



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

The Use of Indigenous Arts in the Therapeutic Practices Of Traditional Priests and Priestesses of Asante, Ghana

Dr. Simon Pyne

Ph.D., Masters (Art Education), BA (Art) Degree in Painting, KNUST, Ghana

Dr. Mavis Osei

BA (Art), Ph.D (Art Education)

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana

Dr. Joseph Adu-Agyem

Senior Lecturer, Department of General Art Studies

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, KNUST, Ghana

Abstract:

Ill health is a phenomenon that every society be it complex or simple entrusts to its health professionals to find solutions using its cultural practices, beliefs and available technology. It is an undeniable fact that Art has been used in several ways and for several purposes to benefit human societies. One of such benefits is its usage in therapeutic practices. The use of indigenous arts in the life and profession of traditional therapists of Asante, Ghana has been in existence for so many years since arts play a key role in Asante culture. This publication therefore aims at finding the symbolic significance of Asante's indigenous arts in the therapeutic practices of traditional therapists of Asante of Ghana, and subsequent projection of this unique cultural heritage. Descriptive research method based on the qualitative design approach was employed. It was discovered that explanations of the causes of ill health given by the traditional therapists of Asante, Ghana in traditional therapy are usually based on what the society has developed and appears to it as a reasonable concept in explaining its therapy and the causes of ill health.. It is recommended that the health services in Ghana need much more of a team approach with greater co-operation between the hospitals and public health services, as well as joint planning with the agriculture and nutrition services, town planning and local government authorities. It is on this team that the traditional therapist might find a place.

1. Introduction

Man as a gregarious being constantly strives for the achievement and maintenance of total well-being through any reasonable means available to him. The above is the reason for which man would go to any extent to deter anything that might seem to pose a threat to his health. The World Health Organization (W.H.O.) defines health as a state of complete physical, emotional, mental and social well-being; and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity.

Ill health is a worldwide phenomenon with accompanied social, psychological and biological implications. Every society attempts in one way or the other to explain and deal with this fact of life and its destructive effect on humanity. Accordingly, in Asante, Ghana, traditional therapists, otherwise known as traditional priests/priestesses and medicine men, believe that besides pathological change the causes of ill-health include the Supreme Being, the ancestors, the divinities, destiny, sorcery and witchcraft. Other causes include the bad behaviour of the individual, as well as malicious operations of others. They have tried to explain and deal with this phenomenon of ill health in accordance with their cultural practices and beliefs in pursuance of their major function; to care for the people and restore health. It is for this reason that since independence in 1957, successive Ghanaian governments have shown a sympathetic interest in the country's traditional medicine and its practitioners to complement that of the orthodox medical practitioners. According to Twumasi, (1975) the Nkrumah regime in 1962 made a profound contribution to the practice of traditional medicine by recognising the significance of indigenous therapists and bringing them to the limelight by enhancing their professional status with the creation of the Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healing Association. Most of the traditional therapists are thus members of this association.

The etymological history of the word "therapy," the Greek therapy, with its derivatives thereupon, therapy, and therapontos, gives birth to some illuminating meanings to the current practice of Traditional priests and priestesses of Asante of Ghana. Therapeia means, "Service." Oden (1966) explains it this way, "more particularly, it means attentive, caring service, the kind of heedful, scrupulous,

conscientious care that one would hope to receive in private and intimate matters. The therapist is the servant who renders careful, experienced, watchful, meticulous, skilled, obedient, painstaking service to the one to whom he is intimately responsible" (p 147).

The task of the traditional therapist in this regard is to examine the different components of the human person (body, sunsum, okra, honhom) and then apply remedy based on indigenous etiological theory. Rituals are performed to exert control over the uncertainties of life by harnessing positive forces from ancestors, gods or other spirits, and by so doing limiting negative forces. The therapists performing these rituals and other therapeutic practices employ indigenous visual and performing arts. These indigenous Asante arts like any African art have a strong symbolic meaning and rarely serve only one purpose. An artefact, for example, may adorn the body of the wearer, indicate prestige and at the same time be the focal point of a ritual that protects the owner from negative forces.

Art manifesting in various kinds of human expression is universal to mankind's ancient root; and has been used in several ways and for several purposes in human societies (Bates, 2000; Fosu, 1993; Vansina, 1984). One such function has been its usage as a tool and process of resolving social and psychological imbalances of human personality. In Europe and the Americas, art is used by art therapists, psychotherapists and clinical psychologists as a form of therapy termed art therapy. Art therapy is a type of psychotherapy that depends on art-making and creativity to increase emotional and social well-being (American Art Therapy Association, 2007).

The presence and application of indigenous arts in the life and operation of the Asante traditional therapists cannot be over emphasized since art is a key player in Asante culture. The indigenous arts are used therapeutically as tools and processes by which traditional therapists carry out their professional responsibilities of caring and restoring good health of clients. As tool and process, the indigenous arts perform diagnostic, preventive, protective and curative functions in the traditional health-care delivery in contrast to orthodox medical practice. However, the significance of the immeasurable contribution of indigenous arts in traditional therapeutic practices is barely acknowledged or appreciated to underscore its effectiveness in traditional therapy of Asante.

The purpose of this paper therefore is to identify, examine and discuss the symbolic significance of selected Asante indigenous arts with regards to traditional therapeutic practices. This in effect will be of great significance to Art Therapists in general to augment their knowledge base and also enhance their skills in practice. Moreover, this paper will bring to the public domain the relevance of Art Therapy to the Ghanaian community.

2. Materials and Methods

The motivation for doing qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative research, comes from the observation that, if there is one thing which distinguishes humans from the natural world, it is the ability to talk! Kaplan and Maxwell (1994) add that the goal of understanding a phenomenon from the point of view of the participants and its particular social and institutional context is largely lost when textual data are quantified. The qualitative research approach, specific descriptive research, was therefore adopted to help understand the people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live and to understand the meanings they give to their experiences (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005).

Based on Best (1981)'s definition, the sample size drawn from traditional priests/priestesses of Asante otherwise referred to as traditional therapists for the study was 168; while 105 were male therapists, 63 were female therapists. They fell under the two main categories of traditional therapists of Asante namely: Atano Akomfuo and Abrafuo Akomfuo. Priests/priestesses who serve river deities are known as Athena Akomfuo. Whereas Priests/priestesses who serve witch catching deities are referred to as Abrafuo Akomfuo.

Considering the heterogeneous nature of the population, the stratified sampling method was employed. Snowball sampling approach formed part of the sampling designs employed in the study. With the Snowball sampling approach, a few potential respondents (traditional therapists) who were known to have licences of operation were initially contacted. Through the recommendations and referrals of these, other traditional therapists operating within the same catchment area were contacted for interview.

The entire sample was drawn from selected "representative" districts, even though the population included all districts of Ashanti Region of Ghana. It was assumed that the chosen sample was truly representative of the entire population. Preliminary investigations revealed that the Asante Akim district, for example had a well organised branch of the Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healers Association whose membership was a befitting representation of the segment of the population for the study. Other selected districts include Offinso North and South, Ejura Sekyedumase, Afigya Sekyere, Kumasi, Ejisu Juabeng, and Adansi East and West districts.

Using the observational situations approach, public performances of traditional therapists of Asante were critically observed. Notes were taken of every activity that appeared significant for the study when two separate durbars were organised for the traditional therapists to pay homage to Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, Asantehene (King of Asante). The traditional therapists used the occasion to perform their professional public functions. They performed amidst drumming and dancing as part of the King's 10th anniversary celebration activities. The enthusiastic spectators observed steadily the spectacles displayed by the traditional therapists.

As custodians of the spirituality and 'security' of Asante, the spiritual leaders were charged to intercede for the Asante Kingdom for God's blessings. The traditional therapists use such public platforms to advertise themselves and their deities by performing wonderful feats which symbolize the supernatural power, effectiveness and reliability of the deities they serve. This is done to attract prospective clients who may consider the therapists and their deities powerful to patronize their therapeutic services (See figures 1- 4).



Figure 1: Traditional Therapist Carrying Water in a Hat to Display His Powers



Figure 2: Traditional Therapist Chewing Hot Coals of Fire to Display His Powers



Figure 3: A Female Therapist Performing a Magical Feat to Demonstrate Her Power



Figure 4: Three Strong Men Pounding Tree-Barks in a Mortar Placed On the Back Of A Traditional Therapist As He Performs To the Amazement of the Spectators

Additionally, unstructured interviewing was used with traditional authorities, custodians of the ethnic groups' culture, folklore and customs and clients who patronised the services of the traditional therapists. Moreover, the traditional therapists were critically observed as they performed their duties at the healing shrines. To support the primary data, secondary data were gathered from documentary sources.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Images of the Shrine and the Therapist

Shrines are thought of as the temporary abodes of the spirits and deities. They are usually associated with sacred objects, places or sites, such as artefacts, forests, fields, cross-roads, river sources and banks, hills and mountains, rocks, trees, graveyards, marketplaces and the outskirts of human habitats. Shrines possess sanctity by virtue of being the abode of the spirits and the gods.

Figures 5 and 6 show examples of shrines.



Figure 5: The Asuo Yaa Shrine At Sokoban Kurofrom

Figure 6: Komfuo Attaa Akosua's Shrine as Displayed in the Shrine Room at Nobesu

It was discovered from the Priests/priestesses who serve river deities and are known as Atano Akomfuo that the shrine of a therapist 'possessed' by a river spirit may usually be kept in a brass pan or earthenware pot (kukuo) specially prepared for the purpose of veneration after being possessed by the river deity. In view of this variety of physical appearances and images, it was realized that the image of the 'shrine' in the life of the traditional therapists and their clients lies in some physical objects other than the said river.

The traditional art therapists revealed that the particular sacred object such as a brass pan, may not house the 'spirit' or god as such. They explained that the sacred artefact serves as an 'image' or 'symbol'. Most of the traditional therapists further asserted that the 'shrine house' or building where the therapist lives and works, together with his or her family and or assistants, constitutes the 'sacred space' or protective boundary where its patients seek security. Moreover, it was discovered from the respondents that although shrines may employ some items and images of symbolic significance such as an iron staff in the centre of a four-part circle, bow and arrows, clubs, knives stuck unto a smock or a sword stuck on the seat of a stool, carved images of spirits and gods; such symbols according to the respondents, demonstrate the awesomeness, domineering and protective nature of the deities or spirits involved. However, according to Rattray (1927) not all shrines or gods employ such paraphernalia. All taboos concerning abstention from sexual relations at least 24 hours prior to a healing session, and the exclusion of menstruating women from the shrine premises, are strictly adhered to by all concerned.

Traditionally, the Supreme Being, the divinities, the ancestors, chiefs, and the therapists are addressed by the generic term Nana (singular Ancient One) or in the plural Nananom (Ancient Ones). In everyday life, it is also applied to the Chief, and to paternal and maternal grandparents of either sex, as also to other elderly people as a mark of respect and honour, but with varying degrees of imagery and weight.

A therapist is seemingly "ageless" and "formless" in essence. One could be as old as eighty years or more, and as young as eight (as can be seen in figures 7 and 8). Regardless of the age though, the one is still Nana, the very image of the ancient ancestors and spirits whose knowledge and authority the patient accepts unquestionably.



Figure 7: A Public Performance of a 70 Year Old Traditional Therapist
Figure 8: A Public Performance of a 5 Year Old Traditional Therapist

For this reason, the word Nana when addressed to the therapist is almost always said in a reverential tone. Nor do the patients speak to him directly. His words must be transmitted through and translated by the assistant. It is similar to the procedure before the chief, who speaks through and is spoken to through his Kyeame (spokesman).

3.2. Asante Indigenous Arts in Traditional Therapy

The people of Italian Renaissance according to Ocvirk et al (1960), quoting Machiavelli, made art the measure of all things, and their lives were motivated by its enjoyment. Accomplishment in other fields was measured by their “artfulness” even to the extent that war itself to them became a work of art.

The Asante as an ethnic group like the people of Italian Renaissance are people who are very artistically inclined and have enjoyed unusual interest in art forms in every facet of their life. Each art form exists to fulfil a specific need and therefore has its own province of expression. The themes depicted are usually of religious and social origin, and of greatest interest to the people as has been shown in figures 9 – 11.



Figure 9: Samples of relief sculpture drums
Figure 10: The Atumpun, Brekete and Mpintin used for “akom” music

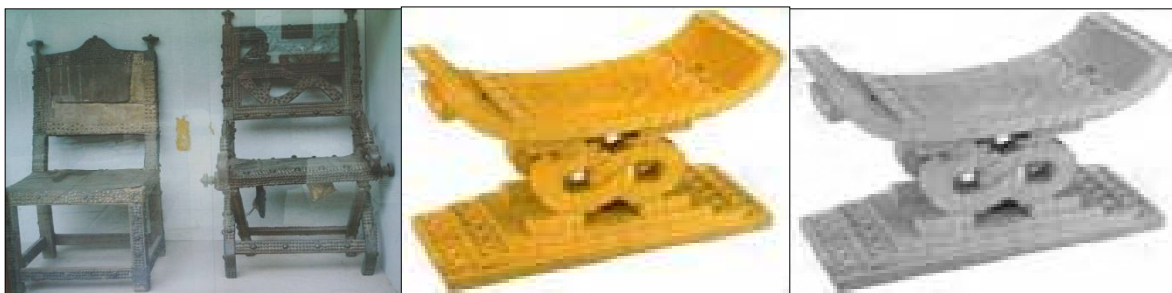


Figure 11: Royal Stools for Chiefs, Queen Mothers and Traditional Therapists

Sculpture, a broad category of Asante indigenous arts is made using a wide variety of materials and techniques by modelling a soft material such as clay or wax; by carving or chiselling hard materials, such as wood or stone and casting metal; or by assembling different sorts of materials. The sculptures comprise objects attached to a background and called relief or three-dimensional sculpture, (whether freestanding or with other structures for support).

The best-known indigenous Asante sculptures are the small abstract, disk-shape figures known as Akuaba. Some Akuaba figures are shown in Figure 12. According to the respondents, Akuaba figures that are consecrated by priests who invoke the influence of their deity to induce pregnancy are now widely used. It was also reported by the therapists that some akuaba figures receive special names and are accorded special powers which may or may not have to do with childbirth.



Figure 12: Variety of Akuaba collection meant for therapeutic purposes

Some akuaba figures are said to be kept by women wishing to conceive, while others are specially prepared by therapist for women already pregnant, to ensure safe delivery and an attractive child. The therapists however were of the view that not all childless women are instructed to keep a consecrated akuaba. According to Okomfo Sakyiwaa of Asante Akyem, a woman desirous of pregnancy is traditionally examined to determine if she is capable of giving birth. When found to be fertile the woman is given an akuaba to be taken home and keeps it with her when making love with her husband. The woman is instructed to return the akuaba as soon as she becomes pregnant. This in effect shows the extent to which the indigenous arts are utilized in the profession of the Asante traditional therapist to ascertain the efficacy of the supernatural powers that are enshrined in the traditional arts.

Local artisans produce exquisite jewellery, and a wide range of decorative brassware to be utilized at the shrines as has been displayed in figure 13. Others include decorative arts to furnish or embellish the spaces within the shrine, or adorn bodies of therapists, officials and patrons.



Figure 13: Assorted Indigenous Handiworks Used As Protective Charms

In the profession of the traditional therapists of Asante, the artistic media which are most frequently used besides plastic arts according to the practitioners are music and dance. These products of creativity are human activity in which creative movements and sounds are performed to convey ideas, emotions, or visually interesting forms. The performing arts feature therapists dancing enthusiastically to drumming and singing. As they dance, communicative gestures are employed to interact with the unseen spirits and the people present. In Figure 14, several priests are seen dancing.



Figure 14: Traditional Therapists Dancing To Drumming and Singing.

3.3. The Shrine Ensemble

The respondents were unanimous in describing shrines as specially housed accumulation of sacred materials which often include indigenous artefacts that accrue over a considerable period of time and sometimes become quite elaborate. The materials according to the therapists are a collection of sacrificial offerings and other objects. Examples of artefacts are displayed in Figures 15 – 17



Figure 15: A Collection of Wooden and Brass Figures Used For Shrine Set Up

Figure 16: The Asuo Fri Shrine Altar, Where Animals Are Sacrificed To the Deity

Figure 17: Display of Fly Whisks, Jawbones of Sheep, Beads, Loin Cloth and Black Smock as Shrine Objects in a Shrine Room

According to many of the therapists, shrine materials are carefully arranged as a conscious display of the nature and power of the gods, by showing their material wealth along with the symbols of spiritual strength. Shrine art as noted by one female therapist Nana Nyarko is symbolic; she contends that figures may occasionally be addressed as if they are deities, but in most instances these images are revered as representations and aids to veneration and to perform therapeutic functions.

The therapist of one “witch-catching” shrine gives prominence to several sacrificially-encrusted wooden figures of varying sizes. Each one according to the therapist is given a title, and believed to possess specific powers in relation to the position reflecting the title. For example; the “big man” and judge, the daughter who helps with fertility, the policeman who guards the shrine, the executioner and so forth. Most shrine figures are supplied by the therapists. “The religious carvings are done in secret by local craftsmen.” one therapist revealed.

3.4. Symbolic Significance of Indigenous Arts

Upon closer examination, it was realized that, symbolically, the production and decoration of the artefacts depended on the particular aspect of art being made and the purpose for which it was made. So in the manufacture of artefacts considered to be sacred, spiritual symbolisms take precedence. The circle for example, which symbolises the presence and power of God and the life-stream which, as it were, flows continuously, is quite prominent in most religious or sacred art. The square or rectangle is the symbol of sanctity in the male aspect of both God and man. It also symbolises territorial power and extent of a male ruler (Sarpong, 1974). On many a regal ceremonial chair among the Asantes, especially, the “Asipim” chair, one sees a combination of square and circular figures known as “Nyame Ntaakyire”, which roughly rendered into English would be “God’s spiritual support and protection”. When the traditional therapist sits in state on the chair therefore, he solicits continually the help of God. The square appears in the cloth and the smock of the traditional therapist more often than any other symbol. In various combinations with other symbols it depicts such feelings as warmth, welcome and security.

The triangle is a female symbol. A queen-mother's pectoral is usually triangular in shape. Triangularly designed shapes are found in their headgear and on their sandals. Such shapes depict the charm and attraction of friendship. The triangle is also the symbol of the pride of state. This might explain why the triangle in various combinations with other symbols is equally used to adorn Chiefs, traditional therapists and other men and women of high standing in society to portray their charm and friendliness.

The circle symbolises the life-stream which, as it were, flows continuously. Ironically the broken circle is the symbol of fertility. The explanation however, is that the circle must first and foremost be broken to induce fertilization which is the root of the life-stream that is expected to flow continuously. The message being put across in this language of symbolism is that, man must first break the circle of life to introduce a new life into the society before he breaks the circle to stop the life-stream from flowing; or better still before he dies. The oval is one of the commonest motifs in Asante. It symbolises beauty, and bears with it a cleansing power. It will be noted that the egg, one of the commonest sacrificial objects, is oval in shape. The oval, as a result of its cleansing power, features greatly in the design and production of amulets, talismans and general shrine equipment as well as general paraphernalia. Furthermore, the oval symbolises the ideal shape of a female figure. To be considered traditionally beautiful, an Asante female figure should, in all its major shapes, fall into an oval shape (Sarpong, 1974).

An undulating line symbolises the stream of life which is characterized by ups and downs. This proverbial symbolism reminds the populace that life on earth is not always smooth and straight forward. One is bound to meet a variety of challenging moments. The straight cross symbolises the rightful or pious interference of a male parent on earth. This indeed is a symbolism of parental guidance, parental control and leadership, parental discipline, love and care for the young ones in the community. In other words it is a symbol of adult responsibility in the home and society at large. In effect when the traditional therapists are clad in any costume with the straight cross motif, they would be reminded of their obligatory leadership roles as models of healthy living in society.

The indigenous arts of Asante employed in traditional therapeutic practices, may be considered as institutionalized art, ritual art and decorative art. The institutionalized and ritual arts may first and foremost be perceived as icons. An icon in this context is the visual representation of an idea, often using a recognizable figure although it can be more abstract or geometric. Some of these icons are culturally or institutionally specific; some are specific to context. The drum for example is a symbol of communication; it symbolises the voice of the people (therapists/adherents) in the therapeutic interactions between the people and associated spirits or deities. The raffia skirt is institutionally specific while the swards are culturally specific. However, sculptures may be specific to context. What this means is that unlike the swards that play several roles in the Asante culture, the raffia skirt may only serve as regalia in traditional priestly institution. The function of a sculpture however may depend on the context within which it is used.

The connection a person has to an icon is not limited to one person; if it were, it would be a personal memory or association, for example a knife stuck in the mouth of a traditional therapist in public gives onlookers the idea that he must not be engaged in any verbal interaction. Or better still it is a symbolic caution to the traditional therapist to avoid undue distractions from his call to duty. It may also reveal the type of traditional therapist he is as can be seen in figure 18.



Figure 18: A Tigare Komfuo in His Traditional Smock with His Club On His Shoulder and a Knife in His Mouth

The fact here is that a simple expression using a recognizable image (knife) has been able to generate all the ideas described above. However, when one sees a knife in real life, though, one recognizes it as a knife but that's the point; a thing itself or a precise representation of a particular thing is not an icon.

Icons often represent something else, but not every representation is an icon. A representation in this context is an image of something that has already been seen, something which existed before the object was made: the object and what it represents are not identical although they look alike. For instance, in sympathetic magic, a symbolic action such as tying a cord tightly around the neck of a figurine affects an object with which the symbol is in "sympathy" or harmony. To explain the point, the person to whom the symbolic action is in harmony already existed before the creation of the image (figurine) that physically received the impact of the action. The living person and the image are not identical although they may look alike. For example, if the person is a man who wears a beard, the

image may be made wearing a beard for the two to look similar. The image (art) in this regard is a representation, in that the man is a known person before the creation of the figurine.

The arts may also serve as tools and process of operation by traditional therapists. Cole and Ross (1977) claim the indigenous arts "are aids to veneration". As a tool, art forms in unique variety give a reflective insight into the supernatural world in relation to the therapeutic interaction between the spiritual forces, the therapist and client. For instance, a traditional therapist asked a sexually impotent young man to place his hand onto the head of a sculptural figure while the therapist addressed the figure in accordance with the client's predicament. The client instantaneously assumed the figure as a symbol of potency and restoration. This psychologically increased his chances of getting positive result. In this circumstance the visual art; (sculpture) has served as a tool to heighten the belief of the client in both therapist and the particular deity; and at the same time helped the therapist to achieve a successful operation. The sculpture and the spirit from the other world become one; the young man's problem is activated in the physical form of a sculpture and becomes one with it. In other words the art form has become a means to an end.

As a process, indigenous art serves as an interactive expedition of self-actualization undertaken by the client under the guidance and company of the traditional therapist. That is, the young man's interaction with the icon opened him up to a mental realization of his weakness and the possibility of attaining solution if he should believe in the efficacy of the gods. The whole process might have been successful within the therapeutic connotation of art.

Icons are visual representations which, in the words of Cole (1989) "achieve compelling prominence through frequent repetition in sacred or secular arts." The key words here are "compelling prominence" and "frequent repetition." They are likely interdependent, because it is the repetition which gives the image prominence and memorability. And that is the difference between an icon and a representation. A representation is so specific to a single person or object that it is not encountered in a variety of contexts and it does not have that sense of prominence or memorability or even recognizability.

An indigenous art may represent something in the vocation of traditional therapists and also "presentify" something. So what is presentification? Presentification according to Cole (1989) refers to the act of making something visible which has not been seen; the object gives it visibility and is essentially identical to what it presentifies. According to Cole (1989) in medieval times, there was the belief that the spirit of a saint resided in the representation of the saint; that saint and image were equal. This might be found to be close to the idea of presentification. But presentification is still different from this because of the fact that what is made visible has never been seen, and moreover, a spirit may be presentified in different forms at different times. Presentification is the most unusual idea to comprehend in the whole concept of cult art; it is a power of art which goes beyond representing and beyond symbolizing. It is difficult to imagine the work of art as "being" what it signifies, but that is the essence of presentification

A traditional therapist and a god become one most especially during possession; (note that presentification may involve a human being, in addition to or instead of an object of art). For example a traditional therapist who was possessed by a serpentine spirit acted in presentification of the said reptile by crawling on the ground and feeding on raw eggs that were picked with only his mouth and swallowed just as the respective reptile does as displayed in figures 19, 20 and 21.



Figure: 19: A Traditional Therapist Acting Out The Serpentine Nature Of His Deity In Search Of Egg



Figure 20: A Found Egg Is Picked With His Mouth



Figure 21: The Therapist Struggles to Swallow the Egg but Eventually Swallows It

4. Conclusion

Traditional therapeutic practice forms part of a system that has been developed as an integral part of the culture of the Asante people. This consists of a number of integrally related aspects arising from their efforts to control and manipulate their environment for the satisfaction of their primary needs. The position of traditional therapists of Asante of Ghana may be comparable to the positions of the Reverend Minister, the Psychotherapist, the Counsellor and the Art Therapist of the West since Traditional therapists of Asante perform integrative functions which first and foremost aim at the restoration of social harmony; and also serves as a social control mechanism which helps to reinforce the spiritual, the mental, the social and the physical growth of the people. Traditional therapy and its explanations of the causes of ill health given by the traditional therapists of Asante are usually based on what the society has developed and appear to it as a reasonable concept in explaining the causes of ill health and its therapy.

The Asante of Ghana have two major categories of deities. A traditional therapist's mode of operation, types of artefacts used and dress code are all determined by the kind of deity being served. The two categories of deities control all professional functions of traditional therapists of Asante. However, these are based on the belief system of the Asante people to whom the services are rendered. In the therapeutic context of the traditional therapist, both therapist and client often agree right at the start that the source of evil is out there, even where an apparently discontented or rebellious kra (soul) is concerned. It is an "externalising process" as opposed to the "internalising process" in the West. The image of the therapist is that of a friend and ally against the evil 'other': the witch, the demon of the wild. Dwarfs, the angry gods or ancestors, mercenary spirits, jealous siblings or other members of the society at large who are to blame for the client's predicament. This state of affairs highlights the significance of the common cultural background of the traditional therapists and their clients.

The traditional beliefs and customs, which surround ill-health, seem to persist to a much greater extent than the pace modernisation would appear to suggest. For this reason problems that face a person and the choice of solution may be influenced rightly or wrongly by what he believes to be the ultimate cause of the problems. It is evidently clear that the success of the traditional therapeutic practice lies in its adherence to a psychotherapeutic approach that makes use of indigenous arts. This is achieved by the skilful manipulation of appropriate indigenous arts by a traditional therapist. Through the physical actions with and in arts, the person is rendered capable of carrying on normal behaviour; and this relieving action is the speciality of the traditional therapist as he encourages the patient to participate in the whole process of the therapy.

Traditional therapy, or its functional equivalent, may never wholly disappear from the Ghanaian traditional society, regardless of how urbanized life becomes, because there is a continued prevalence of doubtful-medical beliefs and therapeutic measures existing in the practice of scientific medicine. The evidence is clear in the continued vitality of traditional therapeutic practice among the indigenes of Asante. In the sphere of traditional medicine perhaps the most recent development of note is the introduction of a course now in herbal medicine at KNUST with some traditional therapists modernizing their practices in pharmaceuticals. In addition is the formation of a Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healers Association which purports to research into mysticism as employed by the traditional practitioners. The pharmaceutical values of known herbs are being investigated as well as some of the therapeutic claims of the practitioners.

In any social formation in Ghana, where "traditional mentality" predominates, it would be reasonable to expect that traditional therapy would be a vital medium in health care delivery. For that matter the practitioner who knows the community well and understands psychotherapeutic characteristics is expected to make good use of that knowledge in the best interest of the people. It is in the light of this that the traditional therapist should be given maximum opportunity to play a complementary role alongside modern medicine; and to operate without any encumbrance.

To create the appropriate environment for a proper understanding of the use of art by the traditional therapists in their profession, art educators, art students and artists in general must adopt the practice of building a conducive atmosphere for a better interrelationship within the art environment. Finally, there is no doubt that a psycho-social study of the therapeutic practices of Asante traditional therapists is of both theoretical and practical interest; for it cannot be denied that the practice will go on for as long as the traditional values which support it remain operative.

5. References

1. American Art Therapy Association (2007) "Art therapy" [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_therapy] (accessed 2011 August 13)
2. Bates, J.K. (2000). *Becoming an Art Teacher*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning
3. Best, J. W. (1981). *Research in Education*. Engle Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
4. Cole, H.M. (1989). *ICONS: Ideals and Power in the Art of Africa*, Washington DC: Published for the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution Press.
5. Cole, H.M. & Ross, D. H (1977). *The Arts of Ghana*. USA: The Regents of the University of California.
6. Fosu, K. (1993). *Twentieth Century of Africa*. Washington DC: National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution Press
7. Kaplan, B. & Maxwell, J.A. (1994) "Qualitative Research Methods for Evaluating Computer Information Systems," in *Evaluating Health Care Information Systems: Methods and Applications*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
8. Ocvirk, O.G. Bone R. Stinson R. & Wigg P. (1960). *Art Fundamentals Theory and Practice*. Dubuque, Iowa: W. C. Brown Company.
9. Oden, T. C. (1966). *Kerygma and counselling*. Philadelphia: Wadsworth Publishing Co.: Westminster Press.
10. Leedy, P.D. & Ormrod, J. E. (2005). *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (8th Ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall
11. Rattray, R. S. (1927). *Religion and Art in Ashanti*. London: Oxford Press.
12. Sarpong, K. P. (1974). *Ghana in Retrospect*. Accra, Ghana: Ghana Publishing Corporation.
13. Twumasi, B.A. (1975). *Medical systems in Ghana: A study in Medical Sociology*. Tema, Ghana: Ghana Publishing Corporation.
14. Vansina, J. (1984). *Art History in Africa* (1st ed.). New York: Longman Group Limited