

Cultural Hybridity in Traditional Politics and Traditional Medicine in Ghana

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Abstract

This study investigates hybrid cultures of the people of the Atwima Nwabiagya District of the Ashanti region of Ghana and the various ways by which these hybrid cultures have promoted local development in the areas of traditional medicine and traditional political system in the district. The study is based on the assumption that the culture of the people of Atwima Nwabiagya, and some other foreign cultures have intermingled to create a hybrid of cultures which are being used to promote local development in the district. The research also proceeds on the grounds that current cultural practices of the people of Atwima Nwabiagya are predominantly hybrid in form and any discussion of the socio-economic development issues of the district must be approached from the perspective of cultural hybridity. The literature review reveals some important theories upon which the investigations are conducted. These theories include writings on the transformation of culture, cultural hybridity, and development and in totality indicate that cultures that are transformed through cultural loss, acculturation, adaptation, and/or replacement lead to the new form of cultures that are termed as hybrid. The study was conducted using a mixed method approach with descriptive research method driving the research. Data collection instruments used for the research include interviews, participant observations of some cultural performances and analysis of some administrative and historical documents. Purposive sampling procedure was used for the selection of twenty five respondents who were very knowledgeable in the phenomenon investigated by the researchers. Data in the form of photographs of some selected hybrid products were collected to complement the analysis of the phenomenon under study. The findings show that the prevalence of hybrid cultural practices in the political and health sectors in the district. The research also shows that the development agenda of the district is spurred by the existence and engagement of hybrid cultural practices. Based on the data obtained and the analysis conducted, the study validates the assumption that the promotion of local development in the Atwima Nwabiagya District is a consequence of the prevalence of a hybrid of foreign cultures and the local culture of the people of Atwima Nwabiagya district in Ghana.

Keywords: Hybridity, Culture, Traditional Medicine, Traditional Politics, Atwima Nwabiagya District

1. Introduction

Within the complex emerging culture of globalization, such as that of Atwima Nwabiagya, cultural identities are gradually changing within several communities around the globe. The trend towards the acquisition of material culture is spurred by migration and movements of people across geographic boundaries which have introduced new cultures into indigenous and evolving communities, transforming existing cultures into new forms. One key factor that affects the transformation of indigenous cultures as postulated by the post colonial theory, especially on the African continent, is the abysmal state of poverty that abounds in several regions and communities in the continent (Obikeze, 2003). Poverty, therefore, seems to be a driving force behind the relocation, migration and transfer of cultural beings, processes, and products into new environments. Even more pertinent is the fact that poverty is often behind the need to use external cultural processes and products as substitutes for the indigenous and traditional cultural forms, especially where the indigenous forms are regarded as expensive to acquire.

On the arrival of the new culture in the local indigenous environment, the existing culture through a system adoption, fusion, coexistence and accommodation may accept the external culture and inculcate it into a new form. The juncture where the two cultures meet may create a new cultural product, *a hybrid*, which despite lacking cultural purity can still perform the symbolic cultural function identified with the original form. The transfer of cultures across cultural boundaries has made it easier for individuals and groups to experience some realization of their dreams and aspirations in life. It is important to note that culture, whether indigenous or new is the driving force behind development agenda. Therefore, communities that find themselves at the receiving end of migrating cultures must, willy-nilly, shape their development agenda along the new cultural forms. In Ghana, several indigenous communities, administrative zones and districts, including Atwima Nwabiagya District confronted with the spectacle of the influx of external cultures has had no option but to plan their development programmes along new forms of culture - the *hybrid*. This study is based on the concept of hybridity as a phenomenon that evolves from the transformation of cultures as a consequence of migration, and the transfer of cultural products into new localities. The space within which the study is conducted is the geographically demarcated zone known as Atwima Nwabiagya District in the Ashanti region of Ghana. This study, therefore, aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- a. To identify and describe the current hybrid cultural practices regarding the traditional political system and the practice of traditional or herbal medicine of the people of the Atwima Nwabiagya District.
- b. To discuss how the hybrid cultural practices of the traditional political system and the practice of traditional or herbal medicine have contributed to the development in the Atwima Nwabiagya District.

This understanding will ultimately aim at providing an important communication tool for development communication practitioners, including District Assemblies, Development Agencies including NGO's, and governmental organizations that routinely use culturally specific communication tools to pursue their programmes.

1.1 Some Akan (Asante) Cultural Practices

1.1.1 Political Institution

This study does not intend to capture a comprehensive narration of the Akan (Asante) political system. The study only describes some salient aspects of the Asante traditional political system in terms of their relevance to the issues of hybridity and local development which form the core area of this research. The Akan traditional political institution is a centralized political organization.

According to Nukunya (2003), this centralized political system operates along a hierarchical structure where authority starts from the family level to the highest point of *Omanhene* or paramount chief. However, in the case of Asantes the level of authority stretches up to the *Asantehene* (the king of the Asante people) as the final authority. Nukunya (2003, p.68) states, "the important levels are the household, the compound, the lineage, the village, town, the division, the paramount and in Ashanti, the nation".

Each level has a head recognized as the spokesperson for that level of hierarchy. Since the whole political organization is based on kinship, each lineage or level of the hierarchy is represented through the head or spokesperson on a higher council that is the highest decision making body. Even though each level of the hierarchy enjoys some form of autonomy, resolution of social issues through well-laid traditional rules and laws can move through all the levels up to the highest decision making body. The highest decision body is a representation of council of elders from various lineages and chaired or presided over by the chief as in the case of a village or town and the King as in the case of the Asante kingdom. The village is a symbol of a centralized political system in Asante with all the characteristics of the political nature of the Asante political organization. The political head of a village is the chief residing at the apex of the political structure within the territory.

The village is a territorial well-defined area whose political head is the chief. Within this territory the authority of the chief is well respected by all those who reside therein. As the head and spokesperson for the village, the chief is also well respected by those residing outside the territory, including other chiefs who head other territories, as well as higher authorities like the paramount chief or the *Asantehene*. In the pre-colonial era the chief performed legislative, executive, judicial and religious functions. He was the primary lawmaker, a judge who sat in his court to arbitrate cases and performed religious functions by liaising with the chief priest of the community if there was one. Many of these functions have been whittled down in the post-colonial era. However, in several rural communities, including the district under this study, chiefs continue to exercise remnants of these powers. The chief is supported by a council of elders in his rule over the village who themselves are mostly heads of households or lineages or both or a sub-chief. They perform several functions that may range from finance through to defense and administrative responsibilities. The composition of the council membership may vary depending on the size of the territory as in the case of the paramouncy. But, generally, council of elders, among others, include the following designations: *krontihene*- who commands the chief's army to go to war in the absence of the chief; the *adontehene*, who is the general who commands in the main fighting body; "*Ankobeahene*, leader of the chief's personal body guards" (Nukunya: 2003, p. 69); *Kyidomhene*, who command the rear guard battalion; *Gyasehene*, who control attendants and oversees the property of the chief's household; and *Okyeame*, who is the chief's spokesperson and through whom all announcements (mostly verbal) and messages to and from the chief are communicated. Aside the clear positions in the council, there are several recognized administrative staff, which includes the *Nifahene*, *Benkumhene*, among others, who help the chief to run the territory and maintain law and order.

The main responsibility of the chief, as the head of the political unit, is to ensure sanity in his territory by maintaining a regular link between his people and the ancestors, between his territory and other territories, and between his unit and other higher levels of the political organizational hierarchy. He is a symbol of moral purity of his kingdom and therefore has to lead an upright life. In running the territory the chief's main revenue comes from court fees, fines, royalties, land sales and leases. In the colonial period, the chief's authority was absolute with the final say on any issue. Even though this may sound autocratic, there are several mechanisms and checks to limit the powers which he exercises. Many of these powers have either been lost under a new post-colonial democratic political system that has been adopted by many post-independent countries including Ghana. Some of the authorities have been absorbed by new dispensations in a hybrid political system that combines aspects of the western political organization with the traditional system of governance.

The role of chiefs in the modern political dispensation is widely dealt with by Neuwall (2005) in a treatise on chieftaincy. His discussion situates the modern chief as a syncretic leader who has become an outcome of a synthesis of state models, global cultures or world views, and traditional cultural imprints. Some of the key features of this syncretism is the use of two languages, one foreign or European, and one indigenous and the acquisition of academic titles. These are illustrations of the two radical worlds upon which the chief astride. Neuwall (2005, 4) further states;

In this area the chief is assured of his role as the upholder of traditional order and rules and supposed guardian of traditional norms and values. He is the supreme dispute settler, allocators of rights to land... a kind of spear head accosting the state and trying to divest it of its resources, such as markets and development projects, but also using new or existing legislation, such as land law reform or personal networks to achieve goals.

In terms of development, chiefs are seen as the epitome of development agenda of their communities. They are seen as seriously interested in the economic upgrading of their villages, initiating development projects, establishing themselves as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) and negotiating with other local and international agencies to promote development in their communities. Crook (2005) discusses the role of traditional institutions in political change and provides an insight into how the modern conceptualizations of chieftaincy as a post-colonial hybrid institution has become a vehicle for community development. He asserts that chiefs occupy dignified position in modern political set-up because “the undoubted contribution that some chiefs make to local government development efforts” (p.1). He further contests that the development agenda of several communities rest on the ambit of both the post-colonial administrative set-up in conjunction with the chieftaincy institution. It is for this reason that post-colonial district assembly political set-up recognizes the special role that chiefs make towards promoting local development and accords them such recognition. Crook further notes that even though chiefs have lost most of their formal governmental, judicial, revenue and land management roles, they still possess such economic, socio-cultural, and political influences. For example, on issues of land administration within several Akan communities, including the district under study, chiefs exercise allodia control, whereas the District Assemblies have some form of statutory and administrative custody. The release of lands for any development projects must have the endorsements of the local chief and the District Assemblies before the commencement of the project. Indeed, in both rural and urban areas the customary allocation of lands means that chiefs still sanction the sale of land for residential and commercial buildings.

Again, the District Assembly System (DAS) as a new political set-up has created a form of cultural leadership for chiefs through the performance of cultural rituals, including fertility of the land rituals, festivals and practices that involve invoking the cult of ancestors. Chiefs partially play their political role by giving their communities some form of community identity at the political level. To this end, chiefs become brokers for the mobilization of resources and support for community development. In all cases the new role of chiefs in the new political dispensation puts the chief in a position that provides him with the duty to work for the progress of the community and ensures their participation in collective action of democracy. Crook states,

The material progress of a community and the maintenance of its peace and unity are seen as the principal duties of chiefs. This is embodied, where a community is united, in the chief’s role as symbolic leader and patron of development/youth/hometown associations...At the local level it tends to deepen those local forms of activism and consolidate vertical patronage-based politics (2005: 2-5).

In the wielding of all these socio-political responsibilities the District Assembly System, DAS, are seen as partners in the promotion of local development goals and initiatives. Despite the presence of several state institutions and administrative machineries established to promote the effective functioning of local governance, chiefs continue to utilize available avenues, including access to DAS resources to promote development in a variety of ways. They unite the people; settle disputes, lobby and advocate for development in their communities, including the construction of market structures, water and sanitation, education and health (Nketia-Ampomah, 2009).

It is acknowledged that the modern form of development is based on decentralization, but the system works more effectively with the chiefs as partners since they are known to wield more influence at the local level of governance. Nketia-Ampomah (2009) also focuses on some selected Akan chiefs or overlords and discusses their roles towards the development agenda of their respective communities. Guri refers to the Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, whose development agenda and initiatives are deeply rooted in customary local tradition and modern political democratic system. The paramount chief of the Asantes, *Asantehene* has established a

charity - Otumfuo Charity Foundation – that incorporates initiatives on education and HIV/AIDS both of which aim to address inequities in education and the health sectors of the economy. He has also forged a relationship with the World Bank, an institution that formerly dealt with formal statutory state institutions and established international agencies and organizations, to implement a lending facility called the Learning an Innovation Loan (LIL) whose main purpose is to focus on the contributions and influence of traditional authorities on socio-economic development. The *Okyehene*, Osagyefo Amoatia Ofori-Panin (the paramount chief of Akyem Abuakwa), an Akan chief domiciled in the Eastern Region of Ghana, over the last decade has shown strong activism on environmental protection and HIV/AIDS issues through external sources of funding. Both traditional leaders have prosecuted their community development agenda through a combination of the traditional system of governance and post-colonial political and administrative set. In all these cases, what is significant is the utilization of hybrid cultural practices by these traditional authorities as important sources of mobilization of physical, human and financial resources for local development.

1.1.2 *The Practice of Traditional Medicine*

Among the Akan, the practice of traditional medicine resides with the traditional priest or in some other cases a reputable herbalist whose reputation was recognized in the entire territory. Both the traditional priest and the herbalist provide medical services to members of the community. Among the Akan, diseases and affliction of illnesses are conceptualized from the spiritual perspective. The priest traditionally referred to as *Okomfo*, diagnoses and treats illnesses through possession and contacts with the spiritual world. Priests and spiritualists are diviners who use methods of possession, divination and other ritual methods to diagnose and heal people; they are the intermediaries between their patients and the spiritual agents, from whom they derive their powers of healing (Brown, 2006, p.13).

On the other hand, herbalists do not deal much in the spiritual realm. Even though some traditional priests may perform the function of the herbalist, the herbalist according to Brown, “approached the work of healing through the application of herbs with or without ritual manipulation”. It is important to note that both the traditional priest and the herbalist administer traditional medicine in medical and religious contexts. The most important aspect of the practice, for the purposes of this research, is the mode of dispensation as described above, and mode of payment. The traditional mode of dispensation includes a performance of rituals and divinations. In recent times the practice incorporates these cultural performances or in some cases totally excludes them. Secondly, the traditional mode of payment for the service rendered was in the form of payment through local produce, such as eggs, hens, goats, crops, or in the form of some token of cash. However, these have given way to modern payment methods that solely involve the payment of cash. These changes, which are the result of external cultural infiltrations, will form part of the focus of this study.

1.1.3 *Transformation of Cultural Practices*

Several writers (Khosa, 1999; Mwammwenda, 1999; Ratz, 1982) indicate that the concept transformation may have differing meaning with different audiences. These writers opine that transformation goes beyond mere alteration, restructuring or change. Obikeze (2003) also note that the term transformation means more than a change or reformation. He states further that, “transformation entails creating something new or different through the configuration of remolding of the constituent elements of the old”. This study agrees with the above conceptualizations of the term *transformation* and adds that transformation of cultural practices implies a revolutionary change in the culture that brings about a change in the knowledge of production and transmission of that culture and its practices.

It is axiomatic that ‘culture’ is dynamic and regular transformations and changes that characterize this phenomenon of dynamism may not be clearly perceived unless upon critical observation. The measurement or proclamation of what are *cultural values*, or acceptable as *culture*, has included definitions that have focused on: values, norms, shared knowledge, social organization, language, observed behaviour, and more recently, technology (Boyd & Richerson, 1994; Harris, 2001; Narayan, 1997). Whichever way one acknowledges the dynamics of culture, it is imperative to note that the culture of any group of people undergoes systematic changes and transformation on a regular basis. It should also be noted that cultural change and transformation are not easy to determine because some may take 11-200 generations to happen (Boyd & Richerson, 2005). However, one of the best ways to measure cultural change and transformation is to monitor its continual exposure to the outside world and the extent to which the outside world culture (external cultures) erodes or dominates the existing culture (Brown and Fernandez, 1991).

Another method of assessing the cultural transformation is to observe the extent to which the existing culture resisted the external intrusive culture, despite the powerful appeal of the external culture in comparison to the local one (Brown, 2006; Reeve, 1994). A third course of assessment is to measure the existing culture’s ability to incorporate selected aspects of the external culture into its general characteristics that make it difficult to isolate the external culture from the existing local culture and treat it as different. In other words, the local culture displays its dynamic ability to adopt foreign objects and foreign customs without losing its identity. Therefore, unless a critical historical study or observation is employed, one may conclude that the culture under

observation is locally pure without any external adulteration or incorporation. All these modes of operations may result in cultural transformation and impact the traditional lifestyle of the local practitioners of that particular culture. It is important to note that these forms of culture transformation still lead to the idea that cultural transformation is a form of cultural preservation. This is because such transformations are assumed to lead to new cultural practices that are accepted by indigenes and local cultural practitioners as the norm. It also leads to the belief that there is no truth in the assertion that cultures are poised to suffer total eradication and extinction as a result of contact with powerful external ones (Narayan, 1997). It is a generalization that sounds debatable. Nevertheless, it is accepted that if a local culture is sustained, contact with external culture leads to an erosion of the existing local culture and the issue of transformation as preservation becomes questionable.

It has already been asserted that culture implies the values, norms, shared knowledge, social organization, language, and observed behaviour, of a group of people, and these phenomena are regularly undergoing transformations in any cultural environment (Harris, 2001). The patterns of transformation of cultural practices are not easy to delineate. However, certain stages of the culture can be identified as the points from which transformation of cultural practices can be identified. Three levels of cultural transformation can be identified (Dallmayr, 1993). The first is the transformations that are based on the identifying cultural practice as *primitive*. At this level, there is general consensus by local cultural practitioners, the indigenes, that an absolute erosion or total replacement of that cultural practice is inevitable. The continued practice of the particular primitive culture normally created tensions in the society which in turn led to regular resistance by the local people against its practice. The second level of transformation is based on *tradition*. This consists of cultural practice made up of a weakened form of mythic beliefs, and an adherence to existing traditional political steering system. With this system people believed that whilst the belief in myths that surrounded a society existence gave it a certain aura of invisibility and survival, a toned adherence was preferred.

The second aspect of *tradition* is the adherence to an existing political steering system based on kinship. Whilst, the sustenance of the traditional political system represented an important cultural component for social cohesion and survival, its totality is reduced to accommodate the changes in the social evolution through the acceptance and adaptation of foreign political systems.

The third level connects the transformation of cultural practices to the concept of modernity- *modern society*. According to Dallmayr (1993) the onset on modern society heralds a cultural transformation that affects the autonomy of several cultural systems, especially in the area of economic market systems. Modern society tries to create a certain level of universal culture through the engagement of global world in a common economic market system that revolves round capitalism. This universal culture impacts all other cultures that come into contact with it and as a result induces a high degree of transformation in indigenous cultural practices - political systems, economic markets and development needs.

Rajan (1986) postulates that any society that moves along these lines of cultural transformation aim to accomplish three main basic ideals: (1) “the task of survival”- during which the society seeks to transform to avoid its total extinction, or bring it into fusion with the global world order, (2) “the task of maintaining the structure and normative order of the [cultural] group”- during which the transformation ensures internal coherence and adherence to acceptable norms and values of the society; (3) “the task of making it possible for individual members a tolerable degree of personal fulfillment and happiness”- during which the transformations allows and encourages individuals in the society to live lives that fulfill their dreams and aspirations in consonance with societal harmony. These forms of transformations, according to Rajan (1986) must operate on three levels of societal competencies- adaptation, interaction, and innovation. Transformation of cultural practices may not manifest as a result of conscious actions on the part of any group or society because the transformation or change is normally gradual, slow, and imperceptible.

1.1.4 The Concept of Culture

This paper, within its limited scope and space, cannot provide comprehensive definitions and analyses of the term “culture”. Nevertheless, since this expression is very vital to the study, an attempt is made to capture some of the essential meanings of the expression and how it is connected to the topic under discussion. These basic but essential contexts of the term will be very useful in assessing the relationship between culture and development and how the concept influences the developmental processes in any society or cultural environment. The term culture has become so expansive in meaning and definition that it would be difficult to capture all the limitless scope of this concept under one paper. This is because *culture* means different things to different individuals and writers. However, this paper will attempt to capture some of the definitions that generally capture the broad ingredients embodied in the concept.

According to Ukeje (1992) a culture is the sum total of a people’s way of life that includes the values, beliefs, thoughts, feelings, customs and all the material and non-material aspects of their existence. Andah (1982), as cited by Mbakogu (2004, p.37), projects a more comprehensive definition of culture. The writer states,

Culture embraces all the material and non-material expressions
of a people as well as processes with which the expressions are

communicated. It has to do with the entire social, ethical, intellectual, scientific, artistic, and technological expressions and processes of a people usually ethnically and/or nationally related, and living in a geographically contiguous area; what they pass on to their successors and how these are passed on.

Oyeneke and Shoeremi (1985) present some basic features of culture. The writers indicate that culture is shared by members of a society; not genetically transmitted, but historically derived and transmitted from one generation to another, created through the process of adjustment to social setting; universal and found in every human society; and lastly, that culture is dynamic. Harris (2001) also adds that culture is the observed behaviour, values, norms, shared knowledge, language, and social organizations that are found in a particular society. To all these, Mbakogu adds that “culture is a network of traits that could be learned based on interactions and derived from history.” (2004:37). She also states that no matter how one conceptualizes the term culture, it is without contention that culture regulates our lives, shapes our attitudes and behaviours, and defines our personality. Ikpe (1999:71) defines culture as,

The learned, adaptable symbolic behaviour, based on a full-fledged language, associated with technical inventiveness, a complex of skills that in turn depends on a capacity to organize exchange relationships between communities.

We can deduce from the above definitions that every personality, every society and what it prides itself on is a product of culture. The totality of life and every society can be discussed from the perspective of its cultural imprints. This also means our discussion of the development of any society; culture must be approached from the perspective of the culture- the culture of a particular group of people. Ikpe (1999, p. 67) emphasizes this point by stating that, “every aspect of a person’s existence illustrates his culture, whether or not such behaviour is purposefully projected”. This means that development processes can only be approached and understood from the perspective of culture.

1.1.5 Hybridity

The term hybridity has become an important concept in the study of culture, languages, ethnicity and media studies in the last two decades. The term originally began in biology. Under this situation selective breeding of two different varieties of plants and animals were put together to produce specific qualities of improved performance. However, in many instances the hybrid product was always stigmatized as inferior and lacking purity. Hybridity has also become a symbol of the transformations of cultures. The concept of hybridity is also synonymous with cultural fusion and difference. The concept has proved useful in describing the multipurpose nature of culture in as much as that culture is derived from several sources aside the original. It is a concept that can best be used to describe post-colonial cultures- from which many post-independence

African countries can attribute their cultures. According to Kraidy (2005: p.8) it resonates “with the globalization mantra of unfettered economic exchanges and the inevitable transformation of all cultures”. According to Garcia- Canclini (1989:11) Hybridity “includes diverse intercultural mixtures... and ... includes the modern forms of hybridization...” The issue of “intercultural mixtures” is one reason why hybridity can be found in many academic disciplines including literature, anthropology, sociology, architecture, tourism, sports, economics, and popular culture.

Hybridity of culture is typically the fusion of cultures that combine new technologies and existing social practices and cultural values. In the current globalization era individuals, communities, countries and continents have been compelled to adopt foreign cultures in order to fit into the global world. During such period of adoption an intermingling of cultures develops during which new cultures are created.

Different authors have made varied attempts to explain the concept from its fusion perspective. Kraidy (2005) believes that hybridity is a fusion of two relatively distinct styles, forms, or identities that occur across national or cultural boundaries through cultural contact. The cultural contact that results in hybridity requires some kind of movement, either of people, especially during migration, the exchange of goods and services, or some cultural products. According to Hall (1986: 21), hybridity is a phenomenon in Cultural Studies that gives meaning to how dominant cultures impact other cultures and vice versa. Cultures that appear dominated by a dominant culture do not become totally acculturated. Instead, they always find counter hegemonic ways to reaffirm their identity. . . . it’s important to note that a dominant culture also intertwines from dominated cultures to enrich its own. Thus, there is “semi fluid” cultural interaction always going on. Cultures do not exist in vacuum.

In this case, the hybridization happens because some cultures, especially the local ones normally resist the external cultures which always try to dominate them. This resistance may not be total and is compromised by an assimilation of the local cultures with aspects of the external culture. In many cases the individual groups and communities that have assimilated parts of the foreign culture into their mainstream culture engage in the cultural practices without much notice of the inherent external influences. What hybridity does is to exercise a

mutual intermingling of the two cultures into a single cultural commodity or practice.

Obikeze (2003) discusses hybridity from the perspective of hybridization. He explains that there are several forms of cultural dynamics through which different cultures come together to create something new. He asserts that through a series of cultural dynamics, two or more cultural products of the same type but of different origins (one foreign, the other indigenous; for example, two types of cooking pots, or two different methods of predicting weather storms) are brought together in one social space, a dynamic system of interaction ensues between them resulting in a situation of domination, marginalization, or coexistence. One result of this process of interaction is hybridization during which something uniquely new is produced out of the blend of the two cultural products. According to him, *Hybridization* occurs, when elements of the interacting culture products fuse and blend together to form a distinctively new cultural product. The hybrid culture product created by this process, while indigenous to the locale, is neither pure nor genuine (p.7).

As a result of the fusion of two rival cultural products propelled by the dynamics of cultural interaction, a new cultural product born out of fusion, adaptation or coexistence may occupy social space. Sometimes the interactive nature of the foreign and indigenous cultural product may lead to a situation where each product loses part of the purity of its original form and becomes modified so as to ensure their acceptability in the social space. In essence a new cultural product is created out of the modification and blending of the rival cultures. Kraidy (2005) identified two ways through which cultural contact and dynamic interaction of the foreign and indigenous cultures occur:

- 1) This mainly occurs through commerce: the strategic movement and exchanges of people, ideas, and practices across geographic boundaries. The boundaries may be local or international.
- 2) This happens as a result of poverty and the quest to be accorded recognition for moving up the social ladder. It manifests in the desire to adopt behaviours and act out practices that lead to individuals being recognized as having moved upward in the social structure either as 'learned' 'elite' or 'civilized'.

In the first instance hybridity occurs as a result of cultural exchanges which lead to the borrowing and adoption of new cultures outside local boundaries. Through commerce, foreign goods and services and practices are relocated into indigenous cultural environments. With time, the new cultural products may show persistence because of their aesthetics, quality, or durability of the product. Yet such product may not be considered as having the capacity to replace the original indigenous culture for which the new product acts as a substitute. Indigenous cultural practitioners, desirous of maintaining the purity of the original cultural product and at the same time holding on to the new culture, blend some aspects of the purity of the original with the 'not-so genuine' external cultural product. This leads to a new product that is acceptable to the indigenous population. It is also given the recognition and capacity to symbolically perform the cultural functions for which the original is accustomed.

In the second instance, poverty may cause foreign cultural products to relocate into indigenous culture to create a new affordable cultural product. In many cultural environments the cost of buying original cultural products or elements that relate to it may be so expensive that local people may decide to forgo the use of that product in local cultural performances. An external product may lend itself as an alternative affordable cultural commodity capable of performing the symbolic function of the indigenous cultural product. The local people renew their dedication towards the original cultural performance by turning to the new product as a substitute for the indigenous product. The desire to maintain aspects of cultural purity of the original leads people to blend the two to create a new hybrid product in a manner that makes the new one financially affordable and culturally appropriate for the performance of the intended cultural practice. The result of these forms of hybridization can also lead to two distinct patterns of the hybrid products:

- (1) a modified form of the original whose content is changed, but whose form remains the same as illustrated by some of the cultural practices that, in modern days, occur during marriage and religious ceremonies in the Akan culture;
- (2) the cultural product that is a pure hybridization in which the local and the foreign are clearly indistinguishable as exemplified in Akan farming activities. In this example, even though a lot of foreign or western farming practices have found their way into traditional farming patterns, it is difficult to draw a line between the "domestic" and the "foreign". In all these cases, the local indigenous population seems to engage in a conscious or unconscious negotiation of fusing the external and internal cultures into a culturally acceptable symbolic product- the *hybrid*. In Africa many peoples' life experiences are uniquely influenced by cultural practices that are the blend of cultures that invariably emanate from hybridization.

2. Methodology

The study employed a research approach that combines qualitative and quantitative (Fraenkel, 1990; Kumekpor, 2002; Leedy, 2005; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). This combined approach utilizes personal contact and insight and focuses on individual experiences as well as human interaction as the central elements of study. In this kind of research, Leedy (2005, p. 504) asserts that,

qualitative researchers operate under the assumption that reality is not easily divided into discrete memorable variables.

Qualitative researchers are often described as being the research instruments because the bulk of their data collection is depend on their personal involvement (interviews, observations) in the setting...

Both verbal (interview comments, documents, field notes) and non-verbal data (drawings, photographs, and video tapes) may be collected. The researchers visited fourteen villages where interviews were conducted with twenty-five research participants and informants. Among some of the interviewees were office holders, including, the District Coordinating Director of the Atwima Nwabiagya District Assembly, the Chief of Toase, who is also a former assembly member of the Atwima Nwabiagya District Assembly; the District Cultural Officer, a herbal practitioner resident at Abuakwa within the district. Also interviewed were community elders, teachers, farmers, artisans, food sellers and traders.

In qualitative research, reliance on a single method of data collection normally renders the work very subjective (Leedy, 2005). With particular reference to the subject under study, which sought to discover the hybrid aspects of a culture, the use of multiple methods of data collection known as triangulation (Leedy, 2005), becomes methodically appropriate. According to Leedy, (2005), in triangulation "Multiple sources are collected with the hope that they will all converge to support a particular hypothesis or theory. This approach is especially common in qualitative research... Triangulation is also common in mixed method designs, in which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected to answer a single research question". The multiple methods used ensured that the data collection and analysis achieved a high level of validity and reliability. Secondly, interviews allowed the researchers to check the accuracy of data, verify or refute the impressions that a researchers gathers through other methods of data collection such as participant observation (Fraenkel, 1990).

In addition, there are other issues that could not be observed directly by the researchers, and interviews allow the researchers to collect unobserved data from individuals through interviews. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) indicate that interviews allow researchers "to understand the social actors' experience and perspective" (p. 173). In this study all the interviewees are major social actors within the site of research, and their perspectives helped to enrich the data collection and analysis. The interviews also allowed the researchers to gain insight into the motives for certain theoretical issues and foundations that underlay their activities and the research questions. All the interviews were conducted personally by the researchers and tape-recorded. Interviewees were informed and their permission sought before each recording was conducted. The interview followed an interactive approach and even though it was done along the question guide, the interactive nature of meeting allowed the interviewees to freely respond to the questions without any interruptions or hindrances. To ensure the ease of information flow and the desired unhindered narrative from interviewees, letters of introduction and permission to set up appointments for the interviews were sent ahead of interview dates to the would-be interviewees. Interviewees also "gained control of the discussion in a manner that allowed them to tell their own stories in an interestingly unhindered narrative" (Ofori-Birikorang, 2009). This method elicited a lot of useful vital information that enriched the data.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 The Judicial System

A major developmental project that is the consequence of hybrid culture was identified with the administration of justice. Under the pre-colonial traditional political dispensation, the chief, in addition to his legislative and executive functions, also performed judicial functions. The chief sat in court in his palace, and with the assistance of his elders adjudicated over all civil and criminal cases sent to him from his subjects. Most of the judicial powers of the post-colonial chieftaincy institution in Ghana have been eroded. The post-colonial administration of justice is wholly placed under the Western court system and headed by a Chief Justice (The 1992 Republic Constitution of Ghana). However, chiefs still perform some minor judicial functions including settling land disputes and other minor offenses especially in civil cases. Recognition has been given to the important role chiefs played and continue in the administration of justice. The establishment of the Alternative Dispute Resolution system (ADR) which combines the western system adjudication with the traditional system of adjudication has incorporated chiefs into the modern administration of justice. The researchers collected data from one of the sittings of the ADR at the court of the Toasehene in the Atwima Nwabiagya District. A complainant before the ADR, Agya Kofi Asare an indigene of Yawanokrom a village near Toase revealed that, in his opinion, the ADR was more convenient than the orthodox system. Under the ADR, One does not need the services of a lawyer to prosecute his case. Cases are disposed-off more quickly at the ADR than the normal court system. In addition, financial and time constraints that come with complainants' regular treks to the normal courts at Nkawie, the district administrative capital, and the consequent frequent adjournments of cases due to several technical reasons is reduced. More importantly, because the ADR is customised on local customs and traditions, arbitration becomes easy for members of the court and attendants, especially, if the parties in dispute

come from the same traditional area.

Nana Afrifa, the chief of Toase traditional area whose court the researchers visited, indicated that the ADR has promoted development in several dimensions. First, in terms of land dispute, the ADR has helped in reducing the number of land cases pending at the Circuit Court at Nkawie. One reason for this is that the ADR court is seen as a more credible system for adjudication of land disputes because in many cases, the disputing parties, the chief who sits in court, the elders who help him decide cases, and witnesses who appear before the court all come from the traditional area and, normally, have first-hand knowledge of boundary demarcations of the particular land at the centre of dispute. This makes it easy for parties to accept the resolution that is reached at the end of each sitting.

3.2 *Traditional Medicine*

This research, through the interviews conducted with Dr. Kwaku Ampomah, a herbal medicinal practitioner, revealed the underlying issues that border on theories of transformation of cultures and hybridization. First, Dr. Ampomah indicates that his practice is purely based on indigenous knowledge and practice. He states,

I deal in herbal products; the herbs our forefathers used as medicine are those I am also continuing with. None of my medicine is orthodox. They are our own herbal medicines that are taken from the forest, boiled and even if we are treating anybody, we treat him or her for seven days because our forefathers also gave treatment to patients up to seven days.

However, even the above seem to indicate devotion towards pure traditional health practice its subsequent remarks showed a fusion of foreign or external cultural practices into traditional practices of his ‘forefathers’. He intimated,

I concentrated on herbs that is what I use most unless there is a sickness that the orthodox medicine will help, then I prescribe for the person to buy from outside. Then I give him or her time to take the herbs alongside the orthodox medicine. Even if the person has been to the hospital and wish to use my medicine, he takes the hospital medicines alongside mine within some period.

What the researchers recognize here is that even though, gradually, western or external medical practices have become part of Dr. Ampomah’s trade, he downplays the impact of the foreign cultures on his practice and loves to characterize the general practice of his trade as traditional. Over the years his trade has experienced gradual infiltration of external elements, but it seems the movement is so gradual and imperceptible that he has become unconscious of its impact. Secondly, as stated earlier, one of the fundamental grounds upon which transformation of cultures becomes manifest is through the migration and the strategic movement of people across geographic boundaries. His practice was highly attributable to his sojourn in France, where he learned the tenets of his practice. He states,

I travelled to France where I stayed with a Whiteman who used the orthodox and herbal medicine for healing. I was glad he was using both, so he always sent me to Ghana for the herbs... What I noticed and learnt in France is that, they trust herbs more than the orthodox medicine, because the hospital that I worked with, though they practice other forms of medicine, it was the herbs they used most.

It is this singular movement that seems to inform the kind of hybrid practice that undergirds Dr. Ampomah’s practice. The concept of hybridity is even more pronounced in his routine practice of diagnosis of patients’ ailments, the processes that one goes through before the one-on-one meeting and resources that are available for healing. He indicated that on arrival of a patient to his health centre,

First we issue a card to the person, and then his or her vital statistics are taken - Blood Pressure (BP), and pulse rate are checked and analyzed. We take the results and where necessary further tests are conducted in our laboratory on blood, urine, stool and so on. Based on the reports then if it is the body that will need rest we advise and if it is diagnosed the herbal medicine that will help in healing him is given.

This clearly underlines the hybridization of the processes of healing under the current herbal practitioner’s mode of practice. Laboratories check of blood, urine and stool screening and the taking of vital statistics were not inherent parts of the practice of herbal medicine in traditional contexts which on arrival of the

patient and on saying the problem is directly given herbs and its precautions. However, fluid flow of western medicine into the local counterpart and its assimilation as an acceptable cultural component of medicinal practice has in the process led to a hybrid cultural product. What is also very significant is the way and manner in which the two different practices— one local and one the foreign have mutually intermingled into a unique acceptable cultural practice.

Dr. Ampomah, the herbal practitioner, also categorized the impact on his profession on the district from the three perspectives of social, financial and personal considerations. First, he discusses the huge role that his hybrid professional practice plays in the delivery of health to the people. One of the reasons, he acknowledges, is that many individuals cannot afford the fees they would have to pay if they had to go the orthodox western health delivery centre. His centre provides an avenue for healing to those who otherwise would have been left without access to health. He said,

Herbalists also provide long term treatment, one week, one month, six months, one year and even up to three years. Each has its procedure for the patient... I could attend to as many as over one hundred people in a month but with the inception of the health insurance which does not cover herbal treatment, the number has reduced drastically. Sometimes in a week I may have to treat up to ten patients. Averagely, in a month, I can see about thirty to forty patients.

The interviewee, Dr. Ampomah, also discussed the developmental aspect of his practice from his personal improvement, mentorship, philanthropic and educational viewpoints. He said that he has experienced financial fulfillment through his practice, that it has personally helped him to build life on his own and with God on his side, through the moneys he makes and have been able to take care of his children and extended family. He has established a nursing institution that is imparting the knowledge and practices of his profession to young men and women and said he has established a Herbal Nursing School at Abuakwa- Maakro and has graduated forty-five trainees in 2009. To his credit, he has a hotel, which was built from his proceeds from the herbal treatments he gives to others, which also has given job opportunities to others.

He also discussed his philanthropic contributions towards development in the district. He also has provided funds for renovation of national security agencies' offices, invested in basic education where children can pay low school fees to attend school, and supported the needy in the society. He said he helped in renovating Nkawie-Toase police station; has built a school at Nkawie-Mpasatia with low fee paying to accommodate the needy in the community; and also help disabled and nursing mothers in the district in the hospital who cannot afford their bills in the form of money and material things. It can further be contended that the selected hybrid cultural performances that form the basis of this research, including the traditional governance system and traditional medicine practice have contributed immensely to the various development agenda of the district. Even if the gains in the performance is at the personal level its short and long term effect on the positive development efforts of the district cannot be downplayed.

4. Conclusion

The tenet of the study was to examine how the hybridity of cultural practices particularly the traditional political system and the practice of traditional or herbal medicine have contributed to the local development of the people in the Atwima Nwabiagya district. The findings and analysis showed that all the hybrid cultural performances identified in the study promoted development. It has also proved that the assertion that the promotion of local development in the Atwima Nwabiagya District is the result of cultural hybridity is valid and based on sound evidence. Thus, these recommendations have been forwarded to enhance the implementation of the hybridity of cultural practices in the traditional political system and traditional or herbal medicine.

1) Justice Delivery System: the ADR seems to provide faster and friendly customary environment for the resolution of civil disputes between local parties. The research revealed that many communities visited by the researchers did not have the system in place. Indigenes still had to travel to other places where the western system or ADR system is located to seek justice. However, almost all communities in Ghana have the basic traditional system upon which the ADR is built. This is because every community in Ghana is traditionally headed by a chief who, customarily, is the head of that village or town. It is recommended that government devolves the ADR system to all communities to ease quick access to this hybrid efficient judicial system.

2) Most rural communities lack access to modern health facilities due to poverty and lack of development in their communities. Some continue to rely on herbal medicine and practitioners for their ailments. Fortunately, traditional herbal medicine has achieved high recognition and acknowledgement in several communities because of their hybrid nature of combining western medical practice with traditional medicine. It is recommended that all health promoting agencies, including government, NGOs, District Assemblies, and philanthropists should be encouraged to explore this new form of health promotion and extend them to the rural communities. One method

of ensuring this extension is to train more herbal practitioners, integrate their practice into the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and post them to deliver health in local communities that lack the modern health facilities.

3) It is further suggested that the resource centre also could be used as a platform to establish a sustainable working relationship with District Assemblies and other local communities to ease researcher's entry into communities and to facilitate the collection and archiving of data material relating to cultural artefacts and products. The resource centre can work closely with religious institutions, schools and community and social workers to build up a comprehensive data on the role of hybrid cultures toward community development.

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