"The Earth Cult and the
Ecology of Conflict Management in Northern Ghana"

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It has often been observed that the people who are to benefit from development projects often play marginal roles in their own development process. The lack of involvement reduces the effectiveness of interventions and reduces the chances of success. Current trends in development, therefore, try to encourage the involvement of the beneficiaries in every aspect of the process from planning to implementation. These trends began with Friere's (1970) idea of "conscientization", which led development planners to try to get the beneficiaries of development to recognize the unfavorable conditions under which they are living so that everyone will work together to transform the situation. Ideally a dialogical process should be fostered involving a two-way flow of information rather than one-way conversation, and input should be encouraged from the "bottom-up" instead of just the "top-down" (Melkote and Vallath 1994).

This trend is beginning to expand into other areas of development such as relief aid, rehabilitation and care services in the wake of natural and man-made disasters. In particular, the escalation of armed conflicts in Africa -- e.g. in Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Liberia and Sierra Leone -- has led to an increased awareness of the need for more cooperation and planning in the area of conflict-management. Providers of aid responding to the mass displacement of peoples, loss of life and property caused by armed conflicts, are now casting their preventative sights further afield and, at least at the theoretical level, are trying to involve the disaster-prone communities in the preventative processes.

Intervention and the accommodation of religious beliefs

From the perspective of the local communities, however, such claims to include their involvement are rarely fulfilled. At times the idealized involvement is hindered by the enormous gap between the wealth of the development provider and the poverty of the beneficiary, or between the presumed superior knowledge and culture of the development provider and the inferior status and knowledge of the beneficiary.

The very need for development agencies, that are perceived as wealthy and powerful, to elicit this kind of cooperation seems oddly incongruent to villagers. Nicolas van de Walle makes the claim that "In most countries of the region, the aid business is typically the second biggest employer in the local economy, surpassed only by the government, to which it is often preferred by young graduates because of its greater prestige and much more generous conditions of employment" (van de Walle 1999:339). This is more than substantiated on the dusty streets of Tamale. Judging from the number of NGO vehicles and the people employed by development or "disaster relief", it is the number one industry. On the principle that "people help those in need" the stark contrast between the rich development agent and poor African farmer makes it difficult for the "beneficiaries" of development to come forward, and the appearance of making a business out of peoples' suffering may alienate them even further.

Added to the ranks of professional developers in their "Toyota Land Cruisers", there are also professional negotiators and "peace contractors" in their "Pajeros". Conflict-management groups, operating with the Western efficiency of SWAT-teams-for-peace, have been organized throughout Africa at national and international levels to anticipate and defuse potentially volatile situations. Typically they tend to operate with a maximum of Western expertise but with a minimum of African cultural contextualization. Although they tend to function smoothly at the negotiating table, their record is less convincing as peace-makers or as agents of reconciliation.

Here too the mis-match between claim and reality is apparent and its roots go deep. It resides in an even more fundamental cultural gap that exists between the Western culture of "conflict-management" and the African culture of reconciliation. These deep cultural differences extend to the local beliefs, values and attitudes about conflicts as well as to the contexts, the timing, procedures and actors that are involved in conflict resolution. Yet a good understanding of these issues is not normally required of a development team and, indeed, such an understanding goes well beyond the scope of most Western-initiated projects of relief or disaster-prevention. So although the intention to involve the local community dialogically is admirable, the cultural framework in which development and relief are currently done does not easily adapt itself to this essentially cross-cultural task.

This essay suggests that development and aid planners, and especially those that wish to help local people "manage" their conflicts, need to enlarge their purview to include an understanding of local cultures of reconciliation, especially the beliefs, attitudes and practices arising from African Traditional Religion. Although Islamic and Christian beliefs and practice may sometimes play a role, especially at the end of a peace process through a symbolic ritual, those of

African Traditional Religion do not normally play any part at all. Our central point here is that in order to help people to truly resolve their conflicts in Africa, especially those which involve the land which is a religious concept as well as an economic and political entity, one must take into consideration the widespread beliefs and practices concerning the cult of the Earth and search for ways to apply these to the mechanisms currently employed in conflict management.

The Situation in Northern Ghana

Although on the larger African scene, our Ghanaian "Northern Conflict" was quite eclipsed by the Rwanda affair, which reached its peak at about the same time, it was nevertheless considered destabilizing enough, that large investments were and are still being made to address the situation and to ensure that it doesn't happen again. Indeed, since the end of open hostilities, in the rainy season of 1994, there have been numerous attempts by sundry agencies to arbitrate a tenable peace agreement. Besides the official governmental bodies and the bilateral and multi-lateral organizations of development assigned to the task, various NGOs acting independently, and a consortium of NGOs acting in unison, have tried their hand. Refugees and other victims of the conflict have been given humanitarian assistance including food relief, medicine and basic amenities. Hundreds of meetings have been organized at the local, regional and national levels, and various strategies have been tried over these five years to negotiate a lasting settlement. In addition to numerous colloquia aimed at clarifying the issues, softening hard lines and keeping the parties at the negotiating table instead of the battlefield, there have also been numerous training seminars and workshops aimed at equipping local arbiters and spokespersons in the tactics of negotiation and the dynamics of conflict-management.

Yet, in spite of all the cost and concern expended, to date there still exists a very tentative and uneasy detante, which is more the absence of open hostilities than a genuine peace. In this context it is noteworthy that in their search for a durable peace, the various agencies-- even those that priortize local participation--do not usually discuss or even seem to recognize the importance of, let alone call into play, the traditional beliefs and practices of the people, especially those which are held in common, concerning their ritual relations with the land. Their reluctance to do so may actually foster the continuance of a kind of "cold war" which is in danger of getting "hot" each dry season.

The reason for this is that for the peoples of Northern Ghana and elsewhere throughout Africa, the spilling of human blood on the land involves not a two-dimensional "negotiation" between the combatants, but a three-dimensional "reconciliation": between the combatants and, even more importantly, especially for all those who are not directly involved in the conflict but are suffering the effects of it, reconciliation with the "Earth".

Dispelling basic fallacies: A Note on the Religious Demographics of N. Ghana:

Before proceeding too far into our discussion it will be necessary to dispel some common fallacies: The first concerns the religious identity of the people in the North. It may be surprising to many that most of the people in Northern Ghana are neither Muslim nor Christian but adherents of their traditional religions (Barker 1986: 59). In fact, astounding as this might seem to Southern Ghanaians whose main acquaintance with Northerners usually stems from their knowledge of the strangers' quarters or "zongo's" in Southern cities, there are more Muslims in the South (especially in the cities) than in the North (Dretke 1979). Current population estimates in the combined three northern Regions of Ghana are: Islam: 18 %; Christianity 10%; ATR: 70% (Boi-Nai & Kirby 1998).

The second is that the use of the word "minorities" to describe "acephalous" peoples (those without chiefs) is not a reference to their actual numbers but to the political and cultural status accorded them by the British in the colonial era--an anomaly that has passed down into current usage. Combined, they are actually more numerous (cf. Ghana Census 1960) than the so-called "majority" tribes (those with chiefs) and their cultures undergird the "majority" tribes linguistically as well as in their common religious understanding of the "Earth".

Opposing Cultures of Peace-making

The major problem that would-be peace negotiators face arises from the fact that the culture of the development agencies, including their philosophy of conflict-management together with its notions of law, justice, and peace etc. (see Gluckman 1969), is so different from that of the beneficiaries, or the people experiencing the conflicts, that without a sophisticated understanding of this the stage is set for ongoing institutionalized miscommunication.

The striking differences that exist between the African political and judicial systems as compared with the systems of Europe and the West have been referred to in numerous classical studies of the colonial period (Gluckman 1956, 1969, Fortes 1949, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940). The most fundamental is with regard to the aim. African systems, often termed "dispute-settlement" (D-S) rather than "conflict-management" (C-M), aim at re-establishing harmonious relations in the community. Assigning blame and punishment or compensation are less important than healing the breech and re-establishing cordial social relations. Pressure is put on the disputing parties to settle the dispute for the good of the whole society. In Africa, justice is more contextual following the sliding scale of human relations as compared with Western-styled notions of immutable truth. Similarly status is more important than contract. Laws and entitlements seems relative, fuzzy, soft-edged, and open to interpretation and re-interpretation. Everything seems to swim in negative space. Everything is

subordinated to human relations and negotiations are meant to preserve these relations rather than destroy them.

In stark contrast to Africa's time-honored modes of settling disputes, repairing the breech, reconciling and reuniting communities, Western cultures of conflict-management aim at securing the rights of individuals. They do not aim at harmonious relations but at minimizing conflicts or keeping them manageable, which is to say not too violent. Negotiations are linear and progressive moving sequentially from one point to another. Gains and losses are concretely defined, calculated and quantified. Clearly identifiable protagonists are placed in direct confrontation to one another. One prosecutes, another defends; one is innocent, one guilty. Indeed, at the cultural core, we find, implicit in the very language and strategies of Western-styled "peace contractors", an oppositional code which conflicts dramatically with the culture-based expectations of African communities for reconciliation and harmonious relations.

The means follow from the ends. We find different strategies and tactics in each system. Dispute-settlement emphasizes the resumption of normal social interchange and friendly relations beginning very concretely with greetings. The tactics favor everything that can foster, insure or better these relations. Western conflict-management, which emphasizes "concrete" things like individual rights and material possessions, attempts to pile these up as chips for negotiation at the conference table.

The systems organize time very differently too. Dispute-settlement is cyclic and recursive, whereas C-M is linear and progressive. D-S goes round and round and seems to be getting nowhere but suddenly breaks through to a new level, whereas C-M makes quantifiable but often illusory gains. Because D-S focuses on relationship, measurement of specific units of time is counter-productive. Because C-M attempts to maximize quantifiable gain, strict measured time is of the essence.

D-S also requires a much longer time period than Western C-M processes because of the importance it puts on "healing". The healing process must go through the three normative stages of separation, liminality and reaggregation (cf. Junod, Turner, Douglas) which do not easily lend themselves to measurement in discrete units of time (days, weeks, months) but in terms of stages in the mourning process. The greater the trauma, the longer the time it takes for the emotional, physical and psychic healing to take place. Before re-integration or reconciliation is possible, denial, anger and acceptance must take place. Grieving is a socially-imposed responsibility, not a luxury. Yet typically in the West, "mourning is treated as if it were a weakness, a self-indulgence, a reprehensible bad habit instead of a psychological necessity" (Geoffrey Gorer 1965:85). Because of this and because mourning time is not easily quantifiable, the process tends to be neglected or ignored by development providers. Only the third stage is stressed in conflict-management, thus preventing a true re-engagement. Whatever was lost remains socially unburied and thus unstable.

The key juncture points indicating "progress" in the process are not tied to this or that concession or to the ratification of documents but to rites of separation, purification and re-integration. The final objective is not to bring about a negotiated settlement that each party can "live with" but to bring about a new life--a new equilibrium based on renewed relationships.

The Religious Dimension and Trans-tribal foundations for Peace-making

The case for the D-S model rather than the C-M model for Africa is a strong one. But there there is one big drawback with regard to the D-S model. The D-S models in Africa operate within the group but are not effective with regard to tribal conflicts which, by and large, are what pertain throughout Africa today. Here the C-M model may appear to have an advantage because the dynamics are not group-based. Yet we will argue that the advantages of the D-S model outweigh this.

The problem is essentially one of stretching the D-S model to a greater level of incorportion to work trans-tribally. In this endeavour one of the most obvious common bases for the trans-tribal nexus concerns the actors. The actors in the two systems (D-S and C-M) are quite different. Very little mention is made by the various C-M peace brokers and development providers of non-material agents such as God, the ancestors and personified deities of the "Earth". Yet these are commonly recognized by the beneficiaries of development (using D-S models) as the most basic agents for harmonious existence. Thus the two processes are most radically different with reference to the unseen world, and it is here, especially in their common belief in and dependency on the high God that we may find the most workable basis for trans-tribal D-S.

"The African is incurably religious" as Mbiti (1960) says. Another way of putting it is that in the African mentality the unseen or the spirit world is so closely united to the physical and material one we see about us it is all part of the same reality. All of creation participates in relationships extending in two dimensions--horizontally among the living in the visible world and vertically (pardon the crude geographics) between them and the agents in the invisible world including the ancestors, the Earth and God. A breech in our relationships with one another in the visible world affects relationships with agents in the invisible one. As they are linked by a common ecology, disruptions in the visible world, brought about by bloody conflicts, not only destabilize elements of the visible world horizontally, they also disrupt the vertical connection rendering a given territory infertile and unproductive for all living there. Thus the aim of dispute-settlement is only secondarily the restoration of balanced relations in the visible world. Its

primary concern is with the holistic restoration of a visible and invisible ecology where the vertical relationships are the conduit for life itself.

The Cult of the Earth

One of the most common features of African Traditional Religious belief is the cult of the Earth. It is consistently found in the pre-Islamic Middle East (e.g. the Kabala, El Shaddai, Horeb, Tabor etc.), and among peoples throughout Africa, including the Gur-speaking peoples of Northern Ghana, Cote-d'Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin and Niger. Among all of these peoples the common linguistic roots of this cult derive from the word *ten* meaning earth which is often used together with the word for "animal hide" or "skin" to mean "land-skin" (Tait 1963:35). This cult is particularly important for their relationship to the land. Tait speaks of Konkomba political and geographical districts as "having their own shrines (*luwaa*, pl. *uguwa*) . . . of which the most important in this context is the Earth shrine, *Ntengbe*" (1963:35).

In Africa land is not just a political or economic entity. It is also a ritual or sacralized entity governing the fertility and vigor of life. The most elementary feature of this wider ecology is peoples' relationship to the land as a spiritual and physical source of life (see Tait 1963:14). This relationship is centered on the "Earth" as a personified deity. It is not just the organic and inorganic elements comprising the earth's ecology, including the soil, the stones, or the trees and vegetation that grow on it, or just the animals that abound in its 'bush'. It is not just the DNA or biological fertility of this or that animal or human, but, within a given territorial range, the essence of fertility itself, including all of the natural elements that comprise, insure or demonstrate instances of fertility, like rainfall, sunlight, and the nutrients and biological life in the soil. In this deity all of these are combined.

In this broad-based ecology are also embedded the rules governing society's relationship with the deity as provider, the source of life, fertility, abundance and prosperity. This relationship proceeds hierarchically through ancestors to the Earth and through the Earth to God. In the Anufo ritual presented below (see Appendix) the Earth priest calls upon the ancestors to give the offering to the Earth and then to God. The Nankanse say "When a *Ten'dana* performs sacrifices, the land ascends to *Yini*, the Sky-God, and begs things (*suse bono*) from him and every one prospers" (Rattray 1932:258).

Our relationship with the Earth must be maintained to insure the life and sustenance for all those living on it. The relationship is cultivated and maintained through intermediaries or "Earth priests" (*tendana*) by means of two main rituals every year--one at the onset of the rains to petition for fertility and crops, and the other after the harvest to offer thanksgiving for the fecundity of man, beast and soil, and for the sustenance to maintain life for

another year. The relationship can also be jeopardized or broken by certain individual or group acts which symbolically or actually destroy the relationship between those living on the land and their relationship with the Earth itself.

Ritual "Landowners"

The ritual office of "landowner" (*tindana*) or Earth priest was the highest office held by the original acephalous inhabitants of northern Ghana. Cardinall finds great significance in the ubiquitous spread of this religious "landowner":

> But apart from this divergence of dialects there is one great similarity in all these tribes. And this is the institution of the *tindana* (Moshi, Mamprussi, Dagomba etc.), *tigatu* (Kassena), *tengyonya* (Builsa), *tensoba* (Moshi)" (Cardinall 1920: 15-16).

The *tendana* were and still are the intermediaries passing between the veil separating the seen from the unseen world-- between the people living on the earth and the Earth itself. Cardinall therefore sees a "primacy" in the office of *tendana* as relating to farming matters and day-to-day living on the land and he asserts that this primacy was recognized by the YaNaa himself.

> At Yendi, for example, the Naa of the Dagomba preserves to this day the cap, gown, and necklace which were the insignia of the principal *tindana* , whom his forefathers slew. But the YaNaa has never dared to arrogate to himself the duties of the *tindana*. In fact, he humbles himself before him and appears disguised as a poor man when occasion arises for him to visit the *tindana*. For the latter not only owns the land, but by reason of his ownership is the only one who knows or is known to the spirit of the land. And it is worship of the earth-gods that is common throughout the country. It is said that there is no place without a *tindana*, and to this day when people move into uninhabited country, owing, perhaps, to the poverty of soil in their own, they obtain the land from the *tindana* who is nearest to the site of the new settlement (Cardinall 1920:19).

Political "Landowners"

Rattray says that before the advent of the "territorial ruler" (the Na), "the *Ten'dana* was head of the clan which was the largest political unit" (1932:259). The "landowner" exercised mainly a religious function in that he made sacrifices to the Earth and he purified the Earth when it was violated, but he also acted politically by preventing wars, by intervening in conflicts and by sitting with the elders to decide on important matters, and he acted economically by allocating land to strangers. Because his authority rested on the ancestors and it was to assure harmonious relations between all the people and the land, there was a "religious" primacy to the office. However, the Earth is a political,

economic and geographic entity as well as a ritual one, and because the "landowner", although essentially a ritual office holder, also at times exercised adjacent authority in other aspects of life, especially those that may threaten or be threatened by a disharmonious relationship with the Earth, he was also implicitly and incipiently a political leader.

In Cardinall's view, the *tindana* is a precursor to the *naba* or chief. "The distinction, therefore, is an important one between a *tindana* and a *naba*. The former cares for the religious observance of the people, the latter was in process of developing into a political head, when the advent of the white man interfered with and accelerated the slow process of evolution" (Cardinall 1920:21). He also maintains that in Asante, and in southern Ghana as a whole, the office of political leader or chief arose out of the office of land priest and that his political authority is a direct extension of his religious authority. They are "landowners" primarily because of their relationship to the sacral Earth, not because of their political authority and the conquests of their forefathers. The Asantehene is therefore first and foremost an Earth priest whose political authority is prefaced on his role as ritual intermediary to the ancestor king/priests of the nation and through them to the Earth and to God during the *odai* festivals and *odwira* (thanksgiving) festivals.

Around the 16th century in western Dagbon there was an attempt to combine these offices. Cardinall says: "These traditions (drum histories) agree in that the first arrivals of these chief-families seized and slew the *tindana* of the land and thus came to them their over lordship" (Cardinall 1920:16). However, all over Gonja, and in eastern Dagbon, Nanumba and in Anufoland these ritual heads along with their people were assimilated into the state system at the level of "commoner" status. Here, even today, the two roles remain distinct, though there was, until very recently, a priority given to the ritual landowner when it came to allotting land to farmers.

Elders and Earth Priests

The Konkomba and the Anufo distinguish between "those who hold the people" or "elder" and "those who hold the land" or "Earth priests". The "elder" has one function and the "Earth priest" has two. Among the Konkomba, "the term *onekpel* is applied to the senior man of the kin group which occupies a district or to the senior men of its subdivisions. Of the elder it is said, 'he holds the people', *odzo benib*. Where there is no Earth priest the "elder" may serve in his place" (Tait 1963:35). But the Konkomba recognize two functions in the title and role of Earth priest: "as the form of the word shows, he is the 'owner of the Earth'; of him, it is said, 'he holds the people, he holds the Earth too', *o dzo beniib, o dzo keteng mu*" (Tait 1963:36).

This division between secular and religious authority also finds its counterpart in the community as a whole. Among the Konkomba and Anufo, the newcomers to an area are distinguished from the descendants of the original settlers. Tait says: "In contrapuntally organized clan and district the two kin groups are known as *onekpelanib* and *otindanib*, the Elder's people and the Owner of the Earth's people; the latter are said to be the earlier settlers in the district" (1963:36).

Among the Konkomba and Anufo we see a connection similar to that of "divine right" between the Earth priest and his shrine. Tait says: "In another sense, *otindaa* means 'one who was sent by the Earth'." "He or she is therefore one who stands in a special relation to the Earth, and may be called on to cut the throat of a fowl or animal sacrificed to the Earth shrine" (Tait 1963:36). The "landowner" is also a messenger or delegate who represents the Earth in all matters concerning society's relationship with the Earth. The office and authority of "landowner" is therefore from the Earth itself through the ancestors and is demonstrated, validated and confirmed in sacrifice. To the Anufo, the claim to the office of Earth priest is ultimately substantiated by the shrine itself. As they say, "the shrine knows the voice of its owner". To snub his authority, to take land without his permission or perform the sacrifices in his stead incurs the wrath of the Earth.

In the past no one in eastern Dagbon would attempt to arrogate to himself the right and duty to offer sacrifice or to claim the office of "landowner" if he or antecedents were not the founders of the place. This comes as a result of first settlement (see also Rattray 1932:285). The establishment of an original settlement or an autonomous community is dependent on establishing a relationship with the Earth shrine of the new place. In an account of this drawn from the Konkomba, Tait says:

> When a man or group of men wish to go and settle in a stretch of unoccupied bush, they consult a diviner who discovers for them whether or not it is advisable to move and, if the answer be positive, the location of the shrines, commonly groves of trees, in the new area they propose to occupy. Thus a new relationship is established from the beginning between a group of kinsmen and the territory they occupy. Migration does not necessitate the cutting of all links with the shrines of the parental district, although the links die out in time; but it does imply the immediate carrying out of separate sowing rites and Earth rites. The first and major step to district autonomy has been taken, and a new clan and a new district have come into being (Tait 1963: 39).

But this need to consult diviners and establish a relationship with the Earth did not apply when someone else was there first. Thus in places where some group, for example the Dagombas, have already settled, the Konkombas say, "the land is for the Dagomba" (Tait 1963:39). In this case the newcomers simply depend on the intercession of the existing Dagomba "landowner".

The Spoilt Earth

Tait, who studied the Konkomba as a prelude to what he considered as his main work which was to study the Dagomba, was ever sensitive to the elementary political and religious strata shared by the two groups. He pointed out that among the Konkomba and Dagomba there are certain acts of desecration which unleash chaos or a state of "ritual pollution" on the eco-system. Among these are certain lesser, more localized offenses such as sexual acts in the bush, the occurrence of a "bad death" (someone dying alone in the bush or by drowning) or the dragging of a branch of a certain thorn tree (*nabuli*) across the surface of the land which can render it infertile. But the most abhorrent act is the spilling of human blood through war, tribal conflict or murder (see Rattray 1932:258, Froelich 1963: 151).

Following such an event the relationship is shattered, a state of ritual pollution ensues, and fertility and vitality can only be restored by a ritual of purification called the "burying the blood" or "smoothing of the land" (cf. Rattray 1932: 258). If the land is not purified there are dire consequences. As Rattray quotes his informant: "the land is a bitter thing, it will cast out, finish, your house (if you refuse to purify it)" (1932:258). Cardinall (1917, GNA, Adm. 67/5/1, 147) gives an account of such a "burying of the blood" ceremony which was to reconcile the two Konkomba villages of Kanjok in Togo and Sambul in Ghana. As he explains it, the infraction is not just between the two fighting parties but also between the Earth and everyone who depends on it for sustenance. Later in the essay we will examine a text of such a ritual in Anufoland.

The very threat of war is a also threat to the stability of these relationships and one of the duties of a Earth priest is to prevent war by casting down his animal skin (the insignia of his office) between the combatants (Rattray 1932:257). Rattray says that even the threat of this destabilizing event is so perverse that "To raise the war cry necessitates purification, even when fighting has not followed, and not one has been killed . . ." (1932:125).

Thus the ritual has a dual purpose. Because of their beliefs in an ecology which brings together both the seen and the unseen worlds, the ritual focuses the warring parties on a common, more basic problem which unites them--the need to live in harmony or not to live at all. The state of war is unnatural and leads to some form of death for everyone. The presence of war constitutes a break with life and brings about a state of deadly contagion and it will ultimately lead to death for all. The very fruitfulness of the earth is affected by this contagion, and its re-establishment depends on ceasing hostilities and reconciling differences. Thus the ritual of the "burying of the blood" both offers the possibility of reconciliation and makes reconciliation a necessary step for the resumption of life. Existentially speaking, without that reconciliation there still exists a state of war.

Old "Landlords" and Land Tenure

Although the chiefly peoples of N. Ghana, the Dagombas and Gonjas, now exercise control over the land, even those of western Dagbon who combined both offices under the chief, have not been "landlords" in the Western or even feudal meaning of the word. Jack Goody stresses that in the past the "ownership" of chiefs was over people, not land as such. "Politically, chiefship tended to be over people rather than over land; these a leader had to try to attract as well as restrain" (Goody 1971:30). People supplied the labour which produced the food. But land was of little consequence. Goody goes on to say, "In Africa labour requirements led to slavery but not serfdom; trading towns like Kano and Bida in northern Nigeria, or Salaga and Bole in northern Ghana, were surrounded by villages of slaves which supplied the ruling and commercial groups" (Goody 1971:30 ftn. 20). Until very recently land was not viewed as an economic entity. Skalnik (1983) maintains that in the past "wealth served non-economic goals almost exclusively. It was a source of prestige and a means for paying and feeding any army. Nor was land considered as an economic interest; the jurisdiction of any ruler over his territory did not imply ownership of the land. His authority was viewed only in terms of political (i.e. organizational, moral and ideological) authority".

The historical record also testifies that chiefs traditionally did not allocate land in the North. Staniland quotes H.A. Blair, "the most knowledgeable of British D.C.s in Dagomba" on this question saying: "Right of control is vested in the Ya-Na, for the decision of boundary dispute between Chiefs, but not for the apportionment of land outside Yendi sub-division. Similarly sub-divisional Chiefs have no right to apportion land to persons except within their own towns . . . The Chief does not grant farming land to individuals. He is considered not to have any right over farms . . . *Tindamba* still have power over Chiefs and are feared" (Staniland quoting from Assistant D.C., Dagomba, to D.C. Dagomba, 13 Aug. 1936 [N.A.G.T., ADM 2/15] Staniland 1975:16).

Rattray describes the position of the Chiefs in pre-colonial times thus:
- people assemble at his house to dance (social functions)
- the chief wears a red cap and people salute him (prestige and sumptuary display).
- when it was "red" the chief ran to the *Tendana* who had the power.
- the land never belonged to the chief.
- chiefs could not fine an man or impel him to do forced labour.
- chieftaincy was "like a wife" because one had to bid for it with cows.
- a chief's profit was in his right to seize and sell strangers (slaves).
- it was forbidden for a chief to sacrifice.

A Changing North

These concepts have gone through many changes. The primacy of the *tindana* in distribution of land to farmers now only applies far in the bush, away from district and

regional centres where the Chief claims this right. In the towns and cities where land is sought for building, commerce or industry, it is the regional governmental bureaucracies, the Lands Department and the signature of the Chief, especially the Ya-Na, that counts. The key to understanding these changes is a conceptual shift that has occurred, from land as the sacralized patrimony of the ancestors, to land as a "people" who could be coerced, and finally to land as a scarce economic, and therefore political, resource (see also Rattray 1932: 259ff).

Rattray, drawing from his observations in the 1920's, makes an insightful commentary on this transition process:

> The territorial Ruler, the only Chief recognized by our Government, in this instance, ignores the *Ten'dana*. I found this old man living alone in a hovel and bitterly lamenting the fate which had befallen him. The functions, too of the old section leaders was gradually but surely being usurped by men who, like the Chief, had bought their positions as head-men in the various sections. Any man who can raise the money can become a *Kambonaba* (Chief of the gunmen) as they are called. This system is a pernicious one. A man, having bought the post, proceeds to make what he can out of it to recoup himself for his initial outlay.

Captain Rattray quotes one informant as saying, "They, the Chiefs and their sons, prefer rascals for their minor posts and keep on changing them to get the presents, which each new candidate must bring before he is installed." And he goes on to say, "Positions of authority are tending to fall into the hands of ambitious and unscrupulous individuals who have taken full advantage of our lamentable ignorance of the conditions under which the Native administration functioned prior to our advent" (1932:260). One wonders if today he might also lament the ignorance of the development teams.

Ritual Authority under Contention

Over the last century the institution of "elder" or Chief has increased in importance and has absorbed the political and economic roles formerly belonging to the Earth priest. Although the institution of *tindana* still brings together all peoples who depend on the land for life and fertility and most people still look to him to carry out the rites rather than the Chief or his appointees, this too is now changing. Nowadays Chiefs are beginning to claim ritual as well as political possession of the land in order to strengthen their overall authority as chiefs.

An example of this occurred in the recent government-orchestrated attempt at reconciliation in Salaga when Muslim clerics were appointed by the Gonja Chiefs to perform a "sacrifice" for peace while the opposing group insisted that only their *tindanas* had the right to officiate at the ceremony. The incident almost thrust the two

parties back into full-scale war. In the Anufo case of the "burying of the blood" below we see a similar tactic being used by the Chereponi *feme* who had appointed an elder of his own family as his "Earth priest" and, in order to satisfy the Muslim majority in Chereponi, he directed the Chereponi Imam to "sacrifice" a sheep in the market a short time after the Sangbana "landowner" performed the "burying of the blood". Such "sacrifices" are considered unorthodox by Muslims and the appointment of an Earth priest by a Chief is considered invalid by adherents of ATR.

The northern "ethnic" conflicts are essentially land wars. It is no longer the "people" of the land but the land itself as an economic commodity that is of interest to the modern day combatants, the 21st Century territorial rulers and their former subjects. Yet, ironically, it is the land as a ritual entity that, sooner or later, all are forced to come back to in order to insure a lasting peace, so they are at a very basic level, also religious wars. Today the territorial rulers show renewed interest in the authority of the *tindana*. This office and the incumbent responsibility to offer sacrifice affords the autochthones (*utindanib*) holding the office a residual claim to land ownership and popular support. Since this is one of the central issues in the recent conflicts, the needed rites of reconciliation are not being performed. Where the farmers would usually prefer to make the reconciliation sooner it is in the interests of politicians and those holding power to postpone this and try to build some religious legitimacy around themselves or their appointees.

Nature may Decide but Divine Right will Win

Thus at present the two parties are at a ritual stalemate. The danger in such a stalemate is that it merely elongates the state of war. We are still in what can be considered a "liminal period", a time of "mourning" but it cannot last forever. If it does not lead to reconciliation "the land will be bitter" they say, and it may degenerate once again to a "hot" war.

Rattray (1932:258) makes the comment that action is not always taken until "misfortune overtakes" those responsible. This rainy season (1999) the North has experienced the heaviest rains in living memory (since 1935). Few farms were spared flooding. Development and relief organizations are already anticipating the need for relief aid and are preparing for severe famine conditions by March. Since the North feeds the South, all of Ghana will be affected and general price hikes with corresponding raises in salaries are also anticipated.

Hardest hit, as usual, will be the farmers. To the farmers in the eastern part of the Northern Region, regardless of their tribal identity, this will not to be put down simply to the vagaries of African weather. Now, as in times past, the very first answer to the "why" question, in the minds of all the peoples on the land, is the disruption of their relationship to the Earth through the hostilities and the blood that has remained "unburied" these past years. They will be reminded of this by diviners whenever any misfortune arises.

Even though the concepts are changing in the face of new economic and political pressures, when faced with a common life-threatening foe, it is likely that all parties will finally forget their differences and address the problem at the ritual level. The more excessive and critical these dangers become the greater the possibility that it will be done quickly and in a way that meets the ritual imperatives of everyone involved. The famine that is predicted for this "hot" season, therefore, may well create the "heat" needed for a more complete reconciliation.

The "Burying of the Blood" at Chereponi.

In order to illustrate the issues involved and how these were dealt with in a specific case, I would like to present an account of a ritual of "burying of the blood" which I witnessed at Chereponi in 1984. The ritual was necessitated by the fatal stabbing of a youth who was a member of the Chief's family by another youth from Sangbana during an argument in the market. The argument was about whether or not the Chereponi Chief had any ritual authority over the Earth and thus over the welfare of the people of Sangbana.

The ritual was enacted because of a crisis or series of misfortunes which were consistently interpreted by the Sangbana elders and local diviners as the direct result of the Earth having been "spoiled" by the stabbing. The particular misfortune that was the "last straw" for some elders was the moribund condition of the mother of one of the youths who had been involved in fight, along with that fact that, at the onset of the rainy season very little food was left in their granaries. My own interest in the case was occasioned by the fact that the woman was the wife of my most closest informant, Kobina.

There are three issues surrounding the case that closely resemble those of the so-called "Northern Conflict". Besides the issue of the stabbing itself and the compensation that is called for, there is the matter of removing the ritual pollution. If not removed, it is believed that the people will continue to be at risk from a range of dangers and chaotic influences. The third issue is the contested ritual office of Earth priest which completes the role of "landowner" for Chiefs.

History of the Anufo and Chereponi

Like the Gonja and Dagomba, the Anufo are territorial rulers who derive from a group of raiders. They entered the area of N. Ghana in the mid-18th C. and conquered the local peoples, gradually incorporating them into their centralized state system at a lower status as Commoners (*njem*). It clear from the accounts of Froelich (1949), Kirby (1986) and others that the people of Sangbana, were formerly "Kpalibas", one of the Konkomba peoples. The mis-pronounced name of Chereponi itself, "*n cha n kpendi*" in this Konkomba dialect means "I am going for water", which, as tradition tells us, is what Sangbana women told the geographer who mapped out

the names of the towns and villages of that area in the 1920s. Their relationship with the Earth and the rituals they follow in this regard are therefore identical to those described above.

The area of Northern Ghana inhabited by the Anufo is about 100 km north of Yendi. After the First World War it was annexed to the Gold Coast as part of British Mandated Togoland. Its capital, Chereponi, which was never a traditional village but grew up at a junction along the road from Yendi to Sansanne Mango during the colonial era, is situated on the traditional land of nearby Sangbana village which claims the custodianship of the Earth. The first Chereponi chief, Malba, was not from the traditional Anufo line of chiefs but from an Anufo commoner lineage. He bid for the title and was appointed chief of the area in the 1930's, as the local administration began to implement the policies of "Indirect Rule", because he could speak English and had culled favor with the British and the Ya-Naa in Yendi--also probably because both the British and the Ya-Naa feared that a real Anufo chief would have divided loyalties to Sansanne Mango, the Anufo capital in French Togoland.

At the time of the ritual, the chief of Chereponi, Abdulai, was the son of Malba. Although up to this time neither he nor his father before him had ever laid claim to ritual authority, he nevertheless refused permission for the sacrifice to be performed because it impinged on the authority he was trying to establish as full "landlord" (including the ritual office) of Chereponi. At this point the reader is asked to follow the account and commentary of the "Burying of the Blood" ritual at Chereponi (see the Appendix).

Background to the Anufo Ritual

Like the Gonjas and the Dagombas of eastern Dagbon, the distinctions the autochthones made between political and ritual leadership were incorporated. The assimilated Konkomba political leader or "elder" became "*miekpie*" and the ritual leader or custodian of the Earth shrine became "*miefo*". Like the other chiefly peoples, the Anufo only bothered to assert their position as elder (*miekpie*) and not Earth priest (*miefo*). If they thought that a sacrifice was needed because of drought, famine or to remove some ritual pollution which had "spoiled the earth", the Anufo chiefs would simply round up the local Earth priests and force them to make whatever sacrifices or rituals were deemed necessary.

I witnessed such a sacrifice at the Anufo village of Kudani in 1984. The Anufo elders called upon the Earth priest from Nanchem, a Komba village some 10 miles to the west, to come and make a sacrifice at their Earth shrine in order to insure good rainfall and fertility in the next farming season. Both the Anufo rulers and their "commoners" from Nanchem subscribed to the view that "you can't fool the ancestors or the Earth shrine" for the shrine "knows the voice of its owner" (Kirby 1986).

By the late 1970's the "ethnic" consciousness that we find generally arising in Northern Ghana because of the establishment of schools and "development" in general was also prevalent in Ghana's Anufoland, locally called "Nalori". Along with this there was strong popular movement afoot to claim their own paramount chieftaincy and governmental district. Up to this point both the Chief's supporters and the opposition were in agreement.

The Chief however felt he had a better claim if didn't antagonize Yendi. For the very process for gaining more independence would involve going through that political and chiefly bottleneck. He also realized that being a "Commoner", and without the support of the Ya-Naa, he would have little chance of winning the Nalori paramountcy against such Anufo "Noble" claimants as Baye (see Kirby 1986).

After the change in constitutions in 1979 regarding the ownership of land in the Northern Region being with the Chiefs (see Skalnik 1985), those who were appointed by the Ya-Naa, like chief Abdulai, following the example of the Dagombas, also began to claim ritual jurisdiction over the land though they had not done so previously. In some ways this case put their claim to the test.

Over the course of February and March, 1984, the elders of Sangbana discuss the necessity of renewing the Earth shrine in view of the desacralization of the land which had occurred because of the knifing. Strictly speaking, Chereponi is no longer under Sangbana's political jurisdiction so the elders informed the Chief of Chereponi, the Imam and the new Earth priest who had been appointed by the Chief's family, that something should be done. But nothing is done. To make matters worse, there are many "strange disruptions" including elders being beaten up by "spirits of the wild" as they walk home at night, and many cases of illness which, like Atifala's case, are attributed to chaotic forces. Diviners are consistently reporting that the cause of all this trouble is the Earth shrine and they are advising their clients "to remove the obstruction" (the ritual pollution caused by the incident).

Therefore all of the elders of the 13 compounds of Sangbana contribute an amount each to buy a goat and on the morning of 1 April, they sacrifice it to the Earth. At first there is some confusion as to whether the sacrifice of the goat should be made at the Earth shrine itself (*mie amue*) called "Chanchangu" or at the spot in town where the blood had been spilled. The Chereponi chief does not want them to make the sacrifice in the town as that would be a sign that they control the land. But exercising their "divine right" and risking his wrath and that of his appointed Earth priest called Langa, they decide to follow tradition and "bury the blood" (*kata mboja*) at the place in the town where the blood was actually spilled.

The Ritual itself

The animals sacrificed include a chicken and a goat. It was explained to me that in the past, each of the quarreling parties had to supply a part of the sacrifice. One was obliged to give the guinea corn beer, the other the sacrificial animals. But in this case Sangbana supplies everything. A hole is dug about a foot deep and six inches in diameter. Then the sacrifice begins with invocations and libation-pouring. Finally the chicken's throat is cut and its blood is dripped into the hole. Following this the goat's throat is also cut and its blood poured into the hole. The very knife used in the fight is used to sacrifice the animals. After the goat is sacrificed its meat is eaten on the spot by the elders and representatives of the offending parties. Only part of the cooked liver, the head, the feet and the offal of the goat are left and these are buried in the hole along with the blood, the chicken and the knife.

The Interpretation

The actual case of the ritual and its background at Chereponi was presented to tie the issues to a concrete situation in which people make real choices to resolve complex situations. An interpretative reading might proceed as follows:

The people of Sangbana believe they have a prior claim to the land stretching back through their ancestry, which, though they wouldn't like to admit it, happens to be Konkomba. Now this claim is being challenged by the Chief by virtue of his authority as a Dagomba sub-chief, appointed by the Ya-Naa, who is by virtue of the constitutions of 1979 the "owner" of Anufo land. Most of the people of the area want to live in peace. They all believe that the rites are necessary to keep misfortune and disaster at bay. But the Chief, realizing that such rites jeopardize his claim to the complete office of "landowner" refuses to let them be performed. The people wait for more than three years before finally performing the rite. This is to avoid problems with the Chief but it is also necessary for mourning. As time goes on, however, misfortunes seem to increase in intensity and gradually a consensus begins to form, which is backed up by diviners and is constantly reinforced by quiet discussions among the elders. The consensus is that the reason for these misfortunes is the spilling of blood, and the subsequent "spoiling" of the Earth. The elders and Earth priest of the affected territory gradually decide that no matter what trouble the Chief makes for them the sacrifice must be performed. Finally the rites are performed unilaterally by the Sangbana elders and their Earth priest. The Chief's people are annoyed to discover that the sacrifice is made without their permission and attempt to fine them without any success. Throughout the area popular support favors the Sangbana Earth priest and elders and not the Chereponi chief or the Ya-Naa.

Conclusion

Western institutions of development and conflict-management (even those with "Christian" foundations) operate out of a set of Western cultural and philosophical

biases which subtly attach negative values to religious beliefs, especially to those of ATRs. Yet if they are to elicit the full cooperation of African beneficiaries in establishing a lasting peace, those who are guiding conflict-management interventions need to be more aware of the culture-based issues--most especially those arising from ATRs--as these are perceived by those directly involved in the conflicts.

Many development agencies have claimed that they fulfill their consultative obligation to cultural sensitivity by hiring African operatives at the local levels. But this awareness is not assured simply by placing Africans in charge of local projects. Our inbuilt ethnocentrism, and the fact that our own cultural presuppositions are usually most hidden from us applies equally to African agents of development. And the Africans are responsible to their bosses for their interventions, and ultimately everyone is responsible to the Western institutions of development for what is deemed "logical" and "valuable". In the long run this form of negligence will prove far more costly than taking the time to learn about the real issues and how people think about them.

In this essay we have tried to explore the intricacies of the stake-holder's world in the context of a peace-making process. It is a world that is both visible and invisible but in which the latter has a priority in the local worldview. The claim to be consultative urges development teams to recognize and understand the stake-holder's world and needs even when it comes to "religious" realities. We are advocating that those involved take the time to go more deeply into the people's perspective. Some very concrete needs arising from this case would be:

> 1. the need of the people on the ground for complete reconciliation rather than a "managed" conflict, for if reconciliation does not take place the chaotic situation remains, rendering all things unbalanced and infertile, endangering life itself at all levels and perpetuating the state of war.

> 2. the need of the people to go through a period of social mourning in which denial, anger and acceptance must feature before arriving at a re-integration stage.

> 3. the need of the people to go through a rite of reconciliation which is commonly accepted and performed by ritual office-holders who are accepted by all the parties, involving the various conflicting parties and the Earth, during which the pollution is nullified.

This last point is particularly critical in the case of the "Northern Conflict" bearing in mind that the ritual authority that is needed to reconcile the conflict is itself being contested. The management teams must therefore be critically aware of the historical transitions that have occurred in the concepts and roles of "landowner" and "chief" so that they can understand the various criteria for legitimacy and illegitimacy based on ATRs and understand the biases, vested interests or political and philosophical leanings of the various parties, the Ghanaian government, other governments, and those of their own development organizations.

Applications to the "Northern Conflict" for Enduring Peace

What is the role of conflict-management experts and development agents here? The key to good management is understanding the length and breadth of the problem. It will certainly mean entering more deeply into all the cultural issues (even the religious ones) at all levels and helping those involved to clarify these issues to themselves. When the situation becomes clear, people do get involved.

Formerly the non-chiefly tribes of N. Ghana did not organize themselves beyond the tribal level. But in the last conflict they united against all the chiefly groups. The fighting ranged widely over a large territory including hundreds of traditional districts each with their own with Earth shrines--some with Dagomba Earth priests, some with Konkomba priests and some with others. The new conditions call for adapting the traditional procedures of reconciliation. Earth shrines are limited territorially. But a trans-territorial war requires reconciliation at that level. It is beyond the scope of this paper to suggest particular ritual innovations or to speculate about the particular sacrifices, their rubrics, or when, where and how they might take place. But if development organizations truly wish to assist in the process of peacemaking and insuring a genuine peace and reconciliation, it may involve them in the ritual aspects as well as in the political and economic.

At any rate, besides the local rituals performed in each affected district, the broader context would suggest organizing a mass ritual of "burying of the blood" by involving a number of Earth shrine custodians to represent the areas where the major battles and carnage took place. One could also envision that the symbolic ritual would accommodate Christian and Muslim clerics and performances since both of these religions are trans-tribal and trans-territorial.

In the Chereponi example the state of chaos, or what the inhabitants believed to be such, had reached a crescendo. The inhabitants could no longer tolerate the insecurity of an imbalanced ecology. So they took matters into their own hands for the common good and performed the ritual of reconciliation even though it meant going against the political authority of the Ya-Na. In this case, affliction brought the picture into sharper focus. Perhaps development agencies can stimulate this kind of clarity through discussion and workshops etc. without having to depend on crisis or affliction. But they will only be successful if they do not diverge too far from the real culture-based issues.

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APPENDIX

Text of the "Burying of the Blood" Ritual at Chereponi

1. I call upon *Nyeme Cela* (the High God) and the *bonvofo* (the village founder).
2. He came to start the village and all others followed.
3. It is your own water! (pouring libation)
4. Today is Wednesday.
5. Here is pito, fire-quenching beer.
6. Let us receive help from our grandfathers and fathers.
7. When you 'got up' (were alive) nobody saw things as we do today.
8. Everything has now spoilt.
9. I am an old man and also a child.
10. This case has come to meet me.
11. It is serious.
12. It is three years now that dangers have been with us.
13. I do not want any more.
14. If any bad man or 'bad tree' wants to bring danger to the village let it be on his head.
15. All of you 'get up' and receive this and bring us life and health.
16. After this, the fire I am quenching should not bother us again.
17. I am removing the blood and by this I am quenching the fire.
18. We do not want to see it any more.
19. If there are any bad spirits in the village, then help us. Send them away.
20. We do not know if they are here or not.
21. As you told us, the land is ours. We are now removing the trouble.
22. All (kinds of) troubles have been coming to us.
23. The one who started the village must come to help us.
24. You took the lead and we followed.
25. If the elephant leads, the calf follows.
26. So everything that comes comes upon OUR heads.
27. We do not know how we have faulted our grandfathers and fathers.
28. The one who started the land, if you are for us you will show it to those who say the land is not for us.
29. If it is [addressing the ancestor] a *Karamo* or any Commoner. It is you who have told us to do this.
30. You must help us along with our grandfather Yanumbo whose farm was on this spot.
31. [He pours the rest of the libation on the ground]
32. Here is your red chicken.
33. Our grandfather who started the village, it is the fire-quenching chicken, his red-faced chicken.

34. It is to the High God and the Earth. It is your chicken.
35. This is Kwaku's house; we are cleaning it.
36. It was his children who brought the case, here not he himself.
37. The person who does not want Kwaku to stay in the house, we have left blood on that person.
38. If anybody thinks badly of Kwaku let it be turned against him.
39. [The chicken's throat is cut, blood is dripped into the hole and then the chicken itself is thrown into it]
40. Here is your goat.
41. It is a white one.
42. Clean the whole town.
43. If it is a *Karamo* that wants to take the town from us let us see it.
44. If you let us see the person.
45. The children did not cause the trouble.
46. They were in their own house.
47. It is only that the townspeople say they hate them.
48. If it is a *Karamo* that wished to cheat us and get the land, all is over to you.
49. This Earth has an owner.
50. Our grandfather Nabue, you farmed here, so 'get up'.
51. The danger that Jabale [the one who committed the crime] brings us should turn against him and if it was somebody that sent him, it should turn against all of them.
52. [The blood of the goat is meticulously poured into the hole and the goat itself is put into the hole.]
53. All black thoughts against us let them turn back on them.
54. All dangers are what we are covering up here.
55. Anybody who says he will take over the land you must 'get up' and stand behind us.
56. [Then all use their right hand in pushing the dirt into the hole on top of the sacrifices.]

Discussion of the Rite:

1. Note the primal significance of the un-named founder of the village and the claim of his direct descendant to the ritual office and the right to make the sacrifice.
6. As in #1, the right to call upon their ancestors establishes a claim of ownership.
11. "Serious" here means life-threatening for the community.
12. Three years has elapsed since the offense without any ritual. This pause afforded the time for communal mourning to occur. During this time people gradually came to interpret wider misfortunes and communal disasters as a sign that the Earth has been "spoiled".
13. The level of tolerance has been reached.
14. Evils are brought about not by the Earth itself but by the chaotic conditions resulting from the unbalanced ecology. "Bad tree" is a reference to the chaotic spirits of the bush or to the presence of witchcraft. Witches are often thought to inhabit certain types of trees simply referred to as "bad trees".

15. All of you--God, the ancestors and the Earth.
16. The difficulties experienced and the underlying condition of ecological imbalance is unstable and destructive like "fire".
17. Direct reference to the spilling of human "blood" which brought about the condition of ritual impurity.
19. Reference to evil forces and influences of chaos as in #14 above.
20. The true meaning of events in the "visible world" can only be perceived through diviners who look into the "invisible world". The invisible truth cannot be perceived directly but only inferred from events. Misfortunes demonstrate the acute possibility that such forces are at large causing trouble.
21. The connection is made between ownership of the land and the Earth custodian and the duty to restore harmony.
22. Connection with a series of misfortunes. See #20.
23-26. The claim of ownership and responsibility, which is a common theme running through the ritual monologue, is here based on direct inheritance.
27. A reference to the fact that their relationship with the ancestors itself is being challenged and that the ancestors should come to the aid of their true descendants.
28. Calling upon the ancestors and original settler to be the judge of the case
29. The chief's people who are now claiming "ownership" of the land are Muslims. They use Muslim rituals to lend further support to their claim.
30. Yanumbo, most recent ancestor and source of identity and traditions.
32. The sacrifice of chicken begins. It is "red" to repel the danger involved.
35. "House" refers to his relationship with the Earth which is the object of contention.
37. The fight among the youth of the town (supporters of the Chief) and those of Sangbana was itself occasioned by opposing claims over the land. They claim that the fault lies with the Chief's supporters.
41. Sacrifice of a white goat to symbolize innocence, victory, cleansing.
43. Reference to Chief's supporters and invoking the Earth's guardianship. "Let us see" that justice is done.
44. The true cause of the problem should be revealed.
47. The Chief's supporters are blamed for the disruption.
48. Greed is imputed to the Chief and supporters.
49-51 The claim to land ownership is from the recent ancestor Nabue and his "fathers" in a long line claiming ownership claiming ownership. Jabale and Chief's supporters are blamed.
53. Invoking protection from the ancestors.
54. "Covering up" or burying the dangers and misfortunes caused by the murder.
55. Invoking ancestors and Earth to come to their aid and support their claim for land "ownership".
56. Ritual burying is done by all parties in the conflict. Because the ritual itself establishes the claim which is being contested only the Sangbana elders are present.