



Cosmic harmony: Understanding the eco-spiritual connectivity of the Ngie people

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Abstract

The imposition of Western Religious systems of worship in the African societies as a by-product of colonization destabilized the bio-spirituality of the Africans. The African man is a natural man whose survival is based on his intimate connection with his environment and the forces that lord over it. This questions the introduction of the mega-spirituality which challenged the focusing on the environment and creates distraction to the African spirituality. According to Buzzel et al, the Africans belief on the earth and her creatures as being potent expressions of the sacred, (qtd in Cheryl Fisher 2005) on whom their well-being and survival depends and is challenged. This study focuses on the Ngie Society in Ambanasom's *Son of the Native Soil* and seeks to establish the spiritual connectivity that binds the people of that society to their environment. How the Ngie people thrive in their daily existence to sustain this sacred bond so as not to provoke the wrath of the controlling supernatural forces is on focus here. By exploring the postmodernist recognition of mini-cultures and religions, the study through African Hermeneutics and Ecocriticism investigates the outcome of a disruption in cosmic harmony where the living are considered the underdogs.

Keywords: Cosmic Harmony, Eco-spirituality, Ecocriticism, Hermeneutics, Ngieland.



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Public Interest Statement

This study seeks to establish and valorize the reality that the African lives in cosmic harmony with his environment. This is because the African believes in the sacredness of the environment on which their physical, mental and spiritual survival greatly depends. In their pantheistic and polytheistic practices, the African in general and the Ngie people in particular, as in the present study, believe in this cosmic harmony, such that any destruction of their eco-system leads to the disruption of the sacred link. In the event of such a happening the living who are the underdogs suffer whether guilty or innocent.

Introduction

Shadrach Ambanasom in *Son of the Native Soil* seeks to recreate the Ngie-Widikum Traditional Religious practices and beliefs as his contribution to the quest for a rebirth of African lost identity especially in their religious practices. The events that unfold in a literary weave capture a mastery of the environment in which he has grown up to an advanced age. The relationship between the living, the dead and the gods as portrayed through their connectivity with their ecology is testimony of the cosmic harmony that ensures the survival and blessings that the living receive from the supernatural world inhabiting the spirits.

Cosmic Harmony

In order to better elucidate the arguments, the understanding of what cosmic harmony is very imperative in the present paper. According to Shashi Prabha Kumar in "Vedic View of Cosmic Harmony: Parity between Microcosm (Pinda) and Macrocosm (Brahmanda)" Cosmic Harmony "signifies that there is a parallelism between the embodied human being and the disembodied cosmic existence" (1). Kumar goes further to postulate that "just as the human body is an abode of the individual self, similarly the entire cosmos is the abode of Supreme Self" (1). On the contrary, in the African society, apart from the presence of the supreme self that Kumar mentions, the cosmos is inhabited by spirits, divinities and gods. This is the situation in Ngie which in the present study is literary represented as Dudum Clan.

On their part, Tomlinson and Prins hold that Fiscino's Universe is profoundly influenced by a Neoplatonic vision of the world, where intermediary beings—angels, demons, heroes—play an important role in various rituals of purification, including music (qtd in Maude Vanhaelen 3). In the same vein, Fiscino "underlines the role of these intermediary beings in the reenactment of the music of the spheres" (qtd in Vanhaelen 3). He concludes that "These beings also play an important role in maintaining the unity and the harmony of the cosmos, since they are responsible for holding together the two

extremes of the Universe; they can do so because their nature consists of a mixture of all elements (ibid 3-4). The interconnection between the folks of Dudum, Ngiekum, their Supreme God, their ancestors and other spirits throughout Ambanasom's novel, confirms the cosmic harmony in the Ngie society.

Eco-spirituality

Cheryl Fisher in "Eco-Spirituality and Nature-Informed Therapy" quotes Ober et al who holds that "...modern living has insulated us from the ionic exchange between grass, trees, river, and sky and resulted in a detachment from physical, psychological and often spiritual connection to the earth and her creatures" (n.pag). This connectivity elsewhere may not be spiritual to some communities but in the African society it is inseparable with their spirituality. Fisher, quoting Donohue, Johnson, Jordan and Jordan further postulates that "As sensual-spiritual beings our interconnection with nature provides a platform for awe, wonder, healing and growth". In the African society as Ambanasom projects, this interconnection is held together by constant communication with the supernatural forces that inhabit the earth and who hold the lives of men in their palms. Sacrifices and incantations keep this bond together and ignoring either of them is an invitation for calamity.

Ecospirituality, according to Valerie Lincoln in "Ecospirituality: A Pattern that Connects" is defined as "a manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the environment. Ecospirituality incorporates an intuitive and embodied awareness of all life and engages a relational view of a person to planet, inner to outer land-scape, and soul to soil" (Lincoln Abstract 2000). By this, Lincoln means that human being are, or should be connected spiritually to their environments. On his part, Ned Hettinger in "Ecospirituality: First Thoughts" postulates as concerns on ecospirituality and environment his understanding of man's relationship with nature:

This earth is our home and our creator. It continues to provide for us the sustenance of our existence. It ties us to other forms of life and individuals by bonds of kinship: all of us are offspring of the same earth parent. The mountains, the sea, the endless prairie, the grasslands, the wetlands, the deserts and rainforests are all infinitely precious, both manifesting and partially constituting a proper object of religious concern. (91)

In a more traditional outlook, Universe Spirit in "Ecospirituality Definition: What is Ecospirituality and Why is it Important to All Spiritual Individuals?" defines eco-spirituality as "based in a fundamental belief in the sacredness of nature, Earth and the universe."

(universespirit.org n.pag) According to them, "Traditional eco-spirituality is as old as humanity and has been practiced by indigenous peoples since the beginning." (ibid.)

Ngieland

Ngie and Widikum are found in the Momo Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. These grassland indigenous people form part of the rich grassfields Cultural zone of Cameroon. Noted for their attachment to their cultural values and the established respect for their traditional authorities, the people have unquestionable religious attachments to the gods of their land. Conflicts over land have been a common feature in the Division and all of the Divisions of the North West Region. Ambanasom hails from this cultural background and his narratives in *Son of the Native Soil* is drawn from his first-hand experiences in his homeland.

Ngiekum

Ngiekum is the Supreme God of the Dudum people in *Son of the Native Soil*. Ngiekum lives in his sacred shrine located far from the people at the Dudum Falls. His presence in the lives of the Dudum people is remarked each time an important happening is taking place in the life of the clan or of the individual.

Theoretical Framework

In order to better elucidate the arguments, the paper will employ the theoretical concepts of African Hermeneutics and Ecocriticism. These theories shall be used to validate the narratives about African Traditional Religions and the harmony with ecology in their eco-spiritual drive. African hermeneutics therefore becomes the instrument for the interpretation and understanding of the African experience given that "culture is pregnant with meaning and has to be explained and understood with the aid of reason within the parameters of philosophy." (Kanu 26). The study of this literary work and its representations of nature constitutes Ecocriticism.

Eco-Spiritual Connectivity in *Son of the Native Soil*

Shadrach A. Ambanasom in *Son of the Native Soil* exposes through his characters, setting, themes and stylistic features, the oral traditions and cultures of the land of Dudum, made up of nineteen villages with two lead villages, under the polarities of Upper and Lower Dudum. Upper Dudum has fifteen villages under its delimited boundaries with Anjong as its lead village, while Lower Dudum made up of only four villages has as its lead village Akan. Though this division has brought about the rivalry and conflicts between these lead villages, they are still bonded by the common ancestry and god whom they worship and

believe in as their common identity. They speak the dialects of the same language, a linguistic factor that buttresses their common ancestry.

The rivalry and division that beset the Dudum clan, thus ushering in a schism the bond that hold them together is the central concern of Ambanasom. However, it is in the course of weaving together this story of the Dudum people who live under the almighty protection of Ngiekum, their supreme god, that the author unveils the oral traditions and cultures of the very people that shape the background of the author's rich inspiration. The interconnectivity between the people, their gods, ancestors and ecology constitutes a religious bond on which their spiritual life depends. This constitutes the main plot of the story. The sub-plot hinges on the love story between the emblematic Achamba, son of the native soil, from Akan, and Echunjei, the assertive and hope-giving daughter of Chief Akaya of Anjong. Their marriage is a great metaphor on the much cherished unity between the Dudum people led by Anjong and Akan.

Shadrach A. Ambanasom's novel thus depicts the relationship between the gods, ancestors, the living and nature. The living in the African societies are in connection with their ancestors who are considered as people in the world of the "living-dead" and who greatly influence the world of the living. The ancestors are seen as intermediaries between the living and the dead, who blur the gap between the living and the dead, thus insuring the survival and blessings of the living. The spiritual life of the Dudum denizens is thus intimately connected to their ecology such that any disruption in this bond has disastrous consequences on the living who are considered as the underdogs in this relationship. Ambansom thus explores the oral traditions of the Ngie and Widikum people to expose their spirituality which is intimately connected to their ecology. The exploitation of the oral traditions of the Ngie and Widikum people by Ambanasom to tell the story opens a great avenue for the culture of the Ngie and Widikum people to be exposed.

The belief in the myth of the Squirrel as the "Age-old Judge" of the people of Dudum is very much exploited by Ambanasom. The people of Dudum believe in the impartial nature of the Squirrel as Judge in their matters of conflict. In such circumstances, for example, whenever there is a conflict between two villages, they all agree through their Chiefs on a Squirrel-hunt expedition to prove the village or individual that is at fault. This means that the squirrel always vindicates the side that is right and disgraces the side that is at fault. In the squirrel-hunt expedition, which is carried out on separate days chosen by the teams of each rival group, the two rival sides go for the hunt to bring home a live-squirrel. Under the leadership of a reputed chosen member of the community, the side that succeeds to bring a live Squirrel proves itself right in the claim.

While at the target bush for hunting, which often is the Iteubugi bush, the members of the team map an area they suspect is hosting a Squirrel, they then set a net on the

opposite end of the mapped area and then enter the bush from the opposite direction to the net. From this spot they begin to comb the bush after having set the hunting dogs, with belts on the necks on which bells are hung, on the identified tracks of animals. While whistles are blown, and clubs thrown up trees and stones get into suspected hiding places for the squirrels, the team moves towards the mounted net. At the appearance of a Squirrel, the leader addresses the Squirrel in an incantation that is a glaring example of the spiritual connectivity between the Dudum people and their ecology performed as their oral traditions demand:

Age-honoured Squirrel, come to our help. Come to the help of the people of Akan. We appeal to you in the name of Ngiekum. Squirrel, if the piece of land in dispute belongs to us as we firmly believe that it does, Squirrel, die and remain in the net. If, on the other hand, the entire plot does not belong to us as Anjong claims, Squirrel, go in and escape from the net. My words are ended. (pp. 42-43)

This incantation made by Abaago, the leader of the Akan Squirrel-hunt expedition to prove their claim to the totality of the Ukob land, captures the communication that exists between the people and their gods, symbolized by the Squirrel. The reaction of the Squirrel to these words can be seen in the reaction to the incantation of the Anjong people who go to the Itebugi Bush after the Akan hunt. The words of Ubeno, their team leader are heeded by the Squirrel not long after they mount their net and start the search:

Squirrel, you are the last word when all else fails. You the impartial judge that has passed judgement over countless cases since the days of Ngiekum. Squirrel, come to the help of Anjong. If the whole of Ukob belongs to Akan. Squirrel, go in and disappear from the net. But if the Anjong side belongs to Anjong and the Akan side to Akan, then die and remain in the net, Squirrel. I have spoken for all Anjong. (p. 43)

In reaction to these words of truth, unlike the words of falsity from the Akan team, the Squirrel runs into the net and remains there: "It had folded the net round itself several times. There were triumphant shouts from the guardians who carried the bundled net with the Squirrel in it in their hands. Anjong hunters screamed for joy, and two gun shots were fired into the air". (44). Unlike in the reaction to the incantation of Akan Squirrel-hunt team, where the Squirrel frees itself from the entanglement of the net and escape to prove them on the wrong, the Squirrel that appears at the Anjong Squirrel-hunt, entangles

itself in the net without much ado, and remains there alive for the triumph of the Anjong people.

Incantation is therefore a means of communication between the living and their ancestors who are believed to inhabit their environment and are always around them, as Mbiti describes "like swarming mosquitoes" (Mbiti 166). This oral tradition thus captures the mode of communication of the Dudum people and their spirit world, hosted in their ecology. The response to the incantations by the Squirrel in both events of the Squirrel-hunt is testimony of the cosmic harmony between the people of Dudum and their spirit world. As the people explain to the D.O during a working session with him on the occasion of his visit to Dudum:

Mr D.O we are sorry to cause you some worries. According to our tradition, we return to the Squirrel for ultimate justice when we are faced with a case that presents particular difficulty. If two people quarrel over an issue, one must present a live Squirrel to justify his claim. A live Squirrel so presented is clear proof of the honesty of the person. This is what Anjong has done, but Akan has failed to produce theirs. So we in Anjong regard the piece of land as belonging to both Anjong and Akan, whereas the Akan feels that Ukob belongs to them alone. (pp. 113-114)

The mockery of the Squirrel as fake and the consequent rejection of the verdict of the Squirrel by the Akan people are a mockery of their gods and the flouting of their traditions. Understanding that the Squirrel is believed to incarnate the gods of the land, it becomes abominable for the Akan people to reject its decision. In the event of such an act the concerned village or individuals must be ready to bear the consequences which are always disastrous. The brutal and untimely death of Achamba is not unconnected to the transgression of their traditions by his Akan people. He becomes a scape-goat in the traditional set up where man's freedom of choice and worship is guaranteed only when one is in the mother's womb.

Though many critics have ascribed Achamba's death to his disobedience, this study demonstrates that his death is spiritually connected to the violation of peace negotiations through the Squirrel in Ngieland. Embuta has a dream few days before Achamba is murdered: "Two days ago I had a very disturbing dream, a dream in which I wept...That dream is portentous. ...my father was killed on a battle field at Edom". Embuta's dream is a presentiment that foregrounds Achamba's death. Though the actual name or face is not in line with his dream, it is very glaring that the dream alludes to his death. The gods may have hidden the actual face or name from him in order to prevent Embuta from

obstructing or trying to prevent what they intend to do. Achamba stays away from his enemies, especially Abaago as advised by his father, yet he is killed in his own house because it was something already predestined by the gods. A scary and spiritual event occurred before his elimination:

It was as if the den of the wild and undomesticated elements had been thrown open and the chained forces let loose. The furious rain, the violent storm, the angry thunder, and the intermittent lightning – all of these – joined in their elemental rage to make of that night one of the most terrifying in the history of the clan. People huddled up shivering from sheer fright, in their various houses. The fury outside was terrible. The roaring of the Dudum Falls seemed to have increased a hundredfold, commingling with the natural forces. (p. 185)

Achamba, caught in the awe-filled night in his bedroom attempts to immortalize the eco-spiritual happenings that have a dreadful bearing on them. In an artistic inspiration, he composes a poem “Elemental Fury” in which he struggles to decipher the message of the ancestors and the gods through the fury of nature. In a pathetic fallacy, Achamba unconsciously captures his imminent demise, a happening that proves the helplessness of man in the relationship with the gods and ancestors. The event portends the death of a great personality. A similar incident was witnessed seventy years ago in the land when the greatest Chief of Dudum, Ambikoh died. The night is said to have been stormy just like the case of Achamba’s departure. In a like manner, Achamba experiences a similar situation which is unable to explain:

As he lay shivering under the blanket he was convinced he heard, in the midst of the savage sounds outside, people crying or dancing; he thought he heard people screaming for help; he thought he heard women and children wailing; he thought he heard the notes of the *ndek* beating a mournful funeral message; he thought he heard Echunjei, heavy with pregnancy and drenched to the bones, beating frantically at his door for him to open and let her in ...This was unbearable. (p. 186)

Achamba’s revelation is an omen of his own assassination and rites to follow shortly after. The strange happening in *Son of the Native Soil* also manifest in the sacred tree around Dudum Falls, which is uprooted during the stormy night causes that fear among the denizens. The various unconscious attempts by man to decipher the plan of the gods

through signs of nature end up in futility. For instance, the impotence of the fellow palm wine drinkers in Back-to-land bar who use the lobes of kolanut to read the signs of the gods to no avail is evident of the powerful hold of the gods. From the placement of the five lobes on the floor they read an impending disaster but are unable to tell who the victim would be. In accordance with their beliefs, when such signs show up, the lobes of the kolanut are not consumed but are thrown away. That is how the attempt to save Achamba from the wrath of the gods ends up in futility. Man's interconnectivity with the gods, ancestors and environment does not make him equal to either the gods or the ancestors as is evident in the divination:

... 'He brings life who brings kola.' He broke it and then threw the five lobes on the floor: three faced down and two up... he picked them up again, and after shaking them in his closed fist, cast them on the floor once more. This time two faced down and three up. Another teacher then said, 'the kola-nut has twice rejected you...what are you asking the kola-nut, anyway?...if we're drinking here with one mind; or if everyone here has a clean mind; or if we're drinking and chatting in good faith, let the kola-nut give us one mouth...so there must be someone here with an evil intention. There is someone here with two heart. (p. 177)

The forecasts suggested by traditional casting of the kola by Achamba and friends in the market is suggestive that there is something bad that no one seems to know what really that may be. It is just another futile attempt by mortal man to read the messages from the gods using the contact point which is their ecology. In the same line, the signal sent to the people through the storm that precedes the death of Achamba a night earlier is far from being interpreted by the mere humans of the society. The uprooting of the tree that harbours a god of the land on the night of the first storm is signal to them that a great man of the land would die but the said great man and the nature of his death and when it will come, are hidden from their knowledge.

As they headed home, the villagers were commenting on the significance of the great rain and the fall of the sacred tree.

"The world is coming to an end", began one man. "The dreadful rain and the storm can only point to greater disaster to come."

"True," put in another. "The uprooting of the sacred tree is a sign that a strong man is going to die in Dudum. And this won't be long from now. By

the time the year runs out, a sadder event will take place in Dudum." (p. 190)

This conversation among these villagers captures the interconnectivity between the living, the dead and the gods communicated through nature. It captures at the same time their bioethical foundations, built on their thoughts and belief systems. In line with these bio-spiritual practices another instance of eco-spiritual connectivity is in the mystery of the palm wine and kolanut. The people in the Ngieland have a hole in every doorstep they call the "ancestral hole". This hole is symbolic in that it tells when a stranger/ visitor has a good or bad intention in his/her visit. In chapter four, for example,

When the visitors had eaten, the wine was brought. The chief asked the *chinda* to show it to Angang to uncork. He held it out to Angang who pulled off the bunch of fresh raffia leaves sealing the mouth of the gourd. Then the *chinda* turned and first served the chief who poured the wine into the ancestral hole. His horn was refilled and he drank. The others could now be served. (p. 32)

The chief is seen as an intermediary that connects information from the ancestors to the people and the contact point is the hole at the doorstep into which palm wine is poured as incantations are said. He has been given the power to perform certain ritual. Though the people work with him, they are answerable to whatever they are asked to do. This is because, he is considered a supreme being, and the chosen of the gods by his people, and must be served first. The fact that the chief connects with the ancestors, gives him an upper hand to detect if there is a bad prediction or intention of any visitor.

Just like during every important event that takes place in the land of Dudum, Eco-spiritual connectivity abides when the bridal dance, the "*Ingua*" on behalf of Achamba and Echunjei is performed. When the people sing and dance, there is a strange echoe in their silence which symbolizes the presence and watchful eyes of Ngiekum. The resounding echoes from the Dudum Falls indicate that the gods are of either great approval or disapproval of the event. In the case of the traditional marriage between Achamba and Echunjei, it is evident that the gods gave their approval:

Each time the bridal party stopped singing, some celebrants thought they heard a corresponding group, or so, singing, somewhere further south. Or was it simply the echoes of our own voices? They listened intently but soon reassured themselves. It was neither their own echoes, nor other human

beings singing. It was rather the disembodied voice of Ngiekum, coming all the way from his sacred resting place. It was the drumming of the Dudum Fall...dim dim-dim dim-dim-dim-dim-dim... (pp. 158-159).

The gods speak in different ways in the Ngieland. In this case, the people could hear the echoes of their voices celebrating with them. This shows that, even the gods are happy with the marital bond between Achamba and Echunjei. The approval shows that the marriage is going to be a success, and it is also going to be an avenue for peace and unity between Akan and Anjong. The ever-present image and voice of Ngiekum through the Dudum Falls in reactions to events, goes to confirm the people's belief in the permanent and unbroken bond that holds them firmly attached to their gods. Ngiekum, being their super god inhabits the Dudum Falls and is always intervening in their day to day lives and especially in moments of great import in their existence. The communication between them and Ngiekum confirms the eco-spiritual connectivity that binds the Dudum people to their source of survival and existence. The marriage between Achamba and Echunjei has, through the echoes, received blessings in the world of the omnipresent Ngiekum. When the Dudum Falls speaks, the people are very alert and take it seriously because they know that there is always a message behind every voice. The Dudum Falls is seen as call to stop evil and pursue morality:

'It is the voice of morality, calling us to order, calling on us to shun evil ways and promote worthwhile pursuits. It is the conscience of the thief at night, asking him some disturbing questions; it is the companion of the lonely traveler'; it is the participant in the dancing arena; it is the ever-present participant echoing the communal market voice; yes, it is the subdued, distant but constant contributor to the discussion we have carried out here. In short, whether in the day or in the night, Ngiekum is incessantly reminding us that we are one and ought to remain so, that our strength lies in our unity. (p. 169)

The Dudum Falls has a very significant role to play in the lives of the people. It is described as the "abiding voice of [their] founding father, Ngiekum" (169). The Dudum Falls is not an ordinary water but harbours the shrine of Ngiekum which has spiritual connectivity with the dead and the living. The sound of the Dudum Falls re-echoes on the land each time an important event is to happen in the life of the society or in the life of an individual which intimately connects with the welfare of the society. During the Squirrel hunt, when the leader of the hunting group starts addressing the Squirrel, there is always dead silence.

As the incantations hit the silent atmosphere, the only other sound that is compelling and resounding all over is that of the Dudum Falls.

The omnipresence of Ngiekum in the Dudum society is unquestionable, as the villagers believe in him affecting every important aspect of their lives. Ngiekum is there when Achamba and Echunjei declare their love and intentions for each other during the Teachers/Students and Parents meeting, when they both consummate their love; he is there when the stormy night subsides and there is total silence in the land; he is there when the Squirrel hunt leader addresses the Squirrel, confirming the belief that Ngiekum watches over the process of justice and judgment in the society. If the murderers of Achamba are at last apprehended, even after six years of their hideous crime, it is thanks to the snapshot given them by Ngiekum in the night of the crime, thus pinning them under his watchful eyes. The soothsayer, Agwerentong, who constitutes an eye of the omnipresent sight of Ngiekum announces the inevitable hold on these bloody criminals. Through the sacred pool of water in his shrine he invokes the spirit of Achamba which appears and in their sacred communication reveals his killers and their hideouts. These happenings confirm the people's very strong faith in their gods whose abodes are in the surrounding environment.

Three months after Achamba's death, Echunjei gives birth to a baby boy. The coming of this baby brings emotional healing to her. Apart from the joy of the child she is also comforted with the presence of her relatives and in-laws. According to their cosmic views, the birth of the male as Achamba's son is considered as the return of Achamba. Embuta's reaction towards the welcoming of the baby is a clear indication that he wants to connect the child to his nature as well as his ancestors:

On the day that the dressed end of the child's umbilical chord (sic) had healed, Embuta tied the fallen knot of flesh in a rag to be buried among the plantain suckers behind his house at home, to ensure the baby's link with his ancestors, and the stability of his soul. Embuta placed the knotted rag right at the bottom of his raffia bag. (p. 231)

The umbilical cord of a child is usually buried in most African societies where the child is, or is expected to connect the most. Burying it among the plantain suckers is a signal that the child's grandfather wants him connected to his natural environment as well as to his ancestors. Every African has an ancestral link to forefathers since it is believed that the dead are not dead: they still live and influence the world of the living. Still in this during the Ubu naming ceremony, Akaya asks for the child's name and Embuta gives "Uyaka" (231). In order to expatiate on the meaning of the given name, Akaya tells us:

'Traditionally,' he went on, because this child is born was born after the death of his father, he is automatically named after him. His full name is *Uyaka* Achamba, which means, in one sense, Thank you Achamba, and in another, Welcome Achamba'... The moment you uttered the word *Uyakal* started figuring out its rich suggestion in the circumstances. Thank you Achamba and Welcome Achamba. Very meaningful indeed. (pp. 231-232)

The Ngie people believe that Achamba, though dead, has been reincarnated in the life of the child. This is the reason they thank and welcome him for coming again. Echunjei explains this well when she states that "*Uyaka* is really to thank God for granting my request. On the other hand, it is also to welcome Achamba back to life. Yes, what the Lord took away with the left hand, He has given back with the right. In a way my husband has come back" (232). To Chief Akaya, the name connects him back to his ancestral space and the influence of the ancestors to their life. The coming of the child brings about great unity between the two clans. This child is therefore a physical bond between Achamba who now resides in the world of the spirits that is part of their environment.

The ensuing eco-spiritual connectivity between Achamba and his people can be seen after the *Ubu* naming ceremony. This interconnectivity is enforced through the incantations and rites performed during the *Ubu*. The child is named *Uyaka* Achamba, which means, in one sense, 'Thank you Achamba, and in another, Welcome Achamba' (233). The mother of the new-born accompanied by the 'husband' and other family members, take the baby to the place of the naming ceremony. The naming ritual takes the following procedure:

When Embuta had finished talking, one of Akaya's brothers ordered Echunjei to come forward and kneel down before him with the child in her arms. Then he rose up with his cup full of wine to conclude the rite in an incantation. Each ancestor's name invoked was accompanied by a generous shower of wine from his mouth onto mother and child. (p. 233)

The invocation of the spirit of each ancestor/god to come empower and protect the new-born is accompanied by the systematic pouring of wine which captures the eco-spiritual connectivity between the living and the ancestors. Embuta's words prove the communication that sustains the living:

We now put your heart into you. (*The other brothers of Embuta responded: Amenié, so be it*)

'Let no bad dream visit you.'
'Amenié!'
'Let no evil man ever pass near you.'
'Amenié!'
'If you kick your toe against a stone, let the stone break.'
'Amenié!'
'May you two live long.'
'Amenié!'
'We say so in the name of Ngiekum, prrfff.'
'Amenié!'
'We say so in the name of Ambikoh, prrfff.'
'Amenié!'
'We say so in the name of Abendong, prrffff.'
'Amenié!'
'We say so in the name of Anjaanoh, prrfff.'
'Amenié!' (233)

Embuta prayers for the child is spiritually connected as he invokes the different gods of their society to come and be with the child. The response of the other members is a clear indication that they all have a spiritual tie with their ancestry. The cultural practice of second burial in Dudum equally captures another instance of eco-spiritual connectivity. This cultural practice is carried out after the death of a member of the society. The second burial is done in memory of the dead, an event which provides an opportunity for the living to communion with the spirit of the departed one, and also celebrate his life on earth. This is believed to give the dead rest and peace in the world of the ancestors, thus guaranteeing good health, abundant harvest and fertility on the living. During the second burial, the community foregrounds the future by celebrating the life of a great member of the community. Cultural dance groups grace such a day in song and dance. Ambanasom presents the second burial of Anyajuh, an elder of the Akan society who, unfortunately could not be given a befitting burial as he died but during the economic setback brought about by the economic embargo declared by Anjong on Akan goods. The dance groups present include amongst others Ikwechong and Ichibi.

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