LIBATION - A UNIFYING FACTOR BETWEEN THE PERFORMING AND THE VISUAL ARTS

A THESIS submitted to the University of Science and Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters Degree (African Art)

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By

HENRY ASIAM OFORI
B.A. (HONS) ART

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KUMASI - GHANA

University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana

October 1987

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I am grateful to a number of people for help in preparing this thesis. Firstly, I wish to acknowledge with thanks the help I received from Mr. Kodwo Eduse1, my thesis supervisor who discussed various points with me, as well as spending enough time correcting the write-ups and giving me caution and inspiration.

My appreciation is also extended to the following people for lending me the books related to the theme of this thesis: Professor Ablade Glover, Mr. F.K. Fiase and Mr. B.S.G. Bull all of the Art Faculty.

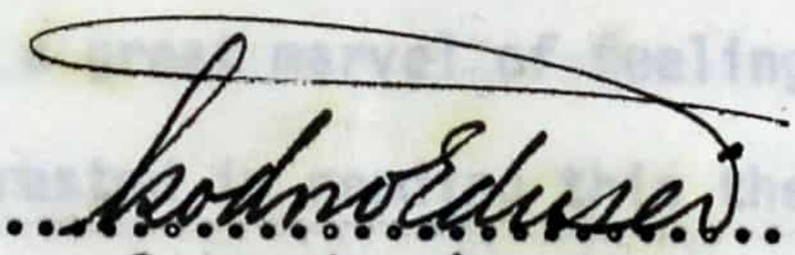
I also thank Dr. S.K. Amenuke and Mr. Ato Delaquis for discussing the main problem as well as the sub-problems with me. Their suggestions have contributed a lot to the completion of the writing of this thesis.

Furthermore, I render my sincere gratitude to the various authors from whose books some of the illustrations in this thesis were culled.

Finally, I should also put on record the untiring effort and maximum help offered to me by Nana KwakyeTutu, chief of the rearguard of Agogo as well as Otyease Ameako and Ohenaba Kwabena Osei all of Agogo who were ... of feeling and understanding, so that everyone interested ... thesis must owe them a special debt.

CERTIFICATION

Certified that this thesis is the candidate's own account of his research.



.....Kodwo Eduse1.....

Supervisor's signature

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PREFACE

The unavailability of books that treat libation from the artistic point of view has served as an inspirational source for the author to help bring out the rich art embedded in this form of prayer of the Akan. This is not to say that no book talks about libation; it has been the subject of many authors but all of them have treated them along the lines of social scientists by giving the necessary anthropological details. Even that is done on fragmentary levels in these books.

The author therefore finds it necessary to knit together all these fragments in one whole and further tackle it from the point of view of an artist.

The methods of research have been through library research at the university Library, U.S.T., the British Council library Kumasi, the Ashanti Library - Kumasi Cultural Centre, Balme Library, and the African Library (Institute of African Studies) - University of Ghana. Coupled with these have been the interviews conducted to obtain the necessary information about libation from people who proved to be helpful and have the requisite knowledge as well as the utilisation of on-the-spot account of the vitality of the pacification and purification rites at the Afram shrine.

The use of the short dash is for emphasis while that of the brackets around certain words or expressions are for clarity.

H.A.O.

Kumasi

October 1987

ABSTRACT

HENRY ASIAM OFORI: B.A.(HONS) ART JUNE 1985

LIBATION - A unifying factor between the performing and visual arts.

MR. KODWO EDUSEI: Thesis Supervisor

The aim of the thesis is mainly to examine the old order - libation - which has played a meaningful role in the lives of the people of Ashanti-Akim Agogo. It further seeks to bring out the considerable potentiality embedded in it as a source of artistic inspiration as well as finding out how it unifies the performing and the visual arts.

Due to this, the main problem which invariably is the title of the thesis has been broken down into sub-problems to enable the author solve the problem in a methodical way.

The entire thesis has been broken down into five chapters including the conclusion. The break down of the chapters reveals the link between the life styles of the people and their art and how this is made manifest in their way of pouring libation on certain occasions which in the light of this people are very important.

The research for the thesis was conducted through a combination of library studies, interviews by the help of questionnaires, logical constructs and personal familiarisation with this form of charitable prayer.

The photographs used here-in are from the on-the-spot performance at the shrine. However, most of the illustrations are made from the artistic imagination of the author while some are culled from certain books. The illustrations are hand-drawn and these have been used to illustrate the main theme as aids to the understanding of the entire work.

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INTRODUCTION

Libation has not been given the place it deserves in the field of art. As a means of saving and restoring this form of prayer from being relegated into the background and further promote it to an artistic inspirational source, the present author has studied it among the people of Agogo who inhabit a mass area in the Ashanti-Akim north district in the Ashanti Region.

From the lives of these people one notices that libation partially promotes the spiritual communalism which forms an essential principle of the people. In this community there exists the spirit of kinship,respect for age and wisdom, economic co-operation, reverence for ancestral spirits and social justice. All these are basic existential factors closely knitted into the fabric of libation pouring.

The present author therefore finds libation as an important source of artistic potentiality. Thus, the attempt to show how it serves as a unifying factor between the performing and visual arts as well as finding out the latent artistic expressions that need to be tapped.

The title of this thesis serves on the same level as trying to bring out the unifying factor between Art and science so far as architecture is concerned. This title is frustratingly uneasy especially when there are no books which treats libation in detail as an art form. If there are any books which talk about libation at all, they treat it on fragmentary basis. This brings to mind that anyone who tries to solve this problem stands on a slippery ground and further presents a difficulty to the writing of a thesis

nessed with interest, some of these rites and how libation forms an inseparable part, the author is able to utilise the first-hand knowledge. Coupled with this are the researches made at various libraries, private reading and logical constructs which have in no small way contributed to the presentation of this thesis.

The aim of the thesis is not to endorse or refute any particular anthropological detail but to examine libation to find out how it can effectively unify the two forms of art - performing and visual. Since this is an artist's thesis, all harsh criticisms that will come from the social scientist will be appreciated though as an artist, this is how the author sees libation. The various chapters treat the main problem piecemeal from the artistic point of view in that one's profession influences one in the way one perceives.

The main problem which is the title of this thesis has been sub-divided into two. This attempt is to help solve the problem through a systematic approach. This is because when the lesser problems within the main problem are not adequately isolated, the research can become poorly defined, cumbersome and unwieldy. Reasonable guesses however, suggest the direction in which the facts may lie.

Chapter One deals with the problem and its setting. The main problem is stated as well as the sub-divisions. In a nutshell the first chapter deals with how the author intends solving the main problem.

Chapter Two deals with the life of the people under discussion. This starts from historical through socio-economic to religious life of the people. It seeks to portray why thtse people behave in a particular way so far as the solution of the main problem is concerned.

The third chapter talks about libation. It deals with it from when libation is poured, how it is done, why it is done and the right places for it. This chapter clears the path to the treatment of the fourth chapter which deals comprehensively with some selected occasions on which libation is poured as well as the considerable originality the art embedded in it possesses.

The last chapter is a summation of the artistic expressions involved in the various rites and how libation seeks to unify them. It further treats the contribution the author finds very necessary to art.

Finally, some of the words which might be seemingly misleading have been defined in the definition of terms.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1. The Problem

The purpose is to project libation as a unifying factor between the performing and the visual arts. For a complete solution of the main problem, there is the need to break it into Subproblems.

2. The Subproblems

(a) The first Subproblem entails finding out the significance of libation in the maintenance of sociological, religious and historical beliefs in the lives of the people of Agogo Ashanti Akim.

(b) The Second Subproblem is to show how libation unifies the performing and the visual arts using the artistic association and verbal arts as pointers.

3. The Hypothesis

(a) That libation is used to maintain sociological, religious and historical values in the day to day practices in the lives of the people of Agogo in the Ashanti Akim North district.

(b) That libation unifies the performing and the visual arts; using the verbal art, it enhances and brings out the aesthetic values inherent in it.

4. The Delimitations

The study is limited to artifacts, gestures, facial expressions and verbal art that accompany the pouring of libation.

A few illustrated examples will be given as pointers to the entirety of facial expressions, and gesture as a language of the hand, through which an additional meaning of libation is gained.

Other illustrations will concentrate on the designs and ideas that could be made out of the patterns created by the liquor poured on the ground during the act of pouring libation. Some of these ideas and designs will be developed to bring out the artistic potentiality therein.

There will also be a concentration on the illustration of some of the artifacts that are used in the pouring of libation.

The present author will lay emphasis on a restricted number of occasions which in his estimation are revered by the people under study, and during which libation is poured.

Libation at the shrine will however be limited to pacification and purification rite.

The research is restricted to Agogo in the Ashanti-Akim North district of the Ashanti Region. The author chose Agogo for study not only because of the sake of its close proximity but also because it is one of the areas in Ashanti where culture is revered and where the author has been living and therefore data could be acquired easily.

5. The Definition of terms

Visual art as used in the main problem in the thesis means the form of art that is seen; for example, artifacts, body art, and ground-patterns.

Performing art as used herein means the form of art that is acted or performed so far as libation is concerned.

Libation in this thesis means a communication between man and the Spirit World which takes the form of the pouring of liquid, or the sprinkling of food, and prayer.

Gesture refers to actions that accompany the pouring of libation as a pointer to the significance or seriousness of the occasions on which libation is poured.

Facial expressions as used in the thesis refer to the physiognomic changes that occur in times of pouring libation as supportive evidence of change in countenance depending on the occasion on which libation is poured.

Arrangement refers to the manner of standing when pouring libation. This refers to the semi-circular manner or circular manner in which (whether advertently or inadvertently) the people are arranged when pouring libation.

Primary elements and forces refer to the artistic substances as well as physical power or strength that are brought into action in times of pouring libation and which are of much importance so far as the basic idea of design formation of ground patterns made during the pouring of libation is concerned.

Simplest unit means a spot.

Expansion herein used means the act of becoming larger so far as the liquor poured on the ground during the process of pouring libation is concerned.

Contraction refers to the act of becoming smaller of the area where libation has been poured; especially when the liquor begins to dry up.

Pattern refers to the arrangement of shapes (whether by design or otherwise) when the liquor is poured on the ground.

Design refers to the general arrangement of the ground-patterns as an outline arrangement of lines, shapes and details from which artistic expressions or ornaments could be made.

6. Assumptions

(a) The first assumption is that libation has certain hidden sociological, religious and historical undertones that need to be projected in order to understand how closely linked libation is with the life of the people under study.

(b) The second assumption is that libation can safely serve as a unifying factor between the performing and visual arts using the artistic values inherent in the act of pouring libation as proof backed by verbal art and gestures.

7. The importance of the study

Libation, apart from its sociological and historical values, has more often than not been part of an institution which draws its inspiration and vitality from the indigenous religious beliefs. Libation in its basic essence is poured to give thanks to God (Onyankopon), the earth (Asaase Yaa), the thousand gods (Abosompem) and the spirits of the dead (Nananom Nsamanfoo).

In the light of this assertion, libation is seen as part of the old order which has played a significant role in the lives of the people of Agogo Ashanti-Akim. This gives one the cause to investigate this charitable form of prayer to bring out the art connected with it.

This will be done by projecting the art in the act of pouring libation which hitherto has not been given the attention needed, or in certain cases neglected, or simply considered as an inseparable part of the dynamic force of the old dispensation but not necessarily as a form of art.

It is in this light that the author wants to give libation and its artistic undertones the attention which their importance demands in the field of art.

It is the author's hope that African Art researchers will take up the challenge and continue investigations in this particular aspect of our culture.

THE REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

LIBATION: Libation has for a long time been an important factor in the lives of Ghanaians. In view of this, many writers have expressed their views about it even though the unlettered ancients, who are custodians of the society's traditions, customs and beliefs created a seemingly impenetrable stumbling block in the bid to secure adequate information about specific rituals when libation is poured, and which they considered sacred. For the sake of a better understanding of libation one needs to examine some of these views.

According to Herskovits and Bascom:

> Libation in most cases constitutes a linguistic complexity[1]

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1. Melville J. Herskovits and William R. Bascom in Continuity and Change in African Cultures, Univ. Press, Chicago, 1959, Pg.4.

In the first place, one can rule out this statement because these two writers, have admitted that this form of prayer is new to them and for that matter are viewing it through their own cultural lens, and as such, there must by all means be 'linguistic complexity'. The African understands 'language'; he accepts its meaning and significance because it falls within the matrix of his belief and expression.

Kofi Antubam also states that;

> The Ghanaian, however, prays traditionally with libation, which may take the form of the pouring of alcoholic drink, water, or the sprinkling of some sort of food. Unlike prayer in most religions of the world, Ghanaian traditional prayer has two main parts, namely, the act of pouring of the liquid or the sprinkling of food and actual saying of the prayer.[2]

In as much as one would agree with him to a certain extent, one disagrees on the point that the Ghanaian traditional prayer (Mpaayie) has two main parts. This gives the impression to the inquiring mind that the act of pouring of the liquid or the sprinkling of food and the actual saying of the prayer are separate entities. But they are mutually inclusive in that while pouring the liquid or sprinkling the food, the prayer is said in consonance. Even though Kofi Antubam tried to show that the prayer is in two parts, which, in the present author's estimation, was only a fair attempt at differentiation, the author sees both as one because neither of them is done in complete isolation from the other; they are performed in situ and as an entity.

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2. Kofi Antubam, Ghana's Heritage of Culture, Koehler and Amelang, Leipzig, 1963, Pg.40.

Sidney George Williamson says;

> Libation has not been the subject of specific Sociological Research, and its exact significance in the Akan context is obscure. It would appear to be a contact rite.[3]

Even though libation had not been investigated during his time, or no adequate information had been given with reference to sociological material, (if the present author is to be convineed by his assertiod) later research has been made and, in the author's estimation, the seeming obscurity that engulfed it has been removed and has further been proved to have all it needs to show its Akan nature and never a 'contact rite'.

Williamson further states;

> "Libation is offered with the mention of the name of the supreme being, the gods, the ancestors, and the earth but it was at no time specifically related to the worship of the Supreme Being alone. It is an Akan mode of worship, but not particularly of God. Probably its commonest use was in approach to the spirit-ancestors, or as a homely recognition of their presence and help.[4]

This assertion has a very strong Christian bias but if viewed through the cultural lens of the Akan one realises how it deviates from the normal course of traditional African Religion in that, in as much as the Akan makes mention of the spirit-ancestors (as he puts it) he no less offers his prayer to God - the supreme Being.

---

3. Sidney George Williamson, 'Akan Religion and the Christian Faith, Edited by K.A. Dickson, Ghana Varsity Press, Accra, 1965, p.13

4. Loc. Cit.

He says again that,

> To insist that libation is a mode of praising the Supreme Being is, therefore, to isolate it from traditional usage and claim for it a meaning not offensive to Christian conscience.[5]

This statement takes certain things for granted. In the first place, saying that libation is a mode of praising the Supreme Being does not mean that one should remove it from the traditional context in order to satisfy the taste of the Christian, in that, the very fact that when one says libation is a mode of praising God it will have a meaning offensive to Christian conscience and if used in the traditional context, does not and cannot estrange one from God. It is still a prayer to the Supreme Being; offensive or not offensive as it should be to christian conscience.

Geoffrey Parinder comments that;

> Pious West African pagans before drinking will pour out a little wine from their gourds on to the ground for the fathers. Others put a mouthful of food on the floor before eating, and at evening meals pots are not entirely emptied, nor washed till morning, in case the dead come and find nothing to eat.[6]

This assertion touches on the fringes of "primitive man's" belief, perception and most importantly the way he reasons. The comment further portrays that the West African pagan or traditionalist for that matter,was always cautious about life in general and his whole life was surrounded by an aura of fear in that he always thought about the aftermath of his action, thus, the statement: 'in case the dead come and find nothing to eat.'

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5. Sidney George Williamson, Op Cit, Page 132

6. Geoffrey Parrinder, West African Religion, Epworth Press, London, 1969, Pg. 116

He always wanted to feel secure, thus, the struggle to offer food and drink to his ancestors. To him, the tangible must and ought to be made a real experience.

He further states that,

> A bottle of whisky was opened, the herald drank some first from a brass cup, then the head stool-carrier poured some out on each stool, addressing them at greater length than before. His speech, as previously, was punctuated by words of approval from those present. The rest of the whisky was drunk by the assistants.[7]

This perhaps took place at the palace and it emphasises the traditionalist's belief about security, fear and the subsequent reverence given to the ancestors.

A.A. Opoku says,

> The ritual in this 'holy of holies' begins with the pouring of a calabashful of water at the entrance to the room by the chief stool attendant. By this, he invites the spirits to come out and wash their hands to prepare for the feast to which they will presently be invited.[8]

This usually takes place before the ritual food of (eto) mashed yam is brought to the stool room. The chief stool attendant or steward takes ladlefuls of this and hands them to the chief who in turn moves from one sacred stool to the other and places portions of the food upon them beginning with the first stool of the dynasty and ending with the one immediately preceeding him in office. The quotation lays more emphasis on the due respect a chief and his people have for the ancestors. As human beings, the ancestors are

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7. Geoffrey Parinder, Op cit, Pg. 117

8. A.A. Opoku, Festivals of Ghana, Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1970, Pg.11

asked to follow the hygienic process of washing their hands before coming to eat with the living on any of the 'adaes'.

Dennis M. Warren in 'The Akan of Ghana' also states that:

> Prayer is conducted daily by virtually everyone in the form of libations poured.[9]

This assertion is an indication that libation forms a vital part of the day to day activities of the Akan. It further strengthens the point that any other person being an Akan, can pour libation depending on the occasion and what his conscience dictates to him to do, especially if he wants to show reverence to his ancestors.

Peter Sarpong also writes,

> The head of her matrilineage takes a bottle of Schnapps - in the olden days it used to be palm-wine and pours a libation to thank God (Onyankopon), the earth (Asaase Yaa), the thousand gods of the ancestors (nananom Abosompem) for having looked after one of his children so that she has attained the age of puberty.[10]

This comment borders on the threshold of the importance of the family head in that he offers the prayer of thanksgiving in the form of libation. It further stresses the importance of the occasion; one of the children has become sexually and psychologically mature. This is a slight hint that any moment after this occasion the girl could be married;become a woman and perform the biological role women are supposed to play thereafter. More importantly, the libation poured on this occasion has the significance of praying for fertility in women in general and the initiated girl in particular.

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9. Dennis M. Warren, The Akan of Ghana, Pointer Ltd, Accra, 1973 p.8
10. Peter Sarpong, Girls Nubility Rites In Ashanti, Ghana Publishing Corp., 1977, Pg. 25.

According to Osofo Komfo Damuah, in Afrikania Voice;

> Libation is a prayer which consists in the pouring of some liquid (water, beer, wine, other beverages or the sprinkling of some food (eg. mashed yam) and the invocation of the Supreme Being, intermediary gods, and the spirits of our ancestors, for blessings for the individual, community and nation. It is a powerful prayer during which we ask God to liberate us from sin, oppressive social and political systems, ignorance, disease, national disaster and to guide us to preserve our culture and to be self-reliant.[11]

This statement from Osofo Komfo Damuah goes a long way to refute Sidney George Williamson's statement that, 'it is an Akan mode of worship, but not particularly of God.' According to Damuah, libation is seen as a powerful prayer during which we ask God for liberation from sin and other calamities; preserve our culture and be reassured in life.

Despite the variations in ideas expressed by the various writers, the nucleus of the assertion is that libation is a form of prayer which in its basic essence involves the invocation of God, the earth, the gods and spirits of the dead.

Since libation in this thesis intends to demonstrate how libation could be used as a unifying factor between the performing and the visual arts, it will suffice to examine what other writers have expressed about these forms of art.

PERFORMING ARTS

Although the definition of performing arts may change according to writer, period and context, when one talks about performing arts, one may be referring to all those arts that can be performed before an audience, viz: there is always the connection between the performer and the audience. This idea about performing arts is western-culture-oriented.

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11. Osofo Komfo Damuah, Afrikania Voice, Vol.1, No.3, p.3

However, relating it to traditional African Culture, performing arts include story-telling, festivals, customary occasions such as marriage, birth, puberty, death; periods of enstoolment and destoolment as extraneous factors to the western-oriented form of performing arts which embraces dance, music and Drama. J.H. Nketia writes,

> In many African societies, public worship does not take the form of a quiet and solemn contemplation but rather that of action - verbal action, musical action or bodily action - directed towards specific ritual ends. Its framework, therefore, is often that of the drama which gives the greatest scope for these actions - actions in which the gods as well as the community of worshippers actively participate.[12]

This statement brings attention on to public worship such as the 'adaes' or in the case of the public 'bathing' of the gods, as an opportunity to promote the exhibition of verbal, musical and bodily actions. Through these, there is an undertone of spiritual ecstasy and satisfaction. These actions break the quiet and solemn contemplation and give way to an activation of sentiment which the living, the dead and the gods accept, and in which there is a mutual indulgence of even the Supreme Being. It further shows an inseparable bond between the devotees and the gods. Once the language used, the music and the bodily actions fall within the context of the belief of the people, it is believed that they will meet the understanding and acceptance from the gods, thus, 'the gods as well as the community of worshippers actively participate.'

---

12. J.H. Nketia, Possession Dances in African Societies, Published Lecture, University College of the Gold Coast, Achimota, Page 1

Peggy Harper also comments on dance which is one of the important performing arts.

> For Africans, the dance is not a mere entertainment but a significant part of the social cohesion of its peoples. As a line from Senghor's poem declares: We are the men of the dance whose feet only gain power when they beat the hard soil.[13]

This shows that ethnic dance is an integral function of a society in which the form and motivation of the dance are familiar to all members of that society as a statement of their way of life. The spectators are seen as a specific audience who assess the performance in terms of customary standards and so ensure that the dance performs its required function, and that the introduction of new elements accords with that function and the accepted criteria of what constitutes a dance in society. It also brings to mind that, the basic pattern of movements for the ethnic dance is established over a period of time as a communal act to which creative individuals contribute elements that are socially acceptable.

She comments again,

> Ritual dance is an integral part of religious ceremony which regulates the relationship between the members of the society and the supernatural powers which control their lives.[14]

This is a central element in a ceremony or festival which is an act of worship for the members of a particular religious cult. The dance is performed by priests and priestesses and may include leading members of the cult. The dance is seen as a central feature of the lives of the performers from the time of their initiation which can take place in childhood, at the age of puberty, or more rarely in adult life. The initiates become dancers of outstanding ability

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13. Peggy Harper, Dance in a changing Society, Published Lecture, University College of the Gold Coast, Achimota, Page 1

14. Peggy Harper, Op Cit page 3.

measured by the standards within the society, and performers of exceptional technical and artistic skill measured by the aesthetic standards of the formal local dance performance critic.

She further states,

> Dance as an expression of social organisation safeguards the traditionally established social and political hierarchy and consequently the standards of behaviour and morality within the society.[15]

The import of this abstract can be listed to be true in that more often than not, certain dances are performed by groups or teams of dancers and define their position in the society, and the social qualities expected of the members of that group are expressed by their dance movements. Such dances may be performed as a part of a festival or simply as a dance performance, and the dancers normally meet required standards of performance before being permitted to dance on official occasions.

Asiedu Yirenkyi also contributes to the understanding of actions and their relatedness to theatrical performance:

> When one is dealing with the theatre in particular, or with the arts in general, one is touching on the many ritualised forms of human actions. It is from these ritual actions that one may first take a look at the problems of definitions.
>
> Many of the actions and everyday activities of the traditional African, from his tonal language use to his dance movements follow well ordered forms that have elements of stylised acting and theatricality.[16]

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15. Loc cit

16. Asiedu Yirenkyi, Journal of the Performing Arts, Vol.1 No.1, Jan, 1980, Page 29

As a summation of the vital points raised by Asiedu Yirenkyi, Professor J.C. de Graft, in his article "Root of African Drama and Theatre" clears the air this way:

> It is important at this point to try and establish a distinction between drama and life as we live it from day to day, in order to avoid confusion. The danger of such confusion is particularly great when, as Africans who are naturally dissatisfied at the continued domination of our 'culture' by Western modes of expression, we talk particularly about our heritage of indigenous drama and the richness of our dramatic traditions. At such times the term "drama" seems to cover almost every form of social expression that may be said to incorporate movement and gesture: singing, drumming, dancing, all ceremonial behaviour, enstoolment and destoolment of chiefs, child naming, circumcision rites, hunting, drinking palm wine and eating goats' meat - literally everything"17.

Having delved into the performing Arts to some extent and realising its confines, we will now examine the visual art which serves as the other form of art which in this thesis, libation seeks to unify.

VISUAL ART

Maurice de Sausmarez talking about visual kinetics in 'The dynamics of visual form' states that,

> .....every spot and every line has energy, and associating these energies together a visual kinetic is created. Rhythm is the most fundamental aspect of this and the'visual beat' of spots and parallel lines, vertical or horizontal, set out with differing intervals between them is a simple example of rhythm changes. 18

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17. Ibid, page 29

18. Maurice de Sausmarez, The dynamics of visual form, Studio Vista, London 1964 pg. 69.

This statement is true in that there is no culture which has not conceived of the idea of rhythm in one form or another because rhythm is fundamental to organic growth. It goes to emphasise that it is movement which produces the rhythm as well as counter-movement and they all arrive at simple pattern-making.

He further comments:

> Every visual experience is at one and the same time a receiving of fragmentary information, a giving of form to these visual sensations and the arousing of felt response.19

From this statement, it could be deduced that the arousal of feeling comes out as a prerequisite response to visual experience. For example, when one views an orange, the eye sees only one side of it but one quickly begins to have a feeling of 'roundness' and 'smoothness' associated with the orange. This shows that;

> The eye can focus upon only a very small area and to obtain adequate information it quickly moves around the visual field collecting a succession of focused data.20

Jenifer D. Wyman and Stephen F. Gordon in 'Primer of Perception' also give their comment on how one is able to see things clearly. These border on the fringes of visual art.

They state that:

> Perception of an object is aided by the clarity of the image.21

This is true in that more often than not the mental picture or idea of an object can make us see the object clearly in reality.

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19. Ibid page 13

20. Loc. cit

21. Jenifer D. Wyman and Stephen F. Gorden, Primer of Perception, Reinhold Publishing Corporation, N.Y., 1967, Page 5.

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They further comment on rhythm:

> Rhythm is kinetic, auditory and visual. The arrangement of solid areas and spaces between them creates a sense of beats as the eye scans the composition.[22]

This brings to mind that, variations in colour, shape, size, spacing and direction can enrich the possibilities of perception of visual rhythm.

Commenting on the effects of contrast, they stated:

> Not everything we 'see' make an impression. We almost automatically select particular elements of a perception upon which to focus.[23]

Most of the times our attention goes to an object that seems to dominate others by contrasting with them in size, value, form, texture, or direction. Here one sees the effect of contrast in creating a centre of interest.

Jerome Stolnitz talking about the aesthetic attitude comments on how we perceive the world:

> It is the attitude we take which determines how we perceive the world. An attitude is a way of directing and controlling our perception. We never see or hear everything in our environment indiscriminately. Rather, we 'pay attention' to some things, whereas we apprehend others only dimly or hardly at all. Thus attention is selective - it concentrates on some features of our surroundings and ignores others.[24]

From this, there is the realisation in the inadequacy of the contention that human beings are simply passive in reception of visual images or external stimuli.

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22. Loc. cit

23. Loc. cit.

24. Jerome Stolnitz in, Introduction Readings in Aesthetics, edited with an introduction by John Hospers, The Free Press, N.Y. 1969, page 17.

Kenneth Clark commenting on art and society states that:

> I take this term to cover everything made in response to the feeling that certain events or objects of contemplation, seen or imagined, are so important that they must be recorded; and that certain objects of use are so important that they must be enriched. These two aspects of visual art I refer to as image and ornament.25

These two aspects of visual art - objects of contemplation, seen or imagined and objects of use - used to be known as 'fine Art' and 'applied art' and were severely distinguished from one another in the nineteenth century. However, there has been a minimisation in the distinction today because of the belief that the form - creating instinct can express itself in both ornament and image and that all ornament, however abstract, suggests some visual experience and all images however factual reveal some sense of design.

At this point one begins to find out how the related literature is relevant to the solution of the main problem. In the estimation of the present author, this review has brought out some vital points about libation, performing and visual arts which indicate that libation can safely serve as a unifying factor between these two forms of art.

Furthermore, most of the literature reviewed has been a pointer to the artistic potentialities embedded in the art of pouring libation.

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25. Kenneth Clark in, The Sociology of Art and Literature, edited by Milton C. Albrecht, James H. Barnett, Mason Griff., Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1970, Page 635.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

> The observed variety of customs, beliefs, and institutions that man has developed, not only in Africa but throughout the world, makes the problem of predicting the forms of even a given culture most difficult.[26]

Reaslising the problem of trying to talk about a people, bringing out their customs, beliefs and institutions, it behaves the present author to break these ideas down starting from the historical background to sociological through the religious life of the people of Agogo in the Ashanti-Akim district of the Ashanti Region. This will (in the estimation of the present author) create an atmosphere of understanding the people's way of life and for that matter the basis of their beliefs. Tracing the history of a people, one realises the reason behind the behavioural pattern of life of a people viz. the way they act, talk and observe certain rites in their community.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Since it is the Aduana clan which governs the Agogo people, and as such has made Agogo what it is now, the history of these people will not be complete without treating the origin of the clan.

According to Nana Kwakye Tutu (chief of the rear guard) oral history of the people has it that the Aduana clan originated from Asuogya near Bekwai in the Ashanti Region. We are further told from the same source that they emerged from a hole at Asumegya and as they emerged out of the hole, they were being led by a dog with a blazing wood in the mouth. It is therefore felt that it was the Aduana clan that brought fire into being so far as Ashanti mythology is concerned. Due to this, it is said that the hole from which they came (still in existence) is considered sacred.

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26. Melville J. Herskovitz and William R. Bascom, Continuity and Change in African Cultures, Univ. Press, Chicago, 1959, Pg.9.

Led by one Opanin Gyebi, they settled with their families at Asumegya in the Ashanti Region. Their leader, Gyebi was a tyrant - a very troublesome leader - so the people decided to get rid of him. At that time it was not easy for 'common' men to kill a person. They therefore built a hut in the forest with the intention of excommunicating him. The hut had neither a door nor a window. Gyebi was carried secretly into the forest and left in the hut to die slowly there.

Gyebi had a son who was a hunter. The son one day decided to go hunting and it was on this mission that he heard groaning from a shrill but fading voice coming from a hut. Upon questioning, he realised for the first time that his father had been sent into solitary confinement to die. He saved his father and reported the case to the chief of Denkyira who was then the overlord of the area where the Asumegya people were living. The Denkyirahene - chief of Denkyira - sent for the elders and questioned them of the whereabouts of their chief. They denied having known where he was. The Denkyira chief ordered his executioners to inflict the highest punishment at the time - death - on them. Some, however, managed to run away. When they were running away they did so in almost all conceivable directions. This idea was mainly to make it difficult for those chasing them to get them all and to further discourage them completely. Some of the places they went to were Dormaa Ahenkro, Kwaso and Nsawam; to mention only a few.

Those who went to Nsawam settled at the foot of a hill called Nyano and named the place Nyanoase. After settling there for some time, they fought with a Ga chief Okaikoi who was then the chief of the area. Okaikoi defeated them and drove them away across the

River Volta to Akwamu.

Among these people was one brave man called Ofori Krobon and his two brothers who were with him and who later became the leaders. When they settled at Akwamu, there was a chief called Atara Finam who was equally powerful. Ofori Krobon, his brothers and the people following them decided to fight Atara Finam and his people and take over the land. They therefore solicited the help of a traditional priest, by name Krachie Dente, swearing before him to offer him a human being, sheep and gold if he helped them to win the impending war. They fought and Atara Finam was defeated.

After winning, Ofori Krobon and his people failed to honour their promise. Krachie Dente grew furious and punished them by sending a swarm of bees to attack them. This resulted in the death of so many of the people including Ofori Krobon who is considered the founder of Agogo and to whom the first black stool of Agogo is dedicated. Some of the people remained at Akwamu with one of the brothers of Ofori Krobon as their chief. The other brother moved to Kumawu with his people to settle there. The rest came down to the forest area beyond the Afram plains in search of a habitable portion of land to settle on and fertile land on which they could farm. They became the first of the Aduana clan members to have settled there.

The members of the Aduana clan however came to meet the Asona clan who had already settled and named the place Agogo after a river called Agogowam which was their only source of water at the time. The members of the Asona clan were very weak because they consisted largely of women. The Aduana clan members who, from their exploits,

can be considered brave and strong, took advantage of that and immediately took over the administration of the land and continue to rule up till this time.

Anim Aboagye was immediately made the chief of Agogo in appreciation of the help given them by his uncle Ofori Krobon. After Anim Aboagye came Toku. Toku was succeeded by a very powerful chief called Kyei Panyin who was a favourite of the Asante-hene. Since Kyei Panyin there have been many chiefs and now the occupant of the stool is Nana Akuoko Sarpong.

The Aduana clan, wanting to cement their strong ties, adopted a strategy that has for a long time made them more powerful and fearful. They have institutionalised democracy in their community but with a bias to secure and protect their interest. A little discussion on the society will suffice to bring out the factors of social cohesion.

Fig. 1. Map of Ashanti Region showing the position of Agogo

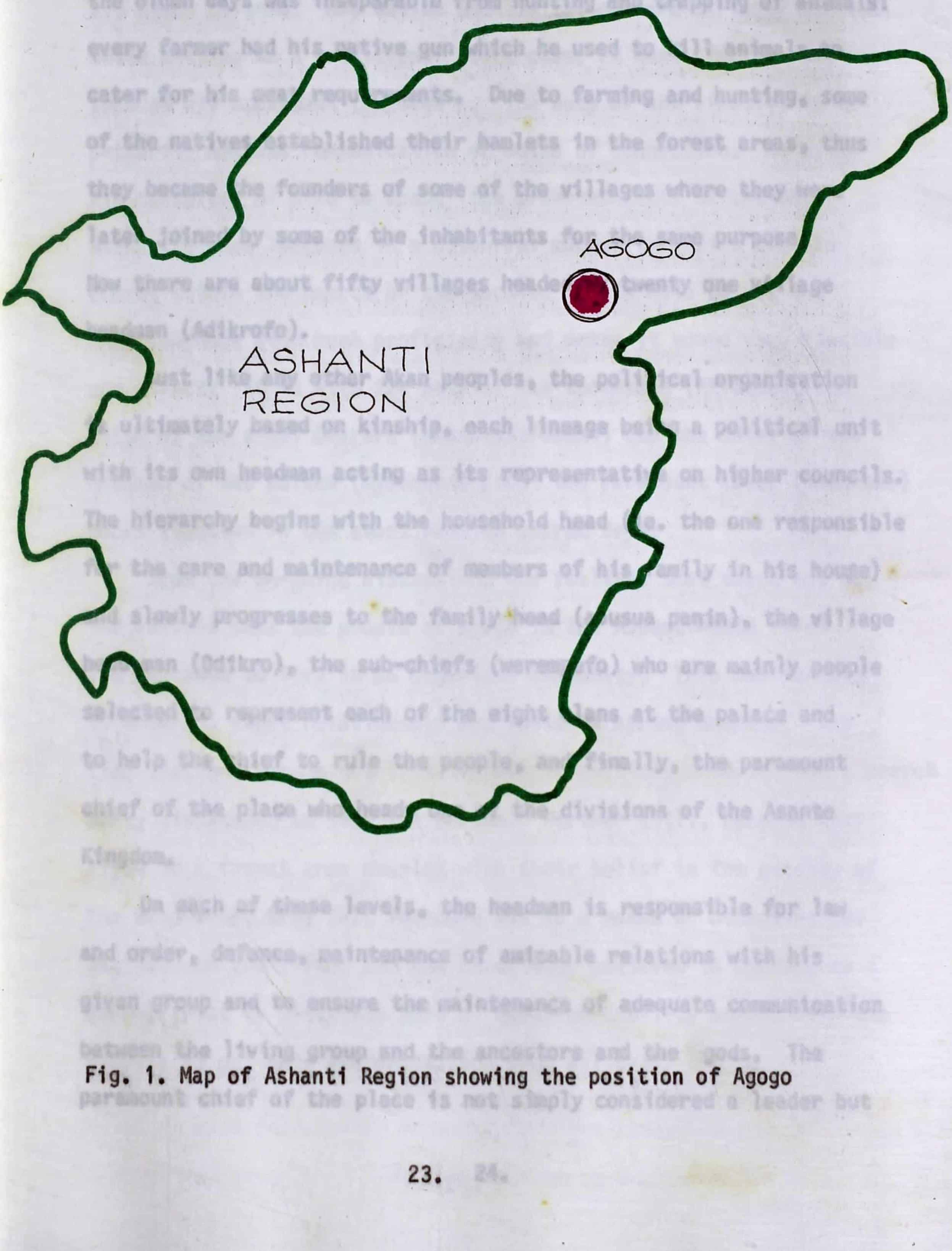

Fig. 1. Map of Ashanti Region showing the position of Agogo

SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE

The people under discussion are predominantly farmers. This stems from the fact that they have a large expanse of land stretching from their place of habitation to the Afram plains (see Fig.1). According to Nana Kwakye Tutu (chief of the rear guard) farming in the olden days was inseparable from hunting and trapping of animals: every farmer had his native gun which he used to kill animals to cater for his meat requirements. Due to farming and hunting, some of the natives established their hamlets in the forest areas, thus they became the founders of some of the villages where they were later joined by some of the inhabitants for the same purpose. Now there are about fifty villages headed by twenty one village headmen (Adikrofo).

Just like any other Akan peoples, the political organisation is ultimately based on kinship, each lineage being a political unit with its own headman acting as its representative on higher councils. The hierarchy begins with the household head (ie. the one responsible for the care and maintenance of members of his family in his house) and slowly progresses to the family head (abusua panin), the village head man (Odikro), the sub-chiefs (werempefo) who are mainly people selected to represent each of the eight clans at the palace and to help the chief to rule the people, and finally, the paramount chief of the place who heads one of the divisions of the Asante Kingdom.

On each of these levels, the headman is responsible for law and order, defence, maintenance of amicable relations with his given group and to ensure the maintenance of adequate communication between the living group and the ancestors and the gods. The paramount chief of the place is not simply considered a leader but

more importantly, a symbol of ethnic identity and the embodiment of the Akan values. His person is considered sacred only as long as he continues to occupy the stool and his judgement is considered as a decision coming from the ancestors. Nobody calls him by his name as it is in private life; the stool name given him should at all times be used. His duties and limitations are strictly defined; while sitting on a traditional court case, he must always speak through his spokesman (Okyeamé). The duty of the linquist is to primarily mediate communication or paths of connection. He uses his dexterity of mind to shape the pronouncements of the chief using the Akan language in a colourful manner to strike certain chords within the hearts of the people. He is able to use the Akan language with much proficiency and makes it sound very flexible and direct. It is with the help of the spokesmen (Akyeame), the chief of the stool bearers (Nkonwasoafohene) and the chief of the headmen of the palace (Gyasehené)that the paramount chief (Omanhene) pours libation in the stool room on sacred days.

From the on-going discussion, one realises that there are all indications that the people of Agogo in the Ashanti-Akim lived and continue to live in an organised community. This was perhaps to ensure a tight relationship and foster a strong oneness. Any time that one person got lost, it was immediately detected and a search party dispatched to find the person. Further still, because they lived in a forest area coupled with their belief in the potency of the dead ones, they felt insecure and as a means of cementing the gap between the living and the dead, they believed in oneness as a strong front to break the aura of unapproachability surrounding the spirits to get help and protection from all evil.

There are certain cultural traditions of the people of Agogo to which they attach much importance. The domains are representative of areas that have a direct bearing on libation and which the people revere. Birth is considered by these people as a blessing and a return to the world of the living from the spirit world of the ancestors.

Thus, all libations and prayers of these people include the request for numerous children. Puberty rites are performed for adolescent girls who have begun to menstruate (Kyima). There is the belief among the people that when a girl has her first menses an old woman will soon die. The people therefore crown the occasion with prayer and libation asking for the protection of life and fertility in women. Marriage is not uncommon among these people. It is the tentacle that embraces families and promotes closer ties within the society. When someone dies, everybody in the community becomes affected and contributes his quota alongside that of the family of the deceased. To them, it is a moral obligation to help bury the dead so that when it comes to their turn they will be helped.

There are also some festive occasions like Awukudae and Akwasidae to which the people of this area attach much importance. It is believed that the ancestors visit the living on these occasions and in the light of this, those inhabitants who have gone to the villages come down to the town on the eve of the occasion for its celebration. It is another way of ensuring a complete oneness in the community and the sustenance of family ties. Libation is poured during prayers for the continual sustenance of the link between the living and the dead. On these sacred days, the traditional priests become very active. They are consulted on spiritual problems from the gods and so on. Libation is poured

before the devotees to the gods and the ancestors as a means of invocation and veneration.

Much reverence is attached to rivers. Many of the rivers have religious significance and many of their gods are identified with the rivers, hence the mentioning of names of rivers when pouring libation on the sacred days.

With the advent of Christianity in Agogo, which was a purely traditional community with a population of about five hundred, there has arisen many churches. There are also many sojourners, itinerant workers and so on who have contributed a lot to the massive increase in the population of the Agogo Paramountcy, now about ten thousand. There are about seven primary and middle schools and three second cycle institutions. The rapid increase in population indicates that infant mortality is low and it further shows the fecundity of the women.

Despite the presence of these churches and institutions of the western ideology, there still exists pure traditionalists who hang on to the belief in ancestors, myths, superstition and other related beliefs which create insecurity in the society; thus the struggle to maintain a spiritual balance between the living and the dead, man and God through the gods and lastly, between man and the earth.

RELIGION

> Despite the intensity of Christian missionary effort and the thousand years of Moslem proselytizing which have marked the history of various parts of Africa, African religions continue to manifest vitality everywhere. This is to be seen in the worship of African deities, the homage to the ancestors, and the recourse of divination, magic and other rituals.[27]

27. Melville J. Herskovitz and William R. Bascom, Op. cit. Page 3

Even though there are orthodox churches as well as spiritual ones at Agogo which are western-culture-oriented, the people still adhere to the observance of their culture which is inseparable from their religion.

In fact, before one can actually understand the spiritual values of these people with the African mind as a pointer, one must accept the fact that the people possess the requisite knowledge of the fundamental facts of the faith which they always seek to express and disseminate in indigenous idiom.

Firstly, the people believe strongly that life does not end at death. Many stories are told about people who have died and have gone to live elsewhere, sending parcels to their children. This belief makes them feel that there is a strong connection between the living and the dead.

There are three types of ghosts or ancestors (nsamanfo) existing within this community. (1) Samanpa, the ghost from a good death, (2) Saman twen-twen, a ghost which has never left the earth and (3) Tofo, the ghost from a violent death. Their belief in these categories of ancestors, create a psychological fear in the minds of the people. Fear and respect to these forces which they consider as supernatural invariably create the checks and balances within the moral framework of the community and further create a very potent sanction of morality.

Death to people therefore does not end a person's membership in a society, thus, the full participation by all and sundry in the funeral celebrations. To them each person's participation goes to strengthen the fact that they still recognize the deceased's invaluable contribution to the society. People therefore feel obliged to attend funerals. Agogo is noted for grand celebrations

of funerals in the Ashanti-Akim North district. Respect for the dead in one way or another becomes a sort of religion.

Secondly, they have a strong belief in the fact that it is not only human beings who have an immortal soul but also lower animals, and plants. Since they live in a forest area, felling of trees to clear the land for farming is common. According to Nana Kwakye Tutu (Kyidomhene) chief of the rear guard of the Agogo Paramountcy, felling of some trees like the sese and Tweneboa entails the pouring of libation to appease the 'sunsum' spirit of the tree and to protect the fellers from its spirit. It is necessary to pour libation and say incantations because these trees are known to be very powerful and malignant whose (sunsum) spirit are described as 'enye koraa' (entirely bad).

Incest is a taboo in the said community. Incest (mogyafra; "blood mixing") was viewed with much concern and anybody who committed it was either considered insane or one who had decided to bring the wrath of the ancestors and the gods onto the inhabitants. The propitiation of the gods and ancestors at this point gives the problem a spiritual dimension; several sheep are sacrificed; libation is poured asking the ancestors to help prevent such happenings in the lives of the people.

There is also the belief that every human being possesses an 'okra' (soul) which is the sustainer of the person's conscience and life and which enters the child at birth. It helps in acting as the spiritual force of the conscience and has much influence on the person's actions.

Another belief of the people is that every person possesses 'sunsum' which is;

> a spiritual substance responsible for 'suban' character, genius, temper or quality of a person.28

According to Okyeame Amoako, (the chief linquist of the Omanhene) paramount chief of Agogo, it is said that the 'sunsum' can leave the body during sleep and can be attacked by witches. When witchcraft is mentioned, people begin to panic and become worried. Nobody, would want to be associated with it for if anyone was considered a witch or wizard in this community, people feared the person; no one would trade with such a person though he or she might be selling the best commodity. In this community they call such people "double-eyed" "woani mmienu". By this, they are refering to a third eye, which gives the person(s)a spiritual power.

In this community under discussion twins are associated with spirits. They are considered as people endowed with much spiritual power from 'Oboadee' (the creator). They are not killed as was the case in Yorubaland. Female twins in this community in the olden days brought joy and satisfaction to the parents in that they became the automatic and potential wives of the chief of the land. Nowadays, this custom is fading away rapidly.

Most of these beliefs create much insecurity and fear and in search of an antidote, this has resulted in bridging the gap between the intangible and the tangible through the building of shrines, and the importance attached to traditional priests as mediators between the people and the gods. It is no wonder therefore to know from Nana Kwakye Tutu that there are various types of gods at Agogo,

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28. Dennis M. Warren, The Akan of Ghana, Pointer Ltd, Accra, 1980 Pg.12.

and their functions are defined though they can perform other functions to help maintain the society. The stool shrines are Tano, Fofie, Akogya, Afram and Yentumi. In times of war, Yentumi (we can't) leads the people. This is perhaps its name which reflects potency gives the warriors much confidence. Fofie, Amanfo, Akogya and Afram work together to ward off all evil coming into the township. Akogya which is situated on the very threshold of the town serves as the guard and reports his findings to Amanfo, Fofie and Afram who come to his aid immediately to ward off that evil; whether it is in the form of a bad intention or plague, it could be neutralised.

It is said that when the chief and his people are travelling out of the town or coming back into it, they must pour libation at the Akogya shrine. Under no circumstance can this be over ruled; it must be done unconditionally.

There are two types of "abosom" (gods)at Agogo. The first type is known as 'bosom fitaa' (white gods) and the second; 'ntu bosom' (adulterated gods). The 'Abosom fitaa' (white gods) are the native ones and they derive their power or potency from rivers. Some of them are Tano, Yentumi, Fofie, Akogya, Sam - in the form of a lake-Ntem, Asuo Abenaa, Kowire, Aboaa, Amoa and so on. The 'Ntubosom' (adulterated gods) on the other hand are not native to Agogo. They were brought down from certain areas and could be destroyed, if they so wish. Some of them are Tigare, Kyereamono, Atia, Charlie, Krafi, Ofiri Number One, Ofiri Number two, Oboo and Nnanko, to mention just a few.

Each of these gods has its shrine dedicated to it, and a priest attached to it as well. With a host of gods, the ruler of the land as well as the majority of the people feel secure or at least the

fear of the unknown is decreased. Each shrine or god has its devotees as well as followers with a host of principles to follow; any breach of them causes much disaster to the offenders unless the specific god is pacified and the offenders are purified. The people swear with these gods to ascertain facts, curse people by using the names of these gods. The most common one is "Meka Afram" (I swear by the name of Afram). This is done in moments when the person speaking will want people around to believe his story in toto. If the person who swore was lying he was spiritually arrested by the god (Obosom kye no). It does not release him till the god is appeased fully.

Libation plays a prominent role in the execution of the work of most of these priests to the gods; they help to invoke the gods. There is therefore the need to know what libation means in the lives of these people.

CHAPTER III

LIBATION

Before one can actually understand the reason why the people of Agogo pour libation, one must first consider how the world appears to them, however wise and experienced in human life, without hearing one word of what science has discovered about the universe. To be able to understand a people, one must learn to understand the beliefs associated with religion and cultural practices of a people and such is the state in which the present author finds himself.

Certain pronouncements in the local dialect of the people of Agogo - Asante Twi - give one reason to think that these people have a strong belief that the earth is flat. For example, Asaase Tamaa meaning 'the plain earth', Asaase Fetee 'the clear earth', Asaase Traa 'flat earth'.

The Sun and Moon are considered shining objects of small size that rise up daily above an eastern edge of the earth, move through the upper air, and sink below a western edge; the sky is an inverted bowl made of some blue material. The Stars, tiny and rather near objects, seem as if they might be alive; they 'come out' from the sky in the night and vanish at dawn. The law of gravitation is not understood by these people. For them, when things like pieces of paper, a stone, a stick are thrown up into the upper air, they do fall not because of any law of gravitation but rather, because there is nothing to hold them up in space. The heart is thought of as a place where love, kindness and thoughts are kept and not the place where blood is pumped to other organs within the body. Leaves are green not from the Chemical substance chlorophyll in them, but from the 'greenness' in them. To these peasant farmers who make up this community, it is just impossible to reason them

out of these beliefs. A baby born is considered a gift from the ancestors. Their belief in the ancestors' presence is asserted as plain hard-headed common sense; death is not the end of life but a continuation of it. They are baffled by the thought processes behind these happenings.

The idea creates a mystery in their minds and they believe that every effect had a cause. This presupposes that the cause of an undertaking is apparent in the effect which comes out as an inevitability. They are therefore always cautious about life in general since they feel their whole life is surrounded with an aura of fear in that the aftermath of every action or step taken will definitely have an equal and opposite reaction which will be of the same magnitude and gravity.

The people under discussion constantly feel insecure and struggle for protection. There has always been a bid to bring these forces behind all these happenings down to human scale, since there is the general belief that reality and symbol are the same. By doing this, there is the feeling that the mystic unapproachability that surrounded the existence of these forces of nature has been broken and that the present, past and future have also been frozen into a perpetual present; thus, what was once intangible has been made a real experience. It is in consonance with this that as a means of communication, libation has been used as an essential means of communication between the living and the dead.

It is this form of human thinking and language that shapes the innermost thoughts of the people of Agogo. Since "language is

cardinal in rearing human young, in organising human communities,

in handing down the culture from generation to generation"[29] the children within this community become naturally imbued with the speaking of their dialect- Asante Twi. This in a way, (and most probably) greatly influences their levels of thinking due to the fact that "the structure of the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which one understands his environment."[30] Even though the level of thinking is relative, the homogeneity of language has influenced the manner in which this people under discussion understand reality and behave with respect to it.

Since language meets the experiences and problems of the speakers, one who is able to record and to retain impressions, experiences and facts and, also to have them available at creative moment's notice as well as using direct language appropriate for the time and making the language seem flexible is highly respected within the Agogo community. People with such qualities amongst a host of them usually become spokesmen (Akyeame) who matter very much in the pouring of libation.

HOW LIBATION IS POURED

According to Okyeame Amoako, libation can be poured by almost anybody on any day that anyone decides to do it. However, there are certain days, events and occasions on which libation is considered sacred and is exclusively dealt with as an essential part of the celebrations by the Agogo Paramountcy.

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29. Benjamin Lee Whorf , Language, Thought, and Reality, M.I.T. Press, 1956, Page Vi

30. Ibid, Page IV

During this period, pouring of libation is left in the care of either the official spokesman who pours libation for the Paramountcy at the palace or durbar grounds, or the head of the family who takes charge of libation pouring on social or family celebrations.

In either of the cases, there are certain norms that have to be followed in order to pour libation. Firstly, the one pouring the libation stands in the middle of a semi-circle formed by the few members of his entourage.

The liquor or food to be used for the performance by this time has been made available in an appropriate container. If it is palm-wine, it is carefully put in a pot. If it is Schnapps - as it is the case in contemporary times - care should be taken that it is new and has never been opened. The first time of opening it should be before the people who have gathered there in pursuance of the satisfaction to be gained from the occasion. This norm has a teaching quality - to show the young generation the proper way of presenting things to their ancestors.

Fig. 2. Bringing the cloth to the elbow

Fig.3. Folding the cloth around the body underneath the armpits.

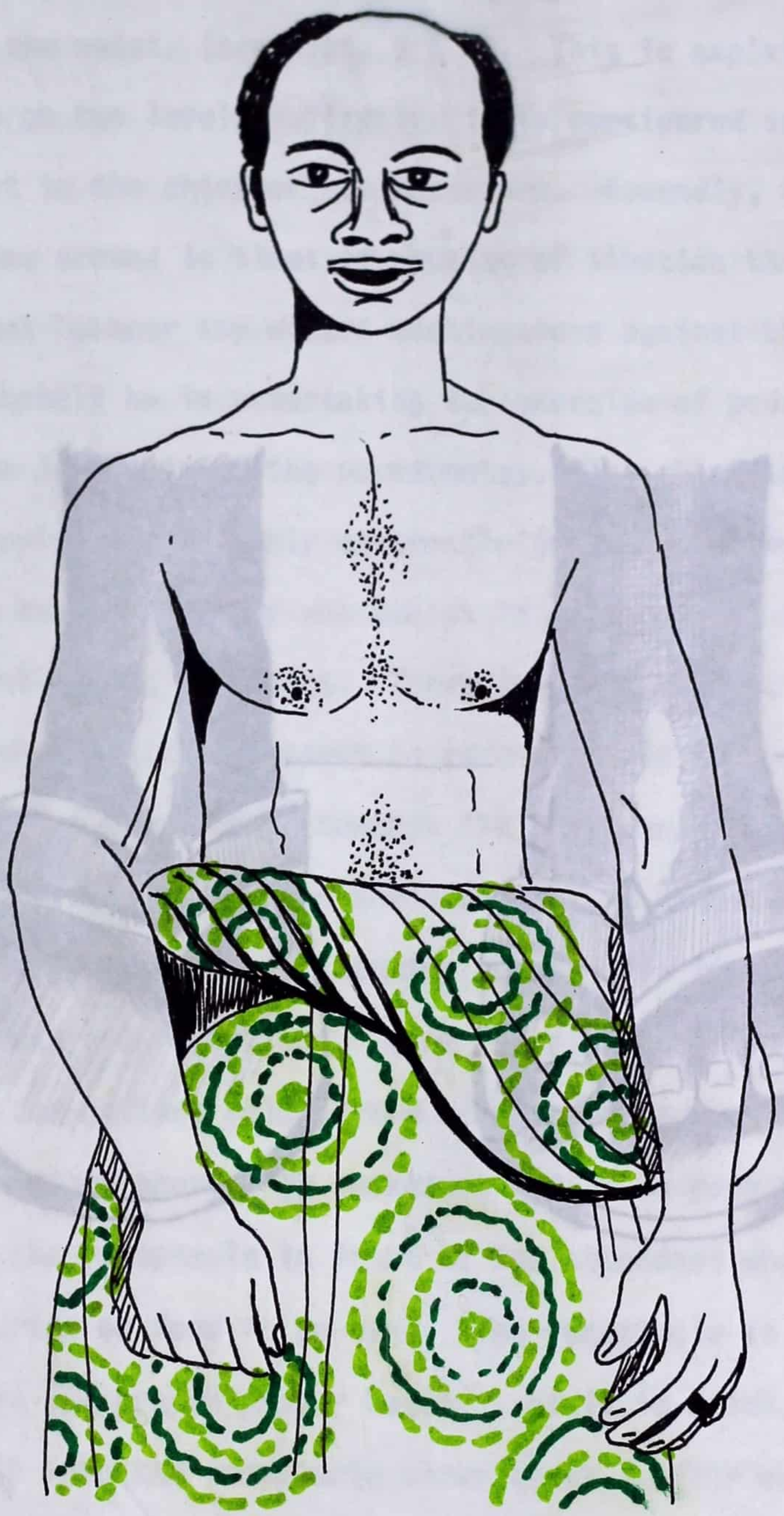

Fig. 4. Wearing the cloth around the waist

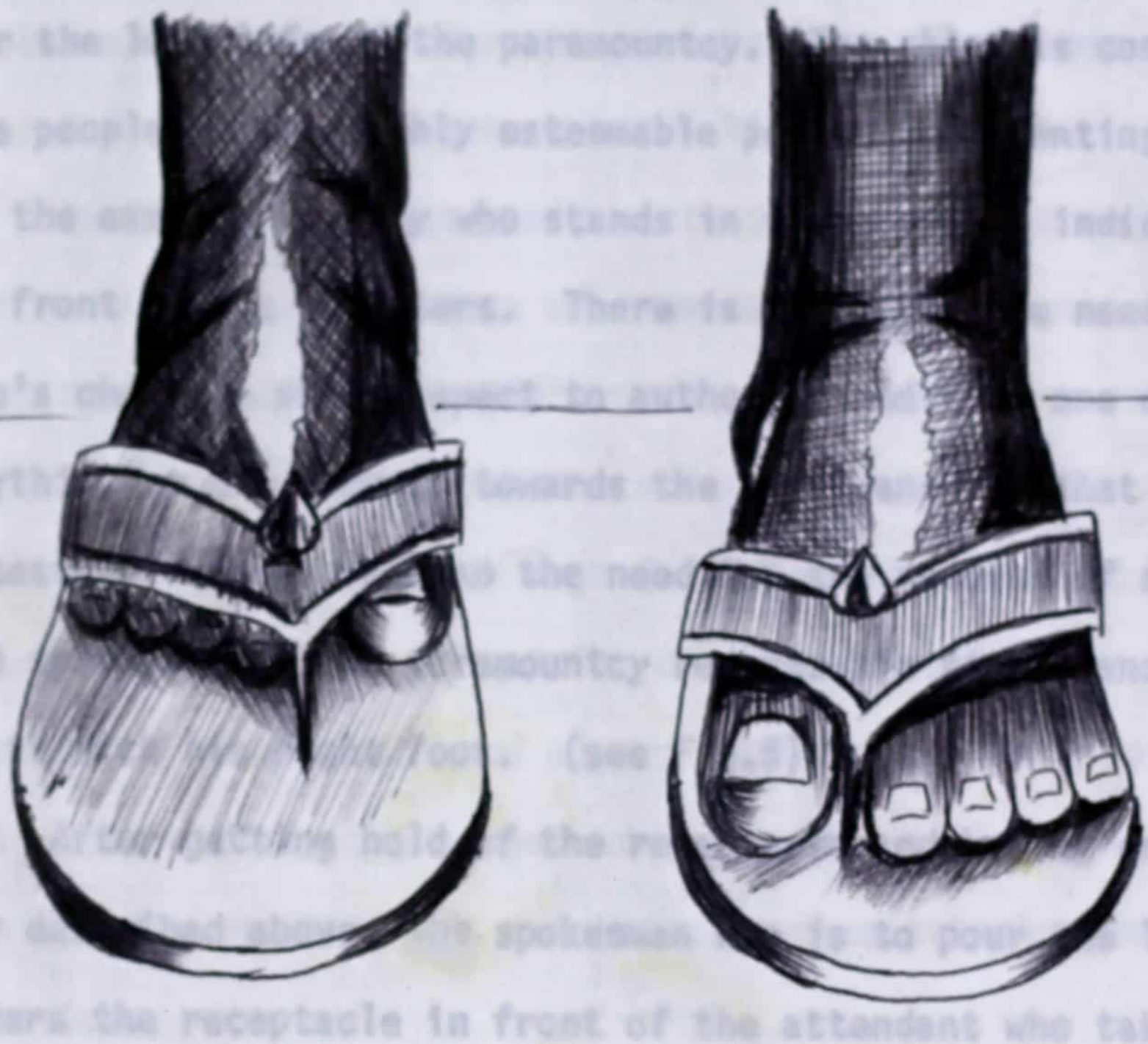

Fig. 5. Removal of right sandal

The paramount spokesman takes hold of the receptacle provided; a calabash or glass, strips bare his left shoulder, bringing the cloth to the elbow (see Fig. 2) or folds the cloth round the body and underneath the armpits or, in certain cases, folded and put round the waist. (see Figs. 3 & 4). This is explained by the people on two levels. Firstly, it is considered as a sign of respect to the chief or his ancestors. Secondly, it is to show everyone around in times of pouring of libation that the spokesman does not harbour any wicked machinations against the people on whose behalf he is undertaking the exercise of pouring libation for the long life of the paramountcy. The chief is considered by the people as the highly esteemable person representing the ancestors on the earth. Anybody who stands in front of him indirectly stands in front of the ancestors. There is therefore the need to uncover one's chest to show respect to authority and that one does not have anything up his sleeves towards the chief and for that matter, the ancestors. There is also the need for the removal of sandals. The spokesman of the paramountcy removes his right sandal and stands on it with his right foot. (see Fig.5)

After getting hold of the receptacle and having dressed the way described above, the spokesman who is to pour the libation lowers the receptacle in front of the attendant who takes charge of the drink or food to be used. The receptacle is filled and the libation and prayer proper begin. If it is drink, the attendant pours it into the receptacle three times. After each pour he takes a pause until the third time that he stops completely. This is also done in consonance with the belief of the people that one does not offer anything less than three to a beloved one. It is supposed to re-echo the traditional cliche 'odo nsa da' love does not get depleted. If it is food, the one pouring the libation

and giving the prayers uses his hand to take a considerable and reasonable amount and the process begins. The bystanders express aloud their approval of the content of the prayer saying 'Ampaara' it is the truth or 'Yonn!' or 'Wie' meaning yes indeed! after every impressive statement in the prayer.

The prayer is normally made up of appeals through ancestors-spirits inhabiting strange objects of nature such as rivers and mountains which usually have wonderful natural phenomena about them. Libation is generally featured by invocations, praises, thanksgiving and requests. The requests are often what the spokesman wishes best for the paramountcy. The enemy and the sinful are often doomed to condemnation.

In libation, seven basic virtues of grace are requested so far as the people of Agogo are concerned. (1) Nkwa - life and good health. (2) Adom - God's grace. (3) Asomdwee - peace. (4) Abawo - fertility, potency and procreativity. (5) Adehu - good eye sight (6) Asote tumi - good hearing power and (7) Amandoree - Rainfall and general prosperity of the land and state. These virtues of grace which are always included in the libation and prayer bring out vividly the belief of the people of Agogo in God, ancestors, the spirits and the gods and the reverence attached to this solemn occasion.

WHERE LIBATION IS POURED

In the Agogo Paramountcy, libation is mainly poured on the ground but at certain times it is poured on stools as is the case of giving food to the ancestors in the stool room, or into another receptacle as happens at the shrine dedicated to Afram. (see Plate 3).

The most confusing issue the pouring of some liquid on the ground raises is whether this prayer is an offering directed to God. If it is - why on the ground.

According to Okyeame Amoako (paramount spokesman)of the paramountcy, everything which God has made is good and holy. More so, the conception is that God is a spirit which resides in everything and gives out the vital energy needed to maintain man on the earth. Libation is poured on the earth because the earth provides enough love and kindness that they need - food, herbs, wood for carving, cooking and so on, and finally a place of rest of the deceased.

Basically, the whole world is God's garden according to Okyeame Amoako (the paramount spokesman). He further states that every material thing on earth will one day go back to the ground, and for that reason, the ground on which libation is poured is sacred.

Pouring liquid on the ground whether at home, palace, farm, cemetery or stool room is a symbol of reverence to the earth, the source of most of man's material needs. Since libation is a prayer offered to God, ancestors, gods and other spirits, there must be an appropriate time at which libation must be poured when its impact can be felt and become effective.

WHEN LIBATION IS POURED

In the Agogo Paramountcy, libation can be poured anytime during the day by any other person depending on the circumstance. Changes in time are a pointer to the fact that demands from God, ancestors and spirits of the people vary from person to person.

However, on sacred days and other special occasions, libation is poured in the morning. The reason is that, according to Nana Kwakye Tutu (chief of the rear guard of the paramountcy) God,

ancestors and spirits also engage themselves in many activities at dawn; the spirits become hypersensitive and helpful to man, listening to the requests and thanksgiving from mortal souls early in the morning. They get themselves tired out trying to solve most of man's problems during the day and retire to their abode for rest in the evening. It is therefore the belief of the people that spirits are not particularly invoked in the night thus, the pouring of libation early in the morning and never in the night. The ancestors need rest just as much as human beings; any attempt to call on them at night creates disturbance and further might warrant the loosening of the wrath of the spirits on the people.

There are many occasions on which libation is poured such as celebrations attached to each of the four cardinal, turning points in man's life; birth, puberty, marriage and death. Sacred days such as Akwasidae and some rites at the shrine of some of the gods of the people are also celebrated at certain periods in their life. An in-depth treatment of some of these occasions will help bring out how libation safely serves as a unifying factor between the performing and visual arts as well as the rich artistic potentiality embedded in this powerful form of prayer of the people.

CHAPTER IV

SELECTED OCCASIONS ON WHICH LIBATION IS POURED

As stated in the previous chapter, there are many occasions on which libation is poured but some of the occasions are considered more of a sacred rite than others. In these selected occasions emerge the reality of existence of the spirituality and potency embedded in the act of pouring libation. By bringing out the ingredients that make up the coneepts of these rites and subjecting them to a thorough examination so far as libation is concerned, their values in social life and art will not lose their importance in a futile and ephemeral drama.

One of the common cliches or overworked phrases that one often comes across is "Rites of passage". This refers to ceremonies that are performed at the various turning points in man's life namely: Birth, Puberty, Marriage and Death. In addition to these occasions is the purification and pacification rite at the shrine which in the light of the life of the people of Agogo is a sacred event. At all these sacred events, libation is poured. An in-depth treatment of these events therefore warrants itemising them. We will start with birth - the beginning of life.

BIRTH

The birth of a new child is of great importance and is treated as a great event among this people. In this community, a baby is considered a gift from the ancestors. The child is not named until after seven days. This delay is to make sure the child granted to the parents has come to stay. The parents have to feel assured that the ancestors have destined the child to remain.

Since libation can be poured by any person on any day, anyone so wishes, a husband can pour libation when the wife is pregnant to ask for forgiveness from the ancestors for the offences, if any, committed by any member within the family, as well as for continued guidance for the safe delivery of the wife. The husband does this because of the evil associated with death at parturition.

The birth of a child is a happy occasion and is thus accompanied by a happy ceremony: outdooring and naming ceremony. According to Nana Kwakye Tutu, chief of the rear guard, this happy ceremony usually takes place on the eighth day after the birth of a child. However, the economic constraints and changing trends of culture due to acculturation, the practice in vogue now is that the husband and wife fix the ceremony at a time that is convenient to them depending on their financial stand. It is not uncommon to find a grand outdooring and naming ceremony being celebrated a month or two after the safe delivery of one's wife nowadays.

This great ceremony which accompanies the birth of a child is an indication of the fact that the traditional African revered a woman who was fertile. This is because a woman who is able to give birth to new life serves to maintain "the unbroken chain of generations linking the ancestral souls to their many descendants."[31]

The birth of a child brings in a new phase in the life of the mother and the child in that it is during this time that the arts of the body are employed, based on the standard Akan form: the cranial shaping of the baby's head to take on the desired shape which in this case should follow the shape of the head of the Akuaba doll, the making of a small scar on the cheek of the child, and the

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31. Boris de Rachewitz, Black Eros, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1964, P. 269.

besmearing of the body of the mother and child with 'hyire' (Kaolin) in pleasing patterns. The people accept that on such an occasion, the mother of the newly born baby should put on white cloth and besmear her body with white clay (kaolin) for the great ceremony. This is indicative of the people's belief that white symbolises purity, joy and victory and it is a symbol that the mother has come out of her predicament victorious. Bangles and other bodily ornaments as well as various hair styles are displayed on this festive occasion.

The outdooring ceremony is the same as the naming ceremony so far as this people are concerned. They consider it as more or less a social event but Nana Kwakye Tutu makes it clearer that it has a religious connotation because it centres on the child's relationship to the spirits and the earth. It is supposed to be the final announcement to the ancestors about the safe arrival on to the earth of the living, of the 'gift' offered to that family. There is a feeling that an increase in the number of the living corresponds to a decrease in the realm of the dead. It is therefore courteous to acknowledge the receipt of the 'gift'. The ceremony therefore strengthens the belief in the ancestors and builds solidarity in the lineage.

Considering these, there is the need for specific advice, admonitions and prayer for hoped-for social accomplishments on behalf of the child. This is done through the pouring of libation which takes place early in the morning. It is after this event that the actual name is announced publicly. The actual name of the child is important because according to Okyeame Amoako (the paramount spokesman), the child's 'suban' character is influenced by its name and most of the times the child emulates the character of the person after whom he is named. The child is usually given at least two

names viz. the natal-day-name called 'akradin' and the father's name called, 'agyadin'. The ceremony itself is known as 'Abadinto'.

When the libation is to be poured, it is customary for the child to be placed on the lap of the most senior aunt or in her absence, on the lap of any of the aunts of the new-born child. The baby's head faces the rising sun's direction - east, and the feet in the direction of sunset - west. This is to ensure that the sun's rays induce much more life in the child and to further show that it will take a long time before the child's feet touch the land of the ancestors since the west is associated with darkness and the east with light. The head of the father's family is the one who pours libation on this occasion and in his absence, the head of the mother's family pours it. The one pouring the libation should always be a male who stands in front of the seated aunt with the child and one of the people gathered there - a male - pours an odd number of drops of the drink into a receptacle and he begins the prayer (see Fig.6). He raises the receptacle up with his eyes looking up in the sky and calls on 'Onyankopon Twediampon' (God) to come for "nsa" (drink). He calls on 'Asaase Yaa' (the earth) to come for drink, 'Nananom nsamanfoo' (ancestors), 'abosom' (the gods) and all other spirits to come for their drink. Apart from 'Onyankopon Twediampon' (God) who is only shown the drink, a little of the drink is poured on the ground after calling the name of each of the rest of the spirits. Upon this powerful invitation of these highly revered powers he begins the prayer proper. He says among other things:

Fig. 6. Pouring libation at an out-dooring and naming ceremony.

Me free mo anopa yi a, enye bone
Ade feefe a, mode ama yen no
Na yere to ne din
Mo ngyina n'akyi akyigyina pa
Oyare bone dee booboo
Yesre ma ahooden, nyansa ne depa
Ade a, ebeye mmusuo ne asan dee
Omfa bi mma.
Na onipa bone ni biara a,
Ode ani bone behwe no dee
Moma no nhu nea ompe awia ketee.

I called you not because of any evil
The nice gift you gave us is what
we are naming now
Stand and fight by him
Don't let him suffer from headache
Nor any dangerous disease
We ask for strength, wisdom and good character
Help him not to bring home any evil deed
Nor any act of disgrace.
Any wicked person who looks at him
With an evil eye,
Let that person suffer greatly
Under the scorching sun.

(Opanin Kwabena Osei, Agogo)

There could however be differences in the presentation of the prayer depending on the use of the mental faculties as well as linguistic ability of the officiant. Nevertheless, the virtues asked for during this time do not vary very much.

There are art forms involved in the presentation of libation and prayer on this occasion which need attention in order not to exclude libation as a means of artistic expression.

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

One can comment that the seated pose of the aunt of the child is a humanistic attitude in which the legs are articulated in a way to accommodate the child on the lap. This articulation can be represented by a free-flowing stroke of any drawing medium in the form of line drawing (Fig.7). This brings out the art in the act of sitting as a relatively straightforward, uncomplicated and direct expression of stability. This is one of the many behavioural modes

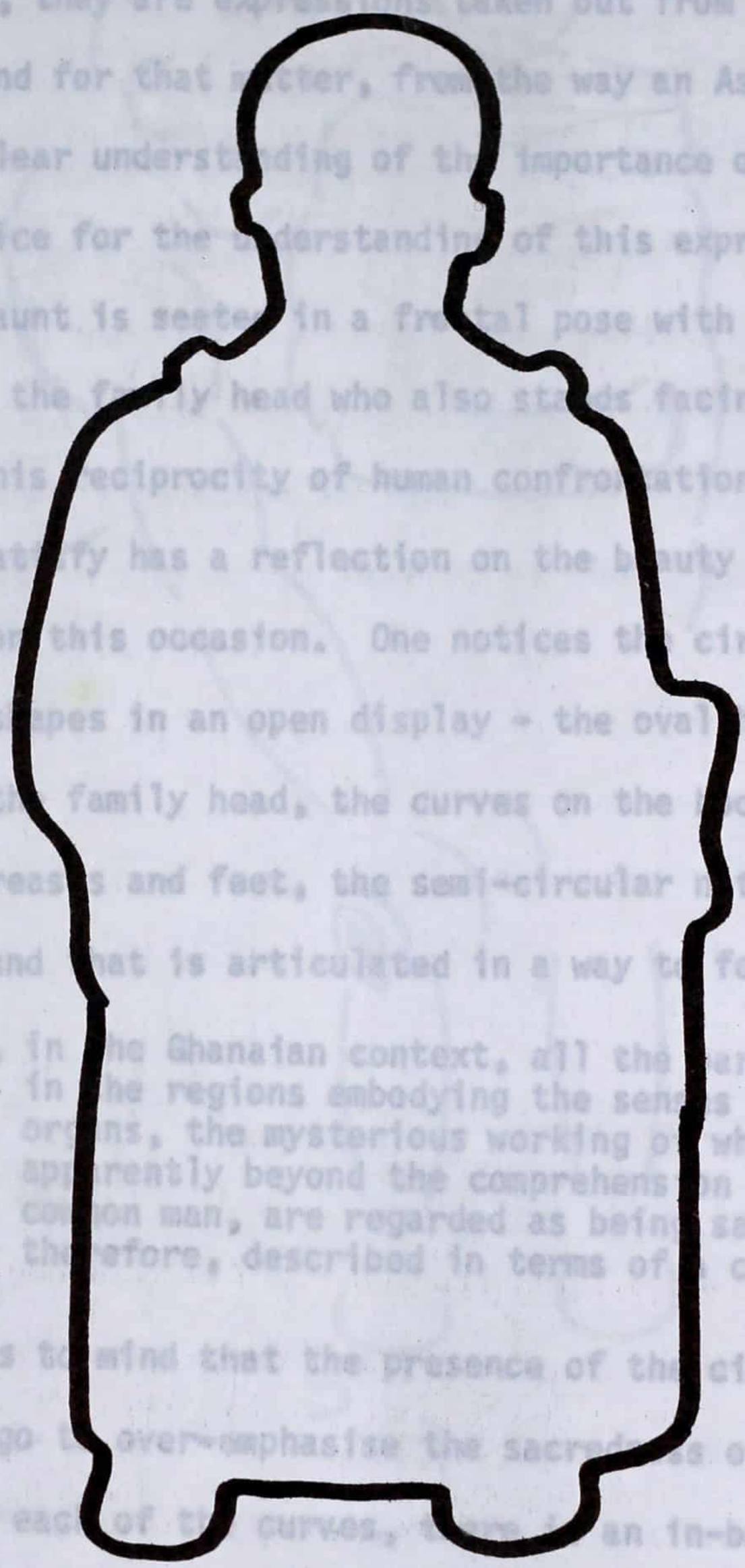

Fig.7. Free-flowing line representation of the seated pose of the aunt of a newly-born child.

of the African self which - not all but some - are expressed in their sculptures. Though these modes are usually abstracted in the icons, they are expressions taken out from the life of the African and for that matter, from the way an Ashanti-Akim woman sits; a clear understanding of the importance of sitting in reality will suffice for the understanding of this expression in their icons.

The aunt is seated in a frontal pose with the baby on the lap and faces the family head who also stands facing the aunt of the child. This reciprocity of human confrontation that their poses seem to satisfy has a reflection on the beauty in the act of pouring libation on this occasion. One notices the circles, semi-circles and oval shapes in an open display - the oval heads of the child, aunt and the family head, the curves on the bodies - shoulders, arms, calves, breasts and feet, the semi-circular nature of the receptacle and the hand that is articulated in a way to follow (Fig.8).

> Similarly, in the Ghanaian context, all the parts that fall in the regions embodying the senses and sexual organs, the mysterious working of which is apparently beyond the comprehension of the common man, are regarded as being sacred and, therefore, described in terms of a circle.32.

This brings to mind that the presence of the circles, semi-circles and ovals go to over-emphasise the sacredness of the occasion.

Under each of the curves, there is an in-built grid of verticals and horizontals.

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32. Kofi Antubam, Ghana's Heritage of Culture, Koehler & Amelang. Leipzig, 1963, P.93

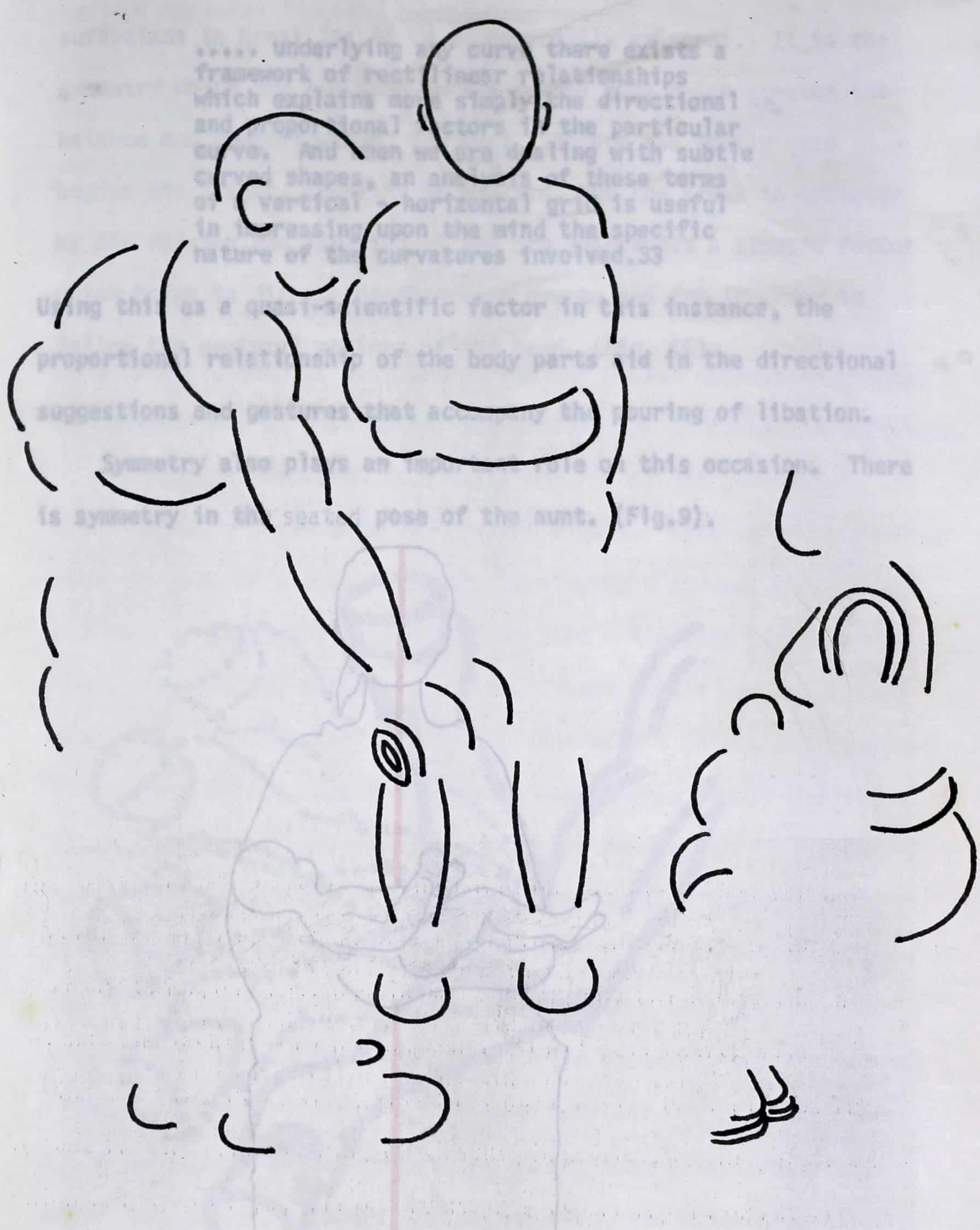

Fig. 8. Open-display of circles, semi-circles and oval shapes at the naming ceremony.

> ..... underlying any curve there exists a framework of rectilinear relationships which explains more simply the directional and proportional factors in the particular curve. And when we are dealing with subtle curved shapes, an analysis of these terms of a vertical - horizontal grid is useful in impressing upon the mind the specific nature of the curvatures involved.33

Using this as a quasi-scientific factor in this instance, the proportional relationship of the body parts aid in the directional suggestions and gestures that accompany the pouring of libation.

Symmetry also plays an important role on this occasion. There is symmetry in the seated pose of the aunt. (Fig.9).

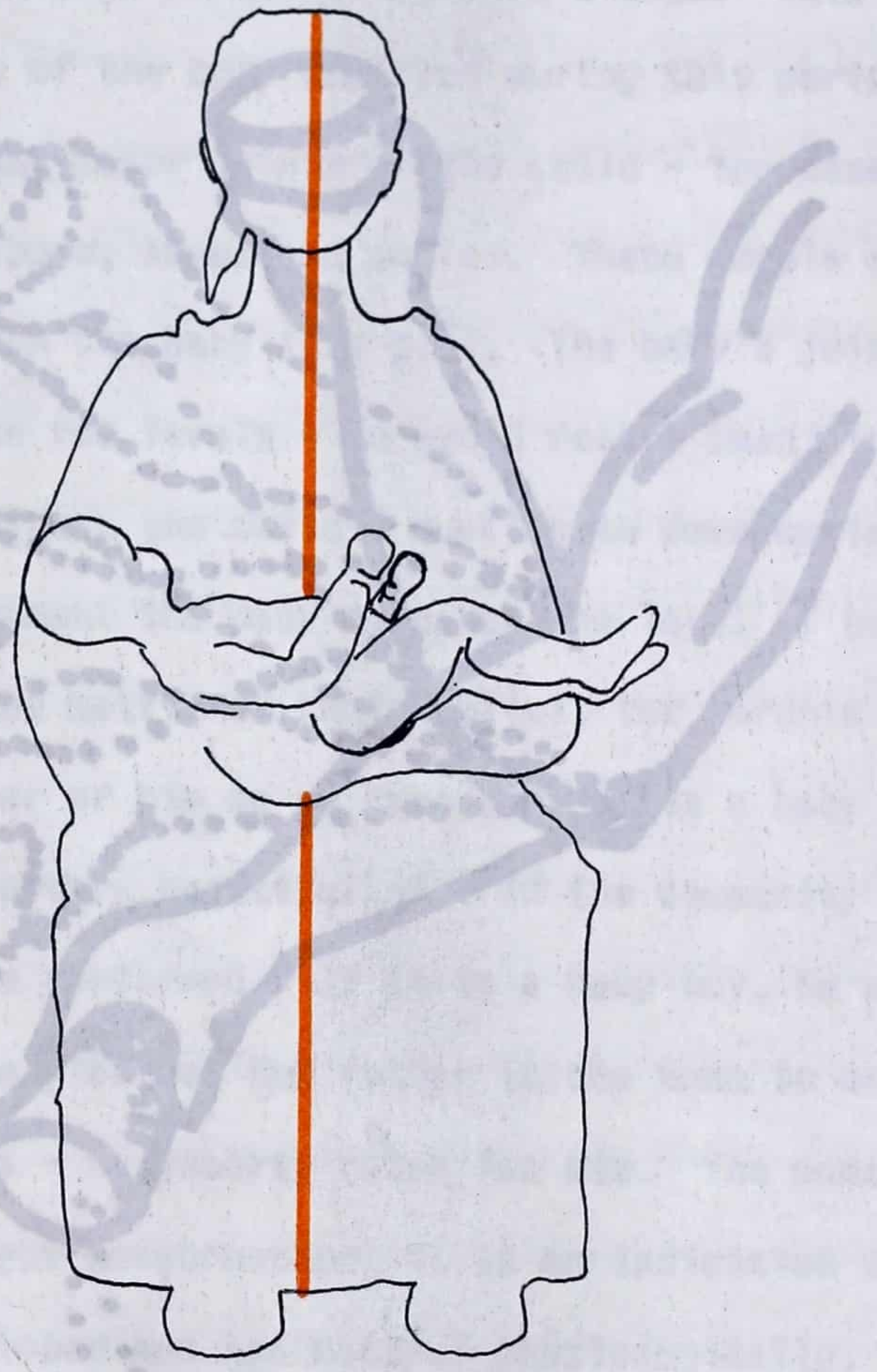

Fig. 9. Symmetry in the seated pose of the aunt.

33. Maurice de Sausmarez, The dynamics of visual form, Studio vista London, 1964, Page 22.

The asymmetrical position of the child on the lap is however not sufficient to break it; it is so powerfully existent. It is the symmetry which one realises in the seated pose which creates the balance and comfort around the aunt. Before the family head begins the prayer, symmetry is existent but the break in symmetry by the raising and lowering of the arm introduces a kinetic factor which helps to direct the observers' eyes to and fro in order to follow the gestural motions of the hand. (Fig. 10).

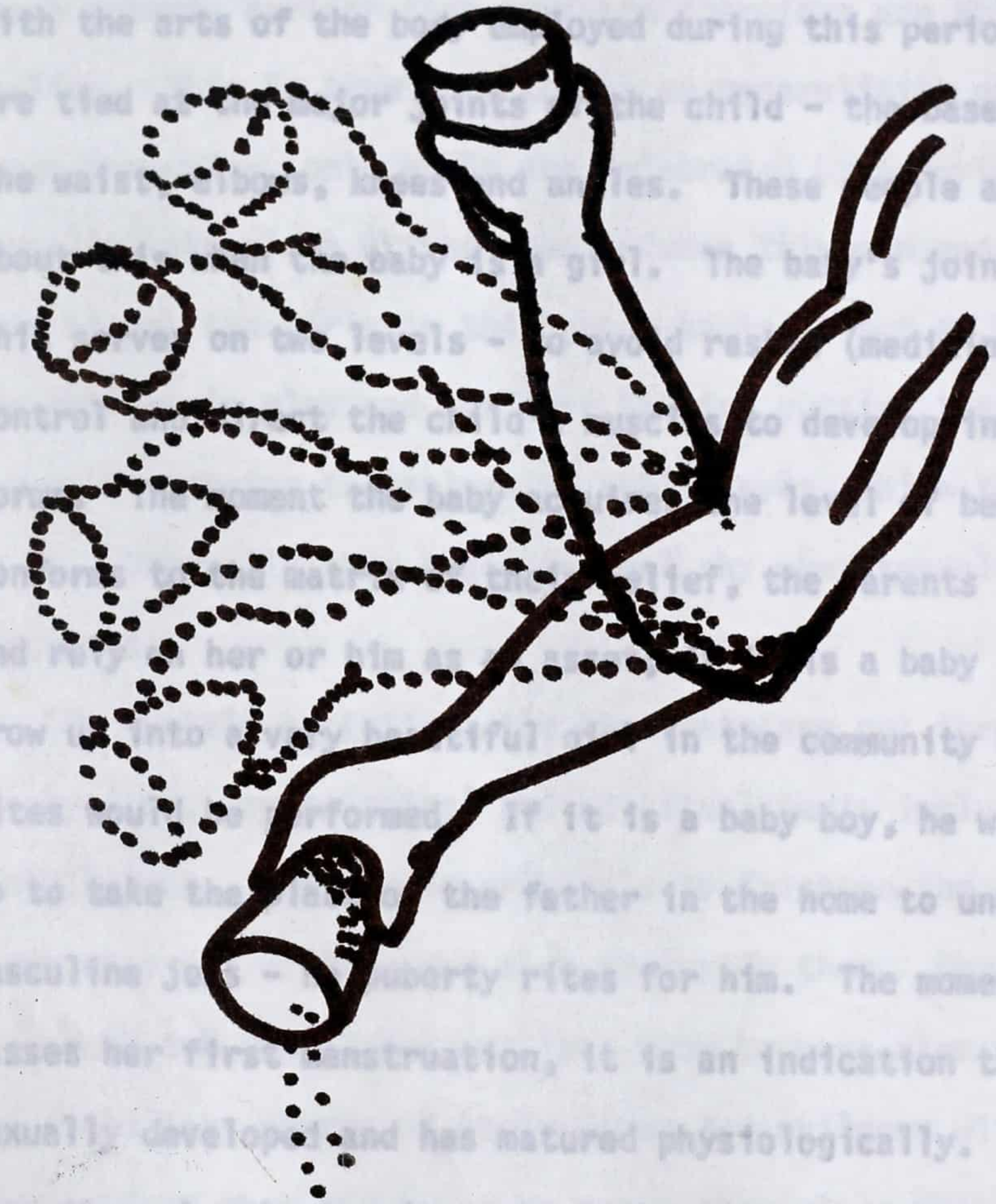

Fig. 10. Kinetic movement in gestural motions of the hand.

These gestures are expressive movements that usually accompany articulated vocal language used in the prayer. These action - expressions are effective in times of pouring libation and they are constantly used in consonance with facial expressions to emphasise a point. For example, when the family head says:

> Momma ne ti mpae no
> Oyare bone dee booboo
> (Don't let him suffer from
> headache or any dangerous
> disease),

he shakes his head in disapproval and the facial expression changes as against that of when he was introducing the child to the ancestors.

Since this occasion is a happy one, it is not permissible to utter negative statements or negative wishes. This is in consonance with the arts of the body employed during this period: white beads are tied at the major joints of the child - the base of the neck, the waist, elbows, knees and ankles. These people are particular about this when the baby is a girl. The baby's joints are powdered. This serves on two levels - to avoid rashes (medicinal) and to control and direct the child's muscles to develop into beautiful forms. The moment the baby acquires the level of beauty that conforms to the matrix of their belief, the parents become happy and rely on her or him as an asset; if it is a baby girl she will grow up into a very beautiful girl in the community and her puberty rites would be performed. If it is a baby boy, he will soon grow up to take the place of the father in the home to undertake the masculine jobs - no puberty rites for him. The moment the girl passes her first menstruation, it is an indication that she is sexually developed and has matured physiologically. She therefore goes through puberty rites which characterise this stage of development.

PUBERTY

As stated by Oswald Schwarz;

> Puberty is the most important and most dramatic phase of the development of our whole personality, and of all the many changes which the body and mind of the child undergo at this time, the sexual change is only a part - admittedly the most conspicuous and alarming, but a part all the same.[34]

At this stage of man's life cycle, one could reproduce: one begins to show signs of maturity in sexual matters, mental capabilities and physical fitness. The age at which one could be considered ripe for reproduction and for that matter to be categorised as having reached puberty varies from society to society and also between boys and girls. It is the understanding that girls normally reach puberty earlier than boys and therefore are able to reproduce earlier. This is true only so far as generalities go. In the Agogo community, only girls are celebrated by puberty rites which normally take place at the ages between thirteen and fourteen. At this stage, the girls in this group begin to put an end to some of the children's play and actions: bathing outside the house during the day, exposing themselves to public eyes, which they are wont to do. Virtually they begin to feel shy when sexual matters are discussed.

In certain societies, the candidatesare put through a series of physical, psychological and spiritual tests including outright flagellation. The aim is primarily to frighten the childhood tendencies out of them and also to purify them. For boys, this is to ensure and instil bravery into them to make them responsible men who could take charge of their wives and children without fear of work to feed them and never to prove themselves incompetent. In certain societies such as the Chewa of Tanzania, the candidates are subjected to most difficult pressures. Amidst all these 'tortures'

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34. Schwartz, Oswald, Psychology of Sex ,Penguin Books Ltd, 1958, P.35

are tattoos, scarifications and cuts which are meant to test the candidates whether they could endure pain. If they are able to demonstrate courage and virility, the custodians of the traditions within the traditional social set-up become satisfied. Incisions are made on the arms and back of the neck of the Nigerian Lala at this stage.

> After a year, at harvest time, as part of the agricultural festival, the buttocks and sexual parts of the thighs are scarred.[35]

All these humiliations and torture are expected to be endured to the end in order to disorientate one's childhood tendencies, then they will later be accepted into the adult society. In contrast, the disorientation of one's childhood tendencies are more or less intuitive for the initiates in the Agogo community.

Here is the ceremonial 'death' and 'rebirth' of the candidate - the self-denial of foregoing what they have become used to is considered literally as 'death', and the new teachings, bringing the much needed transmutation in character which engulfs the shedding away of former values, is considered 'rebirth'.

Since culture varies from place to place, the puberty rites in the Agogo community deviates from most of the methods of approach in the foregoing discussion.

Just like any other Akan group, there are no formal initiation schools for either male or female adolescents in this society. Circumcision, scarification, clitoridectomy and tattooing as formal initiation rites are virtually non-existent. The only puberty rite which characterises the life of the people is meant for adolescent girls who have started to (Kyima) menstruate. The celebration usually covers one week. On each day a new event takes place or,

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35. Boris de Rachewitz, Black Eros, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1964, P. 129.

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in the case of the continuation of an event on the next day, the seriousness of the occasion is heightened.

On the first day, according to Aberewa (Grannie) Badu, the candidate is seated on a stool in open air after having been shaved of all the hair from her private parts. Her finger-nails and toe-nails are cut and is dressed up before taking the seat. This is the first day that the initiate's breasts are exposed publicly. Her friends are given the chance to manhandle her because after the first day she would be no more what she used to be - a woman to-be now.

The second day sees the initiate at the river side where she undergoes a ritual bathing after which she is dressed and brought back home. The ritual bathing entails the triple immersion of the initiate in the river, washing of the hair with lime juice, inspection of the body and the offering of mashed yam or plaintain and eggs to the spirit of the river. This is done amidst praise-songs and words of admonition. This is one of the periods when it becomes permissible for a woman to offer prayers in the form of libation. This is because puberty rites celebrations are considered as a purely women's affair.

On the third day, there is (ka ano) 'mouth-touching' which means the girl is publicly fed. Libation is poured before the process begins to ask for spiritual help. The officiant who usually happens to be an elderly woman who has children who are all alive offers an invocation which is usually very long and appropriate to the food being offered to the initiate.

On the fourth and fifth days there is not much activity. There is 'mass' eating and telling of stories while the initiate's head is always covered. Songs are sung and there is general entertainment.

On the sixth day, there is a general cleaning in the house of the initiate early in the morning. This is to pave way for the ending of the ceremony since this day is the eve of the termination of activities. She is made to walk bare-footed and uncover her head. This is an indication that the spirituality that surrounded her has been broken and she is about to be born again with all wholesomeness in life and beauty into the society.

On the last day of the festivities, the initiate is dressed in Kente cloth with white clay smeared all over the body. She wears beads at the major joints and walks under an umbrella. This is the day the girl dresses as an adult exposing her breasts and chewing her (bra dua) "puberty stick". The rest of the day is used for thanksgiving. There is however the reciprocation of congratulations from all and sundry.

From the on-going discussion, it will be discerned that libation plays not an uncommon role in this rite. Libation is poured on the very first day the rites begin. The matrilineal head - a female in this case - takes a bottle of schnapps, (in the olden days it was palm wine) stands near the seated initiate and pours libation to thank God, the ancestors, the spirits and the gods. She entreats them to stand firmly behind the initiate so that no misfortune may befall her and the celebration may come to a successful conclusion. This is usually done before the women begin to sing the "Bra" songs for those gathered there to dance to.

Libation is also poured when the girl goes for the ritual bath. On arrival at the river-side, ropes of raffia (edoa) are put around the initiate's waist and a piece of rag is given her to cover her genitals. She is then immersed in the river three times, after which the rag and the rope of raffia are thrown into the river, amidst

admonitions. The people have the belief that when a girl reaches the adolescent stage and begins to menstruate, it is important to talk to the spiritual mother, asaase yaa (the earth), informing her formally. This is to ensure that she becomes productive. In view of this while throwing away the rag and the ropes of raffia into the river, the officiating mother says: Mede mema nananom nsamanfoo ne asuo yi mu atumfuo ate se mo ade feefe a mode maa yen no, wakyima. (I'm giving this to the spirits of the ancestors and those residing in the river and to announce to them that the beautiful 'gift' offered us has come of age.) After this, according to Aberewa Badu, the officiating mother offers libation in the form of food - mashed yam, or plantain and egg, and puts them in the river amidst prayers.

Asuo wo dee nie:
(Asomasi) akyima
(nsuo no din) begye ee
Yesre ma nkwa ne awoo
Obarima fa no a, onyem.

River, this is yours
(name of girl) has come of age
(name of river)receive this
Let her live long and have children
If a man ever had intercourse with her,
Let her be pregnant immediately.

Since libation as already stated is of more importance on this occasion, it is poured again at the dedication of the initiate which is called (anoka) "mouth-touching". Bits of various foods are put on plates and set in proper array before the candidate. It is customary for the officiating woman to come forward this time for the dedication of the girl proper. Using palm wine (this time Schnapps)she pours libation:

Onyankopon twediampon
Asaase Yaa
Nananom nsamanfoo
Abosompem
Enne (dano din)yi
Mo adaworoma,
Mo nanawa yi
Aduru bra so
Eno nti na yereka n'ano yi
Monyina n'akyi akyigyina pa
Mo ma no obarima pa nware
Mo ma no mma pa a,
Wobebo bra pa anya adee
Na daakye bi no
Mofre yen ba mo nkyen a,
Y'anya akonta pa abu
Yen nyinaa nkwa so!

Dependable God
The earth
Spirits of our ancestors
Spirits of the gods
Today
By your grace
This grandchild of yours
Has come of age
We are now touching her mouth
stand well behind her
Give her a prosperous husband
And good children
Who will lead exemplary lives
So that when we are called
into the spiritual realm
We would give a good account
of our lives.
Health to all and sundry!

After every line, the officiating woman pauses and pours some of the drink - palm wine - on the ground. The remainder is drunk by the women who have gathered there.

There is more art in the celebration as well as the presentation of prayers on this occasion than meets the eye. An examination of some of the artistic expressions would suffice.

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS

The gracefulness of the celebration is enhanced by the female voice and flexible gestures that accompany the libation and prayer. Unlike the muscular nature of man's body, the elderly woman who officiates over this ceremony exhibits a wrinkled body, drooping breasts and the dansinkran hair style which shows her status as a beautiful woman.

Her drooping breasts which hang out over the cloth wound round the torso gives a sharp contrast between herself and the initiand in that the latter's breasts jut out of the chest with life. The breasts alone can bring out the difference between the old and the young even without seeing the actual faces of the two. The breasts of the old lady flap in her bid to gesticulate while the initiands breasts move in a rhythmic motion from the slightest shake of her body.

The most important artistic expressions associated with this form of rite is deeply rooted in the arts of the body employed. First is the hair style, which is done only when the aunt of the initiand has paid a fee. The father usually pays this amount but since this is a complete woman's affair he does this through his sister. Without the amount paid, the hair is cut without much care intentionally leaving a tuft of hair at the front of the head (see Fig. 11). This is to subject the initiand to public ridicule and embarrassment. On the other hand, the moment the fee is settled, the hair is cut immaculately in the Dansinkran style (see Fig.12).

Fig. 11. Tuft of hair at the front of the head

This style is indicative of the fact that the initiand has now become a woman. This further brings to mind the precedence the head has over all the other parts of the body, as among the Akans. The Ashanti head-form follows the structure of the head of the Akuaba doll.

> Looking at the body from the side or front, the shape of the head and of the neck from the top of the head to the end of the chin must appear like an egg with the wider portion uppermost. Looked at from the side, the head must sit on the neck at an angle of about thirty five degrees with the top falling back. This falling back of the head has an optical effect on the viewer. For, thrown into perspective, so to say, wide, the top part of the face grows wider and gives appearance from the front.36

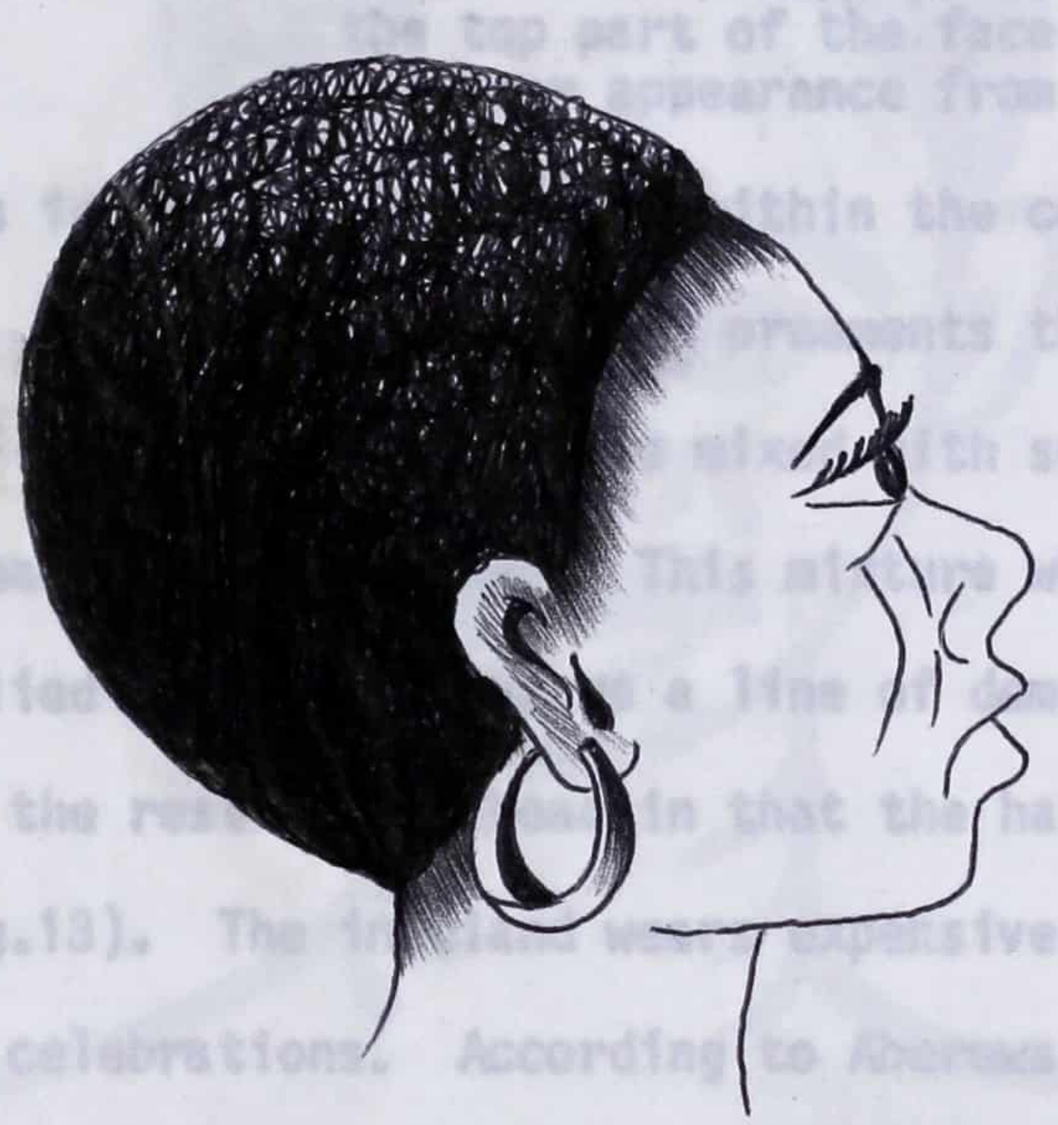

Fig.12. Dansinkran style.

36. Kofi Antubam, Ghana's Heritage of Culture, Koehler & Amelang, Leipzig, 1963, P.80

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This ideal of beauty falls within the concept of societal standards.

There are other bodily ornaments that help to beautify the body. initiand. Shea-butter is mixed with soot and smeared in the hair to make it look darker. This mixture which is a dark pomade, when applied to the hair draws a line of demarcation between the hairline and the rest of the head in that the hair becomes more distinct. (Fig.13). The initiand wears expensive beads on the last day of the celebrations. According to Aberewa Badu, she wears them around the major joints of the body - neck, wrists, waist and ankles. (See Fig.14). The breasts are exposed and shea-butter smeared over them. The lustre of the breasts makes them vibrate with life (See Fig.15).

The initiand puts on white Kente cloth. This is to show that she has now been 'born again'. Very soon she will be married and that will be another stage in the continuous cycle of her life.

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36. Kofi Antubam, Ghana's Heritage of Culture, Koehler & Amelang. Leipzig, 1963, P.90

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Fig. 13. Initiate's hair darkened with black pomade

Fig. 14. An initiand wearing expensive beads on the last day of the puberty celebrations.

MARRIAGE

Marriage marks a drastic change in one's social status. It is essentially the logical extension of the puberty phase culminating in a union of opposites. The union of man and woman brings about a complete unity which is vital for the continuity of life in the society. After the performance of the puberty rites, the initiands are allowed to marry and raise families. The idea of another cycle within a cycle is created. A new life cycle with the resultant children from the marriage soon [illegible] this life cycle of the children is found within the [illegible] the parents. Children are born; people die and [illegible]. It could be compared with the cyclic [illegible] as the course of the sun or moon. Man is born [illegible], new children are born; just as plants are cultiv[illegible]ture and are harvested and new ones are planted to [illegible]. This is automatic so far as generation [illegible]

In the Agon[illegible] community, [illegible] for parents to search for a g[illegible] who [illegible] an estimation for their sons to marry. [illegible]. According to Kwabena Osei (an elder [illegible] instructed dep[illegible] on the life styles led by prospective [illegible] families. If these [illegible] so far as conduct [illegible] down immediately and [illegible] propriety of the action even thou[illegible] be married. Opanin Osei

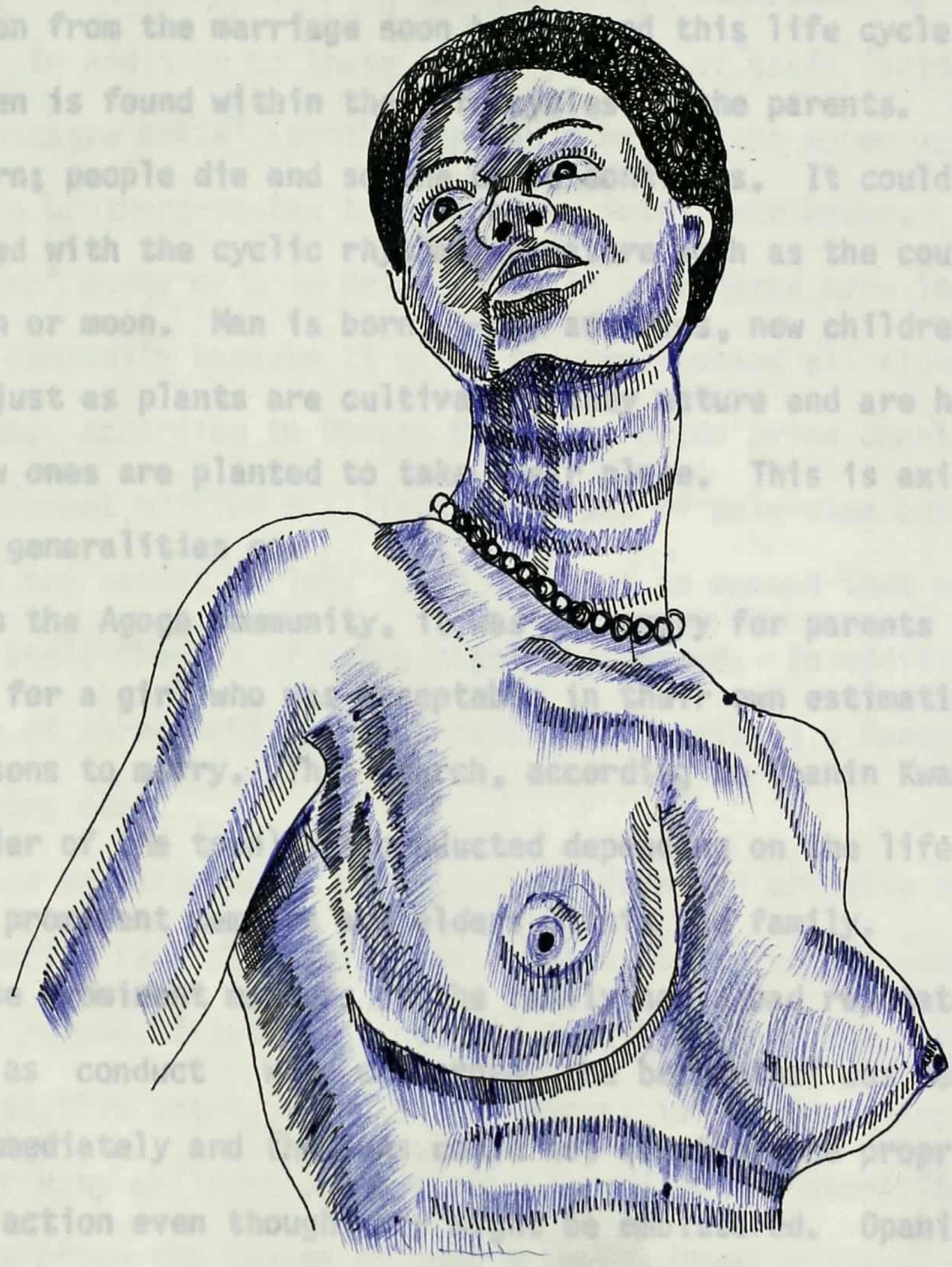

Fig. 15. The lustre of the breasts of the initiand.

referred to the dynamic nature of modern life, one scarcely comes across this form of negotiation. Individuals make their own choice and

MARRIAGE

Marriage marks a drastic change in one's social status. It is essentially the logical extension of the puberty phase culminating in a union of opposites. The union of man and woman brings about a complete unity which is vital for the continuity of life in the society. After the performance of the puberty rites, the initiands are allowed to marry and raise families. The idea of another cycle within a cycle is created. A new life cycle with the resultant children from the marriage soon begins and this life cycle of the children is found within the life cycles of the parents. Children are born; people die and so the cycle continues. It could be compared with the cyclic rhythms in nature such as the course of the sun or moon. Man is born, grows and dies, new children are born; just as plants are cultivated, they mature and are harvested and new ones are planted to take their place. This is axiomatic so far as generalities go.

In the Agogo community, it was customary for parents to search for a girl who was acceptable in their own estimation for their sons to marry. This search, according to Opanin Kwabena Osei (an elder of the town) was conducted depending on the life styles led by prominent members and elders within the family. If these prominent members of the family had a bad reputation so far as conduct were concerned, the bethrothal was turned down immediately and the sons could not question the propriety of the action even though they might be embittered. Opanin Osei reiterated that with present day cultural influences and the dynamic nature of modern life, one scarcely comes across this form of negotiation. Individuals make their own choice and

introduce the selected person to the parents who in turn aid him to perform the customary rites that befit the standard of the family and in line with the laid down regulations.

In this community, the marriage arrangements are that the father pays the son's 'head money' (tiri sika) and offers 'ayedee (thanks rendering money) to the parents of the woman. It is the settlement of affiance fee, "ti nsa" (head wine) which promotes the formal invitation by the male and the formal acceptance by the female. In addition to these is the payment of "aseda" (bride price) and 'akontagye sekan' (brother-in-law's knife) the money paid to pacify the brothers-in-law to accept one into their house. It is the 'aseda' money or bride price which is considered more important in this community because it gives the new husband all rights over the woman. According to Opanin Osei, the bride price consisted of the payment of five shillings and a pot of palm-wine but nowadays the amount varies. Each one pays an amount that will enhance one's chances of being highly respected. In addition, the donation of three bottles of schnapp is as constant a feature as the morning star.

Since marriage means producing children and bringing them up, child-bearing is a point of great consideration in this community. For this reason, libation is poured at this stage. The prayer offered at this point, among other things, is for fertility in the woman for many children and against barrenness and sterility since these are often the causes of many a broken home.

The first of the bottles of schnapps goes to the head of the family of the woman. He represents the people within the matrilineage. He announces formally to them his acceptance of the marriage which is an indication that the ancestors have also

accepted the marriage. This is because he serves as the direct link between the living and the dead. The second bottle of schnapps goes to the father of the girl, and the third is used to pour libation. What remains in the third bottle is drunk by the two parties assembled. They drink to the health and prosperity of the newly married couple. Usually it is the first glass of schnapps that is used in pouring the libation. Until the prayer has been said nobody has the right to drink.

When this part of the ceremony is reached, there is absolute tranquility as the head of the woman's family gets up, uncovers his left shoulder to the elbow, takes hold of the receptable, the drink is poured into it and he begins the prayer. In the complete absence of any set method or formula, the following will suffice for a general idea of what is said on this occasion.

Onyankopon Twediampon nsa,
Asaase Yaa nsa,
Nananom nsamanfoo nsa,
Nananom Abosompem Nsa,
Enne, mo nana (asomasi)
Afa (asomasi) se ne ho ka ni
Yesre ma yafunu pa ma obaa yi
Yesre ma abotare ne nyansa
Mo adaworoma, mo a, mo nim
Asem ketekete bi na ama onipa ho aka mu
Abodin akeka, yempe
Yesre se mfirihyia mmienu pepeepe
Na won mma beye aduonu
Ntokwa ne ade a, emfa asomdwee mma dee, yempe.
Mo ma yen biribi nni
Na asem ba a, y'anya ahooden de aka
Asonafoo nkwa so, won a aka nyinaa nkwa so!

Omnipotent father, drink
The earth, drink
Spirits of the ancestors, drink
Spirits of the gods, drink
Today, your grand child (name of bridegroom)
has married (name of bride)
We ask for prosperity and strength
We ask for fertility in the woman
We ask for wisdom and patience
By your grace, you the all-knowing
are aware that any tiny mishap can

cause a whole lot of confusion.
We do not want trouble
We ask that if it could be done
They should have twenty children
in just two years
We ask for your protection against
unnecessary fighting
We want peace
Give us food to eat
so that we can have energy
To settle all disputes that may arise
We ask for life for the asona clan
Health to all and sundry!

While the head of the woman's family pours libation and offers prayers in such a way, the prayer is interspersed with a corresponding approval like Tie! (listen!) Ampara (it is true) after each impressive statement. One person - who is most of the time self-appointed unlike what happens at the palace-acts as an attendant to the family spokesman who on this occasion is the head of the woman's family. The scenery created on this occasion has other artistic qualities that need to be discussed.

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS

The act of pouring libation is based on the correct and colourful use of language as well as the methodical combination of involvement and detachment. The latter presupposes that the one pouring libation should not be involved too much in the pouring of the libation to forget himself and to lose his line of thought. The detachment helps to sustain the effectiveness of the prayer.

All artists must be able to detach themselves from the work in hand from time to time in order that consciously they would enable themselves to make their convictions materialise into reality through their works. To sum it up, the creative artist whatever his field must always be critical about his work.

This does not mean that the effectiveness of libation lies on involvement and detachment alone. Gestures and facial expressions have also proved to be strongly existential forces in the act of pouring libation in that certain verbal expressions have always brought into action certain spontaneous expressive movements.

Primary forms of gestures like responses to and the expression of various emotions such as joy, fear, anger and hatred are natural and common in human beings irrespective of culture.

Gesture language is universal. We are intuitively imbued with it. The gestures involved in the act of pouring of libation have their conventions woven into the symbolic pattern of cultural history.

It can be argued that the hand in the operation of gestures is only a tool of expression just as the tongue, vocal cord and other speech organs are tools of speech. Gesture, is a language of signs which starts at birth and never ceases till a person dies. This perhaps sums up the persistence of gesture in life. In the early years of a baby's life, before verbal language is learnt, gesture is the most important means of expression. As the baby grows, there is an effective combination of verbal language and gesture for the satisfactory solution of problems in general. This (does not cease in the life of a human being and) is effectively employed when pouring libation.

When the head of the woman's family says, Yesre ma yafunu pa ma obaa yi (we ask for fertility in the woman) he points at his belly to lay emphasis on the necessity of child-bearing. (see Fig.16). This gesture comes as a spontaneous action to direct the observers attention to the importance of the belly of a woman and emphasises

Fig.16. Pointing at the belly to lay emphasis on the necessity of child-bearing.

Fig. 17. Expressing "tiny" or "small" with the hand

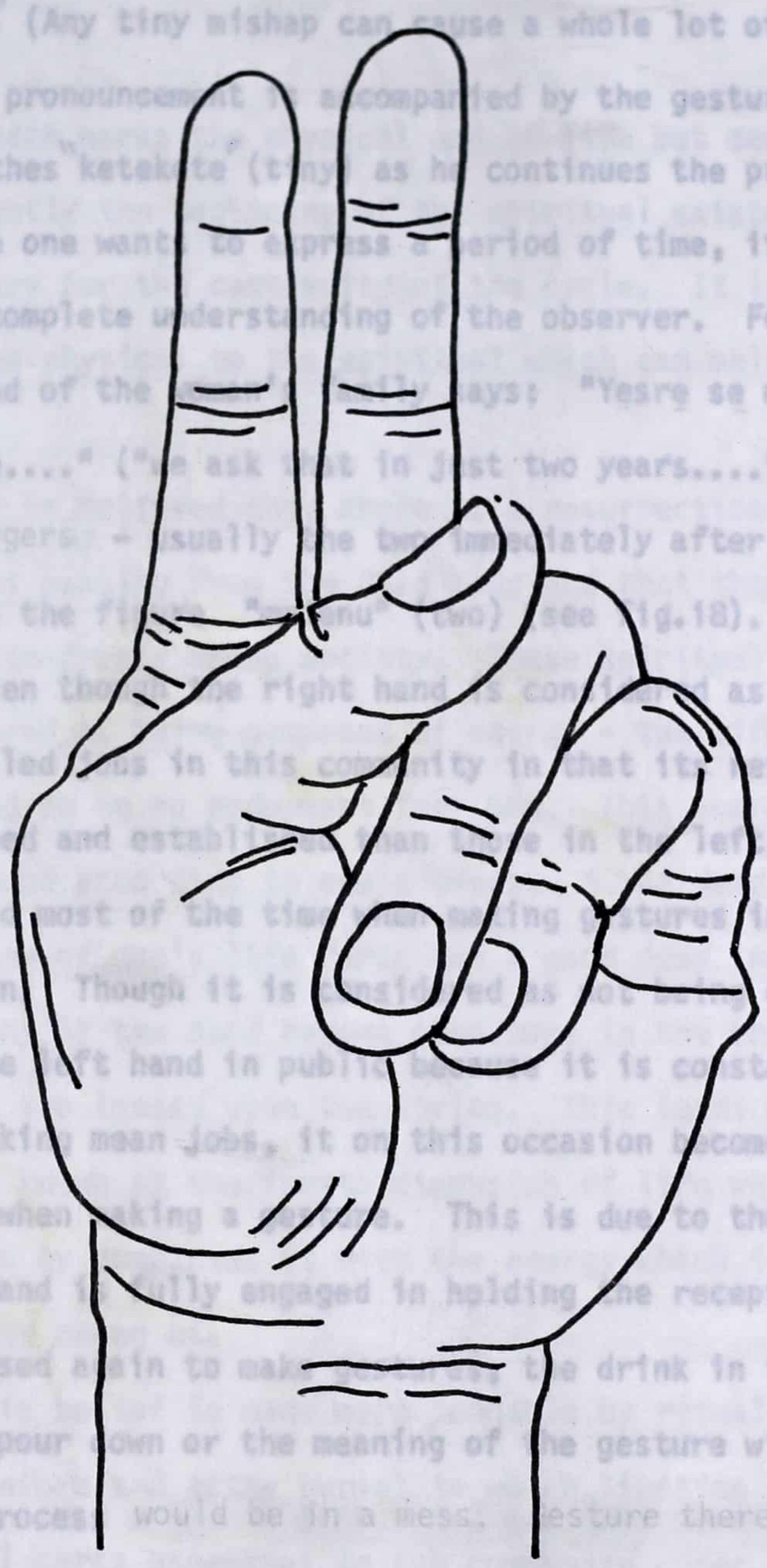

Fig. 18. Using the fingers to express the figure two.

the biological role a woman plays in the life of a man - giving birth.

Touching the base of the little finger with the thumb has a meaning. This expresses 'tiny' or 'small'. As the head of the woman's family rightly puts it: "Asem ketekete bi na ama onipa ho aka mu." (Any tiny mishap can cause a whole lot of confusion). This verbal pronouncement is accompanied by the gesture 'small' when he reaches "ketekete" (tiny) as he continues the prayer (see Fig.17). Anytime one wants to express a period of time, it is done effectively for a complete understanding of the observer. For example, when the head of the woman's family says: "Yesre se mfirihyia mmienu pepeepe...." ("we ask that in just two years....",) he uses two of his fingers - usually the two immediately after the thumb to express the figure "mmienu" (two) (see fig.18).

Even though the right hand is considered as being the master of skilled jobs in this community in that its reflexes are more developed and established than those in the left, the left hand is employed most of the time when making gestures in times of pouring libation. Though it is considered as not being courteous when one uses the left hand in public because it is constantly employed in undertaking mean jobs, it on this occasion becomes permissible to use it when making a gesture. This is due to the fact that the right hand is fully engaged in holding the receptacle and that if it is used again to make gestures, the drink in the receptacle will either pour down or the meaning of the gesture will be lost and the whole process would be in a mess. Gesture therefore, as discussed in the fore-going analysis presupposes that man has become an embodiment of gestural expressions and will continue to use them till life is no more.

After birth, puberty and marriage, man begins to become aged, later frail, and the culmination of it all is death which marks the physical end of life.

DEATH

Death marks the physical end of life but death is most importantly the beginning of the spiritual existence which is necessary for the continuity of the cycle. It is a change of form from the physical to the spiritual which can only be visualised or felt.

It is believed that there is a resurrection of the spiritual elements passing from the dead body and that they are believed to circulate freely among society. These spiritual elements may be considered as being composed of energy - the life force which is presumed to be an endowment from God. This energy could be incfeased or reduced according to one's deeds. A bad deed results in a reduction of one's life force and a good deed increases it.

Many of the dead become ancestors in the underworld and their spirits are loosed upon the living. This leads us to an abstract concept known as the fourth dimension of life which could be made tangible by comparing it with the energy which is believed to circulate among us.

This belief is made more tangible by rituals made from time to time, before and after burial in which libation and prayer form integral parts essential to the community under discussion.

Death in this community as in other areas is met with fear and terror. The causes of some deaths are considered much more serious than others. According to Okyeame Amoako, some deaths are appreciable because they are natural - even though they are sad occasions:

others are abominable in that they are considered unnatural, for example, committing suicide as a means of evading either disgrace or general problems in life. He further states that these differences, as well as that of status in the society, bring about differences in the funeral celebrations.

From the funeral of a chief down to the ordinary man's, libation is poured during the celebrations if and only if the death is natural. That is, having been incapacitated for some time only to die later or simply, death not caused by oneself or through accident. Libations are poured when one's corpse is being conveyed from one place to another in a vehicle or on a stretcher. This is to ensure the safe arrival of the people at their destination. Furthermore, when someone dies and the corpse has been placed in a coffin in preparation for interment, libation is poured for help in favour of the females who are barren in the house of the deceased. Their names are mentioned in a chronological order from the oldest to the youngest. However, no libation is poured in honour of someone who commits suicide or any type of unnatural death with due deliberation. If libation would be poured at all, the content is always for the prevention of such occurrences in future.

Nana Kwakye Tutu defines funerals as social events which help to stress the unity in the lineage and the town as well as helping to re-affirm cultural values. He further states that the size of the funeral will be determined by the age, status, occupation, personality and religion of the deceased. According to him, the size of the funeral, further, in a way sums up the man's life-time accomplishments. It is at this time that people do honour to both the man and the lineage by attending.

He further divides the funeral celebrations into four stages - the preparation of the corpse, pre-burial mourning, interment, and after burial mourning. The preparation of the corpse entails the bathing of it by both the maternal and paternal family kins. The former washes the right side and the latter; the left side. While still bathing the body of the deceased there should be no weeping for there is the belief among the people that if it is done at this time, the body will decompose immediately it is put on the bed even before it is buried*. Due to this, weeping at this stage is disallowed. The first time the body is laid in state, it is customary that people keep vigil by it. This is to ensure that message reaches the ancestors that one of the grandchildren is coming to join them**. It is therefore important that libation is poured early in the morning before the second stage of the funeral celebrations - pre-burial mourning. Here, it is the "abusuapanin" (the head of the family) who pours the libation. Since libation pouring and the offering of prayers depend on the eloquence of the spokesman, which invariably strengthens the point that there must be divagation in ideas, the following will be representative of how libation is poured at the death of any ordinary person within the community. This is the kind of libation poured before the corpse is laid in a coffin, covered, and nailed.

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* The present author feels that wailing at this time will rather demoralise people and further prevent them from preparing the corpse.

** It is the author's view that, this is done to show love and most probably to watch the precious ornaments used in dressing the corpse.

(Asomasi) yereka ama wate
Wo na woreko asamando
Enti woreko yi
Owuo no dooso
Kosi asaman Kwan
Na yen a, y'aka no yentra ase
Bone bi ara nka yen
Mfe ngu yen mfee so
Kobo amanee na won a
Enwo nso nya yafunu nwo mma
Moma yen ase ntre.

(name of deceased)we are telling you
You are going to the land of the ancestors
As you are on your way,
Go and finally block the entrance
For the number of deaths is increasing
Make sure the rest remain
And no evil befall us
Let us grow as old as possible
Tell the ancestors that they should
Make the barren ones fertile
So that they can bring forth
And increase the number of people
In the family.

After this prayer and libation, every person who wants to give anything to the deceased does it, the coffin is covered and nailed and finally sent to the cemetery for the burial. All this while, sympathisers and relatives wear mourning cloths which may be in any of these colours: red, black, maroon or ochre, brown and in recent times dark green and dark blue. These colours of cloth are used in the case of the death of a chief of these people under discussion.

The death of the paramount chief is more often than not expressed in euphemism, and in a voice almost dropped to a whisper.

The death of a chief, a paramount chief for that matter, unlike that of an ordinary individual is a great event which involves the whole community. His burial and funeral assume a high status because he is a person of authority and thus occupies a unique position. According to Nana Kwakye Tutu, this difference in burial and funeral celebrations is meant to emphasise the disparity between the chief and the common people. It is also to emphasise the

desire to preserve the remains of the dead chief more carefully and reverently in order that these might serve as a medium for his spirit when it is invoked in times of the enstoolment of a new chief or societal emergencies. For these reasons, the chief is given a secret and sacred burial and his death is therefore not made public for sometime, for instance one month.

In this society, the moment the chief passes away, the Queenmother is informed and messages are sent to other chiefs closely connected with the affairs of the area, the announcement is always accompanied by bottles of schnapps. Pouring of libation and the offering of prayers becomes a common phenomenon at this time. Libation is poured by any representative of other chiefs who attends the funeral celebrations on behalf of certain important chiefs. However this is done in consultation with the elders of the land. These chiefs are important in the sense that they all fall within the Aduana clan whose members are selected as chiefs of Agogo. More or less these chiefs are considered the 'brothers' of the chief of Agogo.

In the case of the death of a paramount chief, libation is poured at all the four stages of burial ceremony as categorised by Nana Kwakye Tutu. However the most important of all the libations poured, is the one offered at the time the body is laid in state. The libation and prayer at this time most importantly to let the expired chief sever relations with the living. It is also done to give the subjects the assurance that the deceased has broken relations with them and is going away with all his authority and that there should be no fear.

At this time, the dead chief is laid on a bed and is richly decorated with his regalia which may include state swords, maces and crowns. Drumming, singing of dirges and the firing of musketry accompany the pouring of libation. The Drumming, singing of dirges and the firing of musketry however take place outside the room where the dead chief has been laid in state while the libation and prayer that is offered takes place inside the room. The Queen mother gives the drink for this purpose and all the state spokesmen (Akyeame) and the elders of the land (the sub-chiefs) stand in a semi-circular manner in front of the corpse. The Akyeame stand in front with the sub-chiefs in the rear. One of the Akyeame - the youngest - holds the staff of office with his cloth lowered to the waist. All the other spokesmen dress the same way except the chief spokesman who uncovers his left shoulder to the elbow, the drink is poured into the receptacle he holds in the right hand and the libation and prayer begin. Here, too there is no set formula to be followed in that, the language used in offering the prayer depends on the eloquence of the chief spokesman.

The following prayer said by Okyeame Amoako will be representative of the type of prayer offered at this stage.

Otwediampon Kwame nsa
Asaase Yaa nsa
Nananom nsamanfoo nsa
Nananom abosomfoo nsa
Nana (asomasi) nsa
Enne w'aye Nyame dea,
Y'ensii w'anan mu e!
Ohemaa na orehwe akyiri
Gyina n'akyi
Na boa ma bone ansi
Owuo te se nkwa nkwati duro
enom ara na esese wo nom
Enso ennka ano, ennka se,
Na ennka tekyerema nso
Nana, wahu asem

Se bone bi na yeyee a, mmra akyere yen
Ma nisuo ayiri yen
Ahum anntu, nsuo annto, ade annkye, ma ade annsa
Mpofirim, wo kera se meko
Oko a, woreko yi, woko a, ko no akwantrenee
Wo Kwan so ndwo dwoodwoo
Obi bisa wo se, wogyaa yen sen a, wogyaa yen senea
Yete yiara, wonim yamanehu nyinaa
Se owu a wawu yi, eye woara wo wuo a,
Woko a, da dinn
Na se ennye wo kera wuo dea, na yema wo
Otamfo akum wo damirifa
Emma ade pa nnkye no, emma osu pa nnto no
Ma yen mfa sofi mmo nafuru so awia ketee

Our God Kwame come for drink
Mother Earth come for drink
Spirits of our ancestors come for drink
Numerous gods of the land come for drink
Nana (name of dead chief) come for drink
Today, you have become God's own
We have not replaced you yet!
The Queen mother is the caretaker,
Stand and fight by her
That whatever we may do will end well
Death is like the medicine which gives life
You cannot avoid drinking it
Yet, when it is drunk, it is said,
It must not touch the mouth,
It must not touch the teeth and
It must not touch the tongue
Nana, you have sufferred
If it were some crime we committed
We have been gripped by the law
For we have been drowned in a flood of tears
There was no storm, no rain nor a chance
for day to dawn nor night to come
It was all so sudden, when your soul departed
May your road be straight going and peaceful
On arrival, if you are asked how you left us,
Tell them "You left us as we are"
You know all our troubles
If you died a natural death,
Then have a peaceful rest
But if your death was not natural
We say "woe betide you" to the enemy,
The right to revenge rests with you.
Wherever the enemy is, let him enjoy neither
A good day, nor good rainfall.
Let us strike him hard on his belly
With a shovel under the scorching sun.

Immediately after the prayer, the firing of musketry, drumming, the singing of dirges and weeping increase tenthfold. This is an indication that it will not be long before the corpse is put in the coffin for interment at the Musoleum.

Despite the fact that this is a solemn and pathetic occasion, there are artistic expressions involved. One can amply say that the language used at this time is stuffed with understatements, rich imagery and metaphorical language which give it more or less a poetic quality.

When the chief spokesman says "Enne waye Nyame dea" (today you have become God's own) it is a metaphorical language which means the chief is dead. In a similar vein the expression "Owuo te se nkwa nkwati druo, enom ara na esese wo nom, enso ennka ano, ennka se, na ennka tekyerema nso" (Death is like the medicine which gives life, you cannot avoid drinking it yet, when it is drunk, it is said, it must not touch the mouth, it must not touch the teeth and it must not touch the tongue) is metaphorical in that it connotes a deeper meaning of the literal statement that death is just impossible to avoid. Over and above that the statement further creates the image of the inevitability of death. These among others make the language used at this time possess linguistic qualities and contribute to its richness and effectiveness as an artistic whole.

Organisation also plays a major role in the effectiveness of the libation and prayer offered at this time. Since "perception" is aided by "systemising objects or human beings which is a vital process to avoiding confusion and to achieving harmony in a visually complex world,"[37] the arrangement of the paramount

37. Wyman D Jenifer & Gordon F. Stephen, Primer of Perception, Reinhold Publishing Corporation, N.Y., 1967, P.5.

spokesmen and their entourage, the support they have from those who fire the musketry, the drummers, and the singers of the dirges create a harmonised atmosphere and promotes perception to its utmost height.

Furthermore, the inter play of horizontals and verticals create the perception of visual rhythm. The horizontal of the dead chief on the bed as against the verticals of the spokesmen and their entourage as well as the spaces between them create a sense of beats as the eye scans the scene. (See Fig. 19)

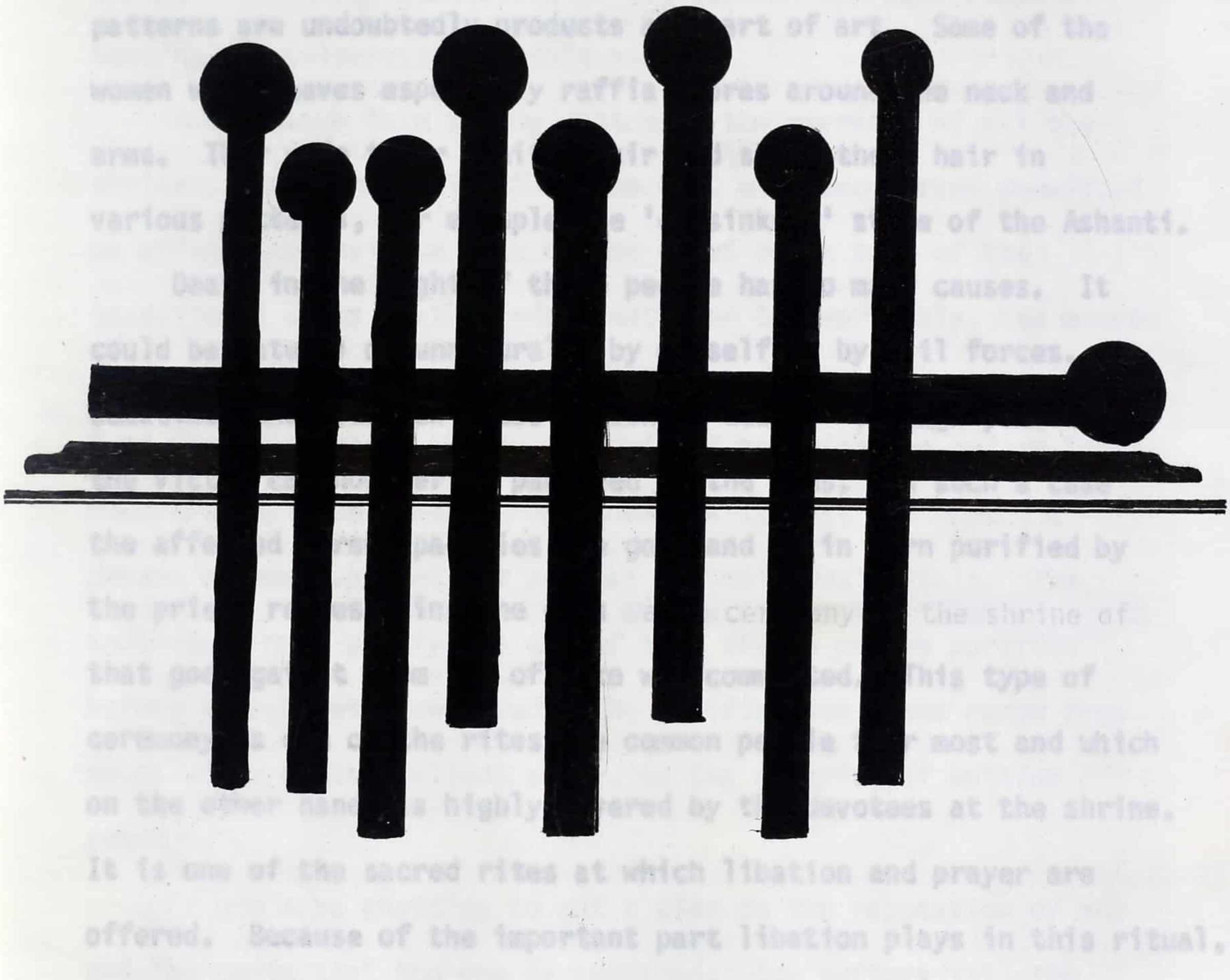

Fig.19. The interplay of horizontals and verticals showing the perception of visual rhythm.

However, shapes and sizes of heads, arms, trunks and feet as well as artifacts displayed like the deceased chief's regalia create variations which are extraneous enrichment possibilities to the perception of visual rhythm.

The arts of the body employed at this time are also of spectacular quality. The people put on mourning clothes of various colours associated with funerals, for example, red or black. The royal daughters and wives of the stool paint their bodies red, and wear red bands on their foreheads while mourning. Needless to say, the cloth and the paint applied on their bodies in various patterns are undoubtedly products and part of art. Some of the women wear leaves especially raffia fibres around the neck and arms. They undo their plaited hair and shave their hair in various patterns, for example the 'dansinkran' style of the Ashanti.

Death in the light of these people has so many causes. It could be natural or unnatural - by oneself or by evil forces. Sometimes the gods can cause someone's death. Through penitence, the victim can however be pardoned by the gods. In such a case the affected person pacifies the gods and is in turn purified by the priest representing the gods at a ceremony at the shrine of that god against whom the offence was committed. This type of ceremony is one of the rites the common people fear most and which on the other hand, is highly revered by the devotees at the shrine. It is one of the sacred rites at which libation and prayer are offered. Because of the important part libation plays in this ritual, it will be examined.

PACIFICATION AND PURIFICATION RITES AT THE SHRINE

As already discussed in Chapter two, there are many gods at Agogo which have shrines dedicated to them. The pacification and purification rites are performed to the same level at all these shrines. According to Nana Kwabena Agyekum, the traditional priest of the shrine dedicated to Afram, if there are changes in the observance of the pacification and purification rites at any of the other shrines, it will be with the items collected from the affected person and not with the mode of approach. For the sake of this, the purification and pacification rites at the Afram shrine will be representative of the general approach adopted towards the celebration of this rite.

Nana Kwakye Tutu who by custom is the overseer of all the shrines, states that, in the olden days when one person committed an offence against the gods or the chief broke some of the traditional norms whether advertently or inadvertently, the moment it was noticed, the chief priest of the Afram shrine purified the land after the chief and his elders had pacified the god of Afram. However, what one comes across nowadays is that the moment a person offends any god, it becomes an individual affair. The individual must pacify the god of that shrine and be purified before he becomes exonerated. The pacification items range from "nwera" white cloth (calico), sheep, to the offering of bottles of schnapp.

If one says anything to cut a slur on the reputation of any god, "bu nanim tia", the one is punished. One suffers till the agony brings one to the feet of the affected god. The day for the performance of the rite is fixed and the items needed for the

pacification rite are also mentioned. If the offender fails to bring the said items, he is left to suffer till he acquires the items and brings them. The gods can never be satisfied with the rite without the items however penitent the person might be. On the other hand, on acquiring these items, the offender and some of his relatives come to the shrine on the stipulated day - usually a Wednesday - for the rites to be performed.

The elders at the shrine get themselves seated early in the morning to listen to what the offender and his entourage have to say. Every reason concerning their mission is said through the spokesman of the priest who in turn presents it to the elders. After the elders have become convinced after being shown the items for the ritual, the priest, his spokesman, an attendant, some of the elders and the offender enter the room where the shrine of the god is and the rites begin.

The first thing done after all have seated themselves is that, the spokesman gets up and uncovers his left shoulder with his attendant having folded his cloth around the sternum area. He is seen holding the drink offered by the offender. (see plate 1) Having received some of the drink into a receptacle he holds, the spokesman begins to pour libation and offers prayer introducing the offender to the god and praying for forgiveness on behalf of the offender. The offender is made to kneel down before the shrine of the god as a sign of total submission and repentance. (See plate 2)

The libation is poured into another receptacle - brass bowl - which a kneeling old man holds (see plate 3). According to Nana Kwabena Agyekum the priest, the libation is done in two parts, the first one being an introduction of the offender to the god as well

Plate 1. The attendant to the spokesman holding the drink offered by the offender.

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Plate 2 The offender made to kneel down before the shrine of the god.

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Plate 3. Pouring libation into a receptacle.

as the mentioning of his or her offence and the reason why the offender is kneeling; the second part is the begging for forgiveness from the god which is done by the priest himself. He is the one the god of Afram knows. Nana Kwabena Agyekum states that the gods know the voice of the priest and so to ensure self-discipline by obeying instructions, he is the only person who can stand on the staircase directly infront of the god and offer prayers of forgiveness (see plate 4) He collects the drink used in pouring libation and which by this time is in the brass bowl, stands in front of the god and begs for ~~for~~ forgiveness. He mentions all the names of the past priests in a chronological order from the first - Nana Ohenewaa to the one he succeeded. This part is done with much precision and accuracy so far as the verbal pronouncements are concerned as well as the offering of the drink. He uses the finger next to the thumb, dips it into the drink and touches the top part of the covering of the shrine after mentioning the name of each of the dead priests. After the prayer, all the people assembled in the room respond 'Yeda ase Amee' (Thank you for the satisfaction).

The second phase is (adwirà)cleansing or purification. The priest adds (mmoto) black substance in the form of powder to the remaining drink in the brass bowl, dips the (adwera) leaves "portulaca Oleracea" in it and begins to sprinkle it on each individual and artifact in the room. Nana Agyekum claims that every person and artifact in the room must be cleansed of the filth brought into the room by the offender.

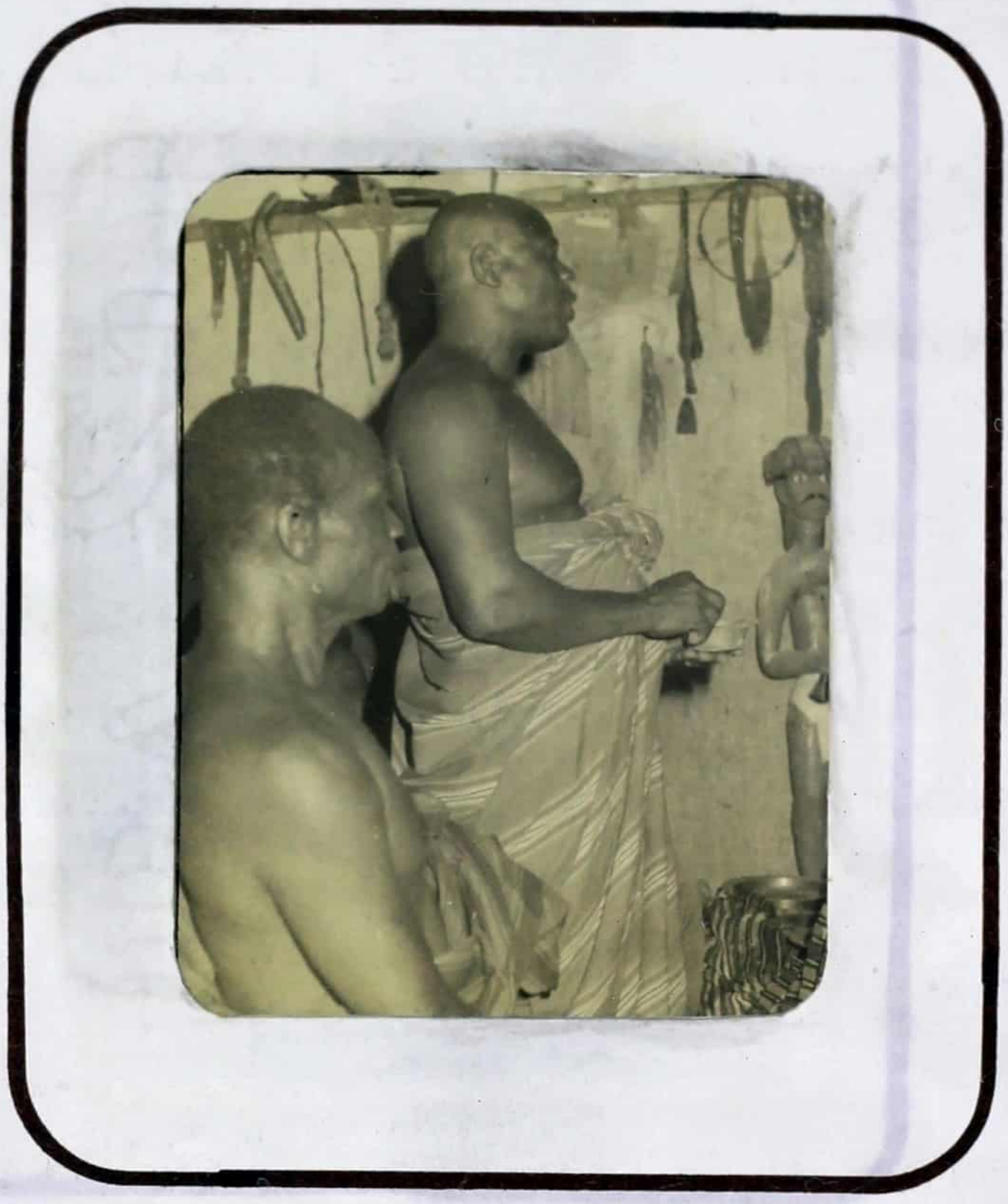

Plate 4. The priest standing on a staircase directly in front of the god.

The third phase entails, the showing of the sheep - which acting as the 'lamb of life' - to be sacrificed as the final stage of the rite. (see plate 5.) The spokesman to the priest is the one who slaughters it. He folds his cloth around the waist

Plate 5. Showing the sheep at the final stage of the rite.

and holds a knife and a nail-like metal. (see plate 6). He first of all thrusts the nail-like metal through the throat of the sheep for the blood to ooze out into a receptacle before cutting it with the knife (see plate 7.) After this the animal is taken outside the house to be flayed and the meat cut into pieces and brought home.

Plate 6. The spokesman to the priest holding a knife and a nail-like metal.

Plate 7. **Receiving the blood oozing out of the throat of the sheep into a receptacle.**

The priest collects the basin in which the blood of the sacrificial offering is, goes and stands in front of the god, dips the forefinger into it and touches the top of the shrine with it. When this is done, the offender is made to get up and is rubbed with an oily substance. The meat is however shared among the elders. After this performance, the offender is made to carry on with treatment if he or she has been affected by any disease till he or she is cured.

These rites also have artistic expressions embedded in them. According to Nana Kwabena Agyekum, all the gods from the river are like chiefs and for that matter have plenty of regalia. Just like a museum, the shrine in which the libation and prayer are offered have artifacts like umbrellas, necklaces, amulets, bracelets, types of guns and sculptures. Since these artifacts are also cleansed by sprinkling the concoction on them, they form part of the libation items.

The two sculptures seen at the shrine are all painted, (see Fig. 20a & b) whose correspondent flat tone representations are plates 8 and 9. This brings to mind the dexterity of the mind of the traditional African sculptor in the use of either monochromatic and polychromatic colours. These are however done to conform to the matrix of the belief of the people. The sculpture holding an egg in the left hand is painted black. According to the traditional priest of the Afram shrine, the sculpture represents the messenger of the god. There is no pacification nor begging which is not done through it. The priest states that, the covering of the eye of the sculpture with a hat is an indication that God can help man without man actually looking at him.

Fig.20 (a) The sculpture holding an egg.

Plate 8

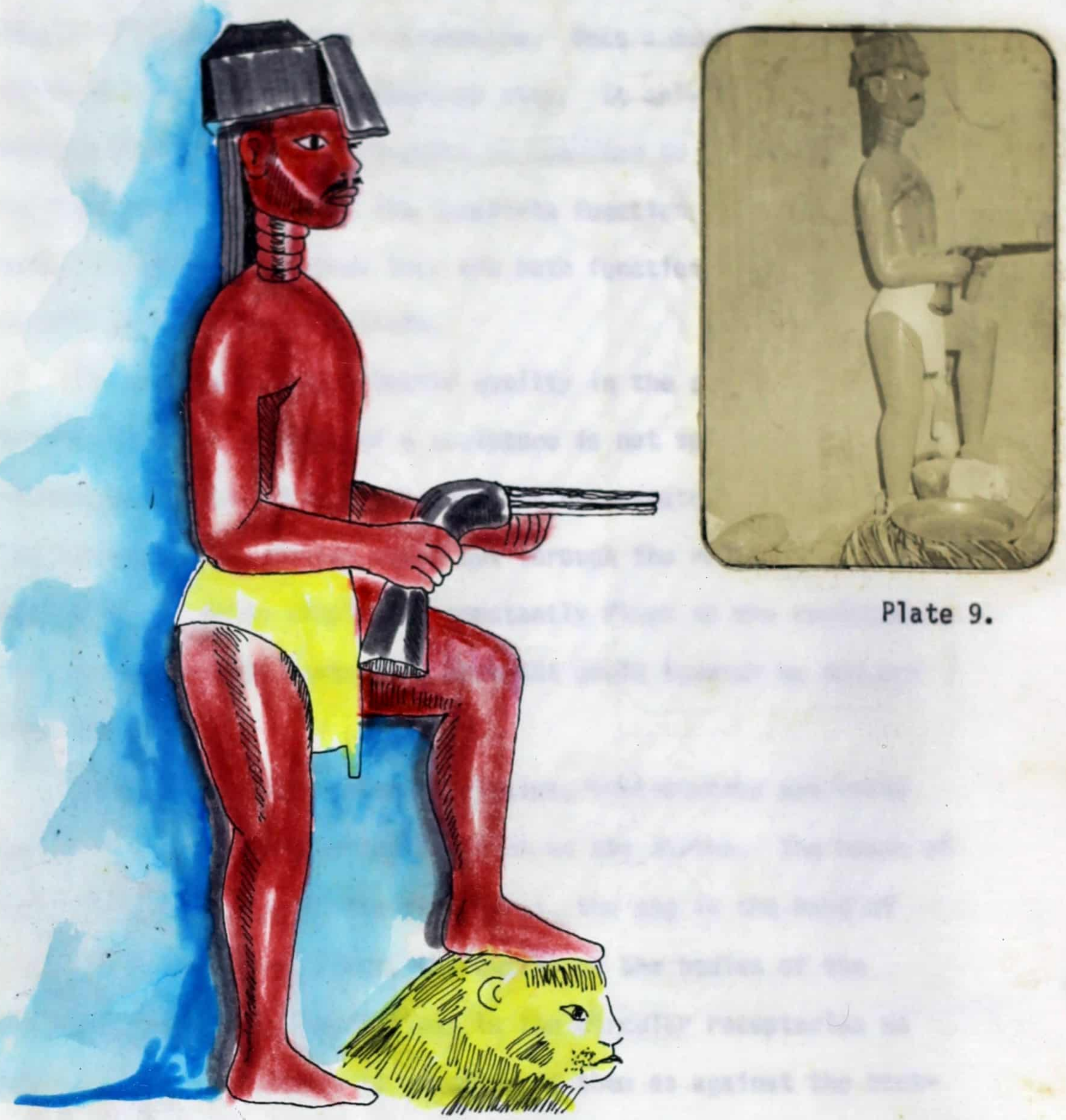

Plate 9.

Fig. 20 (b) A painted sculpture standing on a lion's head.

The other sculpture which is painted red and stands on a lion's head, dressed in war regalia is very spectacular. The colour portrays seriousness or trouble. This sculpture, according to the priest represents a "policeman" to the god. He makes arrests and fights all challenging spirits. Here, one sees how colour becomes reminiscent of function. The beliefs take place side by side with the forms which make them inseparable. Once a meaning has been attached to a form it was there to stay. It only changes in meaning when a different function is ascribed to it. Here again, the meaning of a form and its immediate function are seen as mutually inclusive because they are both functional units of a concept or a system of beliefs.

The absence of any didactic quality in the sculptures brings to mind that the meaning of a sculpture is not spelt out in a narrative way but through the power of understatement and symbolism. The non-narrative quality comes out through the restrained movement which is quite simple and constantly fixed to the sculptures. The meaning of this restrained movement could however be deduced from the form.

Furthermore, the number of circles, semi-circles and ovals increase in times of pouring libation at the shrine. The heads of the people and those of the sculptures, the egg in the hand of the sculpture painted black, the curves on the bodies of the people assembled, the variations in the circular receptacles as well as the hands cupped to accommodate them as against the background spaces in between them create an artistic design.(See Fig.21)

Fig. 21. Artistic design created by heads, curves, variations in the circular receptacles and hands cupped to accommodate them as against the background spaces.

CONCLUSION

From the previous chapters, one gathers the idea that where objects and performances have no life, man gives them life. Man is at the centre of action, and he gives meaning to everything. Libation works on the same level as the mathematical formula that enables a physicist to adjust some coils of wire and other simple implements and gadgets into an assemblage in which they can produce music to a far country. Just as this scientific invention puts the physicist on a level strange to the lay man, libation makes feasible an unusual manifestation of a vital force.

Actors perform and their performance is seen and appreciated. Libation is not performed for fun. It is more importantly a serious affair in which more powerful spirits are invoked as a means of spiritual upliftment and ecstasy. One realises that (stating in context of the belief of the people)none of these performances or none of these rites can be done without the pouring of libation. That being the case, one can say that without the offering of the drink, there would be no performance of these rites and for that matter there would be nothing of importance to be watched.

Talking in terms of art, libation is seen as the pivot around which the performing and visual arts revolve. If it is a new born baby, the baby is seen as an individual who will soon grow to fulfil certain accomplishments in life. However, the moment libation comes in at the celebration of the naming and outdooring of the child, the performance of the pouring of the liquor on the ground and the gestures as well as the facial expressions that accompany the offering of prayer come in as important factors that form an effective

amalgam with the body arts employed on the occasion to make it a whole.

In the puberty rites, the women sing, play drums and dance but all these performances do not actually serve on any spiritual level. They are merely sources of entertainment. When it reaches the time for the pouring of libation, there is perfect tranquility and the invocation begins. The officiating woman could have sat down and without any offering of drink had said the prayer. Since the community does not accept this way of doing things she follows the norm by standing. She pours the libation and (as it is natural with all human beings) she backs the prayer with actions. All these actions are seen by the people but the body arts employed at this stage come in as extraneous factors to project the visual arts to an appreciable level. One realises therefore that at all the periods when libation is to be poured performing and visual arts are brought into play.

In the case of marriage, the elders of the two families meet to join the hands of a man and a woman in a marriage. This could have been done by all of them getting themselves seated till the end of the celebration. In this case everything could have been done verbally without any support of actions. However, the very fact that libation is a form of prayer in which the one who pours it has to address spiritual powers, the head of the man's family stands, uncovers his left shoulder as a sign of respect and begins the prayer. Both his left and right hands are engaged in movements. The right goes up and down since when he is pouring some of the liquor down, he has to bow down and lower the hand to have it done effectively. After pouring some down he raises his body as well as the right hand to a reasonable level while all this time the left

hand is engaged in making readable gestures. The recital of the prayer and gestures are important parts of the art that is performed on this occasion.

On the other hand, the pot in which the palm wine has been put, the calabash or glass and the schnapp bottle, ornaments worn for the occasion, the different apparels as well as the stools used are the visual arts that are employed on this occasion. The arrangement of the people on this occasion in a circular manner is another form of visual art. All these are brought into play because of libation. This is because the most important aspect of this occasion is the final announcement to the spirits that the young couple have joined hands in a marriage on that particular day.

At the funeral celebration of a chief or an ordinary man people play drums, sing dirges and dance to either the "fontomfrom" or "adowa" tune. These fall within the performing arts. However the performing arts infiltrate into the scene where libation is poured in front of the dead chief laid in state and in the case of the ordinary man it takes place when the body has been put into a coffin and about to be covered and nailed. One can comment on the way the paramount spokesmen fold their cloth around their waist and the sub-chiefs lower their cloth to the elbow that, there is movement or action involved in the process. If it were not because of the libation and prayer the spokesmen and the sub-chiefs would not have dressed this way. The very pronouncements made during the offering of the prayers are a verbal art which when accompanied by gestures becomes a performing art.

On the one hand, one realises that while the libation and prayer go on, the spokesmen stand in front with the sub-chiefs in the rear. This organisation is not accidental in that it enables the chief spokesman to talk directly to the dead chief with the support of the entourage. This is an artistic quality - a formal balance - which is seen and admired by all. The staff of office of the paramountcy, the artifacts used to decorate the dead chief such as state swords, golden ornaments such as necklaces, bracelets, golden rings and rich cloths are all visual arts that accompany the occasion.

With the pacification and purification rites at the shrine, libation is seen as the medium through which the god of Afram could be approached. In this perspective, one realises that without libation there would be no pacification and for that matter, purification. Without libation, the bottles of schnapp and the sheep offered, would have been considered as separate entities. But the moment libation comes into the scene, the offering of the drink and the slaughtering of the sheep become one whole entity in that the moment the prayer and the slaughtering of the sheep take place one after the other, they become compatible and essential parts of the libation process. There is performance or much action involved in these processes. However, these are accompanied by visual arts. All the artifacts in the room are cleansed right from umbrellas to the sculptures. Without the process of libation, these artifacts will not be brought into the scene even though they might be hanging in the very room. These are some of the visual arts that are more quickly absorbed and assimilated by the eye than the verbal image, as it presupposes far less and provides us with a more familiar framework.

Apart from the libation poured at the shrine which is done into a receptacle, all libations poured at the various rites are done on to the ground. There are other artistic expressions involved in the ground patterns that are formed.

In pouring libation, the liquor is poured in small quantities till the end of the prayer. One notices that the moment the first drop touches the ground it begins to sip into the ground. Each drop can be likened to a spot and the addition of more drops (spots) increases the size. As stated by Maurice de Sausmarez; "the simplest unit, a spot, not only indicates location but is felt to have within itself potential energies of expansion and contraction which activate the surrounding area".[38] As more of the liquor is poured on to the ground, the size of the first spot increases. The liquor in finding its level meanders (just as rivers do to have their outlets), expands and there is a minimal decrease in the surrounding area.

Furthermore, the moment the drops cluster or spread out, there is the sensation of tension activating the entire area over which the liquor has been poured. Moreover, just as a line can be thought of as a chain of spots joined together, the area where the liquor has been poured can be likened to it as comprising of many spots or drops. The sensation of tension and 'inner' energies increase, as the drops or spots increase in size. (See Fig.22)

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38. Maurice de Sausmarez, The Dynamics of visual form, Studio Vista Ltd, 1964, P.20

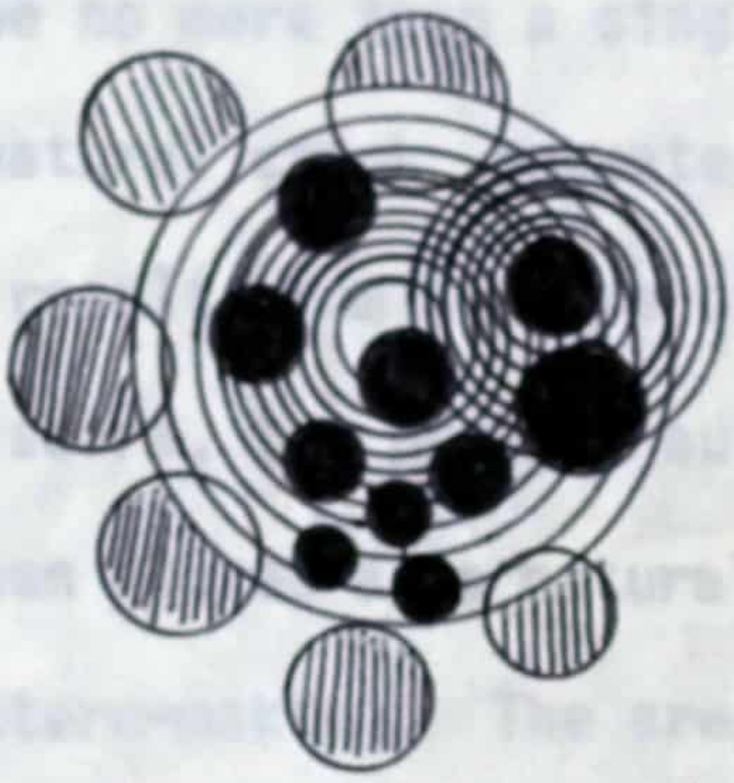

Fig. 22 - The sensation of tension and 'inner' energies created by the increase in size of the drops or spots.

One interesting feature associated with the changes that occur when the drops of liquor poured on the ground increase is the rich idea of pattern making. One can look for patterns everywhere because our surroundings often provide us with ideas for patterns. Patterns, as noticed by the present author, can be found in the most unexpected places, and could be discovered in familiar objects and areas where one has not noticed them before. In the same vein as one can look for patterns even in dried-up river beds, from the barks of trees, shells and twigs, one can take the trouble to look at the ground where libation has been poured for ideas about pattern making. The present author realises that pattern-making has become more or less a human activity which is very important in the creation and decoration of artifacts. A pattern may be no more than a single leaf, a flower, an accidental or natural crack repeated, until it covers a certain area or it may result from a piece of expanded metal (See Fig.23)

Upon this score, the present author finds the ground where libation has been poured as a naturally inspirational source of ideas about pattern-making. The area covered by the liquor poured on the ground can be represented with lines, dots or the edges can be mapped out and ideas of patterns will emerge. Furthermore, the said area can be represented with thin, thick, thicker and thickest lines as well as increasing sizes of dots and each of these will have a different emotional response aroused in the artist. (See Figs.24a,b & c).

Fig. 23 - Repetition of a single leaf for the creation of pattern.

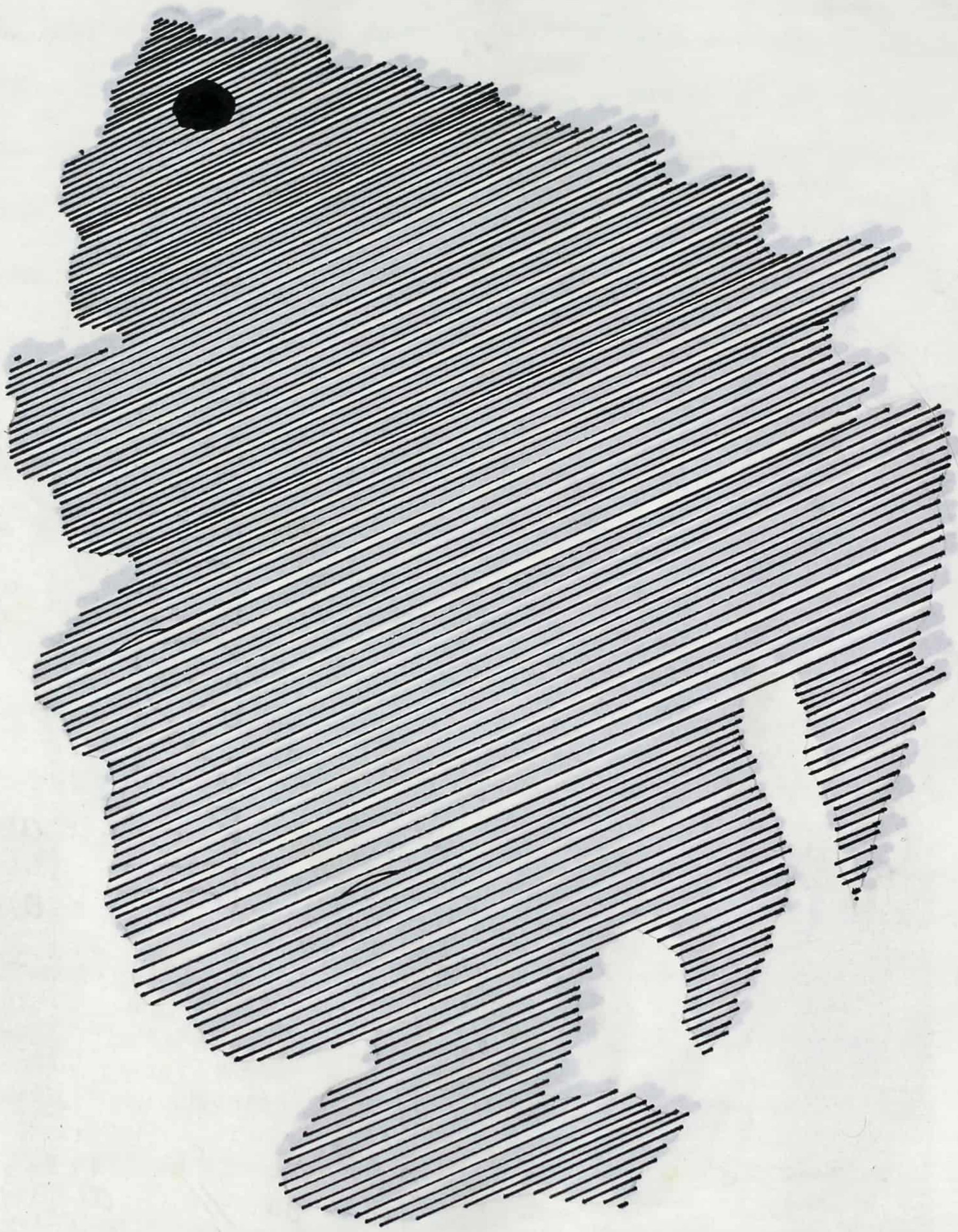

Fig. 24a - Representing the area where libation has been poured with thin lines.

Fig. 24b - Representing the area where libation has been poured with thick lines.

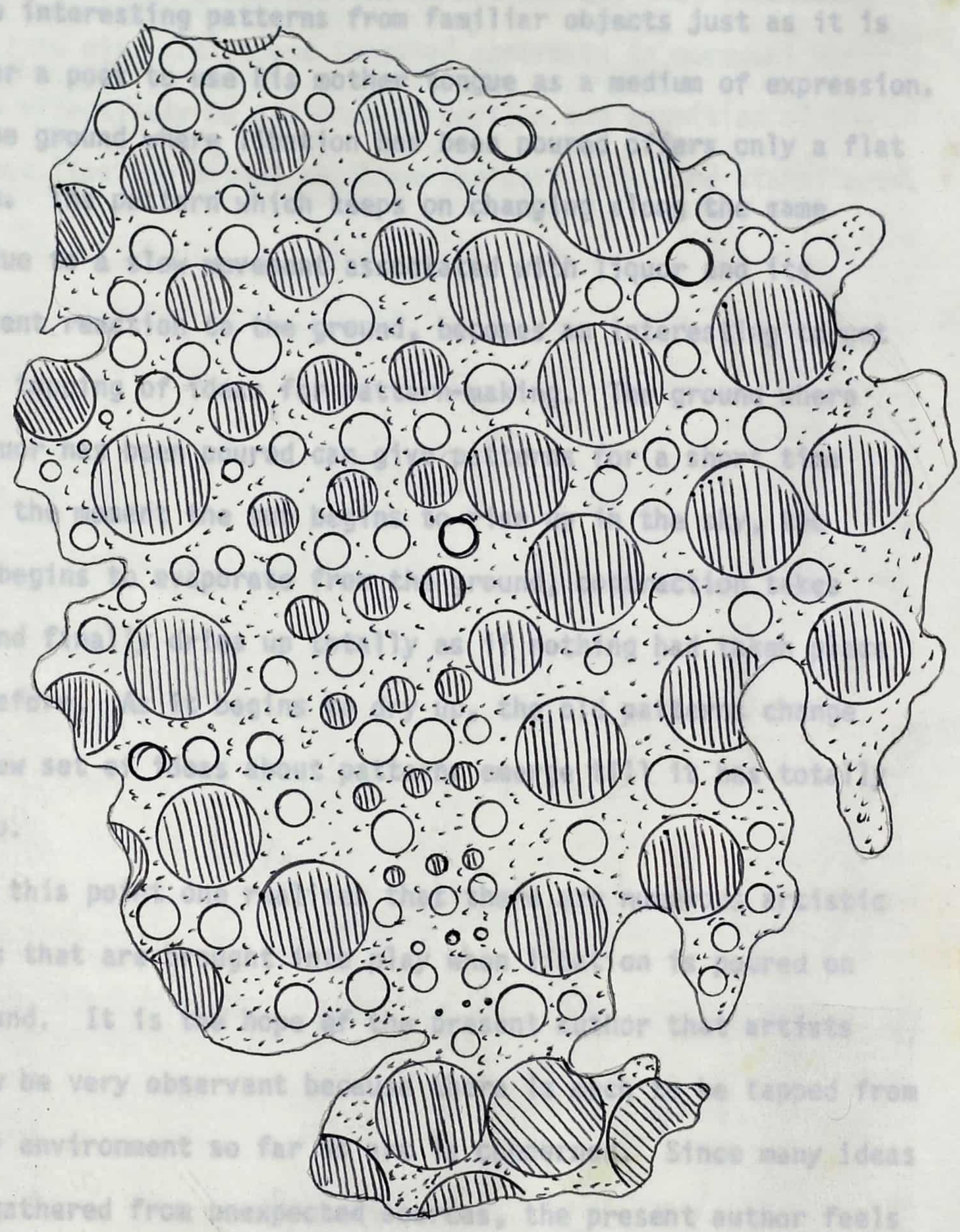

Fig. 24c - Representing the area where libation has been poured with increasing sizes of dots to show the difference in emotional response.

Most of the time, it is the construction and shape of ideas which introduce the factor of differentiation between patterns. A poem or prayer is also a pattern, a pattern of words. In a poem the poet arranges the words to suit the pattern he wants. Its construction and shape differ from that of the pattern from a leaf or flower. One realises that it is easier to make interesting patterns from familiar objects just as it is easy for a poet to use his mother tongue as a medium of expression.

The ground where libation has been poured offers only a flat pattern. The pattern which keeps on changing along the same plane due to a slow movement associated with liquor and its consequent reaction to the ground, becomes an interesting target for the tapping of ideas for pattern-making. The ground where the liquor has been poured can give patterns for a short time because the moment the sun begins to rise up in the sky, the liquor begins to evaporate from the ground, contraction takes place and finally dries up totally as if nothing had taken place there before. As it begins to dry up, the old patterns change and a new set of ideas about patterns emerge till it has totally dried up.

At this point one realises that there are numerous artistic patterns that are brought into play when libation is poured on the ground. It is the hope of the present author that artists will now be very observant because there is much to be tapped from our very environment so far as art is concerned. Since many ideas can be gathered from unexpected sources, the present author feels strongly that, whether or not artists assume any mental processes standing behind the identification of these qualities in the ground patterns, we are still led to put a high value on the artistic

potentiality there-in and their manifold forms as essential pointers relating to perception and cognition of design. Ground pattern formation therefore should not be seen as a pigeon hole in a far corner of artistic workshop but rather an essential quest of design.

From the fore-going discussion one can say that libation brings into play active and inactive contrasts in movement which combine effectively to aid one's perception and cognition of the fact that libation brings together the performing and visual arts.

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Opoku A.A : Figs 3 & 4

Sarpong Peter : Fig.13