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OCCULTISM AS VEHICLE OF MEANING ON WEST AFRICAN LITERATURE

We often talk of African traditional religion and philosophy, the two often go together as the former is the translation of the latter through words and practice and the latter is their belief or way of thinking. Africans are generally known to be religious; religion is so interwoven with their way of life that it is difficult to sever it from their behaviour anywhere: in the office, farmland, market, etc. Though each person is considered as an embodiment of this religion, one cannot talk of religious individuals because religion belongs to the community with individuals as members. It is therefore difficult to detach oneself from one's traditional religion or culture without creating a psychological vacuum in the victim as Mbiti rightly puts it:

A person cannot detach from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of security, his kingships and the entire group of those who make him aware of his own existence. To be without one of these corporate elements of life is to be out of the whole picture¹.

The beliefs and practice of African people are also referred to as folklore which could be interpreted as custom, tradition, beliefs, magic, legends, rituals, proverbs, myths, charms, omens, superstitions and any other behavioural pattern that distinguishes Africans from any other homogenous group of people. The main problem about the African

¹ Mbiti, John S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, Great Britain, Morrison & Gibb Ltd., London and Edinburgh, 1976, p. 2.

folkways is that they are not documented as the christian and muslim religions. They are inscribed in the mind of every African who is born into and so grows with them. They are not acquired, neither can one be converted into them, but they are there in existence. Any wonder why they appear in many African fiction.

Africans believe, among other things, in life after death but this belief does not hope for a happier future in Heaven or Paradise neither is it scared of the punishment of the hell fire. It is seen from materialistic and physical point of view only. For this reason, Africans insist on earthly matters with man in the centre of their beliefs and activities. So their folkways are concerned with material welfare of man on earth and accordingly they endeavour to make man happy and comfortable. Any form of problem which threatens the existence of man causes concern and therefore revives these religious activities in attempt to savegarde and protect him. Occultism is part of these activities.

Occultism and its various manifestations have been known for ages to various cultures of the world. It could be traced to the ancient medieval and Renaissance culture. In fact, the heritage of Greece and Rome on which much of modern civilization was build is full of occult beliefs.

In spite of its humanist claims this science was even considered more important in the Renaissance period than in medieval times. But with the science age of Isaac Newton in the 17th century, occultism was looked upon as mere peasant superstition and the 18th century philosophers of the age of Reason believed that occult forces were dead. The technicians of the first industrial Revolution did not think of occultism at all while the Victorian Empire builders saw it a something practised by only inferior races.

We can see that between the 17th and early part of 19th century Occultism was suppressed either by science or reason. It only reappeared with the radical revolutionary, political and social manifestations of anti-colonial struggles in the effort to liberate and preserve the environment and regain the human dignity.

The importance of occultism cannot be over-emphasized. It provides an answer to human aspirations and problems which neither the reason nor modern science has been able to satisfy or contain.

The century Dictionary defines Occultism as "the doctrine or rites of things occult or mysterious; the Occult sciences or their study; mysticism; esotericism". It is the study of the hidden or unknown things. In the Middle Ages, occult science or occultism covered what we now

know as Physical Sciences. It used to mean those things which were unknown but which later became known through experiment. It also had another meaning, namely mysticism or esotericism which is relevant to our study here. This science means divine unfoldment of the unknown.

The existence of occultism calls for knowledge of laws or forces unknown to common man through modern science. These laws will pry into the invisible world with the aim of discovering the hidden facts. Richard Ingalese gives a clear definition of occultism thus:

Everything in the universe is an unfoldment of Deity itself, and Occultism is the science of that unfoldment. It teaches the laws under which that unfoldment takes place, not only upon the objective plane of life but also upon the subjective plane².

This definition implies that occultism tries to go beyond the objectivity of modern science which studies mostly the effects. It wants to discover the cause of phenomenon and so has both objective and subjective sides of things. The objective side is that which is unknown but could be discovered through experiment, but the subjective is that which cannot be ascertained or proved scientifically.

In the traditional African society, the cause of any sickness or mishap must be investigated because they believe that there are always two sides to it, namely physical which could be cured by medication, and the religious or psychological side caused, of course, by mystical or supernatural forces which Nigerians popularly refer to as 'remote control'. This is treated through rituals performed by religious ministers like the sacred specialists³ that some Europeans call witch-doctors. They are believed to have been specially chosen either in dreams or visions by spirit or living dead⁴, to perform the special duties. They are

² Richard Ingalese, *The History and Power of Mind*, Newcastle Publishing Co. Inc., California, 1976, p. 18.

³ According to E. G. Parrinder in *African Traditional Religion*, sacred specialists are the intermediaries between the gods and the mortals. These are priests, mediums, marabouts, diviners, witch-doctors etc., who explore and interpret problems which bug man so as to resolve them. These problems are caused by unknown (supernatural) phenomenon.

⁴ According to Emefie Ikenga-Metuh, the spirits are those who have never been human beings like supreme being, the Deities and some spirit forces. The living dead are the spirits of one time human beings. They are therefore disincarnated spirits like souls, ghosts, witches, ancestors, in *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions*.

therefore friends to the community which trusts and sees them as their protectors.

People consult the occultists for various reasons: natural disaster, search for love for husband or wife, mysterious disease, impotency, barrenness, birth of appropriate sex, success in business, politics or even exams, good or better harvest, etc.

With some selected literature books: *The Fall Apart*⁵, *Une Vie Hypothéquée*⁶, *Perpetur and the Habit of Unhappiness*⁷, *La Voie du Salut* followed by *Miroir de la vie*⁸, and *Xala*⁹, we shall examine the function of occultism as vehicle of meaning, whether it should be encouraged, discouraged, modified or reviewed. In the conclusion we shall discuss possible ways of improving the African medicine.

II

Occultism, form of folklore gives background to the stories, meaning to the structure and an insight into the characters of the novel. It could therefore be considered as a narrative technique.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe uses a lot of folktales as a narrative technique. An example of such tales is that narrated to Ezinma by her mother about the journey of the bird and the tortoise to the sky. The end of that tale is analogous to that of the novel. As the back of the tortoise is broken into pieces so is the clan of Umuofia caused by the intrusion of a foreign culture. So, apart from folktales which is the most important of the folklore, Achebe also uses occultism to give the same effect.

Achebe shows in *Things Fall Apart* how the Occultists are consulted on individual and communal issues, some of which are tied with the plot of the novel. The oracle is consulted when Ekwefi lost many of her children and prescriptions are given after which Ezinma is born. Later,

⁵ Achebe, Chinua (Nigeria) *Things Fall Apart*, London, Heinemann 1989.

⁶ Adiaffi, Anne-Marie (Cote d'Ivoire), *Une Vie hypothéquée* Abidjan-Dakar-Lone's Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1984.

⁷ Beti, Mongo (Cameroun), *Perpétue et L'habitude du Malheur* Paris, Buchet/Chastel, 1974.

⁸ Maïga Ka, Aminata (Sénégal), *La Voie du Salut*, followed by *Le Miroir de la Vie*, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1985.

⁹ Ousmane, Sembene (Sénégal), *Xala*, Présence Africaine, 1985.

the ceremony of "iyi-uwa" is performed by a priestess when it is confirmed that Ezinma is an "ogbanje" (ch. 9).

The author portrays through this ceremony a strong belief of the Ibos in the reincarnation. A normal child is not supposed to be sickly. Any such child must be an Ogbanje who can die any moment if this ceremony is not performed.

They believe also in the tutelary role of some of the deities. The priestess of Agbala, Chinelo, one day takes Ezinma to the Oracle because the goddess wants to see her. Nobody sees the Agbala but the chanting of Chinelo breaks through the dead of the night in praise of the deity. This chanting and the accompanying rituals by Chinelo call to mind the oral tradition which though unwritten mirrors the cosmic views and values of Umuofia people.

Occultist consultations give an insight into the character of individuals. The novel tells of Unoka's consultation of Agbala to find out why his harvest is always poor. The dramatic description of the Oracle does not only project its sacredness, solemnity and the mystery that surround it but also its extraordinary powers that make people respect it.

The way into the shrine was a round hole at the side of hill, just a little bigger than the round opening into a henhouse. Worshippers and those who came to seek knowledge from the god crawled on their belly through the hole and found themselves in a dark, endless apace in the presence of Agbala. No one had ever beheld Agbala, except his priestess. But no one had ever crawled into his awful shrine had come out without fear of his power¹⁰.

One cannot but see the African traditional culture and milieu at the background of this description. The Umofians are farmers who are attached to the earth. So the vocabulary is that of farmers: "hill, hen-house, hole". The divine power manifests itself in the potent and assured utterance of Agbala to Unoka:

"Hold your peace", screamed the priestess her coice terrible as it echoed through the dark void... You Unoka, are known in all the clan for the weakness of your machet and your hoe... Go home and work like a man¹¹.

¹⁰ Achebe C., *Things Fall Apart*, op. cit., p. 19.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 20.

Apart from the information on the occupation of Unoka as a farmer, Agbala portrays him as a lazy farmer who cannot work hard enough to produce a better harvest.

It is even revealed latter that he is an ill-fated man who has a bad "chi" or personal god. It is therefore not surprising to the reader when he dies shamefully with swelling in the stomach. He has neither burial nor funeral.

In *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*, the consultation made by Maria helps to know more about her character and that of the witch-doctor. It is Nkomedzo, the diviner himself who discloses to Essola the decisive role played by Maria in influencing the plot of the novel and the tragic end of Perpetue:

The witch-doctor who had a good memory, revealed in details how the mother of the young woman, his long time friend had taken him aside to drill him on what to tell her daughter before consulting her (translation mine)¹².

It is the intervention of the diviner which changes Perpetua's plan in life and thereby dictates the plot of the novel. The poor girl is intimidated into marrying Edouard whom she is told is rich. But she belatedly discovers, to her greatest disappointment and dismay that Edouard is only a poor man who is still struggling to make it in life - there starts the calvary of Perpetua. Thereafter, she is exploited, enslaved, brutalized, victimized, neglected and finally abandoned to die. Therefore the consultation of the diviner is linked up with the plot of the novel.

Mongo Beti portrays Nkomedzo, the witch-doctor as an impostor, a charlatan and a cheat as his dishonest role is the cause of Perpetue's premature and tragic death. Maria is seen as a greedy, materialistic and selfish woman who compromised her daughter's comfort and happiness. The friendship which has existed between her and the sacred diviner and their trick on Perpetue show the perversion which characterizes the post-independent society.

Acheba shows in *Things Fall Apart* a crucial consultation done on behalf of the community when white men arrive because of the feeling of insecurity caused by their presence. The Oracle reveals that:

¹² Beti M., *Perpétue et L'habitude du Malheur*, op. cit., p. 65.

The strange man would break their clan and
and spread destruction among them¹³.

This revelation pre-empt the disastrous consequence of cultural encounter. Soon the iconoclasts among them will get converted into the new faith as christians and join the strangers in disereating their land and fighting against them. Chinelo, the priestess calls the first converts "the excrement of the clan, and the new faith was a mad dog that had come to eat it up".

The imagery used by Achebe cannot be more appropriate "excrement" and "mad dog" are both useless entities and even nauseating in the society. In the language and understanding of the people, these converts are worthless members of the society. The new faith which accepts them is ignorant of their culture and causes disorder among them. Their joining the new faith is tantamount to their being dead to their culture as they no longer form one with them. The revelation alludes to the total disintegration of this clan and the subsequent death of the old order. So Achebe has succeeded through this imagery in translating accurately this peculiar experience without going into mediocrity. It is worth recalling that the Igbos use imagery and proverbs a lot. The author himself says that "among the Igbos proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten". So the occult language is saddled with proverbs and realities of traditional life.

The profesy of Chinelo is proved at the end of the novel when Okonkwo commits suicide. His tragic death symbolizes the tragic end of the traditional society. His solitary death (as we know) proves also that no single individual can win the whole community in judgment. Okonkwo decides to fight the whiteman alone against the advice of his friend. So he is left to die alone.

Among the abomination committed by the Christians is the de-masking of an Egwugwu which is a masked spirit. It is difficult to sever the science of occultism from the masquerade cult which like the former pries into the problems that natural science cannot handle. It is also used to maintain law and order in the clan. More important is that it is surrounded with aura of myth which attracts the respect of people. Chinua Achebe refers to the masquerades in *Things Fall Apart* as the "ancestral spirit" because the Ibos see them as their dead ancestors who are in continual communion with the living. This is why they bury

¹³ Acheb C., *Things Fall Apart*, op. cit., p. 128.

especially old people (believed to be nearer their ancestors) in the family compound. These masked spirits in the form of Egwugwu constitute a link between the living and the dead as Achebe puts it:

The land of the living was not far removed from the domain of the ancestors. There was coming and going between them, especially at festivals and also when an old man died, because an old man was very close to the ancestors. A man's life from birth to death was a series of transition rites which brought him nearer and nearer to his ancestors¹⁴.

They appear sometimes in fearful and scary way at festivals and ceremonies to the mortals. Their presence at the death of Ezendu is very remarkable as one of the most dreaded ancestral spirits is in attendance. He

was shaped like a coffin. A sickly odour hung in the air wherever he went, and this went with him. Even the greatest medicinemen took shelter when he was near. Many years ago another Egwugwu had dared to stand his ground before him and had been transfixed to the spot for two days. This one had only one hand and with it carried a basket full of water¹⁵.

These masked spirits are seen as the highest judicial body in the traditional society. Nine Egwugwu come to sit in judgment in the dispute between Ezewulu and his wife, Mgbafor. Achebe describes how smoke comes from the head of the Evil spirit, their leader. Here Charles summarizes the importance of the masked spirit as

the repository of all that was sacred, mythical, mysterious, cultural, superstitious and supernatural in Igbo culture. It was the supreme example that their departed ancestors did still walk the visible earth. Belonging to a society of achievement-oriented individualists where a man is judged by his own achievement... and kowtowing to no earthly ruler or king or

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 108-109.

emperor, the only "Father" the Igbo man would
bend knees for is what I have called his
Primal Father or the masked spirit¹⁶.

It is this 'Primal Father' that the Christians have the temerity to unmask. This is an abomination in the clan:

One of the greatest crimes a man could commit
was to unmask an Egwugwu in public, or to say
or do anything which might reduce its immortal
prestige in the eyes of the uninitiated¹⁷.

The Egwugwu's prestige is reduced by this unmasking, so also is the integrity of the clan. Umuofia clan and by implication African culture is stripped of its powers before the alien culture. The same powerlessness is portrayed when Abame is raised to the ground for killing a white stranger on 'iron horse'. The clan can no longer act as one in self defence because the whiteman in collaboration with African brothers has put a sword in the thing that holds them together. Therefore the unmasking of the Wgwugwu is analogous to the disintegration of the Igbo society. We have been able to prove that the masked spirits do not only represent the African belief and ancestral wisdom, they also give meaning to the plot.

Most occultists' consultations are done because of the African belief that there are two sides to any problem. In *Une Vie hypothéquée*, an old soldier of fifty years of age promises a pregnant woman that he will marry the baby if it is a girl and befriend him if he is a boy. The husband, Kouame, who before this promise has been wallowing in abject poverty, goes from Marabouts to diviners to make the sex of the baby female. The diviner who seems to be enlightened explains to Kouame that the sex of the baby depends on the nature of the sperm from the father and that no human intervention or effort can change it. But he still recommends some sacrifices for protection against evil spirits according to their traditional belief. Luckily for the couple a baby girl is born. Though the explanation of the diviner is scientific and convincing, the author Anne Marie Adiaffi seems to recommend both the orthodox medicine and the traditional one.

¹⁶ Nnolim, Charles E., *The Form and Function of the Folk Tradition in Achebe's Novels in Approaches to the African Novels: Essays in Analysis*, Saros International Publishers, Port Harcourt, 1992, p. 24.

¹⁷ Achebe C., *Things Fall Apart*, op. cit., p. 166.

In the same novel, we read how Kouadio becomes a famous medicine man because he received powers from the spirits to understand the language of beasts and plants and cure human diseases and sicknesses (pp. 20-22). This again displays African belief but Adiaffi tends to suggest that special attention be given to the traditional medicine as they are as effective as the orthodox type and even better for its reduced cost.

Maïga Ka, author of *La Voie du Salut (The Way of Salvation)* shares the view of merging the two medicines. Before the birth of Rabiadou, Rokaya consults a medicine woman to cure her sterility and at the same time she is receiving the appropriate gynecological treatment from her husband who is a medical doctor. It is difficult to know which of the two treatments cures her because she is receiving both of them simultaneously. Or could it be the two together?

In the same short story we learn with two generations of the same family, how a mother and a daughter try in their respective ways, according to their convictions, to retain the love and fidelity of their respective husbands. While Rokaya, her traditionalist mother goes to the marabouts to solve this problem, her daughter, Rabiadou refuses to see the occultists. Instead, she shows love to her husband, makes their house a home and cooks delicious dishes. Unfortunately, both methods do not yield any positive result, their husbands continue with their infidelity as if nothing happened. Rokhaya wasted her money at the occultist's while the young Rabiadou collapses and dies when she learns that the husband keeps a mistress in an apartment he rented and furnished lavishly.

Here we see the conflict of generations manifested: traditionalism and modernism but without any fruitful result. Maïga Ka shows here that the infidelity of men has no cure and that the marabouts are gradually losing their credibility. Even the consultation in the second story, *Miroir de la vie (Mirror of life)* goes to prove the powerlessness of these occultists.

Ndeye Cisse, daughter of a Minister falls in love with a poor griot's son. The Minister's wife, Adjé Arame Dieng goes to the marabouts to stop the marriage because of the boy's poverty. But gets the disappointment and frustration of her life when the diviner reveals that there is nothing he can do about it:

Votre, fille est bien tétue, n'est-ce pas?
Je vois deux étoiles monter au ciel. Leur
destin est lié... Si vous ne voulez pas,
le mariage aura quand même lieu. Le sort
en est déjà jeté!...

- Je ne vous dis que ce que je vois! Je
vous le repete, rien ni personne ne pourra
empêcher ce mariage d'avoir lieu¹⁸.

Translation:

Your daughter is very stubborn, isn't she?
I see two stars going up to the skies.
Their destiny is tied up together. Even
if you don't want their marriage, it will
still take place. It has already been
destined.

I am telling you what I see! I repeat it
to you, nothing and nobody can prevent this
marriage from taking place.

Dispirited and impoverished by the marabouts, Adjï Arme Dieng takes to alcohol to drown her sorrow. The author, Maïga Ka intends to suggest that marriage should be by love and not by social class of the individuals in question.

In *Xala* Sembene Qusmane stigmatized the ills in the post-independent African society. But his main target is the bourgeois class which gets to the top at the expense of the poor masses. The protagonist, El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye, marries a third wife. On the night of the wedding that the marriage should be consummated, he suddenly discovers his impotence: he has *Xala*. As a result, he loses his dignity, his business collapses and the last two wives abandon him. He consults the diviners to find out the cause and cure.

El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye had consulted a
host of face-Katt healers. Each had given
his prescription. He had been anointed with
safara... and made to drink it. He was
given Xatim, esoteric writings to wear round
his waist like fetishes. He was rubbed with
ointments¹⁹.

The healers cannot cure him despite the exorbitant charges but he finally recovers his health at the expense of public humiliation. This final cure makes mockery of occultists and what they represent.

We have been able to prove from these novels that as man is the centre of all events in African culture, problems which hinder his

¹⁸ Maïga Ka, *Aminata*, op. cit., p. 46-47.

¹⁹ Ousmane, Sembene; *Xala*, op. cit., p. 42-43.

progress or disturb his peace is quickly eliminated through occultism. These problems range from childlessness to infant mortality (Ekwefi's children in *Things Fall Apart*), sickness or disease (El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye and Ezinma), even to social security (Umuofia clan), etc. The victims do not only hope to be cured or avert the evil consequences but mainly to know the cause or source. This belief and methods of inquiry are the same in the West African countries-anglophone and francophone alike. The language and rituals used are strange to clients and onlookers but rich in African myth, folktales, proverbs, songs and praises which, as earlier mentioned are not codified²⁰. However, occultism like other folkways forms a background to the stories. It is linked with the better understanding of the plot and the characters of the novel as we have been able to establish.

III

Should occultism be encouraged, discouraged, modified or revived in the modern society? From our findings in these books, it is clear that occultism was successful in the pristine African society before the introduction of Western values and their capitalistic tendencies as we have witnessed in *Things Fall Apart*. Everything came to pass as revealed by the diviners (the arrival of the whiteman) and the treatment of medicine men was effective (Ezinma). At that time the occultists were seen as special people with special and rare powers to interpret and translate the language and working powers of the gods into the common language of the people. They were regarded as protectors of the community as they constituted a link between the mortals and the dead (masked spirits or Egwugwu). They were depositories of traditional customs, knowledge, theology and oral history. But most important was that they commanded the respect of the community as they were surrounded by an aura of myth. They were productive and therefore useful.

But in modern society where people have become very capitalistic and materialistic, occultism is perverted and the diviners are no longer committed to their work. Instead they are more interested in quick money from all sorts of dubious and dishonest ways. (El Hadji Abdou

²⁰ Bu-Buakei Jabbi, *Myth and Ritual in Arrow of God* in "African Literature Today", 1980, p. 130.

Kader Beye in *Xala*, Nkomedzo in *Perpetua*, etc.). They are cheats, dupes, exploiters and charlatans and the writers of post-independence era especially Sembene Ousmane and Mongo Beti portray them as that in their works of art. They should therefore be discouraged as they use their powers negatively to the aspirations of the people.

On the other hand, traditional healers who use roots and herbs like Kouadio (*Une Vie hypothéquée*) should be encouraged. History has proved that medical practices have existed for long in Africa in their traditional way. But the problem has always been that their methods have not been codified or documented. Instead, they have been passed orally or practically from hand to hand and from generation to generation. In the modern society the number of traditional healers is fast decreasing as not many people are motivated. They are seen as being inferior to the orthodox doctors. This is why Africa is facing the tragic progressive disappearance of her authentic medicinemen and the degrading of their medical knowledge.

Africa should strive to preserve this science at all costs as a matter of considerable urgency. Various governments should organize, form and especially fund an Association of National Herbalists who should seriously research on traditional medicine and healing. Efforts should be made to codify its concepts for reference purposes. To consolidate this African treasure, institutions for traditional medicine and research, pharmaceutical centres and chemists should be established²¹.

I suggest that Africans adopt the Chinese system whereby doctors have the option to train either in traditional or orthodox medicine. In the hospital patients can choose between the traditional and the orthodox treatment too. Meanwhile, Nigerians have been talking of merging the two types of medicine. I personally feel that each should be studied separately for better and fuller development, but emphasis should be laid on the traditional medicine.

The roots and herbs needed for the development of this area are available in Africa, and they cost little or nothing. Africans should learn to work with and develop what they have especially now that drugs cost fortune to import. They should invest in this big project and make our traditional medicine attractive and enviable. If successful, the number of people who die because of scarcity or high cost of drugs would be

²¹ Elom-Ntouzo, O. E., *Médecine Pharmacopées Traditionnelles et développement en Afrique* in "Présence Africaine"; No 108, Paris, 1978, p. 38.

reduced. Then Africa could export her own drugs and enjoy the benefits and privileges of exporter of drugs.

Then occultism could be revived as many people would be motivated. The seriousness and integrity it had in the pristine traditional society would be restored²².

OKULTYZM JAKO NOŚNIK ZNACZENIA W LITERATURZE ZACHODNIEJ AFRYKI

(Streszczenie)

Afrykanie są bardzo religijni. Między innymi wierzą w szczęście człowieka na ziemi. Każdy problem, który zagraża egzystencji człowieka budzi ich religijną aktywność w oczekiwaniu opieki i obrony. Wierzą, że każdy problem ma dwa aspekty, fizyczny, który może być rozwiązany przez człowieka oraz religijny, albo psychologiczny, wywołany przez ponadnaturalne, mistyczne siły. Z tym drugim zmagają się okultyzm, boskie objawienie nieznanego.

Ludzie radzą się okultystów na okoliczność różnych klęsk naturalnych, w poszukiwaniu miłości, męża, żony, w oczekiwaniu na potomstwo. Niniejszy artykuł poprzez lekturę kilku wybranych tekstów literackich analizuje funkcje okultyzmu jako nośnika znaczenia, odśladania tła fabuły, pomaga zrozumieć ich treść oraz objaśnia charakter powieściowych postaci. Dowodzi również, że okultyzm był aktywnie obecny w Afryce przed napływem wartości Zachodu. Jednak we współczesnych społeczeństwach, w których ludzie myślą na sposób kapitalistyczny i nieuczciwy, okultyzm się wynaturzył. Czarownicy są bardziej zainteresowani szybkim zarobkiem na wszelkie podejrzane sposoby. Wobec takiego stanu rzeczy, artykuł formułuje tezę o zmianie praktyk okultystycznych na tradycyjne znachorstwo przy pomocy korzeni i ziół.

²² Huannou Adrien, "Xala": *Une Satire caustique de le Société bourgeoise senégalaïse* in "Présence Africaine", No 103, Paris, 1977, p. 145.