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Portrayal and effects of disobedience through drama in works of Aidoo and Fiawoo: A comparative study

Alberta Aseye Ama Duhoe¹ & Emmanuel Kyei Poku²

¹Department of Literature, Language & Linguistics, Kenyatta University, Nairobi

²Department of Languages, Wesley College of Education, Kumasi

Email: duhoe12@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper examined the portrayal and effects of disobedience of Ghanaian youths by juxtaposing both Akan and Ewe cultures as part of literature. Culture as a collective norm behooves members of a community whose identity is related to adherence to a specific culture, to guarantee that their culture is preserved and protected. In other words, there is a marked-off conservatism in any community where identity is related to culture which acts as a blockade that prohibits the intrusion of aspects that are considered anti-culture. Culture can then be described as a structure that developed out of the collective consciousness of a society whose members wanted to 'invent' and identify with all aspects of a culture. Anowa is the story about a young woman who wants to marry a man she loves, ignoring her parents' wishes. The couple gathers fortune after several trials and tribulations-but Anowa knows something is wrong somewhere. In essence, Anowa is an analysis of the contradictions between western cultural individualism and Africa's social traditions. Implications linked to not fulfilling a divine calling are central to this research. Anowa rejects her spiritual calling to become a dancer-priestess, mainly because of the influence of her mother Badua.

Keywords: *disobedience, drama, Aidoo, Fiawoo*



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Introduction

Today the consequences of modernization are being blamed for the current social crisis facing young people. Modernization effect has become a central statement that creates omnipresent social and cultural implications, which influences how values are learned which interpreted by youth. Modernization appears to be a challenge from several directions to preserve certain principles important for people's survival (Horváth, 1990). Young people have no longer learned how to behave as individuals and as members of society; nor do they seem to know what ideals will guide their behavior. African culture contributes immensely in the upbringing of young people. The cultural styles look alike to some degree because of certain factors, according to Cherry (2012). Such considerations include community, temperament, parental history and belief. Culture is used to demonstrate some similarities which exist in communities, in this case, Ghana's cultural heritage of Akan and Ewe communities.

Literature review

Modernization Theory

The theory of modernization emerged from the concepts of the German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920), which laid the foundation for the modernization model developed by the sociologist Talcott Parsons of Harvard (1902–1979). Moral decadence has recently increasingly replaced traditional social principles (Bernstein, 1971). The youth's conduct trend as observed is an indicator that morality is at its all-time low. Today the youth are lax and more involved in fun and amusement without any sense of the future, the sum total of all these is a decrease of moral values that has resulted of indiscipline at all levels of society, the outcome of which is power craze without accountability, corruption, laziness, and lack of honesty and respect for human existence. It is in the public domain that vices such as corruption, broken families, teenage pregnancy, violence and sexual promiscuity are rising, all related to the collapse of moral standards (Knobl, 2003). Being dishonest, unfair, intolerant, arrogant, disobedient, undisciplined, individualistic or corrupt renders one a hero in contemporary society, for these are the principles that keep and followed the majority in the modern society. The modern society has further embraced the idea that "the result justifies the means." Everyone wants to accumulate wealth in the shortest possible time, thus making the wave of corruption vogue (Horváth, 1990). One prominent youth recurring pattern of conduct is in the use of social media. The theory of modernization both aims to describe the social factors that lead to societies ' social change and growth, and tries to explain the social evolution mechanism (Tipps,

1973). The philosophy of modernization emphasizes not just the transition process but also the approaches to the transition. It also looks at internal dynamics, thus referring to social and cultural systems and emerging technology adaptation. The challenge is how modernization have led to erosion of moral traditional values which were held strongly by the traditional society discipline techniques. The advancing and growing technology have with time transformed the traditional society values to be deemed insignificant in the modern society, this has led to the decline of the moral values of the young generation in the current society. The theory explains the change and transition effects on the traditional practices.

Anowa and the Akan Culture

In Ghana's oral literature, Ama Ata Aidoo's play *Anowa* is centered on a common folktale of the rebellious and disobedient daughter's myth in the community of Akan (Horváth, 1990). It is set at the Gold Coast in the 1870s, a location that is caught between the traditional culture and the post-colonial urban modernity turmoil. Aidoo depicts *Anowa* as the current disobedient daughter of the tale and locates her encounters and experience in the legacy of the patriarchy, slavery, economic inequality, and male dominance. Two other important voices in the story are *Badua*, *Anowa*'s mother, who is kept accountable for *Anowa*'s disobedient actions and an *Old Woman* who became the society's mouthpiece. The paper would study how the culture treats *Anowa* as a rebellious daughter, from a feminist approach. As a progressive independent woman, it will show *Anowa* and how her inability to bear any offspring and her views on slavery ends up damaging her marriage and life. The emphasis was on the identity struggles *Anowa* experiences as she is unable to recognize her disobedient identity.

The tale tells about an independent woman, who declines to marry potential suitors that are brought by her father. *Anowa* arrives home and tells her parents she's met a man; *Kofi Ako* and she'll get him to be married to. Her mother is not happy about it because she is aware of *Kofi Ako*'s image and feels he's a loser. The couple get married, and leave *Yebi* to evade being the village's ridicule. *Anowa* vows to her parents that she will never return to *Yebi*, even though all she has left are rags. Alternatively, she meets a man herself (outcast) and reveals to her family, her desire of marrying the guy. In different versions, on their wedding nights, the new husband turns out to be devil in disguise and destroys the young bride. The couple leaves the village / tribe in another version and loses all communication with her parents to a large degree that she doesn't even come back for their funeral. First, the daughter becomes disobedient because she

chooses a groom on her own, second, because expected from her to stay in or close the house of her mother, she leaves the house and continues with an independent life. She's a girl with many incarnations, listening to her own stories, smiling at her own jokes, and taking her own advice.

The idea that the leaders of the Akan clan are furious and shocked by Anowa's defiance and freedom is brought to light by the Aidoo through the play. In the whole story, the chorus compares Anowa's behavior to those expected from a normal person. In fact, the society is another factor which contributes to the identity crises facing Anowa. Identity crises arise when a person experiences internal conflict as to his / her position in the community. These crises are deepened by the uncertainty generated by contradicting the social expectations about one role of an individual to an individual's inner personality. Such a person does not understand the standards of society.

Anowa finds herself at a crossroads with the culture that seeks to suppress her inner strength and bind her to the positions the patriarchal system produces. She consistently searches for freedom and happiness but finds herself under the pressure of balancing gender roles, social customs and cultural practices. However, she establishes an identity beyond the limits of the prevalent gender norms and is immediately alienated and marginalized by her parents and society at large as a result of her choice of independence against the cultural norms.

The spiritual and ethical consciousness embodied in Akan culture functions much in the form of Biblical narratives, instructing the community of the principles and deeds exemplary of a responsible citizen, thus advising them of the consequence of sinful actions. The practice of elders, healers, skilled storytellers, parents, and community and government officials using different types of orality to affirm or reprimand the character of subjects of all ages further instills the connection of the oral speech to holy-writ. Oral literature basically helps to formulate, construct, and codify the paradigm upon which a society stands. A theory that has been called a cultural model, reflecting the manner in which he intends to mold and reshape the world he has created himself.

The conservative complexity of culture is shown in the reality that it fiercely forbids flexibility and individuality. The above also stands true that culture has a passion for making sure that all members of the community strictly adhere to its provisions. The view that culture is conservative is attested by Sarpong (1974), who describes culture as the integral amount of the behavioral characteristics acquired by members of society and transmitted from generation to generation.

Everything is not known about an outdoor ceremony at Anowa. In the opening episode, Badua just tells us that her one big concern lies in the fact that she has still declined to marry, six years after Anowa's puberty. This possibly means that Anowa was outdoor at puberty to 'inform' the conventional society that she is now ready to get married, and it seems that Badua was so concerned that Anowa had actually declined to get married, even though so many people had proposed to her within six years. The predominant religious and/or cultural words in outdoor sports are 'puberty rituals' and 'ceremonies of initiation.' The most critical consequence of the ritual of initiation and the rituals of puberty is that it brings one into marriage and sex roles.

His understanding shows that the adult child, after entering puberty, is shown to the public through the rite of puberty as a way to remind them of her readiness to join marriage. Thus, by rejecting all suitors, six years after her puberty, Anowa was not behaving as conventional society had expected of her. This indicates, in a way, that the playwright attests to that cultural custom that insists that a girl marries only after she has reached maturity. Badua's anxieties about the postponement of Anowa's marriage after her puberty also illustrate a cultural fact; that is, time is respected, as anything that needs to be done is meant to be a right time.

There is a consistency of thinking and practice in any society that is safeguarded by penalties against those members of society who fail to obey the agreed modes of conduct that are laid down in the community for them. Such prohibitions can be bodily (e.g. death), or moral (e.g. illness) or social (e.g. ridicule). Lotman and Uspensky (1986) also acknowledge the conservative essence of culture. They clarify that culture is not a common collection in itself, but a distinctly structured subset, which distinguishes itself from what is anti-culture. Therefore, they say that culture exists in its very opposite; that is, culture shows itself in its opposite way. Culture rarely accepts anything but forms a marked-off space instead. Culture is understood as a segment only, a closed-off region against non-cultural history. The essence of the opposition may vary: non-culture may appear as not belonging to a specific faith, not having access to such information or not sharing any form of life and behavior. Yet society will still require this kind of opposition. This is the situation of culture of Akan community. We understand culture as the community at large non-hereditary memory, a memory which expresses itself in a structure of constraints and prescriptions. Where accepted, this definition presupposes the following implications. Firstly, it follows that culture is a social phenomenon by nature.

The belief of the Akan in the supernatural is also reflected in the play. The Old Woman's argument that Badua "must certainly be punished by gods for refusing to allow a born priestess [Anowa] to dance" (p. 8) is demonstrated in particular. In other words, many traditional cultures assume that gods and other divine forces are revered and that when one goes against their orders, it constitutes defiance and does not spare the perpetrator. It possibly explains Badua's concerns at the contemptuous ways of Anowa.

A married woman is supposed to give birth to a child in the Akan community, as in many other traditional African cultures. If a woman failed to bear a child, that is an abomination. This troubling traditional presumption of childbearing is shown in Anowa, as her traditional society shuns Anowa, the tragic heroine, because she did not have a child. She is mocked as a witch as she is known to eat her own children and have the ability to eat other women's children. Girls say this in the chatter at the fish kilns; Girl: "Takoia obviously tells everyone else that mistress, I mean mother, swallows [babies] since she is a witch" (p. 48). Sarpong (1974) attests to the troubles of a woman who is perceived barren and to the presumption of barrenness, thus "Pregnancy is to be regarded a happy phenomenon... It's socially devastating to be childless. Motherhood is the essence of marriage, if not the very result. Girl fertility is crucial particularly in matrilineal society as it assures the family does not die out. Hence, barrenness is the greatest calamity a Ghanaian woman can endure.

We note that the playwright uses literature to address a perturbing societal norm that assigns the duty of giving birth to women alone. Moreover, in these situations, the playwright tactfully calls on the conventional community to be impartial, because the origin of childlessness may be at the end of the individual. In reality, we read in the play of the adamant refusal by Kofi Ako to Anowa's demand that he takes a second wife by whom he can beget children. If Kofi Ako is a 'guy,' why would he refuse to marry a second wife and give birth to children when Anowa has permitted it?

Again, why would he also hold Anowa back from telling Nana all of this? Those actions on the part of Kofi Ako indicate he knows about his problem. Yet depending on cultural misunderstandings, he clearly places the blame on Anowa for their childless marriage. Involving himself in the village gossip about Anowa's plight, Old Woman also mentions the likelihood of Kofi Ako becoming impotent as follows. "Oh Kofi Ako! Some say he lost his manhood because he was not born with much to begin with; that he had been a sickly infant and there was only a hollow in him where a man's strength should be. Others say he had consumed it acquiring wealth or exchanged it for prosperity. But I say all should be laid at Anowa's doorstep ... they say she always worked as though she could

eat a thousand cows.” (p. 63). Old Woman also accuses Anowa from the aforementioned lines despite her belief that Kofi Ako may be impotent. This shows the strictness in the beliefs outlined in the Akan culture which are beyond the rights of an individual (Hooks, 2000).

Methodology

The study adopts a comparative historical framework based on what Amenta and Hicks (2010) refer to as ‘deep knowledge’ social policy case studies (Akan and Ewe communities in Ghana) to illustrate tensions in different communities regarding disobedience effects in the playwrights of Anowa and T4k4 At-lia (The Fifth Landing Stage). Comparative historical analysis is a primary method of exploration in the social sciences for examining historical transformations and for explaining essential processes and outcomes. The article explores the case-oriented research allows us to examine outcomes of disobedience in different communities and ascertain issues of similarity and differentiation (Geurts, 2003)). The core research question is the portrayal and effects of disobedience among the Ghanaian youths with respect to the culture and traditions of Akan and Ewe. A research sub-question is how, if at all, changing perspectives on punishment of youths who are found against the societal law and customs. Some are the consequences of rebellion against the law of culture.

Findings

The Fifth Landing Stage and the Ewe Culture

The fear of T4k4 At-lia is very real in the community of Ewe in Ghana. This was a punishment that stealing or sleeping with another man’s wife could land you in the ground, buried alive, made me listen well to my parents. This punishment would make an individual think of stealing as wrong, and would be scaring the crows picking out my eyes—like Agbebada, you know—and of the thirst. This was as explained in a five-act play called T4k4 At-lia (or The Fifth Landing Stage), written by F.K. Fiawoo (1981, 1983). The title of the play relates to a piece of land in the settlement of Anloga where the predecessors of those in Anlo-land buried offenders alive as per the Nyiko tradition (Fiawoo 1959a:104–111). Previously forested, by the 1990s the area was a grassy field situated behind the Anloga police station and used as the central venue of every year Hogbetsotso celebration (Clarke-Ekong, 1995). In the introduction of the play we learn of the custom of Ewe. Fiawoo (1983) states that

“Our forefathers detested crime and showed relentless severity in exacting the penalty from the guilty. In those days there were no police in our land nor public prisons. Each member of the community was concerned to guard against social disorder, aiding the unwritten laws of the country to operate severely on those who habitually infringed them. Some of these offenders were made by the State to pay fines, others were banished, some were reduced to serfdom, while others were buried alive according to the gravity of the offence.... Concerning stealing, adultery, and the evil practices of sorcery, they said that these acts were responsible for the destruction of nations. They based their view upon their experiences from the days of their migration from Hogbe to Anlo land.” p.7 (Fiawoo 1983)

The punishment against the violators of the customs in the Ewe community is a clear state that reveals the tough action against the disobedient in the society. In order to preserve virtue among boys and girls, there existed two customs for the punishment of wrong-doers.

- (a) Banishment by slavery of the offender.
- (b) The Nyikɔ custom.

The principal evils of those days were (in gravity order) Taking away one's life by witchcraft or the black-magic art, theft, meddling with wife of another person, incurred debts, Parental disobedience and Infidelity. Of such sins, the first offense was often punished by the custom of Nyikɔ, the second and third by the same said custom, but only in the third offense, and the fourth, fifth and sixth offense was punishable either by deportation into slavery or by the law of Nyikɔ, and that in the third offense as well (Fiawoo 1983).

If a young man seduced the wife of another for the third time, this meant that he had reached the cap considered acceptable in that category, and the first two prior seduction offences would have cost his family a hefty fine. This debt should have been paid thus depriving his other younger family members of the necessities of life, and further sheltering him is to cause supernatural misery for the entire village, which would be more than bearable on the land. This son would then be called a family disaster. In private consultations the elders would agree and a decision will be made on the penalty above (Fiawoo 1983).

According to the Nyikɔ custom, an elder who has sat in the council to pass judgment was then designated the next day to Anloga, to inform the elders of the ties that a young man has been ruined by Nyikɔ. The latter would then alert the awadada, and then designate a day for enforcement. With the specified date the elder sent to Anloga

returns to his men. The awadada then informs the executioners and the two Nyik4 drums are restored, a male and female trowo signaling the drum pummeling which proclaims the fact that Nyik4 had just punished someone. All these meetings are kept in incredible secrecy.

The Nyik4 drums that were assumed to be the home of the deities, who lent to the proceedings their own divine authority. These rituals were conducted only at Anloga since it was an important sacred place where there were the gods in the awomefia's care and the awadada who supervised the protection of the whole community. It was also in Anloga that many of those executed's unhappy spirits could wander about, along with the others who suffered an untimely death, without hurting the populace because of the influence of the deities that protected the city and its inhabitants.

On the morning of the appointed day, the maternal uncle or an elder would send the doomed person to Anloga on an errand which he obeys and on arrival, he is received by the head of his relatives who would pleasantly indulge him in a flood of communicative expressions and praise for his willingness to do his kinsmen such a good turn and partly that the required items are not readily at hand and finally round of with a request that the messenger stays the night for the items to arrive (Fiawoo 1983).

Later at night when the house had withdrawn, the head or elder of the family could wake the doomed messenger from his nap and ask him and another elder of the family to politely take him to the latrines, usually outside of the town, with a lantern. The young man waking would follow sleepily, and with the lantern in his hand, he would enter a solemn parade of the three, led by the first elder, with the second elder behind him.

This order was held strictly, winding through the lanes and into the dense bush outside the area, since the man in the middle was the individual to be targeted. When they approached the place called Agbakute ("ne egbea aku" meaning "if you fail to comply you die"), the front man would pretend to be in the bush taking care of his minor needs, while the rear man would cease to walk. Then a band of torturers armed with weapons would club the offender to death comes out of the woods.

His body would then be placed in a shallow grave and discarded so that the hyenas could dig and eat it. The garments his maternal uncle sent to Anloga would then be scattered over shrubs or cactus trees. A messenger then tells the singers of Nyik4 that the act was performed on which the drummer on the south side would perform... "Miede z7, miegb4 z7; Miede z7 miegb4 z7" meaning "we went in the night and came home in the night." The north side of the second drummer also answered..."Gbe woe nye nye gbe "meaning" I accept. A messenger will be sent to Anloga the next day to tell the uncles and

elders that the deed had been completed. No one in the house ever have talked of him anymore.

The action of criminals buried alive in that soil was viewed by young people as indications of the strict code of ethics which their citizens adhered to. Thus, in a study by Geurts (2003) revealed that young men clarified that as they grew up they gradually came to realize that the tradition was no longer in effect, and thus they were not in real danger of being buried alive. Yet they noted that as a child they recalled thinking like they were frightened not only by the possibility but by the real feeling of being buried alive.

People seemed in a rush to make me understand that T4k4 At-lia did not reflect their forefathers' brutality or perversity, but was the last option in their criminal justice system and a defensive and preventive factor in preserving community stability and safety (Horváth, 1990). Although this custom of burying offenders alive was no longer in place in the 1990's, T4k4 At-lia stories and memories persisted to have a biopsychic have over many Anlo-speaking and the whole Ewe community people. This hold was not only true among the elderly, but also numerous young people held an almost somatic understanding (hence, the shuddering of the body and the memories of fear from childhood) of the consequences of committing a crime.

The Akan and Ewe Communities' Aspect of Disobedience

Being an adult, turning a child into a human being required the creation of other sensory fields. For example, in parent-child close relationships around discipline and development, training to hear, understand and obey (*nusese*) was of prime importance. Kids were taught and corrected in a number of ways but hearing was synonymous with comprehension and compliance. Most of the older Anlo speakers used a saying, *Vi masenu a`4kae kua to n1*, which implied, "The rebellious and disobedient child's ear is often pulled by a vine thorn." To be rebellious or obstinate was alluded to as having "hard or heavy ears" (*tosese*), and the term of retribution was equivalent to "ear pulling" (*tohehe*). Aurality was thus illustrated early in the life of an infant, which would be consistent with the fact that the Ewe language is tonal and thus involves the production of finely tuned auditory abilities (Geurts, 2003). Disobedience was one form of not listening well, but it seemed that losing the ability to hear was perceived as a very grave condition that disoriented a person and handicapped more general use of the various sensory functions such that it could make a person literally go wild or become insane. The aspect of disobedience is therefore advocated for strongly to uphold discipline the two communities.

Conclusion

Community leaders and elders should strive to visit the old tales, make time, and narrate to the young generation. When it's story time during childhood school days, the children take turns in the classroom to narrate these folktales among themselves. The stories are actually pretty much the foreign ones we hear. Therefore, it's important to remind our leaders of this tradition so that the young people can have a rich cultural training. This acts as a counter measure of disobedience as a result of modernization among the youths in the current days. There's a quote in the Ghanaian language that says you're never prohibited if you forget or give up something and then go back for it. The means, whatever one missed, can still revisit. It then behooves our lawmakers and cultural leaders to ensure the cultural disciplining strictness is redefined again. The parents and community leaders should make sure every growing child has experienced discipline of obedience and holding of the cultural morals in the communities. The consequences of disobedience in the cultural traditions as shown the Fifth Landing Stage and Anowa are evidently tough and the young modern generation should earn the dare effects of violation from doing what is right and acceptable of them.

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