

**ETERNITY NOW
RELIGION AMONG THE AMAA**

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**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE
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Since 1976, I have been involved in the study of theology for better comprehension of things spiritual and to understand universal religious phenomena which form an interface between our experience of *Spirit* in the all-encompassing theologies of different cultures. Hence, understanding this *inclusive universal language* of theology enables me to understand the multi-religious Amaa society, as fragmented into six spiritual groupings under the shadow of the traditional African religion, an inherently tolerant and, thus, ecumenical spiritual system.

There are scholars whose inspiring works I have consulted, learned from, and employed their ideas in the process. Although I am critical of some and appreciative of others, nonetheless, to all I extend a faithful appreciation for their *stimulating works* which have greatly contributed to the development of this dissertation.

The purpose of this dissertation is to preserve the traditional Amaa cultural-spiritual elements for future generations, since Amaa traditions will inevitably succumb to the progress of modernity.

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though gradually being weakened by the modern era, nonetheless, persist to undergird maintenance of the traditional Amaa society.

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ABSTRACT

Building upon my “experience-near” knowledge and insider participant-observation fieldwork, this study addresses the religious-cultural experience of traditional Amaa people of south western Sudan. The central focus of the thesis is spirit-priesthood and its function in Amaa society. The thesis examines the ways in which the spirit-priesthood is complemented by an ‘elderhood’ that *blends* with ancestorhood, showing how the central function of the priesthood is divination and ritual, which determine traditional Amaa morality and ethics. The thesis claims that the central structuring principle of the spirit-priesthood and its relation to the social order is that there is a continuum between the visible and invisible dimensions of traditional Amaa society. This continuum, or ‘eternity now’, shows how Amaa society is conceptualised as a ‘whole’ entity, in which relationships (between humanity, artefacts, symbols and nature) are understood and exercised in terms of the invisible. As part of this invisible world the ancestorhood is extremely important, above all the first ancestor, God or *Abbra’dee*, who communicates through the spirit-priesthood.

Amaa society has been deeply influenced by three religions which blend together within it at the family level and in the wider community, namely Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion. A study of one without alluding to the other two would be incomplete. Modernisation is also crucial in understanding Amaa society, and the thesis argues that it is a contributing factor in fragmenting Amaa society into six spiritual groupings. Modernisation is integral to Christianity and Islam in the process of changing Amaa culture. The traditional group, which is the focus of this thesis, resists this change.

Chapter one evaluates the literature and the interpretation and methodologies used to study African religion. It demonstrates the theme of ‘eternity now’. Chapter two discusses the Amaa and the myth of its name, *Nyimang*. Chapter three discusses the idea of spirit in the Amaa cultural landscape. Chapter four considers ancestors, arts and rites. Chapter five discusses Amaa belief in and practice of the manifest idea of *Abbra’dee*. Chapter six describes mock kinship and its impact on social structure and function. Chapter seven draws together the social and ritual life connected to ancestral presence, and chapter eight is a summary conclusion.

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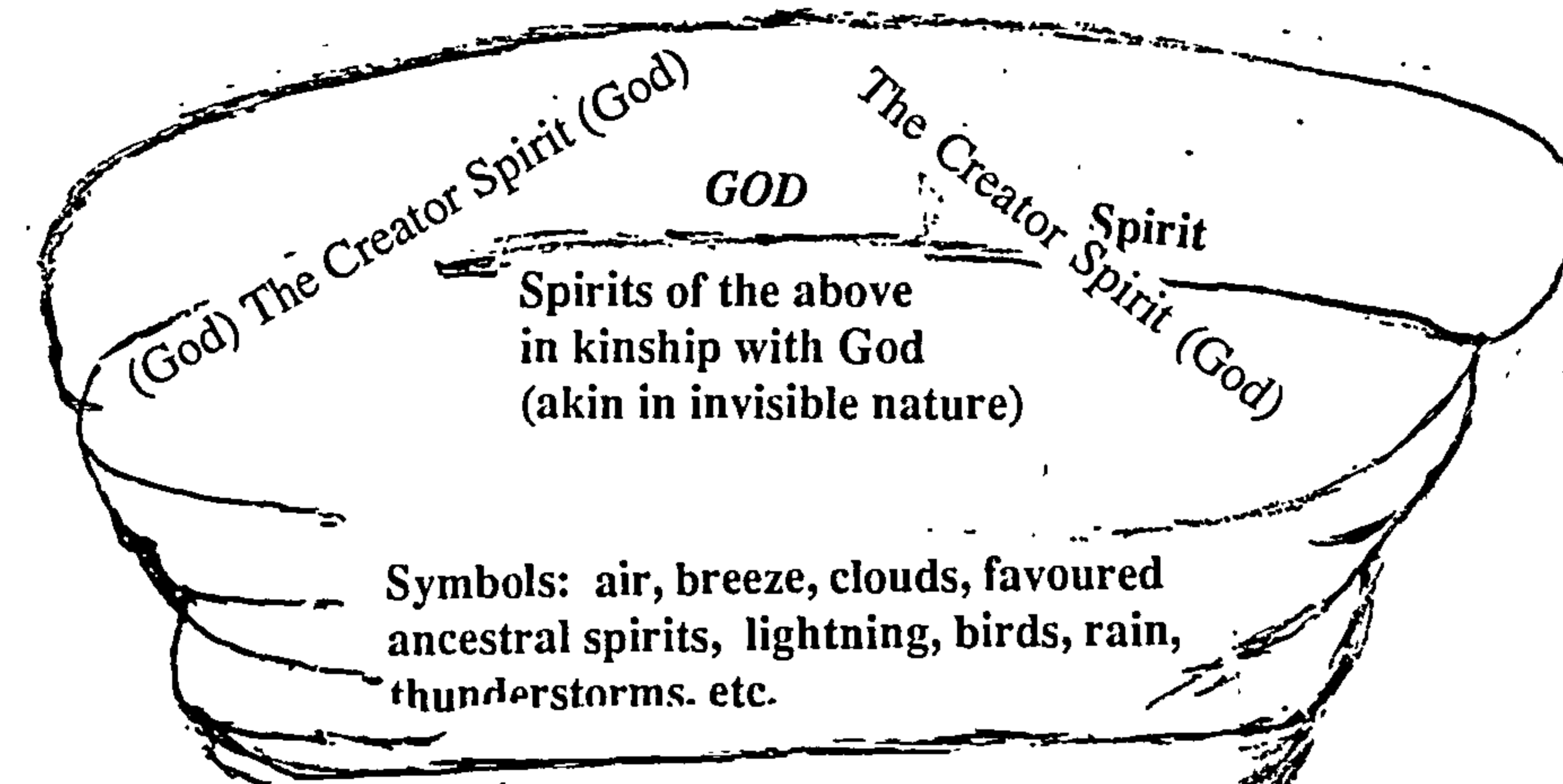
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CHART

This chart of ontology is based on:

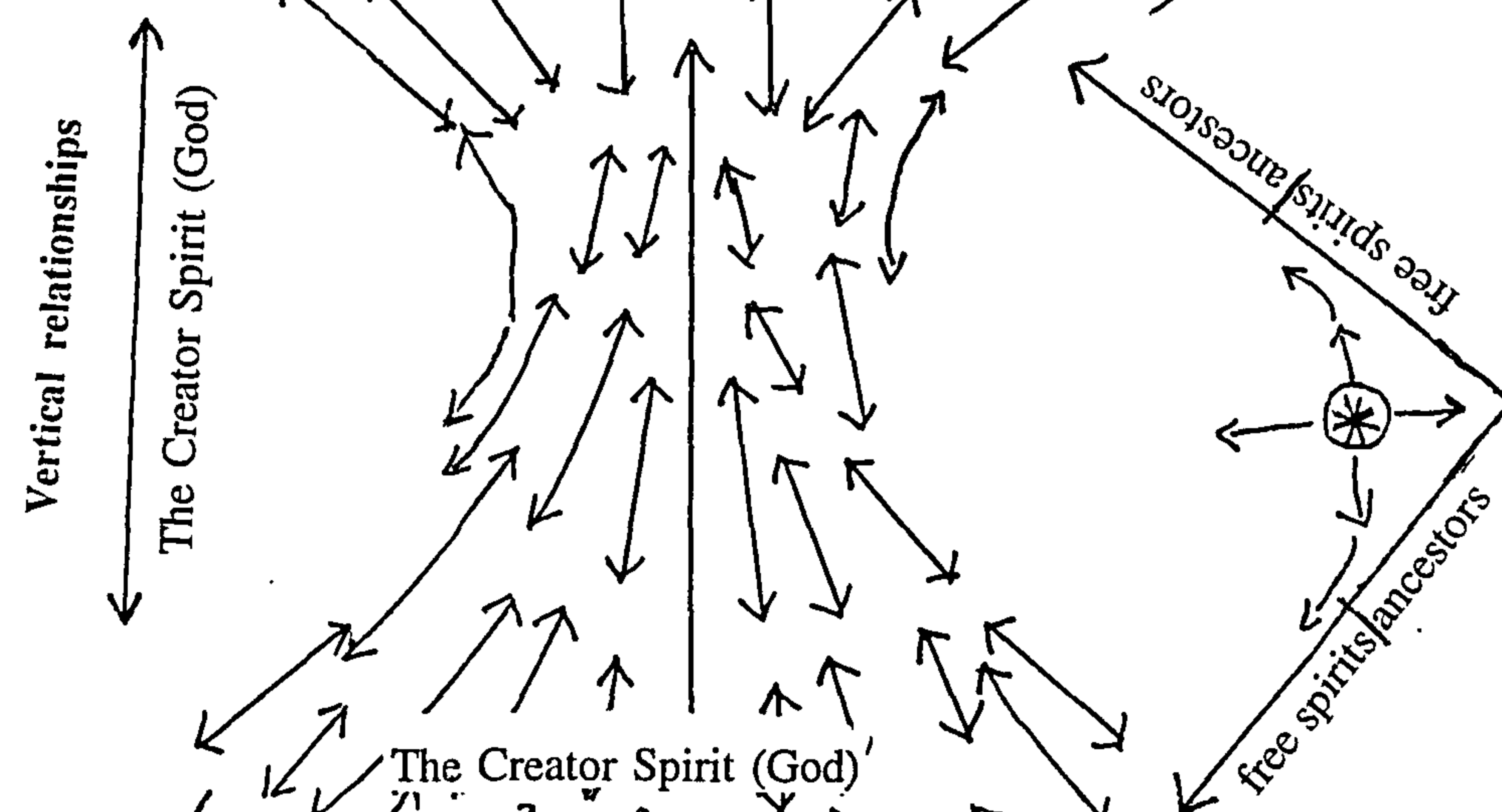
- (1) *God and Man in African Religion* (E.I. Metuh, 1981).
- (2) "Those who are dead are never gone,"
(Diop in J.V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision*, 1963, p. 160)
- (3) *Anthropology of Folk Religions* (C. Leslie, 1960).
- (4) *Amaa Religion (Eternity Now, chapters 2-7)*.
- (5) *The Listening Ebony* (Wendy James, 1988).
- (6) *Divinity and Experience* (Lienhardt, 1961).[*]
- (7) *African Worlds* (ed. by Daryll Forde, 1976).
- (8). *Nuer Religion* (Evans-Pritchard, 1956).[*]
- (9) *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*
(Van der Leeuw, 1964[1938]).
- (10) *African Ideas of God: A Symposium*
(ed. by E.W. Smith, 1950).
- (11). *Southeast Nuba Social Relations*
(J. C. Faris, 1989, pp.304-305.).

[*] This chart was originally based on the works of these two scholars and eventually expanded to others and more, who follow the same pattern of explanation of the idea of Spirit, the common denominator in the traditional African sense of God manifest in diversity. Ancestors are integral to this pattern of explanation.

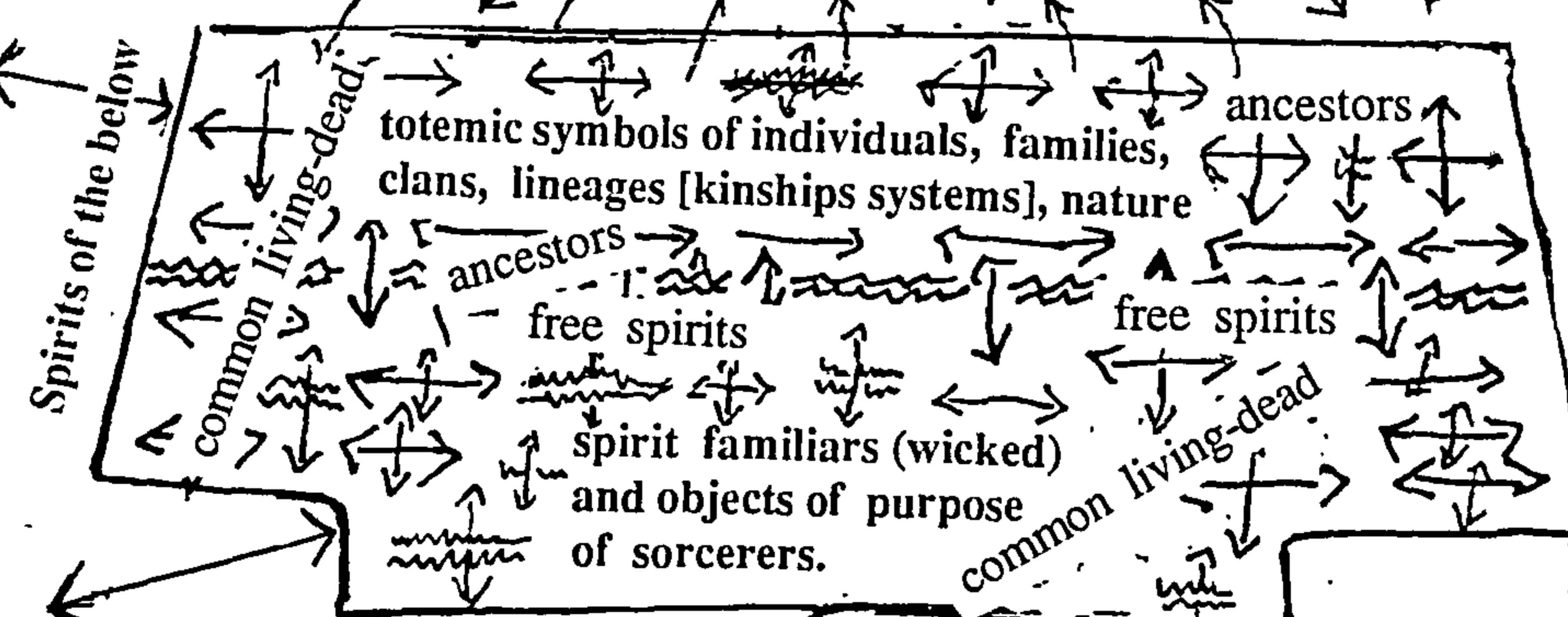


Symbols: Spirit in Its various forms of manifestation and ubiquitous (the problem of the One and many: Unity in diversity):

- ↕ . Vertical relationships of ascending and descending spirits of the above; hierarchical (above) and ritual dimensions with the below spirit symbols (refractions).
- ↔ . Horizontal relationships among spirits of the below, among the people, between the people and their respective totems .
- ↔ . Particular relationships (relatives, totemic, and totemistic relationships) in kinship systems. These relationships carry with them taboo, rights and duties besides interdictions.
- ↕↔ . Social groups (family, clan, lineage, etc.) relationship to God is figured in symbols (totems)- (refractions, manifestations, representations or hypostases)
- ↕↔ . Amoral relationships between people and spirit familiars, the environment, among the people and the respective totems.
- ⊗ . The conception of *Spirit* is both elastic and pivotal. New situations expand the concept with new *spirit* relations, therefore, it becomes elastic (fluid) and pivotal horizontally and vertically in interaction.



Horizontal relationships are totemic and totemistic between individuals and symbols, symbols and groups, groups and groups = organisational, social and ritual (structural and functional) dimensions.



SOME SUMMARY

Horizontal: amoral and individualistic relationships: anti-social and anti-group activities (i.e. Amaa demon relatives at the service of sorcerers: ritual dimension of selfish limited scope embedded in physical and material, etc.)

- "... there is no place where the Shekina is not, not even a thorn bush.", said Rabbi Joshua ben Karka (quoted in J.V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision* 1963, p.194, from C.G. Montefiore and H. Lowe, *A Rabbinic Anthology*, Macmillan 1938, p.13).

The Visible and the Invisible

The invisible, usually associated with the sky, connotes the extension of the earth, the visible realm of the living, its fauna and flora. The invisible is the spiritual mode inhabited by the ancestors, the common living-dead and other *numinous beings* (both good and evil). In their diverse inclinations, such spiritual beings vibrate in localised cosmos. The visible and the invisible occupy the same matrix, the common point of convergence, in which the living (humankind) have indirect relations with the Creator Spirit (God: *Abra'dee*, in Amaa terms) through ancestors, in whom the traditional African time defines itself. In sum, traditional African time (as *circular*) gives significance to kinship systems and social responsibility, for ancestors are "closer to the Source [God]" and are, thus, mediumistic messengers of God. Ancestors are the jealous guardians of their continuity (Eternity Now, synonym of the "Unbroken Circle"). This sense of time, involving spirit-priestly office and elderhood, is ritualistic (soteriology-commemorative-normative narrative) in which traditional Africans (not only the Amaa) corporately celebrate their ancestors and their ancestral connection to God (Creator Spirit). Here kinship has a theological dimension in that it implies First Ancestorhood of the Spirit Creator (God). In veneration (not worshipping) their ancestors, traditional Africans enhancingly enrich both systems of kinship founded by the ancestors (see chap.2-3) and the human community established by the Creator Spirit (God. See chaps. 2-4). Neglecting ancestors initiates disasters and chaos, a contrary condition to fecundity and wholeness. Practice of ancestral traditions, therefore, give continuity and form to life. This continuity carries through into the dynamics of new religious movements.

FIGURE 6

After the ritual of the advanced aged elders for the enhancement of the bride's image and confidence with both the living and the invisible, her mother and the prospective son-in-law will hold a dancing game, in which they challenge each other. He will try to enter her hut, but she guards the entrance, preventing him entry, and chasing him with a broom she has made for the purpose. She continuously stampedes in a dance around the entrance, while her prospective son-in-law does likewise, attempting to force his way into the hut. If she reaches him, she beats him.

Meanwhile, peer-mothers rally her with hand clapping and songs calling for domestication of the man, as *Nyema* did for her husband, who, out of chauvinism, at first, refused to accept feminine authority. Among the songs are obscene ones. Such songs are uncouth and distasteful in normal and other ritual situations and are, thus, out of character for these grown up mothers. This departure from understood ritual norms is similar to barren women's reaction to barrenness, the greatest curse that can come upon a person. Barren women wear phallic symbols, moulded of clay or wood, in a ritual situation. They complain in this manner that they are neither men nor women, but who are they? A question implicitly asked by their obscene reaction demonstrated in ritual situations and not in normal daily life.

The prospective son-in-law's attempt to enter the mother-in-law's hut is a ritual transfer act of the bride's paternal lineage to his, by taking one plank (*coo'maa'nging*) from the master bed (*coo'mang*) where she got pregnant and started feeding her daughter. This is where the bride began her visible paternal lineage membership, though she was potentially already a member before birth - among those "yet to come". So the plank is a symbol of matricentricity that the mother finds hard to part with and pass on to her daughter, whose transition to womanhood will need that plank where she (bride) and the bridegroom are to begin their intense biological relationship. This is why the mother firmly guards the hut entrance. She usually succeeds in preventing the bridegroom entering the hut. But she loses the dramatic ritual battle to one of the bridegroom's age-grades (appointed prior to the contest) who will, as fast as he can, dash into the hut at the moment she is totally distracted by the bridegroom. Seeing the peer guest with the plank exiting, she immediately stops chasing the bridegroom. She, then, gives him the broom. This ritual drama is a symbolic instruction for the bridegroom and his supporting peers to guard the marital relationship. This instruction is part of the domestication process, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, the mother in-law to be guards her nest with the broom which she later on surrenders to him as acceptance of defeat.

Here in this marriage rite of domesticating males, women compose uncouth songs belittling male prowess, particularly male sex organs. These women beat with cooking sticks any male who dares to respond to this ritual obscenity.

Evans-Pritchard, for example, in a study of a range of various African traditional cultures in collective obscenity, suggests that (a) "The withdrawal by society of its normal prohibitions gives special emphasis to the social value of the activity" as in the economic activity and (b) "It also canalizes human emotion into prescribed channels of expression at periods of human crisis" such as the bride's changing temper in becoming quarrelsome to the degree that forces her mother to send her away during most of the marriage rites. The bride's mother, too, experiences the crisis of losing her daughter and attempts to beat the bridegroom with the broom in the ritual context described in the body of this chapter. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "Some Collective Expression of Obscenity in Africa," chapter 4 in *The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and Other Essays in Social Anthropology*, London: Faber and Faber, 1965, pp.76-106.

Thus, she surrenders her daughter, but the final transfer of the daughter's paternal lineage occurs in the house shrine where she ties some of the stringed-beads (*boardelay*) onto the daughter's waist, also in a ritual process. The stringed-beads in the earthen sacred pot (*baa'dang*: a symbol for the spirit of the earth) and its metal lid, which obviously means firm preservation of the bride's paternal lineage potency.

This ritual, thus far, replays the history in *Nyema* mythology,* tames the alien male before he takes over the female, who, as a wife, later domesticates him

* On myth, see the following:

Corte, Nicolas, *The Origins of Man*, 1961, pp.11-12.

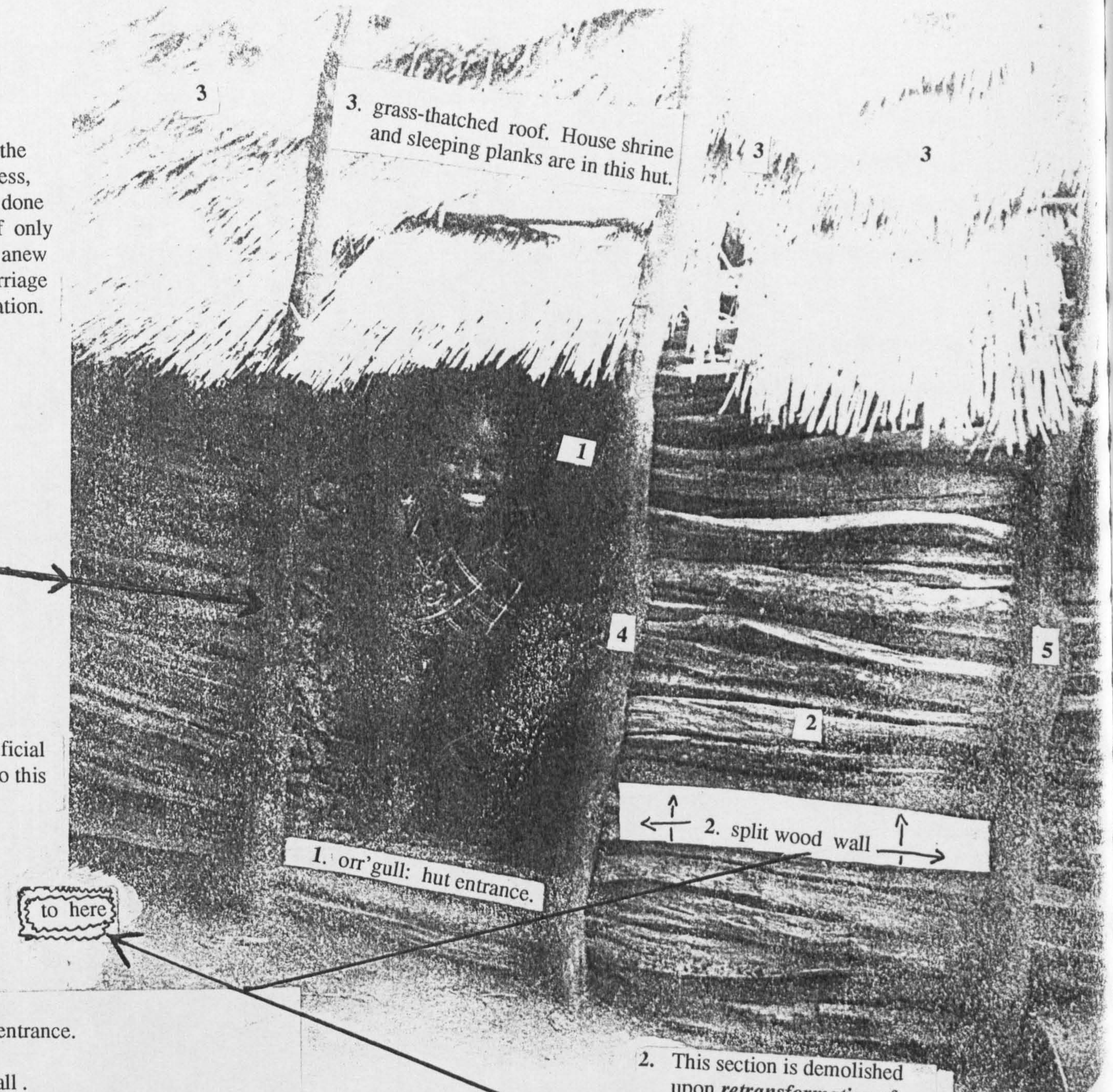
Malinowski, B., *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, introd. by Robert Redfield, 1954, p.100.

Eliade, M., *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, 1955, p.123.

The thoughts of these scholars are relevant to the traditional Amaa understanding of their mythologies as contextually applicable texts to their practical life.

3. As part of the ritual process, damage is done to this roof only to be built anew before marriage consummation.

6. Castrated sacrificial he-goat tied to this door post.



1. orr'gull: hut entrance.

2. split wood wall .

3. grass-thatched roof. House shrine and sleeping planks are in this hut.

4. } {These posts are pulled down upon

5. } {retransformation (death) of the { mother of the hut.

6. Castrated he-goat is tied to this post before it is sacrificed for the burial rite. It is offered to ancestress *Nyema*.

2. This section is demolished upon *retransformation* of the mother of this hut. The pile of the wood splinters is moved to the left side of the widened door way (next to 6). This widened door makes movements easier for both the visible and the invisible during the burial rituals.

The maiden at the hut entrance is *anngee'nayng* (my sister's daughter). She did transfer her paternal lineage to that of the husband in 1983. I took this picture in September 15th., 1978 at the time the villagers were preparing for *Jalle* (demons' rite of departue).

NOTE: SEE FIGURE 3 - COLOUR PRINT FROM THE ORIGINAL ON PAGE 387

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. ANCESTORS

The appreciation of ancestors, as the foundation of traditional societies,¹ conditions the understanding of the ways in which the African worldview is rich with symbolism. Ancestors intertwine with symbols (i.e. art, ritual artefacts, sites, landmarks, mythology, and so on)² related to their legacies that constitute the grammar of the traditional cultures and the soil of inculturation.³ This is where their memory, intertwined with mythology, becomes soteriology-commemorative-normative narrative that shapes and upholds the community of the living.⁴ Because of their legacies, the ground is fertile for the traditional Amaa (and traditional African in common) understanding of Christ as the Ancestor from the beginning of time. This understanding is apparent in Christ's authoritative "I am" statements about *Himself* in St. John's Gospel,

"I and my Father are one" [*emphatic italics mine*]. St. John 10:30

"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, *Before Abraham was, I am*".
[*emphatic italics mine*]. St. John 8:58

Hence, the mystery of incarnation, the notion of *kenosis*, the titles *Word* and *Lord* (not to be forsaken, for Christianisation does not mean de-Africanisation) are all preceded and made transparent in the supposition that Christ is a proto-ancestor, a connection that demonstrates a theological implication of kinship/kingship which displays cautiously ambivalent intimacy with God but through the ancestors; this, then, indicates the tension between the aseity and the knowability God.⁵ The title Ancestor definitely symbolises more for traditional Africans (and African Christians of traditional background) than the titles *Logos* and *Lord*. Therefore, a Christianity that would exclude the ancestors becomes incomplete in meaning, for this deprives the African sense of humanity in relation to God.⁶ As the indigenous (independent) churches' spirituality proclaims the role of ancestors in African spirituality,⁷ the notion that the idea of the communion of saints can replace the ancestors would suffocate African Christianity- and here despite of her constructive contributions in various fields of human concern, the witness of the historical church has

fallen short, for it has been depriving itself of enrichment from African cultural particularities and experience to which ancestors are central. That is, the African Church should be true to its *particularities and life experience* in the context of *Christ, the message*.

The historical and cultural background of the Christian scriptures are of Israelite particularity, witnessing the revelation of God in particular relational fields and events, but the message of God the scriptures carry is transcultural (*transparticular*); therefore, the scriptures must be heard speaking in the context of every people's particularity, situation, and life experience. Hence, God manifests himself in different ways to different peoples wherever they are (**Malachi 1:11**). Africans, particularly the indigenous churches, see Christ, the message, with African eyes and heart. And given the parallel similarities between the biblical and African traditions, there is a theological continuity.⁸

Hence, the process of acculturation-inculturation would be complete when the communion of saints include the ancestors. To follow the African way, which combines and blends the visible and the invisible, is total correspondence with the "mystery of communion " and faith in Christ, who reconciled both the visible and the invisible, including those pre-Christ ancestors whom Kato condemns to "go to hell".⁹

The traditional African is in mutual relationship with other parts of nature. Relationships among human beings and other parts of nature are understood and practised in terms of the invisible, the real, the veiled matrix where all reality acquires meaning. The visible, therefore, is only a metaphor, a symbol, of an invisible value.¹⁰ As such, then, inculturation is made possible when a traditional Amaa (and a traditional African) is initiated into (all forms of rite of passage) the invisible. It is at and in initiation that one is expected to acquire insight into the matrix of the forest, for instance, and the village¹¹ and recognise the hidden presence of the ancestors¹² and other spiritual beings.

Therefore, the subject matter of the previous paragraphs becomes the enclave of a theology that responds to Amaa existential and cosmological values entrenched in the traditional Amaa total culture, in which thoughts and acts are bound to the legacy values of ancestors. Ancestors occupy the same matrix with the living, but their living memory

constitutes a soteriology-commemorative-normative-narrative which upholds, serves, and nourishes the continuity of the traditional Amaa community.

The spirit-priests, ritual elders, and elders recognise the hidden living presence of the ancestors and other spiritual beings. This is *leeh accoo'ree* (sacred presence) in the centre of everyday life. The ancestors overwhelm the immediate presence, the local cosmos blending with elderhood, as Faris, Diop, James, and Zahn portray.¹³ In their enhancement of the corporateness and celebration of the traditional community, the ancestors are hence *Abbra'dee's* principal mediumistic agents of this cohesion since they reflect in traditional social strata as elders and functionally in networks of relationships which knit and web the living kinship. In reverence and veneration for the ancestors, traditional Amaa (and similar Africans in common) express spiritual significance in kinship and the social responsibility prevalent in the knitting networks of ritually dimensioned relationships. Here, the concept of *circular time* defines itself in ancestors, linked to events, and in the retransformation (death) and transformation (birth) process, a process towards which the Amaa theocracy cautiously maintains rites and ritual affecting fertility and fecundity.

The spirit-priest is a harmoniser of traditional Amaa communal ritual functions. As “priest, chemist, doctor, ... prophet, and visionary”,¹⁴ sharing these priestly functional characteristics with the occasional diviners and ritual elders, in the effect of rites and ritual, the central force, the traditional Amaa spirit-priest fulfils his spiritual, social, and political roles and responsibilities.¹⁵

There are two types of spirit-priest if we lump together the spirit-priest (good) and the sorcerer (evil) as both agents for the spiritual realm. Both types deal with spiritual entities of two factions with different intentions. The former, whose significant function is the prescription of rituals and sacrifices to promote harmony between the visible and the invisible, acts for constructive communal ends and is the spirit-priest, whereas the latter acts selfishly for individual satisfaction, regardless of how destructive his acts for collective ends may be.

This African experiential spirituality, in both syncretistic religious movements and the African Religion, poses extreme difficulty for the formulation of a theology, a theology

that can respond to both existential and cosmological African values of diverse traditional cultures, in which the common denominators are the Spirit and ancestors. But the diversity of ethnic groups (tribes) demonstrates diversity in cultural topology, taxonomy, structures of mythology, symbols, and so on. All carry distinct insights. It is in this light that it is deemed appropriate to advocate having African theologies rather than an African theology. However, the potential good news for a unified African theology lies in the developing syncretism in Independent (Indigenous) churches whose theology, like the traditional African, is experiential and, thus, oral. In other words, it is a ritualistic indirect oral theology consistent with ancestral traditions and, thus, dependent on experience rather on discourse.

Indigenisation, according to Bosch, in “God Through African Eyes” and Faces of Jesus in Africa¹⁶ for instance, represents the biblical God expressed in a traditional African values context, a context that traces as well as shapes all aspects of the living. Hence, we can subordinate the African sense of the Spirit to the biblical sense of God, for the central role of the ancestors is commissarial, pointing to the same biblical God, who is addressed by various names in different cultural particularities and life experience. In avoidance of marginalisation of the message of the Christian Gospel in favour of cults, a blind alley, of nationalism and racialism, this submission must involve a prudent distinction between syncretism and indigenisation in the acculturation-inculturation process.

The fast spreading African Indigenous (Independent) churches do not articulate their theology neither do they follow historical church theologies nor the alienated theology produced by westernised Africans like Mbiti,¹⁷ Idowu,¹⁸ and others and the extreme Christian fundamentalist faction like Kato.¹⁹ These theologians and similar others share the same negative approach of the historical churches, as K.A. Opoku points out !

“The negative attitude towards African culture which led to an intolerant rejection of African experience, has become a heritage of the church in Africa and up to the present time, when most of the churches are in African hands, there is still the feeling that too much familiarity with African culture would sap the essential Christian flavour from the church’s being and existence; and there is the constant insistence that the church must maintain its distinct identity and be different from the cultural environment in which it finds itself.”²⁰

as opposed to the Neo-African (indigenous churches) and African spiritual practices, both of which depend on ancestral values in spite of insignificant differences. The former

combines idioms of African traditions with those of the Christian scriptures, for there are so many parallel similarities that bring affinity home and, hence, merger is easily possible, as seen in the abundant rise of the Neo-African Religion; while the latter is solely traditionalist African Religion. Both ways, to reiterate, are unlikely to articulate a written theology, for theirs is experiential spirituality that demands enactment of the religion. They use things African in propagating orally the Christian Gospel, though in a somewhat haphazard way that smacks of naiveté. Without negating the spirituality of the indigenous churches, one would suggest the need for an indigenous theological direction and training to enhance health in the fertile grounds present in the African (Amaa) Religion for the Christian Faith. As such, then, there is much work to be done for a sound acculturation-inculturation process to avoid mutilation that would further alienate and prevent the universal Christ, the First Ancestor from all eternity, from being realised in traditional Amaa culture, a pregnant umbrella description for the Amaa way of life in which everything, every act, thought, and relation carries a spiritual dimension.

This approach could possibly rectify the alienated approach of the Gospel. The Gospel was not propagated in the context of *African particularities* as though Africans in common had no living historical and cultural memory. This alienation of Africans from their respective cultural particularities has resulted from the historical church's *distant interpretation*, which, coupled with the sense of liberation, prompted the rise of Neo-African (indigenous: independent) churches. Despite its weaknesses, Neo-African spirituality sees Christ with African eyes and heart. That is, as the First Ancestor of all eternity, Christ is in the African culture, not on the periphery as alienated by the historical churches.

But “The negative attitude towards African culture[s]”, as indicated above in A.K. Opoku's quote, results from the failure to realise that African Religion, *as an essential mode of revelation*, facilitates Africans' acceptance of the Christian gospel. Thus, African Religion and Christianity are not adversaries, for “conception of God continues to the present day even into and through Christianity”²¹ which becomes an impetus to the *pneumatological perspective* of Kibongi, a Congolese Bantu Catholic theologian.

What is significant in Kibongi's discourse is his claim that his Bantu people acknowledge Christian missionaries as *nganga nzambi* (priests of God). Arguing from a *pneumatological perspective*, Kibongi gives equivalence to the traditional *nganga* and Christ in the sense that Christ accomplishes the role of the *nganga*, but he fails to regard Christ as the First Ancestor from all Eternity.

However, Kibongi's *pneumatological perspective*, as we understand it, leads to a Christocentric view, upon which he confers the following meaning

“The elements to be used or condemned, therefore, depend on the sovereign liberty of the Holy Spirit and the Church's obedience to the Spirit of Christ”.²²

In spite of his favourable Christian inclination Kibongi seems uncertain, for he throws the responsibility for decision making onto the Holy Spirit and the Church, on the one hand, while suggesting condemnation of some elements and Christianisation of other elements of the African traditions, on the other hand.

Whereas Sawyerr,²³ a West African Anglican theologian, examines parallels between the ancestors and the communion of saints²⁴ in terms of the living that are connected with ancestors by way of re-incarnation and atonement. Sawyerr²⁵ asserts that Africans have no proof in relation to “worship” of the ancestors. Indeed, such an assertion is as inappropriate as saying Christians have proof in relation to the resurrection and incarnation. He either misses or chooses to ignore the fact that Africans venerate their ancestors. Sawyerr's assertion is clearly a product of *distant interpretation*, if not Christocentric assertion, that follows the same thought pattern as that of Simon Barrington-Ward, Taylor,²⁶ Tempels,²⁷ and his student Mulago,²⁸ and Parrinder,²⁹ and his students Idowu, Mbiti, and Sawyerr.

Unlike Kato, who condemns ancestors to “go to hell”,³⁰ Sawyerr explores the inevitable correspondence between the ancestors and the communion of saints, but his analogy is mostly rooted in a Christology that proclaims that the living and their ancestors are now joined in a covenant made possible in the incarnation and the atonement. Although Sawyerr shows with caution that the ancestors may be included in the kingdom of God, it is odd to see him prohibit the practice of libation, which is a rite of the

traditional African communion with the invisible which shares the same matrix with the visible. In sum Sawyerr denies the traditionalist his African values, a denial that points to disconnectedness and, thus, lack of wholeness.

Because of ancestral legacies and presence the cultural ground is fertile for understanding Christ as a senior ancestor, in traditional African terms, i.e. the First Ancestor from Eternity. For Amaa Christians, then, Christ's death is retransformation to the original spiritual state in the Spirit (God). His reappearance (resurrection) gives Him superiority over traditional lineage ancestors. An existential point here is that life beyond the grave is sensible only in terms of ancestors, as Christ is for the Christian.³¹ Ancestors are the means to an African soteriology and eschatology established in the here and now (or what we call *Eternity Now*) and *rooted in the invisible*.

Furthermore, we suggest, African *syncretism* in the new religious movements is moving towards transforming the diverse ethnic religious cultures into one African Christianity, now in progress. It is, therefore, justifiable for the traditional Amaa syncretistically to see Christ as the First Ancestor.

Since Christ transforms edible materials, it does not matter which, such that they become his body and blood, it would be more meaningful if *mmoonooong* or *aa'ra* (types of millet grains), the main staple food crops, itself pregnant with meaning for the traditional Amaa, were to be transformed for use in the eucharist instead of the imported wafers and wine, as metaphors of flesh and blood of Christ. For instance, Sesame seed beer (*kanyi'morr*), *mmoonooong* beer (*ashee*) or *assa'lia* (sweet wine), or *kerr'keh'dayh* (hibiscus) juice, and *aa'rao ka'dee* (bullrush bread) can be used as local eucharistic elements as they reflect the reality of the local people. Such local eucharistic elements are the pursuit of the locals' livelihood activities, as in the farming process from sowing to harvest, involving the seasonal respective rites and rituals which, without alienation, can be redirected gospel-wise. The present symbols of the Eucharist, and the economic and cultural alienation entailed by them are but examples of the ambiguities of the historical church mission being out of touch with the indigenous African realities.

Here we employ a hermeneutic in which the Exodus is re-read in the light of the African experience and the faith that liberation is the essence of the promise and the hope of the Gospel, and the liberation it bestows is integral to the ancestral values. Here ancestors symbolise connections with the realm of the invisible and with their origins (i.e. mythologies). The invisible as a spiritual realm, (a mode of local cosmos inhabited by active ancestors, the common living-dead, and other *numinous* beings associated with the sky, of whom the head is *Abbra'dee* [the Creator Spirit]) connotes the extension of the realm of the earth, which is the realm of the living, its fauna, and flora

The two realms (visible and invisible) define the matrix in which the visible have relations with *Abbra'dee*. Such relations are usually indirect, diffused through the agents of the invisible, mainly the ancestors. In venerating the ancestors, therefore, traditional Africans generally, not only the traditional Amaa, point to their sense of sacred time referring to their origins entrenched in mythologies and, thus, give spiritual significance to the kinship system, its function, and social responsibility as shaped by taboo systems.

These religio-cultural matters attain clarity in relation to descriptions and analysis portrayed in the body of this piece of work, where the spirituality of the traditional Amaa un.masks itself.

2. MY EXPERIENCE OF AMAA RELIGION

(INSIDER PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION)

Complementing my fieldwork undertaken over intermittent periods, I am able to draw on a pool of thirty years of living experience in the Amaa tribe, of which I am an indigene and a son of a spirit-priest. I have experienced all sorts of rites and ritual traditions from childhood. That is, my exploration of ancestors, the central numinous figures in Amaa religion, necessarily began at home through parental and elders' instruction, age-grade initiations, and traditional social and economic activities for thirty years. This experience adds to the fieldwork carried out over intermittent periods that total six months.

This chapter provides a religious-cultural account of the traditional Amaa people, the stewardship of spirit-priesthood, its ritual elders, and elders in their respective

communal congregations. Such congregations are represented in family, clan, and the Amaa national (tribal) society as a whole. Our concern is the impact of these luminaries upon Amaa kinship systems (structure) and their function. Structure and function are absorbed traditionally in ritual, where ancestors are vigorously central.³²

It was through applied believing (performing religion) in the role of my ancestors in Amaa life and by participation in the daily flow of existence that I experienced the pervasiveness of the ancestral and other numinous presence in the life of traditional Amaa people. As a child, the main problem, as is the case for any child, was the complexity of the idea of ancestors. Ancestors were in the playground (*bboolang*), in the herds (*keeyeh*), in the seasonal garden plots (*tee'iny and worrooe nyigill*), on the trees (*ttooma*) under whose shade (*lloo*) we played and climbed. Ancestors were in the pastures (*co'dee*), in distant farms (*woo'roongo co'wrong*) as participants and protectors of economic activities; they were in the surrounding wild (*leeh*). Again, adults warned us to observe the taboos, since the ancestors were there to discipline.

As traditional Amaa children, we begin to accumulate knowledge of the ancestral presence when we accompany our parents and participate with them in various economic activities, in which social interaction occurs between us; this can be on distant farms, or hamlet lots, in watering domestic animals such as goats, sheep and cattle, in helping neighbours to mend a thatched roof of a hut or a fence; in helping friends or in running errands here and there for relatives and others, especially the elderly

In this daily activity, traditional Amaa children acquire a cumulative sense of the reality of the *numinous*, particularly the ancestors and their legacies and, hence, knowledge of the traditional cultural environment. Through this participation in the normal activity of life, children learn of the history of family compounds with reference to family and lineage founders, names of sites of importance to families, clans, and the Amaa cultural group (tribe): for instance, war sites like the ritual village which was the locale of war between the Amaa and other surrounding nations (tribes), particularly Gholfan nation (tribe). This is the locale where the last war occurred between Amaa and Gholfan. By contrast, affinity by marriage started after that. This indicates one way that oral history is

preserved, mixed with myth, which casts doubts on its accuracy.³³ Nevertheless, it is a history embodied and inhabited in war ritual sites (i.e. ritual village), in farming sites, mountain sites, burial sites and names of living-dead here and there. All cite their oral history in relation to each other, but in conformity with their whole as the connected perpetual living reality of the visible and the invisible, otherwise referred to as the “Unbroken Circle”, a synonym of *Eternity Now*.

It is in this process that children discover and associate names and places with ancestors and warrior heroes. Names of living-dead and places are fused and, thus, are both history and topography. Here, the horizons (see **chart**) of the visible and the invisible meet at propitiation rituals addressed to ancestors, the pervasive central powers.³⁴

In this context, ancestors are in the hamlets (*beshee*) and in the comings and goings of the inhabitants. They are in meal circles³⁵ to receive their tit-bits of food and libation³⁶ and invited to dip their hands into the same porridge (*caa'dee*) and same sauce (*wee*). Ancestors are participants in all meals,³⁷ regular, ritual, ceremonial, and affliction.³⁸ Thus, for traditional Amaa, ancestors are participants in everything, every act, and everywhere present. As such, ancestors do not occupy one place in the structural sense, or one role in the functional sense, but are embodied in a diverse range of activities and material culture, particularly in symbols, where ancestors occupy a pre-eminent role. Their pervasive manifestation results in multiple identities and various modes of existence rather than one identity³⁹ or a unified mode of existence. According to the traditionalists, all converge in *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God). It is this pervasiveness that gives a potpourri quality to object, gesture, and vocal symbols⁴⁰ in Amaa engagement with and, thus, experience of that prevalent ancestral presence, a presence that is attested to in individual behaviour within the group context at every turn and in every activity in the daily course of life. In other words, there is intertwined interdependence of the ancestral invisible realm and the visible. And there is more to this, if we take Bradley⁴¹ as a guide; in the context of Taylor's “Unbroken Circle”,⁴² the interdependence of people and the interdependence of symbols here mean that the whole is made up of relations, since objecthood depends on a

thing's relations to other things (also see **chart**).⁴³ Reference here is to “normative pole”, art/paraphernalia, and perform the religion.⁴⁴

A person, like myself, who, from birth, has been ingrained and soaked (formed) in ancestral traditions, customs, and values that constitute Amaa religion, cannot possibly forget it or shake it off,⁴⁵ for it is rooted deeply in my being, ethnicity, community, and paternal and maternal relations, on which Amaa identity is built. Without such inherited relations stretching back into the past, bastardom is assumed of a disconnected Amaa individual. This connectedness to the past is knowledge entrenched in daily living-experience that upholds and confirms a traditional Amaa identity in relation to the ancestors, whose historical, organisational, and functional role is perpetually constituted and reconstituted in rites and rituals. Therefore, for traditional Amaa, and traditional Africans generally, spirituality favours experience over discourse, for experience dwells in the depth of the traditional African soul.

3. FIELDWORK

The locus of this study was to have been three nations (tribes) in Ghana instead of the Kikuyu (modern), Pokot (traditional), and Sebei of Kenya, as first intended, since political instability imposed restrictions and risk on field study endeavours and, thus, prevented us from fulfilling the original plan. However, the second option was hindered by claimed severe shortage of funds that had arisen from an unexpectedly difficult financial situation in terms of the funding source. My initial intention was to *compare* the traditional African spirituality and the role of spirit-priests of these nations (tribes) with that of the Amaa.

Hence, for the aforementioned hindrances, it became imperative for me to fall back on my experience, the two notebooks, separate piece notes, and drawing sketches of intermittent periods of approximately six months' fieldwork I had previously done during my annual holidays in Amaaland. In the first place, I did not think the mention of these notebooks as integral to their contents which constitute this work.

I took the initiative to do this field study to contribute to the preservation (if not salvaging) of the traditional Amaa cultural (a pregnant umbrella term) wealth for future

generations, for I had observed the difference between the traditional and the modern Amaa groups as well as individuals in their respective contexts.

It, therefore, came to my attention that Amaa traditional ways were gradually crumbling and sooner or later the traditional would lose its cultural particularity, for the contexts of sacred and profane of modern cultural forces are stronger and, thus, can either dislodge and replace or modify the traditional.

I realised these modern forces are so insidious and, hence, irresistible as well as impossible, for the traditionalists, to conduct a successful counterattack. So, before it becomes too late, I embarked on this task to participate by *preserving in written record* some of the traditional Amaa cultural wealth for future generations.

I did the recording simultaneously partly in Amaa and partly in Arabic. I followed this recording procedure according to the language each informant used and for convenience as well as in the interests of the accuracy of the information given by respective elder informants, most of whom were male elders. I read afterwards the written material to an elder (sometimes more than one elder of both genders), who either confirmed or orally added corrections to the written contents, with which I accordingly complied in writing. We followed this process after each gathering of both a formal and an informal nature.

The contents of the notebooks are in three languages. In addition to Amaa and Arabic, I used English whenever it was necessary to differentiate my observations (analytically relevant to some literature I had already read) from the elucidating comments of elder informants at private coffee or tea sittings as well as in public gatherings for rituals and rites, i.e. affliction, marriage, rites of incorporating (i.e.naming) new births, fatherhood, age-grading, and so on, and economic activities such as farm preparation, sowing, crop tasting, and harvesting. All these activities in their respective ritual contexts, in a way, were rehearsals that have enlightened me more.

But the benefit of being a participant-observer, though an insider, afforded new and invaluable insights which I gained by observation, from others' comments in the course of

individual informal conversations and discussions in group circles when socialising after ritual ceremonies.⁴⁶ This process involved both male and female elders, ritual elders, and spirit-priests. It was in these informal socialisation sessions that questions and discussions flushed out more insights. But I took notes silently during the ritual ceremonies, whispered queries to whichever elder was sitting next to me, particularly when another elder threw in an invoking word or comment to add emphatically to or correct the invoking officiant. Comments, corrections, and emphatic additions to invocations are part of the process of internal checking and corrections.

Being an Amaa, therefore, I had the advantage of having the Amaa language to obtain first hand information and insights from the elder informants through discussion, using the Amaa language to write down invocations, vocal art (lyrics, etc. of youth and even of elders who, every now and then, gleefully reminisce about their olden days), and so on. The reader will notice the texts written in Amaa, but I have added the translations to make sense for the reader.

Being an Amaa indigene and aware of the cultural dynamics, I did not need interpreters, since I was a participant in the celebrating crowd at activities and ritual gatherings. For this reason of participation in various activities of the traditional Amaa, I planned my annual holidays according to the traditional Amaa seasons as follows:

- (1) *Mhara*: dry season: from February to April = Summer (1972);
- (2) *Bhwer*: rainy season : from May to September = Autumn (1973);
- (3) October to December (terminal and burial rites of my father) (1974);
- (4) *Ghuelleh*: cool and dry: from October - November = winter (1975);
- (5) *Kkhinn*: cool, dry, and wind storms,: December - January = winter (1976);⁴⁰
- (6) August -September 1978.

In sum, I conducted the fieldwork through the following procedures:

- (i) Informal oral interviews in the course of participation with elders and youth respectively;
- (ii) Writing down observation notes, others' comments,

(iii) Some sketching and writing down in Amaa texts of ritual invocations, vocal art in ritual process, and confirming with respective elders the accuracy of these materials;

(iv) Small expense was involved for tea, coffee, and sugar for come-together with elders at leisurely evening rendezvous for eliciting further insights on traditions, customs, and oral history.

(v) I stayed at my parents' home and used a bicycle for transportation, but stayed with relatives and friends in the other sub-nations (sub-tribes). I repeatedly explained to the people the reason for preserving in writing some of the traditional ways before they (ways) are submerged or eliminated by the modernisation process. The explanation secured greater co-operation, involvement, and the in-put of too many people.

(vi) I visited my grandfather's bloodbrother family in the *Gholfan Moronj* nation (tribe) with whom the Amaa have had a peace pact in the past following a war between them (see Ritual Village section in **chapter 7**).

4. SOME REFLECTION ON METHODOLOGY

The analysis will attempt to expound some of the characteristics and work of the spirit-priest and the Amaa religious culture of lived-experience of the reality of *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God) expressed in daily living, ritual acts, symbols and in the Amaa traditional collective thought, behaviour (totemic-totemistic) in individual and communal relationships (see **chart**) which may vary from one clan to another, since jural-ritual authority lies with ritual elders.

In this collective context, and taking into account the themes of (a) sacrifice and ritual, (b) possession trance, divination, and visioning trance dissociation, (c) music: drumming, dancing, singing, paraphernalia, body painting, and choice of designs,⁴⁷ for instance, in search of the active presence and involvement of the invisible, on the one hand; while requesting maintenance of fecundity, fertility, community, and ritual celebration, on the other hand. Here in these collective activities of life, one finds the idea of the Spirit and the vision of spirit-imbued involvement in human affairs, which Evans-Pritchard eloquently describes in his Nuer Religion, as do Liendhardt in Divinity and

Experience, Victor W. Turner in The Forest of Symbols, and Edith Turner in "A Visible Spirit Form in Zambia," in Being Changed by Cross Cultural Encounter as well as scholars of a Christian theological orientation such as John Mbiti's school of African Christocentric thought and their critics. The works of these scholars have been our point of reference in the literature review.

There is a correct common understanding, however, among scholars of anthropology and religion, that Traditional African religion is structured by lineage systems and grounded in mythology and symbolic renderings together with the perpetual involvement of the ancestral spirits in the formation of the African personality, which adheres to ancestral traditions, elders' teachings of traditions, and initiation rites taught throughout an individual's life, which intertwines with that of the group,⁴⁸ rites of the spirit-priestly office, ancestral and erratic free spirits (prone to both good and evil acts under the persuasion of the agent's intentions).⁴⁹ Nonetheless, for the traditional Amaa, *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God) is the source for both good and evil.

The traditional Amaa daily routine, whether collective or individual, articulates the structural and functional aspects, underpinned, of course, by traditions and customs that also give initiatory meaning to moral and social solidarity.⁵⁰

Here, we argue that among the Amaa individual and group activities are guided, traditional Amaa believe, by the pervading spirit. This spiritual presence enhances the sense of group solidarity, and, thus, harmony of the whole "Unbroken Circle".⁵¹ Here, elders, ritual elders, and the spirit-priest are the guiding mediums.

The Amaa institution of spirit-priesthood, as its title implies, justifies its symbols, the meanings of which are articulated in ritual discourse, and the ancestor-Spirit-based⁵² lived-experience of traditional Amaa which this study attempts to provide is in the style of an ethnographic as well as to some extent a theological approach. The spirit-priest, though identified under numerous titles, as diviner, *shaman* (a central Asian term),⁵³ medium,⁵⁴ witch-doctor, medicine man, and the like, is a medium between the visible and the invisible and a mediator among the visible community.

As with any religious tradition imbued with the presence of evil, this included sorcery and witchcraft which some social scientists delineated with relish from the secondary accounts of explorers and missionaries of religion during the early era of anthropological studies up to the time of Malinowski, who pioneered a field work approach to this type of study in the Trobriand islands of the South Pacific.⁵⁵

Malinowski's pioneering approach, though it closed the gap of comprehension, did not, nevertheless, eliminate the continuing flawed interpretation of field researchers in relation to host cultures since, as Geertz, using Heinz Kohut's theory, points out, they lacked the intimate feel -"experience-near"⁵⁶ of the host cultures. In this respect, the social scientist's detached interpretation from "experience-distant"⁵⁷ produces an interpretation somewhat dissimilar from that of the natives of host cultures. This, in fairness, is not to disregard the researchers' positive intentions, but

"it becomes profoundly unclear how individuals enclosed in one culture are able to penetrate the thought of individuals enclosed in another"⁵⁸

According to Geertz, then, a detached interpretation is destined to failure for it lacks the insider's intuition.⁵⁹ Geertz's notion of a researcher's limited comprehension and, thus, interpretation of the host culture as detached and incomplete has been implicitly criticised in Victor Turner's symbolic anthropology among the *Zambian Ndembu* traditionalists. Here Turner successfully immersed himself into his host culture to a degree that affected and changed his spiritual life from a socialist orientation to becoming a Roman Catholic adherent.

More than this, the researcher's *analytical reason* differs from that of the traditional African intuitive world of symbols, images, name and landscape embodied history, and commonly the "intrinsic beauty" (which affected Victor Turner) of African traditional culture of which spirit-priests, ritual elders, and elders are agents. These, then, are ample explanations for some field researcher's shortcomings in grasping the substratum sense, a dimension of participant reason,⁶⁰ in the traditional African idea of Spirit which underpins traditionalist African spirituality

In his studies of the *Ndembu* people of Zambia, Victor Turner is critical of Durkheim's idea, which holds that social relations define religious structure and, thus, the individual. Turner, thus, argues the contrary in that the individual defines the structure and, then, social relations. That is, according to Turner,

“the human organism and its crucial experiences are the fons et origo of all classifications. Human biology demands certain intense experiences of relationships “.⁶¹

According to Turner, African symbols enhance our understanding of the human as they explain the individual's processes. Here, Turner has produced an outstanding work, with clear insights, that has an important impact on symbolic anthropology. Turner exhaustively describes and analyses ritual, symbolism, morality, and the *Ndembu* society in order to demonstrate the significance of symbolism in the fact that ordinary entities give way to their deeper meanings. For Turner, symbols work on different levels, the obviously familiar ordinary level and the cosmological level that is in the structure of the symbol itself. To demonstrate this, Turner gives an example of the symbolic significance of colours. The colour white, ordinary in itself, is of a multi-vocal function that includes, for example, both the living and the living-dead. In Turner's opinion, then, for the traditional African, colours produce codes related to the continuity and ambiguity of life.

5. METHODS OF INTERPRETATION IN AFRICAN MYTHOLOGY

Like other religions, African Traditional Religion is bound in mythology according to the respective cultural particularities of ethnic groupings whose mythological topologies, taxonomies, insights, symbols, and rituals are distinct in the light of their respective socio-political contexts which fall prey to the *unintentional distant interpretations* of researchers.

In this respect, to reiterate Geertz, “it becomes profoundly unclear”, when a researcher, despite his/her good intentions, imposes a *distant interpretation* or *negation* the upon religion and mythologies of a host culture. Such *distant interpretations* are deemed to be biased.

In this *distant interpretation*, Faris, for one, despite his fieldwork over intermittent periods among the Fungor, Kao, and Nyaro of the south eastern Nuba Mountains, negates

or fails to realise the spiritual dimension of these Nuba groups when he compares and equates the lived-experience of the diffused Spirit (God) presence in African Religion with those religions of defined and written doctrines and dogmas. Faris states his interpretation, thus,

“As the Southeast Nuba have no religion (known as defined), neither do they have myth- that is, the sanctioning causal histories by which we know religion.”⁶²

In this distant interpretation, Faris, on the one hand, confirms the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut’s “experience-near” and “experience-distant” concepts,⁶³ which Geertz employs to point out that the best knowledge a fieldworker can have of a host culture is an “experience-distant”,⁶⁴ which is clearly seen in Faris’ interpretation of the general features of the social life of the south eastern Nuba; but he misses the point that such features indissolubly intertwine with religious/spiritual presence. That is, the south eastern Nuba do have a religion as experienced, which is neither written, doctrinised, nor dogmatised as compared to his own background of systematised religion. On the other hand, in my opinion, Faris’ discussion⁶⁵ on the role of ancestors in ‘local causality’ contradicts this distant interpretation.⁶⁶

Whereas E.W. Smith,⁶⁷ whose method some African scholars like Idowu,⁶⁸ Appiah-Kubi,⁶⁹ Mbiti,⁷⁰ Kato,⁷¹ and others have adopted and utilised, suggests that a researcher constrains his/her biases in order to serve the integrity of African Religion, which he rightly defines in mythological terms. But he, then, fails, though *unintentionally*, to constrain his own bias in interpreting the African Religion in Christian terms and the (past) erroneous idea of the remoteness of the African God. Accordingly, Smith writes that

“myths of God’s departure from earth and of the coming of death represent what may be called the African’s doctrine of the Fall of man”.⁷²

African Religion does not embrace the idea of a Fall of man, a notion which is totally Christian and Islamic. Here Smith limits his methodological objectivity.

Among those African scholars in the tradition of Smith’s approach⁷³ is Danquah who discusses Akan religion in terms of the diffused Spirit.^{74/75} The Akan people of Ghana believe the source of their being is the Akan Supreme Spirit “*Nyame*”, which is the quintessential ancestor, diffused in the spirit of the Akan people. According to Danquah,

Akan “*Nyame*”, as diffused Being and, thus, functionally employing lower agencies like the ancestors, has an overshadowing involvement in local political and social organisation of the people. “*Nyame*” is, thus, inherent in the structure and function of the Akan people.^{76/77/78}

But Koech⁷⁹ argues that African mythology expresses the archaic sense of the ultimate truth. Koech is in error, for in no sense can he argue that ultimate reality is archaic. Nonetheless, he is accurate in his interpretation in African traditionalist terms of the essential aspects of mythological truth, which is the link between the living and the living-dead that enhances perpetuity of life.⁸⁰ According to Koech,⁸¹ mythologies define the leitmotifs of traditional African religion, such as rites, spirit-priests, sacrifices, and the unborn that integrates the living and the living-dead.⁸²

Such traditional leitmotifs of Kenyatta’s⁸³ Kikuyu mythology, like other ethnic groups,⁸⁴ demonstrate the African traditional leitmotifs involving the Spirit “*Ngai: God*”.⁸⁵ The Kikuyu mythology recounts that “*Ngai*” created the earth and the man Kikuyu and gave him a beautiful wife whom Kikuyu named *Woombi*, a homestead, and daughters.

Kenyatta’s account implicitly demonstrates *incest taboo*, for Kikuyu, being the only man available had to approach “*Ngai*”, “Reverend Elder”,⁸⁶ to provide men, other than him, for the daughters. “*Ngai*” consoled and commanded him to sacrifice a lamb and a kid under a fig tree, which eventually became a shrine, and

“Pour the blood and the fat of the two animals on the trunk of the tree. Then you and your family make a big fire under the tree and burn the meat as a sacrifice to me, your benefactor. When you have done this, take home your wife and daughters. After that go back to the sacred tree ... you will find ... young men who are willing to marry your daughters...”⁸⁷

In terms of Turner’s paradigms⁸⁸ on ritual symbolism, a host of symbols, as essential units “of specific structure in a ritual context”,⁸⁹ can be etched out of Kenyatta’s passage but all for perpetuity. Such essential rituals are Kikuyu’s invocation to “*Ngai*”, the sacrificial animals, the shrine in nature (sacred tree and its environment),⁹⁰ blood pouring, sacrificial meat burning as an offering to *Ngai*, and *Ngai* to provide husbands⁹¹ So there is here the normative and moral pole in function, but preceded by the physiological and sensory poles, according to Victor Turner.⁹²

The ritual process and the elements involved in Kenyatta's passage are similar to those of the Old Testament which de Heusch⁹³ applies in his criticism of Evans-Pritchard's Nuer Religion⁹⁴ as Judaeo-Christian in its interpretation of sacrifice in terms of sin. Accordingly, de Heusch asserts that the

“western concept of sin [as Judaeo-Christian] is inapplicable to Nuer thought”.⁹⁵

Despite the particularity of each culture, we disagree with de Heusch, for sin is also a condition rather than simply a concept.

The common African idea of taboo and adherence to it carries an undergirding agreement that sin is a condition that prompted traditional peoples to employ taboos (as imbued with spiritual powers) for social control and to effect some taming for this human condition. As a human condition, therefore, sin is not restricted to specific human groups. Besides, there are parallel similarities between African religious practices, those in the Old Testament, and some in the New Testament that have inspired the evolution of the African Independent (Indigenous) Churches that, as is argued in this essay, have become the fourth spiritual direction for the traditional reformers.⁹⁶

If de Heusch⁹⁷ is right, then Kenyatta interprets his own indigenous Kikuyu traditions in western Christian terms, since Kenyatta includes ritual symbols parallel to those of the Old Testament ritual traditions. Kikuyu and *Woombi* obviously stand for Adam and Eve. Kikuyu, the point of contact with “*Ngai*”,⁹⁸ becomes the first Kikuyu to communicate with the Spirit “*Ngai*” who, in turn, issues commands; obedience follows, and good results as a consequence.

For traditional Africans, hearth also means family. So the ritual act of Kikuyu initiated the beginning of the Kikuyu extended family, and, thus, the founding ancestor of the Kikuyu nation (tribe),⁹⁹ Kikuyu, the first ritual officiant, becomes the first spirit-priest, family head, community elder, and later, as his life ends, an ancestor.

The normative and moral pole is also seen in the relational dimension prevalent in Dinka mythology. The spear of the master of fishing-spear (spirit-priest) has a mythological significance. It was used by divinity against the people; its mythological account is found in different versions but all express conflict between divinity and man.

The gist of it is the expression of peace-making between the human subject and the offended divinity-man. Divinity-man used the fishing-spear to ritually immolate a spotted ox to seal the absolution of this subject and concluded with a condition that

“I shall never quarrel with you. If you quarrel with me, and revile me, you will die, and if I quarrel with you or insult you, then I shall die. Our words together are finished”.¹⁰⁰

So Longar (divinity-man: ancestor), born of a woman but with supernatural powers, was the first master of the fishing-spear, the ancestor of Dinka priestly lineage, who instituted social control, challenge for breaches, and absolution by sacrificial acts. Therefore, the master of the fishing-spear is a custodian of traditions and customs that maintain Dinka society. As Lienhardt reports

“functions of the master of the fishing-spear are summed up in the expression AA MUK WEIKUA, ‘they carry [support] our life’. The supreme gift which the Dinka ask from Divinity, from powers, from prophets, and masters of the fishing-spear, and even from anyone who makes them a gift, is life”.¹⁰¹

This passage, as it is, is a product of relational differences between the numinous and the living established in the former quotation leading to the constitution of the office of the Dinka priesthood, its role, and the terms of the relationship that involves rituals as its central force.¹⁰² In other words, this passage and the former give a background of relational experience in the Dinka mythology of the founding ancestor Longar, who has constituted the tradition of pardon for life, in which the living subjects are to offer sacrifices reciprocally.¹⁰³

The spotted black and white *ox*, relevant to clouds¹⁰⁴ is a favourite beast; its colour is a symbol for the “spirits of the above”. It is ritually presented by fathers to sons to acknowledge their initiation into manhood and lineage perpetuation, a responsibility, which means immortality.¹⁰⁵ We observe here the involvement of cattle in the structure and function of the society.

In the normal tradition of ritual sacrifice, the master of the fishing-spear recalls the mythological past (ancestors and their herds) to join the ritual occasion at hand.¹⁰⁶ The spear, an extension of the self, manhood, power, ancestorhood, and group solidarity, is tactfully manipulated, thus animating the invocation and the intent. Whereas the sacrificial ox is given an explanation as to why its death becomes a necessity. To sacrifice or kill a

beast without a reason, traditional Dinka believe, means that its spirit will haunt the lineage involved.¹⁰⁷

Every bit of the sacrificial flesh of the ox is assigned to a segment of the lineage and to the Divinity, whose portion is “first placed at the foot of the shrine to be eaten by the family” concerned.¹⁰⁸ The lineage ancestors, too, own a share in the portion allotted to Divinity.¹⁰⁹ Thus the ox, as a symbol of the human community, is the symbol of the limitless life, since it binds the past, present, and future. It thus functionally and structurally maintains the Dinka traditional society in perpetual continuity, a point relevant to the idea of the “Unbroken Circle”, synonym of *Eternity Now*.

The Dinka ox, though in a different ethnic taxonomy, has a parallel symbol of unity in the significance of the *libaka* tree for the Ngombe, a Congolese Bantu people who, according to Davidson, hold annual ritual ceremonies around this tree as the focal point of all relations between the living and the living-dead. For the Ngombe, the *libaka* sacred tree, meaning tying or knotting together, mediates vitality from the spiritual realm to their social groups of respective villages.¹¹⁰

J. Davidson describes the role of the *nganga* in ritual activity, preceding the hunt for the *libaka* tree from forest¹¹¹ Once ritually transplanted in the centre of the village of the *nganga*, the *libaka* tree becomes the centre around which all village activities revolve. It becomes the convergent point for the visible and the invisible. The *Libaka* tree also expresses the metaphor of the “Unbroken Circle”.

This idea of diversity in perpetual unity, the “Unbroken Circle”, is also prevalent in Placide Tempels’ *Bantu Philosophy*,¹¹² despite its distant interpretation.¹¹³ Though problematic for the paternalism¹¹⁴ permeating his pioneering study, nonetheless, Tempels should be given credit for the application of classical reason¹¹⁵ to the African traditional life of the Baluba, a Congolese Bantu people. His work complements that of Davidson on Ngombe unity in diversity, and Tempels concludes that the Bantu

“cannot conceive a man as an individual existing by himself, unrelated to the animate and inanimate forces surrounding him. It is not sufficient to say he is a social being; he feels himself a *vital force* [*italics mine*] in actual intimate and permanent rapport with other *forces* [*italics mine*], a vital force both influenced by and influencing them”.¹¹⁶

It is true of the traditional Africans that the individual being is only sensible within the context of the group combining both the living and the living-dead. We assume Tempels' idea of forces are Divinity and divinities in concurrence with Lienhardt's, or Spirit and spirits in concurrence with Evans-Pritchard's. These spirit beings (or forces; not a *vital force* representing capacity/ vital capability) embody the idea of totems that can be anything visible, animate or inanimate in a special relationship with respective social groups. Hence, traditional Africans, even if unconsciously, affirm their place among these *interdependent spiritual forces*,¹¹⁷ constituting the "Unbroken Circle", when they either choose to command spirit relatives in their service (see **chart**) or, though with paradoxical ambivalence of need and no need, prefer to ignore the ubiquitousness of spiritual forces (see chart) as integral to social structure and function in their web of social networks.

6. RITUAL, SYMBOL AND THE SPIRIT-PRIEST

This section also complements the reflection on methodology since the question of whether or not traditional African religious practices are based on truth is probably less important to social scientists. The goal of the social scientists is to identify psychological themes and archetypes in order to accommodate their scholarly schemes. They have only given fleeting attention to the spirit-priest, the custodian of the African religion, its spiritual content and depth that are the foundation of the structure and function of traditional societies (see **chart**).

But Victor W. Turner, in a participant-observation method, studied seriously African Religion and the spirit-priest, the interpreter of religion, among the Zambian *Ndembu* to the point of constructively affecting his own spirituality, i.e. changing from a socialist orientation to a Roman Catholic.

In spite of neglect and opposition to his political influence in the colonial era and in some of today's theocratic states (like the Sudan), the spirit-priest's essential purpose seems not to have changed much. His purpose is oriented towards the spirit world. Mircea Eliade's discourse on the sacred and the profane acknowledges the spirit-priest as

"a man who knows, who has learned the mysteries, who has had revelations that are metaphysical in nature".¹¹⁸

Eliade's approach, though generic in terms of the temporal and the spiritual, acknowledges the spirit-priest. He concurs with the participant-observer methodology of Victor Turner,¹¹⁹ whose spiritual life was influenced positively by the host culture of *Ndembu*. Likewise the studies of de Rosney,¹²⁰ Edith Turner,¹²¹ and Geertz,¹²² are comparable in that the methodology they employ acknowledges the office of the spirit-priesthood, the local indigenous knowledge, and the person of the spirit-priest as infused with the influence of the Spirit world in function. We, therefore, consider it proper to call him spirit-priest. The interpretation methodology of these scholars acknowledges the presence of the spiritual truth at work in African religious traditions and spirituality.

Similarly, Robin Horton¹²³ discusses traditional African religion and its relationship to western scientific methods, which, he points out, are useful tools applicable to both African and western thought. He asserts that application of such scientific methods and ideas, as tools, is damaging to the distinctiveness of each. The distinctions between the western and traditional African cultures, Horton points out, are clearly linguistic and cultural. Furthermore, Horton asserts, each culture should be treated in its context. That is, one should not supplant the other, as Westermann advocated, in admonishing the missionaries almost seven decades ago,

"However anxious a missionary may be to appreciate and retain indigenous social and moral values, in the case of religion he has to be ruthless ... he has to admit and even to emphasise that the religion he teaches is opposed to the existing one and one has to cede to the other."¹²⁴

Westermann is unilateral and "uncompromising" in support of missionary work that would not acknowledge the presence of God in traditional African cultural particularities, which Kato regards as uselessly invalid. Here Westermann lumps together the Faith and Western cultural particularities as one. Like Westermann, Kato, an alienated African, misses the point that the Gospel of Christ is transcultural (transparticular) and dynamic.

Nevertheless, Westermann's zealous approach that confines the message of Christ to one particularity, as we understand his above admonition, becomes insignificant in contrast with missionaries who faithfully demonstrated the Pauline sense of mission, enhancing the theological continuities, which has revealed the African particularity (his distinctness) to the African. That is, Christ's Gospel has opened up the African to struggle for freedom.

Hence, given the hermeneutic and re-interpretation of Exodus, this revelation has ennobled the African Christianity in the spirituality of the indigenous churches (still in their infancy). Thus, the indigenous churches echo the liberation from political and cultural bondage (being alienated from ancestral heritage) that the African alienated elite and the Christocentrics and Islamicists continue to propagate respectively, but, nonetheless, effect only the “exterior” of the majority who continue to cherish their traditional ways. In this respect E. Dussel, in his Philosophy of Liberation, writes,

“The other, who is not different but distinct (always other), who has a history, a culture, an exteriority, has not always been respected; the centre has not let the other be other”.¹²⁵

Dussel, in this quote as we understand it, describes the particularity of “The other, who ... has a history, a culture, an exteriority ...”, a situation, and life experience that has been interpreted in distant terms which deny the distinctness of that other particularity. Here Dussel corresponds with Horton’s cast of doubts on the methods of interpretation that mark the difference between the modern Western thought and the traditional African thought. Like Geertz, Horton appraises each cultural and thought patterns as distinct. To this effect, Horton states

“doubt on most of dichotomies used to conceptualise the difference between scientific and traditional religious thought. Intellectual versus emotional; rational versus mystical ... are shown to be more or less inappropriate.”¹²⁶

Thus, Horton concurs with Geertz in casting clear doubt on distant interpretations and deductions that fail to correspond to the particularities and inner experience (the real thing) of the host people.

Accordingly, discussing the life and customs of his own Kikuyu nation (tribe), Kenyatta, *echoing* the methodological arguments of Horton’s “doubt on....dichotomies used to conceptualise the difference between scientific and traditional religious thought” and Geertz’s insider versus outsider theory, nevertheless, confirms Kohut’s experiential concepts (“experience-near” and “experience-distant”) in his critical statement as follows,

“while a European can learn *something of the externals* of the African life, its system of kinship and classification, its peculiar art and picturesque ceremonial, he may still not have reached the heart of the problem ... *he fails to understand the African with his instinctive tendencies (no doubt very much like his own) but trained from his earliest days to habitual ideas, inhibitions and forms of self-expression which have been handed down from one generation to another and which are foreign, if not absurd, to the European [and the alienated Africans] in Africa [all italics mine].*”¹²⁷

Hence, the cultural African distinctiveness remains an ingrained habit as Ayandele points out to scholarly investigators,

“Indeed, for those who care to investigate, African traditional religion remains as an instinctive part of most African professors of Christianity.”¹²⁸

This African ingrained habit (“instinctive part”), not memory, is enacted in practice of their religion and has simultaneously been passed over into the new version of Christianity in Africa, as Kibicho observes, since the

“... conception of God continues to the present day even into and through Christianity. It is still the basic conception of God for all Kikuyu believers, including Christians (radical continuity).”¹²⁹

“[R]adical continuity”, represents Indigenous (Independent) Churches that perform their religion in the manner of the traditional religion in music and song, dance, trance, ritual dissociation, divination, and sacrifice. They regard Christ as *One* of the ancestors, who are the foundation of the traditional societies under the leadership of the spirit-priest.

Although Taylor’s approach to African religion is in Christian terms, nonetheless, he identifies and categorises the spirit-priesthood in what he says,

“many leader-figures in the African scene kings, chiefs, elders, and headmen, priests, diviners and oracles, rainmakers, doctors, and herbalists. But, in broad terms, their functions fall into two categories of mediator and medium”¹³⁰

Taylor’s categorisation lumps together priests, ritual elders, and elders all as priests. This is not to deny the ritual role of these elders (kings, chiefs, etc.) and aged-elders and the virtue of their life experience, as family and community heads, as herbalists and healers, and those with experience of climatic moves as raincallers (not ‘rainmakers’), for each have a piece of experience and knowledge to contribute to benefit the community, but this does not mean that all are representatives of the Divine. As elders, they facilitate and contribute to the welfare of communal administration for wise and balanced advice as represented in the persons of the king and the chief, the elders or herbalists as healers for physical sickness; however, the diviners and oracles represent the modern sociologists, psychoanalysts or psychologists. All these are professional social categories having respective gifts, experience, and imbued with spiritual presence in their dealings with community affairs. These categories, therefore, do not have the same intense degree of involvement with the spiritual realm as the spirit-priest.

Therefore, the interpretation of the spirit-priest in the past as a quack or a trickster is a misrepresentation resulting from distant interpretation and, thus, lack of insight into the traditional African ways. And this has been encouraging misinterpretation of mythologies and symbols involved in the religious practices of the spirit-priest in the quest for communion with the past and, thus, with the spiritual realm.

Ritual and symbol are the key pointers that the spirit-priest uses in his approach to mythologies. His symbolic analysis centres on overt and covert meanings. Custom lays prime importance on his proper conduct and on his inner belief, which the Amaa call “*bushee’co’shill*”, associated with his actions; although common traditionalists are unaware of the deep meanings attached to rituals in different segments of their society, they are versed in liturgy, regulating ritual performance and celebrations. He involves elders and ritual elders in his interpretation of symbols and events that ritual acts may represent

Since the Amaa spirit-priest uses the medium of symbol and ritual in his approach to the traditional realm of the supernatural on behalf of his traditionalist community, Victor Turner’s work on *Ndembu* ritual and symbols can perhaps be a guide¹³¹ to the Amaa ritual and symbolic acts.

Victor W. Turner, one of the outstanding proponents of symbolic anthropology, unlike many specialists in his field of study, accepts the common definition of the term ‘symbol’ and uses it to argue his case. It is the definition found in the Concise Oxford English Dictionary:

“A symbol is a thing regarded by general consent as naturally typifying or representing or recalling something by possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought”.

Turner broadens the concept’s application by stating that the

“Symbols I observed in the field were, empirically, objects, activities, relationships, events, gestures, and spatial units in a ritual way.”

And to distinguish sign from symbol, Turner follows Jung, who differentiates them in this way:

“a sign is an analogous or abbreviated expression of a known thing. But a symbol is always the best possible expression of a relatively unknown fact; a fact, however, which is nonetheless recognized or postulated as existing”.¹³²

Turner, therefore, identifies three ways to obtain information about a symbol. He refers to them as fields of meaning: **(a)** the field of indigenous interpretation is obtained by asking native informants what the particular object or action means; **(b)** the field of meaning is concerned with how it functions within a culture or a religious tradition of a people; the structural meaning of a symbol in relation to other things in a culture or a religious tradition.¹³³

It is by this approach that Turner provides a methodology for the interpretation of symbols, the conveyers of rituals according to his interpretation that illumined our approach to and interpretation of Amaa various forms of symbols. Turner points out that data are gathered from which the structure and qualities of symbols are derived. Then the distilling of the data and the synthesis flow from and about **(a)** observable forms and characteristics; **(b)** interpretations given by the knowledgeable; significant conclusions reached by the researcher.¹³⁴

Symbols are, thus, complex in content and function so as to achieve the meaning and purpose of rituals and the means involved, i.e. objects, words, and gestures, are interlaced with mythological content, in networking. This, then, becomes a ritual in action. The officiants' (spirit-priests and ritual elders in our case) liturgical handling of the symbols in ritual performance (i.e. the spirit-priest's right hand gestures to animate his invocation, etc.) is an essential part of the symbols in ritual networking. Here, ritual symbols and invocations are understood intuitively so that words strive to express both thought and feeling, the idea and sensation, with the addressee spiritual entities (ancestors and others), in whom all Amaa traditionalist knowledge has its roots, and in the immediate experience actively at hand in relation to the objective.

It is worth re-iterating that Amaa traditionalist ideas potentially lie (latent) in mythologies (the background of traditions) and symbols, as objects accompanied by words and ritual actions draw meanings out in new conditions and situations. In active invocation, symbols have their sensate dimensions such as feelings, thoughts, and behaviour in relation to the location and time of the ritual in Amaa seasons (as indicated above) and in the daily sanctification of life.

We could, guided on the basis of Turner's theory, metaphorically suggest that a symbol is like a tentacled octopus that reaches out to grasp the intuition and communicate diverse meanings to the believer. According to Turner's thesis, therefore, the sensory "orectic" pole is in opposition to the normative "ideological" pole governing moral norms.¹³⁵ In this case, one can visualise the traditional Amaa conception and comprehension of, for instance, ancestors guarding their legacy of traditions and evolved customs, while the ritual elders among the living are pre-occupied with community maintenance.

And Turner goes on to say that, although ritual symbols are subject to multiple meanings (multi-vocal),

"their reference tends to polarize between physiological phenomena [blood, sexual organs, coitus, birth, death, ...] and normative values or moral facts [kindness, reciprocity, generosity, respect for elders, obedience, courage, bravery..]"¹³⁶

According to Turner, there exists

"exchange between these poles in which the [biological] referents are ennobled and the normative referents are charged with emotional significance, but also, within the normative or ideological pole of meaning, there inheres reference to principles of organization: matriliney, patriliney, kinship, generosity, age-grade organization, sex affiliation".¹³⁷

The diversity of meanings of a symbol, therefore, swings to the normative sociological pole and, then, bounces back to the sensory pole, thus uniting and consolidating them in a sociological activity or customary tradition which brings about emotional reaction and commitment to the symbol, serving individual and societal interests that maintain the interaction of the society and the values it (symbol) embodies, i.e. the stringed-beads (*boardelay*) in *baa'dang* (fertility pot in Amaa house-shrine), the sacred stick (*toewoe*), and the *arched-gate* for the Amaa.¹³⁸

In order to understand man's pole and projection of the spirit, the traditional Amaa, like most similar Africans such as the Nuer, the Dinka, and so on, revert to employing material agents to communicate intuitively with the mystery of the spirit world. The manifestations point to it as the source, and the speculations of scholars seek to understand that "what" of the spirit world. Traditional Africans, though using a pragmatic method of representation in symbols, employ intuition and living-experience in relation to

other things like totems in the belief that spirits use them as vessels. It is quite an emotional business for a traditionalist to approach a particular spirit in a particular totem (inanimate or animate in function).

In other words, ritual symbols and artefacts bear a limitless “liminal” dimension, for they represent spiritual entities that signify the presence of the ancestors, living-dead relatives, free spirits, and the Supreme Spirit (*Abbra'dee*) as Diop demonstrates.¹³⁹ This, perhaps, is a further illustration for the human community that Taylor interprets as the “Unbroken Circle”,¹⁴⁰ not only in the sense of the African traditional family, but the interpretation goes beyond this to include other creatures, both seen and unseen. It is in this sense that traditional Africans cautiously follow and observe customs, for the ancestors are always present on guard.

This polarisation of meaning is one of three qualities which are the condensation of many meanings in one representation and the unification of the separate content [i.e. the ox of the Dinka, spear of *Gee* of the Nuer, etc.] that

“are interconnected by virtue of their common possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought. Such qualities or links of association may in themselves be quite trivial or random or widely distributed over a range of phenomena. Their very generality enables them to bracket together the diverse ideas and phenomena”.¹⁴¹

Nuer “*kwoth*” generally refers to any spirit; that is, unity in diversity. This spirit could be of the earth or of the sky (see **chart**), and such spirits are symbolised in natural phenomena as well as in totems for respective lineages and their family patrons.¹⁴² In this manner a social group segment exercises a special relationship to the Spirit. For instance, an Amaa father, as the head of the traditional family, is the spirit-priest (*kunnee*) of his family in special relationship with the *numinous* ones of the family, unlike the senior spirit-priest (*kuweir*) whose priestly role is more public.

It is important to differentiate the Spirit (God) from spirits, intermediaries, which Nuer people regard as children of the Spirit, which Evans-Pritchard identifies in the concept of “unity in diversity” or Liendhardt in “the one and the many”.¹⁴³ Both scholars concur with Turner’s paradigms about the diverse aspects of a symbol. It is through the many aspects of a symbol that

“God may be figured in numberless ways in reference to social groups and persons”,

writes Evans-Pritchard.¹⁴⁴

Turner was able to generate his theories by using this general methodology that consists of isolating and studying dominant symbols of religious significance to the people of the host *Ndembu* culture, deciphering their content in terms of meaning and purpose in order to gain insights embodied in cultural objects and the ritual actions of the priestly officiant, but the officiant himself leaves behind the ritual curtains without any further exposition.

But Turner investigated dominant symbols of the *Ndembu* culture. In applying the polar model to the milk tree, for instance, Turner demonstrates that the sensory cluster has physical significance, since the tree oozing milky fluid relates to the feeding breast, while the other pole clusters represent the moral and social order of the *Ndembu* society, which is basically matrilineal and functions as such. His theory attempts successfully to condense, knit together, and demonstrate the interdependence of symbols in diverse dimensions of meaning.¹⁴⁵

7. SOME EPISTEMOLOGY

Sites: old sites, compound and farming, are never discarded completely for they carry family history. There is a spiritual, psychological, and social relationship with the place of birth, life activities, and burial. Therefore, a traditional (unlike modern) Amaa would not dare to sell a piece of the ancestral earth (land), for the ancestors and the common living-dead members (the invisible extension of the “Unbroken Circle”) of the family are party to the ownership and use of the said land. Here, we suggest that the old are liminal thresholds between the visible and the invisible, uniting the visible and the invisible into the “Unbroken Circle”, the synonym of *Eternity Now*.

The mother(s) of the family cultivate old sites which they acknowledge alternately as *beshie* (home), *leeh* (presence) *go'layh* (old); that is, the old home is still occupied by the presence. Therefore, they (living) maintain connection with it. Traditional Amaa, like other Africans, pay attention and respect to old things, old places, or old people, for “old” refers to ancestors and most of all to *Abbra'dee*, the *First Ancestor*. So family mothers encircle old kitchen spots with stones. These are the previous spots of house-shrine(s)

(*too'saa*) where fertility symbols were kept. The family hold thanksgiving (crop tasting: *conyingaar*) for two successive years at the old home site (without huts) before they can transfer to holding the rite at their present home. During this period (two years) the said old sites cannot be lent to others for economic exploitation.

Ancestors: as mediums and messengers of *Abbra'dee*, forefathers and ancestors occupy the ontological threshold (see **chart**), the liminal stand, between the visible and the invisible. They, thus, hold mystical powers and authority to manifest in the structure and function of the living kinsmen.¹⁴⁶

The living-dead continue to be human beings except that the mode of being is invisible, the consequence of traumatic retransformation (death) back into the original state of invisibility but remain active among the living. As the chart demonstrates, in traditional Amaa view and belief, there is union between the visible and the invisible on both material (as symbols) and moral planes and their equilibrium must be maintained through the various divinatory *direct* or *indirect* (intermediary) means of communication with the invisible and its appeasement in ritual offerings and sacrifices all for the welfare of the visible and maintenance of *Eternity Now*, the “Unbroben Circle” which the chart demonstrates. That is, ancestral active presence shapes the belief, values, and thought of the traditional Amaa.

In other words, perhaps, in the tradition of orality, social relations in ritual contexts are represented as a text which, in turn, impacts on the transformation of meaning during ritual invocations together with the use of symbols with overt and hidden meanings (see footnote **N61**). Such transformation of meanings (as texts) helps elders and ritual elders to explain and achieve ritual solutions for existential problems among kin groups and their society at large. This is where and when internal evaluation take happen and new customs instituted.

Clan symbols (totems) (see **chap. 3**): on the temporal level, they are symbols of identity and social differentiation within the social structure. On another level, they have moral and ethical dimensions in that they shape behavioural patterns of people in their respective social groups. It is unacceptable, for instance, to kill, eat, or use one's totem,

nor is it permissible for another person to exploit it. Even the spirit-priest (*kuunee/kuweir*) has a totem that he treats with reverence as representative of the founder of his lineage.¹⁴⁷

In addition, on the temporal level, they (clan totems) are symbols of identity and social differentiation within the social structure. On another level, they have moral and ethical dimensions in that they shape behavioural patterns of people in their respective social groups, i.e. age-groups in different stages.

spirit-priest is a vessel of the possessing spirit in terms of the awe extended towards him/her and the spiritual aura simultaneously emitted towards the subject. The vessel, the means, or the “bag of the spirit” as Nuer call him, is a priest (*kuwar*), who should, therefore, be called the spirit-priest in generic terms, as a common noun similar to the Christian priest or the Muslim imam. The spirit-priest is a harmoniser within the traditionalist communal function through ritual processes.

The Amaa *Kuunee* is a spirit-priest, in the essential involvement of “*Abbra’dee*” (Spirit) in Amaa life(see chart). *Abbra’dee* is involved, through its “refractions” (manifestations) as spirits of many categories, in the spiritual hierarchy (see chart). They are manifested in Amaa totems, but they are not ends in themselves. Like ancestral spirits, they are symbols both of connectedness and of communication with the spiritual realm.

The Amaa use the term *Kuweir* to refer to the consecrated senior spirit-priest. Whereas the term *kuunee* (*Kuuneedoo koy’dee*: captive of the spirit) refers to the junior human agent (unconsecrated spirit-priest) or *morr’doo koy’dee* (*morr’du*: horse and *koy’doo*: captive, possessed, enslaved), a metaphor, referring to the expert jockey. The horse is the human agent and the jockey is the possessing spirit. Hence, traditional Amaa equate spirit possession to an expert jockey horse riding. The title *morr’doo koy’doo* is used for the *Kuweir*, the senior expert spirit-priest, (also known commonly as *kujoor* to the modern people. The origin of the term *kujoor* is unknown [to me at least]. Perhaps, it refers to the concept of English terms ‘*conjure*’ and ‘*adjure*’).

Kuunee is the living human, the agent of *Abbe'dee* (or the possessing ancestral spirit). Tributes must be dedicated to *Abe'dee*, for *Abe'dee* has a separate personality that voices his will in divination through the *Kuunee*. Unlike the traditionalists, modern Amaa use the term *kununee* to refer to ancestral spirit and the human agent as synonymous. Tributes are dedicated to *Abe'dee* and the living agent (*Kuuneedoo koy'dee*) is only a caretaker of such tributes which are used for ritual purposes. Members of the public may borrow such property by expressed permission obtained from *Abe'dee* through a divination process. Here the role of ritual elders is prevalent, for the *kuunee* is forbidden to administer such property received in tribute according to his own volition. Such tributes, a point of focus, provide the spirit-priestly office with the necessary assistance to fulfil his ritual duties on behalf of the community. Here Nadel observation describes this correctly in that the spirit-priest directs and sustains the

“... spiritual focus for a community otherwise rigidly divided along lines of descent [not locales]”¹⁴⁸

But it is the ritual prohibition against the *kuunee* (*kuuneedoo koy'dee*) to eat or use any of *Abe'dee's* property received as tribute. *Retransformation* (death) is the ultimate punishment if this ritual rule of prohibition is not observed. This rule excepts his family which, nevertheless, is restricted to sacrificial food consumption. In avoidance of contamination, spirit-priest's women folk handle separately the utensils they use for the spirit-priest. My mothers observed strictly this rule until such a time when ritual elders decided to ritually induct the novice (my father) into normal family life. It is only then that the food and utensil prohibitions would be lifted, but prohibition to administer *Abe'dee's* property (tributes) would remain, for such property with its *intrinsic and ritualistic values* serves both the individual and society.

Abe'dee: the term *Abe'dee*¹⁴⁹ refers to the spirits in common, but *Abbra'dee* refers to the paramount Creator Spirit (God). In Amaa language *abbran* (infinitive transitive verb) means *create*. *She'ayei* (prep. to). *Abbran she'ayei*: to create. *Abbra'dee* is the Creator Spirit. All spirits, using human agents, are intermediaries between the visible and the invisible realms. Ancestral spirits are the key spirits as mediums and mediumistic messengers between the people and *Abbra'dee*.

The spirit-priest, therefore, plays an essential part in the structure and function of the traditional Amaa society, even though his high social and political significance depreciates gradually before the modernisation forces, despite his resistance. Spirit-priests are the patriarchs among traditional Amaa of the eight mountains (**chap.2**) that comprise Amaaland. Despite a spirit-priest's bond with the diverse institutional traditional life engulfed in rituals and rites, nonetheless, he has the spiritual speciality. Specialities concern various aspects of national (tribal) life. Such aspects include rain, agriculture, crop pest control, prophecy (divination) concerning the common well-being, and so on. Ritual elders, too, specialise in similar areas.

kiddangeeh: as Nadel reports, in the past (and even today) spirit-priests are concerned with leadership in war.¹⁵⁰ There were (and are), therefore, *kiddangeeh* (war spirits) and, hence, *kiddangoo irran* (spirit-priests), whose speciality is war affairs. A spirit-priest's leadership in war, as *Kuweir Ajabna* did against the British Colonial Administration in 1917, was valued more than an ad hoc leadership of a valiant warrior and whom the spirit-priest, while in active divination, appointed and authorised to carry and parade the war spirits' insignia (*dhow*: a sacred stick with distinct marks and longer than the *toewoe* of the arched-gate- see **fig. 3**) in declaration of *kiddang* (war) to the public.

Protection of the warriors was/is also the task of the *kiddangeeh* (war spirits). *Kiddangeeh* sanctioned peace pacts and reconciliation internally when conflict and blood feud was rife among Amaa of a sub-nation(sub-tribe) or clan and externally between the Amaa nation (tribe) and a neighbouring nation (tribe). For spirit-priests, involving the invisible realms, rituals and sacrifices were/are the means of achieving goals of peace both internally and externally (see **chapter 7**: Ritual Village section: *Kiddangoo ttagill*).

Since each sub-nation (sub-tribe) was traditionally autonomous, each has its own types of spirit-priests according to community or sub-clan practice and a senior *kuweir*, possessed by the first clan founder ancestral spirit. A *kuweir* of a sub-nation (sub-tribe) can supersede other *kuweirs* in influence over the traditional Amaa nation (tribe). That is, a regional autonomy does not restrict a *kuweir's* influence on the whole traditional nation. This is where we see the diffused authority of ancestral spirits,¹⁵¹ a mechanism, shaping

the structural, functional, and political landscape of traditional Amaa nation (tribe). Here, Nadel points out correctly an institutional leadership in the office of spirit-priesthood as

“...a different order of alignment. The spirit priest is the centre of more fluid grouping, which extends as far as does his *reputation* [*italics mine*]. This extent is localised, and coincides with the zone of community life. [Spirit-priesthood] thus provides a spiritual focus for a community otherwise rigidly divided along lines of descent”¹⁵²

We agree with Nadel, for the influential “reputation” of a *kuweir* is not restricted to his locale of the multi-descent and multi-clanned sub-nation (sub-tribe) that Nadel correctly describes as a “ more fluid grouping”. Such “reputation” counts only on grounds of *effective impacts* that would draw in involvement of the traditional nation. Nonetheless, for mutuality, others adhere to and participate respectively in such taboos and performance of rites. This is what V. Turner calls “*communitas*”, spiritual community of a plural dimension.

Thhowor: earth spirit which, traditional Amaa believe, dwells below the surface of the earth and is in-charge of fertility and fecundity of earth, fauna, and flora. Its share of the marriage gift is offered to it as an appreciation and safeguard for a fertile marriage. ***Thhowor*** is also responsible for the growth of crops. Whether at sowing or harvest rites ***Thhowor*** is honoured together with the ancestors, particularly ancestor ***Shayshayray*** (now *kuunee Shayshayray*), whose agent spirit-priest is known as *kuunee Shayshayray*.

Noise ban: Noise is banned all over Amaaland during sowing and crop growth period from May (*koowoe koor*) to early August (*beh'beh'lay*). Traditional Amaa reason that noise impedes crop growth for it disturbs ***Thhowor*** and spirits in the growing crops. Traditionalists stipulate that these spirits, when disturbed on their work of growth, will work instead for destruction of the crops by drought, strong wind, pestilence, or swarms of locusts.¹⁵³ Therefore, the whole traditional Amaa nation *observes the rite of silence* that a *Sheilo* sub-clan (dwelling in *Nitil* [*Ngihdillong*] see **chap. 2**) breaks in ***Jalle***,¹⁵⁴ a national but noisy rite of purification (described below).

Ancestor Shayshayray: The mythology of *mmoonooong* (sorghum) is attached to *koorroom* (black ant) and associated with *wisheebee* (ant hill) where, according to this mythology, ancestor ***Shayshayray*** found the *mmoonooong* grain, the most important staple

food for Amaa. Ancestor *Shayshayray* (now *Abe'dee Shayshayray*) acts through his vessel, called *kuunee Shayashayray* (spirit-priest) whose domain is in *Kellara (Kelang; see chap. 2)*. Before the traditional Amaa nation begins harvest, spirit-priest *Shayshayray* performs thanksgiving rite to this ancestor for finding *mmoonooong*. The ritual takes place on a designated black ant hill (*wisheebee*).¹⁵⁵ The name *koorroom* for the black ant is also the name for the tree where this ant is found.

8.[a] THE SPIRIT-PRIEST IN AMAA LIFE

In the past as it is today, though without absolute authority, spirit-priests act as national (tribal) functionaries and some are specialised in an aspect or another of the national (tribal) life. While certain of the *kuunee(s)* (not consecrated as *Kuweir*, but inducted into normal life) and ritual elders (both genders) are firmly bound by the institutional life of the group, such as circumcision, age-grading, and so on, others act as professional diviners and various other spheres of Amaa life, such as rain, famine, the discovery and punishment of the offenders.

The traditional Amaa experience the embodiment of *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God) in everything and every act and the ancestors as mediumistic messengers for the Spirit. But the spirit-priest is the agent and medium (through the ancestors) of this spiritual embodiment. Although without absolute political authority, the spirit-priest assumes a corporate responsibility for the life of the people, be it that of sub-clan, clan, sub-nation, or the nation (tribal). He is the master and officiant of the sacred rituals.

This regional structure of the spirit-priest's responsibility excepts *Sheila*, who, as the rain spirit-priest and, thus, responsible for crop growth in keeping *Thhowor* appeased, bears total responsibility for the economic welfare of the Amaa people. Hence, his office is the focus of traditional Amaa attention, for the interest of their livelihood. His office, therefore, wields authority of the spiritual force over traditional Amaa. This total economic responsibility and authority arises from the source of the spiritual authority of this priestly office. This authority comes directly from *Abbra'dee*, according to the elder

informants, who would even go further to name *Kurr'shall*, whom they regard as the free spirit messenger, not an ancestral spirit. Here, Nadel informs us that the spirit-priestly

[*Sheila's*] office binds the people more strongly together: the religious rites of the Nyima are consciously focused on the person of [*Sheila*], through offering and ritual obligations.¹⁵⁶

More or less, Nadel's statement gives clues to the mythical as well as the spirit-priest's office and of the recent past of *Sheila*, who would direct his spiritual authority either to guide the people to victory or defeat, punish the people with calamities for ritual negligence or common social disobedience, or equally maintain harmony and social equilibrium but only when society behaved itself. In all this *Kurr'shall*, for traditional Amaa, was and is *Abbra'dee's* helping messenger for the *Sheilo Kuweir*. According to the elder informants, *Kurr'shall*, the free spirit messenger of *Abbra'dee*, is parcelled with *ttoomm*, the invisible ring on *Sheila's* right hand thumb (*aai'ying co'rayh*), the finger that never misses in a ritual motion. No wonder, then, that *Sheila's* office wields so much ritual power. As such, *Sheila's* spirit-priestly office is unlike the others whose authority is under the dispensation of ancestral spirits, the mediumistic messengers for the *Spirit* (*Abbra'dee*: God). Unlike the ancestral spirits, *Kurr'shall* does not have the physical human experience and is, thus, more nearer to the *Spirit* (*Abbra'dee*). In Christian and Islamic terms, perhaps, is *Kurr'shall* an angel.

8.[b] OFFICE OF THE SHEILA

Despite all his enormous spiritual authority, *Sheila* does not wield absolute power as the mythology of the grain growth and the defiance against *Sheila's* authority inform us.¹⁵⁷ This fluid authority, dependent on its efficacy, became the basis for the Amaa loose confederacy of the eight mountains. This political structure still prevails in modern times.

The most important of the spirit-priestly functionary is the *Sheila*, complemented by some of the consecrated *Kuweirs* whose importance, according to their efficacy, exceeds that of *Sheila*. The late spirit-priest father (a *kuweir*) of this writer was one. Traditional Amaa believe this category of spirit-priests have more intensity of spiritual powers than others. When a *kuweir* reaches this category of *Sheila*, the traditionalists believe that *Kurr'shall* have complemented the possessing ancestral spirit. Hence, such a

kuweir becomes functionally and structurally equal to *Sheila*. To traditional Amaa, the spiritual powers of these luminaries, though without absolute political authority, are necessary to the existence of their traditional society. According to elder informants, the ritual gifts presented to spirit-priests in general, and to this category in particular, are destined for sacrificial offerings.

For instance, beasts acquired in a traditional annual sacred raid are destined for the sacrifices of rain rites that *Sheila* performs annually in May. Such gifts, whether presented by individuals, groups, or acquired by ritual raids, are tributes to the spirit-priestly office and are, therefore, public property in custody of *Sheila*, who must use them as sacrificial offerings for the maintenance of social welfare.

Since traditional Amaa do not distinguish between the sacred and the profane, *Sheila's* office combines the sacred and secular and, thus, upholds and embraces the total traditional Amaa society. This, then, explains why traditional Amaa serve and maintain this ritual office which takes us back to the mythical time. In the same vein, Nadel emphatically points to the importance of *Sheila's* office to the traditional Amaa when he states

“The religious rites of the Nyima are consciously focused on the person of the rain-maker [*Sheila*], through offerings and ritual obligations.”¹⁵⁸

We disagree with Nadel, for neither *Kuweir Sheila* nor any other spirit-priest makes rain. They intercede through ritual rites and sacrificial means in addition to the taboos and sanctions that the public must conform to in aversion of adverse reaction of the numinous. These spiritual powers may initiate drought or any other form of punishment. It is customary, therefore, for traditional Amaa to contribute towards the ritual obligation of *Sheila* to fulfil the annual intercessory rites and rituals for rain.

Nonetheless, expected contributors reserve the right to withhold their respective tributes towards the rain intercession rite; but exercising this right is detrimental to the welfare of the whole society. As such, then, the sub-nations (sub-tribes) that rebelled against *Sheila's* authority still continue, though reluctantly, to allow token contributions towards the rain intercession rite. In fact, ritual tributes to *Sheila* are consumed by the people themselves on the annual sacrifices at the rain rite performances.

The tribute given in labour by youth age-grade groups (especially those nearing the circumcision rite and unbetrothed maidens) is mostly in farming and harvesting *Sheila's* public farm. The produce becomes part of the received tribute that the women folk of *Sheila's* sub-nation (sub-tribe) prepare as food and beer to complement the sacrificial meat of the rain rite. The participant public will consume all the food stuff. That is, the ritual tributes that *Sheila's* office receives from the public are consumed by the public itself. Nonetheless, *Sheila's* spirit-priestly office is the focus. *Sheila's* social and ritual stand is unequivocally equal to those *kuweirs*, like my late father, whose "reputation" elevated him to the same rank of *Sheila* in role and influence over traditional Amaa life.

8.[c] MY FATHER THE SPIRIT-PRIEST (KUWIER)

This section describes and discusses my experience of my father and briefly my cousin *Adoola* in the process of becoming spirit-priests. It would not be an exaggeration to say that elders, ritual elders, and spirit-priests (like my late father), by virtue of immediate involvement, are the persons most informed of individuals and tendencies of their respective communities in spiritual, psychological, sociological, material, legal and customary features. Elders and ritual elders may effect direct political influence; whereas the spirit-priest, though more authoritative, has an indirect political role in traditional Amaa life.

The search for such intuition and knowledge could be explained in terms of divination in parallel lines with revelation that this traditional Amaa theocracy makes concerted efforts to reach. Divination, utilising 'a non-normal mode of cognition', is the attempt to reach information on things, matters, and events of the future that is hidden from the normal human perception. Such obtained information is, then, synthesised and remedial actions follow henceforth. Since traditional Amaa, like similar Africans, believe nothing happens by chance, they obtain answers through divination for their questions of why such and such happened when a misfortune or any kind of trouble occurs. The general explanation will point to taboo breach(es), ritual negligence, or dented human relationships somewhere among the people and sometimes demon relatives could be the

culprits. In sum, such breaches or conflicts invite misfortune(s) from ancestral reaction or sorcery exploiting such crooked situations for selfish ends.

Revelation, however, is unvocalised intuition that is enacted in the ritual framework that my late father, the *kuweir*, exercised. Whereas divination, which he also exercised with the same intention of obtaining knowledge, is of an opposite mode since it (divination) analyses and exposes reasons of whatever matter on hand. As a diviner, in direct communication with the spirit world through dreams, ritual dissociation and observation, he also employed *indirect divinatory* methods that involved object symbols common to the aspects of and customary understanding of the traditional Amaa people. Through this indirect divination, the spirit-priest and his priestly aides are able to guide the individual seeker or the public into what is right and appropriate in moral values and codes of ethics that are acceptable. The spirit-priest (priest-diviner) is shrewdly calculating. He (she) knows a great deal from the intuitive world of symbols and images that guide his mediumistic work in the service of the traditional people.

On the other hand, the priestly intuition intertwines with the ritual approach to enhance the traditionalist understanding of and belief in *Abbra'dee*, as diffused in his created elements (see chart). Looking at the chart, we find these are the elements, of which some are significant symbols, and influential forces active in the traditional religious experience. Here, *Kuweirs* in *Sheila's* category complement *Sheila* (a spiritual leader) in raincall ritual performance. Under the leadership of the spirit-priest, ritual elders, and elders are skilful to know by sharpened intuition and experience that their ontological order is greater than themselves, their order, and their understanding. Nevertheless, they strive to understand it through various means and approaches. Here, then, my father, the spirit-priest (*kuweir*) exercised and fulfilled multi-dimensional roles and influence in traditional Amaa life.

And my late father's becoming a spirit-priest was quite a gruesome process for some years, during which the novice undergoes personality moulding. He was physically, mentally, and spiritually subdued to the will of the possessing *Abe'dee*. According to ritual

elder informants, which supplements my experience of my late father, the drama of a spirit-priestly novice begins with dreams, hallucinations, and transient epileptic-like fits during which he would seem to pass into unconsciousness, a state in which, traditionalists believe, the possessing *Abe'dee* tames, tunes, and bestows on the novice the spiritual qualities and powers of the priestly functions. He becomes a distorted personality and, thus, abnormal in behaviour.

The consecration of the spirit-priest a *kuweir* is a process that demands communal involvement. Brief descriptive details may suffice, but the key points of this initiation are separation, incubation, and reintegration but in a higher social and ritual status. These were the steps my late father the spirit-priest went through to become a *kuweir*.

For separation and incubation, the traditional Amaa wrap the candidate in a mask. He is then presented masked, a ritual state, when initiation (or induction) takes place. Towards the end of the ritual elders' ritual acts, and to ensure communal participation, the whole people join in dancing, thus becoming a spiritual community in ritual action. Hence, in this participation and belonging with the whole there is a deep affinity with many intentions for ontological togetherness (see chart).

At that moment and henceforth, the traditionalists believe, the spirits concerned with the functionary office will guide the neophyte to seek and find knowledge of this ritual office. Since traditional Africans tend to put things into physical form by way of symbols that would initiate experience in interaction, the neophyte is inducted in a masked state, which expresses the mysteriousness of the spirit world. Perhaps, this is indicative of Rudolf Otto's "*numen praesens*", intensely activating itself in the masked neophyte. Meanwhile, the ritual elders invoke the spiritual presence to accept their choice.

It is in this masked bundle (neophyte) that ritual elders give shape to the invisible side of the community, particularly when the whole village joins in dancing. This realises the ideal spirituality which the community expresses concretely in a mysterious and shapeless form. The traditionalists conceive the mysterious to be with them and in natural phenomena, like the mountains that characterise the traditional Amaa nation (tribe). That

is, for the traditional Amaa, one cannot be without inter-being, a state that spells out relational dimensions, not by rational option, but in ontological togetherness (see chart).

Added to my father's experience is the story of my cousin *Adoola* (his real name), which further demonstrates the gruesome process of becoming a spirit-priest. *Adoola*, once possessed, demonstrated an epileptic and lunatic behaviour from 1963 to 1971 but eventually settled into his priestly office. It was this sickly behaviour that often required the presence of my father and ritual elders to address the possessing spirit. Sometimes, as traditions demand, they invoked and offered sacrifices to induce the possessing spirit into openness instead of the mysterious torment for the novice.

The possessing spirit (*Abe'dee*) gradually discloses itself when the priestly candidate starts ritual dissociation which ritual elders (both genders) must study, test, and acknowledge to be the possessing presence of the right *Abe'dee*, not a demon relative whose purposes are destructive and selfish manipulation. Ritual elders' confirmation, amounting to traditional Amaa orthodoxy, has emphatic influence on traditionalists, who still continue to resist the unavoidable modern influences of inevitable change.

Although my father the spirit-priest (as a *kuweir*) had his geographical domain in the *Salara* sub-nation (sub-tribe), his good "reputation" widened his priestly authority to include the traditional Amaa nation (tribe), though without overriding others in the respective domains of the traditional Amaa nation (tribe). Spirit-priests mutually revere each other and, hence, accept and acknowledge each others' spiritual gifts that serve to maintain traditional people connected to the ancestors and, thus, wholeness fructifies in fecundity and fertility; that is, the practical life of the people regarding crops, health, children, animal wealth, and so on. It is in these needs and in the daily mundane living that traditional Amaa celebrate life and, hence, see and experience the sacred.¹⁵⁹

These roles of the spirit-priest (*kuweir*) involve divination foretelling further events both good and evil respectively. And with the help of ritual elders, as facilitators, the people take the appropriate ritual steps.¹⁶⁰ Such sacrifices of appeasement or appreciation

of the numinous include a ram or else a he-goat will suffice. In the olden days preceding 1956, the sacrifice of a pig would be more appropriate.¹⁶¹

But when things seem not to work out in this way, the traditionalists will seek the spirit-priest's help to find out where things have gone awry. The spirit-priest's role is intercessory, ritual, and advisory in helping to solve and alleviate the impediment between the subject concerned and the particular spiritual entity in question. For instance, the spirit-priest's social analysis and psychoanalysis will identify the particular point of weakness that may be negligence or breach of familial or social norms. Such an investigation does not discount the havoc that "spirit familiars" or free spirits may sometimes insidiously wreak.

There are types of specialisation (*irrangeedeeh*, meaning, master of ...) of traditional Amaa ritual elderhood that involve essential ritual roles. It is in these functions that the Spirit (God) is manifested, as the integral element. For traditionalists, all things including humankind and actions speak of *Abbra'dee* as the idea of totem-totemistic relationships demonstrate.

A traditional Amaa community expects the spirit-priest, whose accountability bows to ritual elders and ancestors by virtue of his office, to be insightful of their invisible extension (ancestors and common living-dead), since his advice and decisions, informed through various means of divination, are final and can be detrimental if misjudgement occurs. With an overarching mediumistic responsibility of the messenger from the temporal to the spiritual, the spirit-priest interacts with the comings and goings of the numinous realm. Such interaction is heightened at festivities, though with the paradoxical amalgam of love-fear experience of the living that wants the numinous near for help while, at the same time, rejecting it for its sacredness and, thus, its danger.^{162/163}

As the link between the visible and the invisible, the spirit-priest has moral power over the traditionalists, whose belief in numinous forces predominates. As mentioned above, the qualitative distinction is that the ancestors are in the service of the Supreme Being, acknowledged as the *First Ancestor*. This qualitative distinction between the numinous obviously eliminates the idea of ancestor worship. That is, traditional Amaa, like

similar Africans, venerate, not worship, ancestors who are in communion with *Abbra'dee*, who is also involved in rituals as *Father* and *First Ancestor* (*Abba dia tong Arr'ngay'dong*)

Hence, the traditional Amaa idea of the spirit derives from lived-experience (“experience-near”) of the *numinous*, on whose facade stand the ancestors whom traditional Africans venerate as the most hallowed value. This is the common belief in and approach to the *numinous* among traditional Amaa and other similar Africans. So what is common belief and practice becomes apparent in the existence and activity of an ultimate power from which everything both material and immaterial flows. The material and its meaning and the immaterial counterpart are intertwined in the African traditional structure and function as such in terms of activity and purpose; that is, “the nature of spirit and man’s relationship to it”.¹⁶⁴

It is paradoxical, then, to see this love-fear relationship with the living-dead presence among the living. This is a paradox evidently present in the burial rites when the newly dead (*retransformed*) is asked to depart for good to the world of the ancestors, never to return to disturb the living, while at the same time, the very same spirit is asked to protect and guard the welfare of the living.

My father (with the ritual elders) would take such steps at an ad hoc ritual situation when public safety was at risk and, therefore, required an immediate sacrificial offering. If an appropriate sacrificial offering is lacking among the tribute beasts in his custody, it is the ritual convention of traditional Amaa to catch one from any flock without prior permission from the owner of such a herd. “*Amaa da nay sang!*: the people need it!” is the only explanation that the authorised youth age-graders can offer the herd owner, who, without compensation, does not refuse since it is detrimental to the safety of all. This encroachment on individual rights (on our modern understanding) is according to the tradition of the annual sacred raid that provides *Sheilo Kuweir* with sacrificial beasts of the rain rite.

The individual is at liberty to contribute in kind or labour. But this liberty has limits, for the welfare of the local community or the whole nation (tribe) depends on the

contributive involvement of all. If an able adult male refuses insistently to contribute to ritual tributes, members (not *Sheila* or *kuunee*) of the said community will invoke the conventional communal politics that will not absolve the irresponsibility of that individual by pressurising him to meet his ritual obligation. The influence of modernisation has interjected interruption into this tradition in that the modern local courts (of *Shari'aa* tinge) tend to disregard the traditional ways, for they uphold complaints of individuals against the traditions such as the one, annual sacred raid, and even divorce cases of traditional couples that should be dealt with according to traditional Amaa customs in traditional councils of elders.

In the past, and even today among traditional Amaa, the community enforced the tradition upon the defiant individual(s) by forcefully taking the ritual tribute proportionately equivalent to the contribution in kind or labour rendered by the community. Ritual tribute extracted in such a manner, is optionally disbursed accordingly to its kind or quality, but, nonetheless, under the wish and mood of the community. They either pass it on to the common pool of the tributes in the spirit-priest's custody (local *kuunee*, *Kuweir*, or *Sheila*) or, involving local elders, use it ritually at a communal local shrine (*coo'dee*). Here, the public will still be the recipient in the consumption of this ritual food stuff, together with the living-dead members of the community. The fundamental concern in such acts of communal self-help, given the lack of central political power and refuge to religion as functional in the ingredients of traditions, is the well-being of society and, certainly, of the individual as well.

These sacrificial traditions of the annual sacred raid and a *kuweir's* catching a sacrificial beast ad hoc are so conventionally accepted that an owner of such a captured beast would neither complain nor expect compensation, for they (traditional Amaa) know that the ultimate goal of any property is to preserve, propagate, and maintain *eternity now*. Hence, such ritual beasts captured ad hoc or received as customary tribute or in other kind like grain or fruits of contributed labour must be directed towards those public objectives that arise every now and then. Such public objectives include ritual sacrifices of which the public is the consumer, redistribution at difficult times like famine, lending by

expressed permission, or assistance to the poor/ weak of the community. The more the spirit allows the common wealth to be used for such objectives, the more the public will contribute as tribute. This process is a form of taxation in modern terms except that the difference lies in that modern terms enforce statutory laws, whereas traditional Amaa operate by choice and self commitment, arising out of religious belief, to contribute so that more could be caused by the spiritual realm for the welfare of all. Here, then, the points of generosity and reciprocity are glaringly obvious and these obligated my father's generosity to the degree of extravagance. Goodwill is the norm that must exist between the kuweir, the people, the spiritual realm. That is, goodwill presence between the invisible and the visible and among the visible was what my late father the spirit-priest, a *kuweir*, strove to maintain.

But the lack of this goodwill is another point to consider in Amaa spiritual traditions. According to elder informants, problems arise between the spirit-priest and the people. Some problems may demand drastic measures, though some may be resolved amicably. Such problems mostly relate to honesty.

With the exception of ritual prohibitions (conventional guidelines and taboos), there is no formal watchdog over how the public contributes tributes to the different categories of the spirit-priestly offices. The tributes, elder informants explain, are for the possessing spirits respectively. Therefore, a possessing spirit, though awesome, is yet accountable to the peers. Like the visible living people, elder informants point out, the spirits (invisible world) have good, generous, and trustworthy members as much as evil, wantonly deceitful, and stingy ones who do not reciprocate appropriately or abuse the conventional ritual taboos.

In such unfortunate situations, people become reluctant to allow tribute or adhere to the role of such a spirit and, of course, the person of the human agent (priest) becomes the focus of scorn. Here the role of the good shepherd diminishes and his community is, thus, at risk. Therefore, elders and ritual elders initiate steps. They consult the ancestral realm through a divination process to purge out such a spirit, who may be a sly demon relative.

It is not easy to sack a possessing spirit, especially one of the *kuweir*. But the procedure of purging a culprit junior *kuunee* or those pretending spirit-priesthood (those not accredited by ritual elders) is simple. The advanced aged, “holding thorny branches”, attack from behind such a spirit-priest during a divination session. Elder informants say such a surprising attack shocks the agent and embarrasses the spirit who “in rage...leaves the *kuunee* and wings its way to where it pleases,” say the traditional Amaa. But only retransformation (death) of the agent can rid the people of an unwanted *kuweir*

As such, then, my father was a communal harmoniser and link between the living and the living-dead (mostly the functionally predominant ancestors). As a link, therefore, he (the spirit-priest *kuweir*) combines the individual and communal approach to revered ancestors and the *Abbra'dee*, *First Ancestor* (Creator Spirit: God), who occupies the central place in aetiological myths. Here traditional Africans, not only the traditional Amaa, make qualitative distinctions between the ancestors and the Supreme Being (*Abbra'dee*). And in this link lies the communion that gives sanctity to the legacies of traditions and customs that stimulate the communal unity and stability of traditional groups, family, sub-clan, clan, sub-nation (sub-tribe), and nation (tribe).

As the link between the visible and the invisible, the spirit-priest has moral dominance over the traditionalists, whose belief in numinous forces predominates. As mentioned above, the qualitative distinction is that the ancestors are in the service of the Supreme Being, acknowledged as the First Ancestor. This qualitative distinction between the numinous obviously eliminates the idea of ancestor worship.

In other words, the Amaa traditional belief in the numinous is integral to all aspects of traditional life as, for instance (as my father did), in a ceremonial investing of (political) authority on a newly elected chief (a modernisation effect of British colonial legacy of indirect rule), bestowing blessings upon economic endeavours such as farming, hunting, war, or cash economic ventures locally and in urban centres,¹⁶⁵ or undertakings of social and structural significance, as in age-grade initiation rites, marriage rites, incorporation of new born members, cleansing or healing the sick, burial rites, upholding taboos, safeguarding the fecundity of the earth, people, and other things of nature. Here, then, the

role of *kuunee* or *kuweir* is tantamount to the link between the visible and invisible (see **chart**).

8.[d] SPIRIT-PRIEST : THE POLITICIAN

Evans-Pritchard¹⁶⁶ and Lienhardt¹⁶⁷ have commented respectively that the leopard-skin priest of the Nuer and the master of the fishing-spear of the Dinka have no formal political authority as such, only a ritual one, but exercise an indirect influence which is greater than that of active politician, which case is typically applicable to my father's role as the *kuweir* of renown.

In this regard, Victor Wan-Tatah's¹⁶⁸ exposition of the Cameronian *Nso* religious tradition contradicts the speculative interpretation of J.C. Faris¹⁶⁹ that does not acknowledge the spirit-priest's political influence. Wan-Tatah's exposition further confirms the indirectness of the spirit-priest's influence that Evans-Pritchard and Lienhardt refer to. Wan-Tatah points out that

“Religion is not separate from politics or social events religious specialists [spirit-priests] combine their functions with political leadership. Beginning from the lower levels of leadership, sacrifices performed for the prosperity of the people, and to ensure harmony with God, the ancestors and nature [see **chart**]. There is no conflict of roles or contradictions since the very nature of political and social power is of a religious origin.”¹⁷⁰

All that Wan-Tatah states in this quotation sums up the fact that the spirit-priest's (religious specialist: a term that extends to include ritual elders and elders for their role is religious; whereas the spirit-priest combines both religious and spiritual aspects) emphasis is on the obedience of the people to the traditions and customs of their ancestors to maintain wholeness and, thus, connectedness to the spiritual realm. To achieve this goal, the spirit-priest (or “religious specialist”) performs rituals, as the occasion requires, for appeasement, gratitude, or healing or economic well-being. One can concur with Wan-Tatah in that the spirit-priest has more effective political power since he commands more moral authority than the active prominent politician does.

Like other traditional Africans, traditional Amaa are inherently pragmatic in seeking to secure greater favour from the ancestors and other numinous beings so that the living may enjoy fertility, fecundity, health, and, in sum, wholeness; the traditional Amaa do not

draw distinctions between the political, social, and spiritual spheres which ultimately involve other elements of nature (see chart).

Therefore, the spirit-priest (*kuunee* or *kuweir*) plays a wholesome role in the life of traditional Amaa, who believe in the reality of the invisible, of which the visible is a metaphor. This belief, then, gives primacy to the ancestors. It is through the ancestors that one can discover the Amaa traditionalist concept of God (see chart). Here, then, the inclusion of ancestors, the most hallowed African value, in the communion of saints makes much sense to African Christianity, for the numinous, especially ancestors, wield political power invested in the spirit-priest. So Wan-Tatah's concluding statement

“... the very nature of political and social power is of a religious origin”¹⁷¹

affirms that the African traditional belief in the numinous is integral to all aspects of traditional life as, for instance among the traditional Amaa, in a ceremonial investing of (political) authority on a newly elected chief, bestowing blessings upon economic endeavours like farming, hunting, war (involving *Kiddangeeh*: war [*kiddang*] spirit), or cash economic ventures in urban centres, or undertakings of social and structural significance, as in age-grading rites, marriage rites, incorporation of new born members, cleansing or healing the sick, burial rites, upholding taboos, safeguarding the fecundity of the earth, people, and other things of nature. For instance, in observing the rituals and rites related to specialised spirits such as *Kurr'shall*, *Thhowor*, and *Abe'dee Shayshayray*, the traditional Amaa safeguard the fruition of fertility, fecundity, community, and celebration, which all form the essential ingredients for social and political stability. That is, abundance and health serve stability and harmony. Here, then, the role of the spirit-priest is tantamount to the link between the visible and invisible (see chart).

In contrast to rituals, acknowledgement of *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God) would be regarded strictly as a religious process in non-traditional African societies, mainly Christian and Muslim; whereas in the traditional Amaa society the spirit-priest's (*kuunee* or *kuweir*) role combines both the sacred and the profane in harmonising the traditionalist communal function by means of ritual acts and symbols that presuppose the reality of supernatural truth and involvement as well as individual consciousness.

So the traditional Amaa believe that the ancestors, as the mediumistic messengers, constantly watch over the community and are ready to chastise and correct in punishing breaches. Here, the role of the spirit-priest and elders is one of mediation in rituals to appease the offended ancestors who hold the whole community accountable. Hence, politics is integral to the spirit-priest's role in traditional Amaa life.

9. ETERNITY NOW: THE "UNBROKEN CIRCLE"

Eternity Now, synonymous with Taylor's "Unbroken Circle" with its structural dimension, claims limitless human existence in its interdependent visible and invisible forms. Limitless life is also symbolised in artefacts and symbols of totemic-totemistic significance in relations, kinship systems, rites, and rituals that call the present and mythological past together in function and structure. The process of *eternity now* is only transformational through *perpetual* "liminal" modes from invisible to visible and vice versa, but the fact of *Reality* (the invisible) remains intact in *Its* different manifest forms, at the apex of which the humankind seems to be.

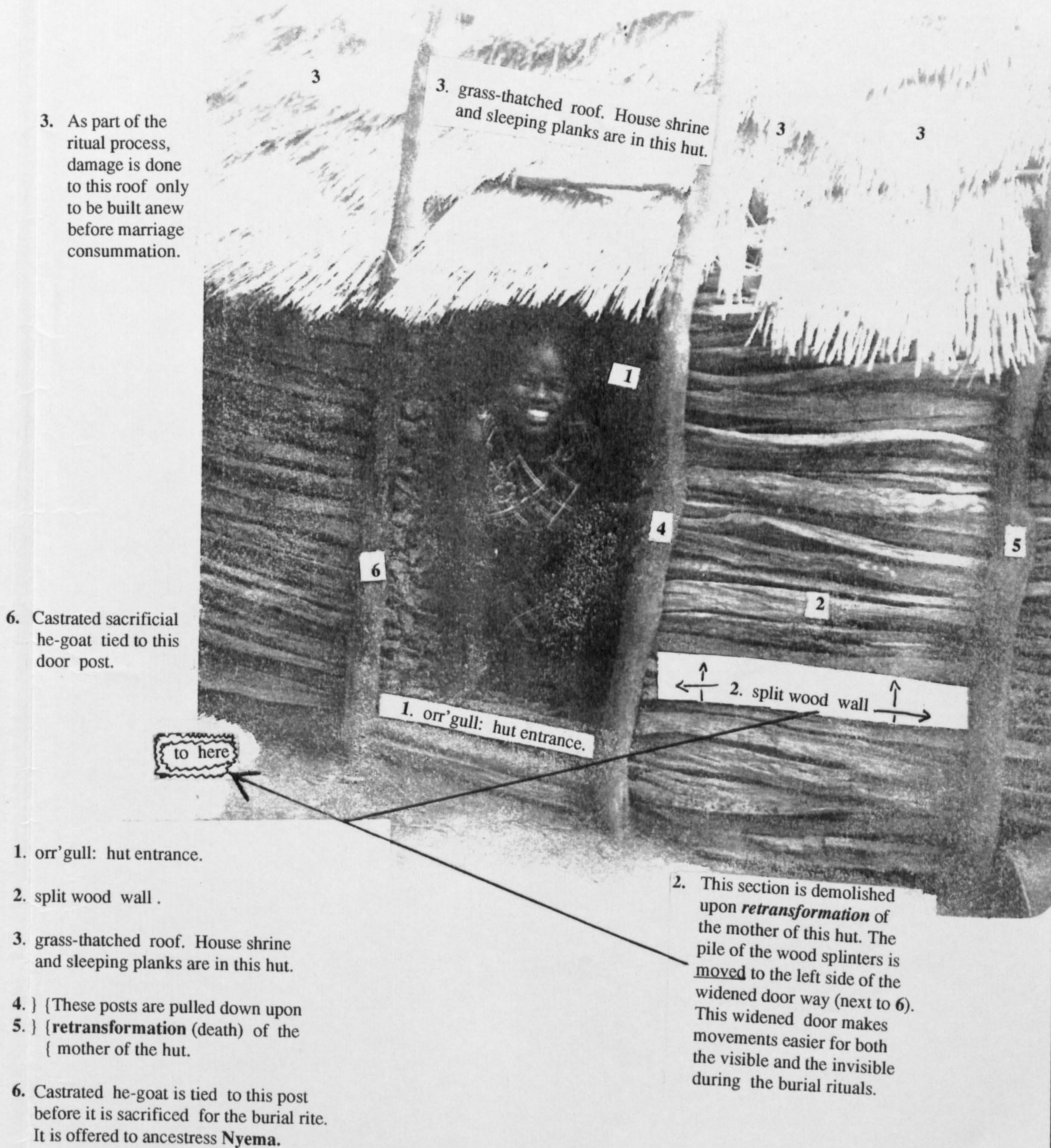
The connectedness of the "Unbroken Circle" organisationally and functionally binds the visible and the invisible into a cosmic unit. Therefore, for the traditional African and the traditional Amaa, in particular,

"... the cosmos does not constitute a fixed, cold, and mute world. On the contrary, it is a world charged with meanings and laden with messages, a world which 'speaks'."

observes D. Zahn, who, in the same line of thought on the traditional African reality, agrees with J.C. Faris, W. James, M. Douglas, B.A. Diop, and many others not all of whom we can list.¹⁷² (Also see **chart**).

For traditional Amaa, the dead are simply *retransformed* to the first mode of existence as free spirits, but this time as attached to their respective human kinship systems that intertwiningly bind both the living and the living-dead as one interdependent family unit, extended families, sub-clans, clans, and the multi-lineaged traditional nation (tribe). This structural and functional humankind community (levels of the "Unbroken Circle") extends to include other things of nature. As such, then, humankind and other things of nature constitute what we call human community. As traditional Amaa demonstrate in

FIGURE 6



The maiden at the hut entrance is *anngee'nayng* (my sister's daughter). She did transfer her paternal lineage to that of the husband in 1983. I took this picture in September 15th., 1978 at the time the villagers were preparing for *Jalle* (demons' rite of departue).

totemic-totemistic relationships, attitude towards non-human beings, whether in the wild or domestic animals, i.e. ritual approach and explanation given at exploitation events.

Traditional Amaa do not entertain the idea of re-incarnation which is prevalent in some African nations (tribes). Nevertheless, it is believed, re-incarnation remains within the family lineage context and re-incarnated spirit maintains its previous living gender, i.e. males re-incarnate as males and females as females according to lineage. It is still in the ancestral ambit and living continuity within the “Unbroken Circle”, *Eternity Now*.

Hence, the communicative and bond maintenance rites, sacrifices, and ritual forms are the central force in the traditional Amaa. In their living thought (as empiricists) and spirituality practice, engaged in doing their religion (orally applied indirect theology),¹⁷³ the traditional Amaa validly correspond to other traditional Africans, who consider the forms of spiritual involvement that accompany the visible living.

It could, then, be said that traditional Amaa life intertwines the present with the past which, as unwritten history, is embedded in mythologies. Certain events become stories and in the passage of time evolve into oral traditions with names of places looming in the landscape,¹⁷⁴ and some as epics that a spirit-priest invokes in rituals that are the centre of traditional Amaa life. Attached to the ritual act is the experiential dimension of the family organisation, upon which depend all rituals activities spreading to the wider traditional society. Ritual sacrifices, a central element in the traditional culture, for instance, are offered to reconcile and/or maintain harmony between the visible and the invisible and are, thus, forward looking to the realm of the invisible, the real..

Such spiritual accompaniment for the temporal, in concurrence with Taylor’s “Unbroken Circle”,¹⁷⁵ involves spirits of the common living-dead relatives and primarily ancestors (whose blood still courses in the veins of the living progeny), free spirits, and the *Abbra’dee* in manifest diversity (see **chart**). *Abbra’dee* is at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of both the living and the “living-dead” [Mbiti’s terminology] (see **chart**). But the organisation of the traditional Amaa family, the essential basic social unit of traditional social structure, maintains the outreach to commune with the infinite spirit world that

imbues everything (see **chart**). It is in this sense that someone commented that traditional Africans were “obnoxiously religious”.

For the traditionalist, therefore, it is disastrous for both society and individuals to lack family, for “man is family”. Family and legitimate progeny are the quintessential social unit for a traditional Amaa, for it guarantees perpetual continuity for the traditionalist despite transitional traumatic transformational changes, i.e. transformation (birth) of a free spirit into visible human lineage and retransformation (death: expiration of metaphorical physical form) into the original invisible form, but this time aligned into the invisible community of family lineage or cast out as a demon if it led an evil visible life.

Therefore, the dead are simply retransformed to the first mode of existence as free spirits, but this time as attached to their respective human kinship systems that intertwiningly bind both the living and the living-dead as one interdependent family unit. Their presence and active involvement continue with the living. Their acknowledgement and active involvement is realised in the priestly office since they have essential bearing upon the work of the spirit-priest and life of the traditional Amaa. Their living presence and involvement necessitate the priestly office. In other words, the living and the living-dead are mutually interdependent, although the living is a metaphor to the *numinous*. Hawkesworth informs us that

“... the living are still dependent upon the [living-]dead, so the [living-] dead are dependent upon the living. Those who have died, though spirits only, still require water and food, and for these they are dependent upon the living. Great is the misfortune of those who die childless, for they will remain for ever hungry and thirsty.”¹⁷⁶

Negligence of the living invites disasters of the punitive reaction of the living-dead ancestors. The marriage section (**chapter 7**) demonstrates the importance of marriage, for the perpetual continuity of the living-dead and the living in communion. It is not only in the idea of the sacrifice that the living and the living-dead share life interdependently but also in property dedicated to and ritual tributes offered to the living-dead. Although the spirit-priest addresses the ancestors, ever present together with the common living-dead among the living, the ultimate addressee is *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God).

Therefore, the agents and messengers of the Spirit are the ancestors, whose eternity lies in the prosperity of the living. Ancestors are present and cognizant of the happenings among the living and are, therefore, consistently rooted in the spiritual instinct of what tells of the immortality of the human spirit. Birago Diop articulates this living sense in a poem to show that

“Those who are dead are never gone:
They are there in the thickening shadow,
The dead are not under the earth
They are in the tree that rustles,
They are in the wood that groans,
They are in the water that runs,
They are in the water that sleeps,
They are in the hut,
They are in the crowd,
They are in the breast of the woman,
They are in the child who is wailing,
And in the fire brand that flames,
They are in the fire that is dying,
They are in the grass that weeps,
They are in whimpering rocks,
They are in the forest,
They are in the house,
The dead are not dead.”¹⁷⁷

In this way, Diop sums up also the idea of totems as a physical representation of the other side of life. This is felt, intuitively comprehended, and communed with even though it is impossible to prove this to those lacking an insight into the light beam of the African faith in the Spirit, to whom the ancestors and other spirits are akin in their invisible nature. That is, life beyond the grave is sensible only in terms of the ancestors, who are the means to an African soteriology and eschatology established in the here and now (what we call *Eternity Now*, a synonym of the “Unbroken Circle”) and rooted in the invisible, the reality that perpetually maintains its metaphor, the visible.

Notwithstanding the fatherhood of *Abbra'dee*, the living approach the ancestors, the free spirits, and the common living-dead with affection and awe, on the one hand, but with fear and apprehension, on the other, lest any displeasure is provoked. Here exists the paradoxical relationship between the visible and the invisible. This is so, according to traditional Amaa¹⁷⁸ and other traditional Africans,^{179/180} since the *numinous* beings, particularly the ancestors, the jealous protectors of their immortality (*eternity now*: perpetual continuity), strike punitively in reaction to violations of traditions and norms.

Hence, the ancestors do maintain the intricate web of ritually conditioned interaction between them and the visible progeny. For traditional Amaa, therefore, the invisible enhances social, diffused political, economic, spiritual relations making them mutual, harmonious, and productive. Such interactions and relations extend to include other things of nature and phenomena (totemic-totemistic) and their respective significances.¹⁸¹

Furthermore, Diop expresses the idea of refractions¹⁸² (the One and the many¹⁸³) of the *Spirit (Abbra'dee)* manifest in various forms. These manifestations are believed by traditional Amaa to be *Abbra'ding* (children of the Spirit). The *Abbra'ding* constitute free spirits, ancestors, the common living-dead as well as the evil ones. This, then, for the traditional Amaa, is *leeh accoo'ree* (sacred presence) as central to sanctification of everyday life.¹⁸⁴

The ancestors overwhelm the immediate presence as Diop's poem shows. In employing their legacies among the living progeny, they (ancestors) are agents of *cohesion* since they reflect in networks of relationships which link people. Here also prevails the work of the spirit-priest, the living symbol-bridge on the threshold of perpetual "*liminal*" state.¹⁸⁵ Although his function is the same, the spirit-priest's name is different in each traditional culture, an umbrella description combining the sacred and the profane dimensions of a people. The spirit-priest structurally and functionally unites the visible and the invisible to constitute the "Unbroken Circle".¹⁸⁶

That is, the temporal and the spiritual realms form one sphere -the "Unbroken Circle"¹⁸⁷ whose mystery is experienced in the traditional referent symbols in ritual acts: symbols like the "*Ofo*" stick of the Nigerian Igbo,¹⁸⁸ the "*Golden Stool*" of the Ghanaian

Akan,¹⁸⁹ the *spear* of the Sudanese Nuer,¹⁹⁰ the “*Fishing Spear*” of the Sudanese Dinka,¹⁹¹ the spear “*Bow’rang*”, sacred stick “*Toewoe*”, and the fertility pot “*Baa’dang*” of the Amaa.¹⁹² These are some of symbols that, at ritual acts, become respectively points of interactive contact between the visible and the invisible.

Here, the participating reason is exercised in totemic-totemistic relationships for such relations are experiential not conceptual. These relationships are experiential since through diffused interaction with the invisible, the traditionalist maintains ancestral connectedness and, thus, wholeness connected to *Abbra’dee* (Creator Spirit: *God*).¹⁹³

The *normative* or customary rules ensure stability and harmony among the living, on the one side, while ancestors, on the other, guarantee their immortality in the continuity of their lineages. Diop¹⁹⁴ refers to this ever protective ancestral presence in the above quotation, saying that the ancestors

“... are in the breast of the woman.”

Besides its hint of reincarnation¹⁹⁵ and the tension between the ancestors and the unborn, this verse echoes Victor Turner’s paradigm on symbolism “the sensory [orectic] pole clusters and the moral and social order”.¹⁹⁶

For Diop,¹⁹⁷ this means that the living-dead are actively involved in human affairs, whether at good or bad moments, and are, thus, in interaction with their particular lineages or clans. They are partners in the social process, in networks and relationships (totemic-totemistic).

This would, then, mean that the spiritual realm “blends” with the temporal,¹⁹⁸ that is, the ancestral spirits and others are part of the structure and function of the traditional African world,¹⁹⁹ which is depicted in a verse from the above quote that the ancestors and the common living-dead

“... are in the hut, they are in the crowd”.²⁰⁰

This state, thus, justifies the essential need for the spirit world to have a mouthpiece in the office of the spirit-priesthood in both public and private domains.

This also illustrates Taylor's notion of the "Unbroken Circle"²⁰¹ that interlocks relationships between opposite polarities (the temporal and the spiritual), that is, a relationship in a pivotal mode that realises the sacred and the profane, to borrow M. Eliade's terms, working together as a unit to maintain the Amaa traditionalist's *Eternity Now*, not at some future time. To maintain this *Eternity Now* that Taylor calls the "Unbroken Circle", which marks Amaa religion as group-tied, traditional Amaa observe rituals in collective contexts.²⁰² These range over all aspects of the traditional African life in both structure and functions which are rituals and rites bound. Such functions express the perpetual enactment of ritual interaction between the visible and the invisible.

Similar to the orientation of the living for co-operation and conflict are the *numinous*. That is, spiritual powers are benevolent and ready to reward, but also to act punitively against negligence and breaches of traditions. So the African traditionalists want to have it both ways; they have no choice in this paradoxical relationship. Here, the traditionalist adherents want to appeal to these powers to come to their help, but to depart immediately after fulfilling their purpose.

To this effect, Faris writes about mourning for the dead in south eastern Nuba out of "respect" not "sorrow":

"Those individuals close to the deceased ... are ... expected to observe a mourning period for some time and refrain from flamboyant public behaviour. This mourning is defined locally as 'respect' or 'honor', not as expression of sorrow. And it is linked to local causality in that flagrant violations of such 'respect' may anger the spirit of the deceased ... who will interfere in onerous ways with the lives of the living."²⁰³

The Amaa, while observing the customs noted by Faris, reintroduce the spirit of the newly deceased person to the living family and relatives three days after the burial in a home-coming "*waa'llow nyonn'daa*" rite.²⁰⁴ And for the departed (retransformed) aged elderly, the home-coming rite is a public ritual celebration in order to satisfactorily settle the retransformed among both the living and the living-dead.

It could be said, then, that these transitional rites, which are ancestor-based and founded on the traditional African ontology (see **chart**), shape the spirituality and commitment of the individual to the collectivity. So rites and mythologies are enacted to

shape the mutuality, harmony, and the entities of both sides of the community of the visible and the invisible into one human community.

This ontology maintains a “thin layer” (see **chart**), an invisible bridge (one-way mirror) through which the ubiquitous numinous can see the temporal. This one-way bridge binds the past and future, which the present makes possible in the office of the spirit-priesthood. Contrary to Mbiti’s idea of *Zamani* (a *kiSwahili* term adopted from *Arabic* term *zumann* and *zamaane*, meaning, time and long ago), the forgotten past, sends the accountable multitudes of the far past living-dead into oblivion, the traditional Amaa remember consciously their living-dead, though not all by name, in a collective manner. For instance, at rites and rituals, my father mentioned the actively prominent ancestors and some common living-dead members by name and added “and those of us we can not call your names for we are many, let us join together for such and such. You have the *winnye* [power] for such and such. Do your part! *Aiye’woe* [amen]”. Though these far past living-dead have become anonymous, they continue their presence amidst the living and are, thus, remembered. Traditional Amaa believe this presence is not anonymous, for it reacts punitively at breaches.

This presence, as consistent with *Eternity Now*, is prevalent in ritual partial demolition of a traditional Amaa mother’s hut upon her retransformation (death), as in the event of retransformation (August 16, 1974) of this writer’s mother. In **fig. 6, No.4** and **No.5** door (*orr’goal*) posts are pulled down to widen **No.1** (entrance). The tumbled splinters of **No.2** are piled, approximately two to three meters, to the right side of the widened entrance **No.1**. This widened entrance, traditional Amaa believe and practice, makes it convenient for both the newly retransformed mother and other living-dead relatives including those of her household who associate with her, *as a* new member in the invisible mode, and the living to move in and out without collision during the burial and homecoming ritual activities. This partial demolition is a rite which represents the beginning of herself participation, combining the visible and invisible realm into one unit as the ritual activities and the object symbols attest.

Furthermore, funeral expense is huge in food and livestock, especially when the retransformed is a *kuweir*, like my late father. Therefore, relatives and friends in community and from afar contribute towards meeting this expense. For the traditional Amaa, this act of giving and sharing anything with others has a spiritual dimension. The spiritual entities, as part of the participant human community, receive shares, too. Sharing demands clear (*cool*) hearts since the partaking spirits will know the thoughts of the visible participants. Even the demon relatives, hovering around in the peripheries of such ritual occasions, in order to neutralise their evil intentions, are acknowledged. The officiant offers them libation and tit-bits of sacrificial material outside of the compound arched-gate, for demon relatives are not part of the community. Here the “Unbroken Circle”, the synonym of *Eternity Now*, is prevalently attested.

The widower wears one bead as a bracelet (*koofang*) to mourn his wife’s physical absence. She, as a living-dead, continues the invisible mode of life in the midst of her visible family as Diop’s poem demonstrates that they are everywhere, i.e. *in the hut, in the crowd, in the house*, and so on.²⁰⁵

She, the living-dead wife, is in the hut (house) since the hut is her ritual domain. It is in her house-shrine she is invoked and offered shares of marriage gifts of her daughter(s), niece(s), or grand-daughter(s). Whether living or living-dead, she participates with female ritual elders in her house-shrine naming rites of the first grand-child (a living thing until named) of respective daughters. As she is inducted into the invisible mode life to continue her motherly role and family membership, the naming rites inaugurate a new born (crude in being and ambiguous in significance) into life by its family that gives it being, meaning, and participation in the ontological order. The social self of the living-dead is integrated into the community and family (composed of living and the living-dead: “Unbroken Circle”) through the induction rites of the newly retransformed, the new born is integrated into its community in which the individual self is inseparable from the inclusiveness of the relationships received and valued from both the living elders (customs derived from) and the ancestors (traditions), for “elderhood and ancestorhood blend”.

That is, naming and burial (induction; Christian terms: baptismal and committal) *rites* are in the concept of incorporation that can be understood and interpreted as communal acceptance to shape the inherently social being of the new member (in both living and living-dead modes of the “Unbroken Circle”, synonym of *Eternity Now*); according to the traditional Amaa, the new member, as a living thing or a new living-dead, in its being named or inducted into the invisible mode, is at the point of receiving and being received, of acting and acted upon (or subject and object).²⁰⁶

Similarly, the old estate (dwelling or farm sites) is in a liminal threshold, a perpetual ritual state, resultant of spiritual attachment that “blend[s]” and bonds the visible and the invisible, as in elderhood blending with ancestorhood into one circular unit that functions liminally as such. Here, the ritual spot of **fig. 4**, of my late father’s terminal rite configures *liminally a circular threshold*, typifying *Eternity Now*, synonym of the “Unbroken Circle”. For the Amaa traditionalist, therefore, the *old* state as a liminal threshold simultaneously divides and bonds the visible and the invisible. It is on his olden first distant farm site, where my late father started farming upon marriage of his first wife (my mother).

The surrounding of a traditional father’s terminal rite, when in progress, is *all* spirit-space in traditional Amaa belief, combining the sense of nature, of man as a family, and nation (tribe), which the living participants must know how to appreciate and inhabit rigorously (e.g. social responsibility) in terms of the invisible, the real in bond with its metaphor, the visible.

This combining and bonding is in intimate participation with the past (previous living-dead associating with new living-dead in transitional rites), which is present-past-participation and without neglecting those yet to come (the unborn as potential members = future) in prayers and invocations. So this combined participation in the traditional Amaa sense of community-continuity involves the past and future (those yet to be born) alike in the *context of the here and now*, otherwise known as *Eternity Now*, synonymous with “Unbroken Circle”, according to which traditional Amaa condition their attitude, material culture, and physical structures as in hut building (**fig.3**). Home compound, cattle

homestead and cattle camp fence are circular (**fig.1**). Distant farm plots cleared are circular shape. The earthen fertility pot (*baa'dang*) in a traditional mother's house-shrine is circular. People gathering, whether for normal socialisation or ritual, sit or dance in a circular shape. When a family gathers for a meal, the sitting is circular, with the expected invisible members' presence, to share food from the same circular vessels, e.g. gourds, earthen pots, modern enamel bowls, and so on.

For traditional Africans, therefore, spiritual ubiquitousness, the Amaa *Abbra'dee*, the Dinka "*Deng*"²⁰⁷ or the Nuer "*Kwoth*", and even in ancestors as Diop portrays, whether expressed in one manifestation or many, is actively always the same in **Its** manifestation. Though hidden invisible, **It**

"sees and hears...and can be angry and can love. It is a helping friend whatever situation one may be in. Therefore, the Nuer habit of making short supplications to God outside formal and ritual occasions also suggests an awareness of a protective presence".²⁰⁸

"...[A]n awareness of a protective presence" echoes what George Thomas observes in *Kimbanguism* that

"The name kimbangu was an invocation of traditional consciousness: he who reveals is he who is hidden"²⁰⁹

Hence, at communal ritual celebrations, the visible and invisible sides of the community, the "Unbroken Circle", gather as a *communitas*, as Achebe demonstrates in that

"All the *umunna* were invited to the feast, all descendants of Okolo, who had lived about two hundred years before. The oldest member of this extensive family was Okonkwo's uncle, Unchendu. The kola nut was given to him to break and he prayed to the ancestors. He asked them for health and children. 'We do not ask for wealth because he that has health and children will also have wealth. *We do not pray to have more money but to have more kinsmen. We are better than animals because we have kinsmen. An animal rubs its itching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him [all italics mine]*'".²¹⁰

And Lienhardt says of the Dinka "*Deng*" and human experience of the self as

"Divinity is manifold as human experience is manifold, and of a manifold world. Divinity is one, as the self's manifold experience is united, and brought into relationship in the experiencing self".²¹¹

For African traditionalists, old age signifies wisdom and knowledge of traditions and custom. The oldest person is [blends] closer to the ancestral realm and is, thus, privileged to officiate in the thanksgiving ritual. This is the case for male family heads, those of advanced age and experience, who are regarded as rich in wisdom and spiritual insights.

Such an elder, in ritual function, is not inferior to the spirit-priest, for he has become a connecting point between the living and the living-dead, a status of a relational dimension of the ontology (see **chart**). Hence, an elder is the spirit-priest of his family. It is at this point that “elderhood and ancestorhood blend” and this is something that makes the elderly African venerable and ritually effective.

And with regard to Victor Turner’s exposition on “liminality”²¹² and Achebe’s point about that

“A man’s life from birth to death [is] a series of transition rites which [bring] him nearer and nearer to his ancestors”.²¹³

or in the same vein -(blending), Faris’ statement that

“...deceased elders [*ancestors*] are still active, that elderhood and ancestorhood blend, is part of the logic that sets causality locally. The linking of [desirable and] undesirable and ubiquitous event to causality of deceased kinsmen is very important in constituting the kin discourse.”^{214/215}

All this characterises the priesthood of elders.^{216/217} for the traditional African, all stages²¹⁸ in life are liminal periods in the sequence from birth to death. Here, then, Victor Turner’s idea of “liminality” is relevant to M. Eliade’s discourse on the sacred and the profane in “Year, New Year, Cosmogony”.²¹⁹

Hence, the metaphor of the circle appears also in physical structures (figures 1 & 3). It simultaneously carries reference of the metaphysical dimension, for the invisible mode normatively participate with the visible while sharing the same spatial matrix as kins and community members.

The burial rites rendered to the retransformed spirit-priest (see **chapter 5**) show this idea (which is reality to traditional Amaa) of life continuity in the invisible in the same mode as the visible is consonant with the concept of *eternity now*. Therefore, the material articles put in the grave demonstrate Amaa perceptions, representations and use of symbolism to envisage the invisible side of the “Unbroken Circle”.

For instance, one half of the sacred stick (*toewoe*) was given to the retransformed *kuweir*. The other half together with the sacred spear remain in the arch of the main gate (**fig. 1**). The sacred spear (*coola*) could not be divided, since it represents the presence of the ancestors as well as being an instrument for severe judgement among the living. This spear, used for ritual immolation, is the ultimate artefact of oath that a traditional Amaa

can swear on to be telling the whole truth. So, traditional Amaa believe, ancestors use this spear against villains among the living.

On the other hand, *toewoe* represents conjoint authority of the ancestors and the living parents. So the retransformed *kuweir* carried part of his authority in that one half of the *toewoe* to join the ancestral. The second half (with the spear) remains for ancestral (including him) traditions and the authority of his male progeny and those yet to come. In other words, traditional Amaa, as do other similar groups on the African continent, are immersed in a cosmic and social milieu that makes it imperative for the retransformed father to validate the ancestral traditions and pass them on faithfully to his descendants.

Here, then, the sacred stick (*toewoe*) and the spear symbols signify a perpetual “liminal” state, for they enhance the cross-roads where the ancestral community and its posterity merge, crossing the thresholds of their boundaries in the equitable enhancement of each other as the eldest son demonstrates in the family gathering at the bedside of the prepared body of the retransformed *kuweir*.

Indeed, circular states (*physical and normative*) are expressed in countless rites and rituals of the traditional Amaa (and traditional African in common) scheme of life inauguration and situations of leave-taking.²²⁰ In these ceremonial sequences the newly living-dead is reluctantly yielded into the invisible realm, where reciprocally to his/her own abiding is the *yearning of memory in the sensible visible world that he/she (as spirit) shall abide*. Such rites and rituals, we may suggest, are intended to assert not only *soteriology-commemorative-normative-narrative*, but a chain of gratitude, which enhances ancestral connectedness, an essential dimension to the *African traditional ontology* (see **chart**).

10. SUMMARY

Ancestors, the foundation of the traditional society, in whom alone life beyond the grave is sensible, are central to kinship systems of traditional Amaa society. They, therefore, symbolise the most hallowed values that shape the social structure and function and, thus, signify the connection with the realm of the invisible, their origins (realm of the real). The invisible, often associated with the sky, connotes the extension of the realm of the earth, which is the realm of the living, its fauna and flora. Nearer to *Abbra'dee* is the invisible realm, which is a spiritual mode inhabited by the ancestors, the common living-

dead, and other *numinous* beings who vibrate in the matrix of the local cosmos. Both realms visible and invisible signify the matrix in which the living have relations with *Abbra'dee*. Such relations are indirect, diffused through the agents of the invisible, mainly the ancestors as messengers of *Abbra'dee*. The spirit-priest represents the visible mediumistic connective agent between the two realms through various forms of divinatory and ritual processes (see chart).

In contrast to rituals, the acknowledgement of *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit) would be regarded strictly as a religious process in non-traditional African societies, whereas in traditional Amaa society the spirit-priesthood role combines both the sacred and the profane in harmonising the traditionalist communal function through ritual measures. In the traditionalist schema of thought and experience, symbols (*both acts and objects*) that are employed presuppose the reality of the supernatural truth (*Abbra'dee*). It involves the individual consciousness that is expressed in what is called social democracy, as portrayed in the traditional Amaa loose confederacy of eight mountains (sub-nations: sub-tribes). Each mountain has specialists (ritual elders and spirit-priests) and a *kuweir*, a generalist spirit-priest of no absolute authority, despite of his spiritual powers unless otherwise endorsed by the people for implementation in ad hoc political situations (chapter 2).

That is, under the traditional Amaa political structure neither spirit-priests nor other functionaries wield absolute authority within this traditional loose confederacy. This, then, accepts the new trend of chieftainship. This new trend is a mark of indirect colonial rule, coupled with Islamic Fundamentalist religious ideology, and is imposed by the modern nation state, whose obscured overshadowing system fails to touch the core of the traditional. In other words, the modern is in the 'show', occupied more with structure, but the traditional is in the 'function'.

The founding ancestors of the traditional Amaa clans (now sub-nations) are known collectively as well as individually as "*maidayhoo irran*"; that is, the master spirits of the mountains, the physical referent symbols to the founding ancestors. The term "*maidayh*", meaning mountain, also refers to the mutli-lineage/ multi-clan inhabitants of that area. "*Maidayh*" may also refer to an inflexible person.

Hence, the Spirit's diffusion in nature is consistently represented in the traditionalist allocation of the priestly functions according to its manifestation. This manifestation is either through possession, which is mostly the case, or through personal characteristics expressing more than the normal active *intensity of spiritual presence*. It is also experienced in the totemic-totemistic association with which the priestly functional office identifies. And the spirit-priestly office is demonstrated in the role of ritual and symbol that signify tensions between life, transformation (birth), and retransformation (death) and the sacredness of the social and *numinous* order. That is, the temporal and the spiritual dimensions are consolidated into one unit and maintained as such; a perfect example of the state of *Eternity Now*,²²¹ the *synonym* of the "Unbroken Circle",²²² which the spirit-priest,²²³ with group participation ("communitas"), celebrates in sacrificial rites and rituals in affirmation of fertility, fecundity and corporateness. Traditional Amaa communalism, as such, suggests a relevant theology that responds to their existential and cosmological values rooted in their traditional total culture. And culture subsumes religion in which thoughts and acts are bound to the legacy values of ancestors. As mediums and messengers of *Abbra'dee*, ancestors occupy the same matrix with the living progeny who, emphasising things spiritual, are obedient to the ancestral living memory which constitutes a soteriology-commemorative-normative-narrative that upholds, serves and nourishes the continuity of the traditional Amaa society.

Nonetheless, in this context, the supernatural truth emerges as normal and not out of the ordinary to be regarded as a fetish! It is part of a self-adjusting process according to the traditionalist Amaa temper of mind. That is, he "founds his life upon the traditional groundwork of his theodicy and his ontology [see **chart**], which include his whole mental life in ...purview and supply him with a complete solution to the problem of living".²²⁴ But the mediation of the spirit-priest is required for ritual performance as a communal act directed towards the sky, as an act of worship²²⁵ that binds the "Unbroken Circle" and not as an expression of the remoteness of *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God).

CHAPTER ONE

FOOTNOTES

1. The *connectedness* of the “Unbroken Circle”, synonym of eternity now, is demonstrated in the following example referneces:

(a) J.V.Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, pp.67, and Diop on p.160.

(b) D.Zahn, The Religion, Spirituality and Thought of Traditional Africa, 1979, p.81.

(c) J.C. Faris, Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, pp.305-310.

(d) W. James, The Listening Ebony, Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power Among the Uduk of Sudan, 1988, pp.28, 186-187.

(e) M. Douglas, “The Lele of Kasai” in African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples, 1976, ed. by D. Forde.

(f) Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: Religion of the Dinka, 1961, pp.24, 156. 171-208.

(g) Kenyatta, Jomo, Facing Mount Kenya, intro. by B. Malinowski, 1965, p.257.

(h) Eliade, Mircea, Myth of the Eternal Return, trans. from the French by Willard R. Trask, 1955, pp.12-17, 143.

(i) Russell, K. Land Reform: A World Survey, 1977, p.358

(j) Deng, F.M. Tradition and Modernization, 1971, p.272.

(k) Junod, Henri A., The Life of a South African Tribe, Vol. 1, 1927, p.180

(l) Dymond, G.W., “The Idea of God in Ovamboland, South-West Africa,” in African Ideas of God: A Symposium, ed. by E.W. Smith, 1950, p.141.

(m) Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956. pp.7,116, 140.

(n) Hawkesworth, D. “The Nuba Proper of Southern Kordofan,” in Sudan Notes and Records 15, 1932-1933, pp.189-191.

(o) [i] Nadel, S.F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes of Kordofan, 1947, p.452.

[ii] Nadel, S.F., “A Study of Shamanism in the Nuba Mountains,” in The Journal Royal Anthropological Institute, 76, 1945-1946, p.31.

[iii] Turner, V.W., The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989, pp.11, 19, 26.

(p) [i] Mendonsa, Eugene L., “Elders, Office-Holders and Ancestors among the Sisala of Northern Ghana,” in Africa 46, 1, 1976.

[ii] Brain, James L., “Ancestors as Elders in Africa- Further Thoughts,” in Africa, 41, 2(1975):122-133.

[iii] Uchendu, Victor, “Ancestoricide! Are African Ancestors Dead?” In Ancestors, ed. by W.H. Newell, 1976

[iv] Kopytoff, I., “Ancestors as Elders in Africa,” in Africa 43, 2 (1971): 129-142.

[v] As mediums and messengers of *Abbra'dee*, forefathers and ancestors occupy the ontological threshold, the liminal stand, between visible and invisible. They, thus, hold mystical powers and authority to manifest in the structure and function of their living kinsmen. They

“speak a bilingual language of human beings... and of the spirits to whom they are now nearer than when they were in their physical life”

Mbiti points out in his African Religions and Philosophy, 1969, p.69.

Here, Dickson points out that “death is not conceived as putting an end to natural-self expression”. Death (*retransformation*) is the liminal stage en route to the domain of the ancestors. This stage, threshold, or the “thin layer” bonds the human community of visible and invisible. Dickson, Kwesi, “The African Theological Task,” in The Emergent Gospel, ed. by Sergio Torres et al., 1978, p.49.

And Kabasele points to the mediumistic role of the ancestors (*Jesus being the First and leading ancestor and mediator, John 10:9: Luke 10:22*) between the visible and the invisible,

“In this mediating community, the ancestors hold the first place. They are closer to the Source [*Abbra'dee*], they know us more intimately. It is their relation to the Supreme Being and to those living on earth that places them in this special intermediary

position. [*Ritual invocation:*] My father, my Ancestor, you in the region below, you with God and the earth, it is with you I speak. As for me, I see nothing, anywhere. Then receive this feather [this hen], and bear it to the Being [God] whom you know, take it to him ..."

Kabasele, Francois, "Christ as Acestor and Elder Brother," in Faces of Jesus in Africa, ed. by Robert J. Schreiter, 1992, pp.123-124.

Also Beattie, John and John Middleton, (eds.) Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa, 1969, and Laye, C., The Dark Child: The Autobiography of an African Boy, 1978.

(q) de Heusch, Luc, The Drunken King: The Origin of the State, translated. by Roy Willis, 1982.

(r) Wan-Tatah points out that *religion and politics are not separate*. That is, for the traditional African wholeness of living means that everything is tied to everything else and functions connected to both visible and invisible combined.

Wan-Tatah, Victor, Emancipation in African Theology, 1986, p.24.

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[ii] Singleton, Michael, "Spirits and Spiritual Direction: The Pastoral Counselling of the Possessed," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978.

(iii) Sawyerr, Harry, "Living and Dead in Fellowship with God," in African Christian Spirituality, ed. by Aylward Shorter, 1980.

(iv) Shorter, Aylward, "A World of the Spirit," in African Christian Spirituality, ed. by Aylward Shorter, 1980.

(v) Barrett, D.B., points out that *African independent churches'* oral theology is a result of "massive and largely unconscious attempt to synthesise the apostolic *kerygma* with authentic African insight, based on biblical criteria from vernacular translations of the scriptures." Barrett., Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary African Movements, 1968, p.278.

(vi) Mbiti, John, "Eschatology," in Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, ed. by Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1969.

(t) See N221

2. (a) Ayim-Aboagye, Desmond, The Function of Myth in Akan Healing Experience: A Psychological Inquiry into Two Traditional Akan Healing Communities, Uppsala, Sweden: Dept. of Theology, Uppsala University, 1993.
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- (d) Kirk, G.S., Myth: Its Meaning and Function, 1971.
- (e) Koech, Kipng'eno, "African Mythology: A Key to Understanding African Religion," in African Religions: A Symposium, ed. by Newell Booth, 1977.
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- (h) Mveng, E., "Black African Art as Cosmic Liturgy and Religious Language," in African Theology en Route, ed. by Kofi Appiah-Kubi et al., 1979.
- (i) Nafoba, Michael Y., [i] Symbolism in African Traditional Religion, 1994.
- [ii] Religious Communication: A Study in African Traditional Religion, 1994.
- (j) Parrinder, G., African Mythology, 1967.
- (k) Ray, B., African Religions: Symbol, Ritual and Community, 1976, p.116.
- (l) Roheim, Geza, The Eternal Ones of the Dream: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Australian Myth and Ritual, 1971.
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- (o) Willett, Frank, African Art, 1977.
- (p) Wilson, Monica, Communal Rituals of the Nyakyusa, 1959.

(q) Corte, Nicolas, The Origin of Man, New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961.

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- (c) Geertz, Clifford, Religion as a Cultural System, ed. by Michael Banton, 1968.
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- (e) Grebe, Karl, African Traditional Religion and Christian Counselling, 1995.
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- (g) Dickson, Kwesi et al. (eds.), Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, 1969.
- (h) Ray, B., African Religions: Symbol, Ritual, and Community, 1976, p.116.
- (i) Mbiti, John, Concepts of God in Africa, 1979.
- (j) Mbiti, John, "God, Sin, and Salvation in African Religion," in The A.M.E. Quarterly Review 99, 4(January, 1985): 2-8.
- (k) Mbiti, John, "The Ways and Means of Communicating the Gospel," in Christianity in Tropical Africa, ed. by C.G. Baeta, 1968.
- (l) Mbuy, Tatah H., African Traditional Religion as Anonymous Christianity: The Case of the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields, 1994.
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- (n) Morley, Peter and Roy Willis, Culture and Curing: Anthropological Perspective on Traditional Medical Beliefs and Practices, 1978.
- (o) Michael Y Nabofa writes
"There is a thin layer which prevents us from seeing [the invisible]. The spiritual beings ... see us, and interact with us but they are not visible to ordinary eyes [see N208 in body text],"
"Erhi and Eschatology," in Traditional Religion in West Africa, ed. by E.A. Ade Adegbola, 1983, p.307.
- (p) Obeng, E.A., "Inroads of African Religion into Christianity: The Case of Spiritual Churches," Africa Theological Journal 16, 1 (1987): 43-52.
- (q) Oduyoye, Mercy A., Hearing and Knowing, 1986.
- (r) Ogot, Bethwell A., "On the Making of a Sanctuary: Some Thoughts on the History of Religion in Padhola," in The Historical Study of African Religion, ed. by T.O. Ranger et al., 1976.
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- (w) Sanneh, Lamin, "Reciprocal Influences: African Traditional Religions and Christianity," in Third World Liberation Theologies: A Reader, ed. by Deane William Ferm, 1986.
4. (a) [i] Tempels, P., Bantu Philosophy, 1959, pp.68-70, 30, 117.
[ii] Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience, 1961, pp.24, 171-218.
[iii] Achehe, Chinua, Things Fall Apart, 1984 [1958], p.146.
[v] See N199 on the act of sharing as a communal-spiritual dimension. For the traditional Amaa, sharing initiates, bonds, and maintains communal cohesion. In the act of sharing, the traditional Amaa (or similar African) community celebrates its corporateness. Here Achebe [iii] writes,
"...Okonkwo's uncle...prayed to the ancestors ... 'to have more kinsmen. [see N210]'"
[vi] Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relation, 1989, p.305.

[vii] Ray, B., African Religions: Symbols, Ritual, and Community, 1976, p.215.

[viii] Kabasele, Francois "Christ as Ancestor and Elder Brother," in Faces of Jesus in Africa, ed. by R. J. Schreiter, 1992, pp.123-124 (see N206[b] for text quote).

(b) Here, Malinowski points to the function of myth in traditional societies as follows,

"... myth is ... a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality, told in satisfaction of deep religious wants, moral cravings, social submissions, assertions, even practical requirements. Myth fulfills in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Myth is ... a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom."

Malinowski, B., Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays, 1954, p.101.

(c).[i] Achebe, Chinua, Things Fall Apart, 1984[1958], pp.146, 190.

[ii] Achebe, Chinua, The Arrow of God, intro. by K.W.J.Post, 1969, p.220.

(d) Forson, Mathias K., Split-Level Christianity in Africa: A Study of the Persistence of Traditional Religious Beliefs and Practices among the Akan Methodists of Ghana, 1994.

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(f) Magesa, Laurenti, "African Culture and Spontaneous Prayer," in African Christian Spirituality, ed. by Aylward Shorter, 1980.

(g) Ma Mpolo, Msamba, "Symbols and Stories in Pastoral Care and Counselling: The African Context," in Bulletin of African Theology 6, 11 (January-June 1984):39-56.

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5. (a) Satiloane, Gabriel, "How the Traditional World-view Persists in the Christianity of the Sotho-Tswana," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, p.404.

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(c) Barrett, Leonard, "African Religion in the Americas: The Islands in Between," in African Religions: A Symposium, ed. by Newell Booth, 1977.

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- (h) [i] Eliade, Mircea, The Sacred and the Profane, 1959, pp.188.
- [ii] Eliade, Mircea, The Myth of the Eternal Return, 1955, pp.85-86, 88-89,107-112, 124.

The traditional Amaa enactment of the ritual paradoxes is an acknowledgement of the relationship between the sacred and the profane; hence, the *presence of the chaos and order side by side* and that creation of harmony requires ritual remedies. According to V. Turner and Evans-Pritchard,* ritual participants overturn the structures that govern the normal social experience; the *liminal* stages of ritual permit the free play of *communitas*, a sense of equality unrestricted by taboos and divisions of the social strata and demands of mundane daily life. They behave disorderly in the context of ritual *liminality*. It is the disorder that the ritual allows in the process of transforming the identities and consciousness of the participants. It is an acknowledgement for chaos as an enhancing factor for order.

* Turner, Victor W., "Liminality and Communitas," chap. 3 in The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure, 1989.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E., The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and Other Essays in Social Anthropology, 1965.

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- (m) Horton, Robin, Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West, 1994, pp.164-185, 197, 258.
- (n) Idowu, Bolaji, Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief, 1962.
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- 6. (a).Sawyers, Hary, God: Ancestor or Creator?, 1970.
- (b)Dymond, G.W., "The Idea of God in Ovamboland, South-West Africa [now Namibia]", in African Ideas of God: A Symposium, ed. by E.W. Smith, 1950. p.141.
- (c) See N210 and N211.
- (d) Geertz, Clifford, Local Knowledge, 1983.
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- (d) Hastings, Adrian, "On African Theology," in Scottish Journal of Theology Vol.37., No.3 (1984), pp.459-474.
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- (g) Oshun, C.O., "Aladura Revivals in a Colonial Situation: A Conflict Model in Mission," in African Church Historiography: An Ecumenical Perspective, ed. by Ogbu Kalu, 1988.
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7. (a) [i] Malinowski writes,

"Myth as it exists in a community ... in its primitive form, is not merely a story told but reality lived. It is not of the nature of fiction, such as we read today in a novel, but it is a living reality, believed to have once happened in primeval times, and continuing ever since to influence the world and human destinies. This myth is to the [traditional] what, to a fully believing Christian, is the Biblical story of Creation, of the Fall, of the Redemption by Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross. As our sacred story lives in our ritual, in our morality, as governs our faith and controls our conduct, even so does his myth for the [traditional]."

Malinowski, B., Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays, 1954, p.100.

[ii] Eliade writes,

"... among all the forms of becoming, historical becoming too is saturated with being. From the point of view of eternal repetition, historical events are transformed into categories and thus regain the ontological order they possessed in the horizon of archaic spirituality."

Eliade, M., The Myth of the Eternal Return, trans. by W.R. Trask, 1955, p.123.

(b) Aylward Shorter requests the scholars of traditional African religion not "to ignore original insights" while proclaiming the "obvious as being uniquely African", in Christianity in Independent Africa, 1978, p.537.

(c) Thomas, George, "Kimbanguism: Authentically African, Authentically Christian," in African Religions: A Symposium, ed. by Newell Booth, 1977, p.276.

Kimbanguism, in the Congo and the Dem. Rep. of Congo (formerly Zaire), is based on the BaKongo Bantu traditions combined with traditions of the early Christian Church. Thomas explains the term *Kimbangu*, the prophet, in practice as a term relevant to both Christian and *Bakongo*.

Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.

(d) Appiah-Kubi, Kofi, "Indigenous African Christian Churches: Sign of Authenticity," in African Theology en Route, ed. by Kofi Appiah-Kubi et. al, 1979.

(e) Babalola, E.O. "African Traditional Religion and Culture in Crisis: The Question of Nomenclature," in Principles of Traditional African Art, ed. by Moyo Okediji, 1992.

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- (x) Zuesse, Evan, Ritual Cosmos: Sanctification of Life in African Religions, 1979.

8

(a) J.V. Taylor quotes,

"... God spoke from the thorn bush to teach you that there is no place where the Shekinah is not, not even in a thorn bush."

C.G. Montefiore and H. Lowe, A Rabbinic Anthology, Macmillan, 1938, p.13, quoted in John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.194.

(b) Bolaji Idowu restates the same as in (a)

"We maintain, therefore, that God cannot be confined in any way. His realm is the universe,"

in Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, ed. by Kwesi Dickson et al., 1969, p.20.

This parallels the traditional African view and experience of nature as inseparable from his being, for the Supreme is identified and at work in it. In chapter three traditional Amaa see the Supreme Being (*Abbra'dee*) in their environment and the natural phenomena in general, i.e. mountains, forests, etc. are places of encounter with ancestors and with *Abbra'dee*. They invoke *Abbra'dee* through the ancestors that they may grant the material and spiritual goods needed for social well-being and equilibrium. In these places the traditionalist meet also the living and the living-dead members of a family (see chart).

Parallel similarities in festivals and observance of sacred times: the obvious ones include (a) *festival of the first fruits*, (b) *spring festival of the unleavened bread*, and (c) *the feast of ingathering* respectively parallel to the Amaa (a) rite of *spirit of coolness* (*leeh'koh'shill*) upon the return of cattle from distant camps in February-March, (b) the *rite of tasting vegetables* (*konying'arr*) in September before people start eating, and (c) the *annual harvest festival* (*ko'wringo woe'dayh'dah*) in April-May.

"...things repeat themselves for ever and nothing new happens under the sun. But this repetition has a meaning, ...: it alone confers a reality upon events; events repeat themselves because they imitate an archetype- exemplary event,"

writes Mircea Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return, 1955, p.90.

See the Old Testament: Exodus 23:14-17, 34:18-23; Deut. 16:1-16; Leviticus 23.

There are **differences**, as Aylward Shorter points out, since

"We do find not ... in the Bible the same vital relationship between the living and the ancestral intermediaries that we find in [traditional Africa]",

and **parallel similarities**

"In the Bible we find institutions and values comparable to those of the traditional Africa, values of family, vital values, hospitality, the corporate personality and ..."

in Christianity in Independent Africa, 1978, pp.535-537.

(c) Kibicho, Samuel G., "The Continuity of the African Conception of God into and through Christianity: A Kikuyu Case Study," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke, et. al., 1978. Kibicho observes that the Kikuyu

"... conception of God continues to the present day even into and through Christianity. It is still the basic conception of God for all Kikuyu believers, including Christians (radical continuity [independent churches])." (p.373)

(d) Bosch, David, "God Through African Eyes," in Relevant Theology for Africa, edited by Hans-Jurgen Becken, 1973.

(e) Schreier, Robert. J. (ed.), Faces of Jesus in Africa, 1992, pp.117-118.

(f) [i] **Malachi 1:11** and [ii] **The First Council of Jerusalem, Acts 15;**
The Holy Bible, KJV, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Bible Publishers.

These two references are examples from many biblical references that point to transparticularity of the message of Christ and, hence, theological continuities.

(g) Sidbe Sempore appreciates the credibility of the Christian Message and meaningful theology only in terms of indigenous religious, cultural, and social analyses and application. He writes,

"But it [Message] will have to become incarnate, live the life of our flesh and our blood, feed on our concepts, conform to our ways of thought. *In this sense theology, like Faith, must Africanize itself, take up residence among us, share our preoccupations, our questionings, our destiny.*" (all italics mine)

Sempore, Sidbe, "Conditions of Theological Service in Africa: Preliminary Reflections," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, p.519.

(h) Mosothoane, E.K., "The Message of the New Testament Seen in African Perspective," in Relevant Theology for Africa, ed. by Hans-Jurgen Becken, 1973.

(i) Barrett, D.B., "Church Growth and Independency as Organic Phenomena: An Analysis of Two Hundred African Tribes," in Christianity in Tropical Africa: Studies Presented and Discussed at the Seventh International African Seminar, University of Ghana, April 1965, ed. by C.G. Baeta, 1968.

(j) Peel, B., Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba, 1968.

(k) Mbiti, John, "The Encounter of Christian Faith and African Religion," in Third World Liberation Theologies, ed. by Dean Fern, 1986.

9. Kato, Byang, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, 1973, p.181

10. Bradley, F.H., Appearance and Reality, 1930

11. (a) de Rosny, Eric, Healers in the Night, 1985.

(b) Turner, V.W., The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 198

(c) Douglas, Mary, "Lele of Kasai," in African Worlds: Studies in Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples, ed. by Daryll Forde, 1976

12. (a) Bascom, William, Ifa Divination: Communication Between God and Men in West Africa, 1969.

(b) James, Wendy, The Listening Ebony, Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power Among the Uduk of Sudan, 1988.

(c) Fashole-Luke, "Ancestor Veneration and Communion of Saints," in New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World: Essays in Honor of Harry Sawyerr, ed. by Mark Glaswell et. al., 1974.

- (d) Beattie, John, "Divination in Bunyoro, Uganda," in Magic, Witchcraft, and Curing, ed. by John Middleton, 1967.
- (e) Beattie, John, "Spirit Mediumship in Bunyoro," In Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa, ed. by John Beattie and John Middleton, 1969.
- (f) Beattie, John and John Middleton (editors), Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa, 1969.
13. Diop, Birago quoted in J.V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160, quoting Janheinz Jan, Muntu, p.108, from Hostice Noires, ed. Senghor 1949, p.144.
14. (a) Thorpe, S.A., Shamans, Medicine Men and Traditional Healers: A Comparative Study of Shamanism in Siberian Asia, Southern Africa and North America, 1993.
- (b) Turner, Victor W., Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society, 1974.
15. (a) Radin, Paul, Primitive Man as Philosopher, 1957.
- (b) James, E.O., The Nature and Function of Priesthood, 1955.
- (c) Kirwen, Michael, The Missionary and the Diviner, 1988.
16. (a) Schreier, Robert J., ed., Faces of Jesus in Africa, 1992, pp.117-118.
- (b) Schoffeleers, J.M., "Christ in African Folk Theology : The Nganga Paradigm," in Religion in Africa: Experience and Expression, ed. by Thomas D. Blakely, Walter E.A Van Beek et al., 1994.
- (c) Sawyerr, Harry, "Jesus Christ-Universal Brother," in African Christian Spirituality, ed. by Aylward Shorter, 1980.
17. (a) Mbiti, John, "The Encounter of Christian Faith and African," in Third World Liberation Theologies, ed. by Dean Fern, 1986.
- (b) Mbiti, John, African Religions and Philosophy, 1970.
- (c) Mbiti, John, Concepts of God in Africa, 1979.
18. dowu, Bolaji, "God," in Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, ed. by Kwesi Dickson et al., 1969.
19. See N9.
20. Apoku, Kofi A., "Changes within Christianity: the Case of the Musama Disco Christo Church," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, p.111.
21. Here are some references on divination which are relevant to Old Testament, New Testament, and African Religion: :
- (a) Burrige, K., New Heaven New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities, 1969, pp.150-160.
- (b) Oppenheim, A.Leo (i) Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization, revised by Erica Reiner, 1964, pp.200-207.
- (ii) The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East, 1956.
- Dreams and visions are **direct**. Hence, both **direct** and **indirect** are intrinsic to the process of communication with the Divine regardless of the method or means.
- (c) Peek, Philip M. (ed.), African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing, 1991, p.3. Peek holds that African divination systems involve "Logical-analytical" and "intuitive-synthetical" ways of thinking.
- (d) Bascom, William, Ifa Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa, 1969.

Bascom undertakes a detailed study on divination and the role of the priest diviner, whom the Amaa call *Kuunee*, the spirit-priest.

(e) John Beattie and John Middleton, editors, Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa, 1969, pp.50-57,225.

(f) Turner, V.W., (i) Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual, 1975.

(ii) Turner, Victor W., "Muchona the Hornet, Interpreter of Religion," chapter 6 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.

(g) Mendonsa, Eugene L., The Politics of Divination: A Processual View of Reactions to Illness and Deviance among the Sisala of Northern Ghana, 1982, pp.135, 162, 188.

(h) Landy, David, "Divination and Diagnosis as a Sociocultural Process," chapter 5 in Culture, Disease, and Healing: Studies in Medical Anthropology, ed. by David Landy, 1977.

(i) Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande, abridged with an introduction by Eva Gillies, 1983.

(k) Etuk, U, "New Trends in Traditional Divination," In Africa Theological Journal 13,2 (1984) pp.83-91.

22. Kibongi, Buana R., "Priesthood," in Biblical Revelation in African Beliefs, ed. by Kwesi Dickson et al., 1969.
23. Sawyerr, Harry, "African Concept of Death," in A New Look at Christianity in Africa, 1972.
24. Sawyerr, Harry, "Living and Dead in Fellowship with God," in African Christian Spirituality, ed. by Aylward Shorter, 1980
25. (a) Fashole-Luke, Edward, "Ancestor Veneration and the Communion of Saints," in New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World: Essays in Honor of Harry Sawyerr, ed. by Mark Glasswell et al., 1974.
(b) James, W., The Listening Ebony, Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power Among the Uduk of Sudan, 1988.
26. Taylor, John V, The Primal Vision: Christian Presence Amid African Religion, 1963.
27. Tempels, Placide, Bantu Philosophy, 1959.
28. Mulago, Vincent, "Vital Participation: The Cohesive Principle of Bantu Community," in Biblical Revelation in African Beliefs, ed. by Kwesi Dickson et. al., 1969.
29. Parrinder, Geoffrey, African Traditional Religion, 1976.
30. See N9.
31. Ezeanya, Stephen, "God, Spirits and the Spirit World," in Biblical Revelation and African Belief, ed. by Kwesi Dickson et al., 1969.
32. Ancestors , as progenitors and founders, are present in all types of ritual. Therefore, marriage without ancestral involvement is invalid as M.Y. Nafoba writes.

"There is no marriage in Urhobo that is regarded as properly contracted without offering of drinks to the ancestors."

"Erhi and Eschatology," in Traditional Religion in West Africa, edited by E.A. Ade Adegbola, 1983, pp.313-314.
33. Sites of ritual significance refer to ancestors and lineage founders associated with mythologies that carry oral history, like the ritual village (**chap.7**) and *Mount Nyema* (**Chap.2**)of the Amaa

people. See the map attached for the location of the ritual village where a tribal war between the Amaa and Gholfan tribes took place, and also *Mount Nyema*, named after the Amaa mythological mother *Nyema*, where she delivered her first spirit-son *Sheila*. So mythologies and old sites interconnect in constituting “a true history of what came to pass at the beginning”, as Mircea Eliade (1960) would convince us in concurrence with Nicolas Corte’s statement that

"Myth is thus a representation of Reality, which though fantastic, claims to be accurate ... It is a symbol which reveals certain aspects of reality, the deepest aspects which defy any other means of knowledge".

The Origins of Man, 1961, pp.11-12.

34. See N13.
35. Taylor’s (1963:67) metaphor of a circle is prevalent in physical structures (**figs.3 and 1**), pottery, various socialisation and economic activities, with the expected presence of the invisible participant members.
36. Sawyerr, Harry, “Living and Dead in Fellowship with God,” in African Spirituality, ed. by Aylward Shorter, 1980.
37. *ibid*
38. Turner, Edith with W. Blodgett, S. Kahona, and Fideli Benwa, Experiencing Ritual: An Interpretation of African Healing, 1986, pp.159-177.
39. See N13.
40. Turner, V.W., “Planes of Classification,” chapter 1 in The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure, 1989.
41. See N10.
42. Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.
43. Things of nature refer to the multiple manifestations of the Spirit in both animate and inanimate forms. These manifestations are an integral part of the human community. It is from these manifestations that African traditionalists choose or are spirit-chosen in *totemic-totemistic* relationships; that is, an indirect relationship with the Supreme Being.
44. African traditionalists perform their religion.
45. (i) Ayandele, E.A.: “Address by Professor E.A. Ayandele, Principal, University of Ibandan, Jos campus, on Sunday, 31 August, 1975,” in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, pp.611-612
Ayandele states,

“Indeed, for those who care to investigate, African traditional religion remains as an instinctive part of most African[s] professors of Christianity.” (pp.611-612).

(ii) Ayandele does not realise that traditional African religion (as an essential mode of revelation) facilitates Africans’ acceptance of the Christian gospel. Thus, Christianity and traditional African religions are not adversaries.

46. Elders, ritual elders, and spirit-priests sit in circles of groups after the formal ritual ceremonies to socialise. They discuss issues of their respective communities.
47. Each month is named after the climatic conditions and/or economic, ritual, and social activities of the traditional Amaa.
48. See N42.
49. (a) Achebe, Chinua, Arrow of God, introduction by K.W.J. Post, 1969, p.220.
(b) Achebe, Chinua, Things Fall Apart, 1984[1958].
50. Zuesse, Evan, Ritual Cosmos: The Sanctification of Life in African Religions, 1979, p.81.
51. See N42.
52. Spirit (capital S) refers to God, for whom ancestors act as messengers and mediums.
53. T.M. Michailov writes on the term 'Shaman' as follows:
 "The history of this term and concept has gone through an evolution, which must not be ignored..... it comes from the Tungus-Manchurian word *shaman* [*saman*], denoting "frenzied," "enraptured." The first scholars of the eighteenth century understood shamanism as the religion of the people of Siberia, in which officiants of the cult were known as shamans, while the term encompassed all religious views and rituals implicated in shamanic activity."
- Michailov, T.M.: "Buryat Shamanism[:] History, Structure, and Social Functions," in Soviet Anthropology and Archaeology, Fall 1989/ Vol.28, No.2, Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1989, p.17.
54. According to E. B. Tylor's interpretation of the term
 "Animism ... includes the belief in souls and in a future state, in controlling deities and subordinate spirits, these doctrines practically resulting in some kind of active worship."
 Quoted in Idowu, African Traditional Religion, 1973, p.128. Tylor's idea of ancestor-worship is implicit in this quotation. But Herbert Spencer's is a sweeping conclusion that
 "Using the phrase ancestor-worship in its broadest sense as comprehending all worship of the dead, be they of the same blood or not, we reach the conclusion that ancestor-worship is the root of every religion."
 Quoted in Idowu, African Traditional Religion, 1973, p.178. In terms of the traditional African, ancestors are venerated and not worshipped.
55. Malinowski, B., Magic, Science and Religion, (Anchor Books Edition), 1954.
56. Geertz, Clifford, Local Knowledge, 1983, pp.56-58.
57. *ibid.*
58. (a) *ibid.*, p.149.
(b) Kenyatta, Jomo, Facing Mount Kenya, introduction by B. Malinowski, 1965, p.257.
59. *ibid.*
60. *ibid.*, p.150.
61. Turner, V.W., "Symbols in Ndembu Ritual," chapter 1 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989, p.90

62. Faris, James, Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, p.310.
63. Geertz, Clifford, Local Knowledge, 1983, pp.19, 57-58.
64. *ibid.*
65. Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, p.305.
66. *ibid.*, p.310.
67. Smith. E.W., "The Whole Subject in Perspective: An Introductory Perspective," in African Ideas of God : A Symposium, ed. by E.W. Smith, 1950, p.8.
68. *ibid.*
69. Appiah-Kubi, Kofi, "The Akan Concept of Human Personality," in Traditional Religion in West Africa, ed. by E.A. Ade Adegbola, 1983.
70. Mbiti, John, "The Biblical Basis for Trends in African Theology," in African Theology en Route, ed. by Kofi Appiah-Kubi et al., 1979.
71. Kato, Byang, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, 1973.
72. See N67.
73. *ibid.*
74. Danquah, J.B., The Akan Doctrine of God, 1966.
75. *ibid.*
76. Turner, Victor W., The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure, 1989, p.153.
77. Achebe, Chinua, Things Fall Apart, 1984[1958].
78. Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, pp.255-256.
79. Koech, Kipng'eno, "African Mythology: A Key to Understanding African Religion," in African Religions: A Symposium, ed. by Newell Booth, 1977.
80. Kenyatta, Jomo, Facing Mount Kenya, introduction by B. Malinowski, 1965.
81. See N86.
82. *ibid.*
83. See N87.
84. *ibid.*
85. *ibid.*
86. *ibid.*
87. Kenyatta, Jomo, Facing Mount Kenya, introduction by B. Malinowski, 1965. p.46
88. Turner, V.W., The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.
89. *ibid*, p.19.
90. See N80.
91. *ibid.*
92. See N88.

93. de Heusch, Luc, Sacrifice in Africa: A Structural Approach, transl. by Linda O'Brien and Alice Morton, 1985, p.8.
94. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956.
95. See N93.
96. (a) Opoku, Kofi A., "Changes within Christianity: the Case of the Musama Disco Christo Church," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, p.111. Opoku describes the persistent tendency of the historical church, though administered by Africans, to maintain itself in the Hellenistic-Hebraic veneer.
- (b). Milingo, E., The World in Between: Christian Healing and the Struggle for Spiritual Survival, ed. by Mona Macmillan, Maryknoll, 1984, pp.136-140.
- (c) Kibicho, Samuel G., "The Continuity of the African Conception of God into and through Christianity: a Kikuyu Case-study," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, p.373.
97. de Heusch, Luc, Sacrifice in Africa: A Structural Approach, translated by Linda O'Brien and Alice Morton, 1985.
98. See N80.
99. *ibid.*
100. The master of the fishing spear for the Dinka spirit-priest is a reference to that mythological character Gee, whom the Dinka regard as the first Dinka ancestor. Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, 1961. p.184.
101. *ibid*, p.206.
102. *ibid*, pp.171-208.
103. *ibid*.
104. *ibid*.
105. *ibid*.
106. *ibid*.
107. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956. Evans-Pritchard reports that the Nuer regarded killing animals without ritual cause as anti-social behaviour to kill animals for meat.
108. G. Lienhardt reports that the ox is a symbol of unity in the Dinka social structure. Every part of the ox is designated to a segment when the ox is ritually sacrificed. See Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, 1961, pp.24, 171-218.
109. *ibid*.
110. (a) Davidson, J., "The Doctrine of God in the Life of the Ngombe, Belgian Congo [now Congo]," in The African Ideas of God: A Symposium, ed. by E.W. Smith, 1950, p.177.
- (b) Douglas, Mary, "The Lele of Kasai," In African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples, ed. by Daryll Forde, 1976.
- (c) Turner, Victor W., "Ritual Symbolism, Morality, and Social Structure among the Ndembu," chap. 2 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.
111. Davidson, J., "The Doctrine of God in the Life of the Ngombe, Belgian Congo [now Congo and Dem. Rep. of Congo]," in African Ideas of God: A Symposium, ed. by E.W. Smith, 1950, p.177.
112. Tempels, Placide, Bantu Philosophy, 1959.
113. *ibid*, p.30

114. *ibid.*, p.117.
 115. *ibid*
 116. *ibid.*, p.30.
 117. See N164.
 118. Eliade, Mircea, The Sacred and the Profane, 1959, p.188.
 119. See N88.
 120. de Rosney, Eric, Healers in the Night, translated by Robert R. Barr, 1985.
 121. Turner, Edith, "A Visible Spirit Form in Zambia," in Being Changed by Cross-Cultural Encounters, ed. by David E. Young and Jean G. Goulet, 1994.
 122. Geertz, Clifford, The Interpretation of Cultures, 1973.
 123. Horton, Robin, Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West, 1993, pp.197-258, 301-346.
 124. Westermann, Dietrich, Africa and Christianity, 1937, p.94.
 125. Dussel, Enrique, Liberation Philosophy, 1985, pp.53, 90.
 126. (a) Horton, Robin, Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West, 1993, p.197.
 (b). Horton, R., "African Traditional Thought and Western Science," in Africa 37, 1-2 (1967), pp.50-71. **The quotation in the body text is quoted from p.69.**

Horton echoes methodological argument of insider versus outsider understanding in (c) Geertz, who writes that

"The formulations have been various: "inside" versus "outside," or "first person" versus "third person" descriptions; But ... to put the matter is in terms of a distinction formulated,... by the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut, between what he calls "experience-near" and "experience-distant" concepts."

Geertz, C., Local Knowledge, 1983, pp.56-57.

127. (a) Geertz, Clifford, Local Knowledge, 1983., p.149.
 (b) Kenyatta, Jomo, Facing Mount Kenya, introduction by B. Malinowski, 1965, p.257.
 128. Ayandele, E.A.: "Address by Professor E.A. Ayandele, Principal, University of Ibandan, Jos campus, on Sunday, 31 August, 1975," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, pp.611-612.
 Ayandele states,

"Scratch the African pastor and you would discover that he has greater faith in charms and amulets he wears superstitiously and in the [spirit-priest] to whom he pays nocturnal visits ...; scratch the Christian medical doctor and you would discover that he pays greater attention to the diviner and the psychical fears instilled by his village *milieu* than his scalpel and the white man's tablets; scratch the prominent layman politician and you discover that his public bold face and animal courage are against the background of his secret endless grovelling before masters of supernatural forces in traditional society." (pp.611-612).

Ayandele does not realize that traditional African religion (as an essential mode of revelation) facilitates Africans' acceptance of the Christian gospel. So Christianity and African religion are not adversaries.

129. Kibicho, Samuel G., "The Continuity of the African Conception of God into and through Christianity: a Kikuyu Case-study," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, p.373.
130. Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963 p.135.
131. Turner, V.W., The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.
132. *ibid*, p.19.
133. *ibid*, p.26.
134. *ibid*, p.11.
- 135 (a) Turner, V.W., The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989, p.50.
 (b) Hobsbawm, Eric and T. Ranger (ed.), The Invention of Tradition, 1983, p.221.
136. Turner, V.W., The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989, p.55.
137. *ibid*.
- 138 ***Baa'dang***: the Amaa sacred (or fertility) pot with the stringed-beads in the house shrine. ***Baa'dang*** symbolizes also the spirit and the fecund bowels of the earth.
139. Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160.
140. *Ibid*, p.67.
141. Turner, V.W., The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989, p.28.
142. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956, pp.28-105.
143. Evans-Pritchard (Nuer Religion, 1956), Lienhardt (Divinity and Experience, 1961) concur with Victor Turner (The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989) on the ***potpourri nature*** of a symbol in that the Supreme Being exposes ***Itself*** in multiple ways as noted by Charles Leslie (Anthropology of Folk Religions, 1960).
144. (a) Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956, p.116.
 (b) Eliade, Mircea, Myth of the Eternal Return, trans. from the French by Willard R. Trask, 1955, pp.12-17.
145. Turner, V.W., "Muchona the Hornet, Interpreter of Religion," chapter 6 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.
146. Mbiti, J., African Religions and Philosophy, 1969, p.69. (see quote in N1(p)[v])
147. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956. The leopard-skin priest (*kuwar*) is a spirit-priest. Evans-Pritchard explains the essential involvement of "*kwoth*" (Spirit) (see chart) in Nuer life. "*Kwoth*" is involved, through its "refractions" (manifestations) as spirits of many categories, in the spiritual hierarchy (see chart).
148. Nadel, S.F., "A Study of Shamanism in the Nuba Mountains," in The Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute 76, 1945-1946, p.31.
149. The name ***Abe'dee*** (ancestral divining spirit) is also applied to the insect wasp. Traditional Amaa avoid killing nor do they tolerate nearness to this insect, for they associate it with the name of the divining ancestor. This insect, therefore, carries totem-totemistic relationship significance.
150. See No.131, p.25.

151. Diop, B.A. in J.V.Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160.
152. See No.131, pp.25-31.
153. (a) Nadel, S.F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes in Korofan, 1947, pp.43-45
 (b) Stevenson, R.C., "The Nuba Peoples of Kordofan Province: An Ethnographic Survey," unpublished Msc. (Econ.) *Thesis*, University of Khartoum, 1965, pp.150-159.
154. (a) Kronenberg, A. "Some Notes on the Nyimang Religion," in Kush 7, 197 (1957), pp.200-212.
 (b) Stevenson, R.C., "The Nyamang of the Nuba Mountains," in Sudan Notes and Records 23,75 (1940), pp.80-85.
155. (a) Stevenson, R.C., "The Nyamang of the Nuba Mountains," in Sudan Notes and Records 23,75 (1940), pp..80-85.
 (b) Kronenberg, A. "Some Notes on the Nyimang Religion," in Kush 7, 197 (1957), pp.200-207.
 It is in *Kellara* (*Kelang* or *Kelong*) that spirit-priest *Shayshayray* performs the mythological rite for *mmoonooong* and thanksgiving to ancestor *Shayshayray* and asking him to protect crops. Kronenberg failed to differentiate *Kellara* from *Tunndia* (*Ttwaa'na*) where he reports this harvest rite to take place. It is in *Kellara* that the harvest rite is performed for the whole of Amaaland. Whereas *Jalle* purification noisy rite (see N147 and chap. 3) begins in *Nitil* (*Ngihdill*) and spreads like a wild fire to the rest of Amaaland in the same night.
156. Nadel, S.F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes of Kordofan, 1947, p.452.
- * *Sheila* , the founding ancestor was a miracle worker. He had supernatural powers and traditional Amaa believe he wore an invisible ring "*ttoom*" which he passed on to his decendent heirs
157. See No.130.
158. See No. 132.
159. Zuesse, Evan, Ritual Cosmos: The Sanctification of Life in African Religions, 1979.
160. Kronenberg, A. "Some Notes on the Nyimang Religion," in Kush 7, 1957, p.197.
161. Pigs were banned in 1956, immediately following the *Sudan flag independence!* This banning act disregarded the non-Muslims who raised pigs for traditional ritual purposes.
162. Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, 1961, p.38.
163. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956, p.177.
164. Here, The participant reason is exercised in totemic-totemistic relationships for such relations are experiential not conceptual. Through these diffused relationships and interaction with the invisible, the traditionalist maintains connectedness with the ancestors and, thus, wholeness connected to *Abbra'dee*.
165. Cotton farming as a cash crop was introduced as a ploy to occupy and lure the Amaa from rebellions against the colonial rule. Hence, the beginning of the process into a cash economy.
166. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956.
167. Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, 1961.

168. Wan-Tatah, V., Emancipation in African Theology, 1986.
169. Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989.
170. Wan-Tatah, V., Emancipation in African Theology, 1986, p.24.
171. *ibid.*
As guardians of their immortality, continuity (eternity now), ancestors are integral to the traditional Amaa politics. They are agents of cohesion since they reflect in networks of relationships that link people. They overwhelm the immediate environment (local cosmos) that Diop's poem demonstrates (in J.V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160) and J.C. Faris, as "local causality", in Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, pp.304-310 (also see N1 and N4).
172. The *connectedness* of the "Unbroken Circle"
(a) J.V.Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963:67. In the same line of thought are
(b) D. Zahn, The Religion, Spirituality and Thought of Traditional Africa, 1979:81.
(c) J.C. Faris, Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989:300-305,
(d) W. James, The Listening Ebony, Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power Among the Uduk of Sudan, 1988
(e) M. Douglas, "The Lele of Kasai" in African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples, 1976, ed. by D. Forde.
173. (a) Traditionalists perform their religion in an artistic manner which is capable of representing internal relations of myths, drumming, dancing, or ritual gestures, just to mention a few. All these *connect* spiritual energies to the dynamics of experience of the participants.
(b) Koech, Kipng'eno, "African Mythology : A Key to Understanding African Religion," in African Religions : A Symposium, ed. by Newell Booth, 1977.
(c) Macdonald, James, Religion and Myth, 1969.
174. Names and sites in the oral literature and landscape of African traditional life bear history although the passage of time may cast doubt on that history. Each era or generation may add its own perspectives or interpretations that feed customs and, hence, ritual acts. As such, authenticity of customs in the traditional process is "no longer the pursuit [Ben-Amos 1984:116]" (see body text in chap. 2, footnote 34). Ben-Amos, Dan, "The Seven Strands of Traditions: Varieties in its Meaning in American Folklore Studies," in Journal of Folklore Research, 21, 2 and 3, 1984, pp.97-132.
175. Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.
176. Hawkesworth, D., "The Nuba Proper of Southern Kordofan," in Sudan Notes and Records 15, 1932-1933, pp.189-191.
177. Diop, Birago: a Malian poet, quoted in John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision; 1963, p.160, quoting Janheinz Jan, Muntu, p.108, from Hostice Noires, ed. Senghor, Paris 1949, p.144.
178. This is *leeh accoo'ree* (sacred presence) in the centre of everyday life. The ancestors overwhelm the immediate presence as Diop's (N170) poem illustrates.
179. See N166.
180. See N167.
181. Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relation, 1989 pp.310-311, 325-346.
182. See N177.

183. See N167.
184. See N159.
185. Koech, Kipng'eno, "African Mythology: A Key to Understanding African Religion." in African Religions: A Symposium, ed. by Newell Booth, 1977.
186. Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.
187. ibid, p.160.
188. Ejizu, Chris Ifeanyi, Ofo: Igbo Ritual Symbol, 1986.
189. Rattray, R.S., Ashanti, 1923, p.11.
190. See N166.
191. See N167.
192. Junod, Henri A., The Life of a South African Tribe, 2nd. ed., Vol.1, 1927.
193. (a) Turner, V.W., The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989, chapter 6.
 (b) Trurner, V.W., Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual, 1975, p.238.
 (c) Idowu, B., Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, edited by Kwesi Dickson et al., 1969, p.20.
194. See N177.
195. The idea of re-incarnation is prevalent in some African nations (tribes). Nonetheless, re-incarnation remains within the family lineage context as well as gender of the re-incarnated spirit. It is still in the ancestral ambit and continuity.
196. Turner, V.W., "Ritual Symbolism, Morality, and Social Structure among the Ndembu," chapter 2 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989, p.55.
197. See N177.
198. Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, p.305.
199. The act of sharing anything with others for the traditional Amaa people has the practical communal and spiritual dimension. Spiritual entities, as part of the human community, receive shares, too. Sharing demands clear (**cool /cold**) hearts since the partaking spirits will know the thoughts of the visible participants
200. See N177.
201. The metaphor of circle (Taylor 1963:67) has a reference to the physical structure of the African hut. Within the hut, for example, physical structures like those of the granaries, house shrine locale, earthen pots, etc. are of circular shape. As referred to above, residents of a hut gather in a circle for socialisation or meals and so on
202. The surrounding of the terminal rite is all spirit-space in the traditional Amaa view, the sense of nature, of man, of family, and of nation (tribe), which the participants must know how to appreciate and inhabit rigorously in terms of the invisible (**see fig.4**).
203. Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, p.304.

204. (a) *waa'llow nyonn'daah*: home-coming rite for the newly living-dead.
- (b) *Animism*: In his work Primitive Culture Vols.1 & 2, Edward B. Tylor presented this term in his definition of the idea of spirits, including those of human beings and living continuity after death. He supports his idea by dreams and visions that occur to a person, while asleep, when his body is actively involved somewhere else and interacts with the *living-dead*, but in forms of their previous physical existence. He concludes, then, that there is more to living beings and that "more" is summarised in the idea of spirit as the animator, which departs to continue existence when its physical body expires (Quoted in Bolaji Idowu, African Traditional Religion: A Definition, 1973, pp.128-131).
- (c) In reference to those who are dead and yet living in invisible mode, John Mbiti has coined the term "*living-dead*". He writes,
- "...The living-dead is a person who is physically dead but alive in the memory of those who knew him in his life as well as being alive in the world of the spirits. When, however, the last person who knew the departed also dies, then, the former passes out of the horizon of the *Sasa* period; and in effect he now becomes completely DEAD as far as family ties are concerned. He has sunk into the *Zamani* period."
- Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, 1969, p.25.

There is agreement in that the living-dead continue living in the spirit world. They continue living as real members among kin groups, who appreciate their protection. In return, the living offer sacrifices in acknowledgement. Therefore, the living-dead are actual entities but in a different mode of being. Against Mbiti's suggestion, the living-dead are not just memory that fades away within a duration of time. Indeed, they can be forgotten but their presence and influence in kinship structures persist; that is why a ritual officiant, like the spirit-priest, will address both the known ancestors, forefathers, and those who have become distant in memory but not in presence and influence upon living members of lineage.

My late father, a spirit-priest, in ritual situations, like healing, invoked both ancestors and the living-dead by name and as collectivity to join forces together for the benefit of the living progeny in the following context: "*You father so and so, you father so and so, we cannot call you all by name but we ask you all to come together for [purpose]*". This is not in the exact words, but it is in the context of a healing invocation since traditional Amaa do not have special formulae for invocations. A ritual situation shapes the flow of invocation according to the spirit-priest's intellect, intuition, ability to penetrate and explore the universe and decode its signals, coupled with his insightful knowledge of his society. In this respect, Mircea Eliade reminds us,

"A religious man periodically finds his way into mythical time and sacred time, re-enters the *time of origin*, the time that 'floweth not' because it does not participate in profane temporal duration, because it is composed of an *eternal present*, which is indefinitely recoverable."

M. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 1959, p.88.

It is into this "mythical time", "*the time of origin*", that is the eternal existence from which the living-dead first came as free spirits, and to which they return but as lineage members. The living-dead are integral to this eternal existence. This suggests, then, time as **circular** not **linear**. It is to circular eternal existence, where ancestral influence counts, that the spirit-priest has access to intercede for the living. Thus, death (*retransformation*) is only a traumatic "liminal [Turner 1989]" transition for the *retransformed* (recent living-dead) en route to that eternal "*time of origin*", although forgotten in temporal memory, never becomes "completely DEAD [:annihilated to nothingness]" as Mbiti (1970, p.25) contends.

205. See N177.

206. (a) "The Bantu cannot be a lone being. It is not a good enough synonym...."

Tempels, Placide, Bantu Philosophy, 1959, pp.68-70.

(b)

“Not only can the human individual not do without the community of human beings, but his or her existence itself would be devoid of all sense and meaning outside of the community ... one lives by and for the community”,

Kabasele, Francois “Christ as Ancestor and Elder Brother,” in Faces of Jesus in Africa, ed. by Robert J. Schreiter, 1992, p.123.

(c) Turner, V.W., The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989, chapter 3.

(d) Mulago, Vincint, “Vital Participation: The Cohesive Principle of Bantu Community,” in Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, ed. by Kwesi Dickson et al., 1969.

207. Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, 1961, p.156.

208. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956, p.7.

209. (a) Thomas, George, “Kimbanguism: Authentically African, Authentically Christian,” in African Religions: A Symposium, ed. by Newell Booth, 1977, p.276.

Kimbanguism, in the Congo and the Dem. Rep. of Congo (formerly Zaire), is based on the BaKongo Bantu traditions combined with traditions of the early Christian Church. Thomas explains the term *Kimbangu*, the prophet, in practice as a term relevant to both Christian and *Bakongo*.

(b) Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.

210. Achebe, Chinua, Things Fall Apart, 1984[1958], p.146.

211. See N207.

212. Turner, Victor W., “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage,” chapter 4 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.

213. Achebe, Chinua, Things Fall Apart, 1984[1958], p.190.

214. Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relation, 1989, p.305.

215. *ibid.*

216. Achebe, Chinua, Things Fall Apart, 1984[1958].

217. Turner, Victor W., Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual, 1975.

218. Junod, A. Henri, The Life of a South African Tribe, 2nd. Vol.1, 1927, pp.56-58.

219. Eliade, Mircea, The Sacred and the Profane, translated from French by Willard R. Trask, 1959, pp.130-131.

220. *waa'llow nyonn'daah*: home-coming rite for the newly living-dead.

221. (a) Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience, 1961, pp.24-26,171-218.

(b) Traditional Amaa symbols and acts of Eternity Now, synonym of the “Unbroken Circle” (continuity: immortality), are demonstrated in various ways. Here we venture to mention some:

[i] Levirate marriage is an applied *metonym of continuum* between the living and the living-dead (the visible and the invisible).

[ii] The rite of homecoming, a *re-incorporating* act for the newly living-dead into the community of the living family. Hence, in his/her invisible mode of being, the living-dead continues life among his/her visible kinsmen and with rights and duties to be observed (see **fig. 6**, for instance) like initiation rites, property ownership, and so on as in N[iii].

[iii] The rite of initiation of a living-dead father into fatherhood status is a structural-functional dimension of *eternity now* continuum. It likewise has effective impacts on life stages of the living progeny, i.e. circumcision, marriage, age-grading (see **chapters 5-7**), and so on that the traditional Amaa generically call *saamoorr'doo tany'nya'rayh* (rituals-rites celebration). **Fig. 4**, for instance, exhibits the idea of the *terminal rite*, the last structural rite and thanksgiving of a traditional Amaa family father as his *retransformation* (death) approaches. In this regard, Achebe states

“A man’s life from birth to death [is] a series of transition rites which [bring] him nearer and nearer to his ancestors”.

Achebe, C, Things Fall Apart, 1984[1958], p.190.

In sum, the traditional Amaa, as *empiricists*, combine the facts and thoughts of their belief in rites and ritual actions. This state, giving a *unique experiential particularity*, therefore, justifies the *persistence of ritual sacrifice* in the progress of the traditional Amaa (and similar African) life affairs. Thus, eternity now is maintained.

222. See N179.

223. The master of the fishing spear for the Dinka spirit-priest is a reference to that mythological character *Gee*, whom the Dinka regard as the first Dinka ancestor. Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, 1961.

224. Tempels, Placide, Bantu Philosophy, 1959, pp.26-27.

225. (a) Turner, Edith, “A Visible Spirit Form in Zambia,” in Being Changed by Cross Cultural Encounter, ed. by David E. Young and Jean G. Goulet, 1994, pp.78-79.

(b) Turner, Victor W., “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage,” chapter 4 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.

(c) M. Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, 1959, p.88.

(d) Nadel, S.F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes of Kordofan, 1947, p.452.

(e) Kibongi, Buana R., “Priesthood,” in Biblical Revelation in African Beliefs, ed. by Kwesi Dickson et al., 1969.

(f) Landy, David, “Divination and Diagnosis as a Sociocultural Process,” chapter 5 in Culture, Disease, and Healing: Studies in Medical Anthropology, ed. by David Landy, 1977.

(g) Radin, Paul, Primitive Man as Philosopher, 1957.

(h) James, E.O., The Nature and Function of Priesthood, 1955.

(i) Kirwen, Michael, The Missionary and the Diviner, 1988.

(j) Turner, V.W., “Muchona the Hornet, Interpreter of Religion,” chap. 6 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.

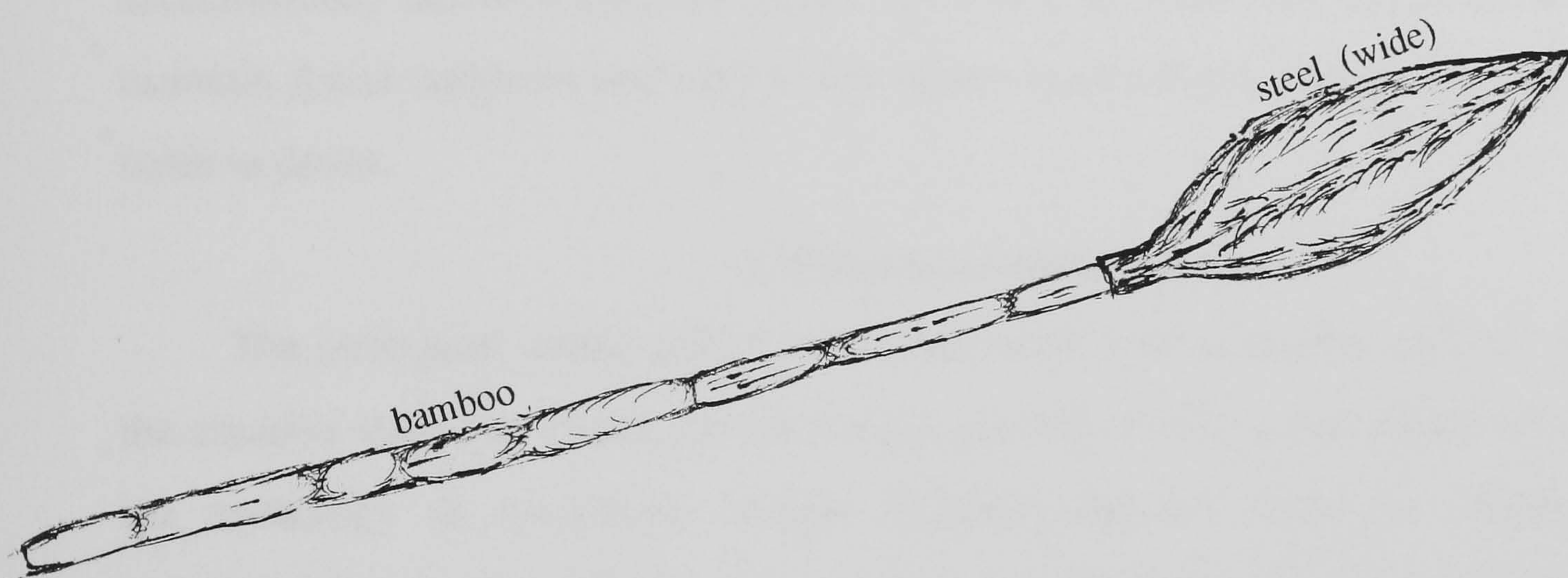
(k) de Rosny, Eric, Healers in the Night, translated by Robert R. Barr, 1985.

Figure 7

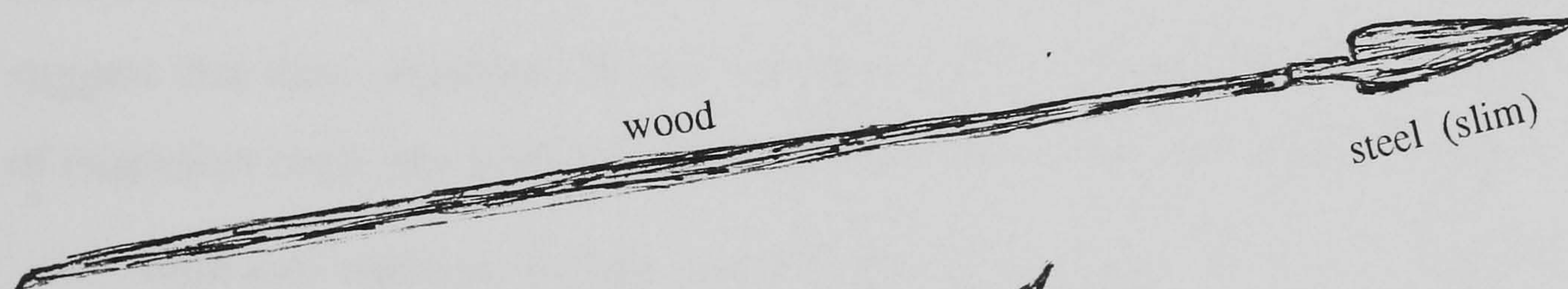
There are two spear types:

(1) **Bow'rang** is used for purposes of social structure:

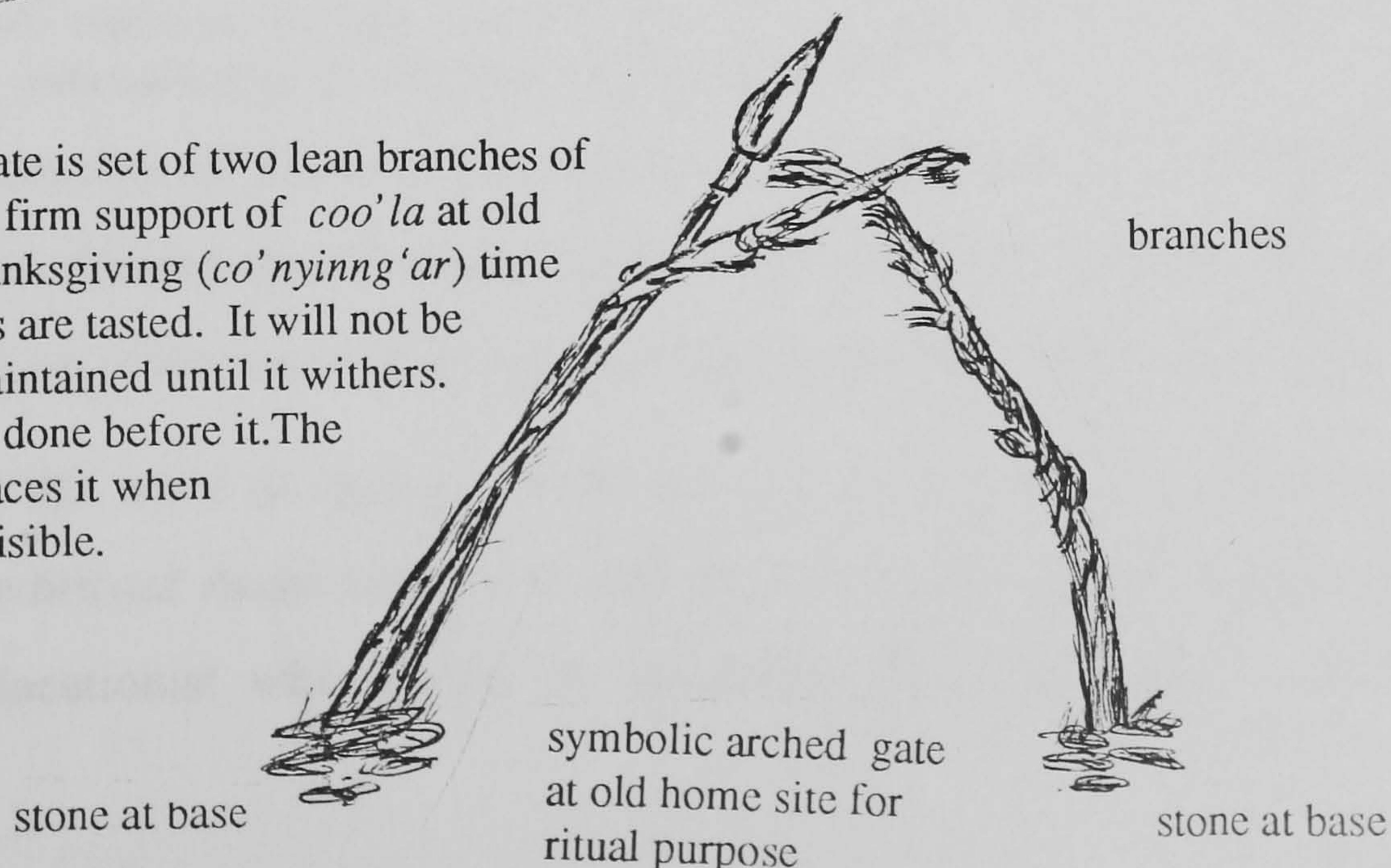
- (a) it is deposited at the shrine of the bride's family. As an artefact, **bow'rang** carries history. Through it, elders trace history of lineages, i.e. who married whom.
- (b) elders use only **bow'rang** to immolate sacrifices at burial rites. No other tool is permitted.
- (c) **bow'rang** is used on the day of a spirit-priests' consecration. This one must be drawn from the arched gate of the main compound (see fig.1) and not from the house shrine (feminine ritual space).



(2) **Coo'la** is used in more functions than **bow'rang**. It is used for hunting, fighting, rituals at old home sites, ritual immolation on distant farms before beginning harvest, ritual immolation before clearing a site for farming, and so on.



Symbolic arch gate is set of two lean branches of *saggee* tree with firm support of *coo'la* at old home sites at thanksgiving (*co'nyinng'ar*) time before new crops are tasted. It will not be removed but maintained until it withers. Immolations are done before it. The ritual officiant faces it when invoking the invisible.



CHAPTER TWO

THE AMAA

1. AMAA SENSE OF THE PAST

The sense of applying the past justifies the attempts to produce volumes of literature based on oral history. Among these volumes incorporating, perhaps, scholarly attempts at reconstruction, we are unlikely to find written documents that offer relevant clues to the beginnings of the Amaa, their origin, and traditions. Only in the mythologies, rites and landmarks, the office of the spirit-priesthood and elderhood that blends with ancestorhood, can such clues be found. All these, as traditional authoritative luminaries, maintain Amaa traditions and rites which inform us of origins, origins that the modern era holds in doubt.

2. THE TRADITIONAL AMAA

The traditional Amaa, unlike most traditional African nations (tribes), are silent on the creation story (or myth), except for the growth of their social organisation based on the mythology of Ancestress *Nyoma* (*Nyema*) and her spirit-son *Sheila*. They are uncertain of their geographical place of origin and their early history before the advent of the Arabs and the forms of colonial administration. Nonetheless, hints in myths, epics, and events form the Amaa oral history of which modern scholarship attempts to make sense by reconstruction. And not knowing (or being silent of) their creation story (myth), the Amaa suggest that they originated somewhere else and migrated to the present locale. This idea of migration conforms with Colson's opinion, based on reconstruction, which states that

“Large scale migrations have been a feature of African life for many centuries ...in conquering hordes ...[or] in ... slow infiltration of small groups seeking new land.”¹

Reconstruction of Amaa origins and, perhaps, their history revolves mostly around the Amaa name *Nyoma* that became a point of controversy, but it is relevant despite the mispronunciation of the name *Nyoma* (*Nyema* or *Nyomong*) that we shall find below.

Despite the wave of modern influences that cause conflict between tradition and modernity, traditional Amaa hold on to their ancestral ways. In this respect, the Anglican missionary-educationist who served in Amaaland, R.C. Stevenson's observation still

stands in that the “Nyamang, [according to his pronunciation]” (Amaa) are a people of strong identity, for they cherish their traditions to the point of making the penetration of foreign influences difficult; the “Nyamang” (Amaa) are of

“...great independence of mind and rigorous tribal traditions which are a deterrent to much outside influence”²

We suggest that Stevenson’s observation arises from the d efforts invested by the Church Missionary workers in Amaaland with almost nil results. Although Stevenson’s observation holds true, the Church Missionary efforts have recently started to fructify from within by the efforts of a few Amaa converts, who are now elderly.³

3. AMAA LANGUAGE GROUPING(S)

The terms *Amaa* and *Nyomong* (commonly known as *Nyima* and *Nyemang*) refer simultaneously to both the people and their language. According to Greenberg, the Amaa (*Nyemang: Nyima*) are linguistically classified in the *Eastern Sudanic group* under the general classification of the *Nilo-Saharan family* of languages.⁴ According to this classification, Appleyard assigns Amaa (*Nyemang*) to the sub-grouping core of *Western East Sudanic*, which consists of Nubian, Nara, and Tama. Here, Appleyard casts doubt (‘unsure’) on this classification in the following statement

“Whilst the details of internal Nilo-Saharan classification may still be *unsure [italics mine]*, it is generally agreed that the phylum may be divided into at least ten stocks: Songhay, Saharan, Maba, Fur, the East Sudanic stock (further divided into two substocks and thence maybe nine families), the central Sudanic stock (further divided into maybe six families)...”⁵

Appleyard reports that there were 70,000 “Nyima” (Nyimang: *Nyemang: Amaa*) speakers in 1982.⁶ This figure (70,000 [1982]) is far short of the local count of 1964 that estimated a figure of 116,000 in the rural Amaaland. Perhaps, this shortfall accounts for the impact of modernisation in different forms among which the key factors are mobility for cash labour and residence in urban centres, education, and missionary religions that have somehow managed to fissure Amaa society into groups of modern and traditional.

4. AMAALAND LOCATION AND THE SUDANESE ISLAMIC POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

In terms of the Sudan national political ideology of Islamic Fundamentalism, the Amaa and other peoples of the Nuba Mountains (South Kordofan Province), though

geographically central but politically peripheral, are part of the greater Southern Sudan. The Nuba Mountains form the northern tip of Southern Sudan. Despite the presence of minute Arab elements whose influence is insignificant, the Nuba Mountains remain African in culture and multi-religious (Also see **chap. 3**).

But northern Sudan claims the contrary. It claims that Nuba Mountains province is northern, Islamic, and Arabic. It, therefore, employs the institutional pressure of the Islamic state to implement its laws which are ideological in essence and cultural genocide in purpose, i.e. hegemonisation through forced *islamisation* and *arabisation*.

An arabised-islamised section among the modern Amaa and Nuba in general have fallen prey to this unwarranted claim. This section, more extremely fundamentalist than the fathers of the Sudanese Islamic Fundamentalism, does not realise that it is one thing to be a Muslim or Christian and another to be an Amaa with a particular culture and life experience. It is this category that has been the collaborating force against the traditional Amaa cultural society. This destructive ideological approach, as we may call it, does the opposite, for liberal Amaa Muslims revert to Amaa traditional religion or convert to the Christian faith. However, though elastic, a culture has boundaries and changes by choice, whereas a religious truth is encouraged by individual spiritual confession and not by force, a point Islamic Fundamentalist Amaa group fails to appreciate.

It is clearly a distortion that northern Sudan promotes not only on the basis of the ideology of the Sudanese Islamic fundamentalist zeal, but most importantly to usurp the untapped economic resources of the Nuba Mountains: for instance, the pastures of the Nuba Mountains available for the Arab nomads (*Baggara* [Arabic]: cattle men and *Hamarr*: camel men) feed the North, which is mostly bound to the Nile River for its livelihood. So the claim that the Nuba Mountains is part of the northern Sudan is neither genuine nor can it be justified.

In addition to the scanty available literature, Amaa elder informants indicate that the cattle and camel people are descendants of the sixteenth century invading Arabs, for whom Mount *Nyomong* (“Nyima”) served as a landmark, as Nadel correctly suggests⁷ according to *Nyoma* mythology, with which the Arabs subsequently identified the Amaa

people and, then, pronounced it “Nyima”. This was obviously a mispronunciation that has been passed on right down to the present. We shall discuss the *evolution of this name* below.

5. THE AMAA, ITS NEIGHBOURING NATIONS (TRIBES) AND COLONIAL STATES

The term *Amaa* means people or human beings. It also refers to the language of the people. It is synonymous with *waah*, a term Amaa use commonly to refer to non-Amaa. *Waah* is also a general term applied to the public. *Amaa*, as a common noun, connotes both plural and singular. Thus, it defies grammatical declension, whereas its synonym *waah* is subject to the syntactic rules, i.e. *waah* is plural; its singular is *woodang*.

Amaa use the term “Amaa” exclusively to describe themselves as human beings or people. This exclusivity, however, suggests an underlying tone of an obnoxious nature that smacks of a sense of superiority over others like the neighbouring nations (tribes) whom they (*Amaa*) fought ferociously, raided for cattle, ransomable captives and marriageable maidens.

Such captives, if absorbed into *Amaa* society, acquired “ties of pseudo-kinship”⁸ that carried rights and duties of blood kinship. They were classified as *kamodoo* (a non-Amaa ransomed from another nation [tribe]), *koy’doo* (a war captive before ransom or assimilation), and *shee’radoo* (a wandering person who had been driven out of his/her own nation for a heinous crime. Such a person was given a choice: either to suffer capital punishment which traditionalists did not appreciate because of blood, or to be sold, or to leave home without return).

Hence, the ancient *Amaa* socially categorised the landed aliens according to how each came to them. Such persons whether they joined the *Amaa* as *sheer’radoo*, *kamodoo*, or *koy’doo* had an obscure social and legal status until the time of their adoption and assimilation through ritual processes that invoked ancestral involvement and acceptance.

Assimilation and adoption rites involve a symbolic cut and blood mixing of the adopting parents and the adopted. Once ritually assimilated into the *Amaa* family and society, the assimilated person owes the same responsibilities of allegiance, rights and

duties as an indigenous Amaa. But the freed captives and their respective captors, as traditions commanded, formed a kinship bond that became pseudo sacred. Traditional Amaa call this type of kinship bloodbrotherhood “*ttoosool*: ochre, for its red blood colour”⁹; it passes on to the descendants of both parties. Such former captives (*koy'doo*) acted as emissaries (*boorrioo irran*)¹⁰ of peace between nations (tribes) in times of strife, since they were immuned against recapture by any group (nation: tribe). It would be a grave error to capture or abuse a former captive in an enemy territory, for other Amaa sub-nations (sub-tribes) or tribes would collaborate together against the culprit sub-nation or nation (tribe). This tradition was the common practice among Amaa and the surrounding nations (tribes) of the northern Nuba Mountains.

According to elder informants, Amaa traditions inform us that some assimilated captives became important Amaa functionaries who wielded ritual authority in the Amaa society. Some informant elders would recite detail genealogies of those Amaa members who were descended from assimilated captives who married Amaa maidens as well as the offspring (*koy'ding*, *Kamoding*, or *sheer'rating*) of captive maidens assimilated into Amaa society as wives. According to Amaa elders' information, Amaa individuals (families) of this obscure social categorisation gradually came to be hidden from the public, except for the elders and ritual elders who maintain the genealogy for the purpose of rituals and rites of social organisation, e.g. marriage, and so on. This obscured category of Amaa society became subject to rules of Amaa social organisation and function.

But Nadel describes what is contrary to Amaa past practice in this respect. In one way, Nadel is right in that the Amaa raided neighbouring nations (tribes) according to elders' information and some evident ritual practices such as that of the ritual village (see **chap. 7**). Captives were freed on ransom paid by the captives' families or nations (tribes). Nadel describes what is in part contrary to Amaa past practices as

“Slave-raiding and slave ownership were on a large scale in the *Nyima* hills.... The very efficiency and ruthlessness of the *Nyima* slave raids forbade that the captives made on such raids should ever be adopted into the captor's family [*all italics mine*].”¹¹

Nadel is right in that the traditional Amaa are still ‘efficient and ruthless’ warriors like the other Nuba people today (1999) as evidenced in the present civil war that has been

waging since October 1983. In addition, the traditional Amaa are arrogantly proud people, who cherish their traditions as superior to non-Amaa nations (tribes) surrounding their domain as well as the forces of modern culture which insidiously creep in. In contrast to the last two lines of Nadel's statement above, however, the Amaa ritually adopted young male captives to the respective captors' families, but adult males and females (especially the married ones) were ransomed, whereas maidens obviously became Amaa wives.

Such wars preceded the colonial era and are still reflected in traditional ritual songs and invocations (see chap. 4). Amaa oral history, woven into stories of bravery for children's general education and character formation, is augmented by Nadel's statement that

"The relations of the *Nyima* [*italics mine*] with surrounding tribes were mostly hostile leading to constant wars and raids".¹²

To this effect, Stevenson comments on the Amaa (*Nyamang*) history, but in my opinion this seems to have been based on the central geographical position of the Amaa. Despite the absence of any supportive physical record of pre-colonial Amaa history, Stevenson's comment applies only to this central geographical position of Amaaland

"When they came to the present home they found the Hill Nubian peoples in possession, and established a place for themselves by warfare, wedging themselves in amongst them and driving the Nubian further out. It is a fact that today the *Nyamang* [*italics mine*] occupy a central position, encircled by Nubian speakers."¹³

There is no credible evidence to establish this assumption as a fact relevant to Amaa history. But, perhaps, Stevenson bases his comment on Amaa oral history that lies in myths, poems, proverbs, riddles, and the epic legends none of which justifies the Amaa place of origin to be somewhere else. All is fair speculation, but no one knows adequately who came first to the present locale, the Amaa or its neighbours!

Similarly, Sagar writes on this idea of wars among the pre-Colonial Nuba as follows,

"Nuba of the jebels have long standing feuds with the majority of their neighbours..."¹⁴

The Amaa in these wars, which they fought ruthlessly, captured, adopted, but imprisoned (not enslaved) other Nuba for ransom in cattle, as the above categorisation of Amaa society shows.

However, the following note of Stevenson on Amaa prowess is a reflection of elders' teaching of oral history relevant to the sense of reliability and rites of passage (some of which are extremely painful, but for purpose of teaching endurance, patience, and courage) for young men that the *Amaa (Nyimang)* were

“Always formidable fighters and with hills difficult of access, the *Nyimang* [italics mine] had not suffered much from the organised slave-raids and were left to themselves by the Turkiyya government.”¹⁵

Amaa raids on surrounding nations (tribes) for wealth accumulation from war booty and redeemable captives were different from the slave trade of the Turkish (Turkiyya) Government slave trade enterprise. The Amaa, however, did not lose much, for aided by the mountainous geographical terrain they were able to defeat such institutional slave raid activities of the Turkish Government in the Sudan¹⁶ to which Hill refers as the

“Slave raiding in the northern foothills of the Nuba country ... was too small for the sanguine Viceroy who later reminded the Daftardar: ‘You are aware that the end of all our effort and this expense is to procure negroes. Please show zeal in carrying out our wishes in this capital matter.’”¹⁷

This was an order to engage in more firm and aggressive action to obtain more slaves from the Amaaland (with its neighbouring nations [tribes]) which lies in the northern part of the Nuba Mountains, but without success. Further, more Amaa defiance against the British colonial state rule was reported between 1902 and 1917¹⁸ in attacking neighbouring nations (tribes) as well as in the refusal to meet tax dues. Accordingly MacMichael reports that in 1908 Amaa (*Nyimang*) who

“....had never been subdued, refused to acknowledge the government or hand over captives they had taken. A patrol was dispatched in October and the Mountain was occupied.”¹⁹

In contrast, the *Mahdia* invasions (*Jihad*: holy war [which unfortunately still continues today]) on the Nuba Mountains were for *islamisation* and *arabisation*. The *Mahdia* also did not succeed in subduing the Amaa, for the Amaa defeated its forces of superior armament. Here Rev. J. Ohrwalder, a missionary to that area and later a captive in *Mahdi's* camp at *Dilling*, the present county headquarters, records that

“Abu Anga attacked almost all the Nuba mountains ... Talodi, Gedir, and lastly *Naima* [italics mine], were scenes of bloody combats, and Abu Anga in spite of his artillery - which was commanded by Said Bey Guma-.was heavily defeated..”²⁰

6. TRADITIONAL AMAA WAY OF LIFE

The term Amaa, synonymous with *Nyomong* (meaning, the people of *Nyoma*), is the original indigenous name for the Amaa nation (tribe). As indicated above, Amaa also means human being(s). The Bee (*Amee*) is the common totem (emblem) for traditional Amaa. Amaa is the largest nation (tribe) in the northern Nuba Mountains (South Kordofan Province).

Stature: The Amaa are of medium size and height, averaging approximately 5.5 to 6 feet. Amaa complexion ranges from black, dull and light brown, to dull chocolate. The majority of the Amaa are round skulled, with short and black kinky hair, but whiskers and beards, though short and goatee-like, are rare. Of course, the modern fabric fashion is worn but simple. Spirit-priests wear *ttoom* (special visible sacred rings and bracelets) on the right arm, thumb and wrist. *Ttoom*, traditional Amaa believe, is the invisible ring of authority that was worn only by *Sheila*, the first spirit-priest. *Sheila* passed it on to the successive descendant heirs to his spirit-priestly office.

Political system: Although traditional Amaa depend on diffused ancestral authority,²¹ they have a form of co-operative social mechanism to enhance that undergirding ancestral authority. This co-operative social mechanism comprises spirit-priests, ritual elders, elders, family heads according to lineage, and youth age-grade institutions. Traditionally none of these has absolute authority. One could call this traditional system group leadership under diffused ancestral authority, represented in spiritual sanctions and taboos with an effective impact on social function and structure.

In the past traditional Amaa chose an ad hoc leader, an able individual of good social standing, to lead them to wars (*kiddang*), whereas peace treaties were negotiated by spirit-priests as well as former captives (as emissaries/ ambassadors: *eer'rayi*), whose immunity (against recapture and harm) was conventionally guaranteed by the former captor's family, clan, and nation (tribe), on account of the bloodbrotherhood (*foonne*) they had established between them. Thus, he became a member of the said family. Such *foonne* was sacred and, therefore, was defended by all possible means, if violated. Both the victor and the conquered strictly observed this conventional rule.

Livelihood: Traditional Amaa are agriculturists with home farms and near hillside farms (mostly for wives) and far farms for both wives and husbands. Animal husbandry, though traditional and poor, is vital for animals contribute to rituals, rites of initiation in life crises such as marriage gifts, burial, age-grading, social equilibrium maintenance (as in the rite of affliction: individual health or social calamities) and so on, which are discussed in the body of this text. Initiation rites include child naming, traditional education, and character formation. Few traditional Amaa are engaged in trading, e.g. as shopkeepers.

Dwelling: Their huts, scattered in groups of villages inhabited mostly by extended families (sub-clan), are of a grass conical roofed type, with walls mostly of splintered wood supported by wooden poles(see **fig. 3**) or brown clay. Though conical roofed and thatched with grass, rural traditional Amaa consider clay walled huts as a novelty and out of the norm. Clay walled huts are mostly used by men. But traditional women prefer splintered wood walled huts (see **fig. 3**), for the rites of splitting the first wood into splinters for her hut upon birth of the first child is interpreted as that of herself splitting into children. Such wood splinters are, therefore, regarded sacred as they represent her offspring and the fulfilment of her womanhood/ motherhood and her contribution to her new lineage. Here traditional Amaa acknowledge her womb as “*aara* [bullrush millet as well as the space of the womb]”. Therefore, these wood splinters of the hut wall can neither be burnt as cooking fuel nor can they be given away for another woman’s hut wall. Only the first daughter in-law of the eldest son can inherit them.

Such wood splinters are neatly built into the kneeing step and sides of the hut door (see **fig. 3**). Upon her *retransformation*, the kneeing step (representing her offspring) and the right side pole of the hut entrance (representing the husband and living lineage) remain intact, but the left side pole (herself and living-dead lineage), to which a sacrificial goat is tied, is pulled down immediately after the sacrifice of *bong’oo keyh* (*retransformation rite*) to let loose the splinters (see **fig. 3**).

When she gives birth to the first child, the rite of fetching *bong* (water: representing life) is observed after forty days in seclusion in her mother’s hut. In giving birth, she *mediates* in life given to her offspring. So upon *retransformation*, it is her right to be

acknowledged in the *bong'oo keyh* rite of the living to the ancestors marking her contribution to *eternity now*.

Bong'oo keyh signifies also the rite of re-integration of the newly living-dead into the community of the living. There is a “thin layer” between the visible and the invisible realms. The visible cannot see with naked eyes through this layer except the spirit-priest who is believed to be endowed with the ability to see through and dialogue with *numinous* beings of that invisible mode. But both realms exist in the same sphere. The barrier is only the limited vision of the living.

According to elder informants (at the *retransformation rite* [in August 1974] of the mother of this writer], the Amaa tradition of letting loose the left side pole and wood splinters is (i) to widen the entrance for the goings and the comings of both the living and the living-dead; (ii) a symbolic act of herself diffusion into that life mode of the living-dead, who yet continue active presence among the living. Thus, the “Unbroken Circle” remains intact and life continues.^{22/23}

The splintered wood walled hut offers an excellent ventilation system through the grass thatched roof and the walled-wood splinters. One would imagine the hut on fire because of the smoke shooting through the roof and wall of the hut building. The hut is divided into separated compartments for:

(i) suitors (*kir'roo koyei'eeo kay'rayh*) of the daughter(s). This is detached and with its own entrance from within the hut. It is here that youth visitors spend time. The eldest daughter of the hut (not household, for the household composes all the compound) decorates this compartment. Once a *bow'rang* (spear) is deposited for her betrothal, youth visits cease except for youth relatives, community members, and friends (contributors to the choice) of the suitor are permitted. This third party plays an important role in the marriage rites (e.g. see **chapter 7 and fig. 3**).

(ii) mother's bedroom (*coo'mang*) which shares the same space with the kitchen and the house shrine, but each is allocated a portion of that space. It is in this shrine area the sacred beads [*boardelay*], spear [*bow'rang*], and *ko'dung* [hunting spear of family spirit-

priest: father] are kept. It is in this shrine that the *teng'oo keyh* [moving ritual sacrifice] is offered for a married daughter who has given birth to the first child before she moves to her marital home. *Teng* (gourd: utensil used for food) in this rite represents motherhood. The *teng'oo* ritual sacrifice is, therefore, a motherhood rite.

(iii) three granaries ([*till'foo*): the main one for the father, the second one for the mother [both for *mmoonooong*: sorghum/ millet], and the third one is smaller for secondary crops such as bullrush grain [*aara*²⁴] ground nuts [*allfool*], sesame seeds [*mmosulle*: of ritual and mythological significance], maize, okra, and so on). The granaries are raised on rock support, thus creating space underneath for sacred farming tools like the *ka'dang* (hoe), *ttemel* (axe),²⁵ and offerings of valuables such as *koo'fang* (bracelets and anklets), *ddhoosow keeyh* (necklaces), *geerishee* (money), and so on. The front space facing the hut entrance (*orr'goalle*) is more spacious for socialisation, meals, and a sleeping area for male children. The passage leading from the entrance passes between the two main granaries en route to the mother's area. It is this passage (*gehshinnoo booh'irr*) that a traditional Amaa mother must keep clear during nights for the living-dead relatives' (*gehshinne*) movements to and fro the kitchen area.

A household (*beshie*) is a conglomeration of huts (*whell*) enclosed by a thick circular fence built of well matted branches (see **figs. 1 & 2**). This enclosure is known as *whirr* (compound). Polygamy is a normal African tradition. The traditional Amaa society is patrilineal and exogamous marriage is viri-local (with the exception of *islamised* pockets of Amaa society who are also endogamous) on the basis of lineage basis, not locale. Where a man has many wives (the late father of this writer was polygamous with four wives), all must occupy their respective huts, but in the same *whirr* (compound). The *whirr* has a main arched gate, with sacred artefacts and quintessential ritual functions that will be discussed in the following chapters. Hence, a traditional compound is not a physical enclosure, but based on lineage, the system itself beginning with the traditional household. The physical compound, though important, is but a metaphor for the real (the invisible), which consists of the ancestors, who are the founders of the lineage systems and communities.

There is a shed (*co'ohrr'dee*: supported by four poles and open sides) in the centre of the compound for the family community socialisation. All males of the family eat meals under this shed, whereas females eat in their respective huts but after the males have finished theirs. The compound family members use the roof of this shed for storing odds and ends. A separated enclosure (within the compound) is set aside for cattle, but a clay-walled hut is built for goats, sheep, and calves. Each wife owns a home farm (*tee'iny*) plot. These farm plots surround the compound (homestead)(see **fig. 7**).

Hence, a traditional Amaa compound (homestead) is made up of the physical fixtures of the fence with domestic livestock enclosures, the huts, the people [both the living and the living-dead], domestic animals and fowls, the sacred spots and sacred artefacts in various locations in the compound, and so on, that extends to ancestors and the common living-dead family members. *Tee'iny* is an integral part of the compound, for its quick ripening crops will not be eaten until they are offered first to the invisible members of the compound, namely the ancestors.

7. THE MYTH AND EVOLUTION OF THE TERM “NYEMANG”

Sheila Ajabna (kuweir Ajabna), who revolted against Anglo-Egyptian Sudan Government in 1917²⁶ and was later hanged with his lieutenant is believed to have been a descendent of the mythological figure ancestress *Nyema*, after whom Mount *Nyema* was named. It was on this mountain *Nyema* that she descended from the sky. According to this mythology, ancestress *Nyema* was pregnant when she landed on this mountain. When she was due for delivery, the babe in the bosom ordered her to rub her right knee with sesame seed (*mmossulle*) oil (*mmossulloo nyom*). This she did and delivered her first son through the knee. She named him *Sheila*, meaning head or king. *Sheila* had spiritual powers. He is involved in human affairs. *Sheila* was informally the first spirit-priest. In defiance of death, Ancestor *Sheila* retransformed his lower body into a snake. He, the snaked-man, crawled into a cave in a dell of the mountain (now known as *Sheilo Maydayh*: the correct pronunciation *Sheilong Maydayh* is explained below) where he subsequently formally ordained his eldest son as the first spirit-priest.

According to this mythology, therefore, the sesame oil (*mmossulloo nyom*) becomes the root for the name of ancestress Nyoma (*Nyema*), after whom Mountain Nyoma (*Nyema*) is named. This mountain eventually became the landmark by which the *Amaa* have rightly become known - people of *Nyema* (*Nyima*).

Since there are no written records except unreliable clues that lead us to suppose that Arab nomads (*baggara*: cattle herders), entering pastures in Amaaland from the western end direction where Mountain *Nyema* (*Nyoma*) stands, associated *Amaa* with this mountain of the mythology. Subsequently, according to the pronunciation of these Arab nomads (*sooloo*), they corrupted first the name *Nyoma* into *Nyema* which later comes into Amaaland further corrupted into *Nyumain*, *Nima*, *Naima*, *Nyimin*, *Nyiming*, *Nyima*, *Nyamang*, and finally *Nyimang* which has become the predominant nomenclature; even some *Amaa*, especially the alienated in the bosom of modernity, refer to themselves as *Nyimang*, but the traditionalists call themselves “*Amaa*”, the people.

A.J. Arkell, for instance, suggests that the *Nyima* (*Nyimang*) descended from a tribe that existed in northern Sudan. In this respect, Arkell writes

“In Hatshepsut’s temple at Deir el Bahri chief’s of Irm and Nimiū are shown bringing gold to the queen from the south. The *Nimiū* have negroid features, and their name suggests that they may possibly have been the *ancestors of the Nyima* Nuba of southern Kordofan. [*italics mine*] ”²⁷

But R.C. Stevenson, an Anglican missionary-educationist in the Nuba Mountains between 1940 and 1962, disagrees with Arkell’s suggestion²⁸ by saying that the name “*Nyimang*” is recent. Instead, Stevenson informs us that the name *Nyimang* (*Nyamang*, in his case) derived from “*Nyimiding*”,²⁹ another mountain on the eastern frontier of the Amaaland. Although Stevenson, who died in the late 1980s, knew the *Amaa* language,³⁰ he seems to have missed a linguistic point. The suffix “*ing*” or “*eng*” in *Amaa* indicates the juniorship of something (or being). Thus, the suffix “*ing*” present in “*Nyimiding*” relates mount *Nyimiding* to *Mount Nyema*: that is, the small or young of *Nyema* (*Nyoma*). So Stevenson’s suggestion is obviously contrary to the information present in the corrupted language and the mythology.

When the Amaa add a suffix “*ing*” or “*eng*” to a noun of animate or inanimate, it is to differentiate between **age** or **size** of **two** objects (groups) of the same genus. Hence, in their respective contentions on the variation of the name *Nyomong* (the people of *Nyoma* [*Nyema*]), apart from the historic origin of which Amaa themselves are uncertain, A.J. Arkel and R.C. Stevenson³¹ have respectively missed the mythological and linguistic dimensions of the Amaa.

The following list further demonstrates this linguistic point:

<u>English Name</u>	<u>Amaa Name</u>	<u>Young/ small</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Hen	Co’orr	Co’orring	chick
Goat	Koodoo	Kooding	kit
Person	Woo’dang	Woo’deng	little person
Mountain	Maydayh	Maydeng	little mountain
Tree	Ttooma	Ttoomeng	bush/ seedling
Earth	Kay’ell	Kay’ling	earthling

Whereas suffixes *doo*, *noo*, *ong*, and *oo* are for *possessive case* as the following the following list of examples demonstrates:

<u>English :</u>	<u>Amaa</u>	<u>Belonging to</u>	<u>Example Statement</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
People :	Amaa	Amaadoo	Amaadoo barr	People’s cattle
Cattle :	Barr	Barroo	Barroo woo’dang	Shepherd
Public :	Waah	Waanoo	Waanoo leeh	Public mood

Proper Nouns:

Ayyoub	+ong	Ayyoubong kitafo	Ayyoub’s book
John	+ong	Johnong galamo	John’s pen
Wanda	+ong	Wandong ttay’nee	Wanda’s shoes
<i>Nyoma(Nyema)</i>	+ong	<i>Nyomong Maydayh</i>	<i>mount Nyema</i>

Nyomong Maydayh (Mount *Nyoma*, the original name related to *nyoma* [*nyom*: *sesame oil, an essential taxonomy referred to above*]) is the correct nomenclature that the invading Arabs corrupted into *Nyema/ Nyima* from the eighteenth century.³²

Hence, *Nyimiding*, deconstructed diminutively, would appear as follows:

Nyimi = *Nyoma* or the corrupted forms of “*Nyema, Nyima, Nyimin*” “*Nyimang*”;
d- = **doo** (possessive article: belong to, of, or ...’s), according to Amaa syntax;

-ing = diminutive for little, small, or young;

That is, little *Nyomodooing* which the Amaa pronounced “*Nyomodong (...ing)*” (little *Nyoma* or little mount of *Nyoma*) before the intrusive influences of change corrupted it into *Nyimiding* for easier pronunciation. Such intrusive influences (or corruption) which have become accepted usage as in *Nyemang* or *Nyimiding*, is widespread, not only in Amaaland, but commonly in the Nuba Mountains.

The following are the eight Amaa mountains that form the Amaaland and society and offer more examples of the influential corruption (cultural change, rather), which, we suggest, are illuminating indicators of progressive changes, as demonstrated in *Nyomong* changing to the present *Nyimang* and *Nyomoding* to *Nyimiding*. They are:

1. ***Saa'layh***: (name of the founder and spirit-priest ancestor) of *Saa'layong* (or *Saa'long*) village is now called *Salara*. It is the home mountain of *Kuunee Saa'layh* and the name of the Amaa sub-nation (sub-tribe) of the present writer. One finds this ***Salara*** name in the Sudan Atlas instead of *Saa'long*.

2. ***Ttwaa'na***: (name of the founder and spirit-priest ancestor) of *Ttwaa'nong*, the name and home mountain of the sub-nation (tribe) *Ttwaa'na*. ***Tunndia*** is the name shown in the Sudan Atlas instead of *Ttwaa'nong*. At the westernmost edge of this Amaa sub-nation (sub-tribe) of Amaaland stands Mount *Nyomong* (now known as *Nyema* or *Nyima*).

3. ***Kelayh***: (name of the founder and spirit-priest ancestor) of *Kelayong* (or *kelong*), the name and home mountain of the Amaa sub-nation (sub-tribe) *Kelong* (or *Kelang*). ***Kellara*** is the name shown in the Sudan Atlas instead of *Kelong* (or *Kelang*).

4. ***Kurmudu***: (name of the founder and spirit-priest ancestor) of *Kurmudong*, the name and home mountain of the Amaa sub-nation (sub-tribe) *Kurmudong*. ***Kurmiti*** is the name shown in the Sudan Atlas instead of *Kurmudong* (Amaa called it *Ko'doongol*). Mount *Nyimiding* (*Nyomodooing/ Nyomodong [...ing]*) is here.

5. ***Ngihdill***: (name of the founder and spirit-priest ancestor) of *Ngihdillong*, the name and home mountain of the Amaa sub-nation (sub-tribe) *Ngihdillong*. ***Nitil*** is the name shown in the Sudan Atlas instead of *Ngihdillong* (Amaa call it *Nghidill*)

6. ***Fho'jeenee***: (name of the founder and spirit-priest ancestor) of *Fho'jeenong*, the name and home mountain of the Amaa sub-nation (sub-tribe) *Fho'jeenong*. ***Fassoo*** (or ***Fassu***) is the name shown in the Sudan Atlas instead of *Fho'jeenong*.

7. ***Kaire'ko***: (name of the founder and spirit-priest ancestor) of ***Kaire'kong***, the name and home mountain of the Amaa sub-nation (sub-tribe) ***Kaire'kong***. ***Kakara*** is the name shown in the Sudan Atlas instead of ***Kaire'kong***.

8. ***Sheila***: (name the founder and spirit-priest ancestor, to whom Ancestress ***Nyoma*** [***Nyema***] gave birth through the right knee after rubbing it with sesame oil ***nyom***, according to his instructions from the womb. ***Nyoma*** (***Nyema***) is the name given to the mountain where Ancestress ***Nyoma*** (***Nyema***) descended pregnant from heaven and gave birth to ***Sheila*** (meaning, head, king, or ruler).

The mythology informs the Amaa that ***Nyema*** and ***Sheila*** were spiritual beings in human form. The state of being partly human and partly spirit, according to Amaa belief, makes ***Sheila*** and his mother ***Nyoma*** incomplete Amaa (human beings); therefore, ***Sheilong*** (or ***Sheilo'wa*** [***Sheilong waah***]: people or descendants of ***Sheila***) or ***Sheilo'wa*** is the incomplete (*soo*) clan, now a sub-nation (sub-tribe); so the name and home mountain are known by this name: ***Hajar Sultan*** (both Arabic terms, meaning, *rock* and *ruler* respectively), which is the name that appears in the Sudan Atlas instead of ***Sheilo'wa***.

The mythology continues to inform us that ***Nyema***, like her son ***Sheila***, married a human. Therefore, ***Sheila*** had male siblings who also founded their respective clans such as ***Bayah and Sabb'yang*** (see *chap. 3*) But most Amaa trace their ancestry to ***Kidoot***, whom Nadel reproduces as ***Kudout*** in a diagram.³³ Although this diagram is incomplete, ***Kidoot*** (***Kudout***) is the principal ancestor of most Amaa clans. Nadel mentions eleven clan founders, but there are twenty one clans spreading across the eight mountains, which are named after the first settler ancestor, who was also the spirit-priest.

Hence, names and sites in the oral literature and landscape of Amaa traditional life transmit history, although the passage of time may cast doubt on that history. Each era or generation may add its own perspectives or interpretations that support customs and, hence, ritual acts. As such, the authenticity of customs for the modern Amaa is “no longer” the concern. Here Ben-Amos observes that

“The process is no longer the process of delivery, or handing down of themes, symbols or forms, but of selecting and constructing a narrative that would become part of a canon, projected into the present and future from an imagined or real past.”³⁴

It could, therefore, be inferred that traditional Amaa life intertwines the present with the past, which, as unwritten history, is embedded in mythologies. Certain events become stories and in the passage of time evolve into oral traditions, influencing the living, with names of legendary characters, ancestral places, and with the landmarks looming in the background. Again, to give a further example, the Islamic invasion, especially of the *Mahdia*, corrupted *Dohnj'njee* [in Amaa] (*arabised*) to *Dallanj* and the subsequent British Colonial Administration further corrupted (*anglicised*) it into *Dilling*. *Dilling* is the present county headquarters.

However, the cultural corruption (or change, rather, for no culture is static) is also found in the names of villages and the Amaa sub-tribes (multi-clans as shown above) of the eight mountains of Amaaland, whose total area is approximately one hundred square miles. This form of corruption, perhaps, dislodges as well as distorts mythological grammar that links the place (oral historic reminder) and the people to their mythic past, the past that draws spiritual dimensions to the present to “blend ancestorhood and elderhood”, which is the keeper and sustainer of mythic contexts applied in traditions and customs, i.e. rites, rituals, and so on.

Here we contend that if a traditional name is corrupted, it becomes a mere name without the particular mythical context and significance relevant to the particularity and life experience of the Amaa. Perhaps, we should observe that this last point spurred me to take initiatives through the fieldwork I have conducted in intermittent periods to contribute to the preservation of the Amaa traditional heritage in written form for future generations before it becomes too late.

8. AMAA RELIGION AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION

The *Amaa* lineage system³⁵ is not unlike those of other traditional African societies, but it is different from its modern counterpart;³⁶ the rural based lineage and kinship system is the essential base of traditional *Amaa* society. Besides the centrality of ancestors, Amaa society extends to include other living-dead, erratic free spirits³⁷ that await birth into human lineage, the *Spirit* (God), nature and its phenomena (see **chart**). That is, things of nature are integral to the traditional Amaa spirituality and social

organisation. Things of nature, as such, refer to the multiple manifestations of the Spirit in both animate and inanimate forms. These manifestations are an integral part of the human community. It is from these manifestations that Amaa and African traditionalists alike choose or are spirit-chosen in totemic-totemistic relationships; that is, an indirect relationship with the Supreme Being.

According to Amaa traditional divisions into sub-nations (as shown above), each mountainous region was settled by an ancestor who established it first as his clan domain. A founding ancestor, therefore, became the first elder and spirit-priest of his clan. The clan, the region, and the mountain are named after him. In other words, the founding ancestor is the resident master-owner of that domain, apart from the subsequent ancestors and the common living-dead (spirit) relatives of the living.³⁸

But when peace reigned among them, these clans gradually infiltrated each other to form multi-clan (multi-lineage) sub-nations (sub-tribe). Here, a migrant lineage member owes obedience to his clan lineage elders who wield ritual authority with their ancestors, on the one hand, while he pays allegiance to the sub-national elders, on the other hand. That is, a clan domain is composed of members from other clans who, for one reason or another, migrated. Therefore, a multi-lineage clan forms a sub-nation (sub-tribe) whose members participate in political and social activities, be it on village or sub-national levels.

A sub-nation (tribe) was traditionally autonomous and without a structured political leadership or office. As a homogenous society in terms of ethnicity and culture, the traditional Amaa social organisation is dominated by a web of lineage kinship systems, which forms the basis of traditional Amaa institutionalised political structure built on kin group representation, elders, and the religious functionaries of ritual elderhood and spirit-priesthood.

The spirit-priesthood, together with its ritual aids (ritual elderhood), though with effectively indirect influence in the political arena, stands as an intermediary in the mutual tension between the visible and the invisible parts of traditional Amaa society, which Taylor would, perhaps, depict as the “Unbroken Circle”; that is, a structural and functional continuity between the visible and the invisible.³⁹

This tension⁴⁰ realises and enhances traditional Amaa spirituality and social organisation. This is the Amaa traditional system of self rule as a traditional (tribal) nation that the British Colonial administration subdued after it defeated and hanged *Kuweir Ajabna* and his lieutenant in 1917.⁴¹ The Amaa (Nyima) was thus subdued. The colonial administration subsequently introduced the system of *indirect rule* on the basis of the Amaa traditional set up. But it made successful inroads to win allegiance from within, for the traditional Amaa

“...political control was largely diffuse and rudimentary, and rose to conscious unitary leadership only in tasks of war...”⁴²

Here one could define *Kuweir Ajabna* as an example who came to occasional unitary leadership against the colonial administration. He was not, therefore, a “unitary” political ruler, but “rose” to that leadership status at that time of necessity for the Amaa to lead a particular *kiddang* (war expedition) against their common enemy. Such leadership came to an end with the completion of the task. Though spirit-priest of the incomplete (*soo*) sub-nation of *Sheilo’waah*, *Kuweir Ajabna* was the ritual head of the seven spirit-priests of the Amaa nation (tribe). Therefore, the Amaa served him on account of his *Sheilo* ritual capacity, inherited sequentially, to influence rainfall. As a key character in the social organisation and as a medium, therefore, the spirit-priest’s role lies in the complex ancestor-related rituals that are at the core of traditional African religion.

According to this social organisation, rituals, in whatever form, cut across the boundaries of lineages and villages, creating wider networks of association, like a glue; they enrich and hold together the harmony of traditional Amaa society, where both visible and invisible are combined⁴³ This is where the traditional collective consciousness lies subliminally, but comes to the fore for a unitary action. At such times of active collective consciousness, spirits of war (*kiddangoo irran* [masters of war]) are invoked for their contribution. As a traditional norm, according to the elder informants, the ad hoc leader of a war expedition makes the first invocation. Then the troops invoke collectively in unison.

The collective invocation accompanies symbolic war actions in an orderly stampeding movement to and fro before the ad hoc war leader (holding a war *toewoe*⁴⁴) in

the company of spirit-priests and ritual elders, who traditionally do not join the war expedition, but interject invocations at random. While singing this invocation with the symbolic movements, one can see the glow in the faces of elder informants.⁴⁵ In addition to war master spirits (*kiddango irran*), the spirits of natural phenomena (the respective eight mountains, forests, etc.) are also invoked to protect the warriors and give victory.

Invoking the natural phenomena to participate is a demonstration that the traditional Amaa do not separate the temporal from the spiritual. Nor do they isolate *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God) from the temporal human community; this is exemplified in the person of the spirit-priest who is partly human and partly spirit.⁴⁶ As such, writes Achebe,

“One half of him was man and the other half mmo—the half that was painted over with the white chalk at religious moments. And half of the things that he ever did were done by this spirit side”⁴⁷

Thus, the realm of the supernatural is so intimate that all activities become religious and cultural activities of liturgical value.⁴⁸ So the traditional Amaa see the cosmos as a hierophany in which human existence is central and sacred (see **chart**). This closeness of the supernatural enhances the function of the traditional society, for individual responsibility upholds obedience to traditions and customs, to which Nadel's observation refers,

“The *Nyima* [*italics mine*] is still close to the level of ‘stateless’ societies.”⁴⁹

This description, of course, precedes the administration of colonial states (the Turkish and the Anglo-Egyptian) and the successive forms of the present Sudanese state. Hence, we see the gradual but slow fissure of the Amaa society into traditional and modern factions.

The traditionalist Amaa still see their society itself as the embodiment of spiritual reality, the Reality (*Abbra'dee*: Creator Spirit) that created human existence and is in contact with it through ritual and in the spiritual journeys (*direct contact: divination*) of the spirit-priest.⁵⁰ This need for the spirit-priestly ministry, a socially integrating factor, gives a sense of national flavour to the traditional Amaa as a nation of the eight mountains, a loose confederacy of autonomous sub-nations (sub-tribes).

9. TRADITION AND MODERNISATION

Cultures grow, bloom, change and some wither away as they are choked by new elements, as they repel the old ones. Sometimes the new and old blend to transform a society into a new one. The Amaa society is no exception as it enters gradually into the new dawn of the changing human cultures, for the powerful products of science and technology cast *insidiously* overshadowing influence on all aspects of human life.

For the Amaa, the beginning of the colonial administration era was the initial beginning of this modernising process, but the traditional Amaa confronted it with defiance to the point of civil disobedience first a refusal to meet tax dues and, then, by armed rebellions in the years 1902, 1906, 1907, 1908, and 1916⁵¹ they raided and looted neighbouring nations (tribes). They cherished their traditions and, therefore, the seething contempt continued until 1917⁵² when *Sheila Ajabna* (descendant of *Sheila*, spirit-son of *Nyema*, the predominant Amaa mythological character), whose political and spiritual influence were binding for his people, stirred up armed rebellion against the colonial administration and eliminated a British district commissioner. According to MacMichael, this incident prompted the colonial administration to dispatch a large armed patrol⁵³ against the Amaa (Nyima). Although some Amaa sub-nations (sub-tribes),⁵⁴ who were traditionally autonomous, rejected participation in the rebellion, nonetheless, *Sheila Ajabna* went ahead with the armed rebellion. The end result was that *Sheila Ajabna* and his leading warrior were captured and executed.

Thereafter, some traditional Amaa became appointed colonial state employs as chiefs and headmen to administer native justice and exercise social control. Here Nadel writes,

“Territorial chieftainship, though in itself a new principle in this tribe, has emerged from the remarkably happy fusion of traditional structural features - local units and clan organization. The favourable constellation of Nyima grouping, with its tendency towards a territorial concentration of clans, has no doubt greatly helped towards a smooth development”⁵⁵

Nadel’s picture of development is inaccurate, but such appointments were made on a lineage and clan (sub-nation) basis, without destroying the traditional Amaa social and rudimentary (but functional) political structure, which was a form of confederacy of the eight mountains of Amaaland. This system of indirect rule was introduced to avert

rebellions, through the (I) village headman (**sheikh**), who was responsible to (ii) the clan chief (**meck**), who, in turn, was responsible to (iii) the paramount chief (**naa'zir**) who exercised local judicial authority and was responsible to the district commissioner, the representative of the colonial administration and the ultimate authority of the local government. This was the officer (district commissioner) *Sheila Ajabna's* rebellion eliminated in 1917.

The introduction of a cash economy and formal education gradually followed. The Church Missionary Society, whose role ended in 1960s by the Sudanese Government decree, even though it worked in co-operation with the colonial state, was the key player in the fields of education and health.

The idea of a central authority was the point of emphasis that the colonial administration superimposed on the traditional structure. Furthermore, the headmen, the chiefs, and the paramount chiefs were not supported by the institutional force of the colonial state, neither were they supported by the traditional Amaa age-grade system. In effect, these appointees of the new system remained as agents of the state, but, although they were obeyed through coercion, they were not of as much influence as the traditional group leadership of elders under the diffused ancestral authority, to which common adherence is still given.

The **in-bold and bracketed** titles above are Arabic terms, replacing the traditional Amaa elder (*woo'dang'go'lay*), ritual elder (*waa'dhaa'oo irran*), and spirit-priest (*kuunee / kuweir*), whose authority is spiritual and diffused under the sanctions of traditions and customs that ancestors guard jealously. The new system guarded the land against rebellions and collected taxes that the Amaa at some points refused to pay. The government appointed chiefs determined all affairs and administered justice according to the new order, instead of the traditional system under ancestral sanctions. The traditional system, though without written laws, tends more towards reconciliation of to avoid ancestral displeasure and punishment.

According to the elder informants, an integrated traditional society is the best, since the ancestral values involved in relations serve the interests of the individual and the

collectivity alike by maintaining the interplay of society and the ancestral values it (society) incorporates. Hence, for traditional Amaa , the new system's use of imprisonment and fines as deterrents does not promote the social integration of their society. For this reason and because of its adequate understanding of the function of ancestral values, the colonial administration and the Sudanese state as well have continually failed (or intentionally ignored and undermined, which is more likely) to attempt to understand the traditional Amaa social, political, and economic institutions upon which the new could build.

Nevertheless, the introduction of a new system of law and order administered by appointed headmen, chiefs, and paramount chiefs effected changes⁵⁶ in both social and political structures. The introduction of education, in collaboration with missionary religions, and a cash economy followed but on a small scale. Certainly, these factors have been the cause division in the Amaa society into modern and traditional, which, though affected by the modern, yet strives to maintain its ancestral ways.

More relevant to this, according to elder informants, is that the non-participant Amaa sub-nations in *Sheila Ajabna's* open rebellion eased the way for the colonial administration and its co-operation with the alternative teaching of the missionary religions of Christianity and Islam, both of which attracted some converts, who further extended internal co-operation and organised polity. The converts and the rebellious advocates of change paved the way for external contact with foreign cultures and invading religious traditions in their respective cultural modes.⁵⁷ Thus came about the inevitable influence of modern ways of life which, no doubt, have been gradually undermining the Amaa traditions, with far-reaching consequences for the role and office of the spirit-priest, who, nonetheless, continues to resist these powers.

Taking *Sheila Ajabna's* rebellion into account, Victor W. Turner tells us something about liberation theology. Although Turner speaks about ritual symbols, he, nonetheless, asserts that his principle can be applied to other cultural symbols and situations and, accordingly, one can identify liberation theology as an example. He clarifies his assertion in this way:

“... cultural symbols ... as originating in and sustaining processes involving temporal changes in social relations, and not as timeless entities. In my view, they condense many references, uniting them in a cognitive and effective field.”⁵⁸

Following this quotation, Turner’s theory has a number of facets as he correctly claims. In the traditional Amaa context, this theory extends to involve both the past and the present, whether in terms of the progressive traditional Amaa traditions and customs implicating symbols and rituals or of the liberation theology that is present in Amaa revolts against the British Colonial Administration and the *Mahdist jihad*, which still continues, as evidenced in the present Sudanese civil war and the drive of Islamic Fundamentalist Government for *islamisation* and *arabisation*.

Besides, “processes involving temporal changes in social relations” definitely apply to the irreversible changes resulting from modern influences at almost all levels of traditional African (not only the traditional Amaa) social organisation and function; even individuals have been influenced on sensory, spiritual, and material levels. Certainly, Amaa traditionalists are no exception, despite their vigorous resistance.⁵⁹

For instance, traditional Amaa have managed to maintain most elements of family solidarity in the face of modern forces, but it is unfortunate that this quintessentially cherished value has started to quiver. That is, among the modern Amaa, the family is being somewhat eroded, since the modern economic system enables individuals to gain wealth and act for individual gain without the traditional co-operation and interdependence of family members, and the father’s authority is becoming less and almost dormant in areas of ritual and social functions. Here, the Amaa traditional religion as group-tied is being destroyed by the *insidious* silent movement of the modernisation process.

Here, cross-cousin marriages among the *islamised* Amaa have gradually become a norm, and this is contrary to the traditional ritual restrictions. Furthermore, some modern Amaa women remain spinsters and single parenthood as a result of illegitimacy, though frowned upon, has, nonetheless, become widely accepted. In other words, the modernised Amaa family institution has become individualistic and somewhat haphazardly loose, but with confusion and woes! Perhaps, Vinogradoff is right in stating that ,

The development of modern economic ideas and relations is unquestionably breaking the primitive conceptions of family solidarity.⁶⁰

Here, perhaps, it is worth interjecting Peter Berger's helpful observation on the offensive nature of modern forces and the defensiveness of the traditionalist. He writes,

"The traditionalist defending himself cognitively against modernity almost inevitably incorporates elements of the latter within his own defense. This process of cognitive contamination operates mainly in one direction because modernity is represented in the traditionalist milieu by ... powerful political and economic forces."⁶¹

Indeed, modernity is too strong a force of change for the traditionalist, in the person of the spirit-priest, for instance, to repel. He can only try to resist, but, one may conclude, to no avail. However defensive he may be in this collision of *ideological forces*, the spirit-priest and his company cannot avoid the benefits of the modern material culture and tyranny of diverse means of communication. Furthermore, the power and impact of the complex modern state surround other aspects that he/she has to reckon with.⁶² This modern state has symbols, too, and secular rituals to carry out, though these may not be religious on the surface.⁶³

In addition to offering scientific and technological benefits that traditional Amaa can not possibly disregard, the missionary religions of Christianity and Islam have also contributed to the fissure of Amaa society into modern and traditional. Forms of religious groupings are the result, manifested in what social scientists call *syncretism*, with perhaps, the emergence of new religious traditions and customs.

Accordingly, the groupings that we have identified in Amaaland are: (1) orthodox traditionalists; (2) Christian fundamentalists; (3) Muslim fundamentalists who, using force, are now more active than ever before in a drive to *islamise* every Amaa, but without much success, for the adherents have started reverting to either Christianity or the traditional; (4) liberal Christians; (5) liberal Muslims (6) the transformers (or blenders of traditions) who adopt some practices from the traditional, Christian, and Muslim to produce a new understanding and a new way of worship; (7) those on the borderline who lack clear spiritual direction as a result of disorientation in values from the three traditions, i.e. traditional, Christian, and Muslim. This category of Amaa seems to have a leaning towards the traditional and Christian ways.

This is the trend of cultural change and its effect on society not only in Amaaland, but across the African continent, as the numerous scholarly works, discussed in the following section of African Religion in syncretism, testify.

10. AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN SYNCRETISM

Ray points to the “types of community” and to some formations of the neo-African traditional religion [known as independent churches]. In this respect, Ray states that

“prophet-healing churches have transformed Christianity according to pre-existing symbols, rituals, and types of community ...”⁶⁴

The prophet-healing or Aladura (praying) churches⁶⁵ employ African traditional symbols and rites in combination with Christian rites and scriptural elements in their worship. For instance, spirit possession, acts of divination, laying of hands on the sick, and active involvement of the adherent community in prayer that may induce spirit possession, an action which Barrington-Ward identifies among *Isoko*, *Urhobo*, *Iteskiri*, and *Igbo*⁶⁶ peoples of Nigeria since this is how communication is effected between the visible and the invisible in ritual dissociation. Here Barrington-Ward points out that colonialism revived spirits which had been inactive,

“invariably directly towards healing, cleansing away evil either killing or purifying witches,”⁶⁷ and that “Christianity first entered the area in a similar guise”.⁶⁸

Perhaps, Barrington-Ward should have acknowledged the failure of the historical churches to appreciate traditional African values that honour the presence of the very same Christian God there. This consequently stimulated Horton’s⁶⁹ argument in favour of independent churches. Horton argues that traditional religion can only be appreciated in terms of its own structure (see chart), in which ancestral values and spontaneity make possible the kind of conversion that is evident in the independent churches, i.e. the use of African values like spirit-possession, divination, dreams, traditional paraphernalia, ritual sacrifices, ancestors, healing, and so on, all of which have essential spiritual significance and a relationship to socio-economic factors.

So the rise of the independent churches is a reaction against alienation from African traditional values or rather being torn away from the ancestors. The independent churches, therefore, reveal the quest for the traditional equilibrium, characterised by a close

relationship between the visible and the invisible realms which form the “Unbroken Circle”, the synonym of *Eternity Now*. And this equilibrium is the connectedness which accentuates community rather than the new mode of individualism. So a number of scholars⁷⁰ rightly emphasise traditional African closeness with the numinous as the source of their equilibrium.

Fashole-Luke, for instance, noting correctly the contribution of the historical church missionaries in the promotion of colonialism,⁷¹ points out the alienation that missionaries caused between Africans and their cultures; that is, alienation from the ancestral values which *seems* to result in disconnectedness for traditional Africans.

Instead, the ancestral ways acquired a distinctly new veneer that scholars call *syncretism*, an essential factor in the process of modernisation in Amaaland. *Syncretism* is essential factor in the ambit of modernisation, for it blends both the new (Christianity and Islam respectively) and the traditional in an *inculturation-acculturation* process which, more or less, is similar to that of the Africans in the diaspora.

Scholars like Leonard Barrett, Fred G. Strum, and Stephen Neill⁷² show that Africans enslaved in the new world held on to the memories of the ways of their ancestors and that this could be considered a sort of commemorative-soteriology that was destined to comfort the community in diaspora. Because of this ancestral legacy and the emphasis on the relationship between the visible and the invisible, the ground was and is fertile for the African understanding of Christ as the ancestor, the First Ancestor.⁷³ Life hereafter only makes sense in connection with the ancestors, so the title Ancestor for Christ certainly signifies more for *African particularity* and life experience than the titles ‘Logos’ and ‘Lord’ which also arise from the old Hebrew and Hellenistic particularities and life experiences. Here the *historical Jesus* does not diminish non-Hebraic and non-Hellenistic contexts. This does not mean these titles should be forsaken since Christian doctrine involves selective africanisation; that is, Africans must adopt titles within their ancestral ambit of legacies that have meaning for the living, but without assuming the need to dissolve the African traditions into Christian ones, as some scholars do,⁷⁴ on the pretext that African traditional religion is a general revelation to be fulfilled in the Christian of

Hellenistic and Hebraic veneer, as assumed by some scholars like Mbiti, J.V. Taylor, Idowu, and Parrinder.⁷⁵

We do indeed acknowledge appreciatively the commitment of such profound scholars to the faith, but faith in Christ does not itself presuppose destruction of one culture, a blessing in God's wisdom, in favour of another. Instead, enrichment for each others' cultures should become the norm for greater understanding and harmony.

But extreme evangelical scholars express outright rejection for African traditions as heathen. One such is Byang Kato, drowned in 1975, whose views were endorsed by the American evangelist Billy Graham. Kato utterly rejects any association between Biblical Christianity and traditional African religion. For Kato, it is idolatry to do this in any way. Kato is emphatic on the difference between the two traditions, and, thus, is blind to the parallel similarities between the two traditions, each as enveloped in its *particularity*. Consequently, Kato regards traditional African Religion as rubbish to be condemned. In this regard, he states that

“The Biblical answer to the question concerning those who died before hearing the gospel seems to be that they go to hell. There is no clear optimism in this case”.⁷⁶

In my opinion, scriptures are not static, as Kato seems to presume.⁷⁷ Kato is either completely alienated from his ancestral traditions or chooses to ignore⁷⁸ the dynamic revelatory nature of the Scriptures as though God does not reveal Himself in other cultures. Mercy Oduyoye,⁷⁹ who points out that Africans “hold to the traditional religious beliefs and practices of their forbears to the exclusion of missionary religions”,⁸⁰ condemns Kato's extremely narrow Christian fundamentalist view of the scriptures which denies African values, especially the ancestors, whom he (Kato) condemns to “go to hell”.⁸¹

Despite his extreme view, Kato has a valuable point in saying that the scriptural and African traditions are different in spite of their apparent similarities. In other words, Kato rejects syncretism as unbiblical. Kato's kind of Christian fundamentalism suggests restriction of the Christian faith to a Hellenistic and Hebraic veneer, a veneer that de Heusch advocates⁸² in his criticism of Evans-Pritchard's theme of sin in traditional Nuer religion.⁸³

Here, Kato⁸⁴ agrees with Benjamin Ray⁸⁵ in arguing that Christian structures should not be imposed on African traditional structures, since they are different. On the other hand, the two scholars hardly agree, since Kato's perspective is biblical fundamentalism, and, therefore, not supportive of *syncretism*, in contrast to Ray's continuing view that

"African Independent Christianity has brought us back to the enduring themes of African traditional religions."⁸⁶

In this passage, Ray certainly acknowledges and advocates the Christian faith enrobed in African cultural particularity and life experience.

Further, Kato takes Mbiti to task. Though a committed Christian, Mbiti remains sentimentally tied to his ancestors,⁸⁷ and is a pioneer in the study of African Religion. In his *African Religions and Philosophy*, Mbiti⁸⁸ discusses a supposed monotheism of African people in terms of Christian systematic theology, a stance which Kato criticises harshly and calls "A Systematic Theology of African Traditional Religion". Kato holds⁸⁹ that Mbiti ignores⁹⁰ the Scriptures as though African Religion were fulfilled and needed no more "light from elsewhere".⁹¹ Furthermore, according to Kato,⁹² Mbiti's study of the connection between New Testament eschatology and Akamba eschatology⁹³ is filled with "abiblicism"⁹⁴ and, therefore, for Kato,⁹⁵ this leads to faulty hermeneutics that can only result in a profane *syncretism*.

Here, Kato's⁹⁶ position obviously rejects the African Independent (Indigenous) Churches, and implicitly "African religion in the Americas",⁹⁷ where the kind of *syncretism* found in Haiti, Brazil and United States of America seems similar to that of the African in its structures, i.e. ancestors, spirit possession, ritual sacrifice, dreams, doing their religion, laying of hands for healing, group-oriented,⁹⁸ and so on that constitute a sort of *oral theology*. Thus, V. Turner correctly notes that these churches are

"less likely to articulate ... the form of theology, doctrine, or creed in the Western Christian manner"⁹⁹

Here, V. Turner develops Zuess's¹⁰⁰ insight that articulates modes, experientially employed in worship in these churches, that are more meaningful to the African than the theologies of the historical churches.

In contrast, Kato condemns ancestors and the ancestral legacies, but, at the same time, upholds them with the intention of christianising them.¹⁰¹ Whereas, for the purpose of christianisation, Mbiti¹⁰² imposes Christian structures upon the African religious structures. This approach puts Mbiti in the middle ground in comparison to Kato's extremism¹⁰³ and those scholars who, like Barrett,¹⁰⁴ convincingly regard the *syncretism* of the African Independent Churches as an organic whole, rather than a phenomenon of many manifestations.

Barrett¹⁰⁵ argues that the Independent Churches are grounded in the African religion(s). Barrett considers these churches to be an organic whole, for they entrench African Christianity in African values and connectedness to ancestors. Such high regard for ancestors does not suppose worship but veneration, for ancestors are mediators between the visible and the domain of the Spirit.¹⁰⁶

Here, we could speculate that the Independent (Indigenous) Churches will eventually dominate the future African spiritual scene. Here, Appiah-Kubi¹⁰⁷ prefers to call these churches Indigenous rather than Independent for, he argues,

“Independent suggests that there is some more important reference point outside these churches”.¹⁰⁸

Indigenous Churches, explains Appiah-Kubi,¹⁰⁹ arise from “spiritual hunger” and are a continuation of traditional spiritual practices such as spontaneous prayer, divination, healing, and so on, which are central to the life of these churches.¹¹⁰

Here ancestors are a prominent force that contours the experience of syncretism, an experience that neither classical reason nor missionary religious ideology can completely diminish because it is constituted in the African being; it lingers on in individuals as well as in groups. For instance, Mbiti,¹¹¹ an Anglican theologian, admits his failure to remove his ancestors from his Christian heart.

Whereas Kibongi, a Catholic theologian, is ambivalent;¹¹² but his ambivalence¹¹³ reveals that it is hard for an African, who has experienced African traditional ways, to shake off ingrained ancestral legacies in favour of exclusive adherence to the historical Christian sense of God.

Similarly, for the enslaved Africans who held to their ancestral memories in the new world, *syncretism* meant clothing the African sense of God (Spirit) in a veneer of Christian faith meaning.¹¹⁴ Here, Brown and Chappelle¹¹⁵ argue that traditional African religion provides critical insights into the meaning of African-American culture. An African spirituality, Brown and Chappelle claim, is present in the African-American memory, i.e. “feelings, perceptions, and attitudes”.¹¹⁶ That is, a *sublime presence* of ancestral legacies pervades the African-American memory and is expressed in art and ritual, though mostly in a Christian veneer, (yet, they practise their religion) that can be seen in worship, liturgy, gospel and soul music,¹¹⁷ and most of all in the group-tied sense.

For these Africans of the diaspora, the acculturation process is inevitable. Brown and Chappelle go further to argue speculatively that biblical religion may have “closer affinity with the African tradition than the classical tradition of the west”,¹¹⁸ a position, similar to Bosch’s historical point in stating that the African God “shows startling similarities with El of Ugarit”,¹¹⁹

Both quotations support Evans-Pritchard’s¹²⁰ description and interpretation of Nuer religion, an interpretation Luc de Heusch¹²¹ has criticised as erroneous in methodology, specifically the Nuer sense of guilt and the act of ritual sacrifice, and the argument that its meaning and intent is based on Hebrew tradition. de Heusch specifically criticised the problematic interpretation of sin.

However, according to Bosch,¹²² European scholars, like de Heusch, neglect the biblical God in favour of Greek natural theology in the debate of European theologians over the meaning of God.¹²³ de Heusch¹²⁴ does not accept or chooses to ignore (a) the process of *syncretism* that shaped the historical church (b) parallel similarities and possible affinities between the Old Testament and African Religion, even though it is difficult to find any tangible evidence of historical linkage.¹²⁵

In our opinion, therefore, Evans-Pritchard’s interpretation of the Nuer sense of sin and ritual sacrifice¹²⁶ offers a parallel meaning and understanding that stems from the similarities apparent between the African and the Old Testament traditions. But de Heusch disagrees with this interpretation of ritual sacrifice in terms of sin, assuming it to

be western; he, thus, asserts that the “Western concept of sin is inapplicable to Nuer thought”.¹²⁷ Again, in making this assertion, de Heusch does not consider the *apparent parallel similarities* between the Old Testament Hebrew and the Nuer traditions. Perhaps, this could be an innovative step towards unifying African Religion, since such similarities of traditions have become the source threads for the evolutionary beginning of the Independent(Indigenous) Churches.

11. AMAA IN THE CONTEXT OF AFRICAN CULTURE

The term African culture is an umbrella description that does not disregard the *particularity and experience* of respective ethnic groups under this collective description. The *Spirit* (God) pervades grammar of these respective cultures. But the common denominators in the cultural traditions of African life and spirituality are the *ancestors*,¹²⁸ this idea of the *Spirit* (God, the cosmic architect of the world order and bestower of mind as a vital capacity¹²⁹ rather than an entity), kinship systems,¹³⁰ social structural building in rites of life crisis from birth to death, and functional ritual and sacrifice. All these are the possible central points that permeate respective contours in the diversity of African cultural landscape.

Some scholars reflect on whether to regard African Religion, the integrating element of culture, as one or many according to ethnic groupings. Parrinder,¹³¹ for one, argues that traditional African religions are similar in structure in that they are ancestor-based and should, therefore, be treated as one religion. Parrinder bases this position on the Christian denominational patterns with its doctrines and dogmas, which are inapplicable to the experiential African Religion in its cultural diversity. His point of the centrality of ancestors, as the undergirding common denominator, however, justifies the regard for African religion as *one* umbrella for the ethnic cultural diversity.

But Ray¹³² argues to the contrary that such a position amalgamates cultures of different ethnic groups (tribes) whose insights and approach to symbols and rituals are respectively distinct. Even the structures of respective ethnic mythologies and their modes of expression are distinct. Therefore, one group’s experience cannot possibly be applied to another in the interests of uniformity.

Ray's point is valid, but following Parrinder's position we regard African religion(s) as one religion of diverse ethnic cultures. Despite the traditional cultural diversity, ancestors and the idea of the *Spirit*, the common denominators, warrant this position of regarding African religions as one *African Religion*. Furthermore, the love-fear paradoxical relationship of the traditional African is common and the Amaa are no exception.

Despite this tense paradoxical relationship between the sacred and the profane, the common denominators enhance and maintain social equilibrium and group togetherness. These common denominators, especially ancestors, are the formative *numinous* forces that commonly shape African traditional thought as a system of beliefs and values that define both the traditional individual and the group as a unit.¹³³

Corporateness, community, and celebration in African Religion as group-tied are essential (see **chap. 7**). In both structure and function, the individual exists because of his/her group. Therefore, he/she does not behave according to individual whims that contravene with common norms, for the ancestors would then react against the collectivity. This tension prevails between the living who paradoxically want the invisible for aid and at the same time do not want it, since it is dangerous. It also prevails at rituals of life crisis, i.e. *transformation* (birth) rites, passage rites, marriage rites, as well as *retransformation* (death) rites and so on. Within this context, too, there exists a tension between the visible and the invisible that is mostly understood to be between the ancestors who may want rebirth and the free spirits which may want birth into a human lineage system. Though in tension, the two realms function interdependently as one circle- the "Unbroken Circle".

This tension shifts to simultaneously embrace locales of ritual polarities. Though perturbing, it is nonetheless a functional wheeler in the unitary circle which, for instance, Mary Douglas, in her "*Lele of Kasai*"¹³⁴ river of Congo, explains in terms of the spiritual consciousness of the traditional Lele. Like the traditional Amaa, Lele are conscious of their place as *intertwined with nature*, the diverse manifestation of *Abbrad'dee* (Creator Spirit: God).

The eight mountains of the traditional Amaa domain are the symbols that combine in connotation the obviously physical, representationally the original clans, and the founding ancestors who remain masters of them respectively. At present a mountain represents a traditional Amaa sub-nation (sub-tribe), a multi-clan lineage constituency. Hence, these mountains are more than peeping rocks, cushioned with vegetational slopes, dotting the terrain of traditional Amaaland. These mountains are symbols with political, economic, social, and spiritual dimensions involved in traditional Amaa life.

Thus, “*madayh dayh woo’loo ttaa’mwoe!*: The mountain has a headache!” is a common expression of complaint and warning from spirit-priests (as the late father of this writer did), ritual elders, and elders when a social problem or catastrophe is at their door step. Such warnings prevail through *direct* or *indirect divination* and sometimes both methods of *divination* concur. “The mountain has a headache!” is a metaphor that expresses the unhappiness of the ancestors. Such a statement by a traditional luminary demands immediate studious attention that will conclude with communal ritual sacrifices. Certainly, channels of contact with the numinous realm (divination), like healing, sacrifice, rites of passage from *transformation* (birth) to *retransformation* (death), are a common feature in traditional African spirituality that actions and physical symbols enhance.

As symbolic representations, therefore, traditional Amaa mountains, their fauna and flora are constant reminders of the presence of the spiritual realm, i.e. ancestors and others as integral to the social structure of the living, as Diop’s poem depicts (see **chart**).¹³⁵ So elders and their communities are conscious of the supernatural at every turn. From my experience of thirty years as a traditionalist Amaa traditional Amaa never doubt that their environment is populated with multitudes of *numinous* beings besides ancestors.¹³⁶ Though venerated, ancestors are not barriers to the traditionalists’ appreciation of the *Spirit (God)*.¹³⁷ On the multiplicity of the Spirit’s manifestation, Charles Leslie points out that the *Spirit (God)*

“is both the one and many in his diverse representations”¹³⁸

As such, then, the *Spirit* manifest in things of nature is implicated in the domain of moral questions, which is important in totemic-totemistic relations and associations.¹³⁹

Thus, traditional Amaa extend this spirit presence to identify and include other areas by way of moral discipline that subordinate the visible to the invisible in ways that are conducive to fecundity, corporateness, celebration, and community of both the visible and the invisible. As Diop's poem also indicates the living-dead are in the midst of the living. This is the goal of traditional Amaa life and thought as expressed in their vision of the *Spirit* manifest as follows,

(a) *Leeh*: the being or the spirit of both good and evil, a reference to the Spirit (God), the source of both moral conditions.

(b) *Leeh arngayo*: the being or the spirit of the sky or rain, thunder, moon, sun, and other heavenly bodies (see **chart**).

(c) *Besshew leeh*: the spirit or being of the home, the *compound*. Here, it refers to lineage ancestors; the possessing spirits (of priests), priests, spirit associates of family elders, or the guardian/ destiny spirits that are known as "*gheshinne*" which could also be punitive of misdemeanour. Such spirits espouse ritual symbols that occupy home space. Here, the totemic-totemistic relationships (see **chart**) come to facilitate the function of this category of spirit manifestation among living people. Hence, the visible and the invisible occupy the same space as a family unit.

(d) *Leeh koosuudough*: the spirit of evil as in (a).

(e) *Leeh kayloo*: the spirit of good as in (a).

(f) *Leeh warr'dough*: the spirit of love.

(g) *Durr'dough leeh*: the spirit of hate.

(h) *Boreo leeh*: the spirit of the way; in generic terms this also refers to behaviour, endeavours, travelling, and so on.

(I) [i] *Codeo leeh*: the spirit of the shrine - a "liminal" space for the interaction of spirit-priests, elders, ancestors, and other spiritual entities. *Codee* is a male ritual sphere and day resting place and place of socialisation of these elders. It is here they manage village affairs and resolve disputes.

[ii] *Tooss'aaow leeh*: the spirit of the house shrine. *Tooss'aa* is a female ritual sphere, except as part of the process of lineage transfer of a daughter upon marriage when a male (spirit-priest) is invited to ritual participation in this house shrine.

(j) *Kaylooh leeh*: the spirit of the earth (*kay'ell*). Traditional Amaa regard earth as a holy old relic. People swear on it, as they do with other phenomena such as the sun, the moon, mountains, seasons, rain, and so on. Traditional Amaa spirituality is attached to these diversity elemental symbols as the *Spirit* manifest in *Its* essential diffusion in creation. For this multiplicity of the *Spirit* manifestation, traditional Amaa have ritual masters (*irran*: ritual elders) who perform rituals directed to such manifestations of the *Spirit* in the diversity of elemental symbols.¹⁴⁰

Earth is never worshipped although traditional Amaa honour her in rites and rituals. *Thhowor*, an important spirit of the earth and responsible for fertility and fecundity, is honoured at sowing and harvest *tany'nyerayh* (rites). *Thhowor* and other spirits of the earth can affect or hinder growth, according to traditional Amaa belief.

Therefore, traditional Amaa must perform the appeasement *tany'nyerayh* (rite) before settling on a piece of land or clearing it for cultivation at the start of and during the farming season (*Bhwer*: May to September) and the thanksgiving rite at harvest season (*Kkhinn*: December to January). There is a spiritual (metaphysical) connectedness between the people and earth. Therefore, traditional Amaa do not sell or buy land. They can only lend or borrow. This is so for the sole reason that *Abbra'dee* created the *kay'ell* (earth) and it should neither be abused nor used as a commercial commodity. As such, traditional Amaa regard *kay'ell* as part of their traditional social organisation; it cannot, therefore, be disposed of, for earth is connected with the ancestors and the spirits responsible for fertility, fecundity, and growth.

(k) *Keyh'wooe leeh*: the spirit of domestic animals. These animals are an integral part of their respective human families. So, when a sacrificial ritual encounter occurs, a time of “liminal” tension for appreciation or correcting disharmony, it is always a domestic animal that pays with its life in exchange for the sacrificing community.

The sacrificing community *gives* an explanation to the victim. The ritual invocation prior to immolation follows an explanation speech to the victim as to why it is necessary for it to transfer to the invisible side of the community. Sacrifice, an act of self-giving, is personal. Hence, a sacrifice from the wild becomes impersonal and generic and, thus, less appreciated.

(I) *Woorungo leeh*: the spirit of the forest. The forest or the wild is associated with human economic activities. For the traditionalists, care must be taken to avoid abuse, lest the spirits be offended. Therefore, rituals for permission before clearing a forest for farming, both in concept and in practice, are the aversion of the hostility of spiritual entities in exploited locales or the reprisal of spirits of sacrificial victims, if no explanation is offered for their ritual destruction.

Abuse of such natural elements can lead to individual or communal quarrels. Such a quarrel will require a ritual reconciliation between the two parties that are in tension. A ritual act of reconciliation is a communal affair; in spite of the individual offence, guilt and liability falls upon the collectivity. Therefore, the “liminal” tension occurs between the visible and the invisible realms. Such a tension requires a ritual rendezvous with the spirit-priest (*kuunee* or *kuweir*).

The Lele, Douglas reports, set ritual categories in their approach to the diversity of the *Spirit* manifestation in their environment; that is, in the forest, whose wild human community is filled with spiritual entities in opposition to the Lele humankind community. This humankind community has its social structure built upon gender opposites which, in turn, define a ritualised division of labour between genders. Each gender executes its share of labour according to this definition.

The forest abode of spirits, Douglas continues, is predominantly the sphere of male economic activities, whereas the village grassland is the “executive sphere of women[’s]” economic activities. This grassland as “barren and dry” is a symbolism relevant to the female reproductive condition which the spirits may afflict for breaches.

The *Lele* opposite spheres are similar to those of the *Amaa* compound shrine (male sphere) and house shrine (female sphere). These opposite spheres of gender norms set the

ritual tone, categories, structure, and function of the traditional *Lele* people. According to Douglas, it is in this structure of opposites that *Lele* spirituality reveals the tension between mythology (*experientially lived-reality*) and ritual which equates to the tension between the visible and the invisible in the paradoxical love-fear relationship.

It is the sphere of such *tense opposites* of spiritual structures that V. Turner explains as “Planes of Classification”.¹⁴¹ Turner explores connotative and normative movements of symbols between the visible and the invisible; that is, symbols signifying tension between life and death, and the sacredness of the social and *numinous* order (see chart).

Thus, integral to *Lele* structure are the tensions in the village, the forest, and the genders. On this understanding, Douglas points out that *Lele* religious concepts are deeply embedded in their experiential spirituality,

“... the separation of the two spheres, forest and village, the separation of the sexes, women’s exclusion from the forest, the association of the forest with spiritual power, the neutrality of the grassland. To the Lele their *rites do not appear as a series of disconnected and meaningless acts [italics mine]*. The very economy and repetition of the themes they draw upon produces a kind of pattern which is intelligible in terms of their assumptions about the relation of God [Spirit] to men and animals”¹⁴²

The thresholds between these entities define and shape not only traditional *Lele*, but traditional African spirituality in general.¹⁴³

Hence, the themes of this structure may be summed up in healing, complementarity of the visible and the invisible, fecundity and fertility, which are basic to rites of life crisis.¹⁴⁴ It could also be suggested that the rites of *transformation* (birth) and *retransformation* (death) are significant to the “liminal” tension between the ancestors and those yet to be born.¹⁴⁵

In the light of this matrix of polarities, which are universal in traditional African culture, according to M. Douglas and V. Turner, the carriers of the essential spiritual stuff are realised in all things, with a potency relative to the levels within the localised cosmos of respective traditional African cultures. Hence, as is relevant to traditional Amaa, traditional Lele belief, Douglas notes, expresses the idea of the Spirit’s diverse manifestation as that of

“animals of the forest [who] are also under God’s power, though they have been given to the Lele for their food ... he [Spirit] originally gave all the animals in the forest to their ancestors to hunt and kill.”¹⁴⁶

Here Douglas echoes Tempels’ utilitarian interpretation rather than the traditional Africans’ primary fellow appreciation of that manifestation. That is, traditional Africans see and experience nature as a fellow human and relate to it accordingly, for the *Spirit* is manifest in it, not only in human beings as Evans-Pritchard maintains in relation to the Nuer view of the *Spirit* (*Kwoth*) as “*Kwoth*” which is in the flesh and is of the flesh. “*Kwoth*” is with the people and is of the people.¹⁴⁷

Tempels’ view is opposed to this traditional African view of nature and their place in it, as Evans-Pritchard clearly shows. Tempels argues on the basis of the fact of exploitation of nature in terms of “vital force”¹⁴⁸ which, to our understanding, is a vital capacity, representing energy devoid of spiritual aspect. “Vital force” does not represent an entity equal to the multiple spiritual entities of the *Spirit* manifest.

So for the traditional African, nature is endowed with spiritual entities as the diffused essential *Spirit* of God. This is why a traditional Amaa would perform the rite of permission, in order to appease as well as to ask for the blessing of the spiritual presence in a particular plot, before cutting a tree or clearing a piece of land for farming. Here, traditional Africans in common see nature as an integral part of the human community. It is, therefore, treated with respect and sensible stewardship.

Hence, there is a mutual fellowship between the traditional African humankind and nature. This mutual fellowship and the sensible stewardship practice towards nature is contrary to Tempels’ idea of exploitation that says

“all beings in the universe possess vital force of their own: human, animals, or inanimate. Each being has been endowed by God with a certain force, capable of strengthening the vital energy of the strongest being of all creation: man.”¹⁴⁹

This quote gives a representative view of the modern utilitarian practice which involves the destructive domination of the non-humankind members of the human community. As such, then, it is divorced from the traditional African sense of creation as an inclusive human community (humankind, other flora and fauna), where mutual respect predominates.

As such, then, the traditional African associates the common denominators of traditional life and spirituality with the conceptions of human personality,¹⁵⁰ and though postulating a life principle not fully material, this is still devoid of sharp dualism of body and spirit,¹⁵¹ since one (temporal) is a metaphor for the other real (spiritual). Accordingly, for the traditional African, human personality has a *normative dimension*¹⁵² that introduces the African communalism¹⁵³ and humanism¹⁵⁴ of moral responsibility into the definition of the individual within the context of group, to which the individual owes duties and demands rights. An explanatory example here is the act of asking permission and offering a sacrifice to the *presence* on a plot of land before exploitation which is an act of sharing as real as sharing with fellow human beings. All forms of sharing carry a spiritual dimension, for the spirits have a part of it. And for the traditional African sharing demands stewardship and clear (*cool: booshee ko'shill*) hearts since the partaking spirits (i.e. ancestors and others) penetrate the thoughts of the visible participants.

Ancestors are, therefore, central to the kinship systems of traditional African societies. The ancestors symbolise most hallowed African values that shape the structure and function of their societies. They signify the traditionalist connection with the realm of the invisible, their origins. The invisible, often associated with the sky (see **chart**), connotes the extension of the realm of the earth, the realm of the living, its flora and fauna. The realm of the invisible is a spiritual realm (a mode) inhabited by the ancestors, the living-dead, and other *numinous* beings who vibrate in the matrix of the localised cosmos. Both realms signify the matrix in which the living (*visible realm*) have relations with the Supreme Being (*Abbra'dee*). Such relations are usually indirect, diffused through the agents of the invisible, mainly the ancestors, who are part of the invisible realm.

As *oral* empiricists, traditional (as well as modernised) Africans inherently incline to favour the application of themselves to their beliefs and values. And wearing amulets and charms are symbols of spiritual dimension, in relation to which Ayandele exaggerates his cynical criticism of the Christian pastor and others, who express their ancestral connectedness in the quest for the involvement of their spiritual world, as superstitious.¹⁵⁵

So the traditional African shows an empirical approach to life and spirituality, for they must experience what they associate with, and act accordingly. This explains briefly their religious expression in different art forms like masks, paraphernalia, clapping, singing, and dancing, ritual dissociation, spirit-possession and divination, and so on that represent forms of connective experience with the invisible. Perhaps, this to some extent explains the participant motive of the traditional African in the context of worship, in which they perform their religion in an artistic manner that is capable of grasping the interrelationship of myths, drumming, dancing, or ritual gestures, just to mention a few of the arts of worship as means of contact with the invisible.

So relations with the *Spirit* (God) are indirect as diffused through the agents (spirit-priests: mediums and messengers, i.e. mainly the ancestors) of the invisible. And in venerating the ancestors in all aspects, the traditional Africans indicate the sense of time (as defined in ancestors) which gives spiritual significance to kinship systems and social responsibility. In other words, traditional Africans are constantly aware of their ancestral connection to the Supreme Being. Here connections involve structures of visible and invisible contours, expressed in symbols also, i.e. sacred stick (toewoe, spear, and so on).

This structural framework is bound into the kinship system and functions as such. It is the basis for a communal interpretation of events from the perspective of their mythologies, the source of history, and thus the inspiration and thought embraced in the idea of the spirit, which itself is facilitated and made tangible in totemic-totemistic (symbols) relationships that, in themselves, are rituals for ordering the complex daily flow of life.

Here we may compare the traditional Amaa predetermined lineage-based belief to that of the Akan of Ghana. In his The Akan Doctrine of God, Danquah¹⁵⁶ gives a definition of the Akan deity (*Nyame Nyankopon Odomonkama*) as being of the same blood as the Akan people. As the source of Being, Danquah says, the Akan God is the essential Ancestor, diffused in the fundamental spirit (*Kra*) of the Akan people. Spirit *Kra*, though interpreted in Christian terms, is similar to Amaa '*Abbadia*', the founding ancestor, represented in the sacred stick (*toewoe*) which stands parallel to the symbol of the *Golden*

*Stool*¹⁵⁷ in the Ashanti shrine, where the chief-priest (Asantehene) conducts ceremonial rituals. Asantehene, sitting on the ritual *Golden Stool*, represents the presence of ancestral community and the pre-eminence of the spirit *Kra*. Here, the concept of ancestorhood underlies the institution of priesthood, the juridical authority of the Asantehene, the community organisation, and the communal interpretation of events in relation to their mythologies (the source of embodied history).

Here again, the role of the *spirit* ancestor is central for highlighting the relationship of Ashanti *experience* to the construction and reproduction of historical consciousness and identity. This, then, demonstrates the extent to which ancestor-related practices are bound in rites and ritual techniques for experientially engaging a socially constituted past for peoples to make and remake their social world, since the social world is fluid and not a given truth.¹⁵⁸

And rites wholly determine the expression of the idea of the Spirit (God), spirits of the living-dead, free spirits, and spirits of the ancestors who, for the traditional Amaa, constitute the world of the invisible. Spirits are more accessible in ritual than in the account of religion, primarily in terms of feelings or inner mental spin-offs. These rites are oral and orality, for them, presents a practical view of the nature of the ultimately real and its relation to human existence. They are practical, because their primary concern is with the attainment of wholeness that delivers their community from the limiting imperfections of human existence, visibly or invisibly.

It is within this structure that the vision is *conceptualised* and *actualised* by means of rituals and symbols, forms of divination, and practical analyses of issues at hand and here empiricism predominates. The ritual way of life may, perhaps, be thought of as a distinct area of traditional thought and experience reflected in the structural framework of the African, whether it be the Amaa or any other traditional society.

Symbols are constantly involved in the daily flow of life. In one way, the symbolic involvement is totemic and reflected in the totemistic relationships that we have learned of from Evans-Pritchard's *Nuer Religion*¹⁵⁹ and Lienhardt's *Divinity and Experience*.¹⁶⁰ In actuality, traditional people are emotive in the totemic-totemistic relationships to the point

of fighting back if a native's totem is violated in any manner. This attitude of veneration to one's totem (emblem/symbol) is also extended to other things of nature, which, according to the Amaa, are an integral part of the human community. No wonder, then, that traditional Amaa natives, like their Nuer, Dinka, Fungor, Kao, and Nyaro counterparts, frown upon those persons who kill animals just for meat.

The spirit-priest is always at the centre of solving problems of ritual significance, such as those of totemic violations. The works of Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer, Lienhardt on the Dinka, and J.C. Faris on the south-eastern Nuba, to mention just three of the multitude of available books on this subject, highlight the central role of the spirit-priest as the facilitator for the African idea of Spirit (God). Spirit-priestly facilitation makes tangible the workings of the *Spirit*. The Spirit-priest is known by various descriptive titles according to the various respective traditional cultures, such as Leopard-skin (*Kuwar*) among the Nuer, spirit-priest (*Kuunee/ Kuweir*) among the Amaa, to mention two of the diverse cultural groups on the African continent. All are facilitators for the same idea of the Spirit (God), whom they experience as "*Kwoth*" among the Nuer, "*Deng*" among the Dinka, and "*Abbra'dee*" among the Amaa.

12. SUMMARY

Ancestors, as founders of kinship systems, are integral to the workings of the Spirit and to mythologies. They are expressed in symbols or artefacts, totemic-totemistic relations, and ritual practices, which all converge in forming and necessitating the office and system of spirit-priesthood and ritual elderhood, both of which constitute elderhood. Elderhood is *assimilated* with ancestorhood, which, in its pervasiveness, becomes a structural-functional "fusion", a term used by Evans-Pritchard (1956) and re-iterated by Uchendu (1976), re-stated as "blend" by Faris (1989), living-dead and "bilingual" by Mbiti (1969), and "helpers and messengers" by Dymond, G.W. (1950), while Achebe (1969) describes it in the person of spirit-priest as "One half of him was man and the other half *mmo* [spirit] And half of the things that he ever did were done by this spirit side" and Diop concludes it in "Those who are dead are never gone", a poem which expresses that

the living and the living-dead occupy the same matrix.¹⁶¹ This “fusion”, therefore, demonstrates the concept of the “Unbroken Circle”, a synonym of Eternity Now.

According to the concept and practice of traditional African spirituality, ancestors define and order the structures and function of the traditional African world which adheres to its values in traditions and customs. As such, then, the traditional African religious system is inherent, i.e. it has no founder. This concept of African spirituality and practice and the idea of the Spirit carry through to the Neo-African Religion in a form of syncretism which will, perhaps, predominate the spirituality of the African continent in future, for, in our opinion, African historical churches seem gradually to have become more defensive while incorporating begrudgingly a minimum of elements of African traditional culture into its liturgy, i.e. drums, for instance.

This work involves a cultural anthropological approach, intertwined with an active implicit theology (the traditional Amaa way of doing their religion). After all, culture is a pregnant, overshadowing descriptive term. Such an approach is concerned with symbols (nature, totemic and totemistic as well as artefacts), site and landmark names, and mythology (the carrier of oral history) interconnect to establish an apparently credible history of a traditional people such as the Amaa. This information is maintained in the Amaa language, i.e. in a network of proverbs, legends, riddles, and fables that are easily transmittable from one generation to another although some loss, distortion or blurring of meaning occurs. This active implicit theology is embodied in language symbols,¹⁶² behaviour and relationships, in spiritual practice, and in social solidarity.¹⁶³ These traditional meanings have become somewhat fluid as a result of modernisation and the presence of the missionary religions of Christianity and Islam, ideologies for change.

CHAPTER TWO

FOOTNOTES

1. Colson, E., "Migration in Africa: Trends and Possibilities," in Social Change: The Colonial Situation, ed. by I. Walterstein, 1966, p.107.
2. Stevenson, R.C., "The Nyamang of the Nuba Mountains," in Sudan Notes and Records, No. 23, 1940, p.17.
3. From the personal knowledge of this writer: Church Mission Society elementary school in Salara closed in 1955; and the C.M.S. Medical Mission closed in 1962.
4. Greenberg, J.H., The Languages of Africa, 1963, p.85.
5. Appleyard, David, "The Languages of the Sudan (Nilo-Saharan Languages)," in Atlas of the World's Languages, ed. by Christopher Moseley et al., 1994, p.271.
6. *ibid.*, pp. 271-273.
7. Nadel, S.F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes in Kordofan, 1947.
8. Gould, J. and Kolb, W.L.(eds.), A Dictionary of Social Sciences, 1964, p.58.
9. Turner, Victor W., "Color Classification in Ndembu Ritual: A Problem in Primitive Classification," chap. 3 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.
10. Nadel, S. F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes of Kordofan, 1947, p.453.
11. (a) *ibid*, pp.393, 394.
(b) Similar to the past Amaa, the Ashanti of Gold Coast (now Ghana) assimilated their slaves. In this regard R.S. Rattray writes,
"The typical slave was a recognised member of a household and possessed rights and duties ... and ultimately might become heir to his master".
Rattray, R.S., Ashanti Law and Constitution, 1929, pp. 38, 33-46.

Kamodoo: (in the past) was a category of persons bought from his/her nation (tribe). Being sold was a capital punishment for what traditional Amaa consider a heinous crime in breach of taboos such as incestuous relationship with daughter, sister, mother, or any female kin, or homosexuality, or murder of a blood relative such as a sibling, mother, father, uncle, or any member in the extended family. Instead of killing the culprit who turned himself/ herself into a *thing by an abhorrent* act, such punishment was commuted to selling the person to a distant (different) nation (tribe). In the past, the Amaa bought from and sold such culprit persons. Such a person (*kamodoo*) was normally assimilated into the family of the purchaser (after ritual performance) as son (regardless of age), daughter, or wife. Henceforth, such a person had the rights and duties of the indigenous persons.

-koy'doo: in assimilation significance, *kamodoo* is synonymous with *koy'doo*. The only difference is that *koy'doo* was a war captive and was either not redeemed by his/her nation (tribe) or family or chose assimilation into the captor's lineage and nation (tribe). This category of (*koy'doo*) enslaved persons, if redeemed, became the *boorrioo iran* (*the masters on the way of peace*). That is, emissaries or ambassadors of peace. *Boorrioo iran* were immune from re-capture or harm; they had the same status of protection as the spirit-priests who also were involved in peace missions and pacts between the nations (tribes).

This descriptive word “*koy’doo*” is derived from the noun “*kodee*”, meaning wood or the wild. In order to restrain an animal, traditional Amaa tie long forked wood (*toerowe*) to the neck. With hands tied, traditional Amaa used the same method in restraining war captives, whom they called *toeroo koy’doo* (*thing of or slave to wood*). This terminology “*thing of or slave to wood*” signifies the “*thingness*” of captives restrained in this humiliating manner but until such a time when they were either ransomed or ritually assimilated into Amaa society. The process of regaining human identity was more or less *similar to the new born whose identity is the identity of a living thing* (*keeh kamoorowe: a thing of the living*) until it is ritually named and incorporated into *its* family, lineage, clan, and nation (tribe). All this process in both situations involve(s/d) ancestors, for they are the founders of the traditional Amaa society.

-*sheera’doo*: was the wandering (stateless) person who might have been driven out of his/her homeland for one reason or another (possibly similar to those reasons against *Kamodoo*) and found by an Amaa. He/she was assimilated into the founder’s lineage with the same rights and duties as son, daughter or wife. This descriptive word “*sheera’doo*” is derived from the Amaa infinitive “*sherren*” (transitive verb), meaning, to make or cause someone, a beast, or a fowl to flee, vanish, or run away.

12. Nadel, S.F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes of Kordofan, 1947, p.363.
13. Stevenson, R.C., “The Nyamang of the Nuba Mountains,” in Sudan Notes and Records, No.23, 75, (1940), p77.
14. Sagar, J.W., “Notes on the History, Religion and Customs of the Nuba,” in Sudan Notes and Records, No.5, 1922, p.137.
15. Stevenson, R.C., The Nuba Peoples of Kordofan Province: an Ethnographic Survey, unpublished M.Sc. (Econ.) *Thesis*, Univ. of Khartoum, 1965, pp.145-148.
16. Ibid.
17. Hill, R., Egypt in the Sudan 1820-1881, 1959.
18. MacMichael, H.A., A Handbook of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1922, pp.181-182.
19. MacMichael, H.A., (i) The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1934, p.18-20.
(ii) The Tribes of Northern and Central Kordofan, new edition, 1967.
20. Ohrwalder, J., Ten Years’ Captivity in the Mahdi’s Camp, 1892, pp.180-192.
21. Diop, B.A. in J.V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, pp.63,160.
22. Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, pp.304-310.
23. Hawkesworth, D., “The Nuba of Southern Kordofan” in Sudan Notes and Records,. 15, 1932/1933, p.161.
24. Traditional Amaa (*Nyimang*) clans, though in strict segmentation of lineage systems,* are not restricted to locales. This is why each mountain is a multi-clan composed. And lineage clans observe traditions and taboos relevant to them. A clan is called “*aara*”, a bullrush grain in a literal translation. The lineage is the *stem* (***boodoo***: *same womb, rear* [*same ancestor*]) and its cone (*woo’loo*) consists of the grains (*aara*: clans). This lineage system, therefore, constitutes the controlling features of the traditional Amaa social organisation. A clan, also segmented into sub-clans, is, therefore, a group of people descending from the same remote ancestor - remote in memory but not in presence among the living progeny.

* Nadel, S.F., "A Study of Shamanism in the Nuba Mountains," in Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute, 76, 25, (1945-1946), p.31. Nadel uses the word "ara [*one a*]" (bullrush millet) correctly to describe the traditional Amaa lineage system in its social organisation, for the traditional Amaa themselves employ this term [*double 'aa': araa*] symbolically to branch off the second meaning applicable to their social organisation in the likeness of bullrush millet with one cone of grains. I think R.C. Stevenson** missed the point of *symbolism* of traditional Amaa when he disagrees with Nadel's (*ara*) correct interpretation of Amaa social organisation.

**Stevenson, R.C., The Nuba Peoples of Kordofan Province: An Ethnographic Survey, unpublished M.Sc.(Econ.) *thesis*, Univ. of Khartoum, 1965, pp.180-192.

25. *Ttemel* (axe) and *ka'dang* (hoe) are examples of implements used in economic activities which are mostly found in agriculture, growth, and land. Such implements and crops (e.g. *aara* [see No.24]) are sometimes employed symbolically at points of the traditional social organisation. Traditional Amaa identify with these implements and crops as well as with the land. The term *ttemel* is used as an age-grade grouping title; that is, members of an age-grade do not address each other by their proper and the given names of initiation rites. Instead, they use this term *ttemel* as the title of address among themselves. It simply means "you are my equal". It is a taboo for age-grade *equals* to address each other by proper or initiation given names. The term *ttemel* also means *labour* through which a traditional Amaa establishes his livelihood activities (farming) and, thus, relationships with plots he clears, farms, and leaves fallow. The term *Ttemel* is also applied to situations of land borrowing. A former user of an agricultural land asks for a ritual token (normally a rooster and a pot of millet beer) that he offers to the invisible (ancestors) owners before the new occupier starts farming. It is a form of permission and a request for the fruitfulness of that piece of land. This token is called *ttemel*, a reference to the axe that the first user employed in clearing the land. Here, there is also the ritual value of human-thing relationship; the relationship with the land is, therefore, so deep that it can only be borrowed; it cannot be sold, for *thhowor* the ancestors are part of it. To these *numinous* entities of the earth, the sacrificial animal and circumcision blood, a libation offering, flows for maintenance of *connectedness* and, hence, enhancement for fertility, fecundity, community, corporateness and celebration.
26. MacMichael, H.A., The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1934, pp.160-176.
27. Arkell, A.J., A History of the Sudan, 1955, p.106.
28. Stevenson, R.C., "The Nyamang of the Nuba Mountains," Sudan Notes and Records 23, No.75, 1940.
29. See N15, p.138.
30. Stevenson, R.C., "The Doctrine of God in the Nuba Mountains," in African Ideas of God: A Symposium, ed. by E.W. Smith, 1950.
31. See (i) N27, p.106; (ii) N15, pp. 145-148.
32. This is a reconstructed history built on oral history.
33. Nadel, S.F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes in Kordofan, 1947, p.380.
34. Ben-Amos, Dan, "The Seven Strands of Traditions: Varieties in its Meaning in American Folklore Studies," in Journal of Folklore Research, 21, 2 and 3, 1984, pp.97-132.

35. Ancestors are central to kinship systems of traditional African societies. They symbolise most hallowed African values that shape the structure and function of traditional societies. They signify the African's profound connection with the realm of the invisible with their origins.
36. Tension between the visible and the invisible is mostly understood to be between the ancestors who may want rebirth and the free spirits who may want birth into human lineage systems. This tension exists between the living who paradoxically want the invisible for aid and at the same time do not want it, since it is dangerous. It also exists at rituals of life crisis, i.e. ritual initiations, etc.
37. The Amaa people regard the free spirits of nature as erratic for they are believed to be manipulatable either for good or evil depending on persuasion of the purpose.
38. See N21.
39. Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.
40. See N37.
41. Lamb, A.J.R., "Operations against the Nuba Gebels," in The Cavalry Journal, No. 25, p.556.
42. Nadel, S.F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes in Kordofan, 1947, p.447.
43. This combining and bonding is in the intimate participation with the past, which is present-past-participation. This combined participation in the traditional African sense of community-continuity involves the past and future (in those yet to come and *retransformation*) alike in the context of here and now.
44. This is a Javelin-shaped *toewoe* (sacred stick).
45. Age is important here. Among traditional Amaa old age is always privileged. Older persons always have the first say.
46. (a) Achebe, Chinua Arrow of God with an introduction by K.W.J. Post, 1969, p.220.
(b) Barrington-Ward, Simon "The Centre Cannot Hold... Spirit Possession as Redefinition," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, pp.455-458, 464-468.
47. Achebe, Chinua Arrow of God, with an introduction by K.W.J. Post, 1969, p.220.
48. All activities carry a liturgical connotation, for the invisible and the visible occupy the same matrix in which the living have relations with the Supreme Being through the ancestors. Such connotative activities, reflecting the opposition and complementarity of essential poles (*male<>female, sky<>earth, nature<>culture, visible<>invisible*, and so on), are a *perpetual call of togetherness to togetherness and harmony that enriches Being*.
(a) Turner, Victor W., "Planes of Classification," chap. 1 in The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure, 1989.
(b) Douglas, Mary, "The Lele of Kasai," in African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples, ed. by Daryll Forde, 1976.
(c) see **chart**.
49. Nadel, S.F, The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes in Kordofan, 1947, p.453.
50. Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, translated from French by Willard R. Trask, 1959, p.88, 136-137. See also N162 for the relevant quote.

51. MacMichael, H.A., A Handbook of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1922.
52. MacMichael, H.A., The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1934, p.100.
53. *ibid.*
54. *Nitil* (*Ngihdill* or *Ngihdillong*) and *Tundia* (*Ttwaa'na* or *Ttwaa'nong*) are the Amaa sub-nations (sub-tribes) that opted out of participation with *Sheila Ajabna* in the armed rebellion of 1917 against the British Colonial Rule. That rebellion failed and the Amaa were subdued and the indirect rule was introduced. These two sub-nations are the most open to new ways, e.g. the most *islamised* groups in Amaaland are found in these two sub-nations.
55. Nadel, S.F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes in Kordofan, 1947, p.472.
56. *ibid.*, p.470.
57. (a) Fanon, Frantz, "The Intellectual Elite in Revolutionary Culture," in The Africa Reader: Independent Africa, ed. by Wilfred Cartey and Martin Kilson, 1970.
 (b) Those who have been torn away from their ancestral values are considered disoriented, whom the traditional Amaa call "*sooloo*" and the Bantu call "*evolue*". There is a gulf between the traditional and the disoriented and between the latter two and the alienated ("*evolue*" or *sooloo*) Africans. To this effect, Placide Tempels writes,
- "The *evolue*', and often the Christian [and Muslim have] never effected a reconciliation between his new way of life and his former native philosophy, which remains intact just below the surface (of his behaviour), though we have rejected it in toto, together with the (ensuing) tribal customs that we misunderstand and disapprove [*italics mine*]. This philosophy was, however, the characteristic feature which made the Bantu the man he was. It belonged to his essential nature. To abandon it amounts to intellectual suicide. It should have been our prime task to add new nobility to this Bantu thought".
- Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, 1959, pp.26-27 Tempels' paternalism acknowledges the "native philosophy, which remains intact just below the surface ([a reference to the presence of **ancestors in the commemorative-normative-narrative**] of his behaviour)" is the element that enables the disoriented (those who have been exposed to modern ways and missionary religions), especially Christians, to reconcile the old and new spiritual traditions in order to **conclude a fourth spiritual tradition** which we know as the *African Independent (Aladura) or Indigenous Churches*
58. Turner, V.W., The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989, p.55.
59. Tempels, Placide, Bantu Philosophy, 1959, pp.170-189
60. (a) Vinogradoff, P., "The Joint Family," in Anthropology of Early Law, ed. by L. Krader, 1966, p.122.
 (b) Wilson, Monica, Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa, 1957.
 (c) Wilson, Monica, Communal Rituals of the Nyakyusa, 1959.
61. Berger, Peter, B. Berger and H. Kellner, The Homeless Mind: Modernisation and Consciousness, 1968, p.103.
62. The present (1999) Sudanese State's use of force to convert the traditional people to their ideology has caused ecumenical Amaa Muslims (still appreciative of their traditional background) to return to either Traditional Religion or Christian faith.
63. See N61.

64. Ray, Benjamin, African Religions: Symbols, Ritual, and Community, 1976, p.215.
65. (a) Omoyajowo, Akin, "The Aladura Churches in Nigeria since Independence," in Traditional Religions in West Africa, ed. by E A. Ade Adegbola, 1983.
 (b) E.A. Ayandele writes,
 "... arising out of spiritual dissatisfaction ... are the Pentecostal or Spiritualist Churches. These Aladura Churches, as they are generically labelled, are certainly closer to the grassroots than their more elitist predecessors. Their emphasis on things of the Spirit, their freedom from the cultural, ecclesiastical and doctrinal yoke of the Western-established Churches and their relative worldly poverty, are characteristics that stand as a rebuke to their more elitist and more prestigious co-religionists.",
 in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, p.610.
66. Barrington-Ward, Simon, "The Centre Cannot Hold, Spirit possession as Redefinition," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, p.454.
67. *ibid*, p.459.
68. *ibid*, p.461.
69. Horton, Robin, "African Conversion." In Africa 41,2 (April 1971) pp.85-108.
70. (a) Oshun, C.O., "Aladura Revivals in a Colonial Situation: A Conflict Model in Mission," in African Church Historiography: An Ecumenical Perspective, ed. by Ogbu Kalu, 1988.
 (b) Dickson, Kwesi, "Continuity and Discontinuity between the Old Testament and African Life and Thought," in African Theology en Route, ed. by Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, 1979.
71. Fashole-Luke, Edward, "Introduction," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, pp.357-358.
72. (a) Barrett, Leonard, "African Religion in the Americas: The Islands in Between," in African Religions: A Symposium, ed. by Newell Booth, 1977.
 (b) Strum, Fred G., "Afro-Brazilian Cults," in African Religions: A Symposium, ed. by Newell Booth, 1977.
 (c) In the Caribbean countries
 "... primitive Africa is very much alive in them; and this wholly different world lives just beyond the lights of the cities, and plays a great part in the life of almost the entire population....",
 writes Stephen Neill, Christian Faith and Other Faiths: The Christian Dialogue with Other Religions, second edition, 1961, p.126.
73. Davidson, J., "The Doctrine of God in the Life of Ngombe, Belgian Congo [now Congo]," in African Ideas of God: A Symposium, ed. by E.W. Smith, 1950, pp.162-165.
74. Tempels, Placide, Bantu Philosophy, 1959. Tempels is among the scholars who did not realise the eventual acculturation-inculturation process would unveil the pre-existent presence of Jesus (the First Ancestor from all eternity) among traditional Africans. This process is clearly demonstrated in Faces of Jesus in Africa, ed. by Robert J. Schreiter, 1992.
75. (a) Mbiti, John, African Religions and Philosophy, 1969.
 (b) Parrinder, G. African Traditional Religion, 1976.
 (c) Idowu, Bolaji, "God," in Biblical Revelation and African Belief, ed. by Kwesi Dickson et al., 1969.
76. Kato, Byang, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, 1973, p.181.
77. *ibid*.
78. *ibid*.

79. Oduyoye, Mercy, Hearing and Knowing, 1986.
80. *ibid*, p.109.
81. Kato, Byang, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, 1973.
82. de Heusch. Luc, Sacrifice in Africa: A Structuralist Approach, translated by Linda O'Brien and Alice Morton, 1985, p.8.
83. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956.
84. See N81.
85. Ray, Benjamin, African Religions: Symbol, Ritual, and Community, 1976.
86. *ibid*, p.215.
87. Mbiti, John, "The Encounter of Christian Faith and African Religion," in Third World Liberation Theologies, ed. by Dean Ferm, 1986.
88. Mbiti, John, African Religions and Philosophy, 1970.
89. Kato, Byang, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, 1973, p.69.
90. Mbiti, John, Concepts of God in Africa, 1979.
91. See N89.
92. *ibid*.
93. See N88.
94. See N81.
95. *ibid*.
96. *ibid*.
97. Barrett, Leonard, "African Religion in the Americas: The Islands in Between," in African Religions: A Symposium, ed. by N. Booth, , 1977.
98. United States Supreme Court, "The Supreme Court: Unanimous on Religious Freedom, Divided on Its Meaning: Animal Sacrifice: A Ban on Ritual Slaughter Is Struck Down by Justices," in The New York Times, Saturday, June 12, 1993, p.Y 9.
99. Turner, V.W., "New Religious Movements in Primal Societies," in A Handbook of Living Religions, ed. by John Hinnells, 1969, p.444.
100. Zuess, Evan, Ritual Cosmos: Sanctification of Life in African Religions, 1979.
101. (a) Kato, Byang, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, 1973, p.181.
Kato's *Christian fundamentalism* echoes the *zealous admonition* to missionaries of (b) Dietrich Westermann, Africa and Christianity, 1937, p.94. Both scholars miss the point that the *Gospel of Christ is transcultural*, to which the *First Council of Jerusalem* attests (The Holy Bible, K.J.V., Acts 15).
102. See N88.
103. See N101.
104. Barrett, D.B., Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary African Movements, 1968.
105. *ibid*.

106. Abogunrin S.O., "The Search for the Historical Jesus in Relation to Christianity in Africa," in Africa Theological Journal 9, 2 (November 1980), pp.18-29.
107. Appiah-Kubi, Kofi, "Indigenous African Christian Churches: Sign of Authenticity," in African Theology en Route, ed. by Appiah-Kubi et al., 1979.
108. *ibid.*, p.210.
109. *ibid.*
110. (a) Etuk, Udo, "New Trends in Traditional Divination," In Africa Theological Journal 13, 2 (1984), pp.83-91.
 (b) Sempore, Sidbe, "Conditions of Theological Service in Africa: Preliminary Reflections," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, p.519.
111. Mbiti, John, "The Encounter of Christian Faith and African Religion," in Third World Liberation Theologies, ed. by D. Ferm, 1986.
112. Kibongi, Buana R., "Priesthood," in Biblical Revelation in African Beliefs, ed. by Kwesi Dickson et. al., 1969, p.55.
113. *ibid.*
114. (a) See N104.
 (b) Peel, B., Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba, 1968.
 (c) Peel, B., "The Christianisation of African Society: Some Possible Models," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Fashole-Luke et. al., 1978.
 (d) Sempore, Sidbe, "Conditions of Theological Service in Africa: Preliminary Reflections," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, p.519.
115. Brown, Charles, Yvonne Chappelle, "African Religions and the Quest for Afro-American Heritage," in African Religions: A Symposium, ed. by Newell Booth, 1977, p.253.
116. *ibid.*, p.242.
117. *ibid.*
118. *ibid.*, p.253.
119. (a) Bosch, David, "God Through African Eyes," in Relevant Theology for Africa, ed. by Hans-Jurgen Becken, 1973, p.74.
 (b) James, E. O., "The Ugaritic Epic of Baal," in Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East: An Archaeological and Documentary Study, 1958, pp.159-162.
120. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956.
121. de Heusch, Luc, Sacrifice in Africa: A Structuralist Approach, 1985.
122. Bosch, David, "God Through African Eyes," in Relevant Theology for Africa, ed. by Hans-Jurgen Becken, 1973.
123. *ibid.*
124. See N121.
125. Isaiah 37:9, The Holy Bible (authorised King James Version). Perhaps, the mention of *Tirhakka*, King of *Nubia*, should give some clues that there existed some kind of interaction between *Nubia* and the Old Testament Israel.
126. See N120.
127. See N121.

128. Traditional Amaa see ancestors (the founders of traditional societies) as the extension of human life. Therefore, life beyond the grave makes sense only in terms of the ancestors.
129. Placide, Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, 1959, p.132.
130. Goode, W.J., The Family, 1964.
131. Parrinder, G., African Traditional Religion, 1976.
132. See N85.
133. See N49.
134. Douglas, Mary, "Lele of Kasai," in African Worlds : Studies in Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African peoples, ed. by Daryll Forde, 1976, p.9.
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136. (a) Achehe, Chinua, Things Fall Apart, New York: Fawcett Crest, 1958, p.146.
(b) Kenyatta, Jomo, Facing Mount Kenya, introduction by B. Malinowski, 1965.
137. Dymond, G.W., "The Idea of God in Ovamboland South-West Africa," in African Ideas of God: A Symposium, ed. by E.W. Smith, 1950.
138. (a) Leslie, Charles, Anthropology of Folk Religion, 1960, p.64.
(b) Danquah, J.B., The Akan Doctrine of God, 1966.
(c) Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, , 1961.
139. (a) Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956.
(b) Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, 1961.
140. Turner, Victor W., "Planes of Classification," chapter 1 in The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure, 1989.
141. *ibid.*
142. See N134.
143. Eliade, Mircea, The Sacred and The Profane, 1959, p.133.
144. Turner, Victor W., Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual, 1989
145. Fernandez, James W., Bwiti: An Ethnology of Religious Imagination in Africa, 1982, p.341.
146. See N142.
- 147 (a) Evans Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956.
(b) See N135.
148. (a) Tempels, Placide, Bantu Philosophy, Paris, 1959.
(b) Booth, Newell, "The View from Kasongo Niembo," in African Religions: A Symposium, ed. by Newell Booth, 1977.
149. Tempels, Placide, Bantu Philosophy, 1959, p.32.
150. Appiah-Kubi, Kofi, "The Akan Concept of Human Personality," in Traditional Religion in West Africa, ed. by E.A. Adegbola, 1983.
151. The invisible, often associated with the sky, connotes the extension of the realm of the earth (the realm of the living, its flora and fauna). The invisible is a mode inhabited by ancestors and other numinous beings whom the living sense in their matrix of the local cosmos (see chart).

152. Turner, Victor W., "Ritual Symbolism, Morality, and Social Structure," chap. 2 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989
153. (a) Senghor, Leopold S., On African Socialism, 1964.
 (b) Nyerere, Julius, "The Varied Paths to Socialism," chap. 5 in Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism, 1981.
154. (a) Senghor, Leopold S., "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century," in The Africa Reader: Independent Africa, ed. by Wilfred Cartey et. al., 1970.
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156. Danquah, J.B., The Akan Doctrine of God, 1966
157. Rattray, R.S., Ashanti, 1923.
158. Van Gennep, Arnold, The Rites of Passage, translated by M.B. Vizedom and G.A Gaffee, 1960.
159. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956
160. Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, 1961.
161. (a) Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, pp.304-310.
 (b) Uchendu, V., "Ancestorcide! Are African Ancestors Dead?" in Ancestors, ed. by W.H. Newell, 1976.
 (c) Diop, B. quoted in J.V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160 (see footnote).
 (d) Mbiti, John, African Religions and Philosophy, 1969, p.69
 (e) Achebe, C., Arrow of God, introduction by K.W.J. Post, 1969 [1958], p.220.
 (f) Evans Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956.
 (g) Dymond, G.W., "The Idea of God in Ovamboland, South-West African [now Namibia]," in African Ideas of God: A Symposium, ed. by E.W. Smith, 1950, p.141.
162. (a) Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, translated from French by Willard R. Trask, 1959, pp.136-137.
 (b) **Chapter 1, footnote 197.**
163. Such relations with the *Supreme Being* are indirect through the ancestors and in totemic-totemistic relationships:
 (a) **See Chart.**
 (b) J.V. Taylor quotes,
 "... God spoke from the thorn bush to teach you that there is no place where the Shekinah is not, not even in a thorn bush."
 C.G. Montefiore and H. Lowe, *A Rabbinic Anthology*, Macmillan, 1938, p.13, in The Primal Vision, 1963, p.194.

CHAPTER THREE

SPIRIT IN THE AMAA CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

1. THE PEOPLE AND THE LAND

The Amaa population is approximately 116,000.¹ They occupy a mountainous area, in south western Sudan, within Lat.N.10-11:59 and Long.E.28-31.² This region forms the north central enclave of the Nuba Mountains (known as South Kordofan province, which approximately measures 30,000 square miles). It is an area of rugged hills, dotted with rocky mountains peaking to over 1500 meters high, and surrounded by fertile dark clay plains where distant farms are found alongside cattle camps, which supply some manure for farmland fertility. Such camps are known also as *weir* (compound). They are, therefore, acknowledged as an extension of traditional Amaa home main compounds (*weir*) and treated as such, for the ancestors are present wherever the cattle are in settlement.

Besides the economic value of these plains, traditional Amaa identify with the earth in a sentimental and mystical way. For them, as for Africans in general, the earth is sacred and must be treated as such with an awe that falls short of worship. Amaa know her spirit as *Kayloo leeh* (*kay'el*: earth; *leeh*: spirit), i.e. *Thhowor* and spirits of crops. *Thhowor* is in-charge of fertility and fecundity of the earth, fauna, and flora.

Believing that the spirit of the earth is present and can witness, an Amaa will swear or take an oath on the earth when telling the truth, asking the earth to witness when promising or swearing allegiance, uttering, for instance, "*ee fanneh kay'el nnow!*"; that is, "*I swear with this earth ...*", with the flat right palm either stretching towards the earth or lying on it. Some people scoop some soil with their finger tips, put it on their protruding tongue, to either swallow or spit it out, to emphatically implore the earth³ to witness to the truth told or the promise that the swearer intends to observe. And since ancestors are believed to be everywhere,⁴ traditional Amaa consider them to be implicit witnesses with the spirit of the earth for such oaths and believe that they will uphold them against breaches.⁵

The earth is, therefore, more than a mere empirical means of livelihood and necessities, such as material for shelter or a burial abode that requires initiation of the departed into it, which is a liminal passage to the invisible world.⁶ The earth gives and takes. Therefore, sacrificial offerings and a share in the marriage gift received (**chap. 7**) exemplify the observance of rights for the living-dead. That is, the living and the living-dead are mutually interdependent. It is, perhaps, a universal phenomenon that marks the eternal tie with mother earth. Mircea Eliade cites Marcel Granet in that,

“The rite of laying on the Earth implies a substantial identity between the [human] race and the soil. And in fact this idea finds expression in the feeling of autochthony that is the strongest feeling among those that we can detect at the beginnings...[of] history....”⁷

Hence, like other Africans, traditional Amaa maintain a spiritual relationship with the earth. Besides committing to it the physical part of the *retransformed* (departed), this relationship is acknowledged in annual rites of sowing and harvest, life crisis in change of status or for health and wealth, and daily rituals of libation and tit-bits of food offered to ancestors at meals and snacks. The petitioner/offerer also does not forget to call upon *Thhowor*, the spirit of the earth, to partake.

My late father, a spirit-priest (*kuweir*), would hold a calabash, tilting slightly forward, and *invoke first the earth* and, then, ancestors before pouring onto the ground three consecutive drops of whatever liquid was contained in the calabash, with tit-bits of food offerings. He repeated this liturgy at least three times in a daily ritual process, in which the common invocation was something like this,

attadia aay abbadia nngeeh nyeedang toowelle'day, ang ko'reng ngaayh teeigg, aangeeh boorow laah'dawne, aay keeyeah boodow weelick, aangeeh aae'yeo laffan. kaashellday nay aangeeh lee'yee'd. Thhowor ee dang ngee kullow tegg ay wa ca'aareeh, kee'yee nga ay kaylee nga.

meaning:

Our mothers and fathers, protect all, give us children, lead us in our ways, follow our livestock, bless our hands for it is sweet to eat and drink water with you all. Thhowor, give us the fat for our women, animals, and the earth you hold.

He would, then, gently pour the libation and throw the tit-bits of food offerings to the ground, take a sip and a bite before others could start consuming. Since the Amaa religion is group-tied, a petitioner would always pray in collective terms when addressing a message from the people to the *numinous*. And so in this invocation requests for

protection against forces inimical to health are essential, as well as for guidance, plenty, fertility, fecundity, and communion with the *numinous*. Thus, *Abbra'dee*, the creator of the earth, and His agent *Thhowor*, a concealed powerful spirit of the earth, to whom fertility of women, animal, and fecundity are delegated, and ancestors are invoked and thanked for maintenance (see footnote 9). In sum, for this invocation, African well-being means that all is correct in the invisible and the visible realms.

2. CONNECTION WITH THE EARTH⁸

Intimate connection with the earth is expressed and enacted in many ways; a new birth flows from the mother to the ground first. Among the traditional Amaa, female elders observe the ritual practice of laying a new born baby on bare ground first before its mother holds it. As a rite, this is an act of symbolism for connectedness to the earth and ancestors, whose presence is witnessed by their burial sites, their homestead sites, and their farming sites. Places where such ancestors or progenitors lived are identified and known by the names of the respective forefathers. This, in other words, is the intimate participation of the present with the past in celebrating the future in the context of now-community-continuity. For instance, connection to the earth is also realised by labour, a man's own vital capability (energy) that he invests and mingles it with the powers (spirit *Thhowor*) of the earth in creative livelihood activities, i.e. fertility, fecundity, and, hence, plenty, childbirth, and rites and rituals in the process.

A traditional child, under the tutelage of elders, will learn his/her connectedness, the importance of ancestors and elders for the living. Such earthly elements, though seemingly crude, bear history and traditional spirituality, both of which interdependently convey that connectedness to ancestors.

As such, traditional individual rights in tillable lands on the plains are checked and modified by traditional social demands. Such individuals, like young adult males, after the circumcision rite, in pursuit of starting their own houses (*beshie*: family), pursue fertile lands and preferably the virgin ones as they expect their wives to be virgins. There is a sense of parallel compatibility between female fertility for offspring and land fertility for

crops and animal husbandry. In relation to traditional Amaa thought and the approach to fertility and fecundity, R.C. Stevenson observes that the “Nyamang” (Nyimang: Amaa)

“...emphasis in religious beliefs is on fertility and growth fertility springs from Thowor, a wonder-maker supreme over offspring and grain. Thowor induces conception in women, and is present to ensure the growth of grain.”⁹

These young men are qualified by membership in families, clans, or segments of the traditional Amaa nation (tribe). The traditional family, or clan, always has some residual ownership of lands held by its members, even when such lands are abandoned. Nonetheless, they nominally belong to the present family, its living-dead, and those members yet to be born. In other words, there is more spiritual attachment than material objective to these lands.

It happens, for instance, that some abandoned homestead sites are claimed solely because they were inhabited by ancestors and are, thus, inherited. So they must be kept intact simply for their sentimental value and attachment to the past. In lieu of this, as some occasions indicate, religious ceremonies are performed in these old places, where the original shrines (*ghodee*) and house-shrine hearths (*ttooss'sa*) of the ancestors are found. Even if there is only one bare stone of the original site remaining, the rite preserves that property. And the rite, in turn, symbolises present communication with the ancestors, the African's most hallowed values. Ancestors (the living-dead in common) signify the African's profound connections with the realm of the invisible and with origins.

The invisible, normally associated with the sky, symbolises the extension of the realm of the earth, which is the visible realm, its fauna and flora. The invisible mode is the realm inhabited by ancestors, common living-dead, and other *numinous* beings who actively regulate the matrix of the local cosmos.¹⁰ The visible and the invisible signify the matrix¹¹ in which the living have relations with the Supreme Being (*Abbra'dee*). Such relations are normally indirect, diffused through “messengers”¹² of the invisible, principally the ancestors as objects of veneration, not worship, around whom are built symbols of communication, fellowship, and reverence. In venerating the ancestors, therefore, Africans strengthen two modes of kinship established by them and the human community established by *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God). Failure to propitiate the ancestors invites disaster and chaos, which are the contrary of fecundity and wholeness that define the

community and connection to ancestors and ultimately to *Abbra'dee*. Social relationships are, thus, embedded in cosmological relationships so as to maintain this connectedness.

Because of this connectedness, through physical evidence, to the past and, hence, to ancestors, families or clans seldom change settlements from one site to another except for serious ecological¹³ reasons that endanger human life, livestock, or crops.

They rarely change homestead sites except in the case of termite (*kunn'dih*) attacks. When they choose to move, the new site must be free. If it falls within another's ownership by virtue of past use (*leeh go'lay*), permission must be sought and obtained. The nominal owner and seeker will together invoke and ritually sacrifice a *red* rooster to appease the previous presence (*leeh*) of the living-dead to give up the site for others. Such a sacrificial offering, coupled with a good word, legitimises permission for new farmers or residents to occupy an abandoned site. Traditions oblige the new user (borrower), in appeasement (*kayloo co'shill'gheedee*) for *Thhowor* and the living-dead former users, to perform another ritual before clearing the site for farming or settlement.

There are areas that traditional Amaa vehemently avoid. First, there are lands traditional people believe to be inhabited by evil living-dead (demons) and are clearly not utilised.

Second, there are the unoccupied lands that are acknowledged as belonging to a lineage(s) without living progeny to maintain the continuity. Successive users can utilise such lands for short term economic activities without claiming the ownership. This usage is according to the belief and tradition postulating that *Abbra'dee* created the *kayloo* (earth) and no one has the absolute right to prevent others utilising any fallow land as long as a prospective user fulfils the traditional ritual (*tany'nyarayh*) requirement for his own safety, for negligence, in this or other ritual situations, invites punitive reactions. So the living-dead, too, are bound by this tradition of land use for all regardless of ownership. *Squabbling over land* use, especially the cultivated, *is taboo* because *Thhowor* and/or the owner living-dead (without living progeny) will strike the culprit with misfortune.¹⁴ Permanent use or settlement on such a land can be acquired by a relative on condition of *levirate marriage* for that living-dead. The offspring of such a marriage belongs to that living-dead whose *Eternity Now* (or continuity) will be assured.

3. NEW TRENDS: POSSIBLE SPIRITUAL DISORIENTATION

But in semi-urban surroundings on the fringes of remote traditional villages, with insignificant modern influence and minimal social change, this sort of permission to utilise an abandoned site is obtained by a nominal compensatory payment which amounts to ritual material for a *tany'nyarayh* (rite of permission) performance to appease the spirits of that place..

In the semi-urban centres the ranks of the urban poor swell with migrating peasants, who come to such centres looking for a better life only to face the contrary in the socio-economic contradictions, that is, the conflict between the traditional values and the urban ethos, the rural and the urban, and most of all the contradiction between the elite and the majority. This is a sad situation that causes traditional Amaa to be downcast.

Their distress is caused by the commodification of traditional values. Their environment¹⁵ and training from childhood sharpen their spiritual sensibilities to explain life in terms of spirits which are infinitely free rather than matter which is limited; so the traditional Amaa are no materialists. The material, though complementary, does not make a central appeal to them.¹⁶ Nothing is further from their mind than the urban materialist way of life.

For traditional Amaa, the realm of the spirits is what is real and limitless; while the material realm is its metaphor and the field for various categories¹⁷ of spirits to display their respective powers. Hence Amaa traditionalists are dependent on this spiritual reality, the undergirding of traditional values.¹⁸ Therefore, commodification of these values means alienation which, in turn, leads to marginalisation, in that it has already exhibited itself among rural migrants in urban centres. Such is the sad situation in ghettos which prevails all over the African continent in the present era of neo-colonialism, in which poor migrants are gripped in the vice of exploitation operated by the modern elite,¹⁹ who have either disoriented or subdued the communal sense of traditional African values.

Such is the dislodged segmented cultural and spiritual condition of urban and semi-urban folks, that has generated, synthesised, and formed a fourth²⁰ spiritual tradition that

is called by different names such as African Independent or the *Aladura* (praying) churches in West Africa.²¹

The rural Amaa are traditional in their religious beliefs and practice, but are inherently tolerant of the missionary religions of Christianity and Islam. An Amaa, for instance, is at liberty to convert from the traditional to a missionary religion or to reconvert from being a missionary religious adherent to a traditional one; while some synthesise the traditional and missionary religious (particularly Christian) beliefs into a fourth religious tradition we refer to above as the African independent or *Aladura* churches.²²

It could be suggested, then, that new religious movements spring from change in modes of traditions, in meanings and physical environment as well as in authority figures like those of the urban elite, who, at present, are oppressive and exploitive. And when faced with such uncertainty in the chaos of social change, some scholars²³ suggest, the marginalised subjects tend to spiritualise the forces of change which are summed up here in new churches in order to accommodate and manipulate them to their favour.²⁴ How far this is true among the Amaa will need to be researched.

4. LIVESTOCK AND RITES

In addition to its importance for economic purposes the land supports a host of rites like sowing, sacred raid, harvest, hunting, and drumming, and so on. The traditional Amaa people cherish these rites, for such rites functionally engulf sites that have become landmarks for ancestral presence, with whom traditional Amaa maintain connectedness.²⁵

More significant to this connectedness is that Amaa life is bound with that of domestic animals and fowls. It is impossible to distinguish the traditional Amaa activity from the ever-present cattle, sheep, goats, and especially fowls.²⁶ As an integral part of the human community, domestic beasts and fowls play an essential role in human affairs as sacrificial victims, the means or modes of communication and dialogue with the invisible in all sorts of ritual situations: whether life crises such as birth, age-grading, circumcision, marriage, affliction, or *retransformation* (death), or even the consecration of spirit-priests, who normally officiate at these rites.

Land and animals are modes also for the organisational and functional rites of the living. Cattle, for instance, are effectively the prominent animals used in marriage, which represents structure, inheritance for males, pride, and power; they are neither sold nor butchered for pecuniary wealth. Therefore, domestic animals are traditionally destined for various categories of ritual purpose.

In the past, according to the oral history told by elders, tribes of the Nuba Mountains (see map) raided each others' herds for meat since they would not slaughter their own, except for ritual requirement; raided cattle did not fulfil this role nor were they slaughtered in village or homestead. Instead, raided cattle were ritually speared as offerings to the earth and spirits of the wild in the fertile plains to avoid reprisals of the invisible forces of cattle owners, which Amaa spirits of the wild would intercept in defence of Amaa domain in hills and mountains.²⁷

So when one hears a traditional Amaa, in a ritual situation, having no doubts while speaking of or to the spiritual realm, one can appreciate the reality of the spiritual world for the traditional Amaa. For instance, they practically live their faith rather than think about it. This is not to say they lack reason, but their reason is a participant reason. For them,²⁸ the spirit realm is a fact, distinct in itself, but, nevertheless, is closely interdependent with the visible one as its arena, where spirits flex their muscles in a demonstration of power.

5. PASTURES

Grazing rights are integral to traditional Amaa ecological, economic, and oral social history. On the plains, elders narrate, there has always been plenty of pasture and free movement. Eventually, life on the plains became unbearable due to the raids of slave traders and other tribes. And so a return to the hills and mountains or concluding protection treaties with neighbouring tribes became alternatives.

Hills and mountain ranges had limited space, and grazing space for the Amaa was life itself. The stories told by our elders allude to countless generations that perished in those hills and mountains either in defending their pastures and home settlements or in waging wars against hostile neighbours for expansion of the protected land strips in those mountains. Oral literature (in the form of songs, epics, and stories that, perhaps, melt into

fiction as part of artistic lore development) tells of those warriors who became headmen or spirit-priests. So Amaa hills and mountains witness to ancestors and forefathers at various sites, some with shrines that the Amaa turn to for initiation rites and celebration of seasonal and annual ritual occasions.

The plains, too, bear witness to ancestors on camp or war sites. For instance, the ritual village, a communal shrine, is an important site, where Amaa and Gholfan periodically commemorate their warriors. It was at this site that the warriors effected peace between the Amaa and Gholfan peoples. According to Amaa elders, that peace treaty permitted the movement of people and animals to pasture across borders.

Nonetheless, the hill pastures form an important grazing land during rainy seasons when movement of livestock becomes difficult. Towards the end of the wet season, livestock is moved from the limited hill pastures to the plains. This is where most of the livestock give birth to their young. Some of the low land, covered with shallow water, grows pasture during the dry season; and for a short time, it provides sufficient water and shallow wells for livestock and irrigation for vegetable gardens. The wet season with its floods and the dry season are the seasonal extremes that shape economic activities and, thus, determine the traditional people's way of life.

The traditional Amaa are always concerned with the pastures. Animals do not escape disease during the wet season. Some will attempt to avoid illness by seeking refuge in the highlands nearer the mountain ranges, but at the beginning of the dry season, when water and grass cannot be replenished, pastoralists with their livestock set out further afield to the plains where such pastures and water are available.

At the end of the wet season, penetration of the semi-lowland is not easy, for grass has grown tall and coarse and is, thus, suitable for hut thatching. Movement through this grass is difficult for, as well as its thickness, its dry ears and their grain dust irritate the skin and eyes. The soil for this tall grass (*kee'lee*) retains moisture that helps growth during the dry season. So some lowland peasants grow crops like watermelon, cucumber, or millet stalks for livestock feed.

There are, therefore, definite routes pastoralists follow to their pastures. These routes, together with camping sites, are known and recognised by parties that operate in

the territory. In the absence of landmarks, the conflicting parties use these routes and camping sites, some of which are ancestral shrines where major hunting and age-grade initiation rites²⁹ are performed. Such routes and sites function also as symbols of the territorial rights. “*boo’irr no tee ayyeado leeh kaa feh’dinn*,” meaning, “*follow the trails and you will find the place*,” say the pastoralists.

But sometimes these routes on the dark clay plains are impassable because of the swampy grounds or the tall and dry thatching grass, in the respective seasons, and, thus, the herdsmen are forced to use other routes. Using another person’s route means also using others’ camping sites and water resources. This is regarded as a trespass, if the intruders are from a different tribe or Arab nomads. Fighting is, therefore, inevitable, particularly if such intrusion precedes the performance of seasonal rites like thanksgiving before harvesting crops such as of thatching grass (*kee’lee*), seasonal hunting, and so on.³⁰

The availability of water in the latter part of the summer (April and May) is a constant problem. The traditional Amaa who have some cows and some goats usually draw water from wells dug by the efforts of community groups.³¹ Such wells are the property of family groups which decided to dig them. Certainly, others are permitted to draw water, provided such others contribute labour to the annual maintenance.

Traditionally, those who depend upon livestock for livelihood take farming as a secondary and complementary source. The rich in cattle depend very little on hoe farming. In the past, those rich in cattle despised those who did not, calling them poor (*doo’wa*)³² and to despise the *doo’wa* is an offence before ancestral spirits.

The Amaa *doo’wa* subsist on hoe farming. They experience difficulty in tilling the land. At rain fall, the dark clay soil absorbs water very slowly and the primitive implements make sowing and weeding a difficult task. The limited labour determines the size of the farm and crop types. A man with more than one wife must, as tradition demands, prepare a separate farm (*kowrong*) for each wife. The man himself has his own separate larger plot, the distant farm (*woorong kowrong*), and is not required to work in those of his wives. He farms only millet (*mmoonooong*), commonly known as *dhora*, which is the main staple. As such *mmoonooong* has more a ritual dimension than other crops. For instance, substantial amounts of *mmoonooong* cones are left on their stalks unharvested in the centre

of the field. A large gourd filled with water is then placed on a three-stone cooking stand under these stalks. This central area is fenced in thorny branches. All these acts are ritually performed. This central portion of *mmoonooong* remains there for a lunar month as the share of the harvest for the spirits of both the wild and the ancestral. It will be used only for sowing in the following season (see **fig. 5**).

The wives contribute in labour in this main farm a number of times in the year. During the farming season, each wife, perhaps, with her children, may work in the father's farm once or twice in a lunar month.³³ The produce of this farm is stored in his main granary in the senior wife's hut. This remains as the central supply for the whole compound.³⁴

In sum, the traditional Amaa economy is at subsistence level. Underdeveloped animal husbandry and crop farming are the main sources of livelihood. And marketing grain produce can be haphazard in the rural areas of the traditionalist.

However, in semi-urban villages, goods are sold in central village markets. Some Amaa, being oriented to a market economy, may drive livestock, cattle in particular, for long distances to urban centres for higher prices. Selling livestock is unusual for the traditional Amaa, since livestock, cattle in particular, are destined for various forms of ritual fulfilment, of which an essential rite is marriage, a life crisis factor for social structure building and ancestral continuity.

6. MYTHOLOGY AND THE AMAA PEOPLE

The Amaa nation (tribe) is divided into twenty-one clans. A clan is then divided into extended families. Each clan has its own emblem, rooted in mythologies that show creativity in imagination and their application to social order and function. The mythologies demonstrate fallenness such as greed, trickery, and sloth that, Amaa narrate, have caused the loss of the perpetual visible immortality³⁵ and fellowship with *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God).

Each clan and their respective emblems are actors in these mythologies. I would suggest that mythology constitutes an important narrative of the Amaa local cosmos. It conveys its own sense. Here the mythic imagination unites and integrates the traditional Amaa community into a living organic whole.

The totemic system in the following table describes this living organic whole human community. Traditional Amaa do not isolate units according to attributes or properties. Instead, this mythic idea unites all the units in the structure and function of the society as the following table demonstrates:

	<u>Clan</u>	<u>Totem</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
1.	<i>Anniman</i>	<i>lemodang</i>	<i>chameleon</i>
2.	<i>Baa'dang</i>	<i>baa'dang</i>	<i>clay pot</i>
3.	<i>Barringeal</i>	<i>barrujum</i>	<i>butter</i>
4.	<i>Baa'yah</i>	<i>saggi</i>	<i>tree</i>
5.	<i>Bareah</i>	<i>maor</i>	<i>monkey</i>
6.	<i>Fandeah</i>	<i>anggey</i>	<i>eye</i>
7.	<i>Fooyee</i>	<i>fooyee</i>	<i>clay</i>
8.	<i>Gujer</i>	<i>kaweeyia</i>	<i>fox</i>
9.	<i>Guleah</i>	<i>Kooreeh</i>	<i>belly button</i>
10.	<i>Geyeah</i>	<i>moerr</i>	<i>steering stick</i>
11.	<i>Kelang</i>	<i>koosheh</i>	<i>rope</i>
12.	<i>Kenya</i>	<i>kenya</i>	<i>rat</i>
13.	<i>Kuderr</i>	<i>kudd'dorr</i>	<i>pig</i>
14.	<i>Kwol'ngal</i>	<i>tongor</i>	<i>eagle</i>
15.	<i>Mariyamaa</i>	<i>sue'ggedee</i>	<i>sword</i>
16.	<i>Mooduuh</i>	<i>amee</i>	<i>bee</i>
17.	<i>Arromah</i>	<i>moodoowoe</i>	<i>salamander</i>
18.	<i>Sannimah</i>	<i>deckkh</i>	<i>tortoise</i>
19.	<i>Sheilow-wa</i>	<i>bong</i>	<i>water</i>
20.	<i>Saw'ra</i>	<i>mardo</i>	<i>horse</i>
21.	<i>Toojjy</i>	<i>co'leng</i>	<i>fly</i>

This table, although mythical, shows the presence of a direct relationship between man and man, and man and nature. It demonstrates how this relationship ventures into the fabric of tales that have been woven orally. To understand what underlies and goes beyond them seems difficult to unravel and lay bare to our full understanding for it is

“hidden and esoteric, that which is beyond conception or understanding, extra-ordinary and unfamiliar”.³⁶

Along with language, for the Amaa, mythology is the essential vehicle for cultural achievement by which the span of the collective imagination, juxtaposed to the planes of

axiomatic propositions, supplements itself in a different region of sensibility and apprehension in symbolic (totemic)³⁷ forms in the Amaa social structure (**as above; see chart**) that frame the entire local cosmology and its symbolic codes³⁸ that endow life and death with meaning.

In other words, symbolic forms of many meanings navigate through the “Unbroken Circle”,³⁹ a dominion created out of the sacred. Such symbolic forms in mythical thought (the essential underpinning element for religion) closely knit the visible and the invisible. It is a knitting together that Amaa mythology achieves in the interaction and participation of other things of nature (in various sorts of activity and involvement as members of the human community [**see chart**]) in Amaa practical life. Amaa mythical thought shapes and conditions traditional Amaa culture as “cosmos-centred”.⁴⁰

Accordingly, the traditional Amaa receive their cue from mythological narratives; they apply them in thought, behaviour, and activity in ritual terms that acknowledge “The Wholly Other”⁴¹ which is behind the fabric of oral tales that shape traditional Amaa living experience of *Abbra’dee* (Creator Spirit), mostly through ancestors as mediums and as manifested in natural phenomena such as mountains, rain, or forests.⁴²

To illustrate this, I shall delve descriptively into the traditional Amaa mythology and its place in Amaa social formation and function (see clans table). This mythology narrates that *Abbra’dee* (Creator Spirit) provided everything for the people. He provided them with visible immortality in the rejuvenating essence that enhanced people’s perpetual visible immortality which they lost due to a dramatic series of incidents of negligence by some members of the human community.

7. AND PHYSICAL DEATH CAME

The traditional Amaa say that physical death came to man because of Chameleon’s (the totem of the *Anniman* clan) tardiness in delivering a message from heaven to earth (**see chart**). The ritual elder Anniman was in charge of dealings between heaven and earth when Chameleon’s catastrophic failure occurred. The old people waited for him to deliver that immortality supplement, but he never returned.

The fox (the totem for *Gujer*) partly participated in Chameleon’s grave failure by his destruction of the rope bridge between heaven and earth. The two realms were

separated while Chameleon was still descending from heaven, where he had obtained the rejuvenating supplement for the earth people. Chameleon tarried some time socialising with the heavenly free spirits (see chart) while descending to earth.

Reaching the exit point to the rope bridge (the totem for *Kelang*), Chameleon neglected to pay attention as to whether the rope bridge was still there. It was too late for he had already exited into the void, where, out of fright, he let go of the immortality supplement, but the free spirits of nature, who roam⁴³ the void, acquired that rejuvenating supplement for visible immortality. Elder instructors of traditions narrate that the free spirits of nature are erratic and inclined to both good and evil. The very telling of the Amaa oral history from generation to generation involves this mythisation of its content and its reality, in the form of the Amaa perpetual awareness coupled with ritual action by which things of the past continue in the here and now (otherwise what we call *eternity now*).

According to Amaa elders, the free spirits do not embrace a specific moral stand and are capable of both good and evil. This is why, when attempts fail to divulge the source(s) of a problem, Amaa ritual elders and spirit-priests turn to invoke the natural phenomena⁴⁴ for that anonymous spiritual force (a free spirit, perhaps), they believe,⁴⁵ is with those phenomena and must be propitiated. And sometimes an unexpected sporadic divination may tell the origin of a malignant spiritual force.

So the rejuvenating supplement remained with these free spirits. In order to sow a sense of responsibility in the young, elder instructors narrate that these free spirits, after a long dispute among themselves, decided to deprive man of his visible immortality. They reason that it was *Annima's* responsibility, not a delegate, to collect the rejuvenating supplement (*winnyoo keeh*) since *Anniman* was the elder in-charge of dealings between the two realms.⁴⁶

In his fall from heaven, Chameleon intruded into the space of eagle (the totem for *Kwol'ngal*) who killed and threw him onto the cool *saggi* tree (the totem for *Baa'yah*). Eagle thought Chameleon would recover from his sleep of fear, but he never did. It was a sleep that deprived the aged Amaa of rejuvenation for visible immortality.

This narrative of the mythology concludes that Chameleon was alive but unconscious. The free spirits forced *retransformation* as a punishment upon him for tardiness and for *Annima*'s irresponsibility that had delivered a mortal blow to the Amaa people in their loss of visible immortality. Since then, elder instructors narrate, Amaa have been attempting to recover that visible immortality and their direct fellowship with *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God).

Elder instructors make sense of behaviour from mythological stories in spite of some conceptual abstraction in them. They teach the meaning of mythological behaviour to the young. Individuals and groups (like those actors in the mythology) have their motives, ideas, and explanations which are integrated into the account of their conduct. That is, oral history as instructed, ritual practice, constant observation of behaviour patterns, the influence of symbols like *toewoe*, landmarks like *Mount Nyema*, and segments of the society like the *Sheilo'waa* clan, and its ritual role, are living symbols for Amaa mythology of the ancestress *Nyema*, whose *Sheilo'waa* clan the Amaa dub as *soo* (incomplete) humans, for being partly human and partly spirit.

Tardiness and irresponsibility led to the destruction of the bridge and the severance of direct communication and interaction between the Amaa people and *Abbra'dee*. That destructive act was sheer revenge, not justice, as Fox decided while in a fury, without realising its detrimental end.

This is so, as the mythology informs us, for Fox knew Chameleon was still on his heavenly mission, but he did not hesitate to destroy the bridge between the realms. According to the elders, Fox was furious because *Barringeal* had denied him butter (totem for *Barringeal*. The name *Barringeal* also means "miser"). Fox worked and *Barringeal* could not pay for the shortage.

There was a shortage of butter because Pig (the totem for *Kudd'dorr*) destroyed all milk products that were kept in clay pots (the totem for *Baadang*). Therefore, there was no butter when Fox asked for it as his due for guarding farm crops against birds and rats (the totem for *Kenya*). Instead of his due, Fox received a kick that roused his anger. Fox cried for justice that he could not get from the man, *Maryiama*, whose totem is the sword (*suggedee*). Fox howled out in anger and decided to complain to *Abbra'dee*

himself (the creator Spirit). When he came to the bottom of the rope bridge, he met *Maor*, monkey (the totem for *Barreah*), descending from what, some elders say, was an aimless journey. Others deny this and argue that *Maor* (boastful and devious) climbed to heaven to eavesdrop on *Abbra'dee's* council of spirits in order to boast foreknowledge for self-aggrandisement among his fellow earthlings. *Maor* was able to do this because of his ability to climb stealthily across barriers between layers of heaven. He was unfortunately caught and shot at with burning stars.

Maor advised Fox not to complain to *Abbra'dee* at first, but to seek the help of Eye, *Angey*, meaning wise (the totem for *Fandeah*). Eye investigated the case of Fox with *Barringeal*, who, in turn, without doing justice, explained that *Kudorr* (Pig: symbol for prodigality in dealing with wealth) was to blame for the butter shortage.

This case was again referred to *Maryiama* (sword) for reconsideration, but to no avail, for Fox was again not justified in claiming reparation for the injurious kick on asking for his due of butter from *Barringeal*.

Fox sought for an alternative against injustice. He decided to take matters into his own hands to serve justice. It dawned on him that Chameleon was still on his heavenly mission. He, then, furiously headed for the bridge to ascend to *Abbra'dee* for justice. He gazed at the rope, shook it, and said to himself, "*Maor* is right. I have to decide for myself, instead of tedious procedures that frustrate justice and bring about injustice. Now I know what to do". Knowing the impact of group effort, Fox howled to others of his kind for help. As a pack, they destroyed the rope bridge and, thus, separated heaven and earth.

Fox's angry act, though securing justice for himself, bred grievous consequences for the Amaa people. It deprived the Amaa of direct communication with *Abbra'dee*, who might, perhaps, have corrected Chameleon's failure. Direct fellowship with *Abbra'dee* was enjoyed through festivals in drum and string music talk, often invocative, joins the rhythmic spirits of dancers to merge with that of the supernatural. Since that severance between the two realms, the Amaa people have been searching for the lost direct fellowship with *Abbra'dee* in their visible mode. Such direct fellowship is now attainable only through *retransformation* (death).

Another result of anger in this mythology involves the gap between heaven and earth which is said to have been widened by a bachelor who was stirring his porridge with a long cooking stick, *moerr* (the totem for *Gyiah*). He could not mix the porridge properly since the blue bottom of the sky interfered with the length of the stick and, thus, hindered its cooking mobility. This bachelor angrily pulled out the steaming hot stick and hit the bottom of the sky and said, “*aangeeniang leeh ha toenow aa fou’jay aashee*”, meaning, “Why don’t you give me enough space so that I can freely manoeuvre when I cook?” The sky experienced pain and roaringly ascended further upwards to widen the space between it and the earth, but both make up “nature”, which the *Tonga* of Southern Africa, according to Henri A. Junod, express in a riddle as “The thing which makes Heaven and Earth, what is it? Nature”.⁴⁷

Because of this mythology about the conflict between a bachelor and the sky, traditional Amaa consider bachelorhood abnormal, since it does not contribute to nature in the reproductive process that builds the Amaa social structure. Bachelorhood is thus a taboo.

8. KINSHIP

The chain of the mythological story extends to involve all the clans and their respective moral, ethical, and religious perspectives that are symbolised in the structures and functions of the mythical (totemic) figures, which draw together all elements of nature into a corporate kinship that we call the human community, a community which celebrates itself in ritual symbols, song, and dance that bind the participants into one “Unbroken Circle”⁴⁸ and identity that Africans (not only traditional Amaa) hallow in their ancestors.

This sense of kinship and all it implies is rooted in *Abbra’dee* (Creator Spirit). It determines and regulates social relationships and networks among the Amaa. It controls marital customs and traditions. Indeed, kinship⁴⁹ binds, upholds and regulates the life of traditional Amaa. It should be observed that in Amaa mythology the involvement of nonhumans is integral to human life. Kinship, therefore, extends to embrace animate⁵⁰ and inanimate things of nature with symbolic meanings that exert a practical influence upon Amaa life.

As Amaa mythology demonstrates, all things are interdependent and, perhaps, none can survive and be without the other. It is in this perspective that the Amaa reckon nature as a person, with living spiritual dimensions, with whom they enjoy a congenial relationship of kinship in *Abbra'dee* (*see chart*). In this web of kinship, the traditionalists regard ethics as the fluid bond which is always true in human relationships and responsibilities, and experiential religion as a statement of the nature of the supreme reality.

This mythology also underlines the activities of communities, whether they be living or “living-dead” (to borrow J. Mbiti’s term⁵¹), that is, the invisible relatives headed by founding fathers and ancestors whose role is demonstrated in social units of clans that constitute the Amaa nation (tribe).

Accordingly, traditional Amaa sense and understand the unconscious⁵² and the invisible, even though they fail to articulate this experience in words. This experience and understanding leads them to belief in the continuity of life after death (*retransformation*).⁵³ As a rite of “liminal” threshold⁵⁴ en route to the invisible realm, death intertwines a double paradoxical function as a bridge and a veiled barrier between the visible and the invisible, which traditional Amaa embody in symbols which, as objects in active ritual, disclose meaning and power. Like the sacrificial victims and the human ritual actors, symbols are participants in the power of being.⁵⁵

So when a member of a family dies (*retransforms*), two sacrifices are offered. On the first morning following death a sheep is sacrificed, and the spirit of that sacrificial participant victim belongs to this new living-dead. The second sacrifice is offered the next morning, and the spirit of this one belongs to the grand spirit (founding ancestor), with a pervasive influence on individuals and the community at large, who is, thus, the head of both the living and the “living-dead”.⁵⁶

As such, then, death is the re-conversion of social status from visible to invisible and is, therefore, a rite that demands sacrifices to initiate the individual into that recovered spiritual status, which the new arrival presents as the introductory gift to the founding ancestor, but the first gift is an initiatory farewell to the visible status, while in the “liminal”⁵⁷ “threshold”⁵⁸ en route to re-incorporation into the numinous community.

Hence, traditional Amaa belief and practice postulate that the new “living-dead” will not depart with empty hands for he/she receives these initiation gifts. He/she is subject to entertainment and interview (Amaa call it *waah’dowh kindda ay waah’dowh fay’low*) by the forefathers, that is, the rite (an initiation process)⁵⁹ for acceptance into the “living-dead” community. Otherwise, wrath can be expected to fall upon any living member(s) of the family, if such sacrifices and rituals are neglected; since such a negligence leaves the newly *retransformed* (dead) in an ambiguous status which invites his/her retaliation.

9. REJECTED SPIRITS: DEMON RELATIVES

The living-dead community, traditional Amaa believe, reject their new kin of spirits on arrival. This rejection is a form of punishment for immoral living in the previous physical life. They are regarded as contaminants by the family community of the living-dead and, therefore, they must be rejected. These rejected spirits become outcasts and villains against the living. They become demons. Such relative demons are the ones who possess the living for destructive ends. They are known as the devils carrying headed sticks (similar to a truncheon) - “*Gheshinne dayh quoorshimalah nyoinne deeh-*” and are ever ready to strike. This explains the traditional Amaa use of protective amulets, sacred artefacts at entrances (i.e. *toewoe*, gourds, etc.). In other words, the new kin of spirits transform into devils and must be protected against.

And so, according to traditional Amaa, devils or demons are of human lineage (they were free spirits of nature and chose freely to join the human lineage system through birth and, thus, integrated), in which the quality of moral life determines one’s eternal life.

According to traditional Amaa, therefore, demon relatives can indiscriminately possess living persons and drive them into madness. And wearing amulets or using sacred artefacts (symbols imbued with spiritual powers to participate in the power of being)⁶⁰ are designed to ward off these unpredictable devils. Sometimes, a torturous possessing demon may speak through its host. It is a form of divination through which it acknowledges itself by telling a significant point in the history of its physical life. Self acknowledgement is a ploy for assertion of demonic authority and control over the living, some of whom

passively appease such a demon's presence among them. These demons cherish readily the manipulation of sorcerers.

According to this belief, there will be no peace in the family where such a demon visits and stays. The family must convince it to leave; and at this stage a dialogue of conflict ensues between the living and the demonic party. The demon will demand sacrifices of certain animals such as a female goat, ewe, or a cow which are rarely sacrificed as opposed to males which are destined for sacrifice. Sometimes such a notorious demon will demand of a family that they dedicate a maiden to it. A maiden dedicated as such will not marry unless a suitor first fulfils specified sacrificial demands before the normal marriage.

After fulfilment of the demon's demands, the family will attempt to guarantee the departure of its demon relative through the "*gheshinnoo sheila*", meaning, "head demon", of whom that area spirit-priest and ritual elders are aware and whom they can approach through a divination process that takes a considerable time to achieve.

Among traditional Amaa there are well known elderly persons in whom such sorcerous spirits sporadically become active in ritual dissociation. Elders know that such persons have not chosen to become sorcerous because they do not intentionally practise sorcery, as do the professional sorcerers, but that these spiritual powers have chosen to work through them. Such chosen persons have no choice.

Protective articles such as amulets and sacred artefacts are also used against the presence of such persons since their mere presence, even without their harmful intention, can do harm, for the spirit is active. Those who wear amulets are mostly children, adolescents of both genders, pregnant women and new mothers. Such protective measures extend to include pregnant and milking cows for they can abort or have an udder injured by the presence of such spiritual- power-imbued persons, whom traditional Amaa call *coo'roo*. (red hot) and who must be handled carefully.

10. THE *COO'ROO*

The *coo'roo* elderly, conscious of his unintentional danger to others, moves cautiously. He avoids vicinities where children or herds are found. If he unexpectedly coincides with a vulnerable category in an avoidable situation, ritual traditions require him

to utter a preventive prayer such as “*aa kuunnee noe ang leaa’ou’woe haa assarr ay too waa lay*”, meaning, “You spirits riding me, don’t touch this [human or animal]; if you can protect, protect! Otherwise, stay away from this”. Preceding this prayer, if the vulnerable one is a human, he will order him/her to stop and look down to the ground. The person (whether a stranger or local) must obey the order.

The *coo’roo* approaches him/her while repeating the preventive prayer. At close range, but without touching the subject, he whips the air around that vulnerable subject. He follows the whipping with two ejections of spit on the ground around the subject, to the right side first and, then, to the left. The vulnerable subject obeys and stoops to the right. With the right hand, the subject kneads the spit into a small lump of clay, which he tightly clasps in the right fist. The subject carries home this clay lump to his/her ritual elders who know further ritual procedures to confirm the prevention of hurt that comes from that clay lump. Normally, a beast is sacrificed in a cleansing ritual and the subject is smeared with the sacrificial blood.

On arrival home, the subject does not enter his/home with that clay lump. Instead, he/she loudly calls upon the eldest person of that home (a grandparent, father, or a female beyond child-bearing years). In response to that loud call, the responding elder will return with two gourds, an empty small one into which the subject deposits the clay lump and a larger one filled with water, weakly mixed with grain sour paste (*aabaa’loo bong*), in which that subject baths outside the gate. It is only after these temporary ritual acts that the subject will be allowed to enter the home.

The small gourd with the clay lump is deposited in the larger one, now empty, covered with pieces of thatch grass pulled off from behind eaves of the oldest male’s hut in that compound (father’s or grandfather’s if still alive), and tightly drawn into a rope net to hang on the outer side of the arched gate, where the *toewoe* (sacred stick), *coo’laa* (spear), and other sacred objects hang on the central and inner sides (see **fig. 1**). It will remain hanging there until the ritual cleansing day when a beast for redemption is sacrificed on the very spot of the subject’s temporary ritual bath.

The subject will hold the gourd, with its contents of grass and the smaller gourd with the clay lump. The tradition of this extraordinary rite demands that a victim be either

a brown or a white ram, to whom the officiant, normally the spirit-priest, explains the reasons for its death before ritually slitting its throat.

The first copious gushing blood must drop in the gourd (still with its contents of grass and the smaller gourd with the clay lump). And, then, the liquid in the sacrificial victim's stomach waste (*wieshee*) is squeezed into the gourd, with further additions of one half of the liver and one half of the lung.

The rest of the meat, except the head, is roasted. A ritual elder, in a ritual manner, will feed a piece of the liver and a piece of the lung to the subject before others join in the consumption. The cleansed subject will dig a pit, approximately a metre deep, next to the ritual fire. He/she, then, deposits first the ritually filled gourd, followed by all the bones, with the sacrificial victim's head on the top. The ritual elders and the spirit-priest cover this pit with the excavated earth. They level it off. The cleansed and redeemed subject concludes by pouring on it four gallons of water and finally covers it with slate flat rocks, heavy enough to prevent the defiling digging of dogs or wild beasts at nights.

Unexpectedly coming face to face, at close range, with a shepherd with his herd, the *coo'roo* will immediately distance himself, but loudly utters a preventive prayer while, from afar, raising arms towards the herd. He will instruct the silent shepherd aloud to report immediately to the elders before sunset, the prescribed time for the cleansing of beasts whereas, for humans, it is either at sunset or sunrise.

The shepherd and the herd must be cleansed before they can enter the kraal (in a camp or at home). Two ritual elders (not necessarily a spirit-priest) stand outside the gate, one to the right holding a brown (preferably red) rooster, and one to the left holding a large gourd full of watery sour paste and palm leaves.

As the herd passes through to the kraal, the ritual elder to the right will aim (a cleansing act) at the rear of every beast with the fluttering rooster, while the other haphazardly does the same with the liquid paste and the palm leaves on the forehead of every beast. This cleansing ritual process concludes with severance of the rooster's head. The head is hung on the outer side of the kraal gate or the arched gate (see **fig. 1**) if the herd passes through main compound to its kraal. The rest of the bird is thrown to the wild.

The gourd is broken and its pieces are hung on the right and left sides of the kraal entrance.

According to traditional Amaa elders, *coo'roo* infuses rejected human spirits from within the living-dead family communities. Some of these rejected spirits, the traditional Amaa believe, act together in *coo'roo* (red hot). They possess the living agent without subduing his will. Instead of succumbing to becoming a sorcerer, *coo'roo* becomes a mediating agent of good, in his protective approach for others, while at the same time fulfilling the imposed will of evil entities receiving sacrifices.

This relationship develops into a reciprocal one between *coo'roo* and the evil spiritual entities. They receive their ritual acknowledgement through *coo'roo* in return for peace for the people. In this confused situation, the person of *coo'roo* (red hot) infuses good and evil spirit-priesthood. His dangerous state forces *coo'roo* to isolate himself for the sake of the peace and safety of others. For the traditional Amaa, children are most likely to inherit this confused spiritual position.

Nevertheless, guardian spirits (*aa'leng co'drrowe*) of ritual elders and the spirit-priests are strong enough, the traditional Amaa believe, to defend themselves. So they can approach *coo'roo* when a family or community wants a demon relative ejected. *Coo'roo* uses his reciprocal powers to force out demon relatives in a parasitic relationship. Besides ritual means of persuasion to bring about the departure of a demon relative, *coo'roo* can authorise elders to beat that particular agent, while in active divination, with thorny branches. As a norm, they will take him by surprise from behind. What a shock! He then departs without return.

To reiterate, *coo'roo* himself is possessed by a demonic category of rejected spirits. The traditional Amaa use evil against evil. *Coo'roo* does not seek harm, but the emanating evil from his person is superimposed by good.

Thus, *coo'roo* is a perpetual “liminal” personality. He is not abnormal. His person combines contradictory (a) spiritual opposites (evil spirits and his own subdued spirit) (b) temporal opposites, an ambiguity, in the Amaa social organisation (as a spirit-priest for both good and evil). In other words, *coo'roo* exists on the borderline of the temporal and the spiritual realms. Nonetheless, as a creature like other people, he is subject to laws and

limitations of the temporal world. Like other creatures (i.e. in fauna and flora), he needs warmth, nourishment, and space, although restricted and isolated by his ambiguous life.

11. **JALLE: A COMMUNAL RITUAL ACT OF PURIFICATION**

Jalle (ejecting demon relatives) is a cleansing and preventive ritual act against demonic sources of crisis in villages. It is a one night ritual affair that the whole traditional Amaa nation perform annually in September preceding the vegetable rite (*konying'arr tany'nyerayh*: grass tasting), to which ancestors and *Abbra'dee* are invited to taste the first new vegetables before people start consuming them. The *Sheilowa* clan initiates this rite (*tany'nyerayh*) of tasting grass. The other seven mountains (clans) follow by turn and this sequence allows all of them to participate in each other's performance of this rite. Nadel observes accurately the *konying'arr tany'nyerayh* 'roster',

"In many tribes the different hill communities do not perform a particular agricultural rite all together on the same day, or at their own discretion, but one after the other, in accordance with a strict traditional order. By means of this 'roster' of ritual performances the religious organization accentuates tribal unity and ensures that each hill community is kept aware of its place within the wider social unit."⁶²

Ancestors are offered slightly cooked green leaves (*konying'arr*) of cow-beans (*kenn'deeh*) dipped in sour milk (*eeleiu'kaa'darr*) of a heifer (*bish'sherr*) that has given a first birth. It is made sure that no one, apart from the calf, has tasted the milk of this heifer. Libation of *mmoonooong* (sorghum) beer (*ashee*), mere water, and the sour milk are offered and, then, concluded with tit bits of the leaves-sour milk mixture. Some of this mixture is put in a small unused gourd and placed in the arched gate of the main compound. Ancestors and *Thhowor* are, thus, invoked to do their part towards the welfare of the community and crops.

For clean a community and environment free of unwanted spiritual entities, *Jalle* precedes *Konying'arr tany'nyerayh*. To clear out demonic social contaminants, *Jalle* is a drastic measure and a ritual protest aims at putting the parasitic demon relatives to flight before the consumption of new vegetables begins. Though silent when asked of a separate place to which demon relatives depart, traditional Amaa acknowledge that demon relatives occupy isolated groves, mountains, or distant forests. I state this in definite terms because the traditional Amaa act upon their belief. Thus, they (as I did in my early years) fearfully avoid areas known to be occupied by *gheshinne* (evil spirits of human origin). Here we are

reminded of Diop's poem that depicts “*Those who are dead are never gone*”⁶¹ that postulates the presence of the living-dead in the midst of things of nature and who, perhaps, should be acknowledged as silent partners (also see **chart**). So the demonic flight to such pockets of our visible world is noisy. It is a dramatic ritual separation between good and evil. In contrast, *coo'roo* combines both good and evil modes, which put him on borderline existence, an ambiguous “threshold” between the natural and spiritual realms.

The precise time for this demonic departure is determined by one authorised ritual elder each year. He does not reveal the approximate time, but it takes place within the frame of two weeks. People must be home early every evening. Those individuals who are caught outside by the shouts, beating of drums and tins and the horns blowing, are damned unless they plead and offer sacrifices to those demons.

Here, *coo'roo*⁶³ will be the officiant, who opts to invite the presence of spirit-priests to the cleansing rite for those who breach that night by not clearing the way for the departing demon relatives. This breach creates a social conflict as it is a ritual breach against the rite of the devil and, thus, exposes everybody else to risk. Therefore, the spirit-priests' presence, although they do not participate but watch *coo'roo* perform the cleansing rite, is a protective measure for Amaa people to acknowledge the demons' rite of initiation into their position in *Eternity Now*.

The absence of spirit-priests at this cleansing rite will cause a public row over social well-being not only for the violators but for the traditional Amaa society as a whole. Such a rare incident engenders the necessity for a collective ritual act simultaneously performed in villages across the Amaaland to avert a demonic havoc that ranges from crop perils, pregnancy failures of both human and animal, to plagues. In sum, afflictions. As ritual norms, male beasts suffer to favour demons in acknowledgement that should have been satisfied first by the mere presence of spirit-priests in the cleansing rite for violators of the devils' rite of way at their fleeing night. In this respect, the psychological impact prevails for the traditional Amaa act upon their spiritual beliefs. Hence, the whole process of the devils' annual rite and its effects are real. Perhaps, the other side of the devils' annual rite of departure (separation: *Jalle*) should be regarded as a collective act of national cleansing rite since demon relatives are understood to clear out.

12. *KAA'AKUDO!*

On a particular night of the month of September, the appointed ritual elder shouts out “*kaa'akudo! haa till'anne gaa'iyee koo'nyan!*”, meaning, “They are coming! Haven't they left yet?” The inhabitants of villages shout, “*kaa'akudo*”, one village after another; they beat drums and blow horns across the entire Amaaland. The drums repeat “*Kaa'akudo! Kaa'akudo!*” “They are coming, they are coming!”.

Indeed, I contributed to this rite of drum beating and shouts with my siblings and parents. As a child, I was terrified to hear these haphazard noises. “*kaa'akudo!* They are coming” is the warning to whoever transgresses by failing to be inside at this time for protection, to quickly hide⁶⁴ in the nearest bush, tree, or a rock to avoid meeting with the fleeing demon relatives. However, “*haa tille'anne gaa'iyee koonyan?* Haven't they left yet?”, preceding “*kaa'akudo!*”, is a command for the people to start the horrible noise, a way of ordering the demon relatives to depart now to their eternal abode (*kay'dengg'ayh*) in the pockets of the visible world (*see chart*).⁶⁵

13. FAVOURABLE LIVING-DEAD RELATIVES

In contrast to the fate of rejection awaiting newly transformed living-dead villains, the favourable living-dead relatives are privileged to return and remain with the living relatives. Some outstanding living-dead, given the status of ancestor, return to choose and possess a member of the family as an agent, who eventually becomes a spirit-priest, through whom he engages in interaction with the living. This means that when a person *retransforms* (dies), though incorporated or rejected according to merit, he does not spontaneously become an ancestor with a wider social role to play. And here, merit is the point of distinction that determines categories of the living-dead community, i.e. ancestors, forefathers, common living-dead, and the rejects who are in the demon category.

A forefather is a lineal (or family) ancestor with whom both the living and living-dead are collectively identified. For instance, the lineage of Gafour is known as *Gafourong waah*; that is, the people (lineage) of Gafour. As such, then, the clan communities of Gafour expect their living-dead relatives to be their protectors for health, fecundity, and abundant life. Here sound relationships are crucial to a healthy community. This is a

compelling reason to reflect on one's relationships with parents and others on whom one depends, and treat other elderly with caring attention, as one cares for one's own health.

In a broad manner, the traditional Amaa divide family spirits into two categories, but sometimes three; the third category is understood to be the creator Spirit *Abbra'dee* himself.

(A)[i] The good spirits are the ones who led devout and transparent lives while in physical form. According to traditional Amaa, prior to burial rites, the merit of a newly *retransformed* spirit is determined by ancestors, who, as moral spiritual beings and, thus, guardians of morality, watch over the living Amaa in a judicious manner. This category is a public status and is achieved through both transparent and exemplary physical life, and (as an elder) high capability of communication with the spiritual realm. In a way, this category of ancestors are more mystical than those in [ii]. It is here that Faris is justified in stating that “elderhood and ancestorhood blend”.^{66/67}

[ii] Every family and clan is governed by the living-dead forefathers, who are also ancestors⁶⁸ but within the ambit of their respective lineage systems rather than its overshadowing influence as of category [i]. So the living-dead seniors wield the power of sanctions that even uphold the living parents' blessing or anger. The traditional Amaa believe (as do other Africans) that parental anger may cause ill-health to a person, and sometimes to one's offspring, through the mystical interaction of the living-dead with the living elders. That is, ancestors and forefathers possess powers that can afflict⁶⁹ or prevent such misfortune as ill health or material failure directly by imposing sanctions or indirectly by inaction on the part of protective intermediaries for the living.

14. SUMMARY

The earth is the quintessential bond between the living and the living-dead. Ancestors speak a “bilingual language”⁷⁰ of this bond together with other *numinous* beings. They provide important roles in rites of social stratum and annual rites and rituals of economic activities that emphasise ancestral connectedness. They also indicate communion with the earth and ensure the health and prosperity of the community. *Abbra'dee* delegated to *Thhowor* responsibility for the creative processes (fertility, fecundity, and growth) of the earth. Human livelihood activities intermingle and “blend”

with the earth processes to affirm the bond between a laboured piece of land and the individual tiller. This is what the traditional Amaa call *ttemel* (also see fig.4 and fig. 5) ⁷¹

This individual tiller, who, as a typical traditional Amaa, is a distinctly warlike individual, exhibiting strong self-worth and identity, and arrogantly proud of his ancestral traditions (see chap.2). He has a profound sense of family and family authority (both the living and living-dead combined as a unit of the 'Unbroken Circle' continuum). He rigorously takes hard work for granted. He lives by deeply ingrained traditions and instinctive customary rules which he often helps to administer but within the context of his community, "the principal mediator of [his] initiation to life"⁷², and supernatural forces through divinatory means since, for him the traditionalist, nothing of crooked behaviour, act, mishap, disaster, calamity or stroke of good luck, prosperity in childbirth, wealth, health, and so on happens by chance. The participant reason is ever present and ever ready for rewarding or punitive action that holds liable both the individual and the group as collective.

Thhowor points to earth's "intrinsic value of mystical quality"⁷³ that draws Amaa traditionalists to swear by it; but this venerable attitude does not bestow a deity status on the earth. This attitude acknowledges, too, the traditionalist immediate awareness of his natural environment and its surroundings throbbing with the unseen presence, as an essential part of which the earth has a mystical value. Ancestors are party to this unseen presence while, at the same time, they intermingle with the living, landmarks and sites. All express both good and crooked relationships that are also articulated in traditional Amaa myths.

This continuum of relationships (including that of kinship systems) of all elements represents what could be regarded as ethics and morals expressed in human relationships and responsibilities, which Amaa mythologies observe in traditional structures and function. Traditional religion (as experienced) is an inherent statement of the nature (as imbued and manifest) of the ultimate reality (*Abbra'dee*), whom the traditional see in terms of function rather than definition. For traditional Amaa, therefore, earth is more than a mere empirical means of livelihood.

CHAPTER THREE

FOOTNOTES

1. This is an approximate count in an old local census of 1964.
2. The Times Atlas of the World (Family edition), 1990, pp.48-49.
3. In swearing by the earth, an Amaa will scoop earth and put it on the tongue without uttering a word. This act will suffice without saying anything else. Not only the earth, but also surrounding mountains and hills are regarded “in a mystical sacred sense”, reports S.F. Nadel, “A Study of Shamanism in the Nuba Mountains,” in Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute 76, 1945-1946, pp.31-33.
4. Diop, B.A., in J.V Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160, quoted by Janheinz Jahn, *Muntu*, p.108, from *Hostice Noires*, ed.by Senghor, Paris 1949, p.144.
5. (a) Traditional Amaa take oath on natural phenomena, whether earthly or astral, for these are manifestations (*leeh*) of the Spirit (*Abbra'dee*): for instance, a person swearing on the sun, with the right flat palm stretching to the sun, “*ee fannow nying'ngang nay*”, that is,” *sun take me with you if I'm not telling the truth*” and in the same manner when swearing on the earth. According to traditional Amaa, therefore, the earth is imbued with spiritual powers that can punitively react against human life unless otherwise appeased with sacrifices.
(b) This is so, for the earth is the quintessential bond between the living and the common living-dead, the ancestors, and other *numinous* beings. Here also Deng comments on the Dinka *venerable* attitude towards the earth as the bond between them and the “ancestral and clan divinities”. Deng, a Dinka himself, reports that “a Dinka will swear on land to establish his truthfulness” which, in a way, Deng continues “symbolises his submission to the judgement of the ancestors”. Hence, a traditional Dinka would not sell a piece of land for monetary gain as it would be offensive to those *numinous* elders. F.M. Deng, Tradition and Modernization, 1971, p.272.
6. The family and attending friends of the newly departed *sleep on bare ground* for the period of the burial rite. This period is a rite of passage, to borrow the term of A. Van Gennep (1960); it is a “liminal” threshold period for the newly departed en route to the domain mode of ancestors, which is the invisible domain among the living.
7. (a) There is a spiritual, psychological, and social relationship with the place of birth and burial of the ancestors. Hence, a *traditional Amaa* would *not dare* to sell a piece of the ancestral earth (land), for the living-dead members (*the invisible extension*) of the family are party to the ownership and use of the land. The living-dead are the in midst of the living as Diop tells us in his poem (in Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963:160).
(b) Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and Profane, (trans. by Willard R. Trask), 1959, p.143 (footnote: Marcel Granet “Le depot de l'enfant sur le sol,” Revue Archeologique, 1922= *Etudes sociologiques sur la Chine*, Paris, 1953, pp. 192 ff., 197 ff.).
(c) Traditional Amaa annual rites and rituals of economic activities (*mainly agriculture as the invocation in the body of the text points out*) emphasise connectedness and communion with the earth and ancestors to
“ensure ... health and posterity of the community”
writes Nadel (1947, p.44);
(i).Nadel, F.S., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes of Kordofan, 1947, p.44.

- (ii) R.C. Stevenson, "The Nuba Peoples of Kordofan Province: An Ethnographic Survey," unpublished Msc. (Econ) Thesis, 1965.
8. Not only for the traditional Amaa but for traditional Africans in common, the earth is of more significance than practical use. In the Amaa traditionalist view and practice, it
 "...is not a commodity but a 'nature, which is not produced by man....' Any value it has is an intrinsic or psychic value.....[it] has a mystical quality",
 K. Russell, Land Reform: A World Survey, 1977, p.358
Also see N0.47.
9. (a) [i] R.C. Stevenson, "The Nyamang of the Nuba Mountains," in Sudan Notes and Records 23; 75, 1940, p.95.
Thowor (right pronunciation and spelling is *Thhowor*) is a spirit of the earth associated with fertility of women, animals, and fecundity of the earth.
 also [ii] Nadel, S.F., "A Study of Shamanism in the Nuba Mountains," in the Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute, 76; 25, 1945-1946, pp.30-34.
 [iii] Nadel, S.F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes in Kordofan, 1947, p.449-453.
 (b) When the causes of a health problem of a child, for instance, cannot be diagnosed, a spirit-priest, a ritual elder, or a family male elder will first invoke the natural phenomena (*leeh baa'rroo*), facing the highest mountain (*may'dayh*) in the area at dusk, or a grove with a communal shrine (*goo'dee*), or sometimes lanes (*booh'irr*) leading to the wild plains, or the dawn or sunset (*nyee'ngaang ggeelay*), offering a chick to the setting or rising sun to either resolve the problem that day or take it with it at setting. The traditional Amaa call this healing ritual "*kaa'waa'lay geedoo affiaah'daah: sickness ritual invocation*". This is one example of healing rituals. Also see V.W.Turner, Drums of Affliction, 1968. Lienhardt, in his Divinity and Experience, 1961, p.221, writes on a Dinka healing petition which shows a reverent, aggressive and loving approach to the ancestors.
10. Faris, James C.: The Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, p.305.
11. Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.
12. Traditional Amaa believe that ancestral spirits are mediums between them and *Abbra'dee*. They (the spirits) intercede with *Abbra'dee* on behalf of the visible. In a sense, the ancestors are "messengers" as Namibian *Ambo* people would reckon,
 "... ordinary people consider that the ancestral spirits are merely *Kalunga's* helpers and messengers. *Kalunga* [God] created everything; he rules everything with the aid of... ancestral spirits",
 according to G.W. Dymond (1950:141) who writes of the *Ambo* idea of God and the ancestral spirits. As "messengers", ancestors enhance for *Ambo* people the ability to experience *Kalunga* (God) through social relations and in the web of kinship systems that express the historical aspect of the people. Dymond reduces *Ambo* religion to social relations according to his agenda that assumes it incomplete and needing to be fulfilled by the Christian message. Such an assumption, however, amounts to a Christocentric outlook that regards African traditional religion as a preparation for the Christian Gospel, instead of the Gospel being presented in the context of traditional *Ambo* particularity. This outlook vitiates his discourse on the *Ambo* religion.
 Dymond, G.W., "The Idea of God in Ovamboland, South-West Africa," in African Ideas of God: A Symposium, ed. by E.W. Smith, 1950.
13. The old site is never discarded completely for it carries family history. The mother(s) of the family cultivate old sites which they acknowledge alternately as *beshie* (home), *leeh* (presence) *go'layh* (old); that is, the old home is still occupied by the *presence*. Therefore, they (living)

maintain connection with it. Traditional Amaa pay attention and respect to old things, old places, or old people, for “old” refers to ancestors and most of all to *Abbra’dee*, the first *Ancestor*. Family mothers encircle old kitchen spots with stones. These are the previous spots of house-shrine(s) (*too’saa*) where fertility symbols were kept. The family hold thanksgiving (crop tasting: *conyingaar*) for two successive years at the old home site (without huts) before they can change to holding the rite at their present home. Here, we suggest that the *old* estate is a *liminal threshold between the visible and the invisible*. This suggestion follows the same trend of Faris’(1989:305) idea of “elderhood and ancestorhood blend” in a *liminal threshold* that Victor Turner discusses in “Liminality and Communitas” (1989:96) in terms of a temporary ritual process. But the *old* estate as a *liminal threshold* (“thin layer”) is a perpetual state that “blend[s]” and bonds the visible and invisible, like that in Taylor’s “Unbroken Circle” (1963:67). In other words, this *old* state as a *liminal threshold* simultaneously divides and bonds the visible and the invisible.

14. (a) *Leeh go’layh* : *leeh* means spirit or presence and *go’layh* means old. The marriage which, in turn, started the social phrase refers to ontological values (ancestors) attached in relationship to both people and sites. Such relationships are articulated also in Amaa myths, as in the association of *Mount Nyema* with the ancestress *Nyema* and her spirit-son *Sheila* who, as spiritual beings, constructed the first relationships with Amaa through marriage.
 (b) Nadel, S.F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes in Kordofan, 1947, pp.455-459.
 (c) Kronenberg, A., “Some Notes on the Nyimang Religion,” in Kush 7; 197; 1957, pp.199-206.

15. See N4.

16. Traditional Amaa exercise informal redistribution of wealth through ritual. Consequently, a rich person is expected to contribute more material in the form of cereal or sacrificial animals to collective ritual occasions. Fear of covetousness is a reason behind this convention of wealth distribution. The traditional Amaa believe that covetousness has a spiritual dimension, particularly for the have-nots, who can become vehicles of sorcery if it is not satisfied.

17. Amaa group spirits into two categories (1) the living-dead with ancestors (2) free spirits not yet attached to human lineage. They distinguish between God and the ancestors. So God (*Abbra’dee*) is the third category in the background.

18. Amaa traditional values are built upon ancestral legacies (ancestral values).

19. Those who have been torn away from their ancestral values are considered disoriented; the traditional Amaa call them “*sooloo*” and the Bantu call “*evolue*”. There is a gulf between the traditional and the disoriented (“*evolue*” or *sooloo*) Africans. To this effect, Placide Tempels that the African traditionalist]

“ ... founds his life upon the traditional groundwork of his theodicy and his ontology [*see chart*], which include his whole mental life in their purview and supply him with a complete solution to the problem of living.” (also see **chap. 2 N57(b)**).

P. Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, 1959, pp.26-27. Tempels acknowledges the “native philosophy, which remains intact just below the surface ([a reference to the presence of ancestral memory] of his behaviour)” is the element that enables the disoriented (those who have been exposed to modern ways and missionary religions), especially Christians, to reconcile the old and new spiritual traditions in order to conclude a fourth spiritual tradition which we know as the *African Independent or Indigenous Churches*.

20. The three traditions are (1) African traditional (2) Christian tradition (3) Islamic tradition. One can not, in the African context, speak of any one to the exclusion of the other two, for African tradition absorbs elements of both. For instance, *Aladura* (praying) churches, West Africa, have resulted from the African traditions assimilating Christian elements, especially early Christian traditions.

For example, G.C. Oosthuizen, in Post-Christianity in Africa: A Theological and Anthropological Study, regards independent churches as very similar to ethnic religions and can only respond to the Christian gospel in a

“syncretistic way ... which means *freedom to self-expression*, and more vital force to attain one's own ends and the ends of one's community. Here is no idea of losing oneself for Christ's sake. It is in a sense a selfish morality, and a type of expectation which is non-Christian”(Oosthuizen 1968:103).

In this way, Oosthuizen a Christocentric, perhaps, sees no other ways which demonstrate the truth of Christian gospel.

Whereas Akin Omoyajowo, “The Aladura Churches in Nigeria since Independence,” in Christianity in Independent Africa, 1978, appreciates the opposite in that *Aladura* churches fill the gap of alienation of Africans from their traditions that counters a form of disorientation created by the historical churches' hostility to traditional African ways. Omoyajowo asserts, then, that *Aladura* (spiritual) churches bear the fruit of the “true African expression of the Christian religion”(Omoyajowo 1978:110; also Adrian Hastings 1976, 1979; E.A. Ayandele 1978).

E.A. Obeng agrees with Omoyajowo. Obeng writes, “Syncretism in West African Christianity? The Case of the Spiritual Churches,” in Africa Theological Journal 17, 2 (1988): 106-177, to point out that adherents of the independent churches acknowledge themselves as custodians of traditional values not in conflict with the Christian faith; and in “Inroads of African Religion into Christianity: The Case of Spiritual Churches,” in Africa Theological Journal 16, 1 (1987):43-52, is emphatic on the relation between African traditional ritual and the liturgy of these churches; he argues that clapping and dancing that accompany possession by the Holy Spirit are characteristically the same dynamics of the African possession trance. Healing is exercised in the African traditional manner; the prophet/prophetess dreams and receives visions of causes of illness and its diagnosis from the spirit. Water, a symbol of healing, with oil and a candle are used in the healing process. Unlike the historical churches, independent churches accept polygamy as normal, not as sin.

21. *ibid.*

22. Barrett, D.B., Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary African Movements, 1968, p.278.)

23. Turner, Victor: “New Religious Movements in Primal Societies”, an essay. Turner points out that adherents of African independent churches do not have a written systematic *form of theology, doctrine, or creed in a Western Christian manner* [1985:444). Their theology is ritualistic oral theology, i.e. they dance, sing, clap hands, and yield to trance [and consequently to divination]. It is consistent with ancestral traditions and, thus, dependent on experience rather than on discourse. This essay is in A Handbook of Living Religions, edited by John Hinnells, 1985. Also D.B. Barrett, in an essay entitled “Church Growth and Independency as Organic Phenomena: An Analysis of Two Hundred African Tribes” in Christianity in Tropical Africa: Studies Presented and Discussed at the Seventh International African Seminar, University of Ghana, April, 1965, ed. by C.G. Baeta, 1968.

In this essay, Barrett observes that the African independent churches form an organic whole and are entrenched in the African traditional religion, of which the values are anchored in ancestors

and the earth with its organic processes, connected to time, and topological thresholds related to space (see chart). Barrett's argument negates the fact that independent churches have arisen as a consequence of defence against alienation of the Africans from the land and ancestral values (also Keynatta 1965; Achebe 1958). Barrett suggests that their mode of defence differs from one people to another (Also T.A. Beetham 1967; J.D.Y. Peel 1968, 1978).

24. *ibid.*

25. The *connectedness* of the “Unbroken Circle” (Taylor 1963:67) organisationally and functionally binds the visible and the invisible into a cosmic unit. For the traditional African, therefore,

“... the cosmos ‘speaks’”

observes D. Zahn, The Religion, Spirituality and Thought of Traditional Africa, 1979:81. In the same line of thought are (a) J.C. Faris, Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989:300-305, (b) W. James, The Listening Ebony, Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power Among the Uduk of Sudan, 1988, (c) M. Douglas, “The Lele of Kasai” in African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples, 1976, ed. by D. Forde, (d) Diop, B.A., “*Those who are dead are never gone*” quoted in John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160, quoted by Janheinz Jan, Muntu, p.108, from Hostice Noires, ed. Senghor, Paris 1949, p.144.

26. Some scholars correctly refer to the ritual merit of fowls. Among the fowls, chickens enjoy that important ritual significance. Chickens are easy to maintain and are always available, whether at one’s home or from neighbours for borrowing, to meet *unexpected ritual emergencies*. Traditional Amaa believe the *numinous* relatives and ancestors can readily receive chickens as immediate sacrificial offering. Some of these *ad hoc ritual sacrifices* stand as temporary measures pledged to soothe the offended *numinous*. They are promises to be followed up by appropriate ritual sacrifices. For this necessary usefulness, traditional Amaa regard chickens as protectors of homes.

(a) S.F. Nadel, “A Study of Shamanism in the Nuba Mountains,” in Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute 76, 1945-1946, p.28. It is true that a *red rooster (cock)*,* though Kronenberg does not mention the colour, would be buried in the prepared grave in case the person wakes up or is revived after being declared dead. According to the traditional Amaa elders and interpretation, it is a right of the grave (earth) to receive the white cock to make peace with the living collectivity on one hand and, on the other, to acknowledge salvation of the revived.

(b) A. Kronenberg, “Some Notes on the Nyimang Religion,” in Kush 7, 1959 1, pp.198,207.

*Turner, V.W., “Color Classification in Ndembu Ritual: A Problem in Primitive Classification,” chapter 3 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Rituals. There is here a ritual symbolism that indicates ambiguity of life (“extra-ordinary and unfamiliar”) and that life beyond the grave makes sense only in terms of the ancestors. Traditional Amaa acknowledge this ritual sacrifice as *loo’ilowh tany’nyerayh*, meaning, the rite of reclaiming the soul of the revived person from the grip of the grave. Traditional Amaa believe a person may physically become alive (enabled by the *vital capability*)** while the spirit is absent. This rite, therefore, is a reclamation and restoration of the spirit. According to traditional Amaa, neglecting this rite (*loo’ilowh tany’nyerayh*) for the revived amounts to a rejection and communal death sentence against that revived individual. The traditionalist belief is that such a person would not last living.

** *Vital capability*, according to our understanding, is what Palcide Tempels calls “force vitale” in his Bantu Philosophy.

27. Traditional Amaa believe that undeserved wealth or any sort of property (raided or war booty) brings curses from previous owners who might use their spiritual agents for vengeance to locate such lost wealth. It is, therefore, prudent to keep the illegitimate apart from the legitimate and

away from villages. So the wild is neutral ground to dispose of unlawful wealth such as slaughtering and even selling raided cattle in the wild to persons from different nations (tribes).

28. For traditional Amaa (like similar Africans) the spirit realm is real, for they experience it in various modes as indifferent, spiteful, malicious, supportive, supervisory, guiding, distant, or intimately close to which they (traditional Amaa) may *paradoxically* be scornful, friendly, fearful, ritually manipulative for good or evil, indifferent but obedient, reverent but aggressive, joyful or loving. Here the chart demonstrates this experience of the traditional Africans with their surrounding throbbing with the unseen presence, which ancestors are part of. Also My father's terminal rite (see **fig.4**) and the Amaa view of birth and death as a process of *transformation* and *retransformation* expresses the reality of the invisible realm. Furthermore, Diop's poem "Those who are dead are never gone" (in Taylor 1963:160) attests to this reality of the spirit realm. Also see Wendy James, The Listening Ebony, Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power Among the Uduk of Sudan, 1988; S. Barrington-Ward, "Spirit Possession as Redefinition," in Christianity in Independent Africa, 1978:456-458; E. de Rosny, Healers in the Night, 1985; Meyer Fortes, Oedipus and Job in West African Religion, 1959:50-55; Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, 1958.
29. At an ancient shrine site (*ghoo'dee goh'lay*) of my clan *Tojgy* (*fly is its totem*), I underwent the rite of hot scarring (*ammia'daah*), a test of courage and trustworthiness for Amaa male initiates into manhood. It was on this very site, marked by a circle of stones in the desolate but bushy farm land, that my father performed his terminal rite. In the centre of that stone circle stood a 16ft. pole with the wooden fly symbol on its pinnacle
30. Violations from within Amaa territory are treated as a ritual breach that would require cleansing. Such violations are fined heftily for ritual cleansing for the whole group has been endangered. Such a ritual aims at sustaining and securing equilibrium in the society and solidarity among its members, both the visible and the invisible.
31. Drought and mostly the civil war since 1983 to date 1999 have forced some traditional people to migrate to semi-urban centres. These migrant villagers build shanty towns on the periphery of these semi-urban centres, where water supply is possible from modern drilled wells. Such migrant villagers are mostly smaller families dependent on hoe farming; whereas the larger ones, established as clans along the mythological divisions, tend to remain in rural domains and persist with ancestral legacies and are, therefore, traditional Amaa dependent.

Migrant villagers in urban and semi-urban centres are the category influenced by missionary religions complementing modern ways, and spearhead the new religious movement. As a spiritual movement, under the Amaa name *Kanneesaa'ou*, the independent church blends similar elements of Amaa traditions and the Old Testament, such as dreams, divination, sacrifice, and the performance of the religion in singing, hand clapping, and dancing upon rhythmic beat of drums (*faa'laang*), planks (*koo'mang*), and a string instrument (*koo'nyang*).

32. In spite of the contempt some rich Amaa may discreetly have for the poor (*doo'wa*), nevertheless, they fear the *doo'wa*, for the *doo'wa*, the Amaa believe, have spiritual doubles (*aa'leng*) that avenge the *doo'wa*. Therefore, a traditional Amaa would never turn away a *doo'wa* empty handed, once the *doo'wa* reaches the gate. Even when nothing is available to give at that moment, the convention of the traditional Amaa demands of that home to welcome the *doo'wa*, let him "*seat the spirit: abbeedo boodaye beeh*" and offer him mere water in a clean gourd "*woe'daang doo'wa yea daah teng kaa'ffell'ow bong tabieu tegg*", for water is a symbol of goodwill, healing, and life (these are ritual reasons why the traditional Amaa mix sacrificial blood with clean water drawn specially from a newly dug well, for example, for the marriage rite).

Traditional Amaa instruct children also to have respect for the *doo'wa*. If a *doo'wa* appears at a gate and there are no adults at home, the oldest child (pre-teen age) should go out to offer his/her right shoulder for greeting and say, “*wong waa beshieu haa nay'dee*,” meaning, “*our people are not at home*”. This child’s statement and offering of the right shoulder for a greeting touch is an offer of goodwill which will end the quest. In sum, then, the *doo'wa* have mystical powers that affect the practice of moral values among traditional Amaa.

33. Traditional Amaa adopt traditional group work in economic activities. For instance, a wife and her children may contribute work once or twice a month in the father’s farm. The amount of a wife’s contribution of labour to the husband’s farm depends on the number of co-wives. More co-wives mean less labour for each wife. Once or twice, during the farming season, all wives cooperate to prepare a pool of food for holding a group work (*cow'lay*) on the husband’s farm (*main farm: co'rong dia*). Group work comprises men and married women in the community.
34. The traditional Amaa compound is formed of many huts, as wives’ households, which are occupied by both the visible and the invisible members of the family. The connection between the two realms of the family authorises the elders, whose authority is intimately connected to the ancestors, forefathers (also Faris 1989:305), and the common living-dead members of the lineage. The living and the living-dead are interdependent; the ancestors are closely involved in the compound to ensure fecundity, fertility of marriage, and abundant life, thus, ensuring their *eternity now*. Whereas the visible members do not concern themselves with how the living-dead members conduct their life. The point here is that both realms are bound together in what Taylor calls the “Unbroken Circle [J.V. Taylor 1963:67]”.
35. Traditional Amaa mythology informs of visible immortality in rejuvenation of the aged by an essential matter received on demand from *Abbra'dee*. No one died until social injustice, revenge, tardiness on duty execution failed the mission of an earthling returning with the rejuvenating essence, without attention to the destroyed connecting bridge to the earth, the earthly emissary floated in the void. In fright, he forfeit his life and *the essence to erratic free spirits*. Thus, the mythology informs on loss of visible immortality, severing of the direct connection with *Abbra'dee*, and the beginning of the intermediary role of ancestorhood “linkage” with mediumship of spirit-priesthood, which was instituted by *Sheila*, who, rejecting or resisting complete *retransformation* (death), *transfomed* his lower body into a snake (*ssomme*) while head and arms remained human. *Sheila* instituted traditions that traditional Amaa follow today. For instance, according to *Sheila*, upon the death (*retransformation*) of a family head, the family homestead remains intact and becomes an ancestral landscape. It is, therefore, inherited by the youngest son (*ando'waar*) This is a reason, then, for an Amaa male to desperately want the last child to be male. This is because the youngest son caressed the tail of his snakeman father.

The snakeman (*Sheila*) instituted priesthood office and leadership. He bestowed them on the eldest son and gave his homestead to the youngest one. Traditional Amaa expect the youngest *ando'waar* to preserve the ancestral homesteads and related landmarks, for the living-dead are attached to them, besides the historical and ritual significance. Some rituals of affliction and healing are performed on these ancestral sites and landmarks. Hence, preserving old ancestral sites has mystical and ritual importance. According to *Nyema* mythology, *Sheila* was partly human and partly spirit and, thus, did not succumb to complete death. It is in this line of mythical thought and ritual practice that the traditional Amaa regard *Sheilo'waa* clan as *incomplete humans (soo)*

36. Otto, Rudolf, The Idea of the Holy, (transl. by John W. Harvey), 1924, pp. 25-30.

37. Turner, Victor W., "Ritual Symbolism, Morality, and Social Structure among the Ndembu," chapter 2 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.
38. *ibid.*
39. (a) see N11.
(b) see N37.
(c) James, W., The Listening Ebony, Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power Among the Uduk of Sudan, 1988, p.28.
(d) Lienhardt, G. Divinity and Experience: Religion of the Dinka, 1961, p.130.
40. Patte, Daniel, What is Structural Exegesis?, 1976, p.2. Patte's discourse states "...man-centred rather than cosmos-centred [p.2]" which is contrary to the traditional Amaa outlook and approach to life as "cosmos-centred rather than man-centre". Here I reversed the word order instead of paraphrasing.
41. See N36.
42. *ibid.*
43. Traditional Amaa believe that free spirits roam the void. Also see **chart**.
44. A spirit-priest, ritual elders, or a family elder when, for instance, a necessity arises for a ritual of healing, will invoke *leeh barr* (natural phenomena) when offering the cleansing sacrifice. For instance, at the foot of a mountain or a hill the sun is invoked first and ancestors at morning or evening twilight (*nyee'ngang geelay*). Such a ritual concludes with the sacrifice and the carcass is left there with an invocation to the red setting or rising sun, "*keehnowoh nyon nay ee doo toorr aa'ng loowoe nowoh boojow!*", that is, "*this [sacrifice] is yours and you take it, and pull [repeal] this shadow off us!*" Here the sun, as if a person, is pleaded with face to face. The sacrificial victim also is invoked. For instance, my late spirit-priest father touched blessingly the patient with the fluttering and quacking fowl first on the head, next on the right shoulder, and then on the left shoulder, the last one on the back below the shoulder bones. This blessing and cleansing act was accompanied by the following,
Too'nn nno, aa wurr nno,
Aa nnyonee dayh loo nno eh kahdan deel,
Too'nn nno, Abbedee nye boodow wee'lick.
 meaning,
You this night, you this bird,
Take this trouble to there,
May the spirit of this night follow you.
- Upon reaching home the sick person (child), this ritual performer, standing at *mannddah* (ground altar - see **fig. 1**) and facing the arched gate (*orre'gaul*), will address ancestors in the same manner face to face as he converses with a physically living person. As he ritually converses with the invisible, holding a spear from the very arched gate he faces, the performer rhythmically but gently jabs downwards to the *mannddah* ground, but without actually piercing it. This sort of rite is performed when *Amaa* elders fail to explain the reasons for an affliction. The invocative conversation with the living-dead elders is a mixture of complaint, pleading, and angry words. This approach to communication with the forefathers and ancestors should not be construed as worship. It is a venerable approach rather than worship.
45. The three religious traditions are (1) African, (2) Christian, and (3) Islamic. The African tradition, having "tolerant, absorptive capacity [Sanneh 1983:87]", endows the other two with the sense of tolerance on the African scene. Therefore, one cannot talk of the African traditional

religion without drawing into the discourse the Christian and Islamic traditions for they, though historically missionary traditions, have become integral to African spirituality. Africans have injected their aboriginal traditions into the Christian and Islamic traditions to form their own new blends of African Christianity and African Islam respectively. This is so for an African does not easily dissolve his/her ancestral values.

46. Amaa elders narrate that elder *Anniman* arranged dances between heaven and earth at annual festivities some of which are still maintained as (1) harvest festivals; (2) the direct drum dance (*doosoolle*) before *Abbra'dee* turned to a masked dance following the severance between heaven and earth in the destruction of the connecting bridge. Disconnection of the bridge entailed loss of visible immortality through the loss of rejuvenating essence. This mythical sense, provides and facilitates for the traditional Amaa (similar Africans in general) to overcome the destructive effects of time by engaging in rituals that return them to the bliss of the past.
47. (a) Junod, Henri A., The Life of a South African Tribe, Vol. 1, 1927, p.180.
 (b) See chart.
 (c) See N8.
48. Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963. p. 67. For the African traditionalist, the "Unbroken Circle" represents the emphasis on what we regard as ethics in human relationships and responsibilities that the Amaa mythology observes in traditional Amaa structure and function, and traditional religion (*as experienced*) is a statement of the nature (*as imbued*) of the ultimate reality (*Abbra'dee*).
49. The Amaa kinship system binds both the living and the living-dead (also see N48).
50. *Animism*: In his work Primitive Culture Vols.1 & 2, Edward B. Tylor presented this term in his definition of the idea of spirits, including those of human beings and living continuity after death. He supports his idea by dreams and visions that occur to a person, while asleep, when his body is actively involved somewhere else and interacts with the *living-dead*, but in forms of their previous physical existence. He concludes, then, that there is more to living beings and that "more" is summarised in the idea of spirit as the animator, which departs to continue existence when its physical body expires (Quoted in Bolaji Idowu, African Traditional Religion: A Definition, 1973, pp.128-131).
51. (a) Mbiti, J., African Religions and Philosophy, 1969, p.25.
 (b) Eliade, M, The Sacred and the Profane, 1959:88 (see quote in chapter 1 N204).
 (c) Hawkesworth, D., "The Nuba Proper of Southern Kordofan," in Sudan Notes and Records 15, 1932-1933, pp.189-191.
 (d) A. Kronenberg, "Some Notes on the Nyimang Religion," in Kush 7, 1959 1, pp.198,207.
52. Edith Turner saw a visible spirit form in the healing ritual she attended as a participant-observer. She describes her first experience,
 "I saw with my own eyes a giant thing emerging from out the flesh of her back. It was a large grey blob about six inches across, opaque and something between solid and smoke."
 Edith Turner, "A Visible Spirit Form in Zambia," in Being Changed By Cross-Cultural Encounters, edited by D. E. Young & Jean-Guy Goulet, 1994, p.83.
53. Traditional Amaa know the spirits of the living-dead are in their midst. The spirits are the silent community members with whom the living are in constant dialogue and from whom constantly they receive informative direction and instruction, which are made possible through divination, rites, and ritual application. The enabling agents in processing and dispensing the

communication between the visible and the invisible are elders and spirit-priests in co-ordination with ancestors. In all rituals, therefore, the invisible are participants and are treated as such. In other words, perhaps, in the tradition of orality, social relations in this ritual context are represented as a text which, in turn, impacts on the transformation of meaning during ritual invocations together with the use of symbols with overt and hidden meanings (see N54). Such transformation of meanings help ritual elders and elders to diagnose and achieve ritual solutions for existential problems among the traditional people.

54. I use Victor Turner's illuminating approach to deeper meanings of symbols and their connotative movements across thresholds of the visible and the invisible, the living and the living-dead, and phenomena such as the sky and earth and tensions present in-between. Such tension extends to the social and spiritual order. "The Ritual Symbolism, Morality, and Social Structure among the Ndembu," chapter 2 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.
55. Turner, Edith, with W. Blodgett, S. Kahona, and F. Benwa: Experiencing Ritual, 1992, p. 100 (2nd. paragraph).
56. Mbiti, John S., African Religions and Philosophy, 1970, p.25
57. Turner, Victor W., "Liminality and Communitas," chapter 3 in The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure, 1989.
58. Van Gennep, A., The Rites of Passages, translated by M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee, 1960, p.20.
59. Turner, Victor W., "Liminality and Communitas," chapter 3 in The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti- Structure, 1989.
60. Turner, Victor W., "Ritual Symbolism, Morality, and Social Structure," chapter 2 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.
61. (a) see N4.
 (b) An example for the presence of the living-dead among the traditional Amaa is the physical symbol of the burial grounds, where both the good and evil are buried. Burial grounds are accorded sanctity. Grave sites must be treated with respect, for the living-dead are there, particularly the rejected ones (*gheshinne*) who, traditional Amaa believe, would not tolerate breaches upon their sites. According to the ritual tradition of absolution of a breacher who treads on a grave, the breacher must be quick to pick up a grain (*coo'woe'la*) of earth and swallow it, an act of declaration that he (the breacher) is a *gheshinne*, too, in order to avoid the punitive reactions of the *gheshinne*. Therefore, traditional children are sternly instructed not to tread on burial grounds unless in company of adults for ritual purposes. There are also other sacred sites that the living would not indulge to tread on.
62. (a) Nadel, S.F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes in Kordofan, 1947, p.45. There is the taboo of silence against loud noises once the crops are sown and the green growth begins. This taboo continues until *Jalle*. Traditionalists reason that spirits in the growing crops and *Thhowor*, in particular, would be disturbed. Such disturbed spirits will turn against the crops themselves by inviting an unnecessarily heavy wind to destroy the crops. This is a punishment by deprivation. In a way, *Jalle* rite is also a breaking out of liminal state of ritual silence. In modern terms, traditional Amaa have been observing this custom against *noise pollution* from time immemorial. Perhaps, Victor W. Turner's idea of "Liminality and Communitas" also indicates to this type of ritual.

(b) Turner, Victor W., "Liminality and Communitas," Chap. 3 in The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure, 1989.

(c) Van Gennep, A. The Rites of Passage, translated by M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee, 1960, p.116.

63. *Coo'roo*, meaning, the unpredictable sorcerer as well as a priest. Some Amaa call him "*borr'goll dia*", meaning, *master thief* for the destructive influence of the demonic spiritual forces that possess him. Such spirits can hurt others while he (the possessed host) is unaware. Being unaware of his demons explains his cautious movements in avoiding vulnerable others like children, women, and livestock. Only the ancestors can counteract the anti-social dimensions of the demonic spirits of a living sorcerer. He can also be spirit-priestly in cleansing rites for whom his unexpected presence impacts negatively.
64. (a) Hiding does not absolve a violator, but it can soothe and lessen the punitive reaction of the fleeing spiritual forces.
(b) Nadel, S.F., The Nuba: An Anthropological Study of the Hill Tribes in Kordofan, 1947, p.44.
(c) R.C. Stevenson, "The Nuba Peoples of Kordofan Province: An Ethnographic Survey," unpublished Msc. (Econ) Thesis, 1965, pp150-160.
(d) R.C. Stevenson, "The Nyamang of the Nuba Mountains," in Sudan Notes and Records, 23; 75, 1940, pp.80-94.
(e) Kronenberg, A., "Some Notes on the Nyimang Religion," in Kush 7; 197; 1957, pp.210-219.
65. (a) Apart from the common living-dead and the ancestors, traditional Amaa believe that there are two types of evil living-dead (or demons):
(i) those rejects from among the good living-dead community (the invisible side of the visible living humankind community). These are the *gheshinne*. (ii) those who, traditional Amaa believe, refuse to accept *retransformation* and, thus, reject the trip to the ancestral judgement for they know the outcome (*rejection*) beforehand. Traditional Amaa believably *speculate* that such newly *retransformed* persons resurrect their bodies in the grave, but cannot maintain them neither are they able to move out of the grave with the physical for the *vital capabilities* expire. These types of evil living-dead are known as *ddho'ssurr*, meaning, the *resurrected ones*. Traditional Amaa believe these are the living-dead that appear in false visible appearance (*aberration*). These are the types of the evil living-dead(demon) which mostly haunt human dwellings. Hence, the loud noise of *Jalle* night across Amaaland aims to flush them out.
(b) M. Douglas in an essay entitled "*The Lele of Kasai*" reveals a structure of opposites as a relationship of polarities that is also prevalent in traditional African paradoxical relationship with the numinous as articulated by Evans-Pritchard [1956] in Nuer Religion, Lienhardt [1961] in Divinity and Experience, and experienced by the traditional Amaa as disguised in *Keeh aa'coo'ree* [sacred things as artefacts or places] must not be approached or touched for they are dangerous; yet they use them in rites for the welfare of the living; that is, the numinous is asked to help and, at the same time, is commanded to stay away when the job is done. The numinous is unpredictable, a condition which causes the paradox in the tense relationship with the traditional African) that expresses tension between ritual and myth, a presentation of interaction between the visible and the invisible. The tension of this structure demonstrates itself in the village, between male and female, and between the forest and the village. Such a tension defines a "liminal" threshold (also Victor Turner [1989] in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, chaps. 1 and 2) and "liminal" space between opposites among the "Lele of Kasai," in African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples, ed. by Daryll Forde, 1976. The *paradox of conflict* in relationships whether between the sacred and the profane or between the profane and profane is a dynamic mechanism that maintains constructive equilibrium.

66. See N10.
67. As mediums and messengers of *Abbra'dee*, forefathers and ancestors occupy the ontological threshold, the liminal stand, between visible and invisible. They, thus, hold mystical powers and authority to manifest in the structure and function of their living kinsmen.
68. *ibid.*
69. Traditional Africans use drama on virtually all ritual occasions. Victor W. Turner's The Drums of Affliction talks of *Ndembu* who, like *Amaa*, use dramatic art in healing. Drums constitute key instruments in such ritual dramas, not only as healing, but also in all sorts of rites as well as war and entertainment. The drum beat accompanied by other forms of music unites the mood of the participants with that of the sacred. Variation in mood is not completely spirited away. Some totally submit themselves (body and soul) to the supernatural participation; others offer little nominal lip service to the spirit realm. A deceptive attitude, traditional *Amaa* believe, is fundamentally offensive to the ancestors, whose mystical power and authority shape the African Traditional Religion.

Here, then, as Meyers Fortes demonstrates in his Oedipus and Job in African Traditional Religion is an ancestral role in shaping one's understanding of the African Traditional Religion such as that of *Tallensi*. Fortes concurs with Evans-Pritchard's work (Nuer Religion) in that both works exhibit contrast and similarities between African Traditional Religion and ancient Judaic values, particularly the sense of approach to sacrifice as the propitiatory means of reaching the Divine. Also E.O. James, The Nature and Function of Priesthood, 1955, pp.145-204.

Such obvious contrasts and similarities between Judaic and African traditional values in Nuer Religion have prompted Luc de Heusch in Sacrifice in Africa to criticise Evans-Pritchard's point that the *Nuer* sense of sacrifice is connected to their sense of sin, which, according to de Heusch, is a "Western concept [and] is inapplicable to *Nuer* thought [de Heusch 1985:8]".

In my opinion, Evans-Pritchard means African humanism when he shows contrasts, similarities, and comparisons between the African traditional and old Judaic values. Here, the functionary experience is what counts in both traditions, as Evans-Pritchard shows in Nuer Religion. Evans-Pritchard does not transplant a Judaic sense of sin, which de Heusch assumes "Western concept ... inapplicable to *Nuer* thought [1985:8]". To reiterate, sin is a human condition not a concept. I disagree with de Heusch's contention for, from my own living experience, the Old Testament and the African Traditional Religion are *parallel similars* in the practice of ritual sacrifice, divination, polygamy, kinship system, dreams and a venerable attitude towards their living elders and forefathers. Moreover, de Heusch seems to ignore the Hellenic cultural factor moulding Western Christendom. Since the *Christian faith* is trans-cultural, there is no preventive factor that would prohibit African traditional cultures moulding the Christian faith. Such moulding, indeed, has already been taking place in the orality and applied theology of the African independent churches as rooted "both in genuine African experience and in an archetypal inspiration of Biblical teaching" (B. Sundkler 1978:545; also Appiah-Kubi 1979, 1983; D.B. Barrett 1968; George Thomas 1977).

Indeed, the traditional Africans are nearer to the Bible than de Heusch (1985) thinks. Contrary to de Heusch's assumption, Bethwell A. Ogot (1976), in an essay entitled "*On the Making of a Sanctuary: Some Thoughts on the History of Religion in Padhola*", writes

"the monotheism introduced by the latter-day higher religions such as Christianity and Islam in the area represented neither a revival, nor an innovation, but an attempted merger of the differently derived concepts of God"

Ogot further notes that *Padhola* people preserve their traditional religion as an Old Testament, but their conversion to missionary religions is mere pretence.

In The Historical Study of African Religion, ed. by T.O. Ranger and I.N.Kimambo, 1976, p.122.

70. Mbiti, J., African Philosophy and Religions, 1969, p.69
71. (a) The mystical role of various facets of *Ttemel* in the traditional Amaa social organisation and function. **See footnote N25 in chapter Two.**
(b) Locke's writing about the relationship of the tiller and the earth, though on material sense, nonetheless, adequately concurs with the traditional Amaa sense and practice of *ttemel* (ownership). J. Lock, Two Treatises of Civil Government, 1884 (1949 reprint), p. 130.
72. (a) Tempels, Placide, Bantu Philosophy, 1959, pp.68-70.
(b) Kabasele, Francois "Christ as Ancestor and Elder Brother," in Faces of Jesus in Africa, ed. by Robert J. Schreiter, 1992, p.123.
73. (a) K. Russell, Land Reform: A World Survey, 1977, p.358.
(b) Junod, Henri A., The Life of a South African Tribe, Vol. 1, 1927, p.180.
(c) Deng, F.M., Tradition and Modernization, 1971, p.272.
(d) ***Thhowor***: earth spirit which, traditional Amaa believe, dwells below the surface of the earth and is in-charge of fertility and fecundity of earth, fauna, and flora. Its share of the marriage gift is offered to it as an appreciation and safeguard for a fertile marriage. *Thhowor* is also responsible for the growth of crops. Whether at sowing or harvest rites *Thhowor* is honoured together with the ancestors, particularly ancestor *Shayshayray* (now *kuunee Shayshayray*), whose agent spirit-priest is known as *kuunee Shayshayray*.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANCESTORS, ARTS AND RITES

1. CORPORATENESS

The corporateness of traditional Amaa life is founded on the family. It spreads to the extended family and, then, is woven into the larger traditional society. Such corporateness is expressed in a ritually undergirded networking web in which ancestors are central since their legacy of traditions and the related customs are law. As mediums between the visible and the invisible, the spirit-priest, ritual elders, and elders uphold these customary laws that traditional Amaa must observe.

It is here that customary laws define customary ties and healthy relationships as essential but under the influence of mystical beliefs and ritual punishment which ancestors enforce. As a patriarchal society, such ties bond traditional Amaa males of a single progenitor into a family.

That is, there is kinship by blood through males. This bond of brotherhood and fatherhood sometimes affects large traditional groupings as families and extended families (clans). As such, they blend together close corporate segments which make the interdependent networking web apparent in traditional Amaa familial bonds between the visible and invisible. There are bonds between parents and sons, brother and brother, uncle and nephew, grand parents and grand children. These bonds and this networking extend to the clan and lineage near and distant.¹ And networking with other lineages are determined by the total web of social, economic, legal custom, psychological or emotional,² moral or ethical, and spiritual factors.

Spiritual factors, in every way, have a directive influence on customary factors that embody the dynamism, which resources as well as investing mystical authority depend on. Here traditions and customs stipulate that men should acknowledge and uphold variant sorts of bonds in a kinship web and in locales where multi-lineage communities are established.

These factors make the traditional Amaa culture viable. Such factors are rites of passage, to use Van Gennep's terminology, that a traditional Amaa male passes through

from birth (*transformation*) to death (*retransformation*) and ancestorhood for outstandingly devout ones. The core of these rites is summed up in circumcision and consummated marriage³ that require accomplishment to ensure the fullness of traditional Amaa life that depends on fertility and fecundity.

The central means of this directive influence are mystical but realized in sacrificial and ritual acts which spirit-priests and ritual elders facilitate and communicate to the ontological order (see **chart**), for example, in flows of libation and the blood of circumcision and animal sacrifice for the maintenance and upkeep of relationships and, thus, for connectedness through procreative marriage. That is, ritual acts connect the visible and the invisible. So rites performed are either for relief from existential problems which could hinder procreation among the living, for re-enforcement, or to promote and celebrate life as in rites of birth (*transformation*) and death (*retransformation*). Here all ritual processes interlock in a network that we shall observe in the traditional Amaa marriage procedures (see **chapter 7**).

For the traditional, therefore, marriage is a mandatory rite for it promotes ritual networking that enhances the process of connectedness of the visible with the invisible. It is essentially mandatory since it maintains social structure and function in lineage perpetuity, which imports upon the living moral tenets⁴ that the mythology of *Nyema* and *Sheila* expect the Amaa to follow in order to build the harmonious society which the ritual customs maintain.

Here, when we say ritual elders understand the limits of the dynamics of behaviour and motivation in Amaa mythology, which is a tenaciously ritual one, we assume that in Amaa ritual elders acquire knowledge and understanding of the cultural components from which ritual traditions and customs arise. Through experience they come to understand communal expectations of their groups (clans) and other nations (tribes), especially defeated ones, like the *Gholfan* with whom the Amaa established kinship through marriage. Instead of enemies, therefore, they became affines (see **chapter 7**).

Transforming such a kinship from animosity to affinity in the *Amaa-Gholfan* war mythology is an existent reality that traditional Amaa refer to in problem solving when

incidents of conflict between individuals or groups of the two nations occur. In other words, traditional Amaa customarily apply the precepts of this shared mythology.

Here Koech Kipng'no is justified in arguing that African mythology tells of the African archaic sense of ultimate truth, a dimension that links the living and the living-dead, a condition that enhances continuity of traditional life in that the mythologies demarcate the leitmotifs like sacrifices, various initiation rites (of which, according to traditional Amaa, the key ones are circumcision and marriage), and the union of the living and the living-dead (see **chart**).⁵

Here we conclude that traditions and customs are entrenched in mythologies, a perspective relevant to Amaa mythology of *Nyema* and her spirit-son *Sheila*. According to traditional elders' interpretation, this mythology has two sections. One consists of the two human-spirit characters of *Nyema* and *Sheila* on the back of a white horse, with a third character, springing out of the earth,⁶ and an Amaa maiden, a fourth character, coincidentally seeing them. The myth does not tell who that maiden was; neither does it tell what she was doing at that moment, but it reports that *Sheila* married her later on as his first wife.

Here, one can observe the elusive nature of orality even though traditional Amaa ritual practice depends on such tenets which arise from mythologies and are regulated by ancestral spirits and living-dead relatives through divination and mediumship of spirits-priests and ritual elders. Despite the elusiveness of orality, in modern terms, its reality for the traditionalist must not be discounted as it regulates their daily living and spirituality. It, thus, enters the mystical dimension (second section) which conditions and connects itself to human fertility and fecundity of the earth.⁷

Nyema and *Sheila* married humans in the same human ritual processes. This mythical human-spirit marriage bond has a ritual bearing for traditional Amaa marriage rites as well as for the family.

As such, this bond is the basis of the traditional Amaa rite of offering to the Spirit (*Abbra'dee*) as spouses the first son and the last daughter in the family. If we look at this dedicatory rite from the angle of modern trends of thought, it is a rite that does not presuppose gender in the Spirit (*Abbra'dee*) since both the first male (eldest) and the last

female (youngest) are dedicated as spouses to the Spirit. This dedicatory rite perpetuates the human-spirit marriage mythology. Furthermore, *Abbra'dee's* gender idea is also practised in adult rites of social structure. The title given to male elders who undergo the *fatherhood* rite carries the suffix *-ma* which bestows motherhood (which basically is the intended rite fulfilment) on these male adults; on the surface, of course, they are male fathers. This is the one side of the picture.

On the other side, once mothers reach the menopause, they adopt (snatch: *angg'ngehhroo too'da*) the male names of their youth *Korr'deeh* (whether living or living-dead)⁸. Likewise, it is the rite that bestows fatherhood (the basic intention) on these menopausal elderly mothers.⁹ This female rite includes mothers of living-dead children, but obviously excludes childless (barren) women. All this, in our interpretation, involves rites and rituals as vehicles to acknowledge that *Abbra'dee* (the Creator Spirit) has no gender; therefore, they acknowledge both gender aspects of *It (Abbra'dee)*. Once a traditional Amaa menopausal woman adopts (snatches, in Amaa terms) a male title, it is a normal choice for her to reject the husband's sexual needs; instead she encourages him to take a younger woman as a co-wife.

Besides this ritual choice that opts for co-wives, Amaa polygamy has a mythological background that shapes it. The mythology in this respect says that *Sheila*, partly spirit and partly man, now a husband to a human woman, was once challenged by an authoritative elderly man who lost rulership as well as ritual territory over his clan to the more powerful two spirit-humans. To resolve this conflict, *Sheila* involved others. He asked a man of his opponent's clan to supply him with bulrush (*araa*) grain. *Sheila* mixed sorghum (*mmoonooong*) grain with the bulrush grain. He buried the mixed grains in the soil. While others watched, he stretched out his arm over the buried grains saying, "Aa mmoonooong, aa araa, Aa mow'nee". He commanded the mixed grains (*mmoonooong* and *araa*) to sprout immediately and they did! This was enough evidence to educate people that *Sheila* and his mother *Nyema* were superior beings in their communal life. They took on human form, though not through the same process of intense biological desire as in human relationships, which are ritually regulated and are, as such, obligatory for traditional Amaa maintenance of lineage continuity, kinship systems, and immortality of

the living-dead, especially the ancestors. Thus, *Sheila* convinced his elderly opponent who, out of gratitude, married his youngest daughter to *Sheila* as his second wife.

Women, who fought for monogamy, were convinced and, thus, persuaded by this miraculous act that it was a logical method of conflict resolution and, hence, the basis of polygamy which the Christian monogamous tradition can not easily defeat, since polygamy,¹⁰ though by choice, is deeply rooted in ancestral traditions that together build and shape the structure and function of traditional Amaa society.

In speaking of spirits in human form joining the human community in matrimony and the beginning of physical human experience, the *Nyema* and *Sheila* mythology confirms for the traditional Amaa that marriage is the vital rite for the infrastructure of society. Marriage perpetually establishes new segments (families and clans), while at the same time broadening the wider social structure. That is, wider bonds in Amaa traditional society are developed and nurtured by the extension of bonds in the family. Such bonds form an intricate web of relationships in which everybody is dependent on everybody else. But ritual norms define different relationships within the wider society (see **chart**).

The mythology of *Sheila* is relevant to traditional Amaa practical life. A common traditional Amaa saying goes like this, “*nnyong ammoodee’ yee morr geedai shee’ dayie*”, meaning, “Befriend your enemies; even marry them”, to encourage young men, for instance, to act constructively in conflict situations, as *Sheila* does in the mythology. Similarly, *Nyema* neutralizes her human husband's male chauvinism by sharing with him the ritual work. These mythical conflict situations are guiding points for traditional *Amaa* to maintain moral order in conflict resolution within both family and wider society.

This saying, therefore, creates cohesion and affinity out of hostility. It obviously makes kinsmen out of outsiders and foes, while serving the Amaa exogamy tradition that is seen in Amaa lineage systems and in the wide range of kinship with the paternal families of women from other nations (tribes) who have married into Amaa lineages.

This saying, “Befriend your enemies; even marry them”, constructive as it is, is prevalent in Amaa oral history that depicts tribal wars of the pre-colonial period, when tribe warriors raided each other. Amaa warriors raided cattle and prized young women, whom they viewed as brides to maintain. And male captives were exchanged with cattle,

especially oxen for sacrifices. Furthermore, instead of oxen, they preferred maidens who, together with those already captured,¹¹ were destined for marriage, but upon the formal acceptance of the defeated nation (tribe) to justify the normal performance of traditional marriage rites on both sides. In this case, Amaa as the victor nation (tribe) returned the war booty and the exchanged cattle to their owners in the defeated nation (tribe).

According to traditional elder instructors, who usually narrate oral history to young people at family sittings around the fire at night, male captives of priestly lineages were not exchanged for oxen. Instead, they were married to their captors' daughters and sisters and set free to return home with their wives.¹²

When in a conflict situation, traditional Amaa are inclined to reconciliation. They will try to find out if there is any affinal relationship with the opponent party. The reason for this conciliatory attitude is found in the mythology of exogamous marriages with many groups, whether through friendship or war, which we call situational marriage.

Such mythical marriages in war situations occurred with the approval of the defeated party in order to establish mutuality in the expected relationship through marriage without ritual impediment between two nations (tribes). Traditional Amaa explain, even offering as an example for young men follow, that creating peace within conflict is preferable even for the stronger to imposing peace upon the weaker party, for traditional people believe in the destructive work of ill feelings (*booshee co'borr*: hot heart as opposed to cool heart: *booshee co'shill*). For traditional people, such ill feelings incite demons (essentially rejected human spirits) to cause havoc.

It, therefore, means the involvement of spiritual realms of goodwill, spirit-priests, ritual elders, and elders of both nations (tribes) to establish this mutuality but through ritual mediums the way is cleared for such situational relationship to begin.

Since blood spilt in any way becomes a hindrance and, thus, a taboo, this requires traditional ritual luminaries, who constitute the theocracies of both nations (tribes), to arrange a blood cleansing rite on the same spot or battleground where the dead warriors fell. According to the teaching of traditional elders, the blood cleansing rite preceded the regular marriage rites between the defeated (*Gholfan*) and the victor (*Amaa*) nations as

equals and, thus, mutuality¹³ becomes necessary. It is only in a war situation that traditional peoples permit such a marriage to take place.

According to elders, spirit-priests and ritual elders of both *Amaa* and *Gholfan* congregated in the *Amaa* domain for a comparative ritual dialogue to establish normal relationships. Both theocracies exchanged ritual ideas and interpretations of their respective traditions, and marriage rites in particular. They dealt with differential gaps in the marriage rites of both cultures in order to bridge gaps ritually, and, thereby, ensured the involvement of their invisible elders, who still maintain their jural authority and whose invisible presence the congregating theocracies acknowledged; this involves ancestors of both the captors and female captives. Here the spiritual entities are bound by agreed conclusions. That is, the invisible is a participant as well as witness to the ritual process.

The rite of building mutual relationship- (from enemies to affines)- between *Amaa* and *Gholfan* became a prominent rite that traditional *Amaa* refer to in murder situations in order to create peace in the feud, but with ritual restriction among the *Amaa* themselves.¹⁴

Both in oral history and literature, this rite involves war legends inasmuch as it is an inspiration for talented youth (of both genders) to compose songs of valour in praise of warriors and the guiding spirits of the *Amaa* nation (tribe). The ritual elders, too, liturgically employ this form of oral art (song, music, and dance) in invocations in various rites like the annual harvest, circumcision, spirit-priest's consecration, marriage, burial,¹⁵ and so on. All parties are committed to celebrate life instead of hostility.¹⁶

Therefore, taboos of such rites demand the suppression of hostility in favour of reconciliation that was marked by marriage between the two nations (tribes). According to *Amaa* elders, the growing theocracies of the two parties did not refer to the hostile atmosphere in their midst. They made a concerted effort to avoid explicit mention of it, for fear that words might move evil spirits to re-ignite hostility, a tendency that traditional elders of both parties wished to force into silence.¹⁷ Thus, traditional *Amaa*, a cosmos centred society, warn, "*haa wadaa qooh'soo'yea boerr tay'yinnan*", meaning, "do not initiate evil ones into action by intoning ill feelings". Or "*ee nee wadaa'yea taa'lee nay, ay noong'noong tuwa deeh*", meaning, "if you are pregnant with the unpleasant, shut up",

the officiant elder will command the gathering parties in conflict. Their role is to search for cool words and hearts.

All adhere to this command, for the invisible elders of both parties are present and uphold the command. Therefore, though in dispute, both parties make a concerted effort not to express but to suppress the tension.¹⁸ This concerted effort for establishing and confirming mutuality is an essential mechanism that dominates social organization in any gathering for conflict resolution among the traditional Amaa, who derive from mythologies and legends means and ways to be employed in practical living.¹⁹

As ritual traditions demand, a bull is sacrificed to seal reconciliation and to initiate the beginning of the relationship. Here the female ritual elders participate together with the captive maidens,²⁰ following the myth, and prepare the sacrificial flesh, cereal food, and beverage for ritual consumption by the gathering. According to ritual traditions, the senior spirit-priests of both parties invoke the invisible participants to partake in the meal. So in acknowledgement of the invisible presence, libation and tit-bits of food are solemnly thrown to ground.²¹ Towards the conclusion of the meal, the most senior female ritual elder (*kkerr'dia*) gathers some of the libation earth together with tit-bits of the ritual food into a new and dedicated gourd. After the dispersal of the gathering, she returns alone to hang the loaded gourd on an *amm'mar*, a citrus tree, under which the ritual procedures and cooking took place. Using branches of an ever-green tree (*goorr'ghoo*), pre-teenage age-grade (*coo'shehh*)²² boys fence this tree within three days. This location of the *amm'mar* tree eventually becomes a shrine besides the main shrine of the ritual village.

According to traditional Amaa belief and practice, after the spirits of the participant living-dead and the free spirits have had their share of the sacrificial meal, the sacred contents of the deposited gourd in the tree are for the birds and others of the wild, since they are part of the human community.²³ The quicker this sacred food is eaten, the happier traditional Amaa would be, though libation earth remains to maintain the link between the living and those spiritual entities.

Here the inclusion of non-humans in ritual affairs, as this reconciliation rite shows, is intended to draw together the complex horizontal and vertical relationships into connected oneness, ("Unbroken Circle"²⁴) (also *see chart*), the intricate kinship and

network realm of both visible and invisible, the source from which traditional Amaa seek relief of physical and social miseries. That is, it is in their natural human creativity that they find such relief, in circumstances of ignorance and failure,²⁵ and in their natural engagement with the *invisible entities and forces that indwell and encompasses them*,²⁶ and which they know somehow have great effect on the miseries and relief which characterise their experience.²⁷ Such kinship and networking that knit both visible and invisible sides of the traditional Amaa family into one unit are expressed in vertical and horizontal relationships (see chart).²⁸

Furthermore, there are shared symbols between groups or nations (tribes) like the ritual village, a symbol of permanent peace that lasts and primarily creates new kinships. For the traditional Amaa, such kinships have been a source for lineage perpetuity which is the shared expectation of the parties in the common rite at the ritual village.

2. ROLE OF RITUALS IN COMMUNAL INTEGRATION

Rituals, like the periodic ones in the ritual village, reactualize mythologies. Aesthetic values, i.e the beauty of peace, affinity, etc., in ritual acts²⁹ that function as relief valves from cycles of emotional or social distress; instead, rituals re-invigorate traditional Amaa, who live so intensively in small groups (i.e. clans, sub-clans, or multi-lineage segments of society in villages), and make them appreciate the moral relations in these groupings who closely participate in all happenings. It is in participation that Amaa (like similar African) traditional life is experienced.

As such, then, ritual, combined with traditional spirituality, involves dramatization of the moral relations of the traditional social groups, since spiritual powers permeate the moral order. Hence, ritual is a spiritual drama³⁰ that emphasizes concern for aesthetics, for what is morally good and beautiful and decent in relationships is what benefits the. What is morally good is what allows dignity, respect, contentment, prosperity, and joy to the individual and the community.³¹

As mentioned in previous paragraphs, the contrary is equally experienced, that is, the undesirable immoral that breeds misery and misfortune to individuals and community combined. In this respect, Kwasi Wiredu writes,

“Immoral conduct is held to be hateful to God, the Supreme Being, and even to the lesser gods. But the thought is not that something is good because God approves of it, but rather that God approves of it because it is good in the first place.”³²

This is essential for traditional Africans, like the Amaa, for they do not differentiate between aesthetics, ritual and other arts, and other dimensions of their life. All are wholesomely spiritual and are qualitatively approached thus, together with their human significance as a metaphor for the spiritual within their localized cosmic totality.³³

It can, therefore, be said generally that all traditional African activities whether in the mundane sense of life, or formal ritual activities, relationships, or artistic creations both sacred artefacts and vocal expressions, are all expressions of communal values in connectedness with their localized cosmic totality.³⁴

This is so for the concern with continuity in creation (i.e. fertility, fecundity, etc) and the human condition. Thus, different forms of artistic expression reflect essential elements of the struggle for life.³⁵ In other words, they are definite expressions of the combined sacred and profane³⁶ experiences of the people in communion with themselves and their cosmos.

Here ritual as art reflects at every moment³⁷ the material and the spiritual reality of the traditional Amaa (like similar Africans) as group-tied social beings within family, clan, and national (tribal)³⁸ parameters, in which the individual and the group face conflicts with nature³⁹ and the requirements of their common life.⁴⁰

These artistic aspects are reflected in ritual acts that the ritual elders enact in dealing with problems and the order of existence, on the one hand; while, on the other hand, ritual renews and integrates the different segments of the nation (tribe) as a community.

Participation of individuals and groups in rituals comes in the form of contributions that vary. It can be in kind such as grain, beer, beasts, fowls, or labour such as in preparing sacrificial food or hewing wood. Even observing taboos and directing one's thoughts are counted as essential ingredients to rituals, since breaches cause rupture in rituals.

Hence, intent, material and moral elements enhance ritual efficacy for the welfare of the whole. Elements in these ritual acts involve vocal arts such as singing and acting which sometimes seem contrary to a ritual occasion as in marriage when the bridegroom's

peers damage part of the hut of bride's mother, who sends the bride away, gross songs of peer mothers of the mother in-law, and so on.⁴¹ So none of the ritual actions is secular.

3. RITUALS REQUIRE NETWORKS IN CO-ORDINATION

The network in co-ordination of ritual activities involves both genders, excepting the male's final acts of immolation, pouring of libation, and food offering accompanied with the essential ingredient of invocation which, as an art of oratory, requires from officiant spirit-priests, ritual elders, and elders deep knowledge of the guiding ancestors and mythologies attached to them. Some of these mythological characters and legends are carved in wood or moulded of fine red clay and, then, ritually deposited in the main compound shrine hut with other artefacts related to them.⁴² A priestly officiant, thus, should have both spiritual insights and oratorical ability, when invoking, to interplay the ritual roles of the ancestors and the moral significance of mythologies, as he prayerfully weaves them in a request for orderly life, into the meaning of the celebration in hand and also to focus the attention on the relationship with *Abbra'dee* (the Creator Spirit). The insightful spiritual ability of the spirit-priest, however, facilitates the priest's course of rituals leading up to ritual heights that permit his simultaneous interaction with those uncontrollable visible forces beyond. This, then, is a liminal state in active divination. That is, it is a crossing of threshold between two realms, the visible and the invisible.⁴³

His dissociation has, thus, a significance that searches for a supreme blessing in the transcendental realm of existence through the ancestral agency in, around, and beyond the ordinary traditional Amaa, for whom such a search is embodied in traditions of conditioned orality, actions, artefacts, and social structure (age-grading system), which are all shaped by events in mythical time⁴⁴ into which the spirit-priest, in ritual dissociation, penetrates, perhaps, to obligate those invisible forces to fulfil quests for the welfare of the living. This, traditional Amaa believe, since the calculation of fate (as in healing) is effective because of the performance of a ritual trance, legitimates the assertion of its efficacy.

Such is the state of divination,⁴⁵ wrapped in insightful spiritual ability, which enhances the spirit-priest's penetration into the invisible to search for answers and explanations for quests and, then, through interpretations of both male and female ritual

elders, to prescribe possible solutions whether of correction of a sour relationship or of herbal material for physical health correction or of both.

4. COQUETRY: A RITUAL VIOLATION

Traditional Amaa, therefore, believe such problems of physical health or of social significance⁴⁶ result from decadent behaviour (i.e. permissiveness) like coquetry that may lead to youth conflict, a social condition that disturbs cohesion, if murder occurs as a result of stick combat.⁴⁷

For traditional Amaa, therefore, coquetry involves serious ramifications, if not confronted, once it comes to the knowledge of the party (family youth) concerned. They regard it as an intrinsic violation of the family, whether the intended female is married or not, since coquetry unwittingly disturbs (excites) the reproductive potentialities upon which unity and social cohesion depend. By implication, it disturbs the ancestral spirits whose immortality is threatened and brings chaos for the living. Hence, coquetry must be contained in order to avoid the worst of its consequences. In this way, fertility is protected as one of the recognized objects⁴⁸ of the traditional religious and spiritual observance and violation of it brings wrath. As such, coquetry is an encroachment upon sexual taboos. As enforcers of social control under the customary law, young men take the initiative to confront it. Using fighting sticks (*ddow*), these law enforcers seriously beat the culprit. But they are cautious not to spill his blood.

Afterwards, a court of elders uses traditional investigative means to determine the truth of that conflict, which sometimes results from sheer malice on the part of one party. The court uses sacred symbols upon which the conflicting parties take an oath to tell the truth. The subject of the conflict is also questioned, for she may truthfully or untruthfully be the instigator. Such sacred symbols include the earth (*kay'ell*), the sun (*nyeengg'gang*), the sacred stick (*toewoe*) from either the arched-gate of the spirit-priest's main compound or communal shrine, or sometimes on the attending spirit-priest's head and/or his/her parents' necks (whether alive or dead makes no difference, since all are living), for spiritual powers (ancestors) are behind these significant persons and affect the oath.

Here, coquetry, as a proven basic example of traditional Amaa morality, is one of the ills that traditionally requires social and ritual corrective action. This corrective ritual

action is to appease the *numinous* as well as to reconcile and create better understanding, better social integration and control; for traditional Amaa, living so intensively in small groups (as multi-lineage clans in villages), ensure that moral relations in their closely knitted groups are observed on all occasions and must, therefore, be monitored.

As such, then, the supernatural sanction for immorality is obviously implied in the traditional conception and belief in the ever-presence of vigilant ancestral spirits, who in all respects are involved in supporting and guiding the morality of their living progeny. Ritual elders, in ritual acts, make this ancestral support and guidance explicit in order to fulfil the purposes and intended meanings for comprehension and solution of problems. And meanings are often implicit that elders can comprehend through divinatory acts of both direct and artificial cognitive intuition.^{49/50}

Here the implicitness of meaning is what counts more to the gathering elders who, without question, accept the wisdom of the more advanced in age in their midst, for the advanced in age has reached an intimate point of communion with the invisible. The advanced aged is regarded, more or less, as a mystic who is already a participant and feels his unity in its unity. He (they) is in oneness with the other⁵¹ in its amoral structure and in its chaos (see **chart**). As an ancestor to be,⁵² such a spiritual state implies his commitment to the social order and deep involvement in its processes.⁵³ This spiritual state explains, then, why the pious and advanced aged wants eagerly to go home when he says, “*aa abangg’ngil ttai*”, meaning, “I want to go home to my fathers”.

Therefore, once again, the implicit meaning is what counts more to the gathering elders in their accepting the utterings of their seniors in rulings; this, to my mind, is appreciation for that mystical state, experience and the age, all of which privileged age characteristics are what the traditional Amaa would affectionately call “*woo’roo taa’baar*”, meaning, “the grey haired”. This spiritual and age status is one of the major reasons for traditional Amaa reverence for the age system, which, I should, perhaps, add, becomes the source for the age-grade system in traditional Amaa social structure and function.

Hence, we may suppose that the social order in ritual complements that of the spiritual order, with the advanced aged in a somewhat permanent “liminal” state⁵⁴ unlike occasional dreams or trance divination of the spirit-priest. Nonetheless, both the social and

spiritual orders intertwine in the ontological order in structure and function as the numerous ritual descriptions demonstrate. Thus, it is in this manner of order that social groups (families and clans) and groupings (age-grade systems) fulfil their existential meaning in continuity as well as deriving their values from the ontological order (see chart). This should explain the severe temporal reaction to coquetry as a misplaced chain of disturbance to reproductive potentialities, to the living and the living-dead, and to the ancestors. It is, thus, a disturbance to the ontological order itself which the traditional strive to maintain and remain connected to through rites, especially circumcision and consummated marriage rites. It is for this reason of connectedness and maintenance of the “Unbroken Circle”⁵⁵ that levirate marriage also becomes essential.

5. ANCESTORS AS MEDIUM ELDERS

According to traditional Amaa, ancestors are the key mediums between the visible and the invisible realms. Venerating them, together with the appreciation of advanced aged elders, conditions one’s understanding of ritual ways, in which the African worldview displays a richness⁵⁶ that intertwines with the dynamic mode of mythology to effect the moral systems that traditional Amaa observe in rites and mundane daily living. And active rituals are the means of communication between the visible and the invisible realms of traditional Amaa (like similar Africans), but through the mediumship of spirit-priests and occasional diviners. As such, ancestors signify the most hallowed value that spirit-priests and ritual elders mediate to the people. They signify for traditional Amaa (like similar Africans) connectedness with the realm of the invisible as their real origin. The invisible, associated with the sky, connotes the extension of the earth with its fauna and flora. The invisible is the spiritual realm, a mode which ancestors inhabit with other living-dead relatives of both good and demonic temperaments, besides other numinous beings that have not attained visible human experience. However, traditional Amaa believe these spiritual entities, particularly ancestors, actively influence the local ontological order (see chart).⁵⁷

To the traditionalist, the visible associate the invisible with the sky (see chart), which, in turn, connotes the extension of the earth, its flora and fauna. The invisible, as such, occupies both the celestial and the terrestrial realms and, thus, its presence prevails

in organisms and matter (see chapter 3).⁵⁸ For the traditional, the invisible mode of life is the spiritual realm (see chart) that the ancestors and other living-dead relatives occupy with the population of numinous beings that have not attained the physical human life experience. They are the free spirits that are yet to come and, hence, form the African traditional sense of future.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, they actively influence the ontological order either for good or evil⁶⁰ and their action, in both modes, depends on the persuasion of the living human agent.⁶¹

The role of ritual is central in its carriage for the past, present, and future back into history and the origin of things, i.e. the Creator Spirit (*Abbra'dee*). This, perhaps, is the explanation for calling the state of ritual journey as sacred time.⁶²

This sacred time is that “liminal” mode⁶³ in the active rituals when participants plunge into the ancestral mode of connection to *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God). In this way, the kinship system is attached to the Spirit (*Abbra'dee*) as the source of being and, thus, has a theological dimension in that everything is attached to everything else.⁶⁴ Ultimately, this connection expands the connection of the Spirit's (*Abbra'dee*) involvement in making the human community whole; this is Taylor's “Unbroken Circle”.⁶⁵ So in venerating ancestors, traditional Amaa (Africans) enhance their patterns of kinship established by the ancestors and that of the human community established by *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God:the *First Ancestor*). Therefore, failure to venerate the ancestors is a recipe for disaster and chaos that conflict with the ultimate desire for fertility and fecundity and wholeness in the human community. Fertility, fecundity, and wholeness define the traditional sense of community and, thus, connectedness to the Creator Spirit (*Abbra'dee*), since continuity is guaranteed (see chart).

Hitherto, the “liminal” mode between the visible and the invisible signifies the connection matrix of relations between the two realms. Such relations are expressed through ancestors, with whom the living advanced aged commune, as mediums of the Creator Spirit (*Abbra'dee*), whereas the spirit-priests and occasional diviners function as mediums between the visible and the hierarchy of the invisible realm by means of ritual dissociation, dreams, and intuitive revelation processes that could be either direct or indirect (artificial means of human ingenuity in quest for knowledge of the sacred).⁶⁶ Other

spirits of both good and evil intent as counterparts of ritual elders and sorcerers play minor but significant roles in these relations which might perhaps be considered transactions since the spiritual and the temporal are interdependent (see **chart**).⁶⁷

So in revered reference to ancestors, traditional Africans direct attention to history and, thus, to their sense of sacred time⁶⁸ that gives spiritual significance to kinship and to social order responsibility.⁶⁹ This sacred time⁷⁰ as such is a ritualistic liminal mode in which traditional Africans, with their invisible counterpart family lineages, take part in their ancestral connection to the Spirit (*Abbra'dee*). Kinship has thus a theological implication, which is to say everything is connected to everything else and ultimately to the Creator Spirit (*Abbra'dee: the First Ancestor*), who overshadows and connects all (see **chart**). To reiterate, traditional Amaa (like similar Africans), in venerating (not worshipping) their ancestors, enhance systems of kinship they establish and that of the human community which the Creator Spirit (*Abbra'dee: the First Ancestor: God*) has established. Here we consider levirate marriage as an instance that makes the point of connectedness as a concern to be fulfilled; that is, the living kinsfolk marry on behalf of living-dead bachelor relatives, whose personal names eventually become points in their respective lineage structures. And consummated levirate marriage fulfils the potential gap in family connected continuity. Upon this connectedness depends the ritual approach, its validity, and outcome. Therefore, the meaning for traditional Amaa is neither in the structure nor in the function, but in the continuity inherent in the rites that ancestral legacies emphasise.

6. MARRIAGE IN THE MYTHOLOGY OF *NYEMA* AND *SHEILA*

The traditional Amaa ritual approach to myth is a wholesome reference to variant interconnected themes that ensure the well-being of the people. Some of these variants are in the mythology of the coming of *Nyema* and *Sheila*, their involvement with the people, and the subsequent ritual events that thus become the historical origin, the first source for rites relevant to the well-being of human community in the sense of the human fertility that *Nyema* represents and the fecundity of the earth. *Nyema* and *Sheila* were seen by a maiden, whom *Sheila* later on married as his first wife, springing up out of the earth on a white horse. This is where the connection surfaces between humans and the spiritual

beings in human form. In this way, Sheila started a clan which is now known as “*Sheilo wa*”, meaning, “people of *Sheila*”.

The mythology of Amaa beginnings and marriage lie with the “*Sheilo wa*” clan. Traditional Amaa believe the mother (*Nyema*) of this clan descended from the sky while she was pregnant with *Sheila*, her spirit-son. She landed on *Mount Nyema* (from *nyoom*: meaning oil) where she delivered her first child through the right knee (*coo’yoom ta’d ee’merr*). She was alone on that mountain at the time of delivery. As a means of help for labour, the baby’s voice from the womb instructed her to massage her right knee with sesame seed oil and, through that knee, the baby came out.

She named him “*Sheila*”, meaning, “head”, “founder”, “first”, or “king”, whom traditional Amaa today know as the first ancestor to have shown connection between them and the invisible realm. *Sheila* displayed miraculous powers in interaction with the people. He had inherent power to cause or withhold rain. It was through this power that he regulated peoples, but by mutual understanding and convincing acts rather than by force. His ways set a precedent for traditional Amaa to follow; that is, to use logical means when dealing with contentious issues in elders’ courts. In such courts, elders show their oratorical skill and knowledge of traditions when they argue points in proverbs and prose, mostly in referring to mythical precedents. Such court argumentation is certainly a conundrum for those lacking knowledge of the traditions.

Despite his miraculous ability to make things happen and, thus, his powerful influence on life surrounding his human community, Amaa people venerated him as an elder agent from all eternity. This veneration did not and does not constitute an implication or act of worship, as some scholars have generally concluded in the erroneous notion of ancestor worship.⁷¹

Amaa called *Sheila* “*Kaar*”, meaning, sacred, bitter, untouchable, or sour on account of his birth and the uncontested mighty influence upon peoples’ lives which set him apart. In expression of gratitude, for instance, when rain falls in plenty and results in plentiful harvest, people load him with harvest gifts⁷² and beasts⁷³ in honour of the spiritual power behind him.⁷⁴

Even though he did not claim to be a divinity, and, thus, was not worshipped, his role and impact among the people combined sacred and political functions that constitute the social system. In structural terms, he combined the spiritual and the temporal roles but in counsel with ritual elders and elders of clans.⁷⁵ He was the first person to provide firm attention to the double-sidedness of life as visible (*jjoohh*) and invisible (*lloohh; mmoohh*).

For traditional Amaa today, his spirit as an ancestor is more powerful than others who, according to the respective twenty one clans, are beings of a *localized cosmos*⁷⁶ except that *Abbra'dee* (the First Ancestor : Creator Spirit), the non-local Being, to whom all connect, is of infinite correlation.

Though *Sheila* did not claim it, he was the spirit-priest who, upon his *retransformation* to being half snake in the lower part, installed his eldest son as the Amaa first formal spirit-priest at the mouth of his cave in the mountain dell.

Sheila set customs that are strictly binding to his lineage. To date, no one among the elders can give a convincing explanation to these customs which are ritually binding taboos to obey. For instance, no one can explain why he set the custom for daughters and sons of his lineage to perform marriage rites in January (*Kooish*), a time coinciding with the beginning of harvest for the main crop “*mmoonoong*”, sorghum.

Furthermore, “*Sheilo wa*” daughters are forbidden to marry men who have never married before. They are eligible for widowers, men with a wife or two, and those who have been initiated into elderhood stage, the final age-grade.

7. SUMMARY

The corporateness of traditional Amaa life is founded on the family. It spreads to the extended family and, then, is woven into the larger traditional society. Such corporateness is expressed in a ritually undergirded networking web in which ancestors are central since their legacy of traditions and the related customs are law. As mediums between the visible and the invisible, the spirit-priest, ritual elders, and elders uphold these customary laws that traditional Amaa must observe. As the medium agent for the invisible the elderhood is the unifier and provider for the spiritual focus of the visible; whereas observance is the function that enhances the continuity inherent in rites and rituals that ancestral legacies emphasise.⁷⁷

Traditional rites and ritual acts, artefacts, symbols, and forms of artistic ritual expression are modes of a continuum linking the visible (a metaphor of the real) and the invisible (the real). They symbolise communication with the *numinous* presence and its participation, mainly the ancestors, as the principle that guides the form, content, and mode of active ritual. A creative ritual artefact (a *toewoe* [sacred stick], *baa'dang* [fertility potent pot], *boar'delay* [lineage beads], spear, libation gourd, gesture, invocation, ritual masks, and so on), becomes a definition of itself and, hence, reflects the traditional legacies, social, ethical and moral values that brought it into existence. A ritual artefact is, therefore, a connective symbol and a means of communication with the realm of the invisible, of which the ancestors, as *Abbra'dee's* agents and jealous guardians for their continuity, are key players in maintaining the intricate web of ritually conditioned interaction between them and the visible progeny. Ancestors and other *numinous* beings enhance social, diffused political, economic, spiritual relations making them mutual, harmonious, and productive. Such interactions extend to include other things of nature and phenomena and their respective significance. That is, the temporal and spiritual form one sphere - the "Unbroken Circle"- whose mystery is experienced in the traditional referent symbols in ritual acts. In this way the traditionalist maintains ancestral connectedness and, thus, wholeness connected to *Abbra'dee*. This closeness with the *numinous* is the source of the equilibrium of traditional society.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOOTNOTES

1. Lineage in distant traditional areas might have resulted from moving for economic activities such as pastures, farming, or even for conflicts. In order to preserve family bonds lest ancestral punitive reactions come into force; such moves are, thus, constructive and are normally initiated by lineage elders, ritual elders, and spirit-priests.
2. Traditional Amaa marriage custom is exogamous and the kinship system is patrilineal. So there are social affinity ties with both paternal and maternal relatives of wives in a family or clan. Also see N4.
3. Among traditional Amaa, marriage is meant for procreation. It is regarded as unconsummated without procreation, for lineage perpetuity and ancestral eternity depends on procreation.
4. What we call customary attitude refers to ancestral legacies stemming out of mythologies, especially from *Nyema* and her spirit-son *Sheila*. Having supernatural powers, *Nyema* and *Sheila* initiated rituals that continue to inspire and guide traditional Amaa in various aspects of life. Both characters in this mythology are guiding examples in moral conduct and in the sense of social responsibility. We may argue that mythological elements and ensuing rituals establish the code of customary laws that define the nature of right and wrong attitude and acts. It is the custom that ordains that men shall recognize kinship bonds of varying degrees. Elders expound such customs from ancestral legacies of traditions.
5. Koech, Kipng'eno, "African Mythology: A Key to Understanding African Religion," in African Religions: A Symposium, ed. by Newell Booth, 1977.
6. Normally spirit-priests or occasional diviners are requested to divine. But sometimes these priestly figures take the initiative before being asked. This situation is similar to that of the *Old Testament* as in 1 *Samuel* 14:36, for example, where the priest-diviner *Abiathar* takes the initiative in divination and encourages King Saul to enquire from Yahweh.
7. The earth has both temporal and mystical value. It provides space for farming, pastures, water pools, wells, and building huts. The earth provides for birth, growth, death, and burial into it. People socialize and quarrel over certain plots for pasture, farm, home sites, and sites of historical landscape relevant to forefathers and mythologies (see chapters 3). In other words, people live, work, play, breed, die, and are buried by others (visible) in the company of others (invisible) by virtue of membership of communities and can maintain themselves by virtue of their membership, on rejection of *retransformed* evil persons from the midst of the living-dead communities. To live and die on earth, we need friendship and fellowship with others whether in living or living-dead mode of existence (see N2, see chapter 2-3). The earth, undivided, as the basis of society in visible and invisible modes (see Mary Douglas' "The Lele of Kasai," in African Worlds: Studies in Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples and N15), thus symbolizes not individual prosperity, fertility, fecundity, and good fortune on which life for all depends whether human, animal, plant, or even the inanimate. (also see N4, N5 chapter Two)
8. See *Chapter 6: Korr'deeh and Social Organization*
9. Menopausal women pose no ritual risk to men. Therefore, they are regarded and treated as equal to men, since their femininity side is no longer enhanced by the monthly period, pregnancy, and child birth labour taboos. Active female reproductive function, besides its physiological dimension, in the African traditionalist idea of impurity, has mystical dimensions that extend to

have destructive impact on males, fertility and fecundity of the earth. Traditionalists believe that such unfavourable ritual effects pass on to crops and animals (part of the human community). These taboos of avoidance, perhaps, explain the traditional Amaa mother's rejection, once menopausal, of sexual relations with her husband. A common idiom known among menopausal Amaa women is "*aa haa shee kiddow noe anning'gee aa shee'dee*", meaning, "*I will not indulge in what my children do*"; that is, "*I will not engage in sexual relationship like my children. It is childish for me to do so*". Therefore, if she is the only wife, she will encourage the husband to marry a younger woman. She may even take initiatives to find a younger woman to become her co-wife.

10. A traditional Amaa person calls older relatives *father* or *mother* or *grand-father* or *grand-mother* besides his immediate parents or grand parents. These parental titles reflect respect that binds the addressee to his/her social or kinship ties that carry rights and duties of relationship. An uncle or aunt may refuse to contribute towards the main marriage gift of a nephew or reject his share of marriage gift for a niece in order to allow his blessing and invocation to the ancestors for his/her prosperity. He may say, "*aah haa mae daah kiddo'nowe,*" meaning, "*I do not know this thing*"; the same applies to a nephew. These titles are also used for older adults who are not relatives. Not using these common parental courtesy titles carry implications in relation to curses as much as blessing. Hence, **the corporateness of traditional Amaa life is not restricted to family units (lineages), but it extends to engulf the wider traditional society.**
11. Male captives who remained with Amaa were adopted into Amaa families with full rights and duties in their particular adopted families as well as in the wider society. As the norm, consultation with ancestors through divination preceded adoption rites. One essential point in the adoption rite, which the Amaa practise even today, is to make tiny incisions on the stomachs of the senior mother of the adopting family and of the adopted to let blood; the father is pricked on the right hand thumb for blood. Blood is picked from the three by three small lumps of red clay and carefully kneaded into one lump and deposited in the *baa'dang* (fertility pot) in the house shrine. All these ritual procedures are done by a spirit-priest or a ritual elder related to that family. Invocations and animal sacrifice (preferably a ram) are involved in these rites to involve the invisible members of the family and the ancestors of the lineage. Thus, the adopted becomes a full member of that lineage.
12. Traditional Amaa obviously raided neighbouring nations (tribes) for marriageable women, since they could not, under strict taboos, marry female relatives however distant the relation may be. This meant, then, that they either used force or were friendly enough with neighbouring nations to acquire wives.
13. Mutuality necessarily served the common concern for stability, since all people want relief from distress and security for the things they cherish. So purification becomes the central ritual theme for both parties. Establishment of mutuality, followed by ritual purification, eventually grew into a web of kinships between both parties, a system that still prevails among the traditionalists.
14. Spirit-priests, ritual elders, and elders (the gerontocracy) also resolve the feud in peace among the families of clans such as by moving one family to another geographical location but maintaining their ritual and familial bonds lest ancestors react punitively.
15. Glaze, Anita, Art and Death in A Senufo Village, 1981.
16. The traditional Amaa concept postulates that open expression of anger invites the demonic spirits to action. Perhaps, there is some mystical exaggeration in the power of ill-feelings that does not allow breaches of established mutuality and the expected relation of kinship in the process and the value of unity. Whoever fails to observe the taboos in this situation is accused of sorcery.

17. *ibid.*
18. Purification rites are performed on various occasions of pollution. One is called *woe'jeh beejoe*, meaning, to throw away or cast out a polluted self or condition. This is also applied to women after forty days indoors after child birth, for she is ritually dangerous (see N9). It is also applied in a murder situation when the spirit-priest officiates in the rite between the victim's family and the murderer.
19. Ogot, Bethwell A. "On the Making of a Sanctuary: Some Thoughts on the History of Religion in Padhola," in The Historical Study of African Religion, ed. by T.O Ranger and I.N. Kimambo, 1976.
20. Amaa mythology informs us that female ritual elders initiated the captured unmarried women into Amaa society before the marriage rite was performed. Married and widowed women were automatically released to return home; this release was meant to neutralize spiritual forces of the families of these captive women.
21. See N7.
22. *Koo'shehh* means rope that can be extended by spinning more fibre onto it. Here it means do as you are told. It is the name for early teenage boys. This stage demands obedience to seniors.
23. The spirits of participants, living-dead, and the free spirits have had their share of the sacrificial meal.
24. (a) Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1967, p.67.
(b) Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, pp.300-305.
25. Sometimes the natural creativity towards things spiritual fails to yield desirable fruit as in a mechanical divination when the diviner or spirit-priest declares either "yes" or "no". Here the traditional belief system allows scepticism and failure but within the group parameters when the sceptic can seek another opinion. See Turner, Victor W., Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual, 1975, pp.223-224.
26. (a) Diop in Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160, quoted by Janheinz Jan, Muntu, p.108, from Hostice Noires, ed. by Senghor, Paris 1949, p.144.
(b) Douglas, Mary, "The Lele of Kasai," in African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples, ed. by Daryll Forde, 1976.
(c) see chart
27. de Rosny, Eric , Healers in the Night, translated by Robert R. Barr, 1985.
28. Fernandez, James W., Bewiti: An Ethnology of the Religious Imagination in Africa, 1982.
29. Magesa, Laurenti, "African Culture and Spontaneous Prayer," in African Christian Spirituality, ed. by Aylward Shorter, 1980.
30. Lwasa, Damian, "Traditional and Christian Community in Africa," in African Christian Spirituality, ed. by Aylward Shorter, 1980.
31. Wiredu, Kwasi, Philosophy and African Culture, 1980.

32. *ibid.*, p.6.
33. (a) Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, pp.275-310.
 (b) Turner, Victor W., Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society, 1974, p.25.
- 34 (a) In this regard, Engelbert Mveng, a Catholic theologian, argues that various kinds of African art are essentially cosmic liturgy and a medium of communication that establishes a perpetual link between human destiny and that of the cosmos; “Black African Art as Cosmic Liturgy and Religious Language,” in African Theology en Route, ed. by Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, 1979, p.137.
 (b) Sofola, Zulu, “The Theatre in the Search for African Authenticity,” in African Theology en Route, ed. by Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, 1979.
35. See N34 (a)
36. Willett, Frank, African Art, 1977.
37. See N26 (a).
38. The African artist, in his/her creations, whether material or vocal, tells of communal values and the relationship to the localized cosmos totality. To this connection, Ngugi points out that
 “African art ... used to be oriented to the community. And because of its public nature, culture in its broad as well as narrow sense, helped to weld society together”
 Wa Thiong 'O, Ngugi, Homecoming, 1972, pp.6-7.
39. For instance, the healing rite for a sick child the cause of whose sickness elders, ritual elders, and the spirit-priest fail to determine is a situation that directs these elderly health-givers to nature. The spirit-priest will take the sick child to a multi-lane crossing or the foot of a mountain to address the unknown at the setting sun, which also will be invoked. A chick is sacrificed and thrown into the wild but towards the setting sun. Also see N7.
40. The spirit-priest often calls upon the poor but wise to sit in courts dealing with disputes. Here ritual prerogatives in the wisdom of the poor outweigh material wealth.
41. (a) The bride’s mother sends the bride away frequently in marriage ritual processes, since she is conditioned by tradition to be quarrelsome. Here is a ritual conflict that is looked upon as constructive. That is, her absence is regarded as a contribution to the marriage ritual processes. She will return home when every bit of the collective sacrificial flesh is consumed and meaty smell has totally subsided. Her mother makes sure all utensils are washed besides the ones set aside for her sole use. She never sees who comes to these rites, neither will she eat any food associated with her fiancé's family. Furthermore, even after marriage, she will not eat, except for drinking water, until the first child is born. Meanwhile, her paternal family supply her with food.
 (b) And on the circumcision eve of her fiancé, her mother dances with the future son-in-law at the ritual party that the mother throws for him. Here also the bride must leave home, otherwise she will start a fight with her fiancé.
 (c) Another contrary conflict worth mentioning is the quarrelsome interaction between the suitor and his betrothed maiden. Sometimes beating may occur between the two, but traditions prohibit intervention from others in the family or from neighbours. Furthermore, they never greet each other during the betrothal period preceding his circumcision rite. After marriage and its consummation, they do not eat together. For instance, I did not see my late father nor the married

brothers eat with their wives. These are some examples of the ritual opposites that occupy a place of importance in the ritualized life of the traditional Amaa people.

42. Art forms such as in physical movements like dance or gestures, or vocal like singing or invoking, or paraphernalia, or the use of artistic instruments in creativity (see N42 [b]), and so on are communicative means of establishing a permanent link between the destiny of the people and that of their localized cosmos (see N34-N35). African art casts light on African traditional religion and spirituality. In this sense
- (a) G. Parrinder contends that, "African art provides a kind of scripture of African religion, for it is the expression from within". G. Parrinder, Africa's Three Religions, 1976, p.21.
 - (b) Lay's autobiography The Dark Child informs us how Africans whether of Christian or Islamic orientation sustain veneration of their ancestors. The Dark Child's parents are Muslims. Nonetheless, they continue veneration of their ancestor in the snake (i.e. symbol of totemistic relationship with the invisible) which they regard as "the guiding spirit" of the Malinke. His father maintains his creative craft of goldsmithing under inspiration of that "guiding spirit".
 - (c) Body art such incised slashings on cheeks, arms, or shoulders is a mechanism for defining social rules, strengthening social values, and a means of lineage identification among traditional Amaa. For some individuals of social status like spirit-priests and ritual elders incisions of specific designs on forearms tell of their specific social and ritual roles in traditional Amaa society. Such body incisions and scars extend to the work of art in objects such as toewoe (sacred stick, placed normally in the arch of the arched-gate of the family main compound, which represents ancestral presence among the progeny), baa'dang (potent pot of fertility and fecundity. It is placed normally in the house-shrine, the female ritual territory). Perhaps, one could suggest that such body and object art is relevant to the rites and mythologies of clans in relation to respective designs on sacred objects, and the reference to social organization (i.e. lineage) experience connecting back to the mists of time, which mythologies represent, but in terms of the "Communitas" that Victor W. Turner talks about in "Liminality and Communitas," chap.3 in The Ritual Process: Structure and Ant-Structure, 1989. And for its significance in terms of mythology, Mercy A. Oduyoye tells of the Nigerian Igbo tradition known as Mbari where the group overrides individuality to "renew the positive creative powers in the community and thereby return things to the way they were when God first created." "In the Image of God: A Theological Reflection from an African Perspective." In Bulletin of African Theology, 4:7 (January-June 1982): pp.41-54,
43. (a) Eliade, Mircea, The Sacred and the Profane, 1959, pp.76-88.
(b) Nabofa, M.Y. "Erhi and Eschatology," in Traditional Religion in West Africa, ed. by E.A. Ade Adegbola, 1983.
44. ibid
45. Divination, except for sorcerous ones, is open to the public. Here people are allowed to voice concerns in approval or disapproval or even to intervene in situations of, for instance, judicial concerns of an accused individual whose breaches violate relationships and, thus, group unity. Mendonsa provides such examples in The Politics of Divination: A Processual View of Reactions to Illness and Deviance among the Sisala of Northern Ghana, 1982, pp.135, 162, 188.
46. Problems arise in areas of individual or group health or crop perils, human or animal fertility, fecundity of the earth or drought. All situations, if any occurs, require divinations in identifying moral shortcomings in the community or of the community that need remedy in order to reverse an unwanted/unhealthy situation which has occurred as a result. According to Victor W. Turner, a [spirit-] priest, as medium between the visible and the invisible, divines acutely and rationally on social and group issues such as those mentioned above, Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual, 1975, pp.220-229.

Sometimes the Spirit-priest or an occasional diviner (prophet), seeing such bad signs approaching, may take initiatives to alert the people to enact ritual remedies to avert a foretold calamity before it occurs and to straighten the communal ways. In this regard, Philip M. Peek asserts that divination is "... a means of acquiring normally inaccessible information, divination utilizes a non-normal mode of cognition which is then synthesized by the diviner and client(s) with everyday knowledge in order to allow the client(s) to make plans of action", "African Divination Systems," in African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing, ed. Philip M. Peek, 1991, pp.190-194.

47. Young men use sticks (approximately two meters long) in combat. Stick combat is an art for recreation that sometimes becomes serious for some ulterior motive of one party. The common cause for such a motive is coquetry of one party with a female relative (i.e. sister, cousin, etc.) or a betrothed maiden for a relative (brother, cousin, or friend). Such conflicts express implicitly relative men's rights on a maiden (or married woman) as a wife to be and a child bearer (see N48). These men, in return, owe her obligations. This is one example of maintenance for common social morality and function since rights and duties are obligations for everyone else to cherish and protect.
48. This is a protective act for those yet to come. It is, therefore, a protection for ancestral continuity. Accusations of "coo'loo tee'daah", meaning, "bad mouthing" or "aang'ayo tee'daah", meaning, "sorcery of the eye" can also cause stick fights in cattle camps. Solutions for such quarrels would involve elders who are always inclined to reconciliation in favour of togetherness.
49. Divinatory acts are employed in order to dig into mystical causes in conflict situations. A spirit-priest diviner may take an initiative to inform elders of mystical or underlying social causes for a conflict situation. Otherwise, elders and ritual elders approach him (spirit-priest diviner) with a multitude of questions. For instance, (a) William Bascom gives details on Nigerian Yoruba divination and the role of the priest diviner in applying verbal formulae accompanied by artefacts obtained from palm nuts and sacred objects. Bascom reports that the priest diviner is asked questions that he responds to either "yes" or "no" in an elimination process to reach the verdict; "the client may ask as many questions he wishes, so long as they are phrased in terms of specific alternatives", Ifa Divination: Communication Between Gods and Men in West Africa, 1959, p.51. (b) "The Meaning of Sacrifice," in his Nuer Religion, Evans-Pritchard presents another form of divination in the direction a sacrificial beast falls. After ritually slitting its throat, the Nuer carefully watch the victim's behaviour in the process of dying and in which direction it falls. If it falls to the right, it is a positive answer. If it falls to the left, it is a negative answer. In other words, it is similar to Bascom's Yoruba method of divination by elimination to reach the verdict either "yes" or "no". Nuer Religion, 1956, pp.272-286.
50. Traditional Amaa, in sacrificial divination, quickly and completely sever off the head of a rooster (kudd'mmooloo taang'aa, meaning, rooster neck divination) and watch and measure the length of time it takes to run around headless before falling. The quicker it falls, the answer is positive. The longer it takes to fall, the answer is negative. Ritual elders interpret the longer time as a struggle between good and evil or the ancestors are intentionally negligent to let the unwanted happen. A negative answer would normally put the ritual elders into frantic activity of further divination (kunee'doo'aa'tengaay, meaning, ritual dissociation) and ritual sacrifice.

There are situations when traditional Amaa use random counting to divine. This is an artificial method of divination which any traditionalist, regardless of age or social status, can employ. Lines are randomly drawn on the ground and, then, counted. If the count concludes evenly, the answer is positive; but if it concludes with an odd number, the answer is negative which means that the seeker has to consult other means of either ascertaining or disproving the negative

answer. This form of divination is called kay'e'ellowe jerjer, meaning, smoothening and scattering the earth in search of answers. African traditionalists employ divinatory means in attempts to find mystical causes for mishaps and different misfortunes because they believe nothing happens by chance. As such, then, there is always a spiritual force behind affairs whether it be conflict, fortune or misfortune; even a stroke of good luck has mystical force(s) behind it.

51. Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, pp.304-305.

52. *ibid.*

53. Bad feelings move powers of sorcery into action in certain relationships but not all relationships. For instance, in situations of a youth fight where, perhaps, murder may occur, traditional Amaa ritual elders and elders search into mystical causes (i.e. sorcery that entices for evil) that can lead to public disorder.

Bad relationships between relatives and damage that may happen as a consequence against the junior (discounting age factor) in relationship among the Amaa are called Cooloo tee'daa, meaning, vocal curse; that is uttering a damning word (very much feared curse) against a junior relative. This type of kin relationship is exemplified between parents and their children whose relationship extends to uncles, aunts, grand and great-grand parents who can utter bad words that carry cursing elements. These kin relationships include active involvement of the living-dead members who react against misbehaviour of the living.

This type of evil impact in relationships of kin is not considered sorcery (coorr'gee'deeh) but vocal curse (cooloo tee'daah), for it is believed that however bad the difficulties and friction between children and parents do not lead to use of sorcery, for parents authority is upheld by ancestors, who may act without being requested to do. Sorcery (or witchcraft) is relevant to beliefs in relation to natural events, between unrelated persons who may be of the same group (i.e. co-wives, multi-lineage communities where competition is rife, or nations (tribes) in some sort of social relationship. Here sorcery cross-cuts boundaries of lineages and villages to create a wider social havoc that demand concerted ritual efforts of ritual elders and elders in order to maintain stability of kinship and affinal ties to which political value is attached.

Through divination (mostly the trance method), traditional Amaa determine which relative (whether living or living-dead) is behind the problem of the junior relative. The family head, regarded as the spirit-priest of the family, offers invocation and sacrifice to that living-dead culprit with an apology from the victim requesting removal of that punishment from him/her.

But the living culprit (a maternal uncle, meaning, annirrr co'aye, for example) is approached by both the victim (a niece: drrr biddingay or a nephew: drrr aarr'ree, to whom that uncle owes obligations and vice versa) and the ritual elder of the family. The culprit may not dispute the accusation for it is understood that even some momentary wrong feelings could be cursed. So a word is sent beforehand to the culprit, who awaits them with a rooster ready for the cleansing rite at his home main compound. He (the uncle) invokes his ancestors to neutralize bad feelings and words he might have felt or said without intending to harm his relative who is before them now. As he invokes, he begins gently and blessingly to touch first the right shoulder and, then, the left with the quacking red rooster. He next orders the victimized kin (nephew or niece) to crawl on their knees and elbow between his legs from the front to the back while he brushes him/her on the back with the quacking red rooster. The subject will stand and remain behind him. While continuing invocation, he makes small but bleeding cuts on both sides of the rooster's mouth. The subject comes to the front and face to face and standing hands him a small lump of red clay that he/she holds in the right palm. He/she has come to ask for life "ee dang jakay", which the victim utters while handing him the lump of red clay. He spits into the clay first and while kneading it,

spits on the head of the victim with the utterance “aa jakay daa’woe”, addressed to the ancestors. Finally he removes the coagulated blood from the mouth of the red rooster with the red clay lump and kneads it again to blend the blood into it. He divides it into two unequal portions. He puts the smaller portion on the right shoulder of the now cleansed male victim and on the forehead of the now cleansed victim if a female. The larger portion is given to the cleansed subject to carry tightly in the right fist. The cleansed subject brings this lump home and has it deposited in a small gourd already in the arch of the arched- gate of his/her home main compound. This rite and similar others have a psychological impact on healing or the behaviour of the cleansed subject. Also see:

(a) Landy, David, “Divination and Diagnosis as a Sociocultural Process,” chapter 5 in Culture, Disease, and Healing: Studies in Medical Anthropology, ed. by David Landy, 1977.

(b) Turner, Victor W., “Muchona the Hornet, Interpreter of Religion,” chapter 6 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.

54. Here involvement of divinatory elements of a natural or deductive process can prevail in providing information for solutions. Natural divination process can involve dreams, tranced visions, or oracles (see Evans-Pritchard and Victor Turner in N53). Spirit-priests may convey their divinations as direct communication with the invisible realm whether such information is of good or bad omen. Nevertheless, male and ritual elders (female ritual elders, in particular) among traditional Amaa do further search and interpretation symbols of divinatory information. Here we refer to Victor W. Turner’s concept of multi-vocality of symbols; that is, a dominant symbol can indicate a variety of things, actions, and/or ritual actions to be taken. Present are implicit and interconnected meanings that refer to social and moral order which, at the same time, connect with natural processes relevant to desires and feelings which are naturally and socially necessary (“Ritual Symbolism, Morality, and Social Structure among the Ndembu,” chapter 2 and “Color Classification in Ndembu Ritual: A Problem in Primitive Classification,” chapter 3 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989).

In sum, for the traditional Amaa there is union between the visible and the invisible on both material and moral planes (see chart) and their equilibrium must be maintained through various divinatory direct or intermediary means of communication with the invisible and its appeasement in ritual and sacrifices all for the welfare of the visible (also see Evans-Pritchard, E.E. “The Meaning of Sacrifice.” Chapter XI in Nuer Religion, 1956).

Types of divination such as the gift of seeing the hidden movement of sacrificial victims (or sacrifice by the spirit-priest), dreams, intuitive divination, deductive divination from observation of natural phenomena, human technical ingenuity, or ritual dissociation are described in Oracles and Divination, ed. by Michael Lowe and Carmen Blacker, 1981.

55. Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.

56. Some of traditional Amaa symbols are conjunctive such as mythical episodes, paraphernalia, insignia (i.e. toewoe, ox tail, gourds, and spears all hanging in arched-gate) which represent ancestral presence and traditions. Baa’dang (the earthen dark-glazed fertility pot filled with stringed beads also symbolizes fecundity of the bowels of the earth), ritual gesture and invocation, ritual art (vocal, physical, and action), and so on. Whereas some symbols are both conjunctive and disjunctive spatial elements such as the main compound altar in opposition to the house-shrine, stringed beads and transition to womanhood of brides from paternal lineage to matrimonial lineage and the weakening of ties with her patrilineal kins. Some relationships as husband-wife relationships (i.e. couple do not eat together), elder son-father relationships, and opposition of male-female relationships (i.e. male fear of the female still active in natural habits of procreation). These are some of the relational symbolic contraries that serve to strengthen and

unite. Also see V.W.Turner, The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989, chapters 1-3.

57. See N51.
58. (a) Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, 1961.
(b) Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956, pp. 28-61.
(c) James, W., The Listening Ebony, 1988.
(d) Turner, Edith, "A Visible Spirit Form in Zambia," in Being Changed By Cross-Cultural Encounters, ed. by David E. Young and Jean-Guy Goulet, 1994, pp.71-95.
59. Kirwen, Michael, The Missionary and the Diviner, 1988. This discussion between Kirwen (an American Catholic missionary) and Riana (a Tanzanian Lou spirit-priest) shows the bond of traditional African to ancestors, those yet to come (the unborn), and the living and the living-dead. Kirwen portrays the differences between Christianity and the African traditional religion.
60. Traditional Amaa mythology informs us that death resulted from the tardiness of Chameleon en route from heaven to earth; he failed to notice the absence of the connecting bridge between the two realms and stepped into the void. He was horrified and let loose life's rejuvenating essence for which old people waited on earth. Erratic free spirits expropriated that essence; they threw Chameleon on the saggi tree. Chameleon never woke up. This was the physical beginning of death.
61. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande, 1983.
62. Eliade, Mircea, The Sacred and the Profane, 1959, p.76.
63. Turner, Victor W., "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage," chapter 4 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.
64. (a) Danquah, J.B., The Akan Doctrine of God, 1966.
(b) Davidson, J., "The Doctrine of God in the Life of Ngombe People," in African Ideas of God: A Symposium, ed. by E.W. Smith, 1950.
65. (a) Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.
66. The desire to know the hidden divine will leads people to devise means of communication with the Divine, who also takes the initiative to reveal Its knowledge through human agents such as spirit-priests (some priests combine divinatory, prophetic, and second sight gifts), prophets, or occasional diviners in (1) ritual dissociation, ecstasy, (2) intuition or second sight, (3) experienced observation, i.e. sacrifice, natural, or social, (4) throwing ritual artefacts at random and reading their positional meanings (oracles), (5) dreams, and (6) "yes" or "no" answers to questions of seekers of the divine will or guidance. The situation at hand determines the divination process except for intuitions and dreams which form a direct communication between the divine and Its agent. Traditional Amaa employ these categories of divinatory mediums in communication with ancestors. For instance, in Turner, Victor W., Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual, 1975, where Muchona, (spirit-priest diviner), aware of social dynamic and sharp insights into Ndembu religion, invokes his ancestors for answers. Muchona and the seeker interact in questions and answers in order to determine the cause of the problem connecting the victim with the culprit. This type of process is not private, but involves other participants (pp.209, 229, 217-218, 282). Also in Turner, Victor W., "Muchona the Hornet, Interpreter of Religion," chapter 6 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual 1989.

Beattie informs us that the diviner, after carefully listening to the answer seeker, throws ritual artefacts (cowries among the Amaa) at random and gives their positions an interpretation which becomes relevant to the answers sought. The process helps the seeker and his/her people to determine remedial action towards a solution. Through the ancestors the priest-diviner (spirit-priest) invokes ancestral involvement for informative clues for answers. Beattie, John, "Divination in Bunyoro, Uganda," in Magic, Witchcraft, and Curing, ed. John Middleton, 1967, pp.211-231. In sum the spirit-priest (priest-diviner) is shrewdly calculating. He (she) knows a great deal from the intuitive world of symbols and images that guide his mediumistic work in the service of the traditional people.

67. The mythology of the immediate growth of the mixed (mmoonong and ara) grains upon the command of Sheila, besides its drawing others in the community to witness that event in practical logic of conflict resolution, it was the miraculous social manifestation of the visible evidence in the belief of the nearness of the realm of spirits, especially ancestors, to the realm of the living human community (also John V. Taylor The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67 and Birago A. Diop in John V. Taylor The Primal Vision, p.160; Wendy James, The Listening Ebony, 1988)
68. This is in contrast to Mbiti, John, African Religions and Philosophy, 1969. According to Mbiti, African traditional religion is bound to the past, makes the present insignificant, and almost drops the future. Mbiti contradicts the traditional African sense of time as circular not linear. And, thus, identifying itself in ancestors, it is linear in terms of fertility and fecundity that fills life with abundance and wholeness now in continuity, not the eternal sometime in an imaginary future which, in itself, amounts only to hope in a linear transformational process moving towards that eternal destination. This future bound eternity is the linear sense of time as opposed to traditional Amaa (and similar Africans) circular sense of time, whether it be in terms of belief in free spirits choosing to transform by birth as members of visible human and retransform (die) into invisibility as members of their respective families and lineages, or in terms of the belief in re-incarnation (unlike Amaa) cultures. Also see M. Eliade, The Myth of Eternal Return, 1955.
69. Observance of taboos and traditions, stemming out of ancestral legacies, has a bonding effect upon the group-tied traditional Amaa social structure and function. For instance, it is structurally evident in the observance of a consummated marriage rite as contributive and participatory in the social structure, i.e. bachelorhood is a taboo. That is, traditional Amaa are committed to subordinating their individualistic desires to the greater moral good of kin group and community expressed through patrilineal values, ancestral propitiation, and co-operative exchanging at marriage and burial rites
70. Eliade, Mircea, The Sacred and the Profane, 1959, p.76.
71. Spencer, Herbert, Principles of Sociology, 1885, p.411, quoted in E. Bolaji Idowu, African Traditional Religion: A Definition, 1973, p.123.
72. This tradition of giving is equivalent to the modern practice of thanksgiving. The first part occurs sometime in September-October each year before people taste quick ripening crops such as maize, milky millet, cucumbers, and so on. The second part is sometime in March-April when far farms are harvested, and the third part sometime in May-June when the sacred raid (laylayh ashee'daah) takes place and the major harvest festival follows at the national shrine of Sheila. This major annual harvest festival precedes the sowing season which begins sometime in May-June. Such celebrations aim to enhance the principal factors (masculinity, femininity, fertility, and fecundity of the earth) of the structural and functional organization which are essentially ontological (see **chart**) and, at the same time, anterior aspects (reference to the work of ancestors) that regulate and govern the traditional ethics such as those moral duties and obligations involved in traditional Amaa marriage rites.

73. **ibid.**
74. According to traditional Amaa mythology, ancestor Sheila did not die but retransformed half of his lower body into loo'guidee (milk snake) and crawled into a cave only later to be visited by his eldest son, whom he initiated as the first spirit-priest, and his youngest son, whom he instructed to become the keeper of his homestead compound (sacred site).
75. **See N67.**
76. **See N051.**
77. **(a) Malinowski writes,**

"Myth as it exists in a [traditional] community, that is, in its primitive form, is not merely a story told but reality lived. It is not of the nature of fiction, such as we read today in a novel, but it is a living reality, believed to have once happened in primeval times, and continuing ever since to influence the world and human destinies. This myth is to the [traditional] what, to a fully believing Christian, is the Biblical story of Creation, of the Fall, of the Redemption by Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross. As our sacred story lives in our ritual, in our morality, as governs our faith and controls our conduct, even so does his myth for the [traditional]."

Malinowski, B., Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays, introduction by Robert Redfield, 1954, p.100.

(b) Eliade writes,

"... among all the forms of becoming, historical becoming too is saturated with being. From the point of view of eternal repetition, historical events are transformed into categories and thus regain the ontological order they possessed in the horizon of archaic spirituality."

Eliade, M., The Myth of the Eternal Return, , 1955, p.123.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRADITIONAL AMAA IDEA OF THE SPIRIT

1. AMA IDEA OF THE SPIRIT

To explain the idea of spirit among the Amaa people, we begin with their conception of *Kuunee* (spirit-priest) as the commissioned agent of *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit) who violently endows a portion of His *Abbe'dee* (Spirit) on *Kuunee*. *Abbe'dee* possesses and absorbs the *Kuunee's* human self into that of the supernatural. At the beginning of this immersion process, the *Kuunee* neophyte experiences frequent trance falls. In the attacks of this process of transformation, his speech becomes impaired and he becomes somewhat dumb. He eventually unwinds by visionary utterances and actions that might seem weird to ordinary people, but to the ritual elders it feels as if the neophyte has become that force itself. His life, henceforth, interweaves with that possessive force which the Amaa believe to be existent in both animate and inanimate things of nature, It could be said, then, that this is how the Spirit inducts the neophyte into becoming His agent. And the communal induction (initiation: separation, incubation, re-integration) follows afterwards.

Here, from my experience of observing a cousin's progress into becoming a spirit-priest and the activities of my late father who was a spirit-priest, I think that the Spirit, in its diverse manifestation, shapes African spirituality, in a way that might seem impossible for an outsider to grasp. The burden of proof is in the complex and intertwined conditioners, which, to an outsider, may either seem not to be there not even to satisfy the curiosity or, if observed, seem to crude to measure in terms of a developed spirituality relevant to written doctrines and dogmas. There is, therefore, a danger of forgetting as well as neglecting the essential involvement of the Spirit in the spiritual growth of the African traditionalist in general and the Amaa in particular.

The spirit-priest, for instance, grows in the Spirit and eventually becomes a mystic. As such, he becomes the embodiment of both Spirit and man. He is conscious of his humanity, but not when he is in an active ritual dissociation state. His mysticism is realised and experienced in the meaning of the words and acts that result from his interaction with

the invisible. He may use symbolic gestures, words, shrine artefacts, and/or things of nature (certain types of plants, rocks, wild animals, etc.) to convey a divination message comprehensible to ritual elders attending in the active divination circle. The ritual elders afterwards hold discussions with the spirit-priest when the ritual dissociation has subsided.

The phrase “things of nature”, as mentioned earlier, refers to the descriptions of the manifestations that the traditional Amaa use for the same spiritual force in its essential diffusion as separate spiritual entities implanted in visible fauna and flora.¹ According to the traditional Amaa, some of the essential diffusion of the Spirit in things of nature is identified as follows:

(a) *Leeh*: Being, Presence, of the Spirit;

(b) *Leeh Kowrenk*: the Spirit of all;

(c) *Beshew Leeh*: the spirit or the being of the home, which refers mostly to the founding ancestor (messenger and mediumistic agent of the *Spirit*), who is expected to be the leading guide for the spirit-priest of a home. This does not exclude the presence of other living-dead members of a family. The tit-bits of offerings, i.e. food and libation at meals, acknowledge and invite the *unseen* members to join the meal with goodwill.

(d) *Codeeo Leeh*: the spirit of the shrine and of the hearth. A traditional Amaa family has three shrines:

[i] The main one (on the ground) faces the main arched-gate (*orre'gull*) of the home (*beshie*) main compound (*weir*). It is here that family rituals and sacrifices are offered to the family spirits. It is here that we find the sacred stick (*toewoe*) symbolising the presence of the ancestral spirits. This stick hangs in the upper curve of the main arched-gate. The spirit-priest uses it to bless sacrificial beasts and fowls before immolation and to transfer them to the ownership of the invisible realm.

[ii] The community shrine where family heads, ritual elders, and spirit-priests meet for deliberations on community affairs. Concerned spirits are also expected to contribute to such deliberations.

[iii] The house shrine (feminine sphere) are in huts. It is here that family mothers conduct rituals addressed mostly to their female counterparts among the invisible members of the family and those *free spirits still wishing to be born*. The symbol in this shrine is

known as the holding-pot (*baa'dang*). *Baa'dang*, besides its ritual aspect, refers to the mother as preserver of continuity of the family lineage. Furthermore, elderly women of a family fashion this holding-pot from clay that is dug out of a fertile family *distant* farm.

The female elders bless the potting clay by spitting² into it (preferably at dawn before speaking, eating, or drinking anything). The blessing is said over the freshly crude clay in the morning in the freshness of the day. This pot is smoothly glossed in a preparation of dark lime stone softly ground into powder (*ttoosooll tabeeo*) by young teenage virgin women still under the tutelage of their female elders.

This potting clay is mixed with grey and salty clay. Cattle enjoy licking this salty clay. In relating to spirit *Thhowor*, Amaa female elders regard cow saliva in this clay as having blessing significance when added into the potting clay. Besides, cows are more often given in marriage gifts, but bulls are given more often for sacrifices.

Amaa ritual traditions oblige a *married woman* to wear stringed-beads (*boardelay*) on her waist for life. She is prohibited from removing them for any reason except for the death of her husband, with whom half of it is buried. The remaining half is equally divided into two, each tied into a ring. As a widow, she wears one as an anklet on the right leg and the other, as a bracelet, on the right arm or as a necklace.

The Amaa traditions require the widow to weave an extension string from cotton (still raw) from a field. If it is not harvest season, she will wait for it. The second half accompanied with invocations is deposited in the holding-pot (*baa'dang*). The female elders conduct a ritual for placing the *baa'dang* in the widow's house shrine, located under the late husband's main granary (*tillphoo*).

Traditional Amaa women have ritual authority, which may appear implicit, but it functions within the feminine space and caters for the domestic sphere, while that of men operates more explicitly in the external sphere. Although traditional Amaa society is paternal in its outward appearance, yet in its inner circle there is a delicate balance of power between men and women, as I have demonstrated in relation to the lineage transfer rite (marriage section: **chap. 7**). Moreover, at the outset women do the ground work in establishing the suitability of a suitor before men proceed with their inquiry into genealogy and ritual prohibitions like blood taboos. Such power relationships are ritually grounded

and are, therefore, binding. Infringements arouse ancestral wrath. More than that, these relationships are binding before the elders' council in any dispute. In this way, harmony is maintained.

Codeeo Leeh: the spirit of the shrine or of the hearth, the reference is to the family lineage, the founding ancestor, subsequent ancestors, and the visible elders. The presence of other members (visible and invisible) at rituals is not excluded. The spirit-priest is the visible ritual binder who embodies authority for maintenance of the human community. The human community consists of the visible and invisible: that is, the community of the living people, animals, and others in the natural environment of the world of traditional Amaa. In this connection, Francis Deng, a Dinka, comments on the traditional African society and culture, which is ultra-spiritual in contrast to the modern state of the Sudan and its imposed cultural trends which are cloaked in an Islamic fundamentalism that plays havoc with the present traditionalist African way of life. In effect, Deng laments for Sudan in his comment that

“Our blood ... was one. It is the government which has taken the harmony away, because black skin was one with hyenas, with our leopards, with our elephants, with our buffaloes; we were all one skin. We are one people ... *we should all combine ... the people, the animals, the birds that fly ... we are all one. Let us all unite. Even the animals that eat people, even the people that keep black magic that we do not like, let us all embrace them all and be one people [all italics mine].*”³

This harmony of the human community, which Deng laments, also includes the evil members whom ritual elders can control. As the quote shows, others are integral part of the human community (**see chart**).

The spirit-priest and ritual elders of both genders deal with communal ills, but with a sense of tolerance, as this Deng's quote indicates. For instance, they deal with those community members who practise sorcery for self-aggrandisement or out of sheer malice. Though anti-ontological, sorcery is still a part of traditional Amaa ontology (**see chart**). The spirit-priest with ritual elders counteracts acknowledged sorcerers⁴ through ritual methods and sometimes disciplinary means.

Traditional Amaa regard the spiritual forces of sorcery as those of free spirits of nature whose functional dimension is prone to both good and evil. Furthermore, African traditionalists believe that there is always a spiritual cause behind both good and evil acts.

Things happen for rational reasons and not by chance, for which Amaa language does not have a vocabulary (word).

Although punitive reactions of living-dead relatives or the ancestors in response to some breach are regarded as evil, the traditional Amaa tend to be more receptive to it, for they can explain through divination and the ritual elders' empirical search the causes and understanding of traditional remedies. In spite of this understanding, like other African traditionalists, the traditional Amaa dread the nearness of spiritual forces on account of their unpredictability. This is one sense in which traditional Amaa experience evil as integral to their ontological order. So this traditional conception of evil presence in the ontological order constitutes what traditional Amaa call *Leeh Koosuudo*.⁵ (also see **chart**).

The natural phenomena are part of this ontological order; each plays a role in the life of the traditional Amaa. They are acknowledged to have their spiritual counterparts in the invisible realm. Other traditional African groups, notwithstanding their cultural diversity, have similar practices and concepts of the essential Spirit diffusion in the creation.

Traditional Amaa acknowledge the Spirit diffusion (*Leeh kowrenk*, meaning, overall presence) in natural phenomena. We might mention a few:

- *Kayloo Leeh* (spirit of the earth). There are more than one spirit of the earth. The prominent ones are *Thhowor* and *Shayshayray*. *Thhowor*, according to traditional Amaa, is associated with economic activities, fertility and fecundity of the soil, its fauna and flora, including human fertility. *Shayshayray* is associated with *mmoonooong* (sorghum).

Maydooh Leeh: spirit of the mountains;

Koonoooh Leeh: spirit of game (wild animals);

Nyingangooh Leeh: the spirit of the sun;

Kuurooh Leeh: the spirit of the moon;

Ko'doh Leeh: the spirit of the wilderness; and so on.

Since traditional Amaa exercise respectful stewardship over other elements of nature and, thus, experience nature wholistically, they express this experience in their art of pottery for moulding the holding-pot (*baa'dang*) that contains the family perpetuity

symbol. This pot is placed in the mother's house shrine to contain the family lineage perpetuity symbol of stringed-beads (wooden beads preferred).

Baa'dang stands for family line and continuity. Such a continuity, as a unit composed of both levels of the community of the living and the living-dead, is expressed in the burial rite by one half length of the stringed-beads being buried with the husband, whom the widow releases to the other realm of the family by untying this stringed-beads (*boardelay*) from her waist. This release is initiation for the late husband into the invisible realm. Nonetheless, this rite does not free the widow from her matrimonial responsibility to the husband in spirit form.⁶

The burial of the one half portion of the stringed-beads with the husband acknowledges the diminished physical relationship, on the one hand. On the other hand, the stringed-beads are a testimony to his contribution to the family lineage and, thus, to the *eternity now*, synonym of the "Unbroken Circle", of the ancestors.

2. FEMALE RITUAL ELDERS

According to Amaa traditional practice, the rite by which a daughter, upon marriage, transfers her paternal lineage to that of her husband lies within the ambit of women's ritual authority. It happens in the final part of the marriage ritual process, when the mother alone prepares the special cotton string and wooden beads. The community female ritual elders join the last part of the process. Led by the oldest female, they invoke their counterparts in the invisible realm, while performing the *removal rite of one bead* (*boardelay nyella*) from the stringed-beads in the house shrine of the bride's mother.

The stringed-beads are ritually retrieved from the holding-pot (*baa'dang*) for the removal of the *one bead*. The mother re-ties and similarly ritually redeposits them in the holding-pot (*baa'dang*), which the Amaa call *baa'dang ac'cooree* (sacred pot). The Amaa call these female ritual elders *wa'cahroo sheila*.⁷

In relation to the male ritual elders (including the spirit-priest, a generalist), in ritual function female ritual elders are restricted to the house and house-shrine. Unlike their male counterparts, in certain rites female ritual elders require a symbol of male participation in the house-shrine, a feminine space. And the marriage process is one major

life crisis of transition that must have male participation in the final step of the bride's paternal lineage transfer to that of the husband.

So the removal of one bead from the stringed-beads signifies the transfer of the bride's lineage to that of the bridegroom. This *lone bead*, having much of the same potential value as of the remaining bunch, is joined to the *new ones* prepared by the mother. The women *sing while they string together the new set of beads*; there is a *prayer for an unlimited* number of offspring for the bride's new lineage. Then *follows the rite of tying the stringed-beads on the bride's waist*. The oldest female ritual elder instructs the bride *never to remove* these beads as long as she lives. Of course, death as a realm is implicitly accepted even though its act is not explicitly mentioned.

Here, accepting Turner (1989), Lienhardt (1961), Evans-Pritchard (1956), and Bradley (1930) as guides, the symbol of one and the many becomes significant in that the potential value of the remaining bunch of the stringed-beads is equal to the *lone one* transferred to the new bunch that the mother prepares for the transfer of *fertility potency* to the bride. There is a continuity from one lineage to another and from one clan to another through the female marriage. Referring to ancestress *Nyema*, traditional Amaa regard women as unifiers for the Amaa nation (tribe) through marriage. The spirit-priest's presence represents the paternal aspect of the Amaa lineage system, also symbolised in that *lone bead*.

As such, the whole of a symbol does not differ from the many in its individual potency and the expected manifestations as expressed in invocatory singing of the female ritual elders. The whole of a symbol (object, person, word [object of thought], gesture, etc.) is a storehouse full of members. *The bride herself is the sum total of the ritual process as a symbol for continuity and a real person.*⁸

So a "Potent Speech",⁹ like the ritual singing of the female ritual elders in the ritual process of transfer of the *lone potent bead*, a symbol regularly affected by the pregnant speech transposing the meaning to the hearers, opens up a gap for meaning between the potent symbol and the *local world with its cosmos*; the effect is seemingly endless fluctuation of the essential diffusion of the *Spirit* (the source of meaning).

As diffused, the *Spirit* can be located in movable objects of symbols like these *stringed-beads invested with fertility* meaning whose efficacy is believed in; the *Spirit's* presence is prevalent, according to Amaa traditionalists. The meaning of *earth fecundity* itself, in its diverse fauna and flora, is the result of seemingly shifting relations, and not the product of one to one correspondence between a meaning and a thing or a person. Perhaps, if a symbol remains essentially fluid, then, there are no limitations on the free flow of meanings that, to the Amaa traditionalist, converge in the goal.

Thus, upon the death of one spouse, though the status of the spouse does not totally diminish, it shifts on a practical level to levirate marriage for the widow and remarriage for the widower.

The late wife takes one half of the stringed-beads to the realm of the invisible. Likewise, the widower retains one half length of the stringed-beads. He removes one bead, thread it, and wears it as a bracelet.¹⁰ The rest of this one half length of the stringed-beads is redeposited in the *baa'dang* in the house-shrine of the departed wife. The oldest female ritual elder present performs the redepositing, since the widower is prohibited either to touch the *baa'dang* or to go near the late wife's house-shrine.¹¹

We now return to the final process of the potency belt (stringed-beads) being tied to the bride's waist. It is at this point that the spirit-priest is summoned to participate in the female ritual sphere with the bride in the house-shrine. The bride's mother offers him the shrine gourd of water, drawn from the newly dug well for that ritual purpose.¹² The offering of water is an induction for the spirit-priest into the house-shrine (feminine ritual space). She pours a libation, an acknowledgement for the *numinous* male counterparts, before the spirit-priest kneels and enters the hut.

All this is to pave the way for transfer of the bride's paternal lineage and to increase the possibilities of transferring some of her father's qualities, what the Amaa call *aa'leng kaylow*,¹³ to expected male offspring for the new lineage. This, then, explains the reason for the presence of the spirit-priest, a male figure of the paternal lineage bridge of communication between the visible and the invisible realms of the family community, at the conclusion of the marriage rituals of the lineage daughters.

The spirit-priest sips the water from the gourd while touching with the left hand the sacred *baa'dang* (potency holding pot). He invokes the community of the lineage spirits to release the bride, while he sequentially pours drops of that water (*bongue*), sour milk (*eeloo caa'daahr*),¹⁴ and sesame oil (*moe'sullo nyomme*) mixed with ground *red ochre* (*ttoo'sooll*) whenever he mentions an influential ancestor or ancestress by name. He invokes these spiritual forces and *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God), for whom the invocations are ultimately destined but through the ancestors and others in the phenomena such as the earth, moon, sun, and the sky all of whom, as intermediaries, have an impact on human life and must be acknowledged in this ritual process. He, then, in respective sequence pours the water on the bride from head to toe. He literally washes her.

After sipping once from the sour milk, also in a gourd, he passes it to the bride's mother who, likewise, takes a sip and passes it to the oldest female ritual elder, who, too, invokes mother spirits and the ancestress *Nyema*, the grand-mother of the first Amaa spirit-priest. The bride finally receives the gourd and drinks the remainder of the sour milk. Thus, she receives the blessings of all, both the living and living-dead.

With his right thumb, the spirit-priest smears the bride's navel with a paste mixture of the ground *red ochre*¹⁵ and sesame oil. Meanwhile the ritual women continue to sing praises to the ritual participant spirits. Next, the mother smears a dot of the mixture on the bride's forehead and places the remainder in the house shrine. This liturgical process concludes with the rest of the women surrounding the bride and anointing her with the sesame oil.

Since these ritual materials, for the traditional Amaa, are imbued with spiritual powers, a meaning is imparted to the bride in this liminal process.¹⁶ That is, the spirit operates both inside and outside of the initiate and the web of her relational fields; this is not a logical impossibility, since those social ritual networks in fulfilling the intended marriage are concrete events in the process, while the Spirit is diffused and functions as such in these processes (**see chart**).

Hence, this ritual gathering of elders of both genders forms an immediate temporal background of the interrelatedness within which the bride acquires a new meaning, role, and purpose for herself and others in the new lineage. This long marriage process

psychologically and physically weans her off the paternal boundaries. Nonetheless, her immediate “liminal” experience cannot escape the relational world,¹⁷ a group-tied traditional world.¹⁸

As the anointment continues, the spirit-priest (*kuunee*) steps aside. He holds the sacred stick (*toewoe*) drawn from the arch of the family compound gate.(see **fig. 1**). He waits to lead the bride from the house-shrine to the main altar (shrine) (*manddaah*) in front of the gate. He will, then, with some inaudible ritual mumble, touch the bride with the sacred stick (*toewoe*) on both shoulders, a ritual act the Amaa know as *llaffoodaa*, to bless and confirm the release of paternal spiritual dimension transference to the husband’s lineage, to which, upon death, her spirit will belong. It may be concluded, therefore, the traditional Amaa marriage is for *eternity*. Even death does not break it. This, then, further explains the levirate marriage tradition.

At the main altar (*manddaah*) where the ancestral presence is in ritual attendance, the father receives the bride and the *toewoe* (sacred stick) from the spirit-priest, who continues to be involved. In approval and blessing with the *toewoe* before elders of both realms,¹⁹ the father touches her knees, forehead, and palms. He instructs her to be fruitful and not to return home.²⁰

At this point, the spirit-priest steps in front, she follows, and the father follows behind. They walk through the arched-gate to meet the bridegroom’s paternal uncle, who is anxious to receive their new member.

“Be fruitful”, says the father when giving his last hopeful advice to his daughter while invoking the ancestors to join with those of the new lineage to enrich her ways. Here, fruitfulness is a reference to her expected offspring, contribution to economic productivity, and maintenance of harmony.

For a married daughter, among traditional Amaa, to return to her paternal home is a serious shame. Some of the reasons for a married daughter’s return home could be unreasonable quarrelsome behaviour,²¹ or barrenness. Such behaviour problems can be resolved amicably with the involvement of elders of both families.²² Often the spirit-priest is consulted together with the ritual elders to determine the possible causes for a married daughter’s poor behaviour.

For instance, traditional Amaa believe a neglected female living-dead family member could be the driving force for misbehaviour of the living relative. It, thus, becomes important for the ritual elders to search for the ritual impediments in her paternal family. The husband is also subject to this form of scrutiny, for he could be responsible for the behaviour of his wife.

Thus, a couple's problems are of concern to the extended family, including those in the *numinous* realm, particularly the ancestors judiciously watchful for their *eternity*. And through the divination process, the spirit-priest is the point of communication for their involvement in family and community affairs. This group process of problem solution facilitates the prevention of divorce. Even in the case of marital infidelity (be it the husband or wife) there is no reason for divorce, since a couple and their respective paternal extended families are *eternally bound* in relationship. In their affinity, they have become *konang* (social kindreds).

In spite of this strict attitude against dissolution, there are exceptions that are contrary to the norm. Barrenness is one situation that brings together elders of both families to seek and resolve its causes. For the traditional Amaa, *eternity now* demands the contribution of the husband to his paternal lineage, as a guarantee for continuity, hence, for eternity in the Spirit (*Abbra'dee*). In this regard, Lienhardt writes of the Dinka,

“All Dinkas are deeply concerned with the continuity of generation in their line ... [They] greatly fear to die without issue, in whom the survival of their names ... the only immortality they know ... will be assured.”²³

It is the name²⁴ that maintains the living-dead man's fatherhood and his social personality. His presence as a spirit is actively felt in the daily life of the offspring.

According to the traditional Amaa belief, the living-dead father is involved through customs like prohibitions, invoked for protection from malevolent spirits, and guidance. Here, the spirit-priest becomes the medium agent for the living-dead father's involvement with the living. Here, we observe that various levels (family, clan, community, and the Amaa nation) of the spirit-priesthood office becomes the connection between the symbolic values people possess and their relation to the active centre of the social life, i.e. the *numinous* in traditional African terms.

So this same progenitor sometimes becomes a punitive force for ritual negligence²⁵ or for breach of traditions that may consequently breed social chaos or discord within the lineage. Breaching a moral law is first and foremost displeasing ancestors, who are the source of traditional legacies that become springboard for customary laws. In other words, traditional legacies are dynamic since, through experience, ritual elders and elders derive customary laws from these legacies in the oral traditions. Such customary laws evolve through time and become transposable in meaning.

In other words, time allows active social forces to carry out their effects on ancestral traditions and to have counter effects according to cultural evolution. That is, ancestral traditions become the springboard for new customs in line with cultural progress. The best example of this is that of the indigenous (independent) African churches. Perhaps, the emphasis of ancestral traditions on harmony is dynamic, for they are receptive to new ideologies as long as harmony is preserved. In sum, ancestral traditions are open-ended and this gives impetus to inherent ecumenism. This is why traditional Amaa families are multi-religious. The adjective traditional must be qualified here in that traditional Amaa families have always traditionalist parents who allow freedom to their offspring to follow new ideologies as long as brotherhood and harmony are maintained.

And here continuity implies change, and varying degrees of shift in relationships between the visible and the invisible as generations disappear into invisibility and generations appear into visibility, as a metaphor of the invisible reality. Even symbols and ritual symbols encompass an endless series of fluctuations and offer hints by which meanings are generated as new situations arise.²⁶ Such changes, perhaps evolution, become causes for the punitive reaction of the living-dead fathers and ancestors, too.²⁷

Hence, a progenitor's range of punishments upon progeny is dependent on the type and degree of offence. For instance, if the living deprive an ancestor of a share of a marriage gift, traditional Amaa believe, this could cause the curse of barrenness upon the bride. Barrenness is the most dreaded curse on Amaa traditional marriage, for its consummation depends on child birth without which the competence of the couple, particularly of the husband, will break and his being perish for lack of contribution to his lineage continuity and, hence, *eternity now*. For the traditional, therefore, it is this fact

(participation) in the traditional Amaa view by which men are only men in a due reverence for participation, a demand that has heavy bearing on the behaviour and attitude of traditional Amaa males.

Perhaps, we should recapitulate the intent of the involvement of symbols in the female ritual in the house-shrine of the bride's mother. The system of symbols is grounded in the intentional speech act of the ritual speakers.²⁸ The structure, which grounds the meaning for a structuralist, is itself grounded in the ritual participants' speeches which kink and intertwine word and intention. In other words, the structure is dysfunctional without underlying intent.

The removal of the one bead from the holding-pot (*baa'dang*) represents the bride and her fecundity in progression towards the new lineage, the bridegroom's lineage. But the whole bunch of the stringed-beads represents her paternal lineage generations of the past, present, and those yet to be born, and those yet to be transferred potentially to new lineages upon the marriage of daughters. In other words, the string holding the beads (*boardelay*) together represents both the lineage continuity, the ancestors, and the *embracing Spirit* as represented in the larger knot, where the two ends of the string are tied. The figure of the string circle (or belt), with the beads, represents Taylor's metaphor of the "Unbroken Circle", and Charles Leslie's idea of Spirit manifestation,²⁹ and is similar to Evans-Pritchard's interpretation of spirit and social organisation³⁰ and Lienhardt's point that

"The respect for the clan-divinity [spirit manifestly present] may ... be related to the other chief situations in which formal respect is required. The clan divinity is respected as the source of life of the clan. ...it is thought of as being external to the clansmen, and also within them. It is "in them", as the Dinka say, but also "in the giraffe" ... and "in the sky".³¹

Experiencing the spirit actively manifest in the life of African traditionalist is what Lienhardt refers to in this quote. It is the *Spirit (Abbra'dee)* that Lienhardt calls *Divinity* and "clan-divinity" is not deity as Lienhardt's above description suggests. Such a description seemingly bestows the status of the Supreme Being upon the founding ancestors of the (tribe) and its various segments respectively. This description, we suggest, stands as an example, among many,³² that has led to the assumption that traditional Africans worshipped their ancestors. It is the result of distant understanding and

interpretation in consequence. Divinity for the nation (tribe) and Divinity for the segment are not separate entities, but the same manifest *Deng* (*Abbra'dee*) that has been confused with *Its* agents, the ancestors. Ancestors are not Deity, but they point to the Deity. This explains the African churches' regard for Jesus as an ancestor from all eternity.³³

In other word, *Divinity* (*Deng*; *Abbra'dee*: God) is experienced in the creative ('generative') manifestation, whereas the ancestral spirits, as part of the social and ontological structure, are agents of that experience which the mediumship of the spirit-priest co-ordinates for the community of the living. Such co-ordination becomes particular in terms of respective lineage systems when barrenness ruptures the flow of a lineage system. A rupture in a lineage system is a sign of chaos somewhere in that lineage. It becomes a task for the spirit-priest and the ritual elders to resolve.

And, for a lineage to regain a constructive experience of spirit manifestation, the Amaa, for instance, will search for possible causes and remedies. The possible remedies are aimed not only at retrieval of the lost "generative" experience from the *Spirit* (*Abbra'dee*) through ancestral involvement which, according to traditional Amaa, is a possible cause of barrenness, but also at re-establishing the equilibrium between the realms of visible and invisible and those particular ancestors and their progeny. It is on this equilibrium that individual participant identity within the collective identity depends.

In other terms, this means that the individual is a participant in the reality of the *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God) within the context of the community of the living, which in turn, connects with the living-dead. It is in this sense that, we could say, the Spirit encircles the "Unbroken Circle". Hence, the quintessential significance of participation means procreation: intense experience, conception, birth, and communal involvement in all other rites through life, including *retransformation* (death) rite. So lack of procreation is a serious problem for a traditional Amaa (and any traditional African) for both genders. Therefore, the process to corrective rites is inevitable.

A corrective ritual intends to appease as well as to prod the spiritual realm to reverse punitive actions like the extreme one of barrenness. In this regard, Louise Okamba quotes a childless woman in the Congo saying,

“In the compound where we lived, there was this fruitless papaya tree. My mother-in-law used this tree to make fun of me. Sometimes she would joke and order the girls to cut down the tree because it was unproductive.”³⁴

Childlessness presupposes lineage obliteration, an unthinkable consequence for a traditional African similar to the Amaa, as indicated in this quote.

If a corrective ritual proves ineffective, the process will lead to mutual consent to divorce. Among traditional Amaa divorce requires a series of severing rituals since marriage, as described earlier (also see **chapter 7**), is not an individual affair based on romantic love between a man and a woman. It is a community affair insofar as it is a lineage with ultimate concern for its *eternal continuity* as portrayed in the symbols of the mother's house-shrine, i.e. the stringed-beads (*boardelay*) in the holding-pot (*baa'dang*). “*eelaadah*”, as the Amaa would call divorce, by reason of barrenness dictates reverse marriage rituals. The families of the parties mutually agree upon it.

In his role as a medium and peacemaker between the visible and the invisible, a spirit-priest and ritual elders of both family communities ritually dissolve the marriage. With the help of community elders, the leading spirit-priest (*kuweir*) will counsel and advise the two family communities.

In order to determine causes for childlessness of a woman, behavioural histories of both families are thoroughly examined as to whether any customs and rites were violated, or neglected, whether a misdemeanour of a spouse might have offended an ancestor or a significant living-dead relative. According to traditional Amaa, past breaches of some taboos cause barrenness, a punishment dictated by the offended ancestors.

For traditional Amaa, barrenness is a serious occurrence that threatens to block off the continuity of that particular lineage. Besides barrenness, a form of severe punishment may occur in the form of successive deaths of babies born to that particular couple. Both miseries amount to childlessness, although the latter one consummates that marriage. It is for the ritual elders, then, to find out answers. The ultimate resort, after all efforts fail, is divination by the spirit-priest through whom ancestral and some free spirits communicate with the living. Through the spirit-priest, while in trance, the problematic spirit reveals itself and the lineage it belongs to if it is not a free spirit seeking association with or

attachment to the lineage. Such free spirits, believe the traditional Amaa, are prone to sorcerers' manipulation and, therefore, must be approached with cautious attention.

More relevant to this are the pre-marital sexual relationships of both genders, murder, neglect of the numinous in the marriage gift distribution, disrespect for the elderly, and unjustified ritual fiddling with sacred symbols, only to mention a few. These are some of the breaches, traditional Amaa believe, that could endanger marriage fertility and fecundity of the earth which are punitive for the collective.

Once a cause, like murder, is determined, the Amaa normally perform purification rites for both the victim's and the murderer's families. A neglect of purification rites for a known or unknown murder committed by a family member, according to traditional Amaa, can breed more punitive situations being imposed by ancestral spirits of both the victim and the murderer. The victim, now a living-dead, will also be punitively active, unless propitiously settled in the realm of the *numinous*.

Here, purification rites "*woe'jeh bee'joeh*", as the Amaa call them, become necessary. The communities of the victim and the murderer become taboo to each other. Such a taboo constitutes total avoidance. It is breach of the taboo for individuals or groups from both sides to interact in any way; otherwise wrong behaviour leads to a charge of taboo breach, which is punishable before ritual elders, whose decisions ancestors uphold.³⁵

Once the ritual elders of both parties establish a murder case, they automatically authorise spirit-priests to perform a *woe'jeh bee'joeh* rite upon the demand of either of the two communities, even if the immediate families of the victim and the murderer do not take the initiative. This done since the taboo implicates everyone else in both communities. Hence, a purification rite exonerates the restricting taboo atmosphere.

3. EXONERATION RITE

A murder, once established proven, requires an exoneration rite that is to be an act of reconciliation with the invisible as well as between the two families concerned. In this way feuds and further bloodshed are avoided. Thus harmony re-establishes its role between the spiritual realm and the living as well as among the living community.

The following description of the Amaa reconciliation ritual gathering may give a better feel and clearer understanding. The local of this rite is the outer front of the arched-gate “*orre’gul*” (see **fig. 1**) of the murderer’s family home. The victim’s ancestral spirits, the victim’s spirit, and other living-dead relatives in that party are expected to come seeking revenge. An expiatory sacrificial beast (preferably a *red* young bull without blemish)³⁶ is offered to them.

In dedicating the sacrificial beast, the spirit-priest uses the sacred stick (*toewoe*). He invokes the ancestors to participate in the reconciliation effort. The spirit-priest (*kuweir*), briskly waving and pointing the sacred stick (*toewoe*) from right to left and in a forward direction, on behalf of the guilty party rebukes the angry spirits of the other party. Besides the spiritual powers in that ritual congregation are the families of the two parties (see **fig. 2**). All are there as a traditional human community in their collective concern for harmony.

While the spirit-priest, a ritual co-ordinating factor for and with these forces, continues invoking the spirits’ presence, the murderer’s mother (aunt, or elder sister or daughter, on behalf of the mother, who must be a living-dead³⁷ in order to require representation for physical tasks and whose presence, among others, the spirit-priest acknowledges in the invocations) comes forward with a gourd, never used before. She will kneel submissively at the inner facade of the arched-gate and, then, walks on her knees to the outer facade of the arched-gate, where there are the multitude of the spirits of the two parties, the spirit-priest, the murderer, the *red* bull tied to a peg facing the centre of the gate archway, two earthen bubbling pots (*kuue’irr*) of sour paste (*abaa’lee*) of sorghum (*mmoonooong*), and home-brewed beer of sorghum (*mmoonooongoo ashee*).

The *red bull* is invoked and given an explanation of the reasons for participation with its life. The first gush of blood drops into the gourd of water and the spirit-priest adds it into the pot of the sour paste. He (*kuweir*: the spirit-priest) then washes the murderer with this mixture while invoking and whipping the void with the sacred stick (*toewoe*). The whipped void is not empty, but occupied by the present spirits. The whipping act is expiatory as well as that of the spirit-priest (*kuweir*) enforcing his

authority on the spirits to be content with the rite fulfilled. Such a rite is binding for both the living and the living-dead.

Nonetheless, the taboo of avoidance between the two immediate families remains eternally effective. As long as the murder is remembered, this taboo remains an impediment against interaction between the family lineages of the victim and the murderer.

However, the duration of time, as it happens, may through forgetfulness lead these tabooed lineages into neglect of the taboo, a neglect that may unknowingly lead to marriage between them and they may, thus, commit the serious breach of an obviously continued “*woe’lee’geedeeh*”,³⁸ murder blood taboo, barring mixing blood of the two lineages.

Since Amaa traditionalists regard death by murder as a forced *retransformation* of the victim to the invisible realm, punitive acts are expected from the victim if relevant rites are not performed. It will haunt both the killer’s family as well as its own.

In Amaa tradition, if the victim was single at the time of forced *retransformation*, a wife is married (levirate marriage) for that living-dead before his younger living siblings, otherwise he will strike the siblings with barrenness or successive death of the siblings’ offspring. A misfortune to which the traditional Amaa, on that living-dead’s word, would say, “*ee dang haa toenowe bell, aa doo kaa yong too’dow*”, meaning , “if you do not respect the tradition and my right of continuity, too, I snatch them [offspring] from you”. This, then, implies the levirate marriage tradition that is imposed on the eldest living sibling, or the nearest eldest cousin (paternal line) to assume physical responsibility for the family of that living-dead relative (be it a brother or cousin), including that of procreation with his sister in-law, besides his own family responsibilities.

The offspring of that deputised relationship are offspring of the living-dead and, as such, will carry the name of the living-dead. The biological father becomes an uncle, whereas the living-dead uncle is the father, who will strike with either barrenness or death any of the living relatives for interaction with those of the killer’s relatives. This is what the Amaa call the *woe’lee’geedeeh* taboo which must not be breached.

According to Amaa tradition, though socially less significant but ritually essential as a protective measure against punitive reactions of the numinous counterparts, *levirate*

marriage is also performed for those living-dead females who departed as bachelorettes. Similar to the males, and regardless of age at the time of departure, a bachelorette living-dead is married to her younger living sibling's fiance before female ritual elders and the spirit-priest in less ceremonial procedures in the house-shrine of their mother. Meanwhile the bridegroom waits outside in the main compound only to be given a feather of the sacrificial hen as a symbol of marriage his bride's living-dead sister, who is now a living-dead wife. In a sense, the bridegroom marries two sisters, the elder one in spirit form, into the new lineage of the living sister. It is here, according to traditional Amaa, that the spirit wife, though, henceforth, to be ritually acknowledged in her living sister's house and house-shrine, becomes socially insignificant.³⁹

Another important point worth mentioning, too, according to traditional Amaa belief, is that the spirit wife protects her co-wife living sister and her offspring. In this manner the marriage tradition is fulfilled and the lineage and ritual acknowledgement are guaranteed through the living sister. More than this, a younger living-dead bachelorette, in the same marriage ritual procedures, can be married to the fiance of the eldest niece of the eldest sister.

It is logical, then, according to the Amaa practice of traditions,⁴⁰ for a widower to wed his late wife's sister, but it is certainly a taboo for living female siblings to wed the same living male. As shown above, Amaa marriage traditions allow female siblings to wed the same living male when one is living and the other living-dead. An elder may be asked in a challenging manner, as curious young people do (*as I did in the fieldwork*), as to what happens when a living couple *retransform* (die) into the invisible.

The usual answer to such a question would be “*annong wadaa nayh. andayh caa waareh kaa beshee kaa'fell waagg*”, meaning, “that is their business with the living-dead community elders [mostly ancestors], but what we know is that our connectedness is of importance to the invisible realm from where we come and to where we return. This is why we, too, emphasise harmony among us and with the invisible”.

Thus, for the traditional Amaa, barrenness ensues from ritual negligence and breach. Here, there is a ritual role for community elders “*wah'dia*”, who know sacred things and affairs, that is “*wah'dia wada accoorieu ko'renk maa'iyedee*”.⁴¹ The elders are

very cautious of such oral knowledge that would permit tracing possible causes, a permanent or latent taboo, perhaps, from forgotten murder incidents, whether accidental or intentional.

Elders can discover unresolved murder mysteries while investigating a barrenness case. This would imply a series of purification rituals and the institution of avoidance observance between the two families. Here, divorce is an unavoidable catastrophe.

Elders may fail to trace reasons for barrenness, health, or other social problems. In this case, they refer to the spirit-priest. Divining⁴² through a spirit-priest may become a necessity to unveil those hidden causes of problems at hand.

The spirit-priest's divination is through ritual dissociation and trance into the realm of the *numinous*⁴³ in search of answers to those hidden causes. While in a trance, he unconsciously spells out hinting answers to the present elders and ritual elders, who obviously understand that type of language and interpretation of trance communication.

In this way, the spirit-priest can be acknowledged as the generalist, whereas ritual elders are the ritual specialists.⁴⁴ They and their female counterparts are the custodians of Amaa oral history, genealogy, literature, rites, symbols and bridges of meanings and purposes when enacted. Ritual elders, too, are affected by the spiritual forces they interact with in ritual situations. But the impact is stronger upon the spirit-priest, who is partially a spirit,

“the other half *immuo* ... the half that was painted over with white chalk [mask] at important religious moments. And half of the things he ever [does are] done by this spiritual side.”⁴⁵

In ritual trance the spirit-priest bridges between the two realms of the “Unbroken Circle”.⁴⁶ Through the ritual dissociation, the visible human priest and the invisible communicate since the spirits become part of whom they possess as a vessel for involvement with the visible. In possession trance, then, the spirit-priest is partly spirit and partly human.⁴⁷ Here, the spirit-priest maintains a delicate balance that preserves harmony between the invisible and their *numinous* counterparts.⁴⁸

Harmony, an essential and vital condition, is expected to be maintained by the spirit-priest, for it involves aspects of the visible community's projection for remaining obediently connected to the living-dead, particularly the ancestors. In this way, as one

could obviously interpret, the traditional Amaa express in action the concept and belief that a family never dies and that it keeps manifesting itself in an unbroken sequence in its offspring. According to traditional Amaa, other things of nature are integral to this unbroken sequence, which expands Taylor's idea of the African traditional family as "Unbroken Circle"⁴⁹ to embrace others of fauna and flora. This being so, then, any lack of human, animal, or vegetation reproduction desperately raises alarms that move the ritual elders to search for answers.

Divining through the spirit-priest is one way to seek out clues. The spirit-priest, while in a trance in the *numinous* realm, unconsciously unties clues in a language that the attending ritual elders understand. Once they decipher the clues, they will know the appropriate ritual, its procedures, ritual material, and performance time of the day and, perhaps, the season for certain corrective rites. So divination, interpretation of dreams and the events such as barrenness, and then ritual application are the process and procedures for problem solution.

Here, we refer to Edward Tylor's proposition of the nature of life, of sleep, of death, and of dreams or visions as the stimulative conditioning factors that inspired religious thought. Reflecting on these mysteries, Tylor would suggest, led humankind to develop concepts of separation between the human body and the spirit dwelling within.

Having developed the concept of soul,⁵⁰ Tylor would contend, people proceeded to generalise and apply this concept to their social organisation and function such as the soul of nation; they also applied it to the natural phenomena such as the sun and the rain and so on.⁵¹ Thus, in consequence of the dream medium, Tylor concluded that other spirits visited his own.⁵²

Here, Tylor concurs with traditional African thought, like the Amaa. But unlike Tylor's concept, the traditional African thought about the spirits is applied in ritual thought and practice. Accordingly, the African traditional belief in the *numinous* world demonstrates practically that there are always spiritual causes for fortune such as reward or misfortune such as retribution. Of course, there disciplinary punishments that require corrective ritual measures as demonstrated above.

In other words, behind these phenomena is a power “wholly other” or “mysterium tremendum”⁵³ other than the visible. Their approach depends on the conception of power and has causes that lead to it.⁵⁴ That power is the source for elemental forces that Tempels calls “force vitale”⁵⁵ which, in turn, may enhance or impede African traditionalist function and social structure.⁵⁶ Thus, for a traditionalist, nothing happens by chance.

At this point, and bearing in mind the idea of elemental forces (fauna and flora imbued with the diffused Spirit; see **chart**), we can assert that traditional Amaa (and Africans in common) do not place ancestors on the same level as the Supreme Spirit (*Abbra'dee*), who sources the spring of elemental forces. Although the venerated ancestors are part of the *numinous* realm of the Spirit, they are not the ultimate force to be worshipped as Spencer⁵⁷ or Tylor⁵⁸ would presume. Although Tylor strays in his presumption of ancestor-worship in cultures he regards as primitive, he concurs with the traditional African belief in and use of dreams and visions⁵⁹ like those of spirit-priests.

4. AMAA VIEW OF DEATH

Like any other society, a traditional African society is an occupied territory, habituated to norms, similar to the traditional Amaa in a north western region of the Nuba Mountains, where there are villages, groves (*ko'dee*), forest (*woo'roong*) thresholds between the entities that shape the grounds of harmony and the “liminal” process in traditional Amaa religion. It is in relation to these shaped grounds of visible and invisible as complimentary opposites that traditional Amaa believe in and respect the presence of the *numinous* in things of nature as real, with the ancestors as central to the traditional life.

In this awareness of the *numinous* reality, the traditional Amaa lead their life. A traditional father or elder, for instance, does not eat or drink anything without offering libation and tit-bits of food as an invitation to the ancestors to bless and partake in the drink and food whether at a meal or at a snack time, or offering a sacrifice and libation to spirits of vegetation before clearing land for farming and again an offering is made to *Thhowor*, the spirit of earth, in charge of fertility and fecundity, before sowing of seeds. Or, (as this writer's late mother did), a mother will leave edibles at night for the invisible other members of her house. All these examples show how real the numinous world is to traditional Amaa and Africans in common. Regarded as such, traditional Amaa (and

similar Africans) believe, see, and experience that numinous world in their world in addition to the qualifying symbols they ritually involve.

One of the key qualifying symbols, besides the sacred stick (*toewoe*), that Amaa employ in diverse rites to represent ancestral active presence, is the mask which influences psychological, social, intercourse of the spirits' processes projected towards the people. The traditional people see material symbols, not only as objects, but forms with actual effective powers. They perceive them in terms of spirits. In other words, the material symbolic form in the eye of the faithful is effective, for it is a vehicle for the spiritual dimension. The point about spiritual dimension raises the question of whether spirits exist. For traditional Amaa (and African in common), spirits do actively exist.⁶⁰

Though it plays an essential role in traditional Amaa life, the mask is only employed in four specific ritual dances to emphasise the active presence of the *numinous* when (a) welcoming, naming, and incorporating new births into the community (*anggairoo fille'daah*), (b) at the descent of the circumcised youth from the mountains (*as coming out of seclusion*) to be re-incorporated. Modernisation process has affected and reduced the length of seclusion period of this rite to a symbolic time of separation. The rest of ritual procedures remain intact; (c) upon death (*retransformation*) of the advanced-aged person, spirit-priest, or ritual elder (also aged), and (d) at the pre-sowing season.

We discuss the first (a) and the second (b) instances elsewhere in this work. Now we deal with (c) the event of death (*retransformation*) as traditional Amaa perceive it and how they act towards the event. The example of the cognisant reaction of the elderly Amaa to the ripe time for his/her *retransformation* is a rite of passage⁶¹

Perhaps, the following description of traditional Amaa belief in the *numinous* reality and the of the spirit-priest's ritual approach to *retransformation* (death) departure to the spirit world may offer some insights which are confirmed by the masked dance when the actual *retransformation* occurs.

Apart from the vital capacity that amounts to functional energy, what operates the physical body and existence is the very thing that empowers the symbols. It is the very thing that traditional Africans of diverse cultures recognise as spirit. Spirit comes from a source and returns to that source when it terminates its function in physically manifested

living forms, be it in fauna or flora. What comes into birth in human form is what the Amaa interpret as the free spirit, choosing to align itself with a human lineage system.

Hence, that source is acknowledged as the Spirit (*Abbra'dee*: Creator Spirit). It is manifest as diffused in its creation. This explains the traditional attitude towards things of nature, for Spirit is diffused in them, as Diop points out, in the case of the ancestors, in his poem.⁶² Manifestations or “refractions” as spirits, in traditional African terms, continue and function as separate entities for better or worse impact on the visible.

Therefore, the traditional Amaa believe in the continuity of life after death. To traditional Amaa, death is only a traumatic *retransformation* from the visible physical state to that of the invisible mode of the spirits, according to lineage and family. In other words, death amounts only to loss of the physical form. So, for the traditional Amaa, normal death is not horrifying, for it is only *retransformation*, a return to the original state of eternal invisibility, but attached this time to that family lineage counterpart in the spiritual realm.

It is worth adding that the edlerly are confident of the reality of that invisible world. Some look forward to and request it, even in good health, and prompt such a request for departure to the ancestors in saying, “*Abba ngee dang koodee*”, meaning, “my fathers are calling”, when addressing the eldest son to prepare for the *terminal rite*, which is performed once towards the end of a man’s visible life. The cognisance of the Amaa elderly of things spiritual, particularly the ripe time for departure to the ancestral world, is a result of the process of gradual growth and experience from birth to that stage of elderhood, which shapes insights and communicative ability with the ancestral realm.

This is “elderhood and ancestorhood [blending]”.⁶³ The elderly know when it is time to depart. According to this traditional belief of life continuity and *retransformation* and in order to enhance it for the departed, some personal effects and tools are buried with the deceased body of the *retransformed* spirit. Some material pieces of property and gifts that mourners present are transferred to the grave. Such transferred property may be utensils, ornaments, modern and traditional clothing, or tools and implements for economic activities such as farming and hunting.

The spirit-priest (*kuweir* or *kuunee*), upon death (*retransformation*), takes with him one half of the sacred stick (*toewoe*), a symbol of ancestral authority, ritually divided into two equal halves. The second half of this particular *toewoe* of the *retransformed* spirit-priest stands for the presence and continuity of the ancestral authority among the living. It, therefore, remains in its place in the arch of the gate (*orre'gull*) of his family main compound (**fig. 1**), and will be transferred to the shrine (*codee*) in that compound, then following the home-coming rite⁶⁴ for the *retransformed* elder, after a year has elapsed, the ritual elders decide on a new location,⁶⁵ according to the ritual criteria of continuity, a day preceding the installation of a new spirit-priest (*kuweir*), who must have been in prescribed seclusion.

One of the sacred stick (*toewoe*) of a departed junior spirit-priest (*kuunee*) remains in the shrine of his immediate family; community elders refer to it when a ritual need arises. The ancestral traditions and mythological knowledge that the senior spirit-priest (*kuweir*) holds are intense (*winnye*)⁶⁶ and, thus, become the determining factor for the permanent location.

The mode of ritual involved in the transfer of the remaining half of the sacred stick (*toewoe*) confirms the home-coming of the departed elderly and ancestral presence while, at the same time, checking on the moral condition of the people. It is here that the *masked dance* takes place. This ritual dance is a communal affair.

5. THE MASKED DANCE

The entire celebration is, indeed, a general package of veneration for the hallowed invisible presence, acknowledgement for the home-coming of that particular departed spirit-priest, while welcoming the initiation and induction of the new one next day. In their dance, the masked spirits represent moral attitudes prevalent in the society and portray some members of the society in the audience. The masked dance is a critical portrayal of the society itself for the purpose of self-examination. As such, this performed art points to the fact African art, whether in religious or secular terms, should be viewed to embrace the essential elements of struggle for life and as giving concrete expression of people in communion with themselves and their cosmos.

Normally for the ritual drama, there is a separation between the actors and the audience. The gathering itself is organised as a circle, with the masked spirits surrounded by the audience. The audience is constantly reminded of the masked dancers as spirits, whose entities are concealed behind the veil of the masks. They are dangerous and must not be approached.

The paradox of traditional African is perhaps displayed here, in wanting the sacred⁶⁷ to be near for help, while at the same time rejecting it because it is dangerous; this seems to portray the divide between the visible and the invisible in that same self-interacting circle of the ritual celebration.

The varieties of masks depict different types of spirits from good, or evil,⁶⁸ to gossip, and healers to diviners, ranging across the entire spectrum of personality types found in Amaa society. Each masked dancer displays the character of the spirit represented in the mask. In this way, different roles and attitudes of the society's life are identified and typified for the audience to see, examine for self evaluation, and act upon for correction or enhancement. We consider this an excellent example of experiential spirituality in action, in other words, of the traditional African performing religion.

In other words, the audience sees its life displayed before it. In this way, some spectators of the ritual learn, acknowledge, and identify themselves in the different life stories displayed before them. Hence, one can visualise how some dancing spirits might portray with movements and counter movements as they enact the roles, for instance, *gossip* (*koo'sheh'deedee*) (regarded as a form of cannibalism in the traditional Amaa moral thought), realised in the behaviour of some members of the society who actually play that role.

Indeed, one can hear acknowledging whispers in the audience that do not fail to identify some of their members embodying those enacted characteristics of favourable or disreputable significance. Some may identify themselves to the amusement of themselves and their neighbours or with disgust and shame which require ritual correction and change of behavioural direction.⁶⁹

In general there is a feeling of high-spirited delight as well as fear, with remorse forcing the villains to retreat by withdrawing from the celebration. And leaving the active

ritual celebration is conventionally understood as confession of guilt for norm breaches. Such leavers will have to offer an explanation before the community elders since there are ritual ramifications in that such breaches are first and foremost against the ancestors. Breaches range from grievous offences (like incest, pre-marital sex, violent against parents and elders in both word and deed, marriage custom and taboos) to less grievous breaching behaviour and acts.⁷⁰

It could, perhaps, at this point, be suggested that the ancestral presence is the equivalent of modern constitutional arrangements in seeking to avoid disharmony and chaos, and chaos in the visible section of the “Unbroken Circle”⁷¹ is a disturbance and displeasure to the invisible. This means, then, communal disharmony for both the visible and the invisible realms. Harmony is the main objective emphasised by the masked dancing spirits.

Here, the masked ancestors are at play to shake up and renew. In such masked ritual dances, there is always one particular puzzling and frightening shaped mask. The head of this mask is filled with multiple eyes facing in every direction. The upper eyes are larger and brighter in colour. This mask’s dancer is taller than his fellow dancers and everyone else in the audience. With wondering movements, this particular dancing mask sees near and far. In other words, the multiple eyes have vision of the past, present and future. It is a spirit with ability of discernment more than its fellow masked dancers, who, as mentioned above, replay the audience’s life.⁷²

It is this kind of traditional Amaa (and similar African societies) ritual directed to periodical summation and reflection on the people’s life that confirms the belief in the continuous presence and involvement of the living-dead with the living. The masked dance, as such, is judgmental for praise and encouragement, correction of wrong, or punishment for lack of adherence to the moral vision displayed in the annual masked dance. The masked dance confirms the Amaa belief and ritual practice emphasis that the living-dead continues to flourish either with the ancestors or outcast demons. Here Diop’s poetic statement that “the dead are not dead”⁷³ complements the Amaa belief in continuity of life in numinous form.⁷⁴ Hence, Diop’s poem describes what traditional Amaa call “*aar’doo’wooe’woorang*”, descriptive of that particular masked, multiple eyed, dancer

whom the Amaa identify as a personification of *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit). Since He (*Abbra'dee*) sees everywhere, so those ancestors and other living-dead can do the same. This, then, illustrates that traditional Africans, Amaa included, give shape and action to their belief. Shape and action to the belief is expounded further in the next paragraph.

For instance, when all her household had gone to bed, my late mother used to clear the way from the hut door (see fig 3) to the kitchen. She always left something edible and water (or home brewed beer on festive occasions) over night. When explaining these ritual actions to her household, she reasoned that the others (*waa'baar*: the different ones, meaning, the living-dead family members) would come for their nourishment while we were asleep; and clearing the way was courteous to prevent them stumbling and also to encourage their protection against the evil ones among them.

Furthermore, the ritual elders will cut a new *toewoe* from an aged ebony tree (*agoo*) which is kept for this purpose. It is known among the Amaa as a sacred tree. It is, therefore, handled ritually when extracting a piece of root for a new *toewoe*. Young people are warned to avoid this tree for it is dangerous. "A Spiritual power is associated with it": "*gheshinn dayh nayh lee'aa'wowoe*", an Amaa mother would retort, sometimes with a slap,⁷⁵ to a question from a challenging child.

After the dedication rituals, following the masked dance, the ritual elders deposit the new *towoe* with the half of the old already in the shrine for one rainy season and, then, it is ritually transferred to the new spirit-priest (*kuweir*). At this rite of transfer, certain plants of medicinal qualities, wild and domestic cereals, domestic animals like bulls of *red colour*, and domestic fowls also of *red* colour are involved, mostly as dedicated or outright victims.

This elaborate ritual is also characteristic of the return from the ritual seclusion and the installation of the new spirit-priest (*kuweir*). It is in the practice of such rituals that the ways (wisdom) of the ancestors remain active as observed in symbols, mythologies, and even in some of the anecdotes. In this way, the departed folks are still alive, but in a *retransformed* state among the living.

The new spirit-priest's (*kuweir*) installation activities testify to the sense of invisible community present in the network of the people, who involve other elements of

nature as cereal and food offerings and the sacrificial beasts and fowls. Here, the involvement of non-human is not only for human enjoyment, but also to make the ritual as inclusive as possible, with the intention of drawing in the diffused *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God) as much as possible to that ritual.

It would seem, then, that things of nature, the free spirits, and the living-dead are honoured collectively as the silent but active participants in human life. Here, the sense of collectiveness brings to mind the idea of wholeness that Taylor describes as the “Unbroken Circle”,⁷⁶ which, in a metaphorical way, is no different from Wendy James’ idea of “permanent presence”,⁷⁷ Evans-Pritchard’s Nuer *Kwoth* “Spirit in...comprehensive conception of...the creator”,⁷⁸ Faris’ thought that “deceased elders are still active, that elderhood and ancestorhood blend...[and] set causality locally”,⁷⁹ and so on.

Hence, community of the living, living-dead, and things of nature blend together to become whole and function as such. Diop’s poem depicts this interconnectedness.⁸⁰

The ancestral presence in the landscape of Diop’s poem is in tune with the intuition and experience of traditional Amaa elderly. Being in interaction with the numinous environment, as the above poem demonstrates, the elderly and the ritual elders (some masked to represent ancestral spirits), besides the insights of the community, experience spiritual presence.⁸¹ So the officiant will invoke and praise this collective presence of both the visible and the invisible, as if all were visible before him.

6.[a] *TOONOO WAA'DAA: THE TERMINAL RITE*

A terminal rite is an observed thanksgiving rite, which is also an appreciation of elderhood, that the Amaa elderly male head of the family fulfils before *retransformation* (death), and which the Amaa describe as “*aa'woe'sooda*”. It is a single rite that a male family head performs once towards the conclusion of his physical life.

The aged traditional Amaa, being in interaction with the surrounding *numinous* and living-dead that Diop’s poem depicts,⁸² intuitively know when time is ripe to join the ancestor. This is when an aged Amaa man, even without sickness, would express that his ancestors are beckoning him to cross over to their side. So a male elder at that stage in life will summon quietly a reunion of all his offspring, including his grandchildren. The family must maintain secrecy on the occasion of this rite. None outside his immediate family

should hear about it, since it is *a* private affair addressed to *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God), whom the Amaa know also as *Leeh* (Presence) and *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit), personified in that particular multiple-eyed dancer.

The following description of my late father's terminal rite gives a better idea and, perhaps, insight to the terminal rite.⁸³ He was not sick when he fulfilled this rite on the night of October 2, 1974. He did not wake up from his sleep of November 16, 1974. I, for one among his offspring, was not shocked for he forewarned us of that ripe time for his departure. This prior knowledge of the time for departure is a puzzling one. Perhaps, it moves one to ask questions about traditional elders' intuition into things spiritual as well as about their interaction with the *numinous* presence in the midst of the living.⁸⁴ How did he know that this was the time? The answer for the traditional Amaa is obvious, as indicated above, but it is a puzzle for the Amaa alienated in the bosom of modernisation.⁸⁵

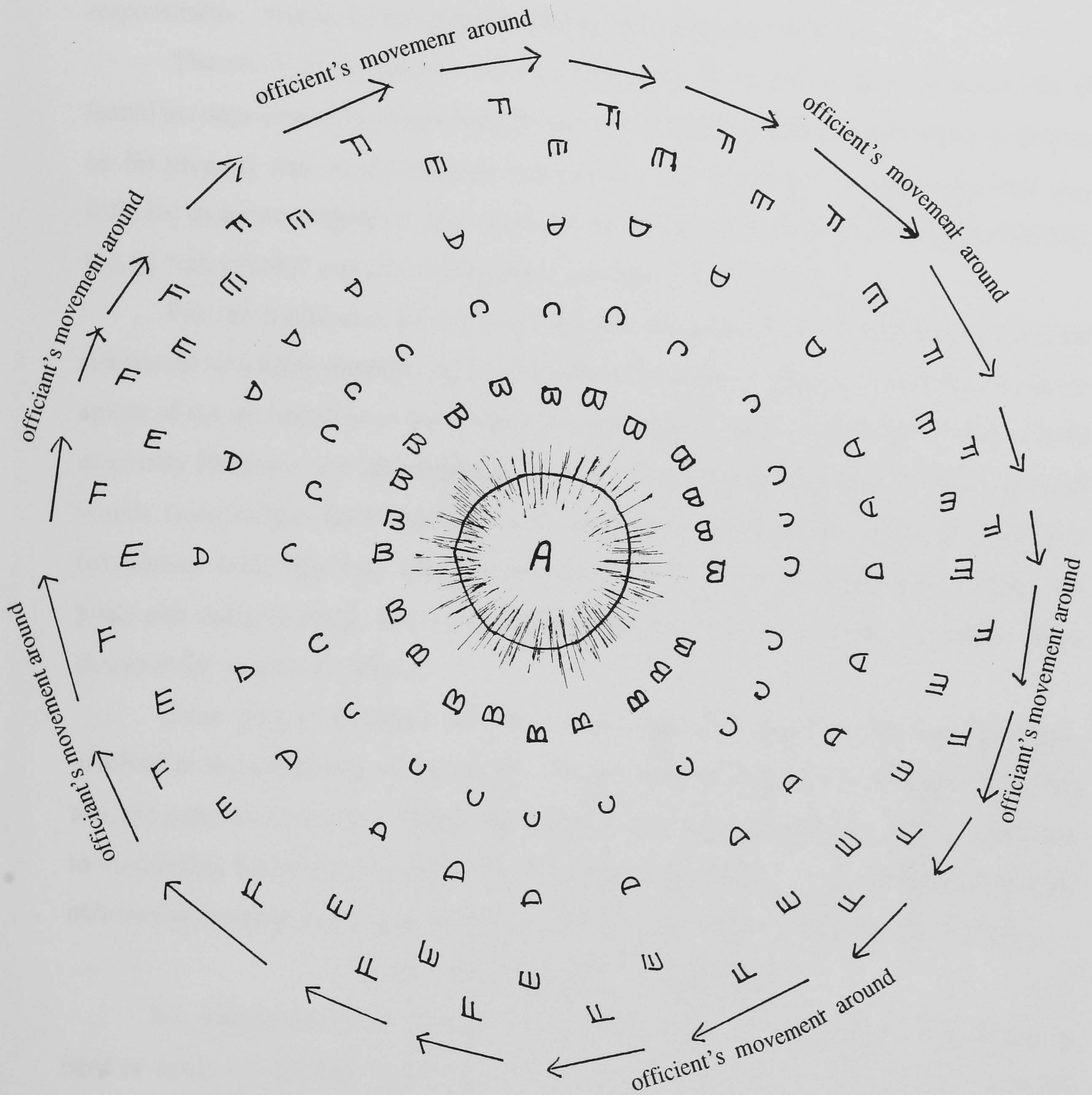
He held this ritual service in the wild, in the vicinity of the old distant farm and to avoid an expected intrusions. He had spiritual attachment to this vicinity and land of his first farm. It was here before he cleared the land for farming, as tradition requires, he first offered libation and sacrifice of a ram to ancestors, the spirit of the wild (*woo'roongo leeh*), and *Thhowor*, spirit of the earth to whom fertility, fecundity, and growth are delegated. This ritual intention was directly addressed to the Presence (*Leeh: Abbra'dee*) and ancestors were called upon second.

As indicated above, this ritual requires the presence of all the children and grandchildren, including the living-dead ones, represented by symbols of blessed stones for males and twigs⁸⁶ for females. Beforehand, the senior mother blessed these symbolic members, whose spirits were believed to be present. These representative symbols were ritually treated by name of the living-dead representees. In this way, all attended the terminal rite. Failure to symbolically represent or of a living member to attend would abort the rite, for it meant the departing father would be presenting himself incomplete before ancestors and *Abbra'dee*. Therefore, the senior mother (my mother) ensured the presence of all members, both living and living-dead.

In other words, a departing father will not fulfil the terminal rite if a living child is absent as this would amount to a curse upon that child. If he departs without fulfilling the

FIGURE 4

SITE OF THE TERMINAL RITE



SYMBOLS:

- A. Altar with flaming ritual fire.
- B. Great grand children.
- C. Grand children.
- D. Daughters.
- E. Mothers and sons.
- F. Symbols for living-dead members of the family.

terminal rite, his departure will give rise to anger and will mean a curse on that absent member and possibly other members, too, since communal traditions dictate collective responsibility. That is, an individual's liability falls upon the collective.

Therefore, in my father's terminal rite, none of his offspring were absent for all feared his departure without fulfilling his last rite, bidding farewell, and bestowing blessing on his progeny that would maintain his eternity. All feared the consequences, not only from the departed progenitor, but also from the punitive reactions of other spirits for they, too, as "refractions" and other living-dead, are part of the process.

For the traditional, having a spirit-priest departing without fulfilling his terminal rite would also mean possible negative reactions from the "refractions" of the Spirit as the spirits of the air (*mooh'woo leeh*) that blow in locusts,⁸⁷ spirits of the earth (*kayloo leeh*) especially *Thhowor* and *Shayshayray*, who may deprive or deform crop growth, spirits of woods (*woo'roongo leeh*) that may deprive them of their yields, spirits of mountains (*maydowoe leeh*) that may instigate leopards to steal or destroy domestic animals like goats and sheep at night, and so on; all have masters, whom the Amaa call ritual elders (*keeyo irran*: master of things).

These things of nature are part of the human community and are, therefore, involved in the experience of the people. As spirit manifestations (or "refractions"), they too, are referred to in the terminal ritual invocations with gratitude for their contribution to human life. Therefore, we should not be surprised to witness at a sacrificial rite a ritual officiant addressing an explanation to a sacrificial beast of the necessity for its suffering.

6.[b] TERMINAL RITUAL PROCESS

We mentioned earlier that sacrificial victims must be chosen from the domestic herd or fowls for offering to the Supreme Spirit (*Abbra'dee*: Creator Spirit), whom the Amaa address as *leeh* (Presence) and *Abbra'dee*. It is in *leeh* that traditional Amaa articulate and define those (the unborn) yet to come. It is to the same *Spirit*, not ancestors, though they are mentioned, since the past cannot be aborted without aborting the future he is approaching, that a departing father offers gratitude in the terminal rite.

At my father's terminal rite, the sacrificial victims were youthful, without blemish, and *red in colour*.⁸⁸ They were a steer, a ram, and a rooster. Their mouths were tied with

pieces of rope from the main compound shrine (*codee*) in order to inhibit any noise that might have been made during the ritual process.

My father, then, dedicated the blazing fireplace, silently prepared and set that very evening, as an altar to become the point of reference. The family silently surrounded it in circles according to their age (**fig. 4**). He walked round the family circle several times, invoking and thanking *Abbra'dee*, the creator present in the forest,⁸⁹ the earth,⁹⁰ in the midst of this family circle, and continued invoking *Abbra'dee's* presence in celestial and earthly phenomena that have contributed to his life. Thus, he expressed his gratitude for being extended in his offspring. As a spirit-priest, he thanked *Abbra'dee* for the intensity of the spiritual authority and guidance that enabled him to direct the community of the living.

Although the ritual was a direct approach to *Abbra'dee*, the ancestors, as mediums and messengers, were thanked for their role of enabling mediation, but the invitation to participate was a dominant point in the invocations directed to the ancestors as members of the *numinous* gathering in their presence for that terminal rite before his crossing over to their side. This ritual invitation was also intended to invigorate and assure the maintenance of the network link between the living and the living-dead before *Abbra'dee*. Here, the living progeny are expected to follow the ritual traditions and customs that derive from the ancestral legacies.

The steer was the first to be sacrificed. In silence, the young men controlled and walked this participant victim around the family circle following the invoking father. At the end of the third round, an explanation was addressed to it as to why its traumatic transfer to the invisible as a gift was necessary. Although the sacrificial ritual is aimed at gratitude, it is also meant to amend and reconcile the father to the progeny for wrongs he might have committed unknowingly against any of them.

The lone invoking voice of the ritual officiant piercing the awesome silence of that forest gave a sense of realism to the presence of *Abbra'dee* in the midst of that gathering of the family, and things of nature with their intrinsic and extrinsic efficacy, including those sacrificial victims. The father's invocation acknowledged the present complex lineage in relation to the past generations, which he was about to join, and offered hope for

perpetual continuity (*eternity now*) in those yet to come. Lineage perpetuity express the African sense of future.⁹¹

The next beast (ram) was processed and sacrificed in the same manner as the first victim. The officiant held the third victim (rooster) and, with it, gently but in the manner of blessing, touched everyone in sequence according to their age and social standing (married or single), beginning with the outer circle (his wives and sons) first, daughters (the presence of the married ones was optional) next, with grand-children and great-grand-children in the last inner circle before reaching the blazing fire (**fig. 4**). This blessing process included those representative physical symbols for the departed progeny, present with the ancestors,⁹² participating in this ritual addressed to *Abbra'dee*, the Supreme Creator Spirit.

Each male child was touched once on the forehead, whereas a female child, whether adult or young, was touched (blessed) on both shoulders beginning with the left one - one was for her and the other for her reproductive potential (for those yet to come). He blessed the representative symbols for his first living-dead wife and three children once (**fig. 4**).

Besides being an act of thanksgiving, communion, purification and farewell before his departure, this rite (*toonoo waah'daa*: night rite: terminal or final rite)⁹³ emphasised the habit of gratitude, continuity of the web of the human community, and the lineage circle of which the living-dead are a part as much as the living and those yet to come (future generations). Thus, death (*retransformation*) for the Amaa elderly is a process through which the Divine “reveals himself”. Ma Mpolo puts the sense of this experience in the form of a questioning statement as follows,

“... the symbolic role of the ancestor has set up new liberating possibilities in which are mingled together the God [Spirit] in us and the God who wears the image of our humanity and reveals himself in this ... symbol of reconciliation, celebration and continuity?”⁹⁴

Ma Mpolo refers to ancestors, communicative symbols, and the ancestral body of traditions from which practised customs are derived. In the ritual process, my father repeated, “*abbangyeeo waa'daa'dayh nay*”, meaning, “we do this, for you our forefathers did so”; it entails mythologies typifying social and spiritual history⁹⁵ that traditional Amaa follow in daily activities with awareness and concerned effort to sanctify life. In other

words, “*abbangyeeo waa'daa'dayh nay*”, meaning “we do this for you, our forefathers did so” express the applied traditional African worldview.

In noting this applied traditional African worldview, we concur with Evan Zeusse who cogently but rightly argues that in most African religion[s] the aim is the active sanctification of life. They (African religion[s]) are quite complex. Traditional Africans (Amaa included) make concerted effort to integrate even the most insignificant things of daily life, a process which makes life more complex but profound than does the practice of religions that restrict the spirit to exceptional pieces of experience.⁹⁶

Hence, three dimensions of the traditional African's life, as Zeusse attests,⁹⁷ are unified as a single whole. Specifically, the dimensions are represented in (a) the personal egoistic dimension which, we add, bears an implicit dimension of the collective, since traditional Amaa society denies to individual a role other than being an embodiment of the group dimension tied together by ancestral will, (b) the social dimension, and, (c) the transcendental cosmic dimension.⁹⁸ And so, ritual is the means by which the complex integration of these dimensions is attained.⁹⁹ Here, the integration or wholeness that the departing father strives to achieve in his terminal rite brings to mind again Taylor's idea of the “Unbroken Circle”¹⁰⁰ and Diop's poem that depicts ancestors in everything and everywhere¹⁰¹ but under the shadow of *Abbra'dee*, according to traditional Amaa.

Hence, *transformation* of one's perception of ordinary objects or persons (like the stones representing the living-dead members of the family at the terminal rite, the spirit-priest or ancestral presence at rituals, artefacts like the *toewoe* stick) from a literal personal, or social mode to the symbolic and transcendental, lies at the centre of the ritual action in the awesome forest locale.¹⁰²

Accordingly, we claim that the ritual process, content, and mode of the perceptual transformation embodied in ancestral traditions must be adhered to by the gathering family group. Here, symbols are referent embodiments that enhance experience of the ancestors and the infinite centre (Spirit), symbolised by the blazing fire (**fig. 4**).

All symbols, thus, combine to converge at the meaning and intention of the terminal rite on that active stage in the wild. This is a stage for the ritual actor, in a semi-liminal state,¹⁰³ in the late night hours (10-11 p.m.) to early hours (2-3 a.m.) of the next

morning. During this whole process, as mentioned earlier, none is permitted to speak or make any sort of distracting noise except for the lone invocative singing voice of the officiant. The content of my father's invocative songs reflected a combination of and relationship to elements in the wider community, not only his lineage.

In retrospect, the imposed ritual silence and the officiant's sung reminder of the interdependence of things (since people are included in combination with and in relationship to the elements) made me reflectively mindful of the internalised factors of traditions developed from the pieces of the cultural experience of individuals (from childhood) within the context of family gathering groups.

In other words, the terminal ritual revealed to me the importance of the taxonomic relations, i.e. kinship ties, structural positions, social status (married, single, widowed-levirate marriage, and so on), bonds and oppositions of interest and friendship, group-individual network ties, informal relationships, and so on (points my father referred to in the invocative songs at the terminal ritual process).

According to the traditional Amaa practice at this ritual, even infants are fed with home brewed beer (*ashee*), mixed with ground dates to nourish and induce long sleep. In this way, all noise was inhibited except that of the officiant and the forest.

In sum, besides his invocation to the silent Spirit, the officiant cautioned his participant audience to be vigilant of this spirit-filled space (earth and its environ), the sense of nature, of mankind, of family and of the Amaa nation (tribe), all of which they must know how to appreciate and inhabit "strongly".¹⁰⁴

7. BURIAL

My father was well when he called for and performed the terminal rite (*toonoo waa'daa*) in October 2, 1974. He died in his sleep on November 16, 1974. Though a sad phenomenal occurrence, nonetheless, traditional Amaa regard *retransformation* (death), especially of the aged, as a *saamoorr'doo* (transitional ritual festivity process) that brings together both the living-dead and the living for

"rejoicing that a man has lived his life to the full and earned rest"¹⁰⁵

As Amaa tradition dictates, the *Kuweir* or the *Sheila* (see chapter 2) are adorned and buried in special way. The family adorned him lavishly with a variety of ornaments

brought by the extended family members, friends in near and distant communities, and junior spirit-priests (*kuuneedaih*). In addition to the adornment articles, his priestly and personal effects and implements of economic activities for use in the world of the invisible were included.

This idea (which is reality to the traditional Amaa) of life continuity in the invisible in the same mode as the visible is consonant with the concept of *eternity now*. Therefore, the material articles put in the grave demonstrate Amaa perceptions, representations and use of symbolism to envisage the invisible side of the “Unbroken Circle”.

Thus, one half of the sacred stick (*toewoe*) was given to him. The other half together with the sacred spear remain in the arch of the main gate (**fig. 1**). The sacred spear (*coola*) could not be divided, since it represents the presence of the ancestors among the living.

On the other hand, *toewoe* represents *conjoint authority* of the ancestors and the living parents. So the father carried part of his authority in that one half of the *toewoe* to join the ancestral. The second half (with the spear) remains for ancestral (including him) traditions and the authority of his male progeny and those yet to come. In other words, traditional Amaa, as do other similar groups on the African continent, are immersed in a cosmic and social milieu that makes it imperative for the retransformed father to validate the ancestral traditions and pass them on faithfully to his descendants.

Here, then, the sacred stick (*toewoe*) and the spear symbols signify a perpetual “liminal” state,¹⁰⁶ for they enhance the cross-roads where the ancestral community and its posterity merge, crossing the thresholds of their boundaries in the equitable enhancement of each other as the eldest son demonstrates in the family gathering at the beside of the prepared body of the *retransformed* father.

In the hut of his senior wife (my mother), all his immediate family surrounded the adorned body for burial to bid farewell to his physical form and to ask for forgiveness for any unknown or unintentional wrongs that might not have been resolved. The eldest son addressed the *retransformed* father, while the rest remained silent as his spirit was there. It was the first time for the eldest son to invoke and offer libation to the *retransformed* father and ancestors for protection and guidance.

That is, life goes on beyond the grave. So among the ornaments and objects were two items of a particular ritual significance that reflected the importance of the spirit-priestly office the *retransformed* functionary:

(a) ritual *sandals* (dressed in colourful cowries: *koe'riang*) were made from the fresh hide of the first sacrificed bull before middle-aged men started digging for the grave chamber (*shee'rra*), an adequate underground room, spacious enough to accommodate the four legged leather bed and the accompanied belongings;

(b) this ritual bed was also made from the straps of the fresh hide of that first sacrificial bull. As Amaa traditions postulate, only a *kuweir* or a *Sheila* (a descendants of *Nyema* and who holds the traditional office of the *Sheila*, the rain caller (see *chapter 2* on *Sheila*) could be buried in such shoes and such bed.

The sandals (*tay'nee*) were put *last* on the feet of the *retransformed* functionary (my father). When all were asleep and no one were to be met on the way en route to the burial grounds in that dead silence of the night, elders walked him from my mother's hut en route the compound altar and through the arched-gate to the outer side of it (**fig. 1**) where he was laid on the waiting ritual bed. He was, then, secretly carried away and laid to rest in that ritual bed of the final abode.

A “boom” of gun firing announced to the people that the *retransformed* spirit-priest has descended (*ngah'shay*) to his chamber. At this stage of the burial rite, traditional Amaa would say that the *retransformed kuweir* (or *Sheila*) “*ay kaa ngah'shay shee'rrow*”, meaning, “...has descended to the final chamber” instead of “has been buried”. That was why the body was ritually walked from the senior wife's hut to the outer side of arched-gate to symbolise his final journey. The inner mouth of the grave was sealed, but the outer one remained open for three days for the late comers to bid farewell to the *retransformed*. This tradition of keeping the outer mouth of the grave open is practised only for *kuweir*, *Sheila*, and the very advanced aged.

According to Amaa tradition of this terminal rite, females are excluded¹⁰⁷ from the procession and burial site rituals. To re-iterate, death (*retransformation*) is but a *neutral* “*liminal*” *mode* that the *retransformed* passes through en route to the realm of the ancestors, who, though invisible, constitute an essential part of the human community.

There followed two strands of rituals and sacrifices, as Amaa tradition dictates, after the *initial burial* (a) the *public* at the grave site and involved people from near and afar. It was on this site that the ritual dance took place. This was an occasion when the young people of both genders displayed or sharpened their artistic skills ranging from song composition, playing musical instruments like *koonyang*, *faah'lang* (drum talking), and *koomang* (plank music).¹⁰⁸ (b) private in the main compound; the eldest son and the senior living uncle alternated in offering inductive sacrifices for the *retransformed* father for three consecutive days. Sacrifices offered were three *red* steers, six castrated rams of white colour, and spirit-priests invoked and poured libation in the mornings and the afternoons (about 3-4 p.m).

As a ritual custom for the period of three days (*aboodoo*: mourning period)¹⁰⁹, all members of the extended family, including friends from afar, stayed and slept on bare ground and without clothing except coverings for genitalia for adults of both genders. The laying on ground is identification with both the departed body in the grave and the unsettled hovering spirit, in the induction process, en route to the new mode of life with the ancestors in the midst of the physically living progeny and relatives. The gifts and sacrifices for initiation into the silent mode of life, traditional Amaa believe, are partially for the ancestors and relatives among the living-dead, who, in return, are asked to come into communion and fellowship that may enhance forgiveness, renewal, and for the family and the larger community participating in this celebration of life in death, which is simply retransformation for traditional Amaa.

8. SUMMARY

Traditional Amaa sanctify perpetuity of life in visible (the metaphor) and invisible (the real) modes. Their applied ritual traditions and customs are grounded in believing attitudes. Therefore, they conduct their daily life on ritual grounds with the vigilant sense that draws the involvement of the *numinous* presence, especially the ancestors, the jealous guardians of their continuity (*eternity now*) in whom the African traditional sense of time defines itself.

Traditional Amaa believably see and experience the *numinous* world in the same matrix with their visible world. As Diop's poem says of "Those who are dead are never

gone”,¹¹⁰ ancestors are everywhere. But *Abbra’dee* (Spirit Creator: God) is manifest in everything and calm attitude and is experienced as such in limitless modes. To re-iterate, it is in this sense it could be said that *Abbra’dee* established the human community of all creation¹¹¹ and ancestors found the humankind community. Hence, in addition to symbols, the vehicles of the spiritual dimension, the visible and the invisible are ritually involved as inseparable participants. The traditionalists perceive material symbols in terms of the invisible. Hence, symbolic objects as referent embodiments of the ancestral continuum and experience of the convergent infinite centre (*Abbra’dee*), physical acts and vocal expression as in forms of invocation, all illustrate that traditional Amaa (and similar Africans) give shape and action to their belief, i.e. in masked dance and so on. That is, liturgy and symbols give shape to the invisible powers. Participants in the “sanctification of daily life” and occasional rituals, converge in the meaning and purpose of the rites. Both the visible and the invisible ritual participants concur in the preservation and continuity of life, i.e. Amaa view of death, terminal rite, burial and homecoming rites, the *numinous*, particularly the presence of the living-dead is acknowledged in daily life.¹¹²

Here the spirit-priesthood, aided by the elderhood, as an office is the connection between the applied symbolic values people possess and their relation to the active centre of the social-ritual life. The *numinous* environment is, therefore, an active participant¹¹³ with the traditionalist in communicative and symbolic relations and actions. The *numinous* environment in conjunction with the living participants serves to maintain bonds, sacrifices, and ritual forms as the central force that intertwiningly combine the visible and the invisible, the present with the future (those yet to come as kinship and community members) and the past. Here neither the past, as defined in ancestors, nor the future are aborted, since they all culminate in the present.

In sum, death is only a traumatic retransformation back to the original spiritual state before birth (transformation). The retransformed (the living-dead) continues life in the same matrix with the visible. As such, then, spirits do actively exist among the living and traditional Amaa see *Abbra’dee* manifest in things of nature.

CHAPTER FIVE

FOOTNOTES

1. (a) Douglas, M., "The Lele of Kasai," in African Worlds: Studies in Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples, edited by Daryll Forde, 1976.
(b) Turner, Victor W., "Color Classification in Ndembu Ritual: A Problem in Primitive Classification," chapter 3 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.
(c) Tempels, Placide, Bantu Philosophy, 1959.
2. Traditional Amaa understand the spitting of elders, when blessing, as life-giving or a curse. Elders, ritual elders, and spirit-priests bless the sick in this manner early morning before drinking or eating. My late father and some of the elder informants explained that the morning spittle had more efficacy, especially when an elder dreams in the previous night. Here when in dream, the dreamer's spirit interact with those spirit of the invisible domain who may enhance or turn a spittled blessing into a curse.
3. Deng, F., Africans of Two Worlds, 1982, p.62.
4. **Sorcery**: Amaa call it *corr'giedee*. It is the menace of human against human. There are two types; possibly three if we count the harmful impact of paternal displeasure (*terr'daa*: curse) as a form of sorcery:
(a) when there are intentions for selfish gratification, on account of others, for wealth, power display, self-aggrandisement, envy, jealousy, hypocrisy, evil thoughts, and son on, which can all be summed up as the *crooked and perverted human condition that threatens the constitution of the human community itself*. It disrupts corporateness, community, and celebration and, thus, endangers the well-being of others. Endlessly diversified as it may be in the studies of anthropology, from nation (tribe) to nation, it belongs with a common African understanding of human evil.
Sorcery: the perverted human condition, involves manipulation of spiritual forces through private ritual mediums opposed to normal group rituals for constructive ends.
(b) When there is a harmful spiritual present in a person who is not aware of it. (also see John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, chapter 12; Placide Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, 1959, chapter 2).
5. **Leeh Koosuudo**: *Leeh* means spiritual presence. *Koosuudo* means bad or crude. It may be translated as *evil presence*. Traditional Amaa believe this evil presence manifests as *durr'do leeh* (spirit of hate) as opposed to *kay'lee'geedo leeh* (spirit of good) or *waarr'do lee* (spirit of love).
6. The matrimonial responsibility of the widow to the late husband according to Amaa traditional custom is:
(a) a widow, with offspring by the late husband, enters into a *levirate marriage* to perpetuate her late husband's social self (*eternity now*);
(b) a widow without children goes into a *levirate marriage* for the same purpose of social self-perpetuation for the late husband; if she chooses divorce (from the late husband who is still socially acknowledged to be the husband), then, a release ritual must be performed. In order to *untie the stringed-beads (boardelay) for divorce*, she offers a sacrificial ram to her husband (now a spirit) for her release so that she can remarry outside his lineage. Otherwise he will haunt her. This is so, for *marriage is for eternity*. In this regard," Van Gennep writes,
"... the basis of levirate and sororate is not only economic but also ritualistic [and social]. [At marriage, a] ... new member has been incorporated into the family, and if [she] were to leave it, special ceremonies would be required. Furthermore, the bonds of marriage have joined not only two individuals but above all the collectivities to

whom the maintenance of cohesion is important. This may also be seen in divorce rites”

Van Gennep, Arnold, The Rites of Passage, 1960, p.120.

7. Amaa female ritual elders are called *wa'cahrroo shiela*. *Wa* (people) is the plural of *woe'dang* (person). *Caa'ahr* means bitter (also applicable to edibles), forbidden, untouchable. This term is synonymous with *aa'koo'ree*, meaning, sacred. The suffix *oo* in *wa'cahrroo* is preposition “of”. *Caahr* also means female. *Kay'erre*, meaning, married woman. *Caahr* (remains unchanged) is the plural (women). *Nyema* (Amaa ancestress) of Amaa mythology who descended pregnant and gave birth to a son on what is now called *Mount Nyema* in Western Amaaland. She had supernatural powers and men feared her, although they needed her help. It was this paradox of fear and need that led Amaa to describe her as *caahr*, meaning, untouchable, sacred woman. Although she was powerful, she exercised her authority behind the scenes in the domestic sphere, while Sheila, her spirit-son, explicitly exercised his in the external sphere. When she married a man, she empowered him for external ritual activities. So the traditional Amaa women follow her example. Men have their ritual sphere and women theirs.

The phrase *wa'ca'cahrro shiela* (literally translated, it means, people female bitter head, people untouchable head, people forbidden head, people set apart, bearing in mind the generic term *caahr* for female); *wa'cahrroo shiela* means female ritual elders.

8. Stringed-beads (*boardelay*) endow ritual authority upon married women over their husbands. At the ritual of maiden's paternal lineage transfer to that of the bridegroom, she is instructed by the female ritual elders in her mother's house-shrine to neither replace nor remove the stringed-beads on her waist. To do otherwise would mean a death curse upon the husband. Traditional Amaa believe that an angry wife can remove and retie those stringed-beads secretly on her waist. This removal act is a death wish for the abusive husband. A battered wife, especially one with children, can threaten her abusive or unfaithful husband with removal of the stringed-beads in order to correct him. Realising the serious inclination of his wife to remove the string-beads, the husband will take initiatives to reconcile her with a gift (a goat or ewe) for sacrifice in her house-shrine for her threat is believed to be effective before the ancestors. This sacrifice is purposed for a plea (*eelam'mooda*) before those ancestors to annul her threatening words. This is an example of the traditional Amaa wives wielding ritual power behind the scenes. Furthermore, women's role in marriage arrangements has an effect on social structure. For instance, women are active behind scenes in negotiations and ceremonies. They can manipulate various aspects of both the bride and the bridegroom in creating new kinship units or causing changes in existing ones despite rigid customary laws of divorce.
9. (a) Zeusse, Evan M., Ritual Cosmos: The Sanctification of Life in African Religions, 1979, p.52.
(b) Oduyoye, Modupe, “Potent Speech,” in Traditional Religion in West Africa, ed. by E.A. Ade Adegbola, 1983.
10. A widower wears one bead as a brace to mourn his wife's physical absence. She, as a living-dead, continues life in the invisible mode in the midst of visible family as Diop would point that
“Those who are dead are never gone,”
Quoted in J.V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160)
11. Ritual traditions prohibit male participation in handling sacred elements in the house-shrine. This prohibition excepts the spirit-priest, who besides being a representative male figure, is the sacrosanct authority figure that can mediate and connect between the visible and the invisible.
12. This water must be drawn from a well, newly dug by the bridegroom's family youth group of kin and friends specifically for this rite. This well eventually becomes the property of the bride's mother, who later on, draws water from it for bathing the first grand-child. It is a form of

blessing rite, though traditional Amaa do not regard it so, that a grandmother bestows upon a grand-child on its first naming day. The name is not acknowledged without that bath. Here, the grandmother celebrates her motherhood for she has been extended through her daughter giving birth to that grand-child. Traditional Amaa tend to inquire of a married couple, “*ay ning’ay haa’naggaiyoonn?*”, that is, “hasn’t [so and so] cracked”, meaning, “hasn’t [so and so] given birth?” Such an inquiry shows a concern for traditional community building and, hence, continuity of that particular lineage. Furthermore, the traditional Amaa regard a new baby, before the naming rite, as a *living thing (keeh commoor)*. The *naming rite inaugurates it into life by its family that gives it being and meaning and participation in the ontological order* that Placide Tempels (*Bantu Philosophy*, 1959) refers to in that “The Bantu cannot be a lone being. It is not a good enough synonym ...[pp.68-69]” until it is integrated into its community in which the individual self is not separable from the inclusiveness of the relationships received and valued from both the living elders and the ancestors.

13. *aa’l’ng kai’loo*: one’s guardian spirit.

14. *eeloo caa’daahrr*: sour milk; a symbol for female maturity in giving birth, without which a marriage is not consummated. Here there is a symbolic link between marriage consummation and marriage gift distribution. When the marriage gift is distributed, a brown heifer (*bish’err*) is reserved with the bride’s mother for the purpose of naming the first child. If this heifer is not milking when that naming rite opportunes, the grandmother can substitute it with a young *red (brown)* female sheep (ewe) for sacrificial slaughter in place of the sour milk. Later on when that heifer gives birth, nobody (except the calf, of course) will use its milk until the grandmother has given a name to that grandchild. The *grandmother chooses a name and a naming aunt pronounces it*, a replacement for the first one, which is traditionally given as a nickname. This naming aunt names the subsequent children of that mature woman. The naming ritual process takes place in the hut (locale of mother’s house-shrine). The ritual elements present are water, grain, and home-brewed virgin beer besides the sacrificial ewe or the sour milk (from the heifer) which the grandmother brings in a large gourd for the child to ritually drink. The female ritual elders are there to celebrate the maturity of child’s mother. They will partake of the ritual sour milk. The spirit-priest does not partake of the sour milk; he is there to do the sacrificial slaughter (if sour milk is substituted otherwise his presence is not required) after the female ritual elders have concluded invocations to ancestors and ancestresses.

As such, an Amaa traditional mother (my late mother used to) may lovingly tease, advise, or even warn sternly if she either discovers or suspects misbehaviour of her daughter. Misbehaviour could be disrespect for elders who may spell curses or breaking taboos in any form of premarital sexual relations. She would say to her daughter, without any explanation, in the kitchen area, the locale of the house-shrine, in the *silence of late night or early morning*, “*ee dayh kang eeloo caa’daahrro woelow*” which translates to, “*you will deprive me of the sour milk!*” That is to say, “*you offend ancestors. You may not mature in children that I will name!*” Or she (mother) may state it this way, “*ee ka bisherr nga’daa shia!*” Which translates, “*What will you do with the heifer?*” Or “*will it be worthy for me to keep the heifer?* If the daughter is innocent, she (daughter) will affirm it by, “*aiyyee woeh*”, meaning, “*oh, yes you will*”. Otherwise, she will keep silent, an expression of confession. She (daughter) cannot possibly lie for the invisible ones are there. In this situation of guilt for breach, the mother will not pursue further for she expects her daughter voluntary explanation for a cleansing rite which will also be performed in the house-shrine in the presence of her father, who will perform the sacrificial slaughter following the mother’s ritual invocation.

15. The colour *red* is of persistent ritual significance. In contrast a new born, just a *living thing*, is merely a symbol of marriage consummation of its parents, but it is not yet a person in its community until it is given a name that opens its way to experience and participation in active

relationships. After naming, the child becomes a participant in the reality of the *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God) manifest in the community. So the name and participation define its being and meaning. It is with the colour *red* in its original unity of the immediate experience; the colour *red* exists as something crude in mode and, thus, without normal categories of the perceived. There is merely *redness* which may not be defined as an object since it is not present for a subject. Once an immediate experience develops into subjective categories the colour *red* is present as subject and object. In Amaa ritual, for instance, there are *red* sacrificial victims, i.e. *red* steer, *red* rooster, *red* ram, *red* ochre mixed with sesame oil, etc. in building new units (i.e. marriages) or maintaining the existing ones in social relationships and structures among the visible and between the visible and the invisible. As the colour of blood, it represents the traditionalist with potentials of life and danger, a condition which Victor W. Turner refers to as ambiguity of life.

Victor W. Turner (1989), for instance, in his study of "Color Classification in Ndembu Ritual: A Problem in Primitive Classification," chap. 3 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, discusses the colours *red*, *white*, and *black* that signify matrix relevant to continuity and ambiguity of life. These three colours, asserts Turner, signify individuals' carnal processes which (as "...crucial experience are the [source] of all classifications" (1989:90) refer to the individual human's reproductive processes and attached rituals determine religious and social structures.

16. *ibid.*

17. This is a life crisis in process towards status change from a maiden to married woman. The time spent in the process is "liminal [V.Turner 1989]" time. It is an immediate experience ("experience near" and "experience distant", "inside" versus "outside", or "first person" versus "third person" theory [see **chapter 1 footnote 119(c)**]) that escapes the relational sphere while moulding the inner being of the bride (the initiate). Something constructive is taking hold in the bride. This something can only be inferred. This something is an immediate experience of the bride, i.e. that something is in the matrimonial ritual process makes her quarrelsome, a condition that forces the mother to send her away during that ritual period. Although we cannot have the same experience as the bride as the object, yet, by observation we can infer from her surface attitude the impact of that immediate experience upon her; it can be concluded as her starting point of knowing from this immediate experience coupled with instruction from the mother, elderly women, and female ritual elders. She will acknowledge all this to herself in the new responsibilities that lie ahead. This is when she, upon realisation, confirms her potential as a mother and a contributor to her new lineage, the relational aspects of the experience. This experience of the process of "transitions from one social category to another", Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, 1960, p.116, is what H. Kohut would call "experience near" in Geertz, Local Knowledge, 1983, p.57.

This is what a traditional father admonishes a daughter upon marriage as his last words in her "liminal" process, "*haa beshie shinnar*", meaning, "don not return home". It was the repeated admonishment my late father voiced to my ten (10) sisters, all married in the traditional Amaa way. This advice, or warning, is to make the departing daughter aware of the virtue of good behaviour that will knit her new lineage. In traditional Amaa terms, failure would mean shame upon the ancestors and *Abbra'dee*, **who operates inside and outside of the relational fields.**

18. The contribution to and distribution of the marriage gift is another coherent example of the group-tied nature of traditional Amaa society. Distribution of the marriage gift includes the mother of the bride, eldest brother, step-mother, step-brother, senior paternal uncle, second senior brother, other uterine and step-brothers, other step-mothers, father, sister of the bride, uncle of the bride, paternal uncles, maternal grandmother, paternal grandparents, maternal uncles, paternal senior aunt, maternal senior aunt, and if more gifts are received, more relatives will be included in the distribution (sharing).

19. The right shoulder, in ritual terms (*affiada*), stand for paternity. It, therefore, refers to the ancestors of the clan (see chapters 2,4,7) and of that house. The gentle tap on the new bride's right shoulder is first a prayer gesture wishing her male offspring, a contribution to her new lineage continuity. Wanting male children does not suppose abhorrence for females ones, but it is clear that traditional Amaa society is patrilineal. Having male children for both parents, besides lineage continuity, means enhancement of collective power and influence in economic and social activities associated with them. Maleness, for traditional Amaa, is the explicit extension of the ancestors, already present in artefacts symbols such as *toewoe*, which are activated at rituals. As mentioned above, Amaa traditional women do have an implicit role to play, but not till marriage for traditional Amaa regard maidens as temporary members of paternal lineage.
20. Since paternal lineage is temporary for maidens, a traditional Amaa father will advise his newly wed daughter not to return home, "*haa beshie shinnar*" further means that her permanent place is with her new lineage. In her motherhood of those yet to come, she becomes an extension vehicle of continuity for the new lineage. It is here that mothers, elderly women, female ritual elders, particularly instructors of traditions, teach female children on the virtues of virginity. In a nutshell, maidens are warned of the dangers of premarital sexual relations which are taboos that could cause barrenness, premature death, or death of offspring. As such, then, individual breaches are liabilities for the whole. Hence, maidens and young men of loose behaviour are rejected in marriage because of the consequences that might follow from the spiritual realm. Besides, relatives are likely to withhold a contribution towards or reject receiving portions of marriage gift that would become a moral liability on them before ancestors. Contributing to or receiving a piece of marriage gift involves spiritual significant (ancestors, ancestresses, and the living-dead parent[s]) who are involved when contributing or receiving a portion of a marriage gift. So a tap on the right shoulder is more than just a tap.
21. A father's admonitory advice, "*haa beshie shinnar*," meaning, "do not return home", at the main compound altar, to his newly married daughter in the ritual process en route from her mother's house-shrine, after the lineage transfer to exit into the matrimonial one, also presupposes good behaviour within that group context.

The contrary to that advice is also to be regarded as in bad behaviour. Unreasonable quarrelsome behaviour that invites disharmony such as disrespect for her in-laws without explanation to those with authority over her like the parents in-law, her husband's uncles or aunts. These are the members of the family she could complain to. Her complaint normally draws in the source of her problem, i.e. taking the husband to a court of family elders (sometimes including her paternal uncles). to whom the ancestors are believed to adhere. Discipline for both, no matter who is right or wrong, aims at reconciliation. This is one example of the customary instruments of social control. Such customary instruments are constructive for social and moral life of traditional Amaa group life.

22. *ibid.*
23. Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, 1961, p.26.
24. The naming rite is in the concept of incorporation which can be interpreted as communal acceptance to shape the inherently social being of the new member, according to traditional Amaa, the new member, as a living thing, in its being named, is at the point of receiving and being received, of acting and acted upon (or subject and object). This traditional naming rite hallows the participation that ensues; that is the bearer of the name is open to experience and participation in the community and lineage (also see Placide Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, 1959, p.70. In other words,

“The reason why the community is of the first importance for black Africans is the [traditional] African awareness of the community as the principle mediator of the individual’s initiation to life. Not only can the human individual not do without the community of human beings, but his or her existence itself would be devoid of all sense and meaning outside of the community ... one lives by and for the community”.

Francois Kabasele, “Christ as Ancestor and Elder Brother,” in Faces of Jesus in Africa, ed. by Robert J. Schreiter, 1992, p.123.

Hence, the colour *red* (V.W. Turner 1989), in its natural state as crude and insignificant until it is acted upon and given meaning and role in ritual symbolism, is similar to new born person who remains ambiguous and insignificant until the performance of the naming rite, which is the point of encounter with (when presented to ancestors) the substance of meaning of participation in the Spirit who embraces the “Unbroken Circle [J.V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67]”.

Also see Menkiti, I., “Person and Community in African Traditional Thought,” in African Philosophy, ed. by Richard Davis., 1984.

25. Negligence and taboo breaches, for traditionalists, lead to trouble from ancestors and other living-dead members of a traditional family. Negligence ranges from forgetting to acknowledge and offer libation of sacrifice at times or using dedicated beasts or fowls without reference to or permission from a ritual elder or spirit-priest; whereas breaches range from mishandling artefacts to individual misdemeanour or group permissiveness. And to remedy through ritual enactment involving a spirit-priest, usually possessed at rituals, is a common practice among traditional Amaa. Such a corrective ritual becomes an event, an act, and a renewed commitment.

26. New situations arise from modernisation process, though traditionalists are adamant in living their ancestral ways but with unconditional tolerance that expresses the compassionate ecumenism present in Amaa religion. That is, traditional African Religion is unconditionally tolerant of pluralism (Sanneh, 1983, 1986). This is why multi-religious families are common in Amaaland, particularly in the case of traditional parents who, due to the ecumenical nature of traditional religion, do not become disappointed with individual members’ choice of religious ideology. It is, thus, a matter of individuals’ discernment to change traditional allegiance to new missionary religious ideologies of Christianity, Islam, or synthesise the three ways into a fourth way that is called “Aladura” (praying) churches in Nigeria and commonly known as indigenous (independent) churches in other parts of Africa (see K. Appiah-Kubi, “Indigenous African Christian Churches: Signs of Authenticity,” in African Theology en Route, 1979, p.117; U. Etuk, “New Trends in Traditional Divination,” in Africa Journal, 13, 2 (1984, pp.83-91; J. Peel, Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba, 1968).

On the point of African heritage, Ali Mazrui discusses, in his The Africans: A Triple Heritage, the interrelation and tensions between the Christian, Islamic, and traditional aspects in Africa. Mazrui disregards the fourth heritage present in indigenous churches which appreciate traditional African values (i.e. ancestors, dreams, divination, etc.) in combination with Christian traditions. (i.e. Christ as an Ancestor).

27. (a) Barrington-Ward, Simon, “The Centre Cannot Hold: Spirit Possession as Redefinition,” in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et. al., 1978.

(b) Horton, Robin, “African Conversion,” in Africa 41, 2 (April 1971), pp.85-108.

28. In the house-shrine (feminine space): The marriage process from beginning to end involves simultaneous interplay of ritual symbols, full of intention in ritual objects and progressively working themselves out toward that goal which fulfils every normal traditional Amaa male and his lineage.

The goal is the bride, as Zeusse (1979) puts it,

“the girl herself who is the co-ordinated meaning of all the Symbols. By this point hundreds of different ... ritual symbols have come together to generate this bride.

She[,] therefore[,] is a complex, piece symbol as well as a very real human being.”

Zeusse, Evans M., Ritual Cosmos: The Ritual Sanctification of Life in African Religions, 1979, p.140. The point of emphasis here is the bride, the converging point to which all customary ritual processes are directed. Also Victor Turner, Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual, 1975, pp.162-164. The intention for marriage, in time consuming and complex ritual process, that a traditional Amaa normal male wants to achieve is the contribution (*participation*) to his heritage continuity (group context), a guarantee for *eterniy now*, his own immortality (G. Lienhardt, Divinity and Experience, 1961, p.61). As involved in every step of the marriage process, the intention is to create, shape, and maintain the social structures of Taylor’s “Unbroken Circle” (J.V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67. In this way, the traditional Amaa guarantee eternity now, that is perpetual continuity.

29. Leslie, Charles, Anthropology of Folk Religion, 1960,,p.24.

30. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956, pp.29-120.

31. Lienhardt, G. Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, 1961, p.130.

32. Spencer, H.,

“Using the phrase ancestor-worship in its broadest sense as comprehending all worship of the dead, be they of the same blood or not, we reach the conclusion that ancestor-worship is the root of every religion.”

Principles of Sociology, Vol. I, quoted in E.B. Idowu, African Traditional Religion, 1973, p.179. Here Idowu informs us that Spencer did not initiate a new theory, but

“... restated the theory with which, generally, the name of the Greek Euhemeros, who lived between 320 and 260 BC, is connected”.

Whether this theory is valid or invalid, as Idowu argues, the question is how it has categorically been applied by some scholars just for the sake of validating the theory of ancestor-worship, which is contrary to the traditional African veneration for their ancestors as means to reach the *Absolute* (Spirit: God). Perhaps, their pious behaviour towards the ancestors was misconstrued as worship rather than veneration for the African traditional approach to their living elders- (whose elderhood blend with ancestorhood [Faris, 1985.,p305]- is not different in terms of reverence from that offered to the living-dead ancestors. In a ritual of affliction, one may hear an Amaa elder addressing his-living father and other ancestors as if they were face to face in physical presence. Such an elder, like my late father used to, may even rebuke his ancestors for negligence for allowing an affliction to happen. Such an address (invocation) is normally followed by a ritual sacrifice that is ultimately destined for the *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God), since ancestors are mediums and points of contact between the visible and the invisible and the spirit-priest is a co-ordinating factor. Hence, in traditional Amaa terms, the belief in and worship of the *Absolute* (*Abbra'dee*) has been demonstrated in my father’s terminal rite performance. In this way, we could state that the venerable approach of the living traditional to our ancestors does not constitute worship. Ancestors, as an extension to living family communities, are facilitators and guardians.

33. *ibid.*

34. Okamba, Louise (Associated Press, Brazzaville, Congo) “Infertility: The Childless Outcast of Africa”, Science and Reproduction, in Toronto’s Globe and Mail, Saturday, August 12, 1995, p. D8.

35. Breach of murder blood avoidance taboo (*weelee geedee*) endangers others in community besides the immediate families of the victim and the murderer. Punishment upon the culprit is hefty.

Ritual elders decide the volume this hefty punishment. It consists of beasts and fowls, depending on the degree of breach. The spirit-priest performs the purification rite specified by the ritual elders.

36. Turner, V.W., "Color Classification in Ndembu Ritual: A Problem in Primitive Classification," chap. 3 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.
37. *ibid.*
38. *weelee geedee*: blood taboo. According to traditional Amaa, it prohibits interaction between two family lineages of the victim and the murderer. This prohibition remains in force as long as the murder is remembered. It can be reactivated by punitive reactions of the living-dead members.
39. We here briefly mention the sexism of male-dominated Amaa society. Such sexism is prevalent in the prominent Amaa mythology of *Nyema*, mother of spirit-son, who eventually subordinated her role to his even though she, too, had supernatural powers. This mythology goes on to tell that *Nyema*, like her spirit-son, married a man. Realising her spiritual powers, the human husband resented her. He was oppressive. Despite her supernatural powers, she conceded to sharing ritual powers with him. Traditional Amaa say that he never came to terms with sharing power with women; he eventually restricted her to the domestic sphere. Here, the traditional Amaa woman is not only subordinated in this visible life, but she also becomes insignificant when she *retransforms* (dies) into the invisible other. For instance, spirit-wife is utterly subsumed into male sphere. She is unlike the spirit-husband who maintains his social self through *levirate marriage* to a living woman. This tells of the beginning of the house-shrine and female ritual elders after *Nyema*. This is, perhaps, where subordination of Amaa women originates. Although reaction is lacking from traditional women, modern Amaa women and others on the continent decry sexism in the African male dominated societies, both traditional and modern. Such an example of the levirate marriage comes from my late traditional father, who, at the same time, was a spirit-priest. His youngest brother, named Soola, was married, with two sons, when he served in the British Army as a soldier and died in the 2nd. World War in North Africa. His widow, in the levirate tradition, was married to his cousin (my uncle) who already had a wife and three children. Late Soola's wife also died after giving birth to a girl from that levirate marriage. As the levirate tradition dictates, she is not the daughter of the biological father, but late Soola's daughter and is known as such. In other words, in modern terms, *Soola* is the uncle but, according the levirate tradition, *Soola* is the father. Whereas the biological father becomes an uncle. Here, fatherhood does not necessarily constitute an immediate biological connection. What counts here most is the lineage perpetuate (*eternity now*) and community maintenance, according to traditional Amaa kinship system. As a precaution and concern for his late brother *Soola*, now without a living wife, my father married a young woman for *Soola*. Although my father was practically the husband, he was a brother in-law and his living-dead brother *Soola* was the husband. *Soola's* second wife bore two boys and two girls, who, according to this levirate tradition, are my cousins and known as such, instead of my blood brothers and sisters in modern terms.

Modern African women, especially those of feminist orientation, would surely decry this structure and function of the Amaa traditional society in which femaleness is subsumed by maleness. For instance, Oduyoye, a Ghanaian feminist theologian, argues for equality of genders on the African scene. She rightly asserts that traditional myths, both Christian [especially the Old Testament) and African traditional, are all vitiated by sexism. She points out that God transcends gender categories and thus, rejects subordination of women to men. Instead, Oduyoye calls for an anthropological approach that validates gender equality. According to Oduyoye, the Gospel reveals to Africans that "The image stamped on us is God's not the male's." (January-June 1982, p.53). M.A. Oduyoye:

(a) "Feminism: A Pre-Condition for a Christian Anthropology" in Africa Theological Journal 11:3 (1982), pp.193-203.

(b) "In the Image of God: A Theological Reflection from an African Perspective," in Bulletin of African Theology 4:7 (January-June 1982), pp.41-54.

40. Traditional Amaa customs allow marriage of a widower to a sister-in-law provided that his late wife's family elders consult him first. Such a marriage is not intended as a replacement, but out of consideration for the welfare of the widower's young children if the widower is not polygamous. Also, the sister must consent acceptance to this marriage.

41. *Waa'dia wadaa accoorieu ko'renk maa'iyedee*: the old people know the traditions and are able to trace a latent blood taboo that, traditional Amaa believe, can impede human reproductivity or cause infant mortality if breached with or without knowledge. If elders and ritual elders fail in the search to trace causes for such problems, then, they resort to divining the spirit-priest for explanatory clues. This mode of search in problem solving extends to other spheres of Amaa traditional life. Traditional Amaa, like other traditional people on the continent, are basically interested in deliverance from forces that impede fertility of marriage and fecundity of the earth. Here are some references on divination may useful :

(a) Bascom, William, Ifa Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa, 1969.

Bascom undertakes a detailed study on divination and the role of the priest diviner, whom the Amaa call *Kuunee*, the spirit-priest.

(b) John Beattie and John Middleton, editors, Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa, 1969, pp.50-57,225.

(c) Turner, V.W., Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual, 1975.

42. *ibid.*

43. *ibid.*

44. Spirit-priest is a generalist who can handle all areas of problems in traditional Amaa life; whereas ritual elders are limited priestly functionaries in specific individual specialities and are given titles accordingly.

There are herbalists who know various uses of plants in healing. The title of this category of ritual elders is *tommow irran*, meaning, masters of plants (or the ones sent to or called upon by the free spirits of plants and endowed with the knowledge of and uses of plants for healing.

There are diagnosticians who, through divination, can inform the sick of causes and recommended ritual remedies; ritual elders of this category are familiar with social and familial intricacies in their neighbourhoods. They can sometimes warn beforehand of a problem related to individuals or families. People individually consult them. They are social catalysts, interventionists, and occasional diviners and are known as *ggheshinno waa*, familiars to spirits, for they have contact with spiritual peripheries (less important spirits, yet helpful). Here social ties and network are dense and involve relevant persons of potential moral support to enhance the social work of this category of ritual elders. In other words, capable individuals participate with this category in communal work.

There are rain-callers (*not* rain makers) whom Amaa regard as priests for their specific role in intercessional rites for rain. They they invoke and offer sacrifices to the *numinous* for rain. Respective communities supply offerings that range from libation, fowls, goats, and sometimes a bull or two when drought prolongs. In situations of drought prologation, this category of ritual elders call upon *cooshay* age-graders (youth) for enactment of *laylay asheeda* (sacred raid) rite across Amaaland. Only drought invokes this extraordinary ritual act.

The *Sheilo'wa* clan normally initiate the annual sacred raid (*laylay asheeda*) and its performance is controlled by the shrine compound of *Sheila*. The annual raid, as a rite preceding farming activities, is concerned with fecundity of the earth; whereas the abnormal raid [upon prolongation of drought] is a call for rain ritual. The public is informed of the day of the raid. The raiders are ritually authorised to lay hands on goats and sheep outside their owners' compound. Raiders may stumble twice on one person's herd outside his compound and, here only one beast is permitted for the raiders. A rope is tied on the neck of one beast in the herd so that another raiding group does not raid. All raided beasts are destined for sacrifice in public ritual call for rain. Communities across Amaaland perform this rite on the same day of the raid. Every bit of sacrificial meat must be consumed on the same day. Bones must be buried also on the same day.

There are the pest controllers (*weeloo irran*). Pest controllers, although other pests fall under their jurisdiction, are named after *locusts* (*weille*) for locusts inflict massive destruction upon vegetation and crops. *Irran* means master or owner of. They are many other ritual specialists (ritual elders). but these few examples should suffice in clarifying the priestly categories which we may sum up as (a) Spirit-priests (*kuunee, kuweir*); (b) ritual elder specialists (*keehyoo irran*); (c) elders: family male heads are family priests; some (if possessed) are spirit-mediums, but within their respective family circles; whereas some (as heads) invoke and offer sacrifices. There are male family heads who are restricted to temporal concerns, since their fathers are still alive to invoke and sacrifice to ancestors.

45. Achebe, Chinua, Arrow of God, 1969, p.220.
46. Taylor, J.V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.
47. (a) See N45.
(b) Paul, Radin, Primitive Man as Philosopher, 1957.
(c) Oduyoye, Modupe, "The Medicine-Man, the Magician and the Wise Man," in Traditional Religion in West Africa, ed. by E. Adegbola, 1983.
48. *ibid.*
49. See N46.
50. Tylor, E.B., Primitive Cultures, Vol. I, p.426, quoted in E.B. Idowu, African Traditional Religion, 1973, pp.124-129.
51. *ibid.*
52. Eliade, Mircea, The Sacred and the Profane, 1959.
53. Otto, Rudolf, The Idea of the Holy, 1931.
54. Faris, J. C, Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, p.305.
55. Tempels, Palcide, Bantu Philosophy, 1959.
56. Spiritual forces may enhance or impede African traditional social structure and function. This is where the African traditionalist concern arises for deliverance from all that destroys and impedes marriage fertility and the fecundity of the earth. The African traditional religion, therefore, imposes on the adherents daily conduct, attitudes, feelings (*bushee co'shille*: cool hearts), and observance of customs.

57. Spencer, H., Principles of Sociology, London, 1885, Vol. I, p.411, quoted in E.B. Idowu, African Traditional Religion, 1973, pp. 178-179.
58. See N50.
59. *ibid.*
60. Turner, E., et al., Experiencing Ritual: A New Interpretation of African healing, 1992, pp.170-177.
61. (a) Junod, Henri A., The Life of a South African Tribe: The Social Life, Vol. I, second edition, 1927.
 (b) Van Gennep, The Rite of Passage, translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee, 1960.
62. Diop, B.A. in John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160, quoted by Janheinz Jan, Muntu, p.108, from Hostice Noires, ed. by Senghor, Paris, 1949, p.144.
63. Faris, J.C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, p.305.
64. The Traditional Amaa permit a grandiose home-coming rite (*waallow nyonda*) only to the aged of both genders and the spirit-priest at *retransformation* (*loowoe wounda*: death). Preceding burial rites, which initiate the departed into the *numinous* side of the community, other new living-dead are expected home. This is why, on the day after burial, a family serves a proper supper and places it overnight on the mother's or wife's *orre'goal* (hut entrance) for the newly departed member (see fig. 3).
65. My late father was a spirit-priest. His half *toewoe*, preceding his *home-coming rite* (*waallow nyonda*), was transferred to its permanent abode in the communal shrine in 1975. The council of elders and ritual elders decided on that final location for the remaining half of the *toewoe*. This symbol, we add, like other symbols, is interpreted according to its purpose, coupled with ritual enactment to manifest the meaning to the traditionalist. That is, ancestral active presence (also see Faris 1989) that shapes belief, values and thought of the traditional Amaa. Here, we may quote Goran Therborn's (1980) definition of what terms may be applicable to the traditional Amaa religion. Therborn points to "that aspect of the human condition under which human beings live their lives as conscious actors in a world that makes sense to them to varying degrees" (Therborn 1980, p.2). So symbols are the means through which traditional Amaa consciously conduct their life. An example in this context is the half of the sacred stick (*toewoe*) which embodies history as well as connectedness to ancestors. It is the knowledge of ancestral legacies and the derivative customs that point to the sacrality of this remaining half stick. Its presence confirms the actively involved presence of the ancestors. It is used in communal ritual invocations, dedications, and oaths in disputes.
66. *ibid.*
67. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956, p.126.
68. Human spirit rejects: traditional Amaa believe that spirit rejects are those who have wrongly conducted their life. Ancestors reject such spirits. The rejects are doomed to become wandering outcasts. They become demons "*ggheshinn coosoodough coola tayei laadee*", meaning, "indefinite roaming villains whose evil influence obeys the command of sorcerers among the living". According to traditional Amaa, therefore, the devil is none other than the spirit of the humankind who gravely misconducted themselves in physical life. Furthermore, traditional Amaa believe, this category of the evil living-dead, besides being the subject or sorcerous manipulation, can violently possess individuals in madness. They can also silently possess and

work through unaware individuals, who may stare at or say things that fulfil destructive ends. Mere presence of such silently possessed individuals may spell harm to persons or domestic animals. The Amaa describe this category of persons as “*cooroo saal’saal*”, meaning, stupid but ominously bound, and “*cooroo teggilay*”, meaning, dangerously *red sorcerer*. Here, the colour *red (teggilay)* comes in to play and means extremely dangerous. Once people apply the adjective (*teggilay*) to an unknowing sorcerer, the descriptive term determines people’s experience of that sorcerer’s word, *stare*, or mere *presence* which does not miss its mark. People accordingly confirm or negate the adjective. It is at this point of awareness that people consciously begin to wear protective amulets. Since ancestors remain supervisors of affairs and continue their communal presence, they are invoked for protection. Family heads, therefore, invoke ancestors at bedtime for protection whenever a sorcerous person’s presence is heard of in the neighbourhood. This, then, explains that ancestors continue to be superior heads and parts of the families and communities to which they belonged while in physical form. Hence, in death family life extends into the invisible realm, but never ends (Taylor 1963, p.67).

People start avoiding such possessed persons and complaints mount in public opinion which eventually lead to formal involvement of ritual elders and spirit-priests, who, through divination and ritual acts, root out the silent destroyer from his shell. Endowed with ancestral authority, spirit-priests are capable of remedies, discipline, and control. The evil possessed person is regarded as doomed for some wickedness that may belong to someone else in the lineage in the present or the past or the person him/herself is wicked. So this is one of punishment now and if not corrected by the lineage concerned may follow the possessed to eternal punishment immediately after *retransformation*, on one hand. On the other hand, this evil, if not remedied ritually, can continue also on the visible level among the lineage concerned. Hence, rewards and punishments take place now and not some future time.

In a brief comparative manner, we may add that the traditional Amaa do not conceive the idea of hell as punishment, which is contrary to those of Amaa Christians and Muslims, whose new belief systems have an idea of hell to be fulfilled at some future time. However, Amaa traditional religious concepts do not embrace the idea of an end of time to be preceded by eternity; the only possible equivalent to hell, as demonstrated above, is deprivation for the living-dead villain of communal existence among the living-dead. Nonetheless, it is not a hell where the living-dead villain languish, for they still move and act freely destructive manner.

69. Ritual dance is effective to traditional Amaa for ritual purpose and meaning, which are sung and gestured in movements and counter movement. Such symbolic active gestures alert people to shortcomings and some point towards abundance and happiness from within the life of a village, community, or society at large. Traditional people understand these symbolic gestures. The mask dance is a good example that demonstrates these points to the participant audience.
70. For traditional Amaa, adultery is not a ground for divorce for marriage, at the beginning, is not based on romantic love between a man and a woman. It is between two family communities. But there are some ritual conditions that permit divorce such as discovery of blood relationship or blood taboo between the married couple.
71. Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.
72. The masked mutli-vision (multi-vocal) spirit sees the visible in a wider field. The Amaa call the annual masked dance *Doossoolle*, meaning, no way out. There are seven drums for this annual masked dance. They are kept in a pit in the communal shrine of *Ttwana* sub-nation (-tribe), the largest multi-lineage Amaa sub-nation. These drums are tightly guarded against what Amaa call *ttoo’woe’da* (snatching.) Whoever attempts to snatch one will be beaten severely (in the past, he would be speared on the spot); if a snatcher succeeds to escape with one drum and reaches his

clan's spirit-priest's dwelling, he has succeeds and the rest of the six drums, in a ritual manner, will be delivered to the new custodian sub-nation. Whether a snatcher succeeds or beaten, sometimes with permanent injuries, nevertheless, he makes his marks of courage and prowess upon whom the whole Amaa nation can depend when need arises for leadership, i.e. defence.

73. See N62.

74. See N62.

75. Sometimes a child may challenge the parents on the importance of sacred objects in ignoring their warnings not to touch them, for these objects are dangerous. This an example of the traditional fear of the sacred.

76. See N71.

77. James, Wendy (1988), for instance, reports on mythological stories of the Uduk people as influenced by the Shiluk traditions of ancestor *Nyikang*, which *iterates the idea of hereafter; that is, the idea of he spirit world as active participants in the same domain as the living*. James writes,

“the tales told of Leina are that he could seize an animal and transform it into a person (*reminiscent of the Shiluk traditions about their [ancestor] Nyikang*). For example, I have heard that Dali, whom I understood to be Leina's sister's son, and a leader of the cult today, was originally a crocodile. Leina seized him and now he is a human being ... These tales reinforce the *idea of Leina as a living presence [all italics mine]* ... he is no more dead” (James 1988, pp.186-87).

According to Uduk people, as James reports, Leina is an ancestral spirit, whose progeny among the Uduk are believed to b partly human and partly spirit (*arum*) after the *retransformed* father Leina. Hence, with a due reference to Achebe's (1969, p.220) *Ezeulu*, who is partly human and partly spirit, Leina's nephew Dali, “a leader of the cult” is partly man and partly *arum* and so the spiritual work is performed by sides. As such, then, *Dali* is a spirit-priest, an adherent and representative of his ancestors since “... *arum beyond death ... is a permanent presence [italics mine]*”(James 1988, p.186) *which means life beyond the grave is sensible only in ancestors*. Here, we reiterate Faris', “This causality is significant to kinship ideology, and ... that deceased elders are still active , ...”(Faris 1989, p.305), Diop, “Those who are dead are never gone” (in Taylor, 1963, p.160), and also Taylor, “The Unbroken Circle” (Taylor 1963. p.67). That, then, involves total ancestral community in the invisible realm, which is ultimately engulfed by *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God), who is the Permanent Presence and other spirits are diffused and empowered forms of Him. This Permanent Presence, for traditional Amaa, is *Leeh*. Amaa believe *Leeh* is the conclusive source for both positive and negative modes which are also delineated in James (1988) reference to *Leina's* spirit as the “permanent presence” among the Uduk people to clarify her earlier exposition, stating that “They [Uduk] still draw on the forest world to inform their representation of humanity and the moral life. Idioms of speech and symbol take their cue from the life of the forest.” (James 1988, p.28).

James (1988) follows the same discourse pattern in liminality, symbolism, and the defining matrix of opposite entities as Mary Douglas (1976) on *Lele of Kasai*, Victor Turner (1989) on *Ndembu ritual process*, Edith Turner (1994) on her first hand liminal experience as a participant observer in an Ndembu ritual process of healing and seeing a visible spirit form, Diop's “Those who are dead are never gone” (in J. Taylor, 1963, p160), and J. Beattie with J. Middleton (eds.), *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa* (1969).

So these pieces of discourse all converge on active involvement of the invisible with the visible, but none reflects on the idea of *Eternity Now* prevalent in the African Traditional Religion, the idea that traditional Amaa, like similar Africans, clearly live. That is, according to the belief of the Amaa, existence is perpetual and randomly changes only its modes and forms from invisible to visible and vice versa but without repetition. This, to reiterate, is different from the Christian and Islamic idea of eternity to come at some future time. Thus, *Leina's* spirit (James 1988), re-

infused, though without losing its identity as a living-dead ancestor, becomes part of the hierarchy of diffused and manifested spirits of the essential *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God), the Permanent Presence, that the Uduk people experience (see **chart**). In other words, ancestor Leina does not lose his identity with his progeny in spite of his return to the spiritual realm. As a living-dead ancestor, he becomes a medium through whom the Spirit (God) exposes Itself to the people. Therefore, when rituals and sacrifices take place, they are ultimately destined for *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God). Also see footnotes in **chapter 1 N4(b), N7(a), N33, and chapter 4 N77 on the role of myth in the African (not only the Amaa) traditionalist life.**

78. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., *Nuer Religion*, 1956, p.112.
79. There is a multitude of literature on African Traditional Religion that depicts the idea of the permanent presence. We have already mentioned a few (see **N77**).
80. See **N62**.
81. Edith Turner (1994) reports on a healing ritual she participated in among the Ndembu of Zambia. That participation was in pursuit of her earlier interest in ritual anthropology field experience with her late husband Victor Turner. She returned in 1985 to Ndembu tribal domain for that field experience. After re-acquainting with the local norms of ritual conduct, she patterned her mode of behaviour accordingly towards participation in a healing ritual process. The process started first in the forest with a search for specific herbal potent roots that effect healing before she and her traditional participant companions attended the female patient, waiting in a ritually prepared locale. That ritual process generated in her a unique subjective experience according to her paper entitled "A Visible Spirit Form in Zambia," in *Being Changed by Cross Cultural Encounters*, 1994, p.71.
82. After describing the landscape of "ritual drama", to borrow Victor Turner's term, similar to that of Eric de Rosny's experience in Duala (Cameroon) in "*Healers in the Night*" (de Rosny 1985), of healing that involved a *numinous* culprit believed to have been a living-dead relative who was a hunter (named Kashinakajin), the sacrificial victim, the ritual music and dance of the patient, and her visionary experience during the ritual, Edith Turner concludes from her experience that "The most parsimonious explanation would be that spirits actually exist"(E. Turner, 1994, P.87). Here, we suggest Edith Turner's observation accounts for Harry Sawyerr (1972, 1980) in essays respectively entitled, "The African Concept of Death," in a *New Look At Christianity in Africa* (Geneva: WSCF Books, 1972), and the "Living and Dead in Fellowship with God." in *African Christian Spirituality* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1980). Sawyerr reflects on the rites of passage for the departed to signify the idea of re-incarnation of ancestors in the living, a reflection iterated by J.V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision* (1963, to mean that death is linked to birth. Here, Sawyerr concurs with Diop's poetic verses that reads,
 "Those who are dead are never gone",
 in Taylor, *The Primal Vision*, 1963, p. 160. This poem informs of the active presence of the living-dead in unlimited various ways in and among the people and their environment. When a person *retransforms* (dies) into living-dead, he/she continues membership in his/her lineage that forms the invisible other of the visible lineage and its respective families (**relevant to commemorative-normative-narrative dimension in practice of traditions**), as Faris says,
 "The death commemorations [initiations] for the deceased to be accepted into his or her proper afterlife community."(Faris 1989, p.305).
 The living-dead (Mbiti's coinage), thus, continue active involvement with the living either in the constructive or destructive manner. This footnote, too, has briefly demonstrated that, for the traditional Amaa, a person lives once in a physical form and must try the utmost to live it abundantly within moral context that preserves the fecundity of the earth and the fertility of marriage. In this sense, traditional Amaa have no concept of rebirth into physical form (re-incarnation).

83. This is an observed sacrament and the only thanksgiving ritual that an Amaa elderly male head of a family performs before *retransformation* into that invisible mode from where he came as a free spirit to be born (*transformation*) into a physical human form and attached permanently to a lineage. The leading living-dead (ancestor), some of whom possess family or lineage members, vocalise their active presence and interaction with the living. According to Amaa, these leading ancestors intercede with the *Abbra'dee* for persons approaching that traumatic *retransformation*. The elderly (or elderhood) interact more with the surrounding realm of the ancestors and other living-dead relatives and intuitively know when to prepare, i.e. fulfil rituals, for *retransformation* (death).
84. Otto, Rudolf, The Idea of the Holy, 2nd. ed., 1950.
85. The modern inroads gradually break up the African traditionalist's immediacy and natural awareness of his environment. These modern inroads tend to shorten the traditional group memory. Whereas his closeness to the natural world, to the mystery seasons, of birth, growth and death maintains his ancestral connectedness and awareness of the spiritual realm.
86. Twigs are used in enumeration. But here, a twig (branch) symbolises the temporary membership status of a female child in her paternal lineage, since she, upon marriage, transfers her paternal lineage to that of the husband.
87. The locust controller (*weeloo irran*) is a ritual specialist (a ritual elder), whose ritual role is directed to pest control. He is so named for locusts, though edible, are most destructive to crops. It is in his ritual authority to mobilise people to use smoke for containment of periodical invasion of locust swarms. He is one of various ritual specialists (*keeyoo irran*), who, as Amaa luminaries and headed by spirit-priests, according to ancestral traditions, look for rules (customs) for social control and for governing interpersonal moral relations. This imply that they determine sanctions, derivatives of ancestral traditions that govern relations among individuals. Situations arise for determining customs that enhance harmony in various age-grades and the traditional Amaa society in general. Here, we appreciate that the ancestral spirits are intimately linked to the support of moral relations in face of failure to observe the customs as in taboos and ritual obligations which initiate ancestral punitive reaction against groups and individual culprits.
88. Colour symbolism is widely employed among traditional Amaa. A colour is a mere colour until a ritual meaning and purpose is attached to it. That is, in becoming a symbolic object, the colour *red* as an object depends in part on its being perceived by the traditional Amaa. Likewise, the existence of the perceiver is dependent upon the perception of objects. The colour *red*, perceived as a symbol in the context of what blood is to life, shows that "Human biology demands certain intense experiences of relationships" (Turner 1989:90). It speaks of the continuity and ambiguity of life. In the sacrificial situation it speaks of both life and death, i.e. exchange of the latter for the former that always involves spilling sacrificial blood, as loss for one and gain for another's life.
89. (a) "He [the *Spirit*] is both the one the many in hi diverse ... manifestations," Charles Leslie, Anthropology of Folk Religion, 1960, p.64.
 (b) The traditional Amaa in reference to "things of nature" allude to the same diffused manifestation of the essential *Spirit* (*Abbra'dee*: Creator Spirit: God). Likewise, the ancestral presence everywhere, as Diop (quoted in Taylor 1963:160) portrays in his poem, is within the realm of what Wendy James calls "*arum*" among the Uduk of eastern Sudan.
90. *ibid.*

91. Traditional African sense of time defines itself in ancestors (*past, present, and future*), the living progeny (present), and those yet to be born (future). Traditional Amaa experience time in the process of *transformation* (from invisible spirit to visible [*birth*]) and *retransformation* (return into invisibility [*death*]). The process of *transformation* and *retransformation* is physical and demands “intense experiences of relationship [V.Turner 1989:90]”. It is this definitive process that structurally and functionally interweaves and spins together the temporal and the spiritual into one. All things are, therefore, spiritual for the spiritual is the real and the physical is its metaphor. John V. Taylor further explores this in observing that “Africa knows what it means to be in the first ancestor, to live in the organism which is growing out of him, to be him, his blood still coursing the living veins, his soul infused in the body, his destiny and disposition working out itself through time” (Taylor, 1963:109). That is, the ancestral spirits are present simultaneously in the living progeny and in the local cosmology as prime movers, but living in the Creator Spirit (*Abbra'dee*). In identifying an interpretation relevant to the traditional Amaa sense of time, even though they do not bother with interpretation but live and experience it, we find here a sense of time as *CIRCULAR*, not linear.
92. For some references to traditional African belief that the living-dead participate in and with the living in the affairs of the living:
- (a) Kibongi, R.B., “Priesthood,” in *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, edited by Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth, 1969
- (b) Mitchel, R.C., *African Primal Religions*, 1977.
- (c) Brain, J.L., “Ancestors as Elders in Africa - further thoughts,” in *Africa* 41, 2 (1975), pp.122-133.
- (d) Kopytoff, Igor, “Ancestors as Elders in Africa,” in *Africa*, 43, 2 (1971), pp.129-142.
- (E) Evans-Pritchard, E.E., *Nuer Religion*, 1956.
- (f) Schreirter, R.J., (ed.), *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, 1992.
93. *Toonoo Waa'daa*: terminal (final) rite that an elderly male head of a traditional Amaa family must perform before being gathered to his fathers. *Ttoo'inne*: night; *waa'daa*: matter, conversation, story, or rite.
94. Ma Mpolo. Msamba, “Symbols and Stories in Pastoral Care and Counselling: The African Context,” in *Bulletin of African Theology* 6, 11 (January-June 1984), pp.39-56.
95. The belief in the presence of vigilant ancestors and other living-dead relatives (expecting observance of traditions and customs) govern interpersonal and moral relations in daily life. For instance, a younger person in greeting an older person or a spirit-priest must extend the right shoulder for a greeting touch. It would be frowned upon or even rebuked when a younger person extends a hand for greeting shake with an older person. The traditional Amaa believe that greeting involves the invisible presence of the living-dead who are everywhere. Therefore, age-graders must shake all hands in greeting, since the invisible presence is a party to the greeting. It is here in this example that the point of curse comes in, since an older person, traditional Amaa believe, can curse a junior person for offences such as offering of a hand shake for greeting instead of complete submission by offering the right shoulder (*taa'dimm'merr*) for males and left one (*kiss'sang*) for females. The invisible presence will uphold an uttered or silent displeasure Hence, the first question a traditional Amaa mother would ask her child when that child falls sick is, “*nyee nganggo faye'dayong nga?*”, meaning, “whom have you met toady?” With this investigative question, a mother suggests that the child inform of his/her own attitude when greeting an older person. It implies both uttered and silent cursing displeasure. It implies an enemy of one of the parents. It implies a misdemeanour of the child such as touching a forbidden sacred symbol. A host of possibilities that the mother would try to determine by elimination process. The parents themselves could be the culprits if they lapse in moral and ritual

responsibility in offering the daily libation and tit-bits of food, sacrificial rites, or even irresponsible behaviour in observing traditions and customs. Any of these reasons and more can cause a curse against a child, the traditional Amaa believe. Adults, too, could be cursed for individual misconduct that might also victimise others in family or community at large. As such, sanctification of daily life requires the traditional Amaa (and similar Africans) to integrate “the simple things of everyday life [E.M. Zeusse 1979:8]” in their attitude and practical living. Here, the *African traditions are empirical* rather than theoretical. In this way the sense and intentions are applied in daily living. It is here that intentions and living experience shape function and structure of Amaa traditional society.

96. Zeusse, Evans M., Ritual Cosmos: The Sanctification of Life in African Religions, 1979, pp.7-9.
97. *ibid.*
98. *ibid.*
99. *ibid.*
100. Taylor, J.V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.
101. *ibid.*, p.160.
102. See N96.
103. Sacrifices in terminal rite are of two dimensional orientation (a) horizontal and (b) vertical (see chart). They are, thus, in a dynamic mode. The vertical burnt offering with its ascending smoke is directed to *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God; **also see chart**). While the horizontal signifies the communal (eucharistic; **also see chart**) dimension and, hence, are central to African cultural particularity. They are provided to reconcile and bolster harmony between the visible and the invisible and are, thus, forward looking.
104. Tempels, Placide, Bantu Philosophy, 1959. Tempels reports that the leitmotif of Bantu culture is “life, force, to live strongly, or vital force” (p.30).
105. (a) Stevenson, R.C., “The Nyamang of the Nuba Mountains,” in Sudan Notes and Records, 23, 75 (1940), p.93.
(b) Diop, B., in Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1976, p160.
106. (a) Turner, V.W., “Liminality and Communitas,” chap. 3 in The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure, 1989.
(b) Turner, V.W., “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rite de Passage,” Chap. 4 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.
107. Oduyoye, Mercy Amba, “Feminism: A Pre-Condition for Christian Anthropology,” in Africa Theological Journal 11.39 (1982), pp.193-203.
108. (a) Glaze, Anita, Art and Death in a Senufo Village, 1981.
(b) Stevenson, R.C., “The Nyamang of the Nuba Mountains,” in Sudan Notes and Records, 23, 75, (1940), p.93.
109. Kronenberg, A., “Some Notes on the Religion of the Nyimang,” in Kush 7, 197, (1957), pp.198-210.
110. A widower wears one bead as a brace to mourn his wife’s physical absence. She, as a living-dead, continues life in the invisible mode in the midst of the visible family as Diop points out
“Those who are dead are never gone:
Quoted in J.V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160.

111. Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, 1961, p.130.
112. (a) Zeusse, Evans M., Ritual Cosmos: The Sanctification of Life in African Religions, 1979.
(b) See N95.
113. The *connectedness* of the “Unbroken Circle” (Taylor 1963:67) organisationally and functionally binds the visible and the invisible into a cosmic unit. For the traditional African, therefore,
 “... the cosmos ... is a world charged with meanings and laden with messages, a world which ‘speaks’”
 to quote D. Zahn, The Religion, Spirituality and Thought of Traditional Africa, 1979:81. In the same line of thought are (a) J.C. Faris, Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989:300-305, (b) W. James, The Listening Ebony, Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power Among the Uduk of Sudan, 1988, (c) M. Douglas, “The Lele of Kasai” in African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples, 1976, (d) Diop, B.A., quoted in John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160, quoted by Janheinz Jan, Muntu, p.108, from Hostice Noires, ed. Senghor, Paris 1949, p.144.

CHAPTER SIX

KORR'DEEH AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

1. KORR'DEEH

Korr'deeh, pretend kinship, is a social custom that carries ritual obligations. It is underpinned by spiritual sensitivity and values that must be observed. It begins with two persons of opposite genders and develops into a wide network that involves kinsfolk. It involves two interconnected groups of different ages as [a] individuals on a private level and [b] middle-aged grade male groups in Amaa social organization.

[a] PRIVATE KORR'DEEH

Private *korr'deeh* carries ritual aspects and responsibilities between two unrelated male and female individuals. The norm dictates that they be junior and senior age-graders; a mid-teenager can match with a counterpart over twenty years, who initiates the beginning of this seemingly social contract. It is an absolute taboo for them to indulge in any form of sexual contact, in spite of their intimate relationship. Marriage between them is prohibited automatically once they declare *korr'deeh*. In a way, *korr'deeh* is a form of kinship, though not by blood, to the point that extends to interplay with the ritual sanctions relevant to the blood relatives of both. Perhaps, the nature of *korr'deeh* is relevant to adoption, guardianship, or mentorship that serves both persons in self discipline.

Korr'deeh is partially relevant to the naming relative (*dhirr*). In both situations, a partner shares and seeks advice from the other. A *korr'deeh* may take steps to intervene in his/her partner's family affairs without rejection of the norm that this relationship expects; though young, traditional Amaa society makes the exception to allow him/her ritual authority, and within that limited sphere to draw in community elders' involvement in the problem of his/her partner.

Korr'deeh kinship is permanent. It carries rights and duties such as intervention in another's problems, contribution and participation in rituals such as rites of passage¹ for self and family members at marriage, naming, and burial rites which are acts of introduction into the communities of the living and the living-dead respectively. Offspring

of *korr'deeh* relatives normally continue such kinship expressed in a network involving family members of both parties. From being two individuals in a casual relationship, *korr'deeh* gradually develops into the familial sphere.

Therefore, *Korr'deeh*, as lore and ceremony among traditional Amaa, shapes and governs social relationships between persons of opposite genders and eventually extends to wider social units with duties, rights and ritual obligations. Initially, since temporal and spiritual are inseparable, even though temporal appears more on the surface, *korr'deeh* begins with implicit ritual aspects and gradually unfolds into a complete kinship system cross-cutting lineage systems' boundaries and networks. It simultaneously extends alongside the widening chain of the blood-tied kinship system.

[b] MIDDLE AGE-GRADERS

This group of middle-aged males must be fathers of children whose ages range from the initial stage of puberty to early twenty. It is a taboo for children within this age category either to choose a *korr'deeh* or to betroth before the father's initiation into fatherhood “*ghoosoh tingnyedah*”, a group-tied rite.

Fathers of junior age-grades, whose daughters reach teenage, which is a tempting stage, and are ready for *korr'deeh*, are traditionally given promotion to the senior age-group. Such fathers are promoted in order to pave the way for the social and spiritual progress of their teenage daughters.²

For this exceptional reason, ritual elders hold an extra-ordinary ritual ceremony in communal shrines³ of various regions. It is here that animal and fowl sacrifices are offered to ancestors, for permission to promote junior fathers to that senior rank bracket. This extraordinary promotional rite facilitates admission for junior grade fathers into the fatherhood ritual initiation. Although they are fathers in natural terms, they are not socially acknowledged to be so until they have passed through fatherhood initiation, which, perhaps, should be understood as a social and ritual maturity rite. So fatherhood, for traditional Amaa, is not defined in biological terms only.

In this extraordinary promotional rite, the senior spirit-priest (*kuweir*) officiates at the ritual ceremony. While offering libation of home-brewed beer, he explains and pleads

with ancestors to accept the promotion of the junior fathers and their incorporation into fatherhood.

Here, the ritual act is bound into the system of belief in ancestors and infinite manifestations of the Spirit (*Abbra'dee*) in both the phenomenal complexity of nature (see **chart**) and moral meanings as in the notions of good and evil among traditional Amaa. Both these moral notions (good and evil) are pertinently integral to social function and structure of which *korr'deeh* tradition forms a part. It could, therefore, be said that social relationships, like *korr'deeh* at the outset, can be considered as natural but casual points of departure. It is a departure that spreads to the wider social organization and involves devotion to ancestors which is veneration and is, thus, supernatural in character.

Fatherhood initiation clears the way for social development and ritual⁴ growth of young adults before embarking on *korr'deeh*, which precedes the central rite of marriage for a normal traditional Amaa.

Therefore, the promotional rite for junior fathers to senior status is a required mediation rite to facilitate the progress of cross-cutting the structural boundary of social organization,⁵ and this is functionally maintained by forefathers, ancestors, and elders, especially office holders such as ritual elders, spirit-priests, in all of whom the ancestors and forefathers vest and uphold their mystical authority.

2.[a] *GHOOSOOH TINGNYEEDAH*: CHOICE OF BULLS

So the dedication and rite of promotion involve both the living and the living-dead. Since this rite is extra-ordinary, to safeguard the teenage females from taboo breach, it is designed to maintain and harmonize social function and structural mobility for both fathers and their daughters and sons, who have become of age, to enable them to contribute to their lineage continuity in marriage,⁶ the key structural representation.

Like numerous other rites, the promotional mediation rite involves sacrificial beasts of domestic orientation. In terms of ritual giving, the domestic beasts are members of the human community and are, therefore, given an explanation for their suffering as sacrificial victims. Though helpless and without choice, nonetheless, domestic beasts are contributors to the ritual transformation of human attitude and behaviour. Hence, the

fatherhood rite, entitled *ghoosoh tingnyedah* means *bull ceremony*, or choosing bulls for the community. Bull ceremony is the ritual for promoting fathers, the community bulls, to fatherhood and subsequently to elderhood in a different rite entitled *ashieu leedah*, after which the initiated is ritually qualified to invoke, offer libation, and even immolate in communal shrines. So the rites of passage into fatherhood and elderhood, consecutively, qualify the initiates to carry ritual and political responsibility at clan and national levels.

2.[b] *GHOOSOH TINGNYEDAH* RITUAL PROCESS

Traditional Amaa do not hold this ceremony every year, but every three to four years. This time duration may extend to five years for lack of enough candidates to warrant the costly ceremony. Such a time extension is rare, but its occurrence results from low births, a condition that raises alarm and sends the gerontocracy to search for answers and remedies. Hence, frequency of births, not mortality, dictates the frequency of *ghoosoh tingnyedah* performance.

The death (*retransformation*) of children does not annul the fatherhood rite, since death, for traditional Amaa, is only a traumatic *retransformation* and return to a previous spiritual mode of existence. Living-dead children, regardless of age at the time of departure, align with their respective lineages in the invisible side. Regarded as such, the *retransformed* children come home with their living-dead relatives, forefathers, and ancestors and, thus, continue to be connected with the living. So a father fulfils his *ghoosoh tingnyedah* rite when the time⁷ is ripe for the eldest living-dead child to become a teenager. The father will receive the fatherhood title like this: the suffix "ma" for "of" is added to the first-born child's name (whether male or female) as follows: say, the son's name is *Karrcoonne* and so when given as the title to the father, it becomes *Karrcooma*. Likewise, the title after the first born daughter, say, named *whenda*, as fatherhood title it becomes *whendama*. All mean *father of* so and so.

A child is born and the naming relative (a mentor or guardian)⁸ gives it a name, but if it dies before reaching teenage years, the father will still perform the rite and receives the title upon the name of the late child, who continues his/her family membership and lineage in the invisible realm, which is an extension of the visible one.

If the father dies before the child's teenage years, it becomes the child's filial responsibility (not worship) to secure the late father's title by a symbol of specified dimensions in a piece of brownish coloured rock. He/she obtains it from the hill locale of the expected rite. The approximate dimensions of the piece range from 18" to 2' long and 6" to 1' wide. The child representative⁹ must smooth it, put it on an elevated green spot, and the guiding ritual elder will, in ritual manner, induct that prepared piece of rock to represent the living-dead father. The guiding ritual elder must be of the same lineage to induct that piece of rock into the representing symbol.

On the day of this ritual performance, and in consultation with the family elders of the living-dead candidate for fatherhood title, the spirit-priest will appoint a pre-teenage man of the same lineage and give him the *toewoe* (sacred stick) from the arched-gate of the living-dead candidate's compound. The spirit-priest and the youth proceed together to the locale of the waiting piece of rock for group induction¹⁰ into the representative symbol for that living-dead father. The spirit-priest will guide the young man to touch that stone with the *toewoe* (sacred stick), while pronouncing the name of the living-dead initiate (title not yet pronounced).¹¹

Both men then move to a youthful brown bull (*ghoosoo*), boxed in a narrow kraal that restricts its movement. The young man then touches the bull once on its rear,¹² while pronouncing again the name of the living-dead initiate. All these ritual acts represent participation of the living-dead father with his living peers, who will pronounce his title at the moment when the representative stone is soaked in a libation of beer that simultaneously they drink. These newly initiated fathers (or *community bulls*) eventually deposit the entitled stone symbol at the main compound shrine of the newly initiated living-dead father.

Henceforth, the community addresses the newly initiated living-dead father's family, in a levirate marriage,¹³ stating that the eldest child's name, whether living or living-dead, is *Andoola*. His title will be *Andolama* and the family will be addressed as *Andoolamo'waa*, or (*Whenda*) *Whendamo'waa*, or (*Karrconne*) *Karrcomowaa*, meaning, the family of.....

If there are no male children in the family and the father dies before his fatherhood rite, it becomes the filial responsibility of the eldest daughter, with the help of uncles and the levirate uncle, to ensure the fatherhood rite is fulfilled for the living-dead father. They choose a young male of their lineage to represent the living-dead father's fatherhood ritual performance. A daughter thus honouring her living-dead father, like her age-graders, is not restricted to participate fully in her mother's house-shrine, since her potential lineage belongs to the lineage of her future husband, while her mother's belongs to this one. In other words, mother and daughter are equals in the line of ritual action; in addition, her ritual participation with the mother is a training process for her. Nonetheless, she is subject to her paternal customs until marriage and lineage transfer her to that of her husband's.

However, a son thus honouring the living-dead father is restricted by ritual conventions and taboos. He can offer neither sacrifice nor libation if his grandfather still lives, for this would be a curse upon both. As long as the grand-father lives, he continues to be the head of his grandson's family. He calls upon the grandfather to invoke, immolate sacrificial beasts, offer libation, perform rituals of affliction, and bless annual family rites such as tasting new vegetables (*coo'nyingar*) in September and harvest of main crops. The grandfather cannot address offerings to a living-dead grandson, neither does a father to his, for such a ritual brings curse upon the progeny.

Instead, the living-dead father's son obliges a ritual elder of their lineage simultaneously to dedicate, immolate, or offer libation to his living-dead father on ritual occasions outside the main compound (on the outer right side of the arched-gate; see **fig. 1**). His living-dead father's age-graders, his mother's *korr'deeh*, male offspring of the living-dead father's female *Korr'deeh*, and his peers attend the outside ritual sacrifice.

Here, one can see the difference between private ritual offering and a collective one. As a private sacrificial offering outside the compound, the ritual domain of ancestors, and in avoidance of ritual conflict, the officiant of this rite does not employ symbols from the compound nor the arched-gate such as *toewoe* in this outside ritual sacrifice. The order of ritual hierarchy affects the function of both the living and the living-dead. The roots of this order are entrenched in the discipline system and exercised in the traditional Amaa family for the young.

3. FAMILY DISCIPLINE

Korr'deehs of family members become part of the traditional extended family, which is composed of parents, grandparents, the clan, and *korr'deehs* who, though not blood relatives, often take constructive initiatives in family affairs. Since a traditional Amaa family comprises communities of both the living and the living-dead; the living-dead, particularly the ancestors and forefathers, become an essential part of a child's training and discipline.¹⁴

Belonging to such an extended family, the child is the child of all connected to its family and not only of the immediate parents. It is to this extended family, then, that the immediate and primary discipline in raising the child become a responsibility. In experiencing the living sense of community, the child is ingrained with the sense and idea of belonging. He/she learns to identify with and esteem adults of the extended family as though they were their own mother and father. This is why a child addresses adults as *Abaa* (father) or *Ataa* (mother) even though they are not his/her biological parents. When praying, a child addresses the living-dead in the same manner as they are older and an inseparable part of the discipline order. Traditional Amaa children come to know the living-dead through rituals, the instruction of grand-parents, and community elder instructors in ancestral traditions.

My late mother, for instance, warned us her children at night to keep clear the passage from our hut entrance (*orr'goalles*) leading to the kitchen since the living-dead family members would come for edibles. She made sure that she left food and water next to the main water pot (*bongoo mmoosoo*). She explained that the living-dead relatives might be offended to stumble on objects or persons sleeping in the passage. She also constantly reminded us (children) to behave when we were in forest pastures with livestock, for our living-dead relatives and spirits of the forest are there and could punish us for misconduct, such as cutting trees, or killing wild animals except for food or in self defence, a rare situation. Because of this spiritual presence in the wild, an adult performs a ritual act for permission before logging trees for building material or clearing a plot for farming. Children also learnt the importance of ancestors from myths and historical sites.

Internalizing this experiential knowledge and orientation, a traditional child understands rights and duties of the adult members of the extended family (including *korr'deeh*) to discipline all children in the extended family. This conventional disciplinary order extends in Amaa traditional communities to include adults of different clans and lineages.

According to the African traditional polygamous marriage system, a family has more than one mother. And traditional Amaa are no different. For instance, a man can simultaneously be a legitimate husband of more than one woman. My late father, as an example, was a husband to four women. Thus, his family had four mothers who mothered all *children of the compound*. In the matter of discipline, if one mother witnessed a child of another in a misdemeanour, it was her duty to take immediate disciplinary measures. Such discipline included spanking with an explanation for the young children, but a rebuke and advice for the older ones. So did uncles, aunts, grand-parents, adult siblings, *korr'deeh* kins, and adults of other lineages in the community. In other words, the whole village is involved in raising children of the village. This disciplinary system works; it has always worked for traditional Amaa society.

But if a child's fault required a communal and ritual correction, that mother would discuss it with the co-mothers before telling the father who, if approached, discusses it with them. At this point, a *korr'deeh*, who may also be a distant naming relative, intervenes in respect of the child's behaviour. The child is bound to listen to the parents' and older siblings' *korr'deeh* or the naming relative for there is an established special relationship of confidentiality that allows the child to speak out his/her complaint, without being exposed to parental disapproval. These are some disciplinary procedures and correctional steps that precede seeking help from the extended family elders, ritual elders, and the spirit-priest. That is to say, the involvement in conflict resolution accords with traditional Amaa social structure.

In other words, failure of one or two segments of the traditional hierarchy of authority (immediate family and clan) draws in the higher social and ritual authority to engage in a conflict resolution, since their experience in herbal medicine, health rites which implicitly embrace a psychological approach and animal sacrifice is indispensable.

A child who undergoes the communal traditional discipline obviously shames the family. But when a child undergoes the modern state discipline, the larger family (community) comes under the scrutiny of their living-dead members, particularly the ancestors. Amaa traditional religion is, therefore,

“community oriented, as opposed to the Christian ... emphasis on religion which is principally the affair of the individual and his God”.¹⁵

In this sense, a faltering individual is a liability to his/her community. In liability terms, nothing is more ominous for traditional Amaa (family, clan, or nation [tribe]) than having an iconoclast member, for he/she is everyone else's liability. Hence, observance of organizational rites prevents iconoclasm and makes discipline everyone's affair.

We now return to the description of *ghoosoh tingnyeeda* which is the climax of life long observance and experiential learning of ancestral traditions that have come down orally, without a written record, from one generation to another in myths, folk tales, legends, liturgy, sayings, music in the form of drumming and singing, or masking art as the embodiment of the invisible connected and involved with the visible. That is, traditional Amaa express their religion in straightforward ritual means and traditions dramatized in diverse activities.¹⁶

As social organization and function demand, each age-grade knows its customary limitations, but final decisions are made by councils of elders, ritual elders, and spirit-priests. Such council members are normally the aged of sound experience and knowledge of traditions and customs able to deal with traditional cases in a ritually oriented manner of traditions that do not exclude the living-dead in invocations, an act that would amount to neglect.

Following invocations and libations to ancestors, a very senior ritual elder (sometimes a spirit-priest) releases the unblemished brown bull from that rocky kraal, specifically built for the *ghoosoh tingnyeeda* (fatherhood) rite on a slope of a foothill that the spirit-priests and ritual elders choose and dedicate for that ritual purpose while, at the same time, inviting the presence of the free spirits and ancestors, whose effective influence embodies Amaa social organization and function that effect the purpose of eternity now in perpetuity.

The *ghoosoo* (bull), its brown colour expressing good and bad, expressing ambiguity of life, with its blood symbolized in its own colour, is to be shed for the good of the society. The articulation of this ritual process begins with intentions, activities, invocation, gestures, objects, and with the locale of the rite; they are all summed up in the *ghoosoo*, a representative symbol for age-grade candidates for fatherhood.

It is upon *ghoosoo* that the concluding collective ritual act falls. The initiates chase and beat him down the slope to the valley until he falls. The initiate, who gives the last blow before the fall, has thereby inducted himself into becoming the head of this age-grade.

A ritual elder, who waits down the valley at the approximate spot of the victim's sacrificial fall, will deliver a ritual spear¹⁷ to this person who instantly becomes the new head, who, looking to the right first and, then to the left, motions to his peers to hold down the sacrificial victim. He then proceeds to walk around the group with the *ghoosoo* in their centre. He circles the group three times. And in a swift move, he sticks the spear into the ground, the chosen spot for immolation.

The group drags the victim to that spot. Three¹⁸ members dig a hole, approximately a meter deep; meanwhile the initiating elders' procession (the spirit-priest [*kuweir*] walking at the front, followed by spirit-priests [*kuunee*], ritual elders, and elders) arrives from the locale of the kraal.

The new head of the initiates submits his authority to the seniors by handing the spear to the spirit-priest (*kuweir*), who sticks it three times into the hole, and aims it three times to the rocky hill, and three times to the sun, while invoking *Abbra'dee*, these three phenomena and the ancestors, whose presence is acknowledged in invocation tone, as if addressing them face to face. Here, then, there is so much physical and psychological influence involved when dealing with the spiritual entities in such an active ritual process as if these spiritual entities have bodies and mentalities similar to those of the initiates and the traditional Amaa society. However, these spiritual entities are real since they combine emotional and psychological influence on the living.

Upon the motion of the spirit-priest, the fourth member of the group deposits a new gourd filled with water in the hole. The spirit-priest then aims the spear at the chest of

ghoosoh but without stabbing it. Instead, he hands the spear back to the new head, who continues the invocation. Under the guiding instructions of the spirit-priest, while others sit silently around, the new head immolates *ghoosoh*, whose blood (*weeleeh*) must gush straight into the hole. Others wait and drop into the hole contents of their fists that could be either leaves of medicinal value or *mmoonooong* (sorghum: main staple) from which libation beer is brewed.

The spirit-priest concludes by invoking the earth, the sky, the sun, and the ancestors, and *Abbra'dee*; all of them, and the communicative silent partners, as integral to the human community. The head of the initiated fatherhood delivers a thick branch of *saggi tree*¹⁹ to the spirit-priest, who in turn places it on top of the contents in the ritual hole. The spirit-priest adds a fistful of soil from the hole itself.

The initiated fathers collectively roll a flat heavy stone that covers the hole. Finally, they pile on the soil to seal it properly to prevent wild animals from desecrating it. The group immediately fence the spot. A communal shrine is set. A thatched hut must be built on the hole with a fenced compound before rainfall.

This is a group brutal act, but the victim, though involuntary, has the significance of its “participation” explained, as Vincint Mulago, a Catholic Christocentric of *Zaire*, calls it,²⁰ as an act that connects and maintains life and death, the living and the ancestors together with forefathers, the common living-dead, and other numinous beings as free spirits of nature,²¹ that is, the cohesive horizontal relationships in unity with the vertical (see chart).

Ghoosoh tingnyeeda is, therefore, a collective bloody sacrifice that seals the social and spiritual covenant among this age-grade, between this age-grade and the senior (elders) graders, and traditional Amaa society that contributes the sacrificial beast to simultaneously renew Amaa connectedness with the spiritual realm and among the people as a nation.²² So *ghoosoh tingnyeeda* as a collective ritual is a multidimensional covenant that renews and maintains the bond between the living and the living-dead. It also enhances the social structure and replenishes the social cohesion, while it promotes individual discipline to prevent iconoclasm, a matter of dread to all when it occurs.

4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *GHOOSO OH TINGNYEEDA*

According to Van Gennep, the rites of passage mark the transition of an individual, or group of persons, from one social status to another.²³ Such transitions embrace life crisis rites that enhance structural mobility and facilitates the functional dimensions of the traditional Amaa society.

Here, Amaa functional and organizational rites are both represented in the *ghoosoh tingnyeeda* age-grade group rite. The fatherhood rite, for example, prohibits individual action on issues, whether of individual or group concern. So group-tied orientation is applicable to all age-graded segments of the social strata.

The fatherhood rite (*ghoosoh tingnyeeda*, also known as the bull ceremony) is a rite that initiates middle aged-grade fathers into fatherhood status and certifies their participation in communal shrines and public rituals. They become communal bulls. A traditional Amaa father is regarded as the *bull* (*ghoosoh*) of his family on account of his procreative success in lineage continuity.

So the title *ghoosoh* (bull) is inapplicable to married men with neither living nor living-dead children because for them the fatherhood title could not be secured, since they have failed to contribute to *eternity now*. Perhaps, it is a temporary exclusion until a child comes from a second, third, or fourth wife. Such structural restrictions dictate social control and, thus, sharpen moral life.

Ghoosoh tingnyeeda is consistent with the harvest rite that strengthens communal values which emphasize fertility and fecundity. Therefore, lack of marriage fertility raises moral questions about the man and his wife (who would encourage him to take a co-wife) as to whether they have adhered to Amaa traditions or whether ritual prohibitions have been breached by their marriage, e.g. pre-marital sex prohibitions, blood taboo between their lineages, disrespectful behaviour towards parents or elders, just to mention a few of the Amaa traditional moral offences that may lead to childlessness. According to traditional Amaa beliefs, taboo breach and bad behaviour can, sooner or later, bring upon a violator such punishments as barrenness and child mortality.

The term *tingnyeedy*a should also be explained. *Tinga* means cough, flu, fluids, and here it refers to body fluids which are significant to a married couple's successful

marriage consummation in childbirth. Here, marriage without childbirth is regarded as not consummated, according to Amaa traditions. The elders use the term *tinga* to enquire whether so and so's wife has coughed (given birth); that is, *ay ningong kerr tinga haa illown?* And *tingnyeeda* is the genitive for *tinga*. *Tingo* is the genitive of *tingo* (same spelling), and *tingo* is the infinitive; *teh* is the preposition *to*. So the term *tingnyeeda* means choice of or choosing.

Another verbal version of *teeh* also means to choose, cease, grasp, or possess (i.e. spirit possession). *Teeh* is the verb used in various forms of spirit-possession whether of priesthood, a temporary divination occurrence, as punishment, or the sorcery (*corr'ggeh'deeh*) of the rejected spirits of the departed relatives who have become vindictive as a result.

Ghoosooh tingnyeeda, thus, means choice of family and community fathers' initiation into fatherhood status; it is the rite that bestows ritual rights on the community bulls (*ghoosooh*). *Ghoosooh*, as such, is a symbol of prowess and virility that contributes to lineage continuity, a guarantee of immortality for the ancestors. According to this structure, the collective title *cooshayh* (rope) is given to those newly initiated into fatherhood status, for they have longevity in their respective lineage continuity that guarantees *eternity now*, from which a traditional Amaa would not want to be disconnected.

Although these men, before the fatherhood rite, could be regarded as elders, their participation with the ritual elders is limited to the periphery and a minor role that excludes invocation, immolation, offering libation in public ritual celebration related to clan or national (tribal) significance, which involves the *bulls* (seniors) of both the living and the living-dead.

These uninitiated fathers are restricted to their specific family ritual offerings. And even so, a father in this age group (middle-aged) cannot immolate sacrifices nor present major offerings for his family, if his own father still lives; otherwise it would be a scandalous curse in reverse, wishing his father's death. His own children would then be the target for the offended ancestral reaction against such a breach. He, therefore,

summons his father to offer and immolate sacrifices. As long as his father lives, he can only offer a libation of liquids such as water, beer, milk, or tit-bits of food to the numinous, not ancestors in particular, before consuming them. Such a father cannot consume anything, as other initiates do, without inviting the ancestors to take part. Thus, however conversant he might be ritually, he has limited ritual standing as long as his father lives; this living father blends with the ancestors.²⁴

5. WIVES AND RITUAL STANDING

Wives, however, have better ritual standing for she (they) can offer and sacrifice fowls, sheep, and goats in the house shrine(s) for she heads her house. Once she undergoes marriage rites and transfers her lineage, she is ritually qualified to invoke and sacrifice in her house shrine. She invokes ancestresses and the living-dead females of her new lineage. She must, therefore, consult her mother(s) in-law,²⁵ senior co-wives (if she has any), or female ritual elders of the clan before she can embark on ritual practice.

The elder female confidantes participate normally in the house shrine rituals with those of other lineages in the community. Confidantes know the myths, events, meanings and rituals that are complementary. They are conversant with local myths on the contours of the social order. Passing on such knowledge introduces the new member to shortcomings, tensions, or limitations in any mode of local social existence. Thus, the confidantes familiarize the new member with the levels of traditional reality (ancestors, totems, ritual beasts, spirits, those of ritual importance in the community, etc.) so that she does not commit a ritual blunder and most of all adopts modes proper to ritual application.

As such, then, the house shrine is the ritual territory for women (see **fig. 3**); only by invitation and in fulfilment of a ritual requirement of a tradition will a male ritual elder tread on female ritual territory.

Likewise, the *main compound altar* (*mandd'dah*) and shrine (*coa'dee*) are restricted to male ritual practice; only by invitation, also, in fulfilment of a ritual requirement of a tradition, will a female ritual elder tread upon male ritual territory. Nonetheless, there is one condition in that only females beyond child birth stage can tread on male ritual territory and then only for minor roles. This condition is based upon the

thought and practice that regard menopausal women as equal to men. They, as female elders, are, therefore, permitted to actively participate with their male counterparts and ritual elders in councils. Such traditional elderly women are conveyors of knowledge in traditions, more so than some men. They, thus, facilitate interpretation when divination occurs.²⁶

Like men of traditional knowledge, the knowledgeable women elders carry sticks (*kkhorr'shimm'maala*) of ritual significance. This is the category of women who will arrange and start a dancing celebration at the spirit-priest's shrine compound. As they stampede dancing, their sticks swinging in the air, and one after another, they sing out reasons (problems) for their visit. They come to intercede.²⁷ Women of this category, among some clans, become diviners and spirit-priests.

6. SOME REFLECTIONS

Since the wife (wives) can perform rituals and sacrifice in her house shrine, while the husband is restricted by reason of his living father, this informs the Amaa view of gender function, within the prevalent territorial imperative in regulation of ritual roles. This territorial imperative, however unequal it may seem, is one of mutual complementarity so that gender equality is inherent in value-equality that traces its beginning to the mythology of ancestress *Nyemya* who, as a woman of superior spiritual power, used coercion objectively to convince her chauvinist husband to accept her superiority. She succeeded convincingly in humbling him, but afterwards empowered him. Thereafter, they shared ritual responsibilities, but on divided lines.

That is, traditional Amaa facts are expressed in myths applied in rituals and living traditions. Accordingly, ancestress *Nyema* divided the areas of ritual responsibilities between her and the husband. This division resulted in recognizing the house-shrine,²⁸ and the main compound shrine (separate hut) and the altar.²⁹ *Sheila*, *Nyema*'s spirit son, after whom the *Sheilo'waa* clan is named, carried on this ritual practice. Division of labour followed these mythical lines. The ritual territories strengthened the purpose of connectedness and, hence, eternity now.

In other words, the two ritual territories complement each other. This complementarity is best observed in the traditional Amaa marriage rites. Thus, the mythology of *Nyema* is an example that shapes traditional Amaa male attitudes towards gender, a point where self-discipline begins from childhood. In like manner, males and females are brought up to respect and value each others' abilities and contributions to the nobility of clan and the Amaa nation (tribe). Upon marriage consummation, both contribute to their lineage and *eternity now* (ancestral immortality). This fact, then, eliminates competitive strife and the appearance of a superiority-inferiority attitude among traditional Amaa family members.³⁰

Instead of competition, the practice is collective interdependence in a wide network whether for ritual fulfilment, economic and social activities, or child discipline.³¹ Amaa interdependence achieves networking at new crop tasting (*conying'arr*) and annual (*mmoonooongo kirr'daa*) harvest rites,³² which is headed by the predominant, though the smallest, clan of *Sheila*,³³ and whose daughters are bound by traditions to marry as second wives in January (*Coosh: Keeshoo Koorr*).³⁴

Sheilo'waa clan is the first to perform the annual harvest rite. Ritual elders of other clans attend as participants and contributors. They contribute with roosters, rams, he-goats, as well as an ox, which all combine to produce an offering of the Amaa nation. But most of all, a participant's clear conscience (*booshee caffay'elle*) is a ritual requirement of ritual elders and the various age groupings attending that harvest rite.³⁵

The invisible participants are expected to be present. "*Aiyye'woeh*", meaning, "*certainly*", a traditional Amaa would respond to an inquisitive child or an outsider inquirer wanting to know whether the spirits really do attend festivals. As a child, I did ask such questions about the reality of the living-dead and their activity among the living, and received an affirmative answer followed by an explanation of some riddles hidden in youth rhymes and some songs that my father sang in ritual performance and sacrifices.

Spirits do exist actively among the living.³⁶ They do attend festivities. To further illustrate from my experience, my late mother, as a ritual aide to my late father, often warned us (children) to behave lest spirits should act punitively. In retrospect, the elders' response to our curiosity, coupled with fear of spirits, shaped a child's belief in the reality

of the spiritual world,³⁷ but as the source of both good and evil, both of which one's attitude can either enhance or prevent respectively (see chart). Here, the chart attempts to show that traditional African experience of the visible and the invisible are intertwined.³⁸ Like other traditional Africans, traditional Amaa do not take the spiritual realm for granted since it can be indifferent, spiteful, wantonly malevolent, supportive, directive, distant, intimate, transcendent and immanent. No wonder, then, the traditional African has an ambivalent attitude, a paradox, in relationship to the Sacred.

In this sense, the spiritual realm is protean. It can become all conditions and all things (see chart). And these conditions are consistent with ancestral legacies in traditional Amaa experience of the Spirit in all things and activities. So in ritual traditional Amaa practise their religion in singing, drumming, dancing, possession trance in becoming one with the Spirit, maintaining reciprocity among the living and with the ancestors as expressed in ritual offerings and awe in response to the manifestation of the Spirit in natural elements such as earth, lightening, thunder, and rain. Traditional Amaa regard a thunderstorm as Spirit's expression of satisfaction in the roaring laughter with tears (*boe'rowoe toolinj ayee waijee*) that cause earth to spring forth numinous fields of forests to murmur further with spiritual manifestations.³⁹ This acute sense of the sacred informs the traditional African worldview which is oriented towards the *numinous* forces of the earth and the sky (see chart). These forces are bound with the living. This worldview is applied in rituals that, when organized around the indigenous taxonomies and topologies, disclose spiritually rich metaphor and metonym.

7. Paradoxical Relationship

Rainfall, particularly thunderstorms (*arrangayeo deeudling*), is a symbol of the active presence of the Spirit, so traditional Amaa observe a strict silence for they revere this dreadful presence in interaction. The active *arrangayeo deeudling* (thunderstorm) and the dreadful but reverent reaction of traditional Amaa is one type of the demonstrated interactive relation between the two halves (visible and invisible).⁴⁰ And this is essential, even though they dread its thunderous lightning character.

In spite of this dread, traditional Amaa observe an awful silence, often sitting around a flaming fire for warmth, in their huts (see fig. 3; see chart) in reverence of the manifestation of the Spirit in the falling rain which makes possible the complex and diverse livelihood and social activities that ritually draw together both the living and the living-dead. Ancestors (akin to the nature of the Spirit) are among them in the sowing rite, tasting rite, marriage rite, birth rite, burial rite, and initiation rites which enhance social organization and function such as in the age-grading system, fatherhood rite, *korr'deeh* rite, or initiation rite into spirit-priestly office, like that of the *kuunee* or the *kuweir*.

So in all these intertwined aspects, to reiterate, there is always a dreadful paradox, expressing conflict but for equilibrium, in the presence of the spiritual manifestation. Traditional Africans fear it. At the same time they want its presence. That is, desire and dread combine. They fear it because of its sacred and, thus, dangerous nature. Traditional Amaa say, "*keeh aa'cooree*", meaning, "*thing sacred, stay away*", yet they desire it. They cannot do without it.

Traditionalists' experience of these conditions and things is expressed in constructive awe, submission, reverence, joy, aggression, manipulation, or love that traditional Amaa never express in words, but in deeds and behaviour, an attitude also expressed towards their fellow living human beings. Such a traditional attitude is a response to the manifested spiritual conditions and things in the surrounding environment, in accordance with the twofold character of the visible and the invisible,⁴¹ that determines the behaviour of the traditional relations, interaction, and participatory activities,⁴² participatory services and objective acts of worship of the Spirit and veneration of the ancestor.⁴³ In this way, traditional Amaa fulfil their customary precepts that involve performance of an outward action to satisfy the inner yearning towards satisfaction of the invisible. Such yearning is the impetus for doing things and readiness to relegate ritual custom as distinct from moral custom.⁴⁴ Accordingly, *Sheila's* act of harvest rite excludes new mothers, children, and teenage graders, divorced and remarried of both genders, and the habitual iconoclast, and there is a requirement of a clear conscience on those who participate. This exclusion is a precautionary measure against the malice of wanton spirits such as those rejected spirits, who also attend festivities.

Some ritual reconciliations do not completely wipe out the wrong. For instance, the rupture that divorce and remarriage cause in lineage continues, and does not prevent offended spirits from repetitive punitive actions against this prohibited category of the living. Here, there is a stringent exercise of self discipline and social control imposed by Amaa traditional norms in pursuit of full life, which can be attained by one's own will in healthy behaviour within a group context that makes possible harmonization between heavenly and earthly dimensions (eternal and temporal) and the collective. This is why traditional Amaa precepts are so strict.⁴⁵ That is to say, moral life is central to traditional Amaa spirituality. It, therefore, becomes a matter of serious concern when breaches, even reconcilable ones, occur for they become scars on their cosmos.

Traditional Amaa believe and, indeed, prohibit new mothers still in the recovery process and emotionally immature young people from attending the harvest festival, for wanton spirits at this major harvest festivity prey on vulnerable members of the community. So during the main harvest festivity, the vulnerable are restricted to their houses, and do not step out for three days. Here spirit-priests and some ritual elders have intuitive insights to recognize the invisible presence of the ancestors and other spiritual beings such as the erratic free spirits that could turn malign as well as the rejected ones. Specifically ancestor *Sheila*, as the host of this festival, and head ancestors of other clans are also expected to be present.⁴⁶

Also present are clan spirit-priests (*kuunee*), senior spirit-priests (*kuweir*), ritual elders, and the elders newly initiated into fatherhood; all gather in the *Sheilo kuweir's* main shrine compound (*coa'dee*), while a few hundred other participants assemble in groups according to clan, each headed by the eldest uninitiated father. They await *Sheilo kuweir's* loud song of invitation to all, both visible and invisible, present.⁴⁷ Here, *Sheilo kuweir* is in ritual dissociation from *Sheila* (ancestor), who speaks through his *kuweir*,⁴⁸ whose common title is *Jalle'da*, which means the *whipper*, for he whips the air around the unmarried men and women, who, according to gender, form two separate groups for that purging ritual act.

Once *Sheilo kuweir* reaches the state of ritual dissociation, he sings loudly to proclaim to clan- group assemblies, according to region, to break silence. The uninitiated

fathers, the oldest in each group, simultaneously lead their respective groups in singing after the *Sheilo kuweir*. Apart from ritual elders and spirit-priests in *Sheila's* shrine compound, the whole assembly stampede in an orderly dance round the shrine compound without entering it. Here, music has the capacity to draw and maintain harmoniously the ritual crowds together more than any other form of ritual communication for both the visible and the invisible.

Group elders, the uninitiated fathers, continue singing ritual songs that narrate their respective clan local mythologies, clan founders, and ancestress *Nyema*. The information in these songs is based on some of the pieces of knowledge that female ritual elders impart to newly married incoming brides.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the priestly council remains inside the main shrine compound (*coa'dee*; see **fig.1**). They are the council that evaluates the happenings of the year of each clan with praised reflections and expressed gratitude to the present participant ancestors in the rite. They do not forget to address those ancestors and common living-dead whom the gathering do not mention by name, but as a collectivity. They (ancestors) are addressed in a manner as if they were physically present in the priestly assembly. Indeed, ancestors and common living-dead are the silent partners in the surroundings of the living. Their presence is felt. Their participation is, therefore, real. I experienced that awesome presence the thirteen times that I attended this harvest ritual.

Some of these ancestral spirits, like *Sheila*, become vocal in direct communication with the living. Such ancestors may possess a ritual elder, a medium, to convey his message that may range from complaint for negligence and warning, or diagnosis of problems and remedies, and sometimes expressions of praise and satisfaction with the living.

At this annual harvest rite, the head ancestor of the clan receives a sacrificial offering of a bull that the clan members contribute every four years. That is, twenty one bulls are sacrificed at this annual harvest every four years. Where a clan cannot afford a bull, a substitute is more appropriate in the form of a number of he-goats or rams. The participating multitude, in communion with each other and with the invisible, consumes that sacrificial meat which, perhaps, could be considered a form of redistribution wealth, as J.C. Faris suggests.⁵⁰

As a collective approach to ritual performance, clan elders orally design the performable liturgy (ritual) in ways that reflect the clan and national (tribal) mythological context; that is, the way ancestors performed it, in spirit and action, to maintain connectedness with their invisible counterparts. The myth and ritual components are what ritual elders and elders determine in their intent for ritual activity that draws in other members' networking in meeting that ritual goal. That is, ritual elders of a clan or the whole nation (tribe) follow ancestral traditions and examples in fulfilling ritual obligations; this is the precursor for communal well being and fullness of life since harmony and equilibrium between the visible and invisible is maintained. In order to enhance a rite, elders systematically search for latent meanings and purpose of a conveyed message (i.e., through divination or dreams)⁵¹ in the process of preparing a liturgy for that specific ritual. So clans' priestly gatherings at annual harvest rites, as for many other rites and ceremonies, are designed for reaching legitimate conclusions that are free of sorcerous input,⁵² for among the elders there could be a member or two whose spiritual powers operate in a contrary logic that is sorcerous, without the awareness of the elder host; that is, the spiritual logic of *coo'roo*.

And the action often involves divination and some illustrative anecdotes to usher in some mythological elements that point to manifested facts or events relevant to the discussion. Although such gatherings are serious in intent, nonetheless, some ritual elders light-heartedly crack jokes with witty⁵³ remarks, and yet maintain the delicate balance without offending anyone. Such jokes become registries to remind discussants of the significant points concluded. This is one process, I suggest, that etches out customs from ancestral legacies and mythologies. Therefore, during dry seasons and ritual occasions such as burial or harvest, elders gather in groups under specific trees that have more or less become landmarks for their size and the counsel gathering of elders. Elders delve into mythologies and histories of some significant living-dead members.⁵⁴ It is, therefore, within the capacity of this spirit-priestly council to trace meanings and messages in mythological depths relevant to rituals that apply to the life of the living.

The *Sheilo kuweir* (spirit-priest), as the host for the annual harvest rite, is a point of reference for the dialogue back and forth of the exponents to the message and the

mythical figures involved of which the most prominent ones are *Nyema* and *Sheila*. These mythological figures are the symbolic keys to meanings and intentions of the mythological consciousness and the spiritual practice of traditional Amaa.⁵⁵ So the shift between the medium and the message is an interpretive process of elimination to identify irrelevant elements and to confirm relevant ones which are applicable to specific rites.

The annual harvest festival usually continues for three days. Upon return to their respective clan regions, the elders and ritual elders are expected to perform recommended rites at a clan level. They also require family heads to perform theirs in the main compound.⁵⁶ Traditional Amaa society is so structured that the structure infiltrates into ritual function. For the participation of elders and ritual elders in each other's celebration of harvest rite, despite of liturgical differences, clans celebrate this rite in turn. The liturgical differences derive from the way each clan founding ancestor fulfilled this annual rite. This means, then, that each clan follows its ancestral way in fulfilling its rites and ritual.

8. INCLUSION

Although the Amaa national (tribal) harvest festival is a traditional rite, traditional Amaa do not exclude others of Christian and Islamic persuasion. Christian and Muslim Amaa may opt to contribute, participate, or exclude themselves as they wish.⁵⁸ In other words, members of other faiths have freedom of choice, as do their fellow traditionalists, as long as they adhere to norms (taboos) which specify moral obligations that seek to maintain harmony in family, clan, and the Amaa nation.

This is so, because traditional Amaa as clan communities in all their activities are inclusive. When elders, ritual elders, and spirit-priests invoke and petition on behalf of the people, they are inclusive. The spirit-priest, in particular, is the mouthpiece that forces his way in approaching ancestors and ultimately the Spirit (God). That is to say, people establish contact with God through living mediators and ancestors. The living intermediaries, therefore, do not exclude the non-traditional progeny of the ancestors. So the inclusion of non-traditionalists in the traditional rites and festivities demonstrates the inherent tolerance of the African traditional religion. Traditional Amaa are no different in

accepting the humanity of others first rather than their religious ideology. This inclusiveness is sometimes mistaken by interpreters as naivete in traditional Africans. But inclusiveness makes it possible for traditional Africans to blend Christian and Muslim religious elements into its customary functional fabric so long as alien ideological elements do not sow discord in the social fabric.⁵⁹

9. INTRUSION

Unlike the tolerance of African traditional religion,⁶⁰ conflicts arise between the missionary religions. Such conflicts have become very obtrusive. This obtrusiveness exhibits itself in the Sudanese Islamic fundamentalist intolerance that has caused havoc among urban as well as rural people. As a result of Islamic fundamentalist intolerance in the Sudanese state, Christians and traditional Amaa have segmented, with growing intolerance, into the following categories:

(1) The original traditionalists who staunchly reject the new religious and cultural invasion. Nonetheless, traditions are susceptible to change from one generation to another either by malfunctions of memory which lead to loss, addition, or modification in information and social life that effect change in the process. Perhaps, traditionalists are too idealistic to consider even the process of change arising from events within their own culture.⁶¹

(2) The rigid Christians who could simply be a prototype of Kato, who has been endorsed by the American evangelist Billy Graham. Kato is intolerant to the degree that resembles the Sudanese Islamic fundamentalism that rejects the traditional African religion, particularly that of his own Jaba people of Nigeria, as trash to be burned in the course of the apocalypse.

(3) The confused whose spiritual belief has become blurred. Nevertheless, they are subliminally inclined to ancestral traditions.

(4) The quasi-Christian transformers, or blenders who Christianize the traditional African values as rooted in ancestral legacies and traditions that are similar to the Old Testament. This category consists of the African independent churches in semi-urban and urban centres.

The traditionalists expect all these categories of the Amaa society to attend the annual harvest rite. Categories [2] to [4] can opt to contribute and participate in the celebrations or opt out, whereas category [1] has the complete social and ritual obligation to this rite. Furthermore, the *tolerant attitude entrenches deep into the traditional Amaa family*, as a collective, and spreads out in individual members relationships within and without the family group- i.e. individuals of other nations (tribes) who, likewise, identify with their ancestors. Ancestors pattern social relations, while simultaneously shaping the traditional organization. So tolerance displays itself in the Amaa multi-religious family.

As such, the traditional Amaa customary practice does not limit the number of wives a man can marry. Hence, a family may consist of more than one wife of a husband. Children of the co-mothers of such a family are full brothers and sisters - not half-brothers and half-sisters; nor do the co-mothers regard themselves as step-mothers to each other's children from the same father, whose fatherhood position derives, not only from being a progenitor and head of his family, though not from being the breadwinner, for his wives are breadwinners, too, but from his *ritual role in relationship to the ancestral spirits* (and ultimately *Abbra'dee*, the First Ancestor: Creator Spirit: God) of the household. The traditional Amaa fatherhood position develops gradually and achieves its full maturity with the first child's growth to puberty, which depends upon his fatherhood rite of initiation. In fact, the fatherhood rite controls structural mobility as well as shaping organizational function, as shown above.

10. SUMMARY

Pretend kinship is a social custom that carries rights and ritual obligations. It is underpinned by spiritual sensitivity and values that must be observed. As the exercise of this custom demands, adherence to moral codes is an integral core to both structure and function, to both of which ancestors, moral by definition, are linked. It is in this mode that the mystical authority of ancestors, overwhelming the immediate presence as agents of cohesion shaping the structural, functional, and political landscape, prevails through living agents such as fathers, spirit-priests, and sporadic diviners as mediums.

As messengers and mediums of *Abbra'dee*, ancestors are the source of family and clan life. Despite the challenging modern intrusions, it is upon ancestors that the closely

knit traditional family structure and social networking systems are set. This structure is at the base of the traditional political, economic, social, and legal institutions (theodicy), whose tact and efficiency depends on the discipline enforced within the family. Therefore, spirit-priesthood, elderhood, ancestorhood and implicitly *Abbra'dee* (the First Ancestor) constitute the traditional Amaa theocracy. Therefore, for the traditional Amaa the quest for full life can only be reached in a collective context. It is social and in its social dimension consists of one's fellowship with parents of birth, the clan into which one is born, the village of identification, the ancestors, the forefathers, the common living-dead, and *Abbra'dee* who allows one's *transformation* into visible form as attached to lineage system.

Although the living are ambivalent in relationship with the unavoidable *numinous* of various categories, nevertheless, the living-dead and *Abbra'dee* are integral to the traditional Amaa domain of moral questions in structural and functional process. Such moral questions are importantly demonstrated in totemic-totemistic relations, social unit associations, and life stages of the traditional Amaa social organisation. In this way, traditional Amaa extend the spirit presence in concept, act, and experience to identify and include other areas by way of moral discipline that subordinate the temporal to the spiritual in ways that are conducive to fecundity, fertility, corporateness, and celebration of an inclusive community.

CHAPTER SIX

Footnotes

1. Genep, Arnold Van, The Rites of Passage (translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee) 1960, pp.41-165.
2. Genep, Arnold Van, The Rites of Passage, 1960, pp.65-70.
3. Communal shrines are landmarks for the history (mythologies) of ancestors and forefathers like the shrines in plains. Male youth initiation rites and annual hunting rites are performed at these shrines.
4. Ritual mobility: following their fatherhood initiation rite, newly initiated fathers allow sons to participate as observers in family rituals of the main compound (male ritual domain). Daughters participate with mothers in house shrines. It is at this stage that sons learn the historical background of some rituals. It is a training process in connotations of myths, artefacts, and extends to instruction on communal symbols and rites. This is a pre-circumcision training. In sum, boys learn about legacies of ancestors and forefathers. Here, the son-father relationship is directed (projected) towards ancestors and forefathers. This means that his (son[s]) existence in-relation-with (connectedness) involves him not only with his visible community of the family, his extended patrilineal family, his village and its multi-lineal community, but also with the invisible community of the ancestors, forefathers, and the common living-dead relatives, and *Abbra'dee* (God, who is the transcendental power beyond the realm of the visible living). For the traditional Amaa (as with other traditional Africans) the individual is raised, and shaped by training that prepares him/her to be in touch with and enter into communion and connect with his visible world. He/she is introduced into the community of the living humankind and the living-dead (Taylor's "Unbroken Circle [1963:67]) which is a long process tethered with symbols. This orientation towards the ancestors and forefathers is not a single event. In fact, this process starts at conception (those yet to come, as free spirits choose to integrate into lineage systems); say, before the birth of the individual into the visible realm, and flows on upon *retransformation* (death) thereafter. It is because of this eventual process, I suggest that traditional Amaa (or most African) concept of time is *CIRCULAR* rather than *LINEAR*. (also see **chart**; John S. Mbiti, African Religion and Philosophy, 1970, p.110).
5. Structure has its correlate function in existent "relationships between the constituent individuals and acts, and ... the contribution which each relationship makes to the maintenance of the entire society", Kingsley Davis, Human Society, 1949.
6. The term normal (*tarr'tarr*) is applied to the Amaa male who fulfils the marriage rite. "*tarr'tarr'hanay*" abnormal is applied to those males who do not fulfil the marriage rite. For traditional Amaa, therefore, the marriage rite is an obligation that must be fulfilled towards the lineage. It is only the abnormal male that does not marry.
7. The family of a living-dead child counts time from one harvest to another (one year), or from dry season to another (one year), or from rain fall to another (one year) until it ascertains the time that the living-dead would have been a teenager.
8. Naming Rite: the new baby (person) is inaugurated into life by the family that gives it its being and meaning which bind the individual to the group. This rite is basically integrative, in which the individual is inseparable from inclusiveness of relationships received from an older living individual and the living-dead (i.e. naming relative, new name at circumcision, fatherhood rite name, and so on from birth to *retransformation*). Since the naming rite involves both the living and the living-dead ("elderhood and ancestorhood blend [J. Faris 1989:305]"; Taylor's

“Unbroken Circle [1963:67]”; also see chart), it establishes a relationship that binds the individual horizontally and vertically; that is, a relationship with both realms and ultimately with the Supreme Being (God). As such, the traditional African relationship extends to bind all things both visible and invisible. Thus, for the traditional African, a given name (or ritual title of structure) is more than a tag of identification. It pursues relationship within the context of collectivity. Placide Tempels writes to this effect that,

“The Bantu cannot be a lone being ... he feels and knows himself to be ... in intimate and personal relationship with other forces acting above and below him in the hierarchy of forces. He knows himself to be a vital force, even now influencing some forces and being influenced by others. The human being, apart from the ontological hierarchy and the interaction of forces, has no existence in the conceptions of the [traditional African].”

Placide Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, 1959, pp.68-69

The naming rite is, thus, a strengthening stimulus for interconnectedness among the human community, while maintaining connectedness to ancestors and ultimately to God. That is, the name rite has both structural and functional connections between different elements of social life.

9. The eldest living male child customarily fulfils this representation role for his living-dead father's initiation rite to fatherhood status.
10. Group orientation is apparent as connectedness of the living and living-dead as the symbols of initiation of the living-dead peer into his appropriate social rank as fatherhood. This suggests, then, that for traditional Amaa (like similar African cultural groups) religion is collective rather than individual. This collective dimension is expressed in that shared concern of and responsibility for the welfare of all and for others whether at living level or living-dead levels, as fatherhood initiation, for example, shows.
11. Vincent Mulago's term “Vital Participation” links between life and death, the living and the ancestors, the visible and the invisible, the main symbols of this continuum are blood and land and that is the unity of vertical and horizontal relation. It involves horizontal exchange of properties of the group and its belonging (a metaphor similar to Taylor's “Unbroken Circle [1963:67]”). “Vital Participation: The Cohesive Principle of the Bantu Community.” In Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, ed. by Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth, 1969. These symbols of continuum also appear in Camara Laye's narrative of the ritual act of circumcision when blood flows into the earth symbolizing continuity and connectedness between the ancestors and the living. The Dark Child, 1978.
12. *ibid.*
13. Levirate marriage is also an applied metonym of continuum between the living and the living-dead. It is similar to that ritual act of the living initiating the living-dead father into fatherhood, a social status bestowed upon him even though he is physically absent.
14. Menkiti, Ifeanyi “Person and Community in African Traditional Thought,” In African Philosophy, 1984. Menkiti cites Mbiti (1970) in Communalism of African traditional religion, but emphasizes the meaning of initiation as a rite of passage and the meaning of the individual only in the context of the group (naming rite, for instance, see N8).
15. Ilogu, Edmund, “*Iro Mmuo and Ikpu Ala*” of the Igbo people of Nigeria. *Iro Mmuo* is a rite that focuses on fertility and fecundity at harvest; whereas *Ikpuo Ala* is the atonement rite. Ilogu goes on to discuss the significance of Igbo religion as “community oriented, as opposed to the Christian Reformed emphasis on religion which is principally the affair of the individual and his God,” in Traditional Religion in West Africa, ed. by E.A. Ade Adegbola, 1983, p.138.

16. (a) *ibid.*
(b) See N14.
17. This spear must be drawn from the arched gate of the spirit-priest's main compound for there is representation of community ancestors in that spear. It is the *toewoe* (sacred stick; see fig.1) that represents the spirit-priest's lineage ancestors.
18. The three members are those who sequentially give the last blows to the *ghoosoh*.
19. Amaa mythology records that death was initiated on the *saggi* tree. On his fall from heaven, Chameleon fell and died on this tree. That resulted in the loss of rejuvenating essence for visible immortality and also the loss of direct interaction with *Abbra'dee* when Fox destroyed the connecting bridge between heaven and earth.
20. See N11
21. Gelfand, Michael, *The African Witch*, 1967. Gelfand examines the *Shona* culture (a Bantu people of Zimbabwe). The *Shona*, according to Gelfand, believe in existent spiritual powers in nature and that some endowed people (spirit-priests and sorcerers) can manipulate such powers either for good or evil, which indicate tension between ritual and mythology. Gelfand goes on to discuss these powers in terms of two polarities (opposing structural fields) visible and invisible, in tension. In this sense, Gelfand's work is similar to Mary Douglas's "*Lele of Kasai*" in which structural opposites cause tension between ritual and myth, the visible and invisible (in *African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples*, 1985). Gelfand's work is also similar to that of Eric de Rosny's *Healers in the Night*, 1985. de Rosny, a Roman Catholic priest and a participant-observer in a ritual of affliction in Duala in Cameroon, like Edith Turner (1992) with *Ndembu* people of Zambia, narrates his experience with Din, a spirit-priest, who maintains a delicate balance (a *liminal* threshold [V.Turner 1989]) between the visible and the invisible.
22. A symbol of continuity between the ancestors and the living in the metaphor of blood flowing into the earth, namely the vertical succession of the living from the living-dead. The symbol of the snake, a symbol of ancestral presence, inspires the creativity of Camara's father in melting and moulding the gold, also stands for continuity between the living and the living-dead. In Camara Laye, *The Dark Child*, 1978.
23. See N1, pp.41-165.
24. African concept of time (identified in ancestors in the process of *transformation* [birth] and *retransformation* [death] back into invisibility) as circular appears also in John Taylor's "Unbroken Circle", *The Primal Vision*, 1963, p.67. And in J.C. Faris's "elderhood and ancestorhood blend", *Southeast Nuba Social Relations*, 1989, p.305.
25. The father in-law of a new bride may be polygamous.
26. Traditionally, the senior wife (i.e. my late mother) of the spirit-priest is among the facilitators for interpretation of the divination utterances of a spirit-priest or a sporadic diviner in ritual dissociation. Fertile women are excluded in this process for the natural menstrual habit is regarded as harmful.
27. Sometimes a spirit-priest's senior wife pledges an appointment for the spirit-priest to meet the visiting female ritual elders with the persons of concern.
28. See figure 3 and the chart.

29. See figure 1: D and G.
30. In spite of the equality values taught from childhood, some men still become stubborn to the point that you hear such a man grumbling about his wife as inferior. When such an incident happens family elders take disciplinary measures against him (1) to prevent this occurrence and (2) to effect reconciliation. That means family elders will not allow a spouse to become a bully against the partner. Traditional Africans do not vocally express affection (love); they demonstrate it in actions. *This, perhaps, could be a paradigm that group sense acknowledges feelings and emotions as well as rational and logical thinking.*
31. Here, the family example of group work extends to communal group work for the enhancement of others. This sense for group maintains connectedness among the living community as well as between the living and the living-dead. So a recipient of the communal group work as in farming does not materially compensate the contributors for he/she will contribute in the same manner. The dominant point here is communal cohesion in the act of participation that shows shared concern and responsibility for the welfare of others and all.
32. *Conying'aarr*: blessing and tasting by ancestors of new vegetable crops before people can start eating them. This tasting rite takes place annually from early September to the middle of October.
33. *Sheilo'waa* is the smallest and the dominant clan. The Amaa call it *soo* (incomplete: not fully human) for it is regarded as partly human and partly spirit people since, according to the mythology, ancestress *Nyema* and her spririt-son *Sheila*, the clan founder, were partly human and partly spirit. They established the present Amaa social organization, even though Amaa are silent on a creation myth.
34. Daughters of the *Sheilo'waa* clan are bound by traditions to marry as co-wives. The elders reason that the spiritual force of the *Sheilo'waa* daughter is strong and kills their husbands who have never been married before. But if this spiritual force fails to deal with the man's spiritual force, it turns against its host; it either strikes her with barrenness or strikes the offspring of that marriage with deformity or death. So *Sheilo'waa* daughters are taboo for men who have never married before. In other words, spiritual and social maturity are a requirement of the expected husbands of *Sheilo'waa* daughters. Social maturity, which is also organizational, refers to men who have fulfilled their fatherhood rite.
35. Elders who have not undergone the fatherhood rite are not permitted to participate in actual ritual performance in the *Sheilo* main compound shrine. Instead, they act as heads for the ritual crowd participants outside.
36. The common belief adhered to is that the ancestral spirits will punish those boys and girls who engage in anti-social behaviour as in sexual relations. Such illicit behaviour is anti-social structure since it interrupts the marriage system, the main factor in social organization. Female ritual elders of some clans check periodically on the virginity of their clan maidens to ensure that no pollution has occurred from illicit behaviour. Within marriage, for example, if illicit behaviour occurs and results in pregnancy, traditional Amaa believe that she will experience difficulty in labour unless she confesses beforehand to a ritual female elder for ritual steps to legitimate the new person who has not yet arrived. Elders, ritual elders, and spirit-priest together with the husband of the woman hold a private ritual initiation for the not yet arrived person. A he-goat is sacrificed on the outer front of the husband's arched gate (see fig. 1), its blood is drained into the hearth ash already in the hole of approximately one meter deep, right in front of the arched gate. The man digs the hole the previous night after he has invoked the ancestors; the following morning, his illicitly pregnant woman will put into that hole hot ash from her house

shrine. Once the rite of legitimation is performed, the unborn child belongs to the man's lineage. According to Amaa customary law, the biological father will have no fatherhood rights.

37. James, Wendy, The Listening Ebony
38. Evans-Pritchard, Nuer Religion, 1956.
39. (a) Diop, B.A. in John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963, p.160.
(b) Douglas, Mary, "The Lele of Kasai" in African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African People, ed. by Daryll Forde, 1976.
40. Nafoba, M.Y., "Erhi and Eschatology," in Traditional Religion in West Africa, ed. by E.A. Ade Adegbola, 1983.
41. Singleton, Michael, "Spirits and `Spiritual Direction': The Pastoral Counselling of the Possessed," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978.
42. Fashole-Luke, Edward, "Ancestor Veneration and Communion of Saints," In New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World: Essays in Honour of Harry Sawyerr, ed. by Mark Glasswell and Edward W. Fashole'-Luke, 1974.
43. Fortes, Meyer, Oedipus and Job in African Religion, 1983.
44. *ibid.*
45. Horton, Robin, writes, "... a diviner [spirit-priest] diagnoses the action of witchcraft influence or lethal medicine spirits, it is usual for him to add something about the human hatreds, jealousies and misdeeds that have brought such agencies into play. Or, if he diagnoses the wrath of an ancestor, it is usual for him to point to the human breach of kinship morality which has called down this wrath.", Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion and Science, 1993, p.201.
46. Zahn, Dominique, The Religion, Spirituality and Thought of Traditional Africa, 1979, p. 82
47. *ibid.*
48. In relation with others, traditional Amaa tend towards the invisible since they believe that the invisible is the real one while the visible is only a metaphor of it. It is from this real realm that free spirits choose to come into the visible, and experience human life as *existence-in-relation processes*. That is, the individual is socially, personally, and mystically identified with the ancestors, involved with others mostly in rites of passage, which is the journey to the moment of *retransformation* (death); the spirit (now as human) returns to the original invisible state as a member of its lineage. Thus, the *retransformation* (death) process is a return home to join the forefathers and ancestral community, which is the extension of the living communities of their progeny. Here, the process from invisibility to visibility and to invisibility and continuity of life displays the concept of time as *CIRCULAR* rather than linear. Here, then, traditional Africans do not seemingly abort the future, as Mbiti (1970) suggests.
49. Traditional Amaa women have insights into things spiritual such as the interpretation of ritual symbols whether in terms of sacred artefacts or divination language, but they do not have as much ritual authority as men do. Here, the disparity refers to the Ancestress *Nyema's* mythology. According to this mythology, *Nyema* was more powerful spiritually and ritually, but she shared it with her husband and gradually delegated it to her spirit-son *Sheila*; nonetheless, she continued

helping with the people. Perhaps this explains the same role of traditional Amaa women with people in need of help that varies from health to marital problems.

50. Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, chapter 3.
51. Horton, Robin, Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion and Science, 1993, pp.198-204.
52. *Coo'roo* is an example of "liminal" personality that combines "communitas [V.Turner 1989]" effective as evil first and, then, good. The evil imposed upon him is spontaneously sorcerous, while the good factor in him seems minimal but maximized in his spirit-priestly approach to maximize good and damage control either by instantaneous preventive ritual acts or in sporadic cleansing rituals with spirit-priests as participants by their presence only and not by participation in the actual cleansing rite.
53. de Rosny, Eric, Healers in the Night, 1985.
54. Kirwen, Michael, The Missionary and the Diviner, 1988.
55. Adegbola, E.A. Adeolu: "A Historical Study of Yoruba Religion," in Traditional Religion in West Africa, ed. by E.A. Adegbola, 1983.
56. The elders of clans arrange to perform in sequence the rite of tasting (*coo'nying'arr*) the new vegetable crops. The purpose of the sequential arrangement is the participation of elders and ritual elders in the rite of new crops. This participation is a functioning example of being in-relation with others among the living as well as maintaining connection with ancestors who are the key participants in all rituals.
57. E.W. Smith observes that environment shapes the traditional African concept of God, but the social, economic, and political values impact African traditional religion. The traditionalist attempts to control the local cosmos in terms of dominant spiritual powers that centre in the ancestors, in whom the thresholds of the visible and the invisible meet. Smith defines these ideas in terms of *Khoisan* and *Nguni* nations (tribes) theism in Southern Africa. E.W. Smith, "The Idea of God among South African Tribes," in African Ideas of God: A Symposium, ed. by E.W. Smith, 1950.
58. According to Lamin Sanneh, African traditional religions
"have penetrated with Christianity and Islam and endowed them with a tolerant, absorptive capacity ... In this sense traditional religions have performed a universal mission towards Christianity and Islam",
West African Christianity: The Religious Impact, 1983, p.87.
Sanneh's appraisal of the **inherent ecumenism** of the traditional African concurs with W.E. Hocking's call for dialogue and understanding. Hocking urges, like Arnold Toynbee's (1956) call for unification of religions, that religions should learn from each other as none is complete; each can certainly find in others potential things that have not been realized, which have been realized and developed in some other place. Thus, by mutual illumination, learning, and self-criticism, religions will certainly enhance ecumenism that might lead to formation of one world religion. Hocking advocates unity in diversity of religions, whereas Toynbee calls for outright unification of religions for a better future for mankind.
(a) Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization: Essays in Honor of William Ernest Hocking, ed. by Leroy S. Rouner, 1966;
(b) Arnold Toynbee, An Historian's Approach to Religion (based on Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of Edinburgh in the Years 1952 and 1953), 1956.

59. Ibid.
60. The Spirit "is both the one and many in his diverse... representations [C. Leslie 1960:64]"; so when sacrifices are offered to any manifestation in different situations, they are offered ultimately to the same one Spirit. Such manifestations, therefore, are experienced as having enduring identities in the one Spirit, whose mediums and messenger ancestors are in co-ordination with spirit-priests, whose able insights into numinous things, enhance and maintain organizational and functional aspects of the living.
61. (a) Williams, Raymond, The Long Revolution, 1961. Williams observes that the past is a powerful base of culture, in the process from one generation to another, society may add or delete from it and even shape it (pp.49-56).
(b) Berger, Peter et al., The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness, 1968.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SOCIAL AND RITUAL LIFE

This chapter draws together the social and ritual life of traditional Amaa people.

1. CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision, like other rites, combines spiritual and social dimensions; each dimension is integral to the other; the spiritual, however, has the dominant role. Its significance is in the chain of participation, which, in sum, is procreation (continuity), conception, birth, integration (as in the naming rite), and circumcision, among other ritual points, leading to marriage. It is the key rite in traditional social structure building.

The circumcision rite is of sacrificial importance, for a man cannot marry before the circumcision rite. If he, for instance, is the youngest male, he will be allowed neither to undergo the circumcision ritual nor to marry until elder brothers have gone through the same processes, according to seniority. This practice, in which age is the main factor, is applied on the basis of the ancestral legacy of traditions which ritual elders maintain. This method of age-grade system is the basis of traditional Amaa organisation and function with seniors providing instruction and leadership, whether it be of siblings, adults or the larger Amaa society. The spirit-priest is the only exception in this structure, where the age factor is negligible, since his seniority is evident in the spiritual office, which involves knowledge, experience, and nearness to the spirit world. Thus, a traditional Amaa asks no questions since such things are so; rights and duties are known, and must be fulfilled. Here, religion is not a private affair, but the spiritual conviction of a group, maintaining loyalty to ancestors and to the traditions they (ancestors) set in force, for which ritual elders and elders are custodians. As such, then, a traditionalist is expected to manifest his/her adherence in action.

The spirit-priest and the other ritual elders, though knowledgeable, constantly have to learn the intricacies of the ancestral traditions. This process of learning, a continuity from childhood, occurs mostly during ritual sessions when they exchange historical information on mythological episodes relevant to the active ritual in hand. Such

information comes in invocation, praise songs edifying the moral-spiritual essence of those ancestors relevant to the ritual concerned.¹ Their disposition to learning is a sure acknowledgement of the ontological order (see **chart**), which is the order of being that traditional Amaa (like other Africans) experience in their traditional order of values.²

So elders' efforts to appropriate the insights of this traditional order of values, in search of wisdom, coupled with rites and ritual connectives such as circumcision, suggest adherence to ancestral continuity and maintenance of the social structure.³ As such, then, this maintenance encourages harmonious relationships in the human community, (i.e. among the people and between the people and others in the natural world), in which the Divine (*Leeh* in Amaa) is present in varying degrees. That is, for traditional Amaa, the Divine (*Leeh*), though of an invisible order, including ancestral intermediation (see **chart**), permeates every point in the traditional living experience.

It is into this invisible permeant dimension that the spirit-priest delves in ritual dissociation to search for information, answers, or approval from the invisible informants (ancestors) on various problems or before performing a rite such as circumcision, a ritual integral to the social organisation. That is, the Amaa ritual tradition demands consultation with the ancestors prior to executing a rite such as circumcision.⁴

Once the priestly-divination clears a candidate to proceed, his extended family elders begin the ritual networking activities to effect the circumcision of their male kin, whereas the occasion of the circumcision rite and its locale offer an opportunity (as do other rites) for the elders (theocrats) to instruct the public in the order of traditional values through hymns that address the ancestors and the Spirit (*Abbra'dee*), the visible audience, and the natural world (see **chart**) since all are intertwined in both function and organisation.⁵ Here, then, the intertwining point is what Victor Turner identifies as a "liminal" threshold⁶ and James Faris as a blending point⁷ between the visible and the invisible realms that form Taylor's "Unbroken Circle".⁸ So every priestly-divinatory form⁹ of consultation implies looking for the participation of the invisible realm.

Thus, in the tradition of the Amaa, there are two locales for the circumcision ritual process. The first locale involves a communal social situation at which members,

particularly the significant persons such as the possible future mother-in-law, parents and the extended family members sing and dance, following a grand ritual meal to which they and other members of the community contribute.¹⁰

Before the operation and the seclusion of the initiate, festivities are held either in the regional spirit-priest's home compound or at the communal place where streets intersect.¹¹ It is at this locale that circumcision initiates (*Ko'oye Ka'nyerr*) and new mothers (*Kerr'tangee or Kerr'ka'nyerr*)¹² challenge each other in one to one dance contests. The term *tangee* means mother suckling her child, whereas *Ko'oye* and *Kerr* mean man and woman respectively. The dancing contests intensify after the seclusion period from October (*Jalle*) to January (*Kooish: kisheo koorr*), a period that requires complete physical and moral cleanliness prior to the Amaa national (tribal) atonement rite (*Leeh Co'shille*) which, in turn, precedes the annual harvest festival.¹³

The second part of this rite is the circumcision act itself at the foot of the mountain where the circumcised will be secluded. That is, each Amaa region has a seclusion locale at a nearby mountain. Such a mountain is quasi-sacred, since its wild life is protected. Elders reason that the *medough leeh* (spirit of that mountain) will avenge the destruction of any of its wild life. Therefore, it is taboo to hunt or to fell its vegetation; even its dead wood is protected. This taboo, however, does not include edible fruits for people to consume on the spot, but they are not to carry them home lest greed leads to more pickings and such a breach violates the sanctity of that mountain.

Following divination¹⁴ for assurance of safety in the ritual seclusion at the mountain, a sheep or goat is sacrificed at the foot of that mountain before initiates and their aides (*bidderr*) climb to its seclusion pockets. Before that, ritual elders, whose speciality is circumcision, abstain from indulgent behaviour of a sexual nature, intoxication, idle talk or socialisation that may aggravate participant spirits during this period of the ritual process. In a sense, the circumcising elders themselves observe the rite of moral and physical self-cleanliness for approximately two weeks before the appointed day of the circumcision operation.¹⁵

Simple as it may seem, the circumcision rite embodies a web of relationships between the individual, the family, the land, the living-dead relatives, and ancestors in whom Amaa personhood is bound. To question whether an Amaa male is circumcised or to call someone “*sobb’boodoo*” (uncircumcised) is the most serious insult, as it suggests that the person is a bastard (*ttoodoo*), without home (family), and without known lineage to confirm his personhood. In effect, for traditional Amaa, he is not a person. Furthermore, the term *ttoodoo* refers to an Amaa male who breaches marriage taboos to sire a child before fulfilling the circumcision rite. In Amaa traditions, such a child is acknowledged as illegitimate “*sobb’boodding*”, meaning, *child of the uncircumcised*; this is a social and ritual traumatic stigma since he/she does not have a legitimate family line to be incorporated into, on the one hand. On the other hand, the child’s illegitimacy prohibits the father from performing the legitimisation rite. That is, Amaa traditions dictate that the father cleanse himself first from this impediment, an expensive rite¹⁶ that traditional Amaa know as “*sobb’boodoo lehdah*”, that must precede the circumcision rite. If he fails to fulfil these ritual demands, he forfeits fatherhood rights and the child will ritually be incorporated into his/her mother's paternal family lineage. Such a child, as Amaa tradition of adoption dictates, becomes the child of a man who marries his/her mother.¹⁷

Thus, the uncircumcised father ruptures the connectedness to ancestors, who, as mediators between people and the Divine, receive sacrifices and prayers and direct the rituals and traditions of the people, as integral to fauna and flora in the cycle of life and death.¹⁸ Here, the uncircumcised procreation deprives ancestors and the earth of the sacrifices¹⁹ involved in the circumcision rite. Thus, an uncircumcised coitus is a disconnective act since it causes confusion (a rupture) to two lineage structures, and prevents the flowing offering (*a libation*) of circumcision blood into the earth and to the ancestors. Illicit coitus deprives the child of the naming rite and personhood.

Besides its significance of cleanliness²⁰ and submission to the ancestors and to one's lineage bond, circumcision is an enacted rite of identification with the earth,²¹ fellow relatives in paternal descent present, past, and remote past, and those yet to come.

The *rite of self cleanliness*²² is also imposed on the circumcising ritual elders for the purpose of validation before both the visible ritual and the invisible (ancestors²³) elders. Certainly, the general public is participant,²⁴ though implicitly, since it avoids interaction with both the circumcising ritual elders and circumcision initiates. Here the common pre-caution is against provocation of inconsistent behaviour or thoughts that may entail breach of taboos of cleanliness; such breaches hold the community of the culprit(s) accountable to a set of corrective rituals; whereas a circumcision candidate, if found guilty of breach during the cleanliness taboo period, most likely loses his candidacy in that year. He is, thus, subordinated to his age-grouping. This happens because the whole society is moving through a ritual process, a *liminal phase*, progressing to the day of the operation.²⁵

This period, therefore, requires a solemn but festive phase; so a breach is an offence against those numinous ancestors in active communion with the living, the offender pays a penalty of healthy beasts (a bull, two castrated rams and two castrated he-goats) to be distributed respectively to the three ritual groups. As already deprived of their sexuality, ritual traditions regard these beasts as virtually cleaner sacrificial offerings, a placation, to the participant numinous entities (**see chart**) in the circumcision process.

It is a norm imposed upon the said offender to meet the ritual obligation without being asked by his clan local council of ritual elders, who delve into previous situations as well as employing divination²⁶ to determine either negation or penalty, since some reported situations may not be regarded as ritual offence. False reports result from uncertainty and fear of ancestral punishments. That is, traditional Amaa are conditioned to take protective measures against ancestral displeasure in situations of self-doubt.

Once ritual elders establish²⁷ guilt of a ritual breach, the culprit without being asked formally, since the penalty custom is common knowledge, will fulfil the penalty requirement of the sacrificial beasts to be distributed respectively to the council of ritual elders (the bull), the initiates²⁸ (one he-goat), the circumcising elders, who pass on one ram to the clan female ritual elders and the second he-goat to the lineage elders of the offender.

These male beasts are all destined for the sacrificial acts of atonement with both the visible and invisible elders (ancestors).²⁹ There is a fifth sacrificial beast, normally a castrated bull which, if unavailable, is substituted by two castrated rams or two castrated he-goats that the offender's family offers to their lineage ancestors. All these rituals are acts of reconciliation both among the living and between the living and the living-dead. Nevertheless, the penalty of demotion for the culprit will stand.

Here, we may reiterate that an initiate is expected to have achieved gradual growth into traditions. And the penal demotion of one step down the social ladder for a circumcision ritual breach is the milder part of the punishment, since the culprit is forced into re-education in ritual norms with his junior age-grade (now his grade).

The re-education, therefore, is for character formation under instruction of teaching elders and community mentors and family elders, whose insights into traditions facilitate interpretation of divination.³⁰ The instruction of such knowledgeable elders weaves ethical riddles and puzzles in mythology narratives which are preserved in the language and thought of these traditional elders.³¹ Hence, an elder's experienced narration style reinforces the intended impact on the apprentice, whether a young or demoted member in the community.

Circumcision, like birth, incorporation, growth rites of age-grade stages, is, thus, the initiation into both temporal and spiritual facets of contributive manhood. As such, then, manhood is institutional,³² despite ritual challenges and hardships in the process of these countless variants of the traditional Amaa scheme of life inauguration, the climax of which is the circumcision operation.

Relevant to this, Catheru Mugo, a Kikuyu compatriot of Jomo Kenyatta,³³ reminisces vividly about his experience of the circumcision rite at the age of sixteen on "*The Day the Knife Bit [him]*",

"The cutting was over. I was now a grown-up Christian³⁴ Kikuyu, circumcised but without *Ngwati* [small skin left hanging under penis]. I was a man ... Blood was streaming from me like water from a pipe. Thank God I did not faint for I would have been disgraced! The crowd was glad because I had shown courage. They dispersed singing and happy that another Kikuyu child had been brave and had become a man."³⁵

In the same vein of recalling a circumcision ritual experience, Camara Laye narrates his boyhood learning experience of customs while growing up in Upper Guinea, West Africa. In his book entitled The Dark Child, Laye's narrative comments on the significance of the frightening blood streaming off his circumcision rite. Laye writes.

“... the haemorrhage that follows the operation is abundant, very long and disturbing: all that blood lost! I watched my blood flowing away and my heart contracted. I thought: “Is my body going to be entirely emptied of blood? And I raised imploring eyes to our healer, the “*sema* “The blood must flow,” said the *sema*. “If it did not flow” He did not finish the sentence: he was looking at the wound. When he saw that the blood was finally beginning to flow a little less freely, he put on the first bandage. Then he went on to others.”³⁶

Here it could be speculated that the “*sema*” (healer/ circumciser) is explaining to the initiate that the flow of blood onto the earth is a libation offering to the ancestors. It is offered for the maintenance of connectedness with the earth, and ancestors, and for the continuity of other living-dead and the living in communicative relationship.

Ritual “blood flowing” (of cleansing attribute), whether of circumcision or of a sacrificial beast, could also be regarded as a symbolic form of self-offering in order to enhance continuity with the ancestors, who, being central to the traditional African religion, mediate between the living and the living-dead and the divine Spirit. As such, then, sacrificial blood flow is ultimately destined for maintenance of connectedness and communication with the divine Spirit.

Hence, the circumcision blood flow is an essential offering. It is the most cherished rite of passage for the elders and ancestors, who together³⁷ as visible and invisible guarantee continuity (*eternity now*) in rites of passage of their progeny. And circumcision, despite the connection with other rites, is the dividing line in the chain of rites leading from birth; it is a key stage for it promotes Amaa males from social infancy to social maturity,³⁸ a step towards marriage and procreation, which, in turn, promotes them from ritual infancy to ritual maturity. Thus, elderhood is achieved which eventually bonds (*blends*) with ancestorhood.

So circumcision is a symbol and an essential referent that covers many aspects of traditional Amaa life and culture. It implies a rite of connectedness in traditional Amaa society, between its members (visible and invisible) and its natural environment. That is, the society, its members, and its natural environment (all as human community) constitute

a single system of relations which are morally interdependent. Here harmony becomes an essential ingredient that must pervade this traditional human community; otherwise disaster is apparently at the door step.³⁹

It should be observed, then, that in acts of connective rites the living is able to render significant the *retransformation* (death) of ancestors. This significance justifies the past continuing into the present; while the present extends its contribution to the future (in those free spirits yet to be born). It could be said, then, that justification of the past in its contribution to the future is observed in ritual commitments that lead to a successful circumcision rite which, in turn, paves the way for reproductive marriage that contributes to and affirms Amaa traditionalist immortality (*eternity now*).

Central to the sense of *eternity now*, which circumcision and marriage rites strive to ensure, is the need of the living for a mode of connectedness with the past, present, and future people and events that shape the course of individual and group history. Events, so entrenched in traditions started by founding ancestors, take place in various ritual acts, but all aim at connectedness to that invisible realm (*Abbra'dee*), which holds the past, present and future beyond the powers of the ancestors.

Hence, in the rite of circumcision the blood flow (libation, perhaps,) is both a self-giving symbol and a form of ritual interplay of the collective affairs of the individual with the group while, at the same time, binding both earth and sky with the people (see chart). Sacrificial rites that involve blood letting are similar to marriage which perpetually keeps ancestral life “blood flowing”, while circumcision bonds and nourishes the reciprocal relationships between the living and the living-dead and ultimately the *Spirit* (see chart).

2. CIRCUMCISION RITUAL GATHERING

Elders, ritual elders, under the leadership of the spirit-priest, observe the importance of Amaa mythology in this ritual gathering. They intersperse in their instruction mythological aspects, such as the role and meaning of characters in a mythology with present events (individual and collective). In this way, the instruction conveys the intended preserved values in a mythology alongside active customs.

In other words, the youth gather to receive wisdom from the ritual elders, to pray together and to draw on spiritual energies invoked by music, singing, and dance; other creative modes of expression, unlike leisure time dances in cattle camps or group work, are a catalyst to uniting and reuniting⁴⁰ peer groups, family lineages, and the Amaa nation (tribe). The circumcision ritual celebration is an occasion, among many, for peer groups' participation. It is a re-affirmation of life to celebrate, as Camara Laye tells us of his own experience,

“In the town, our parents were making a fuss of the messenger, and loading him with gifts; the celebrations began again: was it not an occasion for rejoicing over the fortunate outcome of the ordeal, for rejoicing over our new birth? Already friends and neighbours were crowding inside the compounds where the newly circumcised had their homes and were beginning to dance “fady fady” in our honour, the dance of manhood, until the enormous banquet was ready, which would be shared by all”.⁴¹

Prominent in this passage is the product of the communal networking, contributions in material and labour to make the gathering possible. That is, costs of ritual celebrations are mutually shared by the community, since it is almost impossible for an individual family to afford hosting a participant crowd that includes people of the neighbourhood, friends and relatives from afar who also contribute according to the nature of their relationship.

Similarly, for traditional Amaa, it is an occasion for the communal acting out of a whole spectrum of political-social-ritual relationships. It is a drama of kinship systems, spirit-priests, ritual elders, family heads, and female ritual elders. All have roles to play in the circumcision ritual in coming down from the mountain (*maydayoo ngaa'soor*) (out of ritual seclusion). Such roles are related to their everyday way of life and affirm not only the unity of the traditional Amaa people, but also the conflicts among the newly initiated men. In accordance with tradition, key persons also contribute freely to the celebration expense.

Such help is reciprocated when similar or other needs arise, whether in terms of material, or labour or both. This co-operative tradition is dominant among traditional Amaa, with the implicit intention of the social integration of communities to the satisfaction of the numinous counterparts.

Hence, ritual activities involve sharing of food as expressed in Laye's statement (*enormous banquet ... would be shared by all*), the repeated participation of ritual elders, with a pleasant ritual presence that prevails in the interaction among the participant crowd.

Here again, we observe the instructional role in the presence of ritual elders both from the community and from distant communities (or tribes). Such ritual elders are more than griots (oral historians). Their participation has a positive impact on the gathering, for they invoke the past in the present. They combine proverbs and metaphors as a means of instruction when addressing youth groupings like pre-circumcision age-grade groupings.

The narration of mythologies is relevant for the purposes of youth gatherings. The character and style of a narrating elder reinforces the meaning and purpose of a mythological narrative. In recalling my tutelage under the Amaa ritual elders, I recollect that some instructing elders seemed to have told mythologies of individual experience which, though relevant, are rich in ambiguity and irony, and almost beg the first person narrator. But mythologies are never told in the first person, as of the mythological figures of *Sheila*, *Nyema*, and others that shape the traditional Amaa mythical contours. Instead, they are narrated by traditional elders, whose awareness and wisdom, nonetheless, are often right. In this way, the ritual elders' objective role serves as a corrective mirror to the youngsters' self-absorption, and, perhaps, to the distorted vision of others like some of those mythological characters who might seem cruel and immoral. Here, then, the apprenticeship of the youth is apparent in traditional wisdom, as is learning from lived communal experience rather than personal reflection.

3. MARRIAGE

According to the mythology of Amaa religion and social organisation *Nyema* and her son *Sheila*, spiritual beings in human form, used prudence in response to the challenge of the establishment in traditional Amaa society. As a tribal society, the Amaa depend on experiential knowledge that is spiritually pertinent to ancestral traditions which are dynamic; ritual elders derive from them relevant functional customs, which constitute the basis for ritual acts. Through concerted networks, ritual elders and elders institute a custom relevant to the background of a tradition and the ritual course to follow.

So the range of customary resources is embedded in ancestral traditions and it is, thus, calamitous for Amaa traditionalists to divert from them. The challenging reactions, as a form of defence, are therefore justifiable. In spite of this defence *Nyema* and her son *Sheila*, by their constructive acts, which are summed up as persuasion and understanding, satisfied the elders.

To the delight of the elders, *Nyema* and *Sheila* came to enrich and broaden existing social structures in relation to both the visible and the invisible levels. This delight and satisfaction are expressed in the acceptance act of the leading opponent elder. He married his youngest daughter as a second wife to *Sheila*, the first acknowledged spirit-priest. Upon his mother's guidance, *Sheila* complied, as he did in the first marriage, with the matrimonial and other structural rites such as circumcision. According to Amaa thought, this was the beginning of Amaa polygamy and the end of female arguments against sharing husbands. Since then some wives have instead either encouraged their husbands or initiated steps towards them wedding co-wives, i.e. a second, third or fourth co-wife.

So Amaa polygamy, entrenched in this mythology, is one among a multitude of anthropological and sociological examples of the variety of marital forms and family structures; but no society can possibly engineer the ark of social experience without the marriage institution. Although procreation can happen without marriage, traditional Amaa, without exception, marry to procreate towards fulfilment of *eternity now*. In his study on the Dinka of the southern Sudan, G. Lienhardt points out that

“All Dinkas ... greatly fear to die without issue, in whom the survival of their names - the only kind of immortality they know - will be assured.”⁴²

Therefore, the key function of marriage is to procreate and legitimise children born to the formal union as opposed to bastardom which in turn implies disconnectedness and rootlessness. It is, therefore, apparent that a bastard progeny has no legitimate lineage to which he belongs. Traditional Amaa regard a bastard as lacking identity, since he is born to two individuals, male and female, whose union has not been recognised and legitimated by the living and the living-dead through the traditional rites. Here the legitimacy for the

traditional Amaa marriage is in the involvement of both male and female familial groups and their respective communities.

The inclusive traditional marriage procedures are the legitimating source of the individuals' spiritual and social identity that is pertinent to both the living and living-dead, along lineage and kinship systems. This means, then, that a marriage socially and ritually acknowledged confers legitimacy on offspring of the union, which further builds interdependence and enhances social structure and function.

For traditionalists, therefore, interdependence knits an invisible fabric between members of a family. It strengthens familial bonds between father and son, brother and brother, uncle and nephew, grandparents and grandchildren; others are determined by an amalgam of the dominant social, economic, psychological, legal, moral or ethical and spiritual factors.⁴³ Certainly, the spiritual factor impinges on every other factor and is, therefore, the dominant undergirding and effective meaning that ensures the legitimacy of marriage and its offspring.

Legitimacy here may mean transmission of the meaning of traditions. Such meanings, in the marriage process, in socialising and bestowing identity on offspring, are found in ritually enacted customs to prevent chaos, which the ancestors punish. And so the prolonged marriage process in networking begins with the initial choosing of the bride, in the formal and informal negotiations and the elders' study of the prospective couple's lineage and suitability to marry, since Amaa traditions do not permit marriage between blood relatives, particularly in the paternal line. In this respect, J. Mbiti points out that

“In traditional societies marriage is not allowed between close relatives. Since the range of kinship extends very widely, the degree of these prohibitions is extensive. ... clans are exogamous ... Taboos exist to strengthen marriage prohibitions ...”⁴⁴

Nevertheless, a couple having maternal relationship may wed each other if the blood relationship is very distant; this is an exception though, and is allowed only after a rite of permission to legitimate such a marriage before the living and the living-dead family members and others in the community at large. Without such ritual permission, a blood-related married couple are looked upon with contempt as incestuous, and guilty of an unforgivable breach of marriage taboos deserving ancestral punishment. In the traditional Amaa view, the couple are regarded as brother and sister and their marriage is, therefore,

a contamination for both the community and the lineage. And ritually conferring legitimacy on such marriage, therefore, protects the husband's lineage and communal social systems, keeps them free from social chaos and preserves the biological continuity.

Here, free from chaos means prevention of deviance, as in the aforementioned prohibition of coupling, concubinage, incest, adultery and other deviant sexual behaviour that breaches common norms in relation to the “processual” social experience and acknowledgement. Such processes are also measures against illegitimacy. Legitimacy is the concern not only of the elders, among whom some individuals are extremely judgmental moralists to a degree that may exceed ritual group consensus (see chart); it is also the ritual group's concern to discern in deciding on the suitability of a marriage coupling, as we shall show below in identifying the elaborate formalities that extend to include locales, animals, other animate and inanimate members of the human community.

For the traditional Amaa, therefore, the supernatural (*Leeh*) imbues the natural order while, at the same time, *It* undergirds the complex interplay of social, spiritual, psychological and economic forces that occur at both interpersonal and inter-group levels. This sense of spiritual presence, whether adequate or inadequate, and which an experienced Amaa traditionalist would know, underpins the actions and motivations of individuals and groups such as extended families, clans, and age-grades.⁴⁵ Individuals function within their interdependent cultural and natural environment in these groups, where the interests of the individual and the society complement one another.

Thus, the individuals within a group or the larger society are interdependent, while the relationships and networks within that societal web form a social continuum, which, in turn, depends on the marriage rite, while at the same time fulfilling the individuals' intimate needs and the ultimate goal of procreation, but it is legitimated in the ritual at the hands of ritual elders as the visible extension of those invisible spiritual forces, whose concern in social continuum is the *eternity now*.

4. INITIATIVES

The traditionalist Amaa marriage rite for a young man can be initiated either by himself or by one of his family senior members such as parents, older sisters or brothers,

cousins, uncles, or aunts, while initiatives by the grandparents, believed to be nearer to the ancestors, are considered to guarantee prosperity for the future couple.

These as well as other more distant members of the family not only have the right of decision on marriage rites, but they also bear material responsibility for marriage gifts (dowry), since that young man will ultimately fulfil their lineage and the societal imperative of procreation, a continuum for their *eternity now*. So their contributions augment that of the parents' cattle, goats and sheep. Such livestock are kept ready for dowry purposes, for whatever ritual act or transaction may occur in the framework of the extended family, which includes the living-dead members and the wider traditional Amaa society. To this end, it may be observed that the individual unit is not the individual, but the kin group. The individual is but part of the kin group and this we also see in the distribution of the marriage gift.

Of course, the young man has a choice, but this is again subject to the approval of the family elders. So when he is permitted to marry, following a long process, he wears either *anddih* (stringed beads) or a (*ca'wee'yeo* fox tail).⁴⁶ His choice is also subject to the scrutiny of his peers (age-grade) in the community.

He may meet his bride-to-be in places such as dancing arenas, collective youth activities or cattle camps.⁴⁷ If he decides, after consultation with his peers, to seek her hand, he approaches his mother, who in turn approaches his family elders, who are capable of recalling orally stored information, especially genealogy. Such information (*traditional knowledge as embodied in traditional culture and celebrated in rituals*) is dispersed among many elders and grand elders. Through consultation, also extended to the intended bride's family elders, they reach a consensus⁴⁸ in the light of which they express approval or disapproval as to the suitability of the intended marriage union.

The father will give his son a *bow'rang* (spear) from the family shrine, as a symbol of consent, manhood and ritual authority⁴⁹ handed down from the ancestors. The spear symbol involves not only the way Amaa relate to each other from childhood onwards, but also the history of the Amaa which is carried on in oral accounts that bring together associations of ideas in the minds of the Amaa people, particularly those of ritual influence and authority like elders and spirit-priests.

So the religious symbols and artefacts (*reminders of the past from one generation to another*) become perpetual transmitters of traditional knowledge for the maintenance of the *connectedness* of the living to the living-dead. Using these artefacts is like dipping into significant things that spiritually effect the perceptions and emotions of relevant people like elders, ritual elders, and spirit-priests all of whom articulate the knowledge retrieved from the symbolic artefacts in ritual acts.

As a symbolic artefact of ancestral presence and authority, the spear⁵⁰ signifies the participation of ancestors in the intended marriage process. The young suitor will request a maternal uncle, close or distant, to deposit the spear at the intended bride's family home. Then follow the necessary networking contacts with the girl's family.

It is the custom in Amaa traditional society to treat marriage as a union between two families rather than two individuals. What is important in such a union is that the choice of a partner is an interplay between culturally defined and religiously sanctioned social factors and individual psychological and non-psychological factors and interests.

It is by relying upon such individuals and ritually undergirded social conditions and factors that the Amaa determine who should marry whom. So the individual follows the set of regulating traditions out of self interest, since this is dependent upon the objectives of the group. Hence, the consent of both families to unite in marriage has spiritual and moral implications as determined by the elders.

So the approval of relatives is essential since the interdependence of individuals is the basis of that society. Therefore, appropriate relatives contribute materially as well as receiving a portion of the marriage gift. Similarly, disapproving relatives may reject their portion and that means doom for the intended marriage. It is, thus, unthinkable for a traditionalist Amaa young male to proceed with marriage without the approval and contribution of the relevant relatives.

On the other hand, a daughter may be forced to marry without consent if the parents accept the choice of a bridegroom, and the acceptance is approved by family elders and relevant others. Here John Mbiti states:

“if the girl very strongly and firmly rejects the prospective marriage partner ... there are cases where force or pressure is applied to get the reluctant young person to marry the partner chosen by the parents.”⁵¹

Once the parents, with the involvement of neighbourhood and family based networks, make the choice of a marriage partner for their daughter or son, she or he cannot possibly reject that choice, for the religious symbols involved in the decision-making process work at the subconscious level.⁵² These choice makers become part of the marriage in a three dimensional sense that is (a) moral, psychological, (b) spiritual, and (c) social and material.

Apart from the marriage gift contributions for ritual reasons; there is the obligatory economic help, an investment in the lineage, given by the bridegroom's relatives to establish both social and economic stability. Since moral and material investments have been incurred, which might be lost at the marriage dissolution, relatives of both partners impose sanctions on the couple when they infringe their marital commitment and give every support to them when stress occurs. Hence, it is obvious that kinsmen, the necessary social relatives, are the formal guardians of the moral order, bound to the lineage and the tribal society by sanctions, duties and rights that are customary, legal and ethical and which, in common speech, refer to rules and traditional standards governing behaviour that enriches and honours the lineage system. As such, then, a man without kinsmen, traditional Amaa believe, is a man without concern for shame or honour that his behaviour might bring. A male Amaa is, therefore, conditioned by these ingrained sanctions from childhood through to initiation (confirmation in traditions) into manhood, fatherhood, and then into elderhood.

It should, therefore, be observed that individuals concerned, and this is an awareness common in any human society, about the reactions of relatives behave differently from individuals who are anonymous strangers,⁵³ whom the traditionalist Amaa would despise as disconnected and rootless. Disconnectedness and rootlessness, though indirectly inclining to biological and social bastardom, for the traditional Amaa, is less than absence of the perpetual but orderly transfer of the legacy of ancestral traditions, rituals and social meanings embedded in the dynamic mythologies and other carrier elements of oral history like artefacts and ancestral locales.

In other words, such a disconnected individual has lost the characteristics of his ontological being (see chart). He lacks the right relationships that exist between the

founders of his clan and the living members of the clan community. Traditional Amaa consider such a person a demon relative still in physical form. He belongs to nowhere as demonstrated by his wrong behaviour, and this surely becomes a stumbling block in relation to marriage rites. This, however, is a stringent approach to traditional Amaa social control.

Since marriage is a union between families, besides prohibitive blood and feud relationships, the third cardinal factor, subject to elders' investigation, is the suitor's ontological standing; that is, the ritual elders of the prospective bride's family investigate whether the suitor has a good ontological standing before they can advise as to his suitability. This is because the ancestors of both sides are parties to the marital union which must, therefore, be proven clear of grievance.

In a way, it is not only the suitor, whom the elders investigate, but his family for what becomes apparent about him reflects on the family. We, therefore, observe that the traditional individual and the group are interwoven, and is regarded only in this light. The individual, the personality, the self can be evaluated adequately only in terms of membership in his group, as we see in the following description of the traditional Amaa marriage process.

5. MARRIAGE GIFT PROCESS

The deposit of *bow'rang* (engagement spear) is followed by the visit of the suitor's family emissary (*ere'doe*: a maternal uncle), who formally presents the intention to the prospective bride's family elders, who then initiate a consultative network to ascertain whether there are any existing prohibitions of blood relationships or blood feuds in the distant or recent past. The presence of any of the prohibitions annuls the intention.

Nevertheless, there is one flexible exception in relation to the maternal relationship line in the distant past where genealogical information is blurred, but even then the process requires necessary ritual permission from the ancestors of both families, for it is regarded as permissible incest and must, therefore, be acknowledged by both the ancestors⁵⁴ and those select ritual elders, who are most advanced in age (*goa'llay*: *well blended into the ancestral dimension; they are partly there with the invisible while physically present and involved among the visible*) and whose sharpened knowledge of traditions and advanced

intuition into things spiritual are prophetic.⁵⁵ To minimise the likelihood of this exception, the cleansing ritual is performed secretly in a secluded dry bed (*co'o'all*) of a seasonal river, preferably in a forest. In other words, restricting the knowledge of marriageable young people of this potential ritual exception minimises its likely occurrence.

For the traditional Amaa, doubts about incestuous marriage involving possible taboo breach which could lead to ancestral punitive reaction must be clarified by means of this exceptional cleansing rite. So the traditional practice allows only a select few, chosen by the spirit-priest of each party, who are most advanced in age, to perform this exceptional rite.

These aged elders' decision on ritual exception is normally followed by a two to three months⁵⁶ waiting period, during which a positive or negative qualifying dream, ritual dissociation (*forms of direct communication with the invisible: divination*) or some other relevant event (*indirect communication of the invisible: divination*) in either of the two communities brings confirmation. Once a blood relationship is established, however distant, the marriage intention becomes invalid since the subsequent waiting period following ritual exception has proven otherwise. Finding that the two families are of the same lineage institution, results in some regret on both sides; nonetheless, they appreciate the discovery. This discovery serves to restore the lineage social order and to retain their social solidarity. In other words, a redefinition of the relationship becomes necessary. To effect this redefinition, the deposited engagement spear (*bow'rang*) will be ceremonially returned. Ritual traditions prohibit the use of this spear again for marriage purposes. After it is returned, it becomes a reminder of reunification and a symbol for ancestral authority; it is silently deposited in the arch of the gate of the family main compound (see **figure 1**).

On the other hand, the approval to proceed enables the prospective bride's family to send a ritual token of acceptance, a confirmation for the *bow'rang*. This comprises a *red* rooster, a large and round cake of tobacco (*dapho'warra*), an item of modern pecuniary value, all of which (*as symbols*) stand for *waah'dah* (word) to be shared among the groom's family and ritual elders of the community.

FIGURE 8: COMPOUND

The traditional Amaa compound is formed of many huts, as wives' households and other purposes, which are occupied by both the visible and the invisible members of the family. The connection between the two realms of family members authorises the elders, whose authority is intimately linked to the ancestors, forefathers, and the common living-dead members of the lineage. The living and living-dead are interdependent; the ancestors (as elders) are closely involved in the compound to ensure fertility of marriage, fecundity, and abundant life, thus, ensuring their *Eternity Now*. In other words, traditional Amaa compound dwellers know the spirits of their living-dead are in their midst. The spirits are the silent community members and participants with whom the living are in constant dialogue and from whom constantly they receive informative direction and instruction, which are made possible through various forms of divination, rites, and ritual application on the compound altar. The enabling agents in processing and dispensing the communication between the visible and the invisible are elders and spirit-priests in co-ordination with ancestors. Couched in this context, 'elderhood and ancestorhood blend'. In all rituals, therefore, the invisible are participants and are treated as such.

Ritual elder : a ritual elder is a very spiritual person with wisdom over matter and basic instincts; preferably an elder could be chosen, provided he accepts, and is then initiated into the role of ritual elder to occupy the office of a ritual master of an aspect in Amaa life. This initiative is out of necessity to ward off ancestral displeasure which sometimes is severely punitive.

But the formal ritual situations have different organisational tasks. Elders and *ritual elders* have some limitations in their ritual roles; whereas the spirit-priest's ritual role is open-ended, for he characterises and exemplifies (or rather representative of) the Spirit in his relationship to the people. i.e. care, friendship, patience, slow to anger because, so people believe, he (*Sheila*, for instance,) can curse the earth and deprive the people of material benefits of the earth. As a key ritual officiant, the spirit-priest always concludes ritual ceremonies.

Kuweir's Private Lodge (Leh Acquuri: sacred place): The numbered area 1,2,3,4,5, is the *kuweir's* private lodge; (c) is the private altar of this lodge, a restricted area, to which only the *kuweir* (spirit-priest) and his senior (first) wife have access; (a) is the entrance to this lodge via the main compound. Number 4 houses the main shrine.

(b) is the main **arched-gate** of the main compound; its ritual importance is demonstrated in **figure 1** and **figure 2(a)**. Numbers 7, 8, 9, and 10 are the huts of the *kuweir's* wives. Hut 12 belongs to the *Kuweir's* living-dead wife. Hut 11 belongs to the adult male children. Number 13 is the bedroom hut of the *Kuweir* (spirit-priest). (d) is the main altar (*mannddah*).

(e) is the common shed (*korr'dooh*) for socialisation and is eating place for males (both adults and children). (e) is the area where education in traditions for the young take place, i.e. narratives, mythologies (ancestors, heroes, and legendary animals), moral and ethical taboos, social and spiritual dimensions of the community. This writer had undergone through this educational process of the traditional Amaa. It is here (e) traditional Amaa children (before and during the modern educational system) are prepared for life. Hence, it should not surprise those who have been brought up in the traditional African way, and who are now in the modern system, when they fail to shake off their ancestral traditions. It is under (e) that ritual-participant elders sit to listen and throw in corrective or emphatic invocation when a ritual officiant misses a point and/or unclear of his normative-narrative invocation preceding a sacrificial immolation and libations at (d) while facing and addressing the invisible at (b). As such, then, (e) is more in the male ritual sphere. Female ritual sphere is in house-shrines of the respective wives' huts.

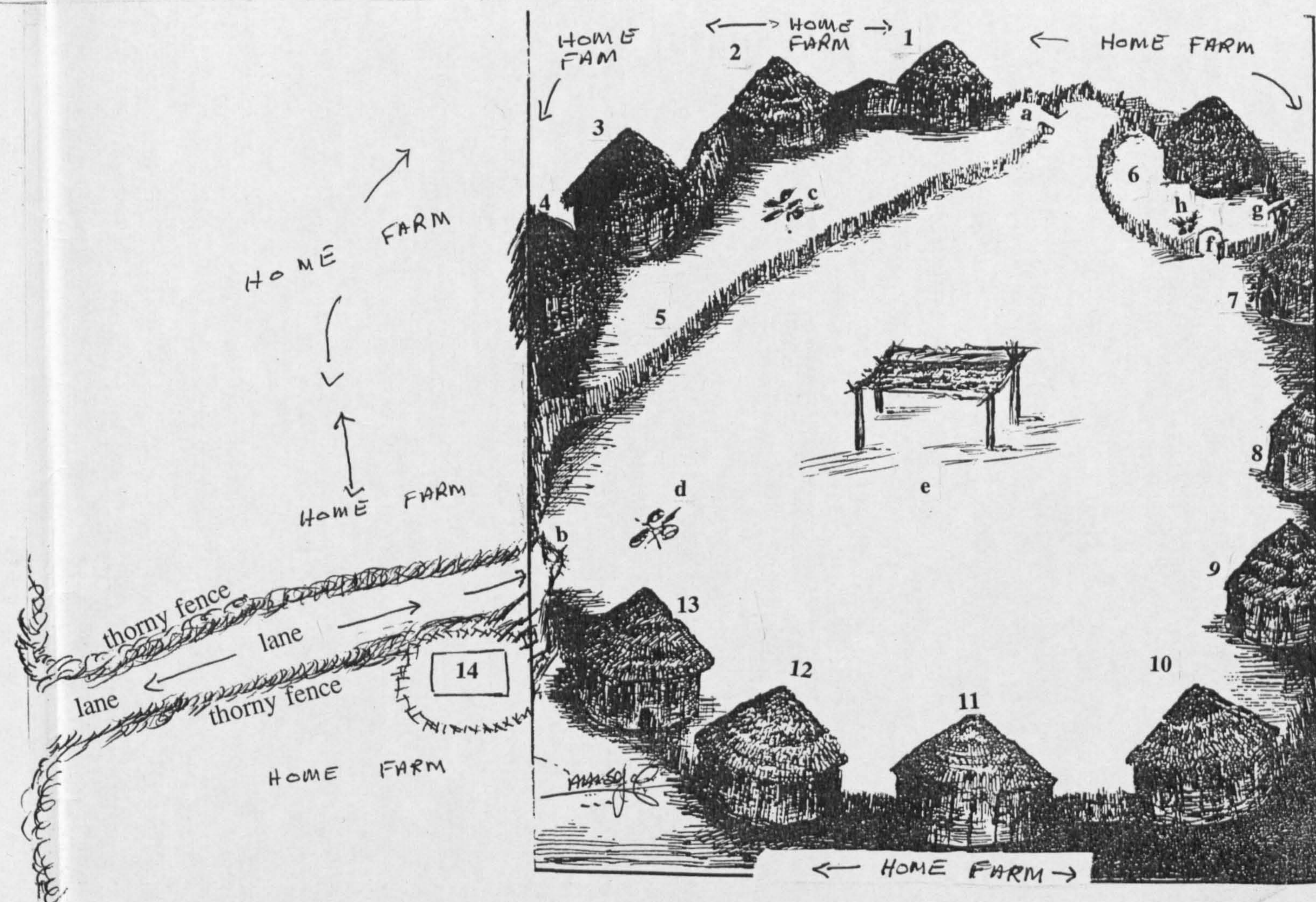


Figure 8
Spirit-priest's Home Compound and Shrine.

Home farm surrounding the homestead is normally divided in plots between the wives.

Compound of the Living-dead:

Hut number 6 of the detached compound belongs to the family of the spirit-priest's late brother *Soo'la* (a soldier in the British Army and died in the 2nd. World War in North Africa), for whom the spirit-priest married a wife in the levirate custom. (f) is the entrance to and from the *Kuweir's* main compound; (h) is the main altar of *Soo'la's* compound; (g) is the main arched-gate to *Soo'la's* main compound. (f), (g), and (h) have their own ritual roles significant to *Sool'la's beshi* (compound) and his living male kinsmen fulfil these ritual roles. There is more to this levirate custom in the body text of this work.

Hut 14 (unlike the circular traditional hut of splintered wood and grass, see **fig. 3** and **fig. 6**): its rectangular wall is built of red clay. Its roof is thatched with grass. Muslims and Christians of the family use this hut 14 for their respective worship time. Although it has its own fence and gate facing the main compound arched gate (b), it is a part of the main compound and is located as such for convenience and is not a sign of exclusion. This is the normal arrangement in multi-religious families across the traditional Amaaland. Ancestral traditions, as inherently tolerant, give continuity and form to the new religious dynamics in an open dialogue and understanding. Maintenance of harmony of the family community is the key point here.

6. ANNOUNCEMENT

Then follows the announcement by the groom's father of his son's engagement. At the spread of the engagement news, the groom's age peers (*kolee*) visit the bride's home. They bring individual gifts to the bride's mother. It is a ritual act of this young and rowdy visiting peer (*coh'leo'way'dee*) group to inflict some damage⁵⁷ upon the hut of the hostess during presentations, accompanied by praise songs of the bridegroom who, though, like his bride, absent at the time, comes later in the company of his mother, with a senior female ritual elder to watch him vigorously dance with the mother-in-law to be.

The key items among the gifts presented are goats, beads, spear(s), and tobacco. They, apart from the main marriage one, represent peers' intention to soothe the mother and her spiritual counterparts in advance of the expected disruption for the family on their daughter's lineage transfer to that of the prospective groom. This expected lineage transfer, coupled with the inflicted damage to the hut (see **fig. 6, N3**), are symbols for loss of the daughter, whose reproductive potency is represented in the stringed-beads (*boardelay*) taken from the mother's house shrine and tied to her waist at the departure rite. Hence, the peer-presented beads replace the out-going ones. At least three she-goats⁵⁸ are sacrificed to the first ancestress (*Nyema*), with spirits coming for edibles at night while the household is asleep and in apology to the female spirits of the clan for the loss of the daughter's services upon her departure. The officiant, a senior female ritual elder, invokes these recipient spirits to enable goodwill to accompany their departing daughter for her prosperity. The second and final in-house ritual, in the presence of a male spirit-priest, is officiated by this female ritual elder as a departure ritual.

As the symbol of ancestral authority and a tool for sacrificial immolation, the presented spear is added to those already in the main shrine hut of the family compound. The senior family elder ritually deposits this spear⁵⁹ in the shrine, while invoking the names of ancestors, mentioning *Sheila* first, as he pours a libation sacrifice saying,

"Aah Sheila nyee'day aay abadia gayei, wong ngay da ay nye doo woe'low la'donn",

meaning,: "You Sheila and the great fathers, you all, lead and clear the way for our child as she is gradually prepared to leave our midst. You have started this way (reference to transfer of her lineage to that of the husband) and must guard it".

This invocation continues further under the compound shed (*koo'err'doo*), where the advanced aged ritual elders gather for the ritual bridal party. The family elder moves from the shrine carrying one spear. As he heads towards the compound altar, he sings war songs and makes attacks in the air. This is a declaration of war against the evil ones (demon relatives) among the living, while emphatically and repeatedly invoking the ancestors to do the same against the evil ones.

Meanwhile, the aged participants share in smoking tobacco, while evocatively adding supporting words whenever the spear carrier, facing the entrance altar (**fig. 1**), pauses as he awaits the senior female ritual elder to deliver a goat, the sacrificial victim, one of peers' gifts to the mother-in-law. This is an offering to ancestress *Nyema* and ancestor *Sheila* from the female kinsfolk, but offered at the altar of the founding patriarch. The patriarch is *Sheila*, to whom *Nyema* gave the reign at that time when they both embraced matrimonial relationships with humans. So this ritual is a renewal, a re-living, act for that particular mythological event to rejuvenate relationships between the living, the living-dead, ancestors, and the *Spirit (Abbra'dee)*, with whom the Amaa lost direct contact upon the destruction of the connecting bridge.⁶⁰ It is a re-enactment of the primordial matrimonial event in appreciation of its perpetuity as central to the Amaa traditions.⁶¹

Hence, at the officiant's invocation at the shrine while depositing spears, the journey of one spear to the patriarch's altar is a revival journey across the threshold between the empirical world and its numinous counterpart, the threshold (the "thin layer") between the visible and the invisible, the living and the living-dead, the earth and the sky (see **chart**). Every participant present follows the ceremony with keen attention, reflection, and expectation according to that situational reality in process. It is apparent, therefore, that traditions are meaningfully worthwhile only in the context of practice (empirical context: *done theology as orality implies in the traditional Amaa cultural particularity and experience*).

That is, traditions which are not sensed, understood, reflected upon, communicated, applied and actualised are meaningless deposits of Amaa oral knowledge. Amaa call such meaningless knowledge "*Wooh'loo corr'corr*," meaning, "hollow or

sweetless *mmoonooong* [sorghum] stalks” to chew on in September at the crop tasting rite, following “*Jalle*” which is the demon departure rite. In a sense, Amaa oral theology is a *done* or *applied theology* and must, therefore, involve communication with both the visible and invisible (in various forms of divination and invocation). It is a lived (*experiential*) theology. By living or practising it, the traditional Amaa gain more insights into things spiritual. This applied oral theology (*done theology*) becomes meaningful only when it is applied in and through the traditional Amaa reality.

7. FEMALE RITUAL SPHERE WITH DRAMA

Thus, the ritual gathering’s smoking of tobacco, and making offerings with water at the house shrine (female sphere), while depositing the beads in the dark clay pot (*baa’dang*), in the presence of a female ritual elder, the male spear carrier, the advanced aged elders, and the ancestors themselves, who prior to the meeting have been asked to be present and for whom the spear stands as a physical symbol of their presence, all this, both the animate and the inanimate gathering in “*multi-vocal*” presence, is locked into that ritual process which, in its turn, locks in social interaction. The collectivity forms the representative presence of the human community. They have gathered to seek wholeness of life for their community and for their daughter in the departure process.

Here, we observe an image and confidence boosting process, a point in the multi-vocality, for both the home community and for the departing daughter, whose detachability has matured for the prospective husband’s lineage and community. However, her image of personal identity is in danger of confusion; insofar as the process suggests that there is present an inner instability and diffusion to the point of destruction for sameness that she has derived from her attachment to the paternal mythologies (like *Nyema and Sheila*, whom she has known since childhood) of the traditional culture in which man's relationship to his institutions and symbols is still relatively intact.⁶² However, her confusion is normal in overcoming the hurdle of this transition into a new uncertain identity; she will gradually blend into that new identity as she consummates her marriage by reproduction.

After the ritual of the advanced aged elders for the enhancement of the bride's image and confidence with both the living and the invisible, her mother and the prospective son-in-law will hold a dancing game, in which they challenge each other. He will try to enter her hut, but she guards the entrance, preventing him entry, and chasing him with a broom she has made for the purpose. She continuously stampedes in a dance around the entrance, while her prospective son-in-law does likewise, attempting to force his way into the hut. If she reaches him, she beats him.

Meanwhile, peer-mothers rally her with hand clapping and songs calling for domestication of the man, as *Nyema* did for her husband, who, out of chauvinism, at first, refused to accept feminine authority. Among the songs are obscene ones. Such songs are uncouth and distasteful in normal and other ritual situations and are, thus, out of character for these grown up mothers.⁶³

The prospective son-in-law's attempt to enter the mother-in-law's hut is a ritual transfer act of the bride's paternal lineage to his, by taking one plank (*coo'maa'nging*) from the master bed (*coo'mang*) where she got pregnant and started feeding her daughter. This is where the bride began her visible paternal lineage membership, though she was potentially already a member before birth - among those "yet to come". So the plank is a symbol of matricentricity that the mother finds hard to part with and pass on to her daughter, whose transition to womanhood will need that plank where she (bride) and the bridegroom are to begin their intense biological relationship. This is why⁶⁴ the mother firmly guards the hut entrance. She usually succeeds in preventing the bridegroom entering the hut. But she loses the dramatic ritual battle to one of the bridegroom's age-grades (appointed prior to the contest) who will, as fast as he can, dash into the hut at the moment she is totally distracted by the bridegroom. Seeing the peer guest with the plank exiting, she immediately stops chasing the bridegroom. She, then, gives him the broom.

Thus, she surrenders her daughter, but the final transfer of the daughter's paternal lineage occurs in the house shrine where she ties some of the stringed-beads (*boardelay*) onto the daughter's waist, also in a ritual process. The stringed-beads in the earthen sacred pot (*baa'dang*: a symbol for the spirit of the earth) and its metal lid, which obviously means firm preservation of the bride's paternal lineage potency.

This ritual, thus far, replays the history in *Nyema* mythology, tames the alien male before he takes over the female, who, as a wife, later domesticates him. Here, we find an Amaa husband responding, “*Aah shing wooe'dang kaa shelle nowoe!*”, meaning, “*I am no longer a man, I have been castrated!*”, when asked whether he has a house (*beshie*: family) or when confronted with an issue demanding his immediate decision or action. That is, he does not execute or determine alone unless he consults his wife, who carries essential responsibility before his ancestors, for whom she maintains *eternity now* in lineage perpetuation. His ancestors uphold the wife, especially if she is a mother. Nevertheless, he often contradicts himself in many ways for she holds the reins. We recall how *Nyema* maintained her husband’s chauvinistic attitude.

So the bride's image and identification with and domestication of her prospective husband begins at this ritual at the hands of the mother with the singing and clapping participant peer mothers. Even though the bride is absent, she knows these mothers play a boosting role in encouraging her new identity and confidence to continue afterwards in the domestication of her groom’s chauvinism.

Here at this point, a bride’s maid, normally an age-grade peer, calls the bride out from the seclusion of a neighbour's house. She is called to initiate the groom into eating. She, then, addresses her father saying that she wants her husband to eat (*indoo kaa ngalle tibbiyen: I want him to wipe his mouth!*). Now that she has accepted him to become her husband through the father (*here referring to her family, relatives and all those presently involved in the ceremony*), it is her turn to confirm by introducing him and his company to the first meal. She initiates him in this ritual process, which, again, is the beginning of the domestication that the mother-participants had started. Her request is immediately granted. It is a tradition among the Amaa that a prospective groom neither eats nor drinks at his bride’s home until she initiates him into it. Apart from the matter of domestication, there is a custom of avoidance between him and the mother-in-law. This taboo only affects the mother-in-law at the rite of domestication;⁶⁵ henceforth, this taboo stands.

According to the ritual norm, with the exception of *Sheilow’wa* who use cow milk to initiate the bridegroom into eating, the bride chooses a white ram from her father's flock that has been driven home from the cattle camp for this rite. The father, then, invokes and

dedicates the beast by intermittently but gently hitting it in the centre of its forehead (*nnurrr*).

The ram is to be sacrificed; the women prepare it, and the eldest male in the family offers tit-bits of the meat to the ancestors with a reminder to those relatives who departed to the living-dead realm at a young age that they are not forgotten. He, then, requests the elder ancestors, some by name, to gather, celebrate and share the gifts of this occasion. They are asked to bless the prospective relationship between the two families as social affines.

Besides the ram, a domestic beast but a member of that human community, there is a comprehensive sacrifice consisting of a number of beasts and fowls, excepting cattle, that have been brought by the company of the age-grade peers of the bridegroom. As a tradition, of course, these sacrificial victims, too, are offered ceremonially to the living-dead of the bride's family. The invisible members of the bridegroom's family and their other significant member spirits are usually expected to be invited participants. So the invisible members of both parties are invoked to direct their goodwill towards this new relationship.

The officiant, normally a spirit-priest like my late father,⁶⁶ after invocation and libation of thin-liquid sour dough (*mmoonongo abaa'reeh*: paste of sorghum) poured to the spirit of the earth, dips the ox tail into the *abaa'lee* (thin sour dough) and, then, showers the participant audience while he utters this invocation,

"Abadia ngy, atadia ngy, aa tee dow nyo kiddough a ang too'welleday. Ayh nyong ngayee boo'dow willigg. Ayh arrngay da aa ngy too'reenyo a millayh taygay torr'neye dow aa gy ana leeo wirreo deeggillen she'day ashing",

meaning, *"Our fathers, our mothers, take this thing (all sacrificial beasts for the offering are regarded as one thing in a sense of being a portion of the living human community sliced off as an offering to the living-dead and other invisible) and protect us and follow this child of yours (reference to the bride) to her new lineage. Let her not put us to shame (reference to her fertility and contribution in children to her new lineage, which should mean her contribution to eternity now). Ask the heavens (the Spirit; see chart) to shower us with the tears (heavy rains) and spittle (blessing; also referring to light showers) so that we meet again next year (reference to crop growth in farms and the wild of both plants and beasts and the domestic beasts and fowls) for festivities in our continuity."*

He, then, aims the spear at the sacrificial victims as if he was slitting their throats simultaneously. Meanwhile another ritual elder awaits him with a bunch of spears from the

shrine. The officiant, after symbolically slaughtering all the beasts, turns to that ritual elder, invokes the *Spirit (Abbra'dee)*, and touches the spear bunch with his. Henceforth, these spears are distributed to the attending ritual elders according to their age. Clan elders know the respective histories of these spears.

8. MALE RITUAL SPHERE AND MALE YOUTH DOMESTICATION

The attending youth group hold the victims for the ritual elders to slaughter. The officiant ritual elder slaughters the ram, first saying, “*aba ngy day neeyey she'done*”, meaning, “*our fathers did it in this manner*” as he slits the victim's throat and others follow in the act. Since the sacrificial blood spattering is ominous, victims are firmly held down, while all observe absolute silence, to ensure the smooth flow of it into the earth, which is essentially sacred, as a libation for the ancestors, whose physical (metaphoric) presence is acknowledged in it,⁶⁷ while their spirits (real persons) actively enhance the life of the living progeny.

Then follows the offering of the “*nyogour*”, the tip of the sacrificed ram's right ear, pierced on a green “*saggi*” twig which the aiding ritual elder roasts lightly on the flaming altar. The officiant elder then offers it to “*Leeh tong arnngayh dong*” (the being [*Spirit*] of the sky or rain). The tit-bits of ear tip, accompanied with praises, are alternately thrown first into the flaming fire for the sky (see chart),⁶⁸ the second piece to the right for the ancestors, and a piece to the left for evil ones, which is a cautious acknowledgement of the presence of the evil members⁶⁹ in the invisible realm of the community.

And he then offers a piece to the back, a piece to the front, and a piece to the right. The offering in these three directions is intended for those living-dead, either blurred in memory or gone into oblivion to whom Mbiti refers as *zamani*,⁷⁰ who might react punitively against exclusion. Even though these anonymous spirits are peripheral to the memory of the living but integral to the community, the officiant elder, after chewing the last bit with inaudible mumbling, addresses them,

“andoo nga kaadoong naydee ay nyeedoo nga kaadoong naydee a'a angyeedoo kaa ngan tegg's ay kaa ngan jay'gayia. Ay nyee day kaa feeyeo daa'woe”,

meaning, “we are many on both sides. Now that we are about to enjoy the sacrifice, we ask you to share it since there is so much and no one would have a bigger share than the other except what

the traditions of our beginning dictate. It is the tradition to share (to free spirits) and our fathers who are with you started it. Join hands with them (fathers) for our prosperity.”⁷¹

It is as though these spirits are physically present before him, as his gestures and tone of the voice suggest. Meanwhile, other elders, in support of the prayer, add “*mmm, nee’yeh’coo*”, meaning, “*it is so*”. This is one way of maintaining the relationships between the living, the living-dead, ancestors, free spirits, and *Abbra’dee*, too. In other words, this elaborate propitiatory ritual is also a protective covenant renewed with the ancestors, messengers of *Abbra’dee*.

He then beckons to the senior youth to light sticks in a solemn manner according to the number of beasts sacrificed, and to hand them in an orderly manner to his peers to start roasting fires outside the compound, where the host community of young women have deposited piles of chopped wood and water in new earthen pots. This water must be drawn from a newly dug well.

This particular ritual tradition requires the visiting young men to clean and cook the sacrificial meat, and to prepare it according to the structure of the ritual gathering, i.e. age-grade groupings, who are to consume it. In other situations, both formal ritual and non-ritual, men neither cook nor serve others in the presence of women. But the exception here is because women domesticate men in marriage, as seen in the bride’s mother and her age-graders’ symbolic act of domestication of the bridegroom and his age-graders,

Upon the beckoning of the officiant elder these young men to be domesticated receive flaming twigs, which represent living-dead youth, from the altar flame of the main compound after the sacrificial victims’ ear-tips have been toasted and offered to ancestors.⁷² The officiant ritual elder, pointing the sacred stick (*toewoe*) to the lying carcasses of sacrificial victims, gestures permission to the young men to carry away the carcasses to the foot of mount *Soonyour*, where the large-scale social and ritual processes will occur. Their journey involves effective ritual role relations and interactions among themselves as they march singing obscenities⁷³ and exchange the ritual loads, some of which are extremely heavy such as calf oxen, rams, and he-goat carcasses that require group units to carry them. Younger age-graders are also participants in this ritual process.

Upon the appearance of Nyema's shrine in sight, the songs change. The spear carriers, a leading sub-group of the procession, stampede forwards and backwards while brandishing the spears and making mock attacks in air as they sing songs of praise to *Nyema* for the fertility and fecundity of the earth. In spite of the ritual seriousness in the procession to the wilderness to appease and venerate *Nyema*, the ancestress who brought to Amaa attention the knowledge and practice of spiritual involvement in marriage. She domesticated and tamed the chauvinism of the human male she married.

Meanwhile, the bride is secluded in her mother's hut in the village. One of her age-grade maidens is her representative in this ritual journey. The bride's representative is expected to be familiar with marriage rites and the underpinning mythology of *Nyema*, besides having the ability to articulate such knowledge into prose and comedy lyrics, some of which are crudely impolite, in attempts to tease and provoke the bridegroom with his peers, who are now doing women's work in the wilderness of mount *Soonyour*.

While the young men carry out the rites of the ritual meal preparation in that large scale, the maidens, as a separate peer group, play juba to accompany that prose and lyrics. From my experience as a five times participant in the domestication rites, I found juba (*aa'eiyee*) prose and lyrics provoking. It is an integral part of the rite to test the temper of the young men, but the ritual taboo prevents the young men's immediate response during the ritual process. The rebuttal comes in the same manner of artistic form, with the exception of juba, as the procession returns home. The main contents of male rebuttal consist of a denial of chauvinism (*co'coy'asheeda*) and the claim that *Nyema*, emerging from her silent natural actualities of mount *Soonyour*, has witnessed the rite before her. The bridegroom leads in singing the ritual rebuttal,

a'aandayh wong wadah kaa sheiyeda Nyema we have fulfilled our ritual obligation with mother *Nyema coallee gueshinne, codowe teggayee, moowe teggayee a'telledayh* our age-grade spirits, the ones of woods, ones of the air, saw all *ngganay shaye aa'do wonong kayree kiddo hashinne* who says I don't do wife's work? *Eenay tanday, aada eeyi*. Is it you (addressing the bride's representative) or you or you (while pointing with the left hand fore finger at the representative, then to the maiden on her left, and then to the one on her right. This is repeated as both groups march homewards in juxtaposition but at a separating distance of at least two to three hundred yards)

The maidens will again observe silence; none of them will respond to the rebuttal of the bridegroom, who marches dancing to the rhythm, sticking the spear into a mask of

ram's head, decorated with green leaves and grass in its mouth. With his right hand, the bridegroom holds the loaded spear with the mask. He has his prey, a visible symbolic sign of male hunting skill.

But the spear, a symbol of ancestral presence, is also a shielding sign of authority against spirits of the woods who might be protective of the game. The grass as a substance tied to the spear is significantly stronger than the various worn amuletics. It is a certain type of grass that traditionalists believe can ward off magic and spells from enemies. Therefore, the loaded spear here is also a protective ritual device against the unwanted spirits of woods, mostly the demon relatives and the erratic free spirits. The traditionalists believe these unwanted spirits can harm the procreative potential of the bride's representative or any of the ritual participant maidens. So the bridegroom's brandishing of the loaded spear and the ritual pointing⁷⁴ of the fighting stick towards the juxtaposed flock of maidens is a warning to those spirits not to attempt to follow since the ancestors are on guard surrounding the village entrances (see chart).

The maidens continue to observe silence as they squeeze closer together to eliminate space gaps, while their fast moving hands hold *saggy* (a tree) branches⁷⁵ to be added later to the ritual fire of the main compound altar, from which the young men received the flaming twigs. The maidens' movements are also acts intended to discourage the evil spirits from following. These symbolic acts of avoidance and discouragement of undesirable spirits are, in fact, an acknowledgement of the problem of evil as integral to the *Presence (Leeh)* in the traditional Amaa thought and belief system (see chart). As such, the homeward ritual journey is a vulnerable one and must, therefore, be cautiously made. Thus, for the traditional Amaa, not unlike similar Africans, the distinction between the sacred and the profane are not meaningful, for the invisible forces are held to be active also in the natural order and can work for or against the visible. No wonder, then, traditional Africans live in mutual obligation with nature.

9. EXCHANGE RITUAL

On reaching the village limits, the returning ritual processions meet four elders with their ritual elements at the main road entering the village. The most senior elder, holding a spear and a bunch of neatly tied reeds, stands in the middle of the road while

facing south to that wilderness (*woe'wrrong leeh*) direction; the second one, holding a bundle of grass coupled with a new gourd full of water, stands to the right (*taa'dim'merr*) while facing east (*err'now*); the third one, holding a red rooster (*koddom'mooll*) and a she-goat (*kkodo*), stands to the left while facing west (*lao'woe'now*). The fourth one is the female ritual elder who ignited the flame from the fire hearth (*tooss'ssa*) of the house shrine (*tooss'sson*) and brought it to the officiant elder who, in turn, set it onto the altar of the main compound. She stands behind the most senior elder in the middle, but faces north, homeward. She carries a red earthen pot (*mmooss'ssooh*) full of home-brewed virgin beer (*ashee ackoo'ree*) and holds a castrated he-goat(*ko'ra*)⁷⁶ while humming praises to *Nyema*.

This ritual continuation is between the visible and the invisible. The female ritual elder has come to receive the domesticated young males and the returning flame from *Nyema*, but she exchanges them for the castrated he-goat that is destined to be sacrificed together with the pot of home-brewed beer.

She offers a salute to the bride's representative, who, on return, represents *Nyema* instead and, thus, holds a flaming twig which she picked from *Nyema's* shrine. She hides in the vegetation surrounding the shrine, while the bridegroom offers a bit of the ritual meal and some utensils with their contents to ancestress *Nyema*. She remains still until everybody has faced homewards and the journey has begun. She, then, slips into the shrine and picks the flaming twig from the fire pit (about two feet deep) and runs fast to catch up with her group. This is the flame she exchanges for the pot of beer. Since she represents *Nyema*, she is simultaneously authorised to perform female rites. Thus, she faces southwards to the wilderness, invokes the *Presence*, pours a libation to *Nyema*, demon relatives, spirits of wood, and free spirits who might have followed them. She finally asks *Nyema* for release from this ritual responsibility. The male ritual elders consume the beer afterwards.

She then joins the female ritual elder. Both women face the north, homewards. The bride's representative (*bidd'airr*) takes hold of the castrated he-goat which she takes to the bride. Still holding the flaming twig, the female ritual elder turns round and her male

counterpart also turns round and they face each other. Between them is a well-arranged pile of wood which she sets aflame while invoking ancestress *Nyema*,

“atta dia Nyema, aba dia Sheila, anggy dang boodow willig aay beshee toowalayh, anngy tao’low koo’deer woe’rran. Annggy wada koosoodough woa’rowe....hmmmm”,

Meaning. “Grand-mother Nyema, grand-father Sheila, follow us home, and protect the home (reference to community) and strengthen our laps (reference to child-bearing). Drive away all ill will of both people and spirits surrounding us” (see chart).

Upon completion of this invocation, she returns to her first position (southward) and sings songs celebrating the generosity of the ancestors. She beckons to the maidens and the bridegroom’s group to follow her and the bride’s representative with the castrated he-goat. All sing after the female ritual elder, except the bridegroom, as they, separately and in juxtaposition, march dancing towards the main compound, where the able-bodied members of the village come forward in the same jubilant manner to join in the dance, thus becoming a spiritual (*ritual*) community celebrating the beginning and continuity of life in the ancestors and those “yet to come”.

The female ritual elder, in a ceremonial manner, exchanges the flaming twig for another one, handed to her by the male officiant, from the altar of the main compound. Hence, she proceeds with the flaming twig back to the house shrine past the waiting castrated he-goat, tied to the left post of the entrance to the hut.⁷⁷ It is destined for sacrifice in that house shrine by those female ritual elders who, in the presence of the spirit-priest, are to perform the lineage potency transfer.

The return of the flame to the hearth of the house shrine, which in essence is invigorating for the lineage potency, transmuted and reinforced by *Nyema*, before its essential transfer to the departing bride, provides the traditional Amaa with their sense of the present, the past, and renewed continuity for the future in those “yet to come”. In another sense, for the bride, this journey is a mythical one,⁷⁸ a “liminal”⁷⁹ value uniformly esteemed, even though physically she remains secluded in her mother’s hut, which might be seen as a return to the maternal womb to be reborn anew in the transfer process into the matrimonial family, to which she will belong for *eternity now*.⁸⁰

According to Turner’s notion of “Liminality and Communitas”⁸¹ she is in a “liminal” threshold, an ambiguous state between married and unmarried woman. Her

paternal roots have been loosened but have not yet been uprooted for transplantation in the new lineage grounds, which she eventually will reach after the observance of the “liminal” value transcending the social status.

The second point is in the return of the flame accompanying the cooked sacrificial meal brought back from *Nyema*'s presence. The bridegroom, at the main compound altar, returns the bunch of spears to the officiant who, in turn, deposits the bunch in the arch of the main gate facing the altar. The officiant, then, beckons to the meal carriers to surround the flaming altar, with the loads still on their heads,⁸² while the officiant invokes the spiritual presence. He calls upon *Nyema* and *Sheila* by name. With the sacred stick he gently hits the bridegroom on both shoulders and thighs, and finally offers him a small gourd of beer from the waiting pots surrounding the altar.

Upon the order of the officiant, the young men unload the sacrificial meal and withdraw backwards to their group adjacent to the maidens' group. Silence is observed during this ritual process only to be broken after the dedication of the meal, the offer of tit-bits of it and the pouring of the beer libation into the very small hole in the ground before the altar. The officiant, then, picks a pinch of earth surrounding that hole, adds another pinch of ash and blends them; he blesses this mixture with his saliva and as he kneads it, he continues invoking *Nyema* while staring at the hole. He, then, invokes *Sheila*, the bride's ancestors and the other spirits present as he moves forward to the main gate where he deposits the kneaded tiny lump of mud, now rich with functional symbolism (composed of saliva, earth and ritual ash), into the sacred bull horn in the arch of the gate (see fig.1).

10. SIGNIFICANCE OF RITUAL ELEMENTS IN THE “UNBROKEN CIRCLE”

Here, a brief explanation of the ritual uses for the sacred horn may be intersected for clarification. This horn, decorated colourfully in symbols, also represents continuity of the ancestors with other living-dead and the elements attached to it; its context as a symbol becomes “multi-vocal”. It contains grass, ears of different grains, some dried fruits from the wild, and two round and small (undug) gourds are tied to it - one in the middle (representing the moon) in its gentle curve, while the other representing the sun is at the

sharp end. The presence of these elements, imbued with respective spiritual dimensions, involved with the people draws in the African traditionalist idea of the human community, we referred to earlier.⁸³

The collection of these elements enhances the process of *eternity now*; that is the perpetual growth and withering, birth and death (*retransformation*, the return to invisibility, the original real state). But the perpetual process of birth anew and the waning of the moon and the rising and setting of the sun and their formative influence on seasons and impact on the life cycle, according to Shorter, referring to Joseph Goetz's concept of cosmobiology, shows that humankind is organically related to the rhythm of nature.⁸⁴ The traditional African is, therefore, justified in including and treating other things of nature as integral to his human community.

So the pouring of the libation into that hole before the altar, the pit flame at *Nyema's* shrine and the taking of a flamed twig for the house shrine, and the depositing of a kneaded lump of mud into the sacred horn, as symbols combined with the symbolic acts and ritual words including the obscene songs, are all, as Shorter suggests, referring to de Chardin, in a process that

“draws a continuum between humanity and the material world”.⁸⁵

This “continuum”, however, prevails in the Africanness which, Kenneth Kaunda argues, is spirituality rooted in the depth of traditional African memory, which also prevails in Africans of the diaspora,⁸⁶ of

“birth and death, harvest and famine, ancestors and the unborn”.⁸⁷

The traditional African, therefore, in terms of what he regards as human community, as Senghor contends,

“... does not draw a line between himself and the object ...”,⁸⁸

As such, the involvement of the elements in this marriage ritual process, (i.e. *toewoe*, spears, gourds, grass, fire, beer, water, blood, horn, and so on, besides their totemic and totemistic functions [see **chart**]), serve to promote forces that expand the abundance of life for *eternity now*.⁸⁹

11. MARRIAGE GIFT

The gathering of the elders of the two families starts with some humour on both sides. Either side can take the initiative to break the ice, but with humour. Each side is headed by an elder and in most cases by a ritual elder solely because of the expected ancestral presence to which, using the intuitive sense, he can respond; for instance, as sometimes happens, when an aggrieved ancestor presents his/her concerns. In this situation divination becomes inevitable.⁹⁰

Such ancestral concerns may rise from a distant historical or genealogical impediment like a blood relationship of feuds which, although resolved sometime in the past, nevertheless, still continues to prevent marriage between two lineages. A vocalisation from divination ensues to bring about the termination of the intended marriage at this stage and this creates hardship that can be emotional or a revival between the two parties to discover a dormant but present blood feud that has surfaced.

So leadership of a ritual elder ensures a mature response spiritually pertinent to both parties. In such a situation, traditions demand reversion to the council of elders, ritual elders and spirit-priests.⁹¹ This state is what deems the presence and leadership of a ritual elder significantly preferable, for this process of the Amaa traditional dynamics of marriage unfolds rituals and moralities of taboo controls, balance, sacrifice, and cohesion. Taboos, mostly inspired by religion, are intended to regulate social relationships.

So the final settlement of the marriage, if no ancestral interruption or bridal suicide occurs, will proceed. The two groups of elders move to a corner of the kraal, which is actually a part of the main compound but separated by a fence (see **fig.1-a**). The living-dead are also expected to be present in their respective groups.

They come to assess and settle the marriage gift in terms of cattle, goats, sheep and various pecuniary materials. Some wooden pegs are traditionally fixed in the centre towards which hand gestures are directed during the negotiation address. The elder acting as spokesman for the bride's family, holding a bunch of pebbles, carefully trimmed straw grass or small twigs, makes a mole hill before him. He will then count those relatives entitled to receive a portion of the gift according to the degree of relationship. Some will receive cattle, some will receive sheep, some will receive goats, and some will receive

material of pecuniary value. Each time he mentions the name of a relative, he transfers the pebbles one after another from the left hand and piles them on the mole hill. This process of enumeration includes the living-dead relatives who have a right to a portion, normally given to their living progeny or heirs. Even the demon relatives are enumerated. Such portions for the living-dead are sacrificed or dedicated to them. But the portions belonging to demon relatives are certainly simultaneously sacrificed to them.

Once the act of enumeration is completed, this elder spokesman collects the pebbles, counts and hands them to the elder spokesman of the groom's family. This total sum of pebbles is the total corresponding number of persons entitled to the portions of the marriage gift. This enumeration procedure is repeated in enumerating the expected animals to be received in the marriage gift package to which the bridegrooms' extended family contribute. The bride's family distributes it likewise to its extended family.

Furthermore, as the custom dictates according to the mythology of *Nyema* and *Shiela* as incomplete "*soo*" human beings (partly human and partly spirit), combining the visible and the invisible in a perpetual relationship, traditional Amaa do not take marriage gift in full as agreed on upon this enumeration. They always leave behind (unsettled) unspecified amount of the gift, also called "*soo*" (incomplete) for future generations of the two parties. The intention of the "*soo*" is to maintain their kinship perpetual. This tradition extends to other relational areas that maintain social bridges intact.

The application of "*soo*" tradition indicates traditional Amaa connectedness to their mythical origins, gives spiritual significance to kinship systems and social responsibility. In other words, ancestors started the kinship systems and humankind community. In sum, traditional Amaa marriage process demonstrates continuity of lineage and family beyond the grave. Here Hawkesworth's report is applicable to the traditional Amaa,

"... on marriage during the various other ceremonies, goats and other animals are slaughtered to the [living-dead relatives: good and demons and] ancestors."⁹²

12. MORAL GRIEF MAINTAINS CUSTOMS: SOCIAL CONTROL

However serious the offence might be, traditional Amaa ways incline mostly to reconciliation and life rather than punitive vengeance unless a situation is out of elderhood

(traditional theodicy) control. Members of traditional Amaa society are expected to live and behave in ways that promote the society's well-being; to do otherwise is to invite disaster, not only for the culprit individual but also for the social group as whole. Behaviour or action that diverts from the harmony of the society is regarded with disfavour. The group, therefore, employs remedial steps to counteract and, hence, reverse the evil consequences set in motion. So reactions to breaches vary from one situation to another. Our example here surrounds the occasion of marriage gift distribution when a latent breach of taboo of social relationships surfaces in a gradual way that, at first instance, resembles greed.

Though frowned upon as sorcerous, the weakness of greed sometimes plays its unwanted role in some recipients who, if an animal so presented, will reject it and demand a replacement, which, if brought, may or may not be accepted again. If a replacement, though without blemish, is rejected too, the elder spokesman will suspend the choice for that individual. A repeated act of rejection for the portion of gift is an expression of the grief of that relative. The rejection is a demand for intervention of the ritual elders for the resolution of the latent grief.

Such grief may be caused by some behavioural factors. The party to the conflict could be the bride, a sibling, her mother, her father, even the groom could be a coincidental party as a cause of the grief. As noted earlier, an offence of an individual holds members of his/her community liable. Thus, an offence of anyone of these could hold everyone liable. Of course, this form of liability does not exclude the offender. Any behaviour outside the customary and social norms may be the cause, i.e. lack of courtesy, impersonal behaviour especially towards the elderly, and so on. Such behavioural factors are rooted in the experience of group life, adherence to customs, and the awareness of the oneness of things as human community. Hence, for the traditional Amaa, not unlike similar Africans, religion is a constant accompaniment in individuals' and group life. So the relations between members of the society, morality, life crisis, healing, traditional education, and so on are an integral and inseparable part of the traditional religion.

Here, an example of the offence, since we are dealing with the marriage gift, is articulated best in the character of the bride. She might have failed to comply with

conventional traditions such as leaning (inclining: a form of a bow) forward and offering her right shoulder to be greeted by a touch and a moist (saliva) air blow (*millay*, meaning, saliva and *ca'aarre*, meaning, bitter). *Millay ca'aarre* is that bitter (holy) saliva of spiritual cleansing potential, which is normally bestowed as an invocation to the ever-present spiritual dimension; it can become a curse instead of a blessing from an elder, if the elder is a relative or community member but of a different lineage. Such an elder does not have to say anything, but the constructive or destructive (punitive) efficacy lies in the silent intent.

It is the spiritual realm that has been offended. So the rejecting recipient, too, is liable to punishment if he/she does not compensate for that offence against the spirits who judiciously guard customs and social conventions derived from the ancestral legacy of traditions. Such a case requires the council of ritual elders to deal with it immediately after dispersion of the gift, but the rejected portion remains suspended until the problem is solved. Such a solution involves apologies by the prospective couple and their parents before the ritual elders, who afterwards summon the offended relative to express his satisfaction. He (the offended party), then, spits saliva⁹³ on the bride's forehead with a greeting touch on her right shoulder.

He is, thus, reconciled with her, but his reconciliation with the spirits will take place at his home altar of the main compound. He sleeps alone that night to avoid intimate contact with his wife (wives). At dawn the next morning, before cleaning his mouth, he invokes the ancestors for release of the bride (calling her his daughter), with libation of water, some of which he retains in the same gourd. He, then, sacrifices the marriage gift itself to the ancestors. The first drops of the sacrificial blood⁹⁴ flow into the gourd and mix with the retained water. Using the sacrificial knife (or spear drawn from the arch of the main compound gate) to slit the victim's throat, while invoking, he adds four scoops of a hot mixture of earth and ash from the edges of the altar fire into the blood-water mixture; he spits into it. Accompanying this blessed gourd (*co'deng*), with spontaneous prayerful gestures and idioms, he hangs it with its mixture in the arch of the main gate. In this way, the spheres of personal spiritual ego, the social, and the transcendental cosmic one⁹⁵ are brought together in this gourd in the form of the mixed contents, which are symbolic of the restored harmony - from a state of disconnectedness to connectedness with the

spiritual realm. Fundamental here is the sacredness of existence in the affinity of diverse elements converging in the *One* and the same but diffused *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit: God) (see chart and chapter 4). As such, this indicates a theology of nature, which we may interpret as the living dynamic religion of traditional Africa, not as “deteriology” as Mbiti contends.⁹⁶

Diop claims the dead are not dead and gone, but continue life as living-dead and occupy the cosmos (see chapter 1). They are involved with the living. Traditional Africans are bound to them. They appeal to them in the quest to maintain cosmic order, health, and harmony, but there looms beyond them (ancestors) the *Supreme Being (Abbra'dee)*, to whom *ancestors connect* (as messengers) to intercede for the visible. Ancestors are, thus, the medium for the understanding of traditional religion. The ancestors are ever in the consciousness of the living.

13. MYTHS, SYMBOLS, RITUAL AND ‘LIMINAL’ MATRIX: A REFLECTION

Myths, symbols, and ritual practices as ways for the *indirect theology*, as we have seen in the sequence of different phases of circumcision rite and the traditional Amaa marriage, are the means by which the traditional Amaa set much in store and which they *believe* to determine the nature and destiny of the group life and their sense of *eternity now*. These symbols and rituals are important, but they are not the end in themselves. They are only externals. It is the interior meaning that counts in traditional religion and this explains traditional Amaa emphasis on *booshee co'shille* (cool and clear heart) for enhancement of this interior meaning.

So the threshold, a ‘liminal’ zone, between the visible and invisible, the living and the living-dead, the earth and the sky (see chart) is also symbolised in the elements involved⁹⁷ in the marriage ritual process only to converge in the bride, the threshold of the humankind continuity in the “Unbroken Circle”,⁹⁸ which embraces the natural world (see chart).

So, too, the arch of the main gate, locale of the microcosms in the character of the gourd with its mixed elements, bridges the inner compound and the outer skirts where the spirits are believed to gather at rituals. They are believed to dialogue in silence while

awaiting libation offerings and sacrifice; here to the traditional Amaa, not unlike similar Africans, the distinctions between the sacred and profane are not meaningful, for these unseen powers populate the natural order and are, thus, held to be active in it (see **chart** and **chapter 4**). The material objects that feature in traditional Amaa religious practices are not ends in themselves. They are the means by which these spirit powers are approached. For one reason or another, they can act for or against the living.

Because of this belief in the spiritual presence in the ritual activities on the mundane altar through the arched gate (a *bridge*: a 'liminal' threshold), the ritual officiant invokes them as if he sees them face to face. They (spirits) have access to the offerings deposited for them in the arch of the gate; they have the ownership of beasts⁹⁹ dedicated to them at the altar in front of the arched gate (see **fig.1**). It is through this arched gate, following the rite of potency and lineage transfer in the house shrine, that the bride finally exits to her matrimonial new lineage.

As a ritual norm, arising from these beliefs of the traditional Amaa, the bride's journey from the house to the arched gate is guarded against possible attacks of the living-dead sisters who might have died young or before marriage. Traditional Amaa thought speculates that these living-dead sisters remain in their respective paternal lineages.¹⁰⁰ This state is a cause for dismay and, therefore, leads to aggression against the living sisters in the process of the marriage rite. As a result, during her exclusion rite in the mother hut, the bride invokes and offers appeasement gifts in the house shrine to spirit sisters. With the help of the accompanying female ritual elder, she offers and invokes some by name, asking them for sisterly protection instead of aggression and saying that it is not any of her fault that they are imprisoned in the paternal lineage.¹⁰¹

The guiding female ritual elder, too, rebukes the spirit daughters to prevent them from any aggression for the bride has acknowledged and appeased them and so there is nothing more the bride could do to change their situation.¹⁰² She utters the rebuke while escorting the bride to the waiting male ritual officiant at the altar. Even though, during seclusion, the bride performs restoration rites for social relationships with both the living and the living-dead realms of the paternal lineage in quest of their blessing towards wholeness of life in her new lineage and community. This belief in the erratic behaviour of

junior living-dead relatives forces traditional Amaa ritual authorities to maintain the seclusion rite upon the bride in the marriage process until she exits through the arched gate (a neutral “liminal” threshold) which is a bridge between the visible and invisible and between her paternal lineage and the matrimonial one. Once she exits the arched gate, she becomes an outsider but a social kin and, thus, under the spiritual protection and authority of the new lineage.

But meanwhile, before the final exit, she remains a liability upon her paternal lineage ritual authorities, which must make certain that she clears the ritual hurdles before her. The officiant, normally a spirit-priest whose authority bears weighty efficacy, enacts the final protective rite and blessing combined in the sacred stick and the mixed elements in the gourd; every component element of this mixture is seen as a symbol interlocking and interlacing the nature and course of Amaa traditional life. As multi-vocal symbols, these elements are in the service of fertility and fecundity.

So the traditional Amaa life course is the interweaving of age-graded trajectories as in rites of initiation transitions of which male circumcision and marriage are essential ones. Such transitions are always embedded in symbols of group dimension (like the gourd, sacred stick, spear, stringed beads, house shrine pot [*baa'dang*], etc.) reinforced by the network of social forces as represented in relationships¹⁰³ among kin and friends across a life span, that give these transitions distinctive social meanings of age. Transitions bring age-graded perspectives to social roles and events which, as definite movement from one state to another, involve rituals determined by the age-grade groupings that form the social hierarchy, the structural dimension of the Spirit presence. Males are the dominant factor in Amaa social hierarchy, and females, who are subordinate and movable from one lineage to another, undergo fewer transitions but marriage is the major and, perhaps, the final one preceding burial rites and home-coming rites when she *retransforms* (dies)(see **fig. 6**).¹⁰⁴

This protective process passes on to the officiant at the altar (before the arched gate) for the final protection, peace, and exit rite. Here, the male officiant blesses her with *toewoe* (sacred stick) drawn from the arch of the gate; it represents ancestral authority, on the right shoulder first and, then, the left. He dips a well-trimmed bunch of reeds into the

gourd and blesses her with it on the forehead first, the right thigh second and the left last. She is certainly smeared with the mixture of elements contained in the gourd.

So the passage through the arch (*sacred spot*) of the main compound gate is a liminal passage of the bride (*the point of convergence for all ritual processes*) from the profane through the sacred to the profane as though she (*in metaphorical terms*) knits together the visible and the invisible realms of the “Unbroken Circle” through that “thin layer” which hinders the vision of the visible from seeing the invisible members in their midst. This passage concludes the ritual act of both cleansing and releasing the bride’s spirit from the grip of the paternal protective spirit ancestors, some of whom could be vengeful.

14. RITUAL VILLAGE: *KIDDANGO TTAGEELLE*

In his “Ritual Symbolism, Morality and Social Structure Among the Ndembu”, in The Forest of Symbols, Victor Turner gives the interpretation of the crosswise movement of symbols¹⁰⁵ in the threshold between the visible and the invisible, the living and the living-dead, the earth and the sky (also see **chart**).¹⁰⁶ This symbolism, though real for traditional Amaa, since for them believing and doing are central, represents the transitions between birth (*transformation*), life and death (*retransformation*). It suggests the sacredness of the social and numinous order. The ritual village is such a symbol between the invisible and the Amaa and Gholfan tribes, on the one hand, and a neutral ground as well as a symbol of peace proclamation between the two nations (tribes), on the other hand.

As a neutral ground for two bordering nations in a ritual gathering in memory of those living-dead warriors and ancestors, this village becomes a liminal threshold that periodically draws the two nations into convergence in “Communitas”.¹⁰⁷ Here the progenitors and the progeny commune as one. That is, the living and the living-dead (visible and invisible) intersect to form and maintain oneness in peace and harmony. This communal ritual act, in memory of fallen warriors, is a celebration which represents the living experience in that life defeats death. Thus, traditional Amaa regard death as only a trauma of *retransformation* into the first invisible mode of existence. This time the

retransformed (living-dead) continues life as a member of his/her family lineage and not as a free spirit.

The forest surrounding this ritual village is not exploited, for it belongs to the living residents¹⁰⁸ and is, thus, a sacred ground preserved in its natural state. It is where walkers to and fro between the domains of the two nations hide their rudimentary weapons.

For instance, I and my village friends, as shepherds, used to hide our spears (*coo'la*) and daggers (*commoodoo connie*) in the bush on the Amaa side whenever we and our animals (cattle, sheep and goats) herded across the demarcation of the ritual village to and from the Gholfan side. So did Gholfano shepherds when they crossed over to pastures on the Amaa side. This was the common ritual observance for both peoples, whether in groups, or individuals moving beyond the ritual demarcation to and fro the domain of the other. It was a taboo to carry a weapon beyond the demarcation.¹⁰⁹

Once on the other side we, the shepherds, borrowed tools such as axes and knives for chopping and sharpening branches into sticks for digging edible roots and for hunting rabbits, kudus, and sometimes fowls with slingshots.¹¹⁰ This ritual custom prohibited unconsumed portions of game or fruit from crossing to the domain of the other side. As the tradition required, we donated excess of game to local elders, but hid our weapons in the forest on the Gholfano side of the ritual village before we returned to Amaa side.

15. VIOLATIONS

Violations are, therefore, disruptive for oneself and others within and without one's group. This is the situation of the multi-dimensional ritual village (shrine) between the Amaa and Gholfan peoples. Whoever violates sanctions of the passage of this ritual village develops immediate anxiety, with unpleasant sensations; I once did because I believed it. Such anxiety eventually drives the violator to report immediately to his/her family head, for such violations put one's family at risk.

Before a violator passes through the arched gate (*orre'goalle*; see **fig.1**) to the family main compound, he must call repeatedly in a shrilling call that is sharp enough to attract immediate attention from any adult, a neighbour even, male or female, with the exception

of the unmarried, for the unmarried, though grown-up, are not acknowledged as adults for they have yet to contribute in procreation towards continuity of the clan and eventually the nation (*beshie*).

The respondent, who might be the family head himself, will spontaneously understand that shrilling call. He/she¹¹¹ immediately comes with a gourd of mere water, preferably liquid-thin-sour dough or beer, for libation and invocations on the ground altar (see **figure 1**) facing the arched gate. Meanwhile, the violator continues waiting outside the arched gate to be summoned to the compound. Upon entry, that ad hoc ritual officiant will pour drops of the liquid onto his/her head and shoulders. This amounts to an immediate cleansing act, even though it is incomplete.

This ad hoc cleansing rite, though incomplete, intends a peaceful welcome for the provoked numinous forces inimical to disorder. Both Amaa and Gholfan believe the spiritual forces (living-dead warriors) from the ritual village escort the violator to his/her home. Unless they are appeased, they are believed to cause havoc first in that family and then the community.

Therefore, the temporary and peaceful ad hoc rite preludes the propitious sacrificial rite that exonerates the family, at the cost of the life of a he-goat or a ram. Besides appeasing the particular offended numinous entities, the family guardian ancestors, who are also offended, are invoked and offered sacrifices to revoke their claim and alleviate the expected punishment

The propitiating sacrifice for this cleansing rite is performed by the Spirit-priest, the ritual elders, and the head paternal uncle of that particular family. The ritual village shrine is the locus of the cleansing rite. Invocation, libation, and the sacrificial victim(s) are supplied by the family of the offender. These offerings are to exonerate the whole community.

According to elder instructors, the living-dead warriors of the Amaa and Gholfan nations, as a numinous community, act together in punishment, protection, and maintenance of harmony between the two nations. This living-dead community of warriors at the ritual village (shrine) are also believed to influence the fertility of intertribal marriages (*Amaa* and *Gholfan*) and animals and the fecundity of the earth and to deter

permissive conduct of any segment in both *Amaa* and *Gholfan* societies. Here a network of consultations among ritual elders, whose knowledge of the social dynamics of their respective segments, becomes necessary before they seek divination of a spirit-priest for confirmation or correction in the necessary ritual remedies that will follow.¹¹²

This category of numinous involvement is, therefore, more of a horizontal than vertical dimension (see chart). Here the earth is the horizontal plane, with its attendant meanings that intersect with the vertical ones to substitute intersections of ritual action to reach the desired remedies or to achieve the desired goals and needs.¹¹³

More relevant to the horizontal plane than the vertical (see **chart**) is another set of co-ordinate ways filled with tensions between the domiciled villages and the ritual village (shrine) and the passage lanes in its surrounding reserved forest which should, perhaps, be regarded as a liminal threshold¹¹⁴ and, thus, sacred. Therefore, its violation entails a cleansing sacrificial rite or else there is trouble. In other words, this ritual village is potentially sacred and, therefore, dangerous. It has to be respected through sanctions relevant to it. It is a localised cosmos by itself, but with a binding moral and spiritual impact on these two separate traditional nations of *Amaa* and *Gholfan*.

Their periodical ritual gathering at this ritual village is a commemorative rite that involves dances. Such ritual dances are collective invocations addressed to the warrior ancestors to impart their courage upon the young men who are to defend the well-being and contribute to continuity of kinship between the two nations. Ritual dances, not only at the site of this local cosmos, but in general are re-actualisation's of the past for the present. In this way, the tradition expresses future hope of lineage continuities that enhance eternity for ancestors.

16. TRADITIONAL SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Before the dance begins, groups of the women pay a visit to *saggi trees*, the fertility symbol. As mentioned earlier, this *tree* is associated with the spirits, whom the eager visitors want to entice into their families. It is a norm observed among maidens in such ritual celebrations to compose fertility songs under these *trees* as they clap, sing, and dance for the spirits.

It is here, therefore, in watching the beautiful costumes of jubilant celebrants, that spiritual traditions are experienced in acting. This form of spirituality is a living art of theology, intertwined with the eternal dimension, but it is just a performed art to unfamiliar spectators like modern social scientists as well as religionists among both modern and alienated Africans.¹¹⁵

In this spiritual art, female ritual elders contribute zestful poetic chants to young female groupings, including barren women. The female ritual elders transpose mythology into an entertaining spiritual experience for ordinary and young people, whereas for the elders these chants carry meanings. This process teaches and transposes the mythology and history into the present moral and ethical context for the youth. This is one process of continuous though informal tutelage for the youth on the threshold of adulthood; that is, the stage of approaching circumcision and marriage rites.

Perhaps, for the traditionalist, it is not the visible beauty of ritual costumes or melodies that interests ritual elders and seekers of answers to existential problems like barrenness, but the meanings that will move spiritual forces to action.¹¹⁶

It is here that the knowledge of female ritual elders prevails over males. Female ritual elders weave knowledge better into the art of chants, songs, the beat of the talking drums, and dance movements and counter movements; a spirit-priest (or ritual elder) transforms those legends and tales so much that their mythological significance becomes submerged in the chants and songs. As such, mythologies are not mere abstractions, preserved in vocal art, body painted costumes, in rites of passage, elders' memory, sacred artefacts, and in riddles that challenge children's intellect, but they are a living reality in the traditional Amaa life.

All this means that daily living and knowledge intertwine with mythology to trace the history of the people. For instance, Lienhardt writes of the Dinka

“... to illustrate how a few central and fully mythical incidents are re-created in local terms which place them in the context of the ... social world each Dinka knows today, with its particular relationships of descent-groups and personalities.”¹¹⁷

Despite the inexperience in oral traditions of laity who could unintentionally distort a mythology in their vocal art, nevertheless, the detailed knowledge lies with the ritual

elders who constantly deliberate on the national (tribal) affairs,¹¹⁸ in which ritual and historical aspects intertwine as integral parts.

Thus, the traditional attempt to master the localised cosmos¹¹⁹ is to be appreciated in terms of dominance of the numinous presence as expressed in sacred paraphernalia.¹²⁰ It is in such paraphernalia that the active ritual horizons of the visible and the invisible meet to enhance the wholeness of the community and of individuals.¹²¹

This kinship operates in social and ritual networks that intensify in preparation for this factual rite. Deaths of warriors of both nations (tribes), the coming of peace as a result, and the beginning of inter-tribal marriages have widened the kinship systems of both nations (tribes). The peace treaty has been beneficial for the Amaa, since their marriage system is exogamous.

Thus, the periodical ritual festival at the ritual village is a spiritual expression deeply rooted in the traditional memory of birth (*transformation*) and death (*retransformation*), ancestors, and the unborn. It is in the cultivation of this memory and its perpetual reactualisation, in spite of the ever-present tension between the visible and the invisible social structure, that the traditionalist *eternity now* fulfils itself (see **chart**).

This ritual festival of the *Amaa* and *Gholfan* peoples at the ritual village is a process of communion, anticipation, rediscovery, and reaffirmation¹²² through the ritual medium of every meal and every drink (libation to the invisible). Such reaffirmation and forward looking is seen in every gift that participant youths exchange. The essential exchange here is when individuals give of themselves to neighbours, whether in kind or in an economic activity such as sporadic group farming (*cao'lay*) or building or repairing a hut or fence. It is in this way that individuals of groups become fused with the neighbour in a reciprocal manner that extends to spiritual dimension. Thus, they experience the fused and committed "Communitas".¹²³

17. MYTHOLOGY OF *KO'DEER*

Ko'deer was the title, not the proper name, people gave to this descendant of ancestor *Sheila*. It describes his deeds as a leading warrior. It means strong, generous, just or rich in wisdom. His mythology informs us that a warrior called *Bowe'rang* came to him with a captive maiden, also a warrior, from the Gholfan nation (tribe).

According to this mythical narrative, warrior *Bowe'rang* explained that the captive begged for marriage instead of death, the preferable war norm for losing warriors. This request was *unusual* and, therefore, became an *unusual reason* for the traditional warrior *Bowe'rang* to disobey this deadly war norm which required him to kill the maiden warrior on the spot whether she asked for marriage or not.

Since, for traditional Africans without exception, nothing happens by accident, the *unusualness* of the maiden warrior's request and *Bowe'rang's* disobedience were simultaneous variables attributed to the guidance of numinous presence in the battlefield. The mythology says *Ko'deer* pondered *silently* on these variables and, then, ordered warrior *Bowe'rang* to drum talk to the warriors to stop killing and not to proceed with spoiling Gholfanland.

In the meantime, *Ko'deer* gave his own horse to the captive maiden. He instructed her to ride to Amaaland. On its neck, the horse wore a rope (*Koosheh*), the emblem (totem) of *Bowe'rang's* clan of *Kelang* as a safety ticket, since she rode alone to the land of her captivity. Although she had the opportunity to divert, she did not, for she believed the numinous were a party to the process and would react punitively if she were to act contrary to the process that eventually led to her marriage and assimilation into Amaa society. This was the beginning of a lasting peace of which the ritual village is a symbol between the two nations (tribes).

According to traditional African sense of local causality, ancestral spirits are active¹²⁴ in continuity among living progeny. In this mythology, therefore, ancestors of the Amaa and Gholfan peoples were involved in the process of ending the tribal wars. It could, then, be said that the ancestral spirits used the opposite genders as a means to communicate the message of peace and the beginning of kinship.

The two important figures in the mythology are the *Gholfano* maiden, spurred by her tribal ancestors to break the tribal marriage norms in asking for marriage instead of death.¹²⁵ *Bowe'rang*, her captor, facilitated the communication between her and the leading warrior *Ko'deer*, whose progenitor's visionary appearance confirmed the meaning of the woman's quest. So the meaning and the purpose of this series of happenings in the battlefield were fully realised for both nations (tribes) and the respective invisible

counterparts as far as divination goes.¹²⁶ The sequence of this communicative interaction of the past is grounded in concrete facts of social interaction in ritual events of the Amaa and Gholfan nations (tribes) at the establishment of the ritual village, which has induced permanent peace and lasting affinity.

That is, harmony, kinship, and continuity all blended in the periodic ritual re-enactment of the mythology, which has become the central point of communication between the two peoples as well as the individuals of both sides for sociality, especially for youth, among whom the meeting of opposite genders sometimes concludes with marriage.

Here a maiden has the ritual liberty to take marriage initiatives which are unorthodox, even vulgar in normal life, for such a liberty breaches the marriage systems of both nations (tribes).¹²⁷ Although there is no enemy involved here, this contrary ritual behaviour is an enactment of the request of the Gholfano maiden for marriage. Her request breached tribal war norms. Instead of death, and knowing full well she was acting against the norms of the nations (tribes), she chose marriage into the enemy group. Here our reference is to the contrary behaviour in ritual situations.

This is, on the one hand; on the other, at the same time, *Ko'deer's* vision¹²⁸ of his ancestor *Sheila* in the battlefield informed him of some hint in the direction of marriage that was later confirmed in the coming of *Bowe'rang* with the surrendered maiden warrior.

The mythology continues to say that within a brief period after the burial and blood clearing rites of the warriors of both tribes for acknowledging the legitimacy of the institution of a new kinship between families and clans of the two nations (tribes), prospective suitors' families begin the normal marriage procedures that involve rights and duties. For these inter-cultural ties, points of conflict always require compromises between the two parties (see **chapter 2**).

Here in the re-enactment the two parties re-live anew the original moments of the mythology. And re-living the moments of the eventful mythical past is one of the most typical of ritual gatherings when the participants' poetic imagination swings to shallow interpretation of the traditional religion (*its topologies, taxonomic, and the socio-political contexts*) to provide insights into the work of ancestress *Nyema*, *Sheila*, and the successive ancestors and legends as those living-dead warriors who have not yet attained

ancesthood status with the living. Death in whatever manner is in this sense but a transition, which entails both ancestorhood and continuity between the living and the living-dead.

For traditional Africans, rituals are acts aimed at maintenance for the visible as part of the larger ontological web (see **chart**). The individual roles in this network of relationships that maintain ritual co-operation require all to yield to the community of spirits, but most importantly to ancestors, who form and stand in the centre as binding for the norms they have established within the ambit of that Mystery, the Spirit.¹²⁹

Perhaps, it should be re-iterated that the ancestors are not only members of the transcendental order (see chart), with an endowed will to grant wishes to the living, but they are also part of and involved with the living in daily affairs. Therefore, they are formally and informally offered sacrifices like libations, food offerings, animal and fowl sacrifices.

Sometimes they are offered rare objects that become sacred artefacts imbued with active power, depicting ancestral presence in the respective descendant's homesteads.¹³⁰ The power of the owning spirit is believed to possess its artefacts. In other words, artefacts such as *toewoe* are living objects for ontological socialisation and are, therefore, used in blessing and dedicating both people and sacrificial beasts.

Using such artefacts as *toewoe* (sacred stick) in rituals aid traditional people to feel more deeply for the invisible realm which surrounds them. For traditional Amaa, the truly real is the invisible, since it is the source of social and spiritual formation which is expressed in the networking social web of the ritual participants. It is this ritual networking web that Victor W. Turner calls "processual"¹³¹ complex, a functionalist interpretation, where Victor W. Turner combines the organisational and functional dimensions into one ritual unit, since both are inseparable.¹³²

Here the ritual village is one expression of that one ritual unit combining organisational and functional dimensions of two nations (tribes) and becomes more emphatic at the periodical ritual gatherings, which involve intensive networking.

The process of collective networking to achieve ritual purpose in traditional Amaa society has developed into collective habits and, perhaps, customs, that supersede the

necessity for the development of formal modern legal authority which, in any case, is not like a social order that grows from within internalised customs that become second nature and which spontaneously lead a traditionalist to do what is right for him/her and the collectivity. The numinous elders and ancestors are vigilant to reward or punish. The example of such obedient behaviour is apparent in the efficacy of sanctions for crossing the ritual village demarcations between Amaa and Gholfano domains.

18. TRIANGLE OF CONFRONTATION

The confrontation of spirits against spirits and spirits against the living is implicitly shown in the behaviour of the characters in the war mythology (*Gholfano woman, Bowe'rang, Ko'deer*), and of the ancestral spirits of the parties. Each of the three people breached tribal war norms. Marriages are normally arranged by family elders and it was, therefore, inappropriate, even lewd, for the *Gholfano* maiden¹³³ to ask for marriage instead of immediate death by the spear of the capturing warrior. Moreover, *Bowe'rang*, the capturing warrior disobeyed the murderous norm of the battlefield.. Instead of killing this *Gholfano* maiden warrior in battlefield gear, *Bowe'rang* dragged her to *Ko'deer*, to whom the spirit of *Sheila* appeared in a vision at the same time without utterance,¹³⁴ according to the elders. The vision preceded the whirlwind that came while *Bowe'rang*¹³⁵ and the captive were before *Ko'deer*.¹³⁶ He, then, ordered *Bowe'rang* to beat the lone talking drum in the battlefield to tell the Amaa warriors, though victorious, to withdraw, to abandon the spoils, and to stop spoiling the Gholfanland.

Upon *Ko'deer's* orders, *Bowe'rang* gave the explanation on the drum beat that it was the will of the spirits of both tribes to end the fight. According to Amaa elders, the whirlwind was the approving presence of Gholfano ancestral spirits who had guided their living female member to breach the norm. *Sheila's* spirit appearance was approval too for Amaa warriors to bend the battlefield norms. They spared the lives of the captives and abandoned material spoils. The sequence of events in this mythology, which Amaa call *Waa'do'innassaah*,¹³⁷ seems to indicate a conflict between the ancestral spirits of the two tribes, whose cultures are slightly different.

All the sequences of events of this mythology confirm the traditional belief in the invisible, especially ancestors, and continuity of life after death. It also confirms John V. Taylor's metaphor of the "Unbroken Circle"¹³⁸ and the ultimacy of the invisible (the truly real) over the visible (its symbols and metaphor). The mythology concludes in marriage and the establishment of an intertribal kinship system that imposes compromises upon conflicts between the two nations (tribes).

That is, the sequence of events has succeeded in preventing the destruction of the *Gholfano* people. This was the survival point for the *Gholfano* people and their ancestral eternity, since, for traditionalists, life beyond the grave makes sense only in terms of the ancestors, who constitute the source of a soteriology relevant to the spiritual and physical dimensions of life in the here and-now.

19. MYTH AND VISION INTERPLAY: A DIVINATION PROCESS

According to traditional Amaa elders, ancestor *Sheila* appeared in a vision to *Ko'deer* in the battlefield. The traditional Amaa interpret this vision as a reciprocal response of ancestor *Sheila* to the quest of the Gholfano maiden warrior who was spurred by her Gholfano ancestral spirits to breach war and marriage norms in asking *Bowe'rang* for marriage instead of death in the battlefield. That is, according to the elders' interpretation, Amaa ancestors responded to *Gholfan* acceptance of defeat by allowing this *situational marriage*.

So the ancestral spirits were directly involved in establishing kinship between the two nations (tribes). This kinship, in its turn, has established a chain of reciprocity, a whole system of mutualities that commands both the visible and the invisible. For the traditional Amaa, mythical realities and meanings¹³⁹ and the sense of ancestral presence¹⁴⁰ are applicable in the traditionalist daily living in an attitude which is prescribed authoritatively in a range of customs and work ethics, whereby the ritual elders are enabling authority mediums of mythical and legendary realities (as they are believed and acted upon) to manifest in daily living. In this way, a mythology becomes a linking block between the visible and invisible and between the past, present and future and, perhaps, a "liminal" matrix in active visions.¹⁴¹

Hence, a mythology may prescribe a specific situation(s) that may extend its involvement into other situations. This informs us how myths are building blocks of traditional Amaa cultural idioms, as we can see in the sequence of events beginning with ancestress *Nyema* and extending to the visions of the battlefield with *Ko'deer*.¹⁴²

The narrative tells that the spiritual powers of *Ko'deer* prevailed as equal to that of his ancestor *Sheila*, who, traditional Amaa believe, had empowered him (*Ko'deer*) to become an effective spirit-priest diviner.¹⁴³ In the light of *Ko'deer's* vision and the resultant sequence of events, we can regard the spirit-priest as a prophet and a medium,¹⁴⁴ a key ritual elder, who enjoys tremendous respect. His person and presence overshadow his council of ritual elders, the clan, and the tribe even, though he is accountable to both the living, the living-dead, and ancestors, if he/she is to remain morally upright. His/her authority, therefore, is religious and judicial; he/she is an arbiter whose word (authority) none would dare to breach. And according to the common will of the living and the ancestors his concern is the well-being and the harmony of the group which is guided by ancestral traditions. Mythologies, in turn, undergird ancestral traditions.¹⁴⁵

Hence, a mythology, a linking block between the visible and invisible, directs our attention to K. Koech's point of view, even if Koech presents it in terms of the concept of reincarnation,¹⁴⁶ which is contradictory to the Amaa understanding and application of mythology. That is, mythology enhances practical living since it impacts upon the behaviour of individuals and groups. In other words, mythologies, for the Amaa, are models to follow in ritual and cultural formation. Koech argues that African mythology expresses the continent's traditional comprehension of the Spiritual realm and, hence, of the ultimate truth. The essential point of this is the link (continuity) between the living and the living-dead,¹⁴⁷ who enhance perpetuity of life for the visible realm. Myths define the leitmotifs of traditional religion, i.e. birth, life-stage initiations, spirit-priesthood (medium) for those chosen to be so, sacrifice, and the union between the living and the living-dead; that is, the visible and the invisible complement one another in forming the "Unbroken Circle"¹⁴⁸ of the traditional human community.

The sequence of interplaying events in this mythology leads us to conclude that trance is a process that induces the spirit's presence before divination utterances. The

traditional Amaa view flash occurrences in ritual trance as indicative forms of revelatory modes containing germs of answers that ritual elders, especially the elderly wise, understand and interpret. Sometimes such interpretations embody ominous news that will demand immediate ritual action to achieve resolution. Besides divinatory clues, interpretation also takes into account unexplainable and obscure events in either that local natural environment or social behaviour in some quarters as being contrary to the norms of traditional life. Both situations are relevant to the interpretation, since traditionalists believe that they are in constant interaction with their counterpart visible world (**see chart and chapter 3**).

In other words, views of ritual trance and other artificial and direct forms of divination enhance traditional Amaa beliefs, as they further clarify and generalise the traditionalist world view in the process of lived experience which is charged with emotion as well as cognition, and a discerning ability for the meaning of their eternity now.¹⁴⁹

20. SUMMARY

The theme throughout this chapter is based on the kinship ideology among the traditional Amaa. This ideology is undergirded by ritual, a central force, actively reflected in the social relations among kinsmen and others. Traditional Amaa is a society that demands accountability from its corporately consecrated spirit-priesthood while granting cautious respect to its elders and reverence to its ancestors as messengers of the Supreme Being (*Abbra'dee*: the Spirit Creator). Ancestors and the common living-dead are believed to be constructively as well as destructively active among the living. "Local causality is", therefore, "significant since the deceased elders are still active".

The description of the intricate web of ritually conditioned social interactions enhance communication between the visible and invisible as well as relations mutually co-operative, productive, consumptive, distributive, and protective against forces (including demon relatives) inimical to the soundness of traditional Amaa society. These relations extend to mutually include other aspects of nature and their respective significance. Traditional Amaa life is, therefore, full of rituals enacted and performed in various social relationships for *eternity now*, or family functions that are portrayed throughout the text. It

is in these functions and livelihood activities that religion (or the divine presence) manifests *Itself* as an integral and inseparable part and, indeed, the quintessential undergirding factor for the whole. It would, therefore, be an unfortunate error to compare and equate, and it would definitely lead to a negative conclusion, the experientially lived religious traditions with religions of holy books, written doctrines and dogmas. In sum traditional Amaa indirect (oral) theology is articulated in various ways as portrayed in ritual acts and social relations. Traditional Amaa life is bound in rituals, the platform for the applied articulation of their oral theology.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Footnotes

1. Such information is maintained in the Amaa language, i.e. in a network of proverbs, legends, riddles, and fables that are easily transmittable from one generation to another. They do not have a written literature on humanities such as ethics, psychology, sociology, or natural sciences like zoology, botany, biology, and so on in the manner of modern science. Instead, they are rich in common sense gained through observation and practical experience. Such traditional knowledge is conveyed, besides through elders' instruction, from father to son. Each generation adds, subtracts, or shapes the traditions according to its era. Also see Ben-Amos, Dan, "The Seven Strands of Traditions: Varieties in its Meaning in American Folklore Studies," in Journal of Folklore Research 21, 2-3, 1984 pp.97-132.
2. Spirit-priests, ritual elders, and elders know by experience and intuition that this ontological order is greater than themselves, their order, and their understanding. Nevertheless, they strive to understand its depth in their attempts to know who they are, where they come from, and where they go to upon *retransformation* (death). These are certainly the common human problems! (see **chart**).
3. (a) Faris, James C. Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1963, p.305.
(b) Laye, Camara, The Dark Child: The Autobiography of an African Boy, 1978, p.105.
(c) Schreiter, Robert J., (ed.), Faces of Jesus in Africa, 1992, part two.
4. (a) Beattie, John, "Divination in Bunyoro, Uganda," in Magic, Witchcraft and Curing, edited J. Middleton, 1967, pp.211-231. Beattie points out that
"Divination is a rite: it is not just a way of doing something; it is also, and essentially, a way of saying something."(1967:230)
Where a seeker (or patient) is anxious about the outcome of a divination quest, or is given an undesirable response, by enacted ritual means in the divination process, he is permitted traditionally to state his doubts and fears. That is, in spite of doubts and fears, Beattie would argue that [divinatory rites] are a force that induces, levels, and, thus, relieves
"some of the interpersonal stresses and strains which are inseparable from life in a ... community"(1967:231)
Hence, divination and ritual accredit the divination processes and legitimise the diviner before the seeker or public in that the supernatural give the answers. That is, the divination process secures divine sanctions.
(b) Here we refer to some pertinent historical material on divination in the Old Testament (The Holy Bible: Authorised King James Version) as in **Judg. 20:26-27 and Josh. 7:13**. The Israelites went to the house of the Lord, mourned, fasted "and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord". When they did not receive favourable response through two attempts of divination, they continued with ritual activities for ritual activities are cleansing, since they effect release of tension whether on an individual or group level. Furthermore Old Testament passages demonstrate that the priest, who is the medium between the Israelites and Yahweh, uses symbols as a means for divination to obtain information for decision making (i.e. lot) as in **1 Sam. 10:17-27** where Samuel functions as the priestly diviner in choosing Saul as their king; **1 Sam. 23:9** where David uses the *ephod* to seek guidance from Yahweh on decision making against Saul's plans to destroy him; **Josh 7:16-18** where Joshua uses lots to find the sinner (Achan). Also see:
(i) Driver, S.R., Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel, 1890.
(ii) Oppenheim, A. L., The Interpretation of Dreams in Ancient Near East, 1956.
(iii) Beattie, John, "Spirit Mediumship in Bunyoro," In Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa, edited by John Beattie and John Middleton, 1969, pp.159-170.
5. (a) This justifies J. V. Taylor's "Unbroken Circle", The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.

(b) James, Wendy, The Listening Ebony: Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power among the Uduk of Sudan, 1988.

6. Turner, Victor W, Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual, 1975, p.238. Here Turner explains divination in parallel terms with revelation. Revelation is unvocalised intuition that is enacted in ritual framework; whereas divination is of an opposite mode, since it analyses and exposes the reasons for troubles. Ndembu divination methods involve object symbols common to the aspects of and customary understanding of the people. The diviner, like “Muchona the Hornet, Interpreter of Religion [chap.6 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989]”, guides the seeker to decide through intuition into what is right and appropriate in Ndembu moral values and codes of ethics that are acceptable to the people (1975, p.238). According to the Ndembu, V. Turner points out,

“...the diviner [spirit-priest] is a man who redresses breaches in the social structure, enunciates the moral law, detects those who secretly and malevolently transgress it, and prescribes remedial action both on the social-structural and cultural levels in the form of redressive ritual.” (1975:238).

As such, then, divination and the corrective rite intertwine in one process. The priest (diviner; spirit-priest) conducts the divination process in intuitive and controlled procedures to reach acceptable conclusions. Since the diviner is the medium between the spiritual realm and the people, such conclusions are binding divine sanctions, which is the case in numerous divinatory examples in the Old Testament, the traditional Amaa divinatory ways and similar traditional African societies like the matrilineal *Ndembu* of Zambia of which Victor Turner has written extensively, or Eric de Rosny’s Healers in the Night (1985) dealing with the traditional healing approach of Duala people of Cameroon. Healers in the Night raises the question of medicine, religion, and the idea of power. That is, among traditional African societies (including the Amaa) the ideas and practices attached to health problems are integral to religious beliefs and practices. Health problems are believed to be caused by supernatural beings like offended ancestors, demons, other spiritual beings (living-dead apart from ancestors), or living human beings such as sorcerers or those with hot eyes (*Amaa’doo annggay ko’bor*) as of *coo’roo*. Finding solutions for such problems involves divination and rituals.

7. *Leeh*: being, Presence, or the Spirit. The traditional African concept of circular time is expressed in terms of events. Also Eliade, Mircea, The Myth of Eternal Return, 1954.

8. Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963, p.67.

9. Divination is the attempt to reach information on things and events of the future that is hidden from normal human perception. Accordingly, Philip Peek points out that divination
“As a means of acquiring normally inaccessible information, divination utilises a non-normal mode of cognition which is then synthesised by the diviner and the client(s) to make plans of action.”

Philip M. Peek 1991, p.194. Peek is in agreement with Victor Turner’s “Muchona the Hornet, Interpreter of Religion” (1989: chap. 6) who helps seeker(s) to reach conclusions followed by action on problems (see N6). In sum, Philip Peek suggests that African divination is

“...the major expression of a social system and the means of maintaining its governing norms...”

Philip Peek 1991: “Introduction” in African Divination Systems. Divination, as Philip Peek suggests (1991:206), maintains the cohesion of traditional societies, like Amaa, in the face of modernisation forces of bombardment. Philip M. Peek, African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing, ed. Philip M. Peek, 1991, pp. 70-71, 194, 206.

10. I participated in traditional Amaa circumcision festivities prior to the operation and seclusion of the candidates to the mountain (*maydayh*) called *Doma*. These ritual activities (*koonyango*

filldah) are held in the family compound of the betrothed maiden, who, as traditions require, leaves home at least two days preceding these ritual festivities. She is the object of this ritual occasion and is mourning the inevitable separation in marriage that follows the return of her fiancée' from circumcision seclusion. The mother ensures the daughter's absence during the circumcision festivity of the future son-in-law, for the daughter is disturbed, easily agitated, and, thus, can start fights with the family members and relatives who come for the ritual occasion. She can spoil the ritual festivity which then becomes a ritual impediment; therefore, she is required to leave home for at least two weeks. She spends this period with a peer family in a distant village. Here there is a ritual conflict that Amaa tradition resolves by the absence of the ritual object.

11. The communal place could be acknowledged as the village centre. It has ritual functions as in healing rites, for instance, when elders fail to uncover the explanation for individual and communal health problems. It is at this spot that ritual elders and elders congregate to counsel on communal concerns. Of course, such gatherings sometimes call upon a dream(s) of an elder (whether male or female) and ritual dissociation is involved in this form of divination and recommended ritual action to remedy the problem. For instance, drought (*leeh maa'raa nayh*: existence or the Spirit is dry, or His tears are dry, but when it rains, especially with thunderstorm and lightening, traditional Amaa silently sit in their conical huts; as they watch water streams down the grassy eaves, adults, full of emotion compounded with dread, veneration, and wonder, silence children lest they disturb the creative work of *Abbra'dee* and, thus, invite punitive reactions). In Amaa, when silencing children while it is raining, we say "*Aa doo'ring(children), doong'doong aah tuwaa'dee yaa. Arr'ngngay dayh caa'naa ngey dew'dilling sheek*". Thus, Amaa traditionalists need service of the Spirit and, at the same, they are apprehensive.

In order to ensure their ritual affairs are clear of impediments, it is on this spot that circumcision candidates gather prior to the traditional surgical operation. From here they pay a greeting visit (*Abbe'edowe woosoda*: greeting to ancestors) to their regional spirit-priest, who, employing a sacred ear of sorghum (*mmoonooongo wooloo aa'coo'ree*) (see **fig. 5**), will blessingly sprinkle them with water. The ritual of water, which a ritual elder holds in a new gourd bowl, and sorghum ear (cob) from his compound arched-gate are symbols for productivity and abundant life. The spirit-priest normally dismisses the circumcision candidates with a bull which a ritual elder (circumciser) sacrifices at the foot of the mountain of ritual seclusion of the circumcised young men. Such ritual gifts, like this bull, could be interpreted as a form of redistribution of the material wealth that different age groups offer to the shrine (*co'dee*) of the spirit-priest. Furthermore, individuals can borrow from this sacred public wealth but after consultation with ritual elders and the possessing spirit during ritual dissociation of its agent. Ritual dissociation (one form of divination) of the spirit-priest can occur. Sometimes a ritual elder (*koe'rayh*: occasional diviner; this term also means left-handed or impotent) unexpectedly falls into a trance that results in divination. *Koe'rayh* also employs cowries (a form of artificial divination like that of lot casting) to foretell. Unlike dream divination, which is a straightforward prophetic method as a direct human-spirit communication, the artificial methods of divination are scrutinised more than the dream one which is subject to more interpretation. For the idea of divination also see T.W. Overholt (i) Channels of Prophecy: The Social Dynamics of Prophetic Activities, 1989, pp.117, 143 and (ii) Prophecy in Cross-Cultural Perspective, 1986.

There can be a public impediment that has not been recognised and ritually dealt with. Such a case causes the possessing spirit to take an initiative in calling attention to it. Once such an impediment is revealed, ritual elders and elders take immediately remedial ritual steps to clear the way before the operation and seclusion of circumcision candidates. This circumcision ritual process occurs in September after tasting (*ko'nyingayr*) new crops. Apart from *Sheilo'wa* maidens who marry in January, maidens, especially the betrothed ones, who expect marriage sometime before harvest festival march from the same public ritual spot to pay their annual greeting (*Abbe'edowe woosoda*) to their regional *Kuweir*, who, in the same manner as blessing circumcision candidates, blesses them. It is here that the spirit-priest, through divination or

intuition, commands the maidens to report taboo breaches to their family for ritual correction before marriage, otherwise difficulties may arise at pregnancy, defective births, or even abortion. For instance, traditional Amaa believe that a maiden who breaches a sex taboo will experience difficult labour unless she confesses the accomplice. Such taboos are a powerful force of social control. As a borderline between childhood and adulthood, the circumcision rite brings into action both structural and functional dimensions of traditional Amaa society.

12. *Kerr'tangee*: mother of a child less than two years old.
Kerr'kaa'nyerr: a new mother for less than a year.
Ko'oye: man (kaa'shell: male)
kaa'nyerr: new
ko'oye kaa'nyerr: the newly circumcised male who has become a man.
13. *Leeh co'shille*: children's atonement.
14. Davies, T.W. Magic, Divination, and Demonology among the Hebrews and their Neighbours, 1969 [1898].
15. This ritual observance begins at the last wane of the moon (*kuur dayh weelee'ou toong*: when the moon is drowsy in blood); traditional Amaa associate this state of the moon with the female natural reproductive system. When in this natural habit, a traditional Amaa female is considered unclean and, thus, ritually dangerous. Traditions prohibit her to interact with or serve males. Female friends or relatives fulfil her role such as food preparation for the household and so on.
16. Besides the required sacrificial beasts for the cleansing rite, ritual elders add extras, i.e. a ram or two, as a form of punishment for the family of the culprit.
17. An older child has the option of deciding to remain in his/her mother's paternal lineage when the mother marries and transfers her lineage to that of the husband.
18. (a) Traditional Africans display the impact of natural rhythm. Their life is totally dependent on this rhythm. Thus, Shorter suggests, humankind is organically related to the rhythm of nature. "A World of the Spirit," in African Christian Spirituality, edited by Aylward Shorter, 1980, p.10.
19. There are sacrifices of beasts and libations in the ritual process of circumcision rite. The climax of this process is the operation and the blood flow. Thereafter adulthood begins, coupled with marriage following the completion of circumcision rite.
20. Moral cleanliness is required of both the public and the candidates before the circumcision rite can proceed. Also see N11.
21. See N18.
22. *Booshee*: stomach heart. *Kaaffell*: clear, clean. So rituals demand *Booshee kaaffell*: clear conscience or cool heart (*booshee ko'shille*).
23. Kopytoff, Igor, "Ancestors as Elders in Africa", Africa 48, No. 1: 129-142, 1971.
24. See N22.
25. Mugo, Catheru, Child of Two Worlds, 1964, pp57-64.
26. Traditional Amaa are conditioned through instruction from childhood to report or confess misdeeds to their elders for ritual remedies. Also see NII.

27. Bascom, W. Ifa Divination: Communication Between Gods and Men in West Africa, 1969, p.70.
28. Spirit-priestly divination on individual breaches which affect social relationships are treated as public offences, once the culprit confesses and confirms the divination verdict. Also see Mendonsa, Eugene L, The Politics of Divination: A Processual View of Reactions to Illness and Deviance among the Sisala of Northern Ghana, 1982, pp162-170). As such, then, the circumcision initiates receive a portion of the penalty for that breach which they regard as a polluting offence for the ritual process.
29. See N23.
30. Similar to the social and psychological interaction between a spirit-priest and a patient in the healing process towards resolving a problem, the spirit-priest (with the help of ritual elders) and the culprit dialogue for negating or confirming divinatory detection of the offence to be solved in ritual terms. So the interaction between the spirit-priest and the subject (patient or accused) is a dialogue seeking a resolution. Also see
 (a) Peek, Philip M., African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing, 1991, pp.204-210;
 (b) Turner, V., Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual, 1975, pp.220-230.
31. This is why male and female ritual elders debate conflicts and explanations of historical events in oratory. This is when they display their individual skills in proverbs, riddles, and interpreting history to make a point.
32. This is a reference to ancestors who maintain the cohesion of traditional Amaa social institutions.
33. Kenyatta, Jomo, Facing Mount Kenya, 1965, pp.116-150.
34. African traditional customs accommodate the missionary religions that modify traditional attitudes of its community members. For instance, becoming a Christian does not prevent an African, rooted in traditional values, from individually modifying some peripheral aspects without offending traditional members of one's family and community, as long as such a modification does not disturb the sense of brotherhood and togetherness, both of which are nurtured by the inherent tolerance of the African traditional religion. Mugo refers implicitly to this prevalent tolerance in African traditional religion when he says,
 "... I heard Karanja's voice ordering the circumciser *not* to leave a `small skin' hanging under my penis. That is called `Ngwati', which was to be fixed immediately after the second cut. The reason Karanja cried out was that Christian boys were against this `small skin' being left. It must be appreciated that it was a very old and strong Kikuyu custom to leave that `small skin ..."
 which Mugo informs us was an identity sign of the Kikuyu, in Child of Two Worlds, 1964, p.61.
35. Mugo, Gatheru, Child of Two Worlds, 1964, pp.57-61.
36. (a) Laye, Camara, The Dark Child, 1978, pp.104-105. The flow of blood into the earth is a libation to the ancestors and, hence, continuity of the living and the living-dead. That is, the blood and the earth are symbols of ancestral continuity. And in sum, The Dark Child reveals that both Christianised and islamised Africans do not abandon their ancestral traditions. The dark child's parents were Muslims; nevertheless, they continued to venerate the ancestors. His father continued the sacred trade of goldsmith. His mother continued with healing and divination activities. She was able to identify sorcerers through dreams, which is a direct communication and intermediation (prophetic) of the Divine and the priest.

(b) T.W. Overholt, Channels of Prophecy: The Social Dynamics of Prophetic Activity, 1989, p.117.

(c) Wa'Thiong'O, a Kenyan political activist, in a political perspective, writes on the relation between the earth and the people,

“Perhaps the soil, which in the traditional view was always seen as a source of creative life and fertility, will unite them [Kenyans].”

Homecoming, London: Heinemann, 1972, p.25.

37. Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, pp.300-305.

38. After the circumcision rite one becomes a man. Following his circumcision rite, Mugo writes,

“I was now a proud circumcised Kikuyu man ... I would now be able to mix with all the beautiful girls in the neighbourhood. Customarily uncircumcised boys cannot speak, date, or mix with circumcised girls. They must not use bad language in the presence of circumcised people, especially if those words are connected with sexual intercourse.”

Mugo, Gatheru, Child of Two Worlds, 1964, p.62. On completion of circumcision rites, like the traditional Kikuyu, an Amaa becomes a man. Unlike the Kikuyu, Amaa traditions impose an immediate marriage rite upon the new man. This is why he must find a girl before circumcision.

39. Since traditional Amaa believe nothing happens by chance, they would, then, ask why such and such happened when a misfortune occurs. The general explanation will point to taboo breach(s) or another wrong in human relationship(s) somewhere among them. Such breaches or conflict invite misfortune(s) from ancestral reaction or sorcery exploiting such crooked situations for selfish ends. Here it becomes the duty of ritual elders and elders to search and find the cause(s) before they can determine ritual remedies. The last means of search is divination to either confirm their findings or, if their search failed, give answers to questions about the problem, and remedial acts after divination. See

(a) Turner, Victor W., Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual, pp.218, 282.

(b) Beattie, John, “Divination in Bunyoro, Uganda,” in Magic, Witchcraft, and Curing, edited by John Middleton, 1969, pp.215-218.

(c) Mendonsa, Eugene L., The Politics of Divination: A Processual View of Reactions to Illness and Deviance among the Sisala of Northern Ghana, 1982.

(d) Lowe, Michael and Carmen Blacker, (eds.), Oracles and Divination, 1981.

Upon receiving confirmation or finding the answers to their search and remedial steps to follow, Amaa ritual elders and elders sacrifice either a castrated ram or a castrated he-goat in honour of the diviner their colleague. If there are doubts about this diviner's answers, they can consult a second or a third diviner before they proceed with the remedial steps. But before the circumcision rite can proceed, Amaa ritual elders consult diviners to make sure no impediment is left unresolved. Circumcision ritual is not an individual affair, and so social harmony is a requirement before its ritual processes begin. Also N57. On the significance of blood flow into the earth (see N44), Victor W. Turner writes on the burial rite of a hunter and the *mudyi* tree, a multi-vocal symbol for Ndembu of Zambia,

“A possible analogous practice may be found in the custom of burying a hunter in a sitting position with a *mudyi* pole touching his brow and emerging from his grave. Blood is poured down this pole by hunter kinsmen of the deceased when they make a kill, and these offerings are believed to ‘feed’ him ...”,

Turner, Victor W., “Three Symbols of Passage in Ndembu Circumcision Ritual: An Interpretation,” in Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations, ed. by Max Gluckman, 1962, p.132.

40. Group activities reunite peer groups (age-grades) and in-group conflicts, for the spiritual dimension is actively in their midst. That is, the collective ritual activities are believed to be

charged with mystical powers and, therefore, enforce conflict resolutions among and between peer groups.

41. Laye, Camara, The Dark Child: The Autobiography of an African Boy, Introduction by Philip Thoby-Marcilin, 1978, pp.104-105.
42. Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience, 1961, p.26.
43. A typical traditional Amaa male is distinctly warlike individual, for he has been trained from childhood through rites of passage some of which are extremely severe in nature for character formation, courage, and endurance. He has profound sense of family and family authority. He takes hard work for granted. He lives by customary rules which he participates to apply. Such customary rules, underpinned by spiritual dimension, stand at the base of political, economic, and the traditional theodicy institution, whose efficiency relies on the discipline enforced in the family and confirmed by the public rites of passage.
44. Mbiti, John, African Religions and Philosophy, 1970, p.137.
45. Bolaji Idowu, in Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, ed. by Kwesi Dickson et al., 1969, p.20.
46. Wearing stringed-beads (*aanddih*) or fox-tail (*caa'wee'yeo jayh*) is one way of announcing to the public one's new social status.
47. Such meetings are not planned, but they happen in a casual manner and always in company gatherings in various social or economic activities.
48. A maternal senior uncle will be the initial messenger, after whom others pursue the negotiation.
49. **See figure 7.**
50. Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956, pp.231-247.
51. Mbiti, John, African Religions and Philosophy, 1970, p.136.
52. The process of marriage rites for a traditional Amaa maiden is an emotional and psychological crisis. She becomes quarrelsome in the first part of this process.
53. The alienated Amaa who have either lost or not received traditional training are an example.
54. Divination makes it possible for problems to be revealed and dealt with on communal level.
55. **See N37.**

Bascom, W., Ifa Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa, 1969, p.51.
56. This is only an estimate. It can take much longer and in this regard, for elders patience and silence are prudent.
57. Upon *retransformation* (death) of the mother of the hut, this door (*orr'goall*) will be partially demolished. See **fig. 6: No.4** and **No.5** door posts are pulled down to widen **No.1** (entrance). The tumbled splinters of **No.2** are piled, approximately two to three meters, to the right side of the widened entrance. This widened entrance, traditional Amaa believe, makes it convenient for both the newly *retransformed* mother and other living-dead who might associate with her, as a new member, and the living to move in and out without collision during the burial and homecoming

ritual activities. It is upon **No.3 (fig. 6)** that the visiting youth inflict ritual damage. These male youth will rebuild all of this conical roof at a later time but before the consummation the marriage, i.e. birth of the first child.

58. It is rare to have females as sacrificial victims. Traditional Amaa elders explain that female sacrificial victims are related to enhancement of the beads, especially the ones that will be given to the departing bride to the new lineage. Besides, the female sacrifices are also an appeasement for the ancestress Nyema.
59. This spear permanently remains in the family. It is transferred with its history from one generation to another. This is one way of tracing blood relationships (who married who) to avoid incestuous marriages, and to trace kinship systems. As an artefact, this spear keeps family history alive.
60. Eliade, M., (i) Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, 1960, p.23. (ii) The Myth of Eternal Return, 1954.
61. Modupe Oduyoye writes that,
“Myths are therefore hypotheses: they are constructed to offer explanations of phenomena. They are always literary hypotheses, not scientific hypotheses”,
in Traditional Religion in West Africa, ed. E.A. Ade Adegbola, 1983, p.376.
62. Traditional Amaa are stubbornly determined to resist the ravaging impact of the modernisation process and the missionary religions of Christianity and Islam on their traditional ways which, I suppose, in some future time will be overtaken by the modernisation process.
63. This departure from understood ritual norms is similar to barren women's reaction to barrenness, the greatest curse that can come upon a person. Barren women wear phallic symbols (*schellow*), moulded of clay or wood, in a ritual situation. They complain in this manner that they are neither men nor women, but who are they? A question implicitly asked by their obscene reaction demonstrated in ritual situations and not in normal daily life. Here in this marriage rite of domesticating males, women compose uncouth songs belittling male prowess, particularly male sex organs. These women beat with cooking sticks any male who dares to respond to this ritual obscenity. Evans-Pritchard, for example, in a study of a range of various African traditional cultures in collective obscenity, suggests that
(a) “The withdrawal by society of its normal prohibitions gives special emphasis to the social value of the activity”
as in the economic activity and
(b) “It also canalizes human emotion into prescribed channels of expression at periods of human crisis”
such as the bride's changing temper in becoming quarrelsome to a degree that forces her mother to send her away during most of the marriage rites. The bride's mother, too, experiences the crisis of losing her daughter and attempts to beat the bridegroom with the broom in the ritual context described in the body of this chapter. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, “Some Collective Expression of Obscenity in Africa,” chapter 4 in The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and Other Essays in Social Anthropology, 1965, pp.76-106.
64. This ritual drama is a symbolic instruction for the bridegroom and his supporting peers to guard the marital relationship. This instruction is part of the domestication process, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, the mother in-law to be guards her nest with the broom which she later on surrenders to him as acceptance of defeat.
65. The domestication rite occurs once in man's life time. That is, it occurs only at the first marriage. Subsequent marriages do not demand it.

66. My father exercised this at the marriage rites of my ten sisters.
67. *Retransformation* (death) and continuity of life in spiritual form are the reason for traditional Amaa to bury personal effects with the deceased.
68. (a) Evans-Pritchard, E.E., *Nuer Religion*, 1956.
(b) Lienhardt, G., *Divinity and Experience*, 1961.
69. The piece to the left is an acknowledgement of the demon relatives who are believed to hover around for their share in the rite. Traditional Amaa acknowledge them in order to neutralise their ever present evil intentions.
70. Mbiti's idea of *Zamani*, the forgotten past, sends the accountable multitudes of the far past living-dead into oblivion. But we suggest the contrary in that the supposedly sunk into oblivion are not lost and forgotten; they have become part of the mythological dimension in that these living-dead are remembered, although not all by name, in a collective manner. For instance, at rituals, my father mentioned the actively prominent ancestors and some living-dead members by name and added "those of us we can not call all your names, join together for such and such". Though these living-dead have become anonymous, they are remembered. They can react punitively at breaches of some taboos such as blood feud avoidance, incestuous marriages, and so on.
71. There is an implicit reference to the tradition of sharing taught to traditional Amaa members from childhood.
72. Ancestors, as progenitors and founders, are present in all types of ritual and marriage in particular. Among traditional Amaa, marriage without ancestral involvement is invalid. In respect of this marriage validity, M.Y. Nabofa writes,
- "... in the ancestral shrine of the girl ... The father would use the drink brought by the fiance to pour libations to his ancestors; formally declaring to them that he has given his daughter in marriage to such and such person. They should therefore bless the marriage with plenty of children, health and wealth."
- "Erhi and Eschatology," in *Traditional Religion in West Africa*, edited by E.A. Ade Adegbola, 1983, pp.313-314.
73. Young men march to mount *Soonyoor* singing obscenity. See N33.
74. This is the only occasion when an unmarried young man is allowed to officiate in a ritual process that is normally the domain of elders, ritual elders, and the spirit-priests. It is also a situation of ritual contradiction which is more or less in the same line as obscene comedy and songs.
75. *Saggi* tree is a symbol that traditional Amaa identify with both fertility and *retransformation* (death). It was on this tree that Chameleon's (messenger to heaven) *retransformation* happened.
76. The castrated he-goat refers to the young men under domestication.
77. See fig. 6: No.6 is the left post of the hut entrance to which the castrated he-goat is tied to await its ritual destiny. Here, left is identified with the feminine side.
78. (a) Eliade, Mircea, *The Myth of Eternal Return*, 1954.
(b) Parrinder, E.G., *African Mythology*, 1967.
79. Turner, Victor W., "Liminality and Communitas," chapter 3 in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, 1989.

80. For traditional Amaa, marriage is for eternity once the potency and lineage transfer rite is performed.
81. See N38.
82. It is normal for women to carry loads on their heads. In this ritual situation, it is the men who are the carriers of the loads like women. However small a thing might be, it must be carried on the head. All this is a symbolic act of accepting domestication for themselves and for the bridegroom. This is also a ritual contradiction outside the norm. See N22.
83. This horn (present in the arched gate of every traditional family) is blown at group annual hunting expeditions, in wars, at the beginning of the harvest festival, at sacred raid rites (Sheila's horn is used here), and at the initiation of spirit-priests.
84. Shorter, Aylward, "A World of the Spirit," in African Christian Spirituality, ed. by Aylward Shorter, 1980, p.10.
85. (a) See N84.
 (b) Aylward Shorter, in an attempt to make historical sense of African traditional religion cites J. Goetz. Shorter writes,
- "Goetz sets up his categories on the basis of an analysis that traces religious elements in a culture down to the living experience of a particular environment and a particular social ecology."
- Shorter, "Recent Developments in African Christian Spirituality," in Christianity in Independent Africa, ed. by Edward Fashole-Luke et al., 1978, p.533.
86. This is the very memory that prevails in a Christian veneer in the syncretism of the Africans of diaspora. For instance, Fred G. Strum informs us that African-Americans are ancestral prototypes, for they are much more tolerant and absorbent of diverse religious traditions. Strum's key point relates to the thresholds between the living and the living-dead in rituals that promote life, i.e. health and wealth. Strum contends that the Afro-Brazilian employ Yoruba ritual idioms. Fred G. Strum, "Afro-Brazilian Cults," in African Religions: A Symposium, edited by Newell Booth, 1977.
87. Kenneth Kaunda, "The Religious Phenomena of African-ness," in African Christian Spirituality, ed. by Aylward Shorter, 1978, p.45.
88. L. Sedar Senghor, first president of Senegal, points out that, "In contrast to the classic European, the Negro African does not draw a line between himself and the object," On African Socialism, (1964, p.72). Senghor interprets African socialism as a mixture of diverse traditions (African traditional, French traditions, Marxist-Leninist, and theosophy of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin). Its grammar is what he dubs as "Negro-African Knowledge", a description that serves to demonstrate the tolerant and absorbent nature of African traditional ways that have been echoed in the works of many scholars such as Kenneth Kaunda (see N46), Fred G. Strum (see N45), and Lamin Sanneh is quite explicit in stating that African traditional religion(s) "have penetrated both Christianity and Islam and endowed them with a tolerant, absorptive capacity." Sanneh, West African Christianity: The Religious Impact, 1983, p.87. The works of these scholars serve to expose the nature of pluralism in the African traditional ways. Sanneh is right in that **African religion is inherently ecumenical and, thus, tolerant**, but the religious intolerance that prevails in the African continent does not justify Sanneh's conclusion on the other two religions.
89. see N46.

90. It would not be an exaggeration to say that ritual elders, especially the spirit-priest, are the persons most informed of individuals and the psychological and social tendencies of their communities. No wonder, then, that by virtue of this social and spiritual standing the spirit-priest is believed to be the medium between the living, the living-dead, and *Abbra'dee*. Here, then, the spirit-priest is capable of employing the artificial divination; its grammar is a combination of *events* and constant *observation* that sharpens his intuition into and interpretation of things and matters spiritual. Ancient Greeks, for example, used this form of divination. George Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, 1985, p.229-231. On the other hand, direct divination involves dreams, visions, and oracles, all of which are subject to interpretations of the symbolic hidden meanings that Victor Turner refers to in "Muchona the Hornet: Interpreter of Religion," chapter 6 in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Turner reports what he learned from Muchona, the diviner, with sharp insights of Ndembu religion.
91. *ibid.*
92. Hawkesworth, D., "The Nuba Proper of Southern Kordofan," in *Sudan Notes and Records* 15, 1932-1933, pp.189-191.
93. This is a sign for the return of her life breath "*looe*", traditional Amaa believe, from the grip of the spirits who are believed to have suspended it, but did not withdraw it. African traditional religion is, therefore, mostly the means of reinforcing life and of precautions against the destructive forces.
94. Sacrificial blood is cleansing, "blood drips down on earth as purifying rain, reviving it with the fluid of divine life," writes Evan Zuesse on Dogon, *Ritual Cosmos*, 1979, p.161.
95. The multiplicity (refractions; manifestations) of truth is reconciled in this gourd. It is a symbolic example for living in harmony with others, the environment, and the self in terms of physical, social, spiritual, and natural and supernatural entities.
96. Mbiti's Christian notion suggesting that Christian eschatology is more dynamic and should inject its *teleology* into African *deteriology* seems not to acknowledge the presence of the same but parallel dynamism in African traditional religion which is more "tolerant and absorptive [N46 and N47]" of diverse religious traditions. That is why the African ritual sacrifice is persistent in accordance with the hallowed values of ancestors. One does not see impediments for inculturation rather than acculturation. (John Mbiti, "Eschatology," in *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, ed. by Kwesi Dickson et al., 1969).
97. Turner, Victor V. "Ritual Symbolism, Morality, and Social Structure among the Ndembu," Chapter 2 in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, demonstrates symbols as connotative movements across the thresholds between the visible and the invisible counterparts.
98. See N8.
99. Beasts so dedicated can be borrowed for married gift purposes, but must be replaced in a later time. This lending-borrowing transaction is normally carried out through consultation with elders before divination.
100. Living-dead female levirate marriage is more symbolic than the one of a living-dead male. (a) Living-dead female levirate marriage guarantees only a matrimonial lineage with her living sister; (b) Living-dead male's levirate marriage could be socially regarded more factual, since it

entails progeny and, thus, social self continuation with ritual privileges- a guarantee of **eternity now**.

101. *ibid.*
102. Amaa tradition permits only one living-dead sister in levirate marriage if the living bride has more than one living-dead sister.
103. Among the traditional Amaa, the presence of the spirit is expressed in social relationships as a functional dimension.
104. See **N079**.
105. Turner, Victor W., The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989, chapters 1, 2, 5, 6.
106. *Ibid.*
107. See **N79**.
108. Diop, Birago A., in a poem that tells of the “dead are not dead”; they are *retransformed* and continue life in invisible form. Quoted in John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160, quoted by Janheinz Jan, Muntu, p.108, from Hostice Noires, ed. Senghor, Paris 1949, p.144.
109. *ibid.*
110. Hunting rites demanded from the shepherds to engage Gholfano local elders in invocation of the spirits and ancestors to partake in the shepherds' feast of game meat. Many of us, shepherds, were not that keen on involving those local elders, but we were bound by the ritual rules to do so else, we believed, spirits of the forest, the ritual village, and our ancestors would exact the price for ritual disobedience. This is generally how, without physical policing, social control is effected in traditional Amaa society.
111. Traditional Amaa society regards the menopausal as equal to men and they can, therefore, respond to emergent ritual demands if no ritual male is available. Nevertheless, each ritual gender holds to its ritual territory, i.e. female house-shrine and male compound shrine. Here the menopausal can immediately respond to the shrilling call, but cannot follow up to the cleansing rite that will take place in a space and time out of her ritual domain
112. Divinatory consultation is an important factor in determining the kind of sacrifice, manner of sacrificing, time, and place of sacrifice. All this depends on the interpretation of the ritual elders in the divinatory consultation, i.e. inductive divination which involves human artificial technical means and probabilities based on observation relevant to the situation (Amaa call this as *co'rayh* : a diviner specialist, not a spirit-priest, who throws cowries at random several times. He/she counts the number of times cowries fall in twos and singles (odds). If twos are more, the probability is positive and, thus, the answer is yes; if odd numbers are more this is no. This, perhaps, parallels ancient Greek and Roman practices in George Luck, Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds, 1985, p.231. Dreams and ritual dissociation are also means of divination unrestricted to particular persons. These are regarded as natural, since they are direct divine-human communications without intermediaries.
113. Turner, Victor W. “Planes of Classification,” chap. 1 in The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure, 1989.
114. See **N79**.

115. Traditional Amaa believe that such chants are stimulants for unsolicited ecstatic (ritual dissociation) divination when the spiritual agency reveals future (positive and negative) things that people are not aware of, such as warning against a catastrophe and its ritual remedies or good harvest and so on.
116. *ibid.*
117. Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka, 1961, p.192.
118. (a) Artificial divination is solicited either to confirm deliberations or cast doubts which set ritual elders and elders in search of further interpretations. Also N39(d) and N112.
(b) Milingo, E., The World in Between: Christian Healing and the Struggle for Spiritual Survival, ed. by Mona Macmillan, Maryknoll, 1984.
119. See N37.
120. Paraphernalia vary from time to time according to the ritual theme of the festivities. See N17. Also Zulu Sofola, "The Theatre in the Search for African Authenticity." In African Theology en Route, edited by Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, 1979.
121. Barren women wear phallic symbols over their stringed-beads in protest and rebuke of the numinous authorities for depriving them of procreation. These symbols are carved of ever-green trees (*ghoorr'phoo*) snatched off fences of community shrines. They smear themselves with paste of red ochre or reddish clay, which they associate with fertility and the spirit of the earth.
122. Traditional African sacrifices are central to traditional African culture. *Sacrifices* are offered to *reconcile* or to *maintain harmony between the visible and the invisible* realms and are, thus, *forward looking*. Also see P.E.S. Thompson, "The Anatomy of Sacrifice: A Preliminary Investigation." In New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World: Essays in Honor of Harry Sawyerr, ed. by Mark E. Glasswell et. al., 1974.
123. (a) Mulago, Vincent, "Vital Participation: The Cohesive Principle of the Bantu Community." In Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, edited by Kwesi Dickson et al., 1969. Mulago is one of many that Placide Tempels' Bantu Philosophy (1959) influenced. Mulago discusses Bantu values in terms of the idea of a "Great Chain of Being". He calls it vital participation to signify the links between life and death, the living and the ancestors, and the visible and the invisible. The dominant symbols of this continuity are blood and land (see N17). Vital participation involves vertical succession of the living from the dead and the living sharing of properties of the group.
(b) Laye, Camara, The Dark Child: The Autobiography of an African Boy, introduction by Philippe Thoby-Marcillin, 1978. The blood flow onto the earth is a libation to the ancestors. The blood and the earth are symbols for ancestral continuity.
124. Koech, Kipng'no, "African mythology: A Key to Understanding African Religion." In African Religions: A Symposium, edited by Newell Booth, 1977. According to Koech, mythology enhances the link between the living and the living-dead, which edifies the continuity of life. Mythologies define the dominant themes of African traditional religion such as rites of passage, rituals, and sacrifices. All these themes are summed up in the union of the living and the living-dead in the perpetual continuity of *Eternity Now*, the synonym of the "Unbroken Circle".
125. See N20.
126. The incidents and visions in the battlefield can be interpreted basically as intuitive divination carrying a direct message from the invisible to the visible without intermediary methods of

divination and the respective recipient characters were able to interpret them correctly. They had capabilities, in the abnormality of such situations, to understand such insights and act immediately.

127. For traditional Amaa, it is considered a breach of traditions for a maiden to ask for marriage, since marriage is a group affair.
128. See N22.
129. This is the same power that Rudolf Otto calls “mysterium tremendum”. Otto, Rudolf, The Idea of the Holy,(translated by John W. Harvey), 1924, pp.25-30.
130. Traditional Amaa have the rite of home coming (*woe'lowe nyond'daah*) for the newly *retransformed* (dead). The first part of the home coming rite for every newly *retransformed* (dead) male or female, young or old is performed three days after burial rites to acknowledge the new numinous status of the *retransformed* and to ceremonially welcome him/her home. The second home-coming rite, an acknowledgement of the virtues of old age, is performed for the very aged females/males at the time of *retransformation*. This rite is normally fulfilled one rainy season (one year) after the burial time. Ritual elders explain that this period of one season allows the spirit, as senior and whose authority can effect both reward and punishment, to settle with their numinous lineage before he/she can ritually be welcomed home to assume his/her role as spirit elder among the living and the living-dead. This ritual is partly performed at the graveside by the descendants and relatives of the *retransformed*. The eldest living male kin and the area spirit-priest officiate at the rite. Meanwhile, the community, relatives and friends from other areas celebrate. They sing, dance, and feast at the homestead of the deceased. On returning from the graveside ritual, people continue to celebrate while elders and ritual elders gather at the community shrine (*ghoodee*) to enquire and resolve issues relevant to the family of the *retransformed*; issues such as outstanding quarrels and debts, care for widows, especially those still of child-bearing age and the choosing of a male kin (married or not) to propagate (levirate marriage) the lineage for the *retransformed* kin, though physically absent, yet present in his family as the father in numinous form.
131. See N79.
132. *ibid.*
133. The Gholfano maiden warrior knew about Amaa traditions, when faced with death, she dropped her weapon and crept on her knees while speaking out her request and touched the right knee of her captor, *Bowe'rang*. In Amaa tradition, touching a foe's right knee means surrender to the protection of *Sheila*, Amaa ancestor. She again touched *Ko'deer's* knee before *Ko'deer* sent her alone to Amaaland. The Amaa people understood something unusual was happening when they saw the lone strange maiden coming from the battleground. They knew there was a reason, for the spirits were active. The traditional Amaa still practise this protective custom of knee touching when in a grievous fault. **On the role of myth in a traditionalist life see endnotes of Chapter One N4(b), N7(a), N33, and Chapter Four N77, Chapter Five N77, and Chapter Seven N61, N139 and 145.**
134. See N8 and N14
135. *Bowe'rang* means flamboyant. He probably received this name at his circumcision rite.
136. *Ko'deer* means strong or able. It is believed that this name was given to him at his circumcision rite.

137. For traditional Amaa, mythologies are living realities. They entrench their daily living experience in ancestral presence and ancestors are part of the myths.
138. Zahan, Dominique, The Religion, Spirituality and Thought of Traditional Africa, translated by Kate Ezra Martin et. al., 1979.
139. In this regard, Nicolas Corte writes,
 “Myth is thus a representation of Reality, which though fantastic, claims to be accurate ... It is a symbol which reveals certain aspects of reality, the deepest aspects which defy any other means of knowledge”.
The Origins of Man, 1961, pp.11-12.
140. See N108.
141. As in the example of ancestor *Sheila* (a mythological character himself) in a *visionary* appearance to *Ko'deer* (a progeny of *Sheila*) in the battlefield followed by a sequence of events that led to peace, the occurrence of situational marriage, and the eventual establishment of kinship systems between two warring nations (tribes). This mythology is a reference to Amaa history and the beginnings of the divinatory and prophetic (i.e. visionary appearance) process. Also
 (a) Eliade, Mircea, Myth and Reality, 1963.
 (b) Eliade, Mircea, Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, 1960, p.23.
142. T.W. Overholt attempts to define prophecy and divination separately. Diviners, he says, use human artistic means to reach the divine will; traditional Amaa use these means as in randomly throwing cowries on the ground and interpreting their positions on falling, watching the behaviour of a sacrificial victim like a chicken, or randomly drawing by the right hand pointer finger lines on smoothed ground and counting them in twos (ending with an even number is good news; an odd number is bad news, and the interpretation proceeds accordingly) and so on. Thus, we identify the technical divinatory methods of traditional Amaa in terms of Overholt's definition. Overholt maintains that divine messengers as prophets initiate communication of divine commands to people; that is, a message from the Divine to the people. (Overholt, T.W., Channels of Prophecy: The Social Dynamics of Prophetic Activities, 1989, p.117).

There is a slight difference between Overholt's definition and traditional Amaa (like similar Africans) whose mediums (i.e. spirit-priest, spirit-priest diviners, and occasional diviners) address messages mostly from the people to the Divine, but through ancestors, messengers of the Divine mediate between the two realms. Here traditional Amaa do not draw defining lines between divinatory persons' roles, since the main goal is communication with the invisible realm; despite different means of direct and indirect communication, both channels involve sharp intuition and rigorous cognitive effort in interpretation, for both channels (direct and indirect) involve symbols. Kenelm Burridge's argument is relevant to traditional Amaa (like similar Africans) whose general view of divination is that they make no defining lines; its efficacy is the only goal of concern. Burridge argues that the art of divinatory manipulation and interpretation is in the same line as the prophetic interpretation, since both fulfil the same mediumistic role of communication between the people and the supernatural. Burridge, K., New Heaven New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities, 1969, pp.150-160. Accordingly, though traditional Amaa do not acknowledge the prophetic role as separate from the spirit-priestly one, the prophetic tradition is like the spirit-priestly (diviner) in its employment of the art of interpretation to make sense of divinatory manipulation (artificial technical methods that lead to indirect communication with the supernatural).

A. Leo Oppenheim regards divination as

“a technique of communication with the supernatural forces that are supposed to shape the history of the individual and the group”.

Oppenheim's definition of divination or prophecy fits squarely with the traditional Amaa (like similar Africans) group-tied living experience in which the individual is within the group context. Oppenheim, A. Leo (i) Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization, revised by Erica Reiner, 1964, 200-207; (ii) The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East, 1956. Dreams and visions, like *Ko'deer's* vision in the battlefield in traditional Amaa mythology of wars with the Gholfan, are *direct*. Both direct and indirect are intrinsic to the process of communication with the Divine regardless of the method or means.

143. *ibid.*

144. The roles of the various means and methods of divination whether **direct** (dreams, visions, ritual dissociation, and so on.) or **indirect** (artificial or use of human technology, observation, intuition, etc.) in traditional Amaa are similar to some of those prophetic traditions of the Old Testament and some of the New Testament, especially the direct communication, i.e dreams and visions. The central point is that both predict the future and, through mediums, spell out an analysis of social situations. That is, divination and prophecy are more or less the same, for they serve the same goal of prediction, analysis, and presentation of remedies. For instance, Philip M. Peek holds that African divination systems involve “Logical-analytical” and “intuitive-synthetical” ways of thinking. Peek, Philip M. (ed), African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991, p.3.

145. Eliade, Mircea, regards
“myths as a true history of what came to pass at the beginning”,
Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, 1960, p.23.

146. See N124.

147. *ibid.*

148. See N8.

149. This view on the ritual trance, (a form of direct communication with the supernatural-divination), enhancing African traditional beliefs, clarifies and generalises the traditionally lived experience in which it is partially charged with emotion and volition to discern. This partialness becomes a source of value judgements and precepts for some Africans who, being of Eurocentric Christian orientation and finding no formulated dogmas and doctrines in the manner of the historical and established Christian religion, fail to see the African traditional religion in its own context and spiritual merit.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY CONCLUSION

The theme of this thesis is the traditional Amaa concept of the continuity of this life without end. Reward and punishment happen in the present. That is, eternity is moral order not sometime in future, but the process of birth (*transformation*) and death (*retransformation*) is only a traumatic “liminal” transition. This, therefore, is the traditional Amaa religion and is integrated into the ancestral central role in co-operation with the living elders and spirit-priests in regulating Amaa kinship systems, spirituality, livelihood activities, and the “sanctification of daily life”, which can be summed up in the term ‘culture’, an umbrella description of the *particularity* and *life experience* of traditional Amaa. Culture, as an umbrella description, is undergirded by ritual, a central force, actively reflected in social relations. There in social relations looms the idea of the *Sacred*, the participant reason as diffused in the universe.

It is the traditional Amaa kinship systems, lineage perpetuity, community, corporateness, and celebration of ancestors in ritual acts of *soteriology* and *commemorative-normative-narrative* that shapes the traditional Amaa society as a community. The kinship system, the central ethos in traditional life, includes the humankind community, other fauna and flora, and the categories of the *numinous* who, though in invisible living mode, occupy the same matrix with the visible as Diop’s poetry demonstrates¹ in the body of this dissertation. Traditional Amaa is a society that demands accountability from its corporately consecrated spirit-priesthood while granting cautious respect to its elders and venerable reverence to its ancestors as messengers of *Abbra’dee* (Creator Spirit). Ancestors and the common living-dead are believed to be active constructively as well as destructively among the living. ‘Causality’ is, therefore, ‘significant’.²

The description of the intricate web of ritually conditioned social interactions enhance communication between the visible and invisible. These relations extend to mutually include other aspects of nature (i.e. earth, land, forests, and so on) and its respective significances. Traditional Amaa life is, therefore, full of rituals, variously tithed here and there and enacted in innumerable social, kinship groups ‘*konang*’ for *eternity*

now, and family functions that are portrayed throughout the text. It is in these functions and livelihood activities that religion (or the divine presence) manifests *Itself* as an integral and inseparable part and, indeed, the quintessential undergirding factor for the whole. It would, therefore, be an unfortunate error to compare and equate, since it would almost certainly conclude negatively, the experientially lived religious traditions with religions of holy books, written doctrines and dogmas. In sum, traditional Amaa's indirect oral theology is articulated in various ways as portrayed in ritual acts and social relations. Traditional Amaa life is bound in rituals, the platform for the applied articulation of their oral theology.

The traditional Amaa is concerned to fulfil the demands of this life. He is involved in social, economic and political relationships with others within their organised stateless traditional society. He hopes for prosperity in marriage, child-birth, and harmony. He must seek the welfare of the community and the lineage. Moral obligations are rooted in social bonds, the common living-dead, and the ancestors who have founded the kinship systems and humankind community and *Abbra'dee* established the inclusive human community, while the *universe is his (Abbra'dee's) domain*. The traditional clan is the base of the social and political life. The custodians of morality are the ancestors and mutuality necessarily serves the common concern for stability of the interdependent realms of the visible and the spirit-world. The chart attempts to show the traditional African experience and nature of this intertwined world of the "Unbroken Circle". Not only the traditional Amaa, but traditional Africans in general, do not take the spiritual realm for granted since it can be indifferent, spiteful, wantonly malevolent, supportive, directive, distant, intimate, transcendent and immanent. No wonder, then, the traditional African has an ambivalent attitude, a paradox, in relationship to the Sacred.

The traditional Amaa silence about a creation mythology implies that their origin lies somewhere else rather than the present central locale, surrounded by other nations (tribes) of Nubian origin, in the north western enclave of the Nuba Mountains. Amaa mythologies are many and tell different versions of doubtful history on origin and other aspects of Amaa nation (tribe). Mythologies, particularly the prominent one of ancestress *Nyema* and her spirit-son *Sheila* and their miraculous works, inform us of spirit-human

marriage that has reproduced the incomplete but ritually powerful *Sheilo'wa* clan (*soo*: partly human and partly spirit) which forms the eighth mountain of the Amaa nation (tribe). The mythology of *Sheila* informs of the beginning of polygamy, but the mythology of Amaa social organisation and function reports on the coming of physical death and the loss of direct interaction with the numinous, particularly *Abbra'dee*. Instead, relations with the *numinous* are facilitated through ancestors, progenitor founders of kinship and cultural system that shape every aspect of the traditional Amaa religious life, but in co-ordination with the mediumistic role of spirit-priests and ritual elders who employ various forms of divinatory channels of communication with the *numinous*.

Although the traditional Amaa (or similar African) oral knowledge conveyed perpetually from father to son is rich in common sense gained through observation, participation, and practical experience of the spirit-priestly functionaries, nonetheless, damage to the accuracy of information occurs. But despite the depleted and doubtful presence of remaining sense and hints that elders cling to, modern reconstructive attempts can only rebuild by assuming hints or clues found in landmarks, names, and sites in the oral literature and landscape of traditional life. These hints and clues, however flimsy, still indicate history. The passage of time has certainly undermined that unwritten history with doubt.

This doubtful oral history is carried in mythologies that traditional Amaa connect to their ontological order (chart, chap. 2-3). The spirit-priestly functionaries and elders know by experience and intuition that this ontological order is greater than themselves, their order, and their understanding. Although these sages are depositories of traditional knowledge, nonetheless, they can only give uncertain hints in the form of legends and myths of Amaa geographical place of origin. Such information is maintained in the Amaa language, i.e. in a network of proverbs, legends, riddles, names, and fables that are easily transmittable from one generation to another.

Since this process of transmission is oral, constant loss and distortion occur and there are modern attempts to re-establish chronologically the original meanings. Here the elusiveness of orality is glaring and changes and loss of information take place. Each

generation subtracts or adds its own perspectives or interpretations that feed customs and, hence, ritual acts, and, thus, shape the traditions according to its era. As such, authenticity of customs is “no longer” the pursuit as some might think. It is in this fluid process we can say that ancestral traditions are the mother of customs. Traditions are dynamic and, thus, impact on customs which are fluidly subject to constant change and depletion.

But the legacy of traditions continue to be anchored in ancestors, who are integral to mythologies. Ancestral ever active presence manifests itself in huts, compound, shrines, artefacts (i.e. *toewoe*), sacred sites (*leeh accoo'ree*), cattle camps, farms, and so on. Since *Thhowor* (regulator spirit of fertility, fecundity, and growth) below the earth surface and ancestors are party to the ownership and, thus, present on the land which traditional Amaa can never convert into modern pecuniary value. This legacy is also expressed in rites of passage, economic activities, affliction, cattle, and earth rites and rituals.

African art is another phenomenon that casts light on African religion and spirituality. It links liturgically between the visible and the invisible. Dramatic art forms in physical movements, gestures, paraphernalia, vocal in song and invocation accompanied by artistic instruments in creativity are communicative means of establishing and maintaining links between the destiny of the traditional people and that of their localised cosmos. That is, the contents and nature of art work are a system that links and communicates the individual, group, and the *numinous* into a unitary system, an example of the “Unbroken Circle”, in the flow of harmonious action that reinforces and elaborates the significant factors in the values of traditional Amaa culture (see chapter 7).

Hence, “art”, coupled with mythology, “provides a kind of scripture of African religion, for it is the expression from within”.³ Apart from entertainment, forms of music unite the mood of the participants with that of the sacred. Variation in mood is not completely spirited away (see chapters 4 and 7). Some totally submit themselves to supernatural participation; others offer only nominal lip service. But such a deceptive attitude towards the spiritual realm, traditional Amaa believe, is fundamentally offensive to the ancestors, whose mystical powers and authority shape the African religion.

Mythologies are a “true history of what came to pass at the beginning”⁴ and are, thus, living realities for the traditional Amaa, who entrench their daily life experience in

ancestral presence, for ancestors are integral to their myths. So they believe in the presence of vigilant ancestors and the common living-dead relatives (expecting observance of traditions and customs). This *numinous* presence governs interpersonal and moral relations. Though present among the living, the ancestors are part of the “mythical time”, “the time of origin,”⁵ which is the eternal existence, acknowledged as the invisible existent mode that shares the same matrix with its visible counterpart.⁶ It is from this eternal existence, believe the traditional Amaa, that free spirits come into birth (*transformation*) and to this they return upon death (*retransformation*), while continuing membership in their respective lineage and kinship systems that extend to the invisible counterpart and, thus, form one unit of the “Unbroken Circle”, the synonym of *Eternity Now*, and functions as such (see fig. 3).

Relations with the Supreme Being (Amaa *Abbra'dee*), to whom eternal existence belongs, are indirect, diffused through the agents of the invisible, mainly the ancestors. In venerating the *ancestors*, the traditionalists indicate the sense of sacred time which gives spiritual significance to kinship system and social responsibility. The African sense of time, therefore, defines itself in ancestors.

Defining time in their ancestors, traditional Amaa prompt self definition as to who they are and where they come from, a process that entails and accompanies internal evaluation. Internal evaluations do happen in new situations that demand elaboration and/or the adoption of new custom(s) that should, in conformity, be relevant to the background of ancestral legacies of traditions. It is one among many occasions when male and female ritual elders debate conflicts and explanations of historical events in oratory. An internal evaluation is an eventful procedure in which traditional Amaa priestly functionaries display their individual skills in proverbs, riddles, and interpreting history to add meaning(s) or make corrective point(s), an event that will be followed by a ritual act, a confirming gesture, and a renewed commitment to ancestral legacies, the base of the traditional Amaa cultural system that constitutes Amaa religion.

Without losing sight of their ancestral connectedness, Amaa sages are progressive in their concerted effort to avoid narrowness in their interpretation and evaluation of traditions and customs which are fluid. Perhaps, this fluidity (flexibility) of interpretation

and application of traditions and customs is an informative key of the inherent tolerance in African religion generally. In other words, traditional Amaa are constantly aware of their ancestral connectedness to *Abbra'dee*, their Origin, the First Ancestor, whose multiple manifestation prevails in nature. As such, then, activities always involve elders, ritual elders, and spirit-priests in interaction with the ancestral realm. Their word is law, for ancestors uphold it. Here the organisational dimension is inherently apparent in ritual acts and celebration. No wonder, then, life beyond the grave makes sense only in terms of the ancestors, who, as messengers of *Abbra'dee* and blending with the living elders, head the kinship systems of both the living and the living-dead that constitute one "Unbroken Circle", the synonym of *Eternity Now*.

Being trained and conditioned by traditions and customs, the traditional Amaa make a concerted effort to sanctify daily living in integrating "the simple things of everyday life"⁷ in their attitude and practical livelihood activities, embraced in rites and rituals. In this way the sense and intentions are applied in daily living. It is here that intentions and living experience shape, function, and structure the "Unbroken Circle", the synonym of *Eternity Now*. That is, all activities carry a liturgical connotation, for the invisible and the visible occupy the same matrix in which the living have relations with *Abbra'dee* through the ancestors.

Here it could be said, then, that "Africa knows what it means to be in the first ancestor, to live in the organism which is growing out of him, to be him, his blood still coursing the living veins, his soul infused in the body, his destiny and disposition working out itself through time".⁸ For this continuity reason, antecedent rites to marriage and its complex rituals processes are mandatory for the traditional Amaa. Accordingly, the ancestral spirits are present simultaneously in the living progeny, in local cosmology, but living in *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit). Therefore, the marriage rite is for eternity as, not only the regular process, but also the levirate marriage demonstrates. This means, then, that a traditional Amaa (or a similar African) physiologically embodies within himself his forefathers and their descendants, the connectives, who guarantee the perpetual continuity of the "Unbroken Circle". This connectedness of the "Unbroken Circle" organisationally and functionally binds the visible and the invisible into a cosmic unit.

Hence, this “Unbroken Circle” of the traditional Amaa “is a world charged with meanings and laden with messages, a world which ‘speaks’”.⁹ Thus, traditional Amaa know the spirits of the living-dead are in their midst. The spirits are the silent but active community members with whom the living are in constant dialogue and from whom they constantly receive informative direction and instruction, which are made possible through divination, rites, and ritual application. The enabling agents in processing and dispensing the communication between the visible and the invisible are the experienced and analytically intuitive elders and spirit-priests in co-ordination with ancestors. In all rites and ritual performances involving forms of traditional art, the invisible are participants and are treated as such.

The “Unbroken Circle”, therefore, *has a structure with its correlate function in existent* “relationships between the constituent individuals and acts, and ... the contribution which each relationship makes to the maintenance of the entire society”.¹⁰ Here, we appreciate that the ancestral contribution, as protective measures for *Eternity Now*, are intimately linked to the support of moral relations in the face of failure to observe the customs, taboos, and ritual obligations. It would be surprising, therefore, if ancestors were to be indifferent to actions violating harmonising bonds of loyalty that bind the members of traditional Amaa society. That is, African (not only Amaa) traditionalists interweave their faith with their practical life. Hence, their belief is not independent from their daily living.

African traditionalists are generally empirical rather than theoretical. It is in the same spirit of empiricism that the Neo-African Christianity, arising from spiritual hunger and alienation from ancestral traditions, carries over into the oral liturgy of indigenous churches’ performance of their religion. Their ritualistic theology is a result of a concerted conscious and successful effort to *synthesise the apostolic kerygma with authentic African insight, based on biblical criteria from vernacular translations of the scriptures*.¹¹ Indigenous churches, forming an organic whole, do not have a written systematic *form of theology, doctrine, or creed in the manner of the historical Christian churches*.¹² Their theology is ritualistic oral theology, i.e. they dance, sing, clap hands, and yield to trance [and consequently to divination]. It is consistent with ancestral traditions and, thus, dependent on experience rather than on discourse. That is, they are entrenched in the

African religion, of which the hallowed values are anchored in ancestors and the earth with its organic processes, connected to time, and topological thresholds related to space. The earth, undivided, as the basis of society in visible and invisible modes, symbolises individual and group prosperity, fertility, fecundity, and good fortune on which life for all depends whether human, animal, plant, or sites and landmarks that carry both temporal and mystical value. For the traditional Amaa, therefore, commodification of land, in modern economic terms, is a taboo, since the ancestors are party to the ownership and *Thhowor* is active in it.

The beginning of modernisation in Amaaland accompanied the missionary religions of Christianity and Islam; both religions to-date (1999) continue to be intolerant of each other and, thus, struggle for dominance over Amaaland. Whereas traditional Amaa religion is inherently tolerant and, hence, pluralist as much as ecumenical. Here spiritual and social conditions serve our understanding of the distinctly particular approach in which Amaa reformers in the indigenous churches read the Bible. They relate the Bible to their *particularity and life experience*.

That is, Christ's (the First Ancestor from eternity) good news of redemption and salvation is summed up in values present in Amaa religion. The Amaa religion (like similar Africans), like the Gospel of Christ, is concerned with wholesome living and the victory of life over death,¹³ despite their difference in the idea of eternity. Amaa concept of eternity is *Now* whereas the Christian one launches on a journey towards eternity sometime in *Future*. Nonetheless, both religions are not nemesis, since there is reconcilable much for the *acculturative-inculturative* process that points to the presence of God (*Abbra'dee*) in history (both written and mythological). The concern for redemption and salvation, an inculturative process, demonstrates itself in the traditional Amaa (or similar Africans) concerted effort in their rites and ritual (sacrificial rite as central) acts, which they believe, negate evil and liberate them from forces that destroy fertility, fecundity, community, corporateness, health and well-being. Hence, points of parallel similarities pave the way for a wider growth of an organic African Christianity, now in its infancy, in Amaaland.

To demonstrate further, in line with the previous paragraph, Amaa (or similar Africans) traditions and customs accommodate the missionary religions that modify the

traditional attitudes of its community members. Therefore, becoming a Christian does not prevent an Amaa, rooted in traditional values, from individually modifying some peripheral aspects without giving offence to traditional members of one's family and community, as long as such a modification does not disturb the sense of brotherhood and harmony, both of which, also called for in Christian faith, are nurtured by the inherent tolerance of the African religion. This modification, however, coupled with the modernisation process, leads some Amaa into utter alienation. Among them are those who have either lost or have not received traditional training, up-bringing, or those who choose to downgrade, in the manner of Byang Kato,¹⁴ and reject the traditional ways as rubbish.

The modern secular education, unattached to religious dogmas and ideologies, is not a threat for it throws constructive light on the traditional Amaa religion. Amaa traditionalists have already started to appreciate Christian faith in terms of traditional Amaa cultural values and systems such as kinship, community, sacrifice, and ancestors in relation to Christ (the First Ancestor) and in comparison with the saints. Hence, Christian theological and scriptural beliefs show parallel similarities to Amaa traditions and values that make Amaa indigenous Christian theology more viable than the Islamic.

But there is chaos in this *acculturation-inculturation* process that results in the fragmenting of Amaa society into religious groupings. For the parallel similarities, therefore, factors of the Christian faith are less threatening than the Islamic ones, with which, so far to the best of my knowledge, Amaa traditions and values entertain nothing in common. Furthermore, the brutally violent Islamic Fundamentalist approach sets out to obliterate the Amaa culture (and other Nuba cultures as well) as heathen (*shaa'wazah*: Arabic term) and transplant instead Islamic culture in Amaaland. The intention is clearly arabisation. This is the threat that has moved Amaa traditionalists, Amaa Christians, and Amaa liberal Muslims of a traditional Amaa background along with similar others of the Nuba Mountains nations (63 tribes) to barricade themselves against the imposing forces of the Sudanese Islamic Fundamentalist state. As they acted collectively against the former British colonial forces, the Nuba people presently fight the Sudanese Islamic state in defence of their cultural systems and land.

In addition, modern scientific and technological culture further promotes fragmenting factors, i.e. easy mobility, material culture, but a peripheral cash economy, and so on. These modern inroads gradually break up the Amaa traditionalists' immediacy with nature and awareness of their environment. These modern inroads tend to shorten the traditional group orientation; whereas the traditionalist in closeness to the natural world, to the mystery of seasons, of birth, growth, and death maintains his ancestral connectedness and, hence, awareness of the spiritual realm. These are the values that traditional Nuba, not only the Amaa, people defend against the Islamic missionary violent (*jihadic*) negation and rejection that expect the traditional Amaa (and other Nuba) people to give up their respective indigenous *particularities* and *life experience* in favour of Arabic and Islamic ones.

But despite the invaluable contributions of Christian missionary work, its *distant approach* failed to differentiate between worship and African veneration for their ancestors and the indicators of the presence of *Abbra'dee* (Creator Spirit) in traditional Amaa *history and life experience*. This failure, however, became a stumbling block to appreciation of the Amaa (or similar African) religious values. Perhaps, the Amaa (or African) pious behaviour towards their ancestors and the common living-dead was misconstrued as worship rather than veneration, for the Amaa (or African) traditional approach to their living elders is not different in terms of reverence from that offered to the ancestors.

The spirit-priesthood office provides the traditional Amaa political organisation with a viable mechanism within the structure of their social system of the loose confederacy of the eight mountains that constitute the Amaa nation (tribe). Despite his specialisation in a certain area of traditional Amaa life, a spirit-priest (*kuweir* in co-operation with junior *kuunee[s]*) is in-charge of his local community and region. But individuals are not restricted to seek help of any *kuweir* or junior *kuunee* according to that individual spirit-priest's famous ability which might equate him with *Sheila*. Although the spirit-priest is an influential functionary in both political and social spheres, he does not exercise absolute authority. In the same manner, Amaa spirit-priesthood is not hereditary, for it depends on personal qualities that, at the initial beginnings, pave a candidate's way

to priesthood. The only hereditary spirit-priesthood office is the *Sheila*, whose clan is considered partly human and partly spirit, *soo* (incomplete humans) as traditional Amaa call it. It is only to this priesthood office of *Sheila* that the Amaa nation (tribe) owes allegiance for his divine origin as the mythology of ancestress *Nyema* maintains. According to elder informants, at the beginning *Sheila* was approached as a divine king, as the title *Sheila* (head, king, leader, or chosen) suggests.

But *Sheila's* spirit-priestly office has been gradually weakened by the advent of the modernisation process over a century ago under the colonial rule in co-operation with the Christian missionaries, coupled with their counter adversary of the *Islamic Jihad of Mahdi*, failed to fully penetrate Amaaland. The Amaa warriors would not permit such penetration until 1917 when *Sheila Ajabna* waged a failed armed rebellion. This failure and the execution of *Sheila Ajabna* and his lieutenant caused an internal rift in that three Amaa mountains (*Kurmiti* [*kurmudu: Kurmudong*], *Nitil* [*Ngihdill: Ngihdillong*], and *Tunndia* [*Ttwaa'na: Ttwaa'nong*] sub-tribes) breached their commitment in ritual dues and attendance at the national annual ritual performance at *Sheila's* shrine. These Amaa sub-nations still reason by employing their respective regional *kuweirs* and *kuunees* for the *rain calling, pre-sowing, and harvest rites* instead of *Sheila's* central role in these rites.

Looking at the six religious groups (including the traditional) of the Amaa society, we find that all, in one way or another, participate in the unavoidable modernisation phenomenon. One is justified, therefore, in concluding that traditional Amaa (or similar African) concepts, beliefs, and values have not for the most part relaxed the grip of the modern life¹⁵ and thought that, out of the six groupings, besides the secularist category, have bred the African elite.¹⁶ But these elite categories, for health in tradition-modernisation continuity, have to include the conceptual reactions to circumstances, experiences, and problems of both modern and traditional Amaa societies.¹⁷ This aspect of the enterprise will have to deal with and embrace the indigenous critical analysis, interpretation and assessment of the changes through the *acculturation-inculturation* (or syncretism by choice not by force!) that traditional Amaa ancestral values and ideas are

going through in response to these pressures from both the internal and external inroads weighing heavily on the process of change through the ethos of contemporary life.¹⁸

However, the alienated Amaa of the missionary religions (those of no traditional cultural background who are adherents of Christianity and Islam) and some misguided secularists of material orientation demand outright replacement of the traditional ways; whereas the traditionalists are stubbornly determined to resist these new trends which have a ravaging impact on their traditional ways and which, I suppose, will be overtaken by the modernisation process and the Neo-African Christianity.

This inevitable process of change of traditional Amaa culture through religious syncretism and modern state neo-colonial machinery beginning from the past colonial states, *seems* certain to have gradually been eroding the confidence and role of the spirit-priesthood office in Amaa life. It also seems true, then, in spite of the lessened but important functional role of the spirit-priest in the traditional Amaa political, social, and economic life, that the traditional Amaa spirit-priesthood will become untenable in its traditional form in some future time. As the syncretistic evolution of the historical church, its dogmas, and doctrines teaches us, the spirit-priest will wear a new veneer of the Neo-African Christianity.

As it combines with the modernisation process, the indigenous church will continue to syncretise Amaa religion and will ultimately smother the spirit-priesthood office. This is because the spirit-priesthood is not hereditary and does not have the driving impetus to resist the challenging ethos of contemporary life. In this respect, my late father the spirit-priest (*Kuweir*) was an example. Although his shrine and related artefacts of the main compound are intact and employed ritually, none of his offspring are spirit chosen or have stepped into his shoes. This is a weakening point for the spirit-priesthood office confronting the modernisation and syncretistic approach of the indigenous church as a reforming modern institution of the traditional Amaa religion. Nonetheless, to reiterate, the only spirit-priesthood that remains hereditary, though weakened, is *Sheila's*.

Instead, the Neo-African Christianity of the indigenous church will be the thriving spiritual force and *may be* the Amaa lived concept of *Eternity Now* will shift to look forward to eternity sometime in future. The indigenous church, now in its infancy, is,

therefore, forming its oral theology in *syncretistic* process from the persistent values (i.e. ancestors and sacrifice), beliefs, ritual practices, and values embedded in traditional Amaa culture, and historical experiences expressed in legends, mythologies, and modern history. These undoubtedly include Amaa supernatural ideas of *Abbra'dee*, ancestors, common living-dead, and other spiritual entities conceived in Amaa (or similar African) ontology (see chart).

The traditional Amaa struggle to overcome the dualistic perception of the world as visible (*metaphor to*) and the invisible (*the real*). The religiosity and spirituality of traditional Amaa moral life and human destiny as roaming demon villains or in communion with ancestors and ultimately in *Abbra'dee*, perhaps, will be subsumed into the Neo-African Christianity.

The traditional Amaa idea of individual personhood at birth (or adoption) as a living thing until ritually named (or adopted) and incorporated into the lineage community could be a parallel equation to the Christian rite of baptism and acceptance into the community of believers as much as traditional Amaa total adherence to ancestral ways. This rite of incorporation is, therefore, the initiation into relationships (totemic-totemistic, affinity, *and* kinship) which express the traditional Amaa spirituality, morality, and social responsibility that influence the good will of the *numinous*. The *numinous*, in turn, enhances fertility, fecundity, corporateness, community, plenty, well-being, and, hence, celebration of the good life.

Therefore, an individual lacking a family and community is rendered a non-entity in traditional Amaa societal thought, political ideas and system (i.e. modern chieftainship) and the traditional political authority. As a stateless society, the traditional Amaa democratic thought and practice is in a communal framework; the clan as a political base shapes group politics and decision making that virtually involves every member in traditional Amaa social structure and function.

Despite the forces of inevitable change, traditional Amaa continue to maintain shrines to their ancestors who, as points of reference, are central to their political thought and action. Their reactions to the world, nature, and man are basically undifferentiated, for the Spirit imbues all.¹⁹ They are emotional but religious with their own way of reasoning

CHAPTER EIGHT

Footnotes

1. Diop, Birago: a Malian poet, quoted in John V. Taylor, The Primal Vision, 1963, p.160, quoting Janheinz Jan, Muntu, p.108, from Hostice Noires, ed. Senghor, Paris 1949, p.144.
2. Faris, James C., Southeast Nuba Social Relations, 1989, pp.304-305.
3. G. Parrinder contends that, "African art provides a kind of scripture of African religion, for it is the expression from within". G. Parrinder, Africa's Three Religions, 1976, p.21.
4. (a) Eliade, Mircea, regards
"myths as a true history of what came to pass at the beginning",
Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, 1960, p.23.
(b) Modupe Oduyoye writes that,
"Myths are therefore hypotheses: they are constructed to offer explanations of phenomena. They are always literary hypotheses, not scientific hypotheses",
in Traditional Religion in West Africa, ed. E.A. Ade Adegbola, 1983, p.376.
(c) In this regard, Nicolas Corte writes,

"Myth is thus a representation of Reality, which though fantastic, claims to be accurate ... It is a symbol which reveals certain aspects of reality, the deepest aspects which defy any other means of knowledge".

The Origins of Man, 1961, pp.11-12.
(d) Also see **Chapter 7 N133**.
5. Eliade, Mircea, The Sacred and the Profane, 1959, pp.76-88.
6. Turner, Victor W., "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage," chapter 4 in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual, 1989.
7. Zeusse, Evans M., Ritual Cosmos: The Sanctification of Life in African Religions, 1979, pp.7-9.
8. Taylor, John V., The Primal Vision, 1963.
9. (a). Zahn, D., The Religion, Spirituality and Thought of Traditional Africa, 1979:81.
(b) Evans-Pritchard, E.E., Nuer Religion, 1956, p.7.
10. Davis, Kingsley, Human Society, 1949.
11. Barrett, D.B., Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary African Movement, 1968, p.278.
12. (a) Barrett, D.B., Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary African Movements, 1968.
(b) Turner, V.W., "New Religious Movements in Primal Societies," in A Handbook of Living Religions, ed. by John Hinnells, 1969, p.444.
13. Glaze, Anita, Art and Death in A Senufo Village, 1981.
Geertz, Clifford, Religion as a Cultural System, ed. by Michael Banton, 1968.

14. Kato, Byang, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, 1973, pp. 69-70, 181.
15. (a) Berger, P., B. Berger and H. Kellner, The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness, 1968, p.103.
(b) Bellah, R.N., Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post Traditional World, 1970, p.103.
16. Fanon, Frantz, "The Intellectual Elite in Revolutionary Culture," in The Africa Reader: Independent Africa, ed. by Wilfred Cartry et al., 1970.
17. Kaunda, Kenneth, "Spirituality and World Community," in African Christian Spirituality, ed. by Aylward Shorter, 1978.
18. Berger, Peter, B. Berger and H. Kellner, The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness, 1968, p.103.
19. "It is thought of as being external to the clansman, and also within them. It is 'in them', as the Dinka say, but also 'in the giraffe' ...and 'in the sky'", writes
Lienhardt, G., Divinity and Experience: Religion of the Dinka, 1961, p.130., **also see chart.**
20. Geertz, Clifford, Religion as a Cultural System, ed. by Michael Banton, 1968.

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Figure 5: Wooroongo Mmoonooong

(a) This grain is left as a share of the spiritual entities such as *Thhowor*, ancestor *Shayshaylay* and others who are involved in fecundity and growth processes (see chaps. 2, 3 and 7). This is why this grain is treated as sacred and suitable only for sowing. Once this sacred grain (*wooroongo mmoonooong*) is harvested, a communal dimension of sharing comes into effect. The traditional Amaa society is communitarian and, therefore, without this farmer's consent others can drive in their flocks to graze the fodder of that harvested farm. Unless a farmer/ dweller is the first exploiter, he absolutely owns only the crop but not the fodder (grain stalks, grass, creeping plants such as cucumber).

(b) At this stage of the final harvest of the previous season, most farmers keep their flocks (mainly cattle and goats) near to graze the farm first before others can (or concurrently) join in. Generosity, sharing and being useful to the community are the common sense that underscores this practice which extends to other areas of traditional Amaa life.*

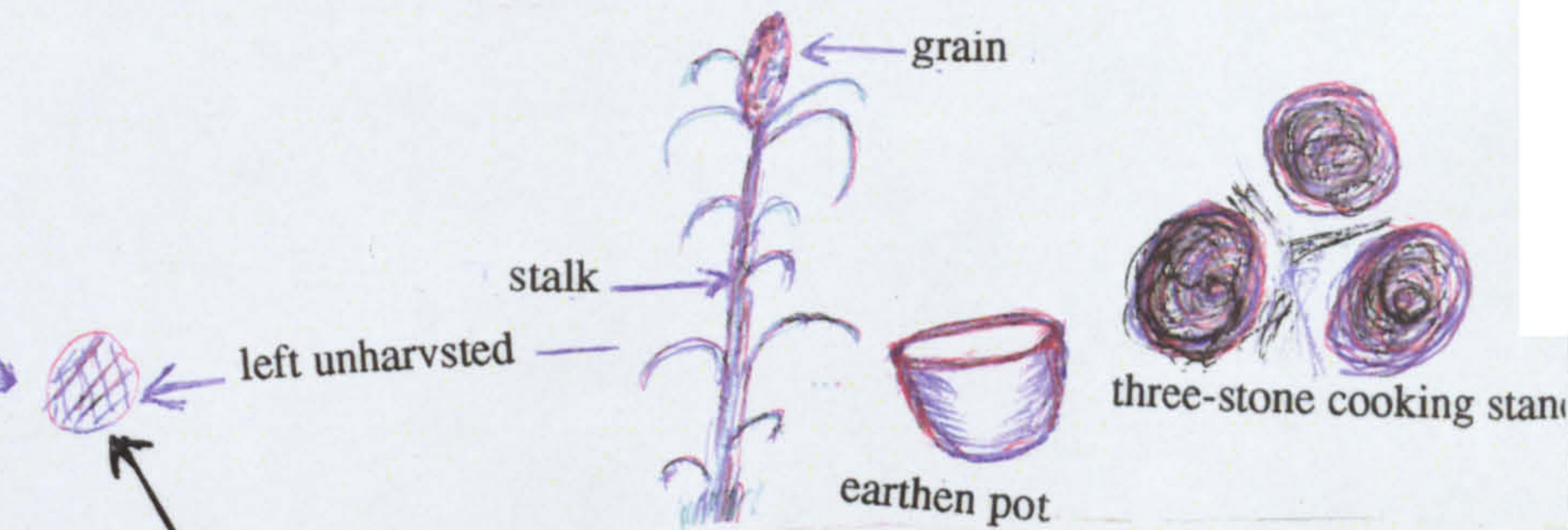
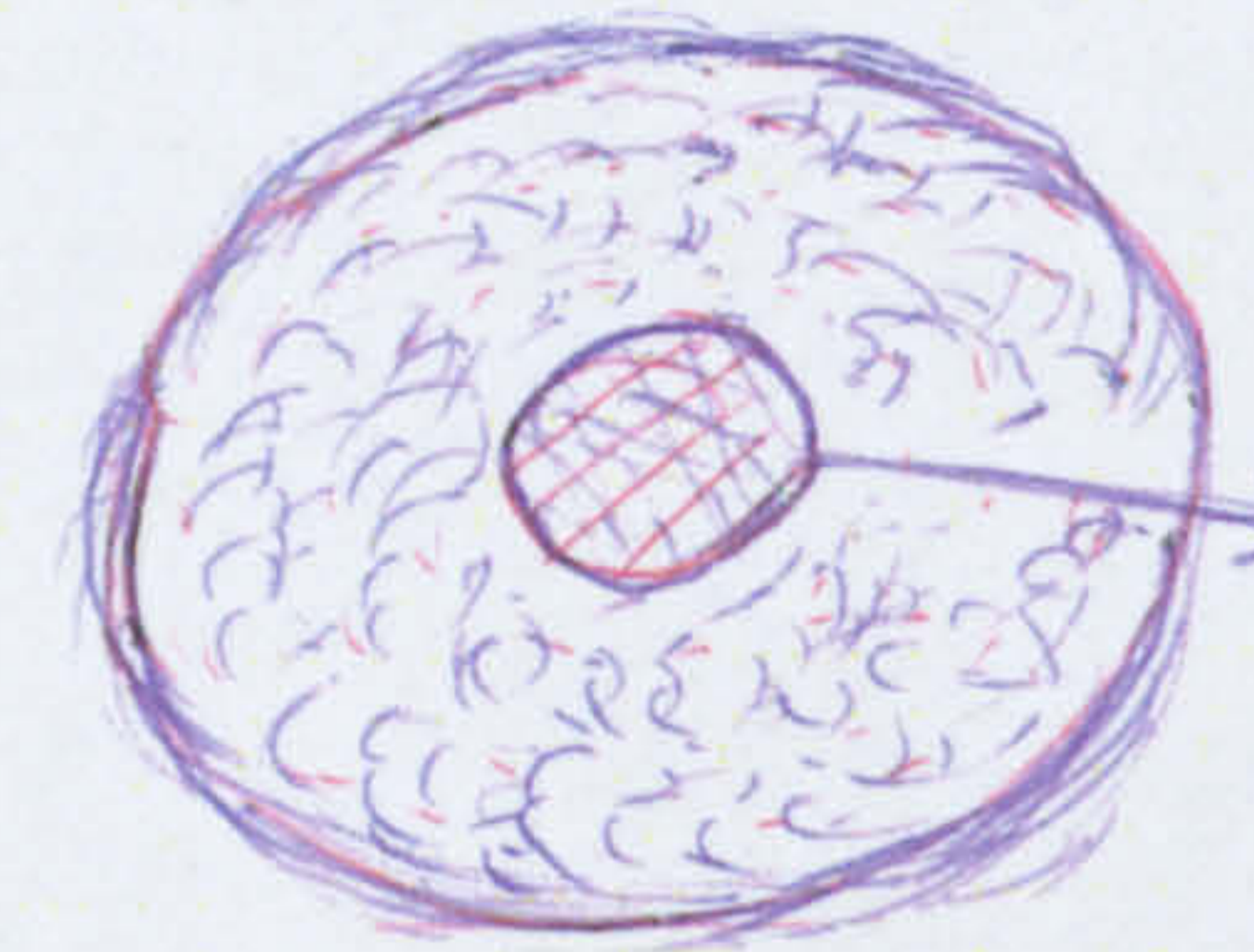
(c) If a farmer of a piece of land discontinues, customary traditions prohibit any one else to exploit it immediately. It will remain fallow for a minimum of two years. Customary traditions require the prospective new tiller/ dweller to perform the rite of permission before exploitation. This rite is intended to involve the invisible presence, particularly the ancestors, as party to the ownership relation. This practice goes further to dictate the act of lending and borrowing land without denial or charge, except the ritual permission. Accordingly, traditional Amaa say, "*Abbra'dee dayh nay keilo abbran she'ay*", meaning, "the Creator Spirit [God] freely created the earth and, therefore, it must be exploited freely". That is traditional understanding, land is given by the creator as a medium for livelihood and not to be owned absolutely with the exclusion of others. The new tiller or dweller can use such a borrowed land without time limit as long as the ownership relation title, which has a mystical dimension (see chaps. 2 and 3), remains with the first user (whether living or living-dead).

* See (a) Kabasele, F., in *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, ed. by R.J. Schrieter, 1992, pp.123-124.

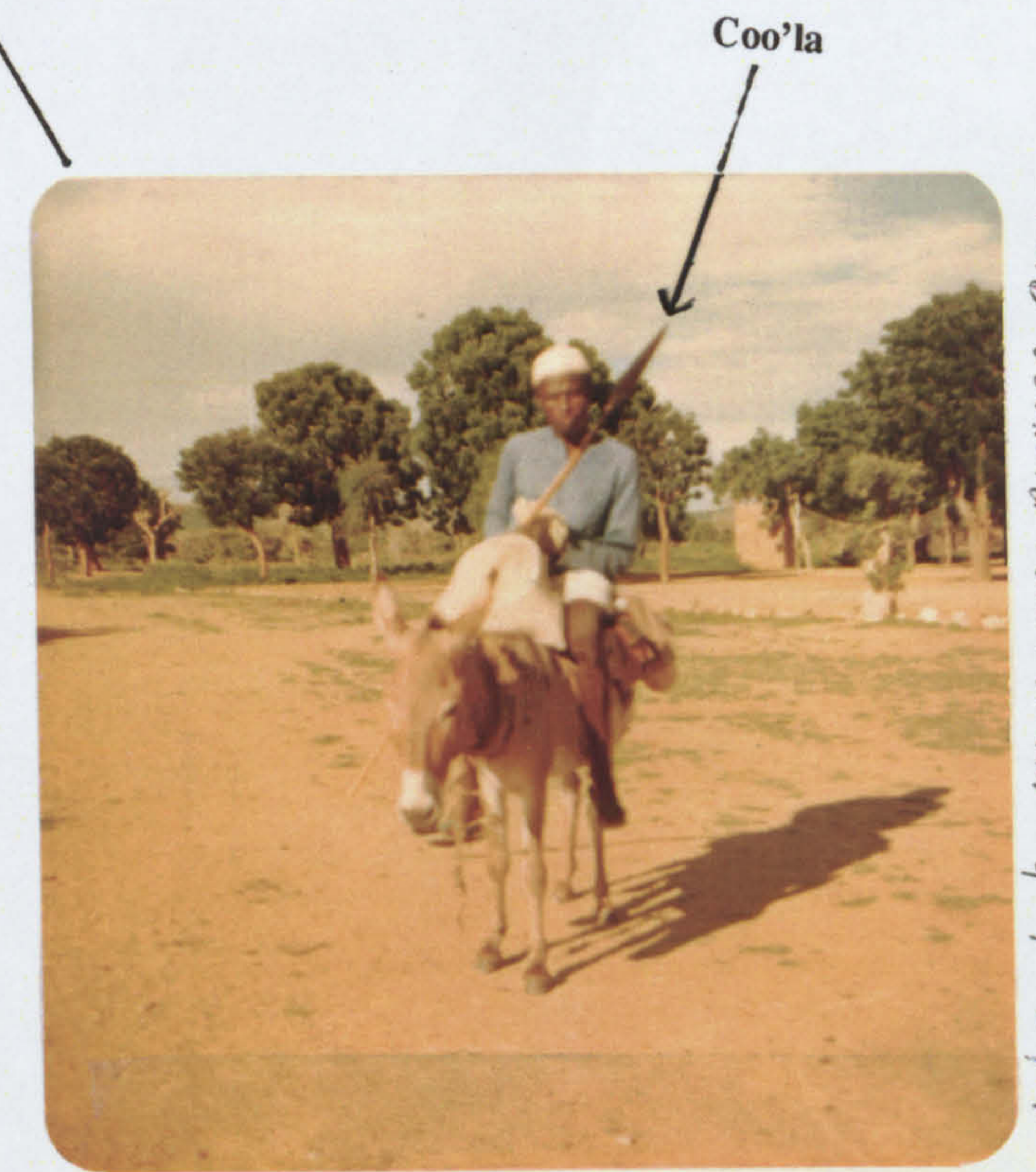
(b) Tempels, P., *Bantu Philosophy*, 1959, p.30

(c) Like other customs and traditions of the traditional Amaa, the act of sharing, a spiritual dimension of group orientation, becomes instinctive in the traditionalist through instruction and training from childhood.

distant farm after harvest



This bunch represents the *tee'nyow mmoonooong* (sacred grain - the first cut from home and near farms which are cultivated by women and the elderly (excluding males, for these are female domain of economic activities). It can not be used for any other purpose except planting next rainy season



Early May 1978, the rider is returning from his distant farm after harvesting the sacred grain in preparation for cultivation period that begins mid June to mid July.

photograph by ANNECIB-ANACH BUSBARA S'AMOUR MAY 1978

FIGURE 3



A.A.B. Pafan
Sept. 15, 1978

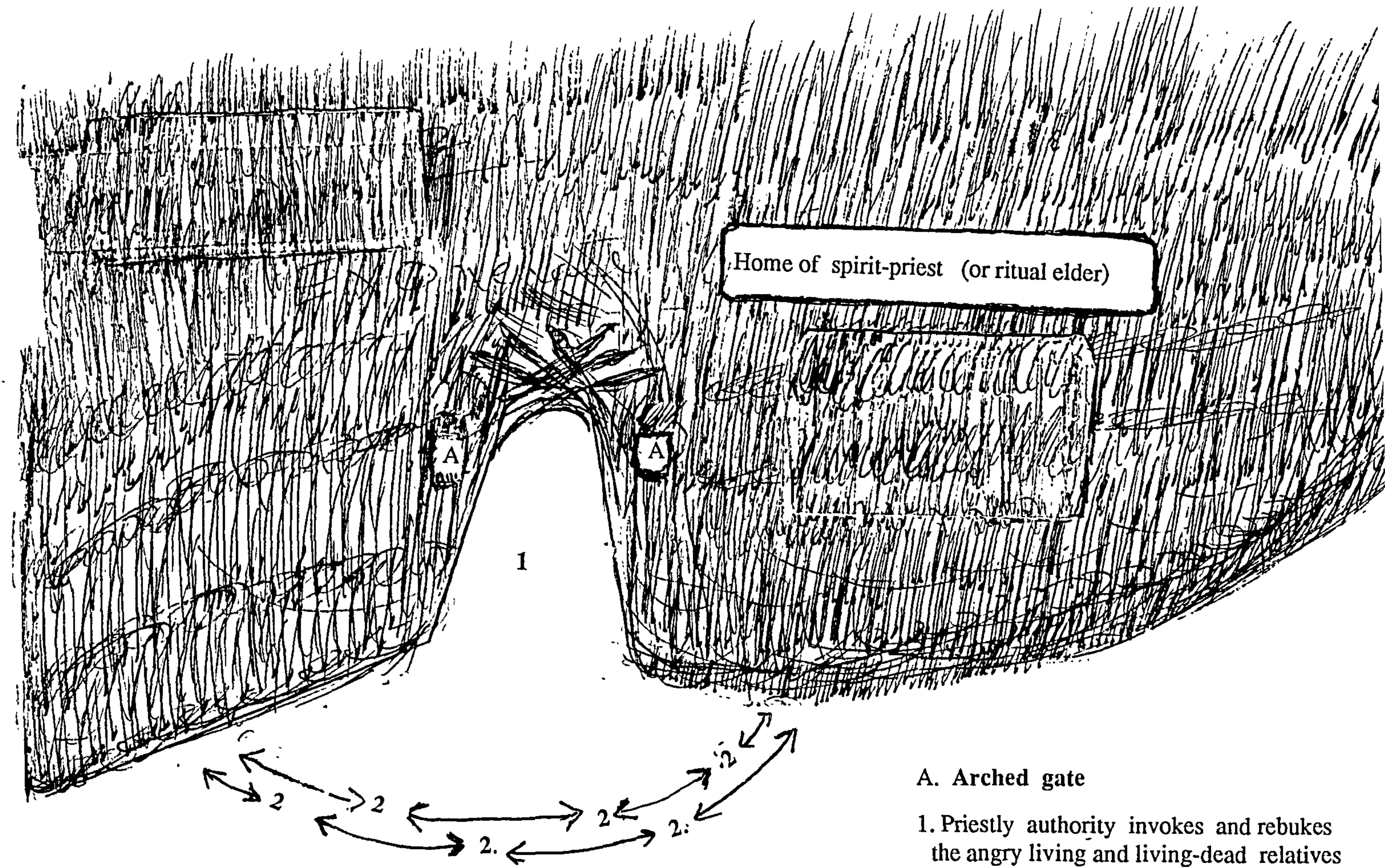


The maiden at the hut entrance is *anngē' nayng* (my sister's daughter). She did transfer her paternal lineage to that of the husband in 1983. I took this picture in September 15th., 1978 at the time the villagers were preparing for *Jalle* (demons' rite of departue).

FIGURE 2: EXONERATION

(A)

A murderer must run for protection to the nearest spirit-priest's or ritual elder's home. Exoneration rites follow afterwards.



A. Arched gate

1. Priestly authority invokes and rebukes the angry living and living-dead relatives of the victim from here.
2. The angry living and living-dead relatives: Taboos prohibit them to attack the murderer in the shrine. The murderer is safe even if no one is at home of the priestly authority, for the spiritual entities are there.

Figure 2: Exoneration Rite

(B)

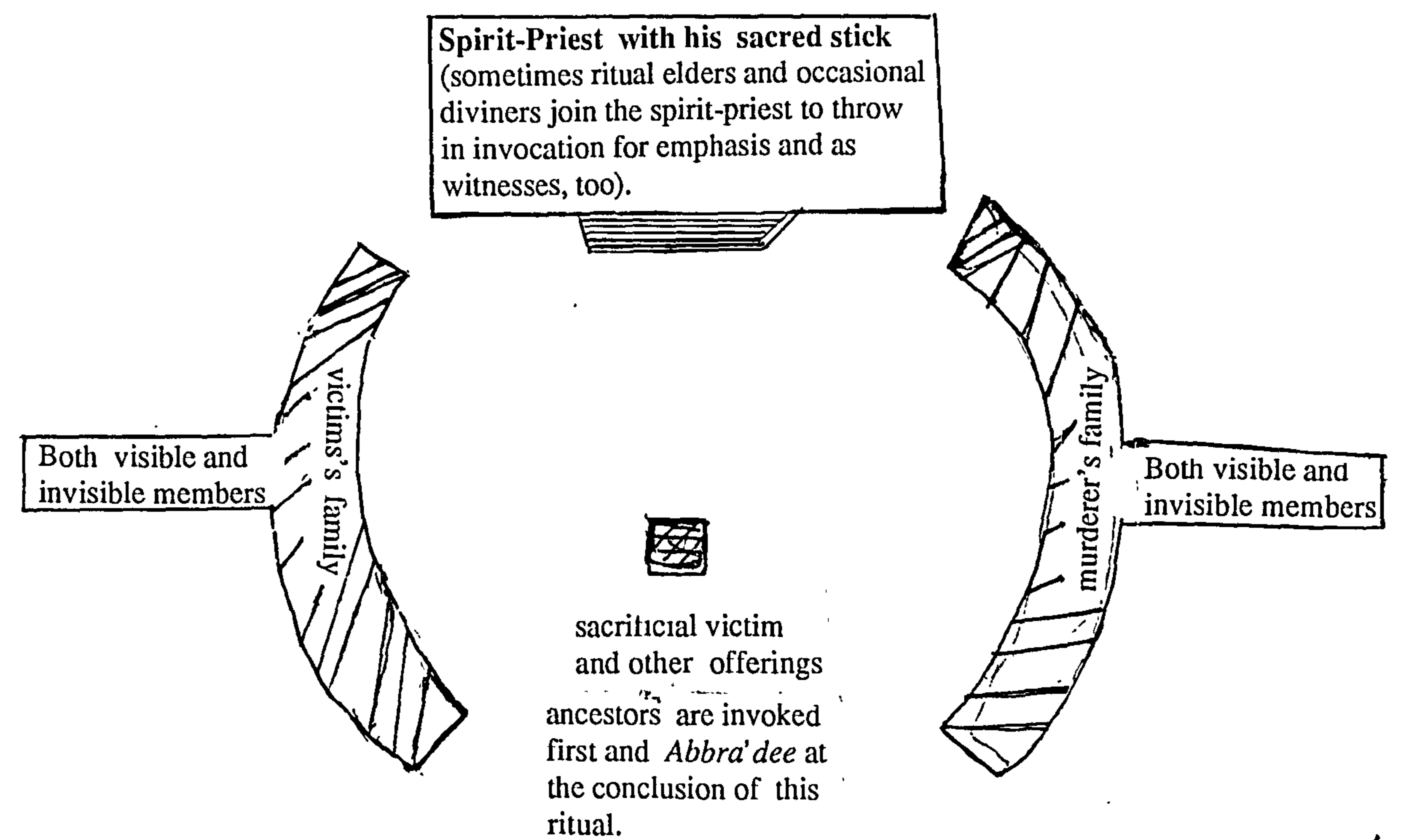
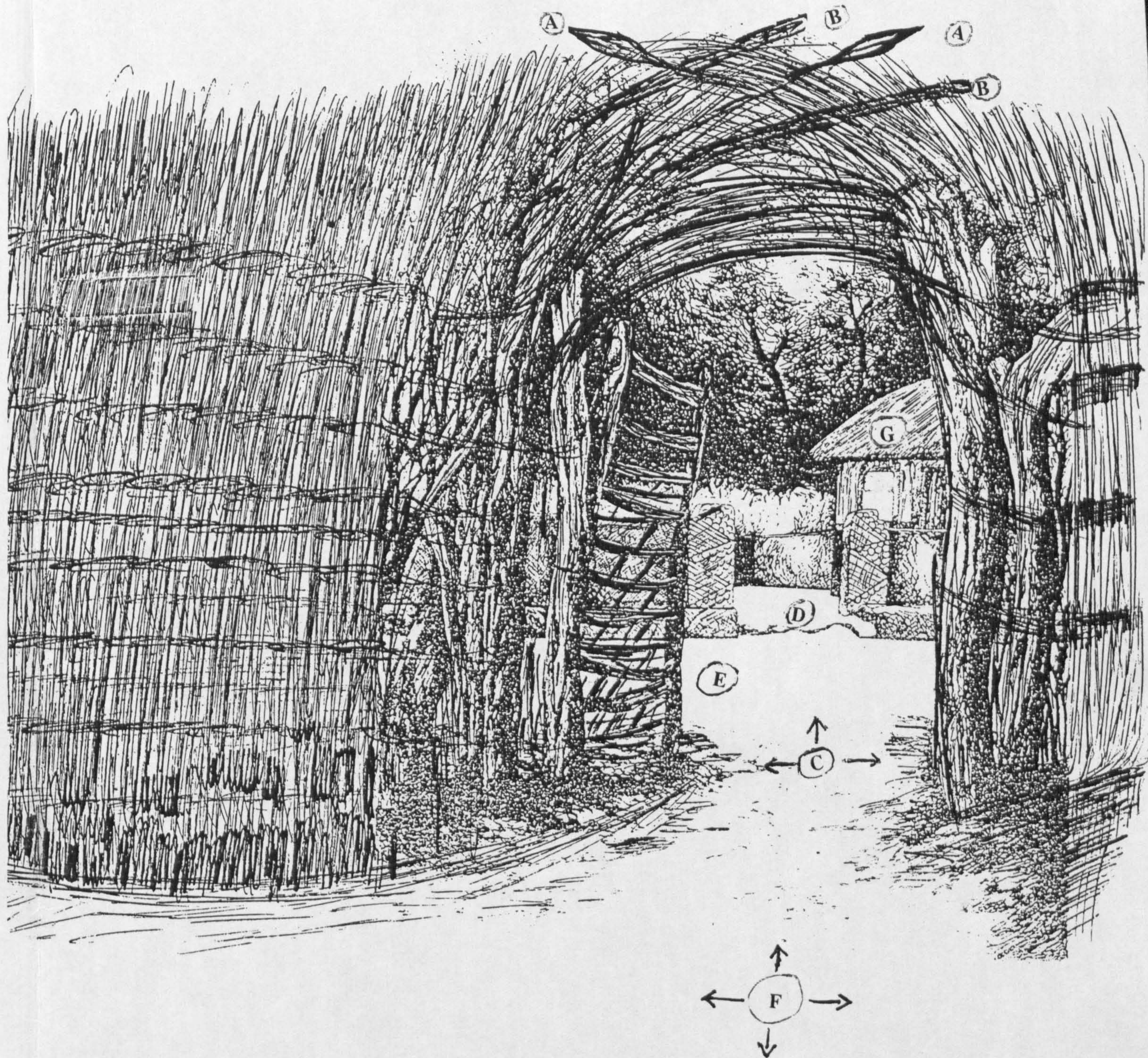


FIGURE 1



A. spears (coo'la)

B. sacred sticks (toewoe)

C. arched gate (orr'gull)

D. main compound altar (mannddah), where ritual sacrifices, libations, human dedication or daughters' rite of transfer to marital lineage (after the house shrine main rite) take place.

E. main compound shrine (coo'dee): masculine space, where sacred artefacts are kept and certain rites are performed like the annual rite of relationship renewal with the earth after the harvest festival.

F. Outside of the arched gate; some rituals are also performed here.

G. Grass-thatched hut (E: main compound shrine).

