

The Legend of Aku Sika: A Transposition of Folk Narrative to a Stage Play

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Abstract: Plays are literary works, which represent a set of instructions for its readers and audience. Playwrights must therefore be exposed to „a broader cultural based“ as suggested by Gassner (1957). Most often, playwrights do not invent the plots of their plays; rather, they are based on existing or old stories. Folktales are one of such major sources of plot for the African playwright.

This essay examines the relationship between the stage account of *The Legend of Aku Sika* and its original folk narrative content and style for the purpose of comprehension and deepening and widening the scope of Ghanaian dramatic form. It examines the transposition techniques adopted by the playwright. The paper further discusses the various dramatic elements the playwright employed in executing his task. This paper is purely a textual analysis of the play *The Legend of AkuSika* vis-à-vis the original folk narrative *Aku Sika*.

Keywords: Folktales, Akan, plays, playwrights, drama, transposition, *The Legend of Aku Sika*,

1. INTRODUCTION

The Legend of Aku Sika is a stage play transposed from a folktale *Aku Sika*. Folktale is a story from a folkloric background, a community or societal based story, passed on orally from a generation to the other. Folktale, according to Soanes (1995) in the Oxford Dictionary of Current English, “is a traditional story originally passed on by word of mouth” Folktales are kind of stories that are passed on from generation to generation. Folktales do not have a single sources and authors. Most of them are community bound. They develop as different people tell them over time. Folktales are the creations of "the folk," or the community people and are mostly oral. The playwright serves as a force for social reconstruction by sensitizing the public or society on occurring issues. Playwrights have variety of sources for their dramatic works. Ancient playwrights wrote based on myths, fables and on biblical events. To serve the purpose of education, sensitization and entertainment, the playwrights must be good observers of the society in which they find themselves. This will aid them in writing gripping stories, which will make the readers tick.

2. THE TREATMENT

The idea of transposing folk narrative i.e. Myths, Legends, Fables, Folktales into stage plays have always been part of the origins and development of drama and theatre in many cultures in the world. For example, during the classical Greek period, dramatists like Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes among many others transposed ancient Greek myths into their modern stage drama as part of the Dionysian Festivals.

Again, during the medieval period in Europe, biblical narratives such as the Parables were transposed into stage performances, and this formed the basis of Mystery, Miracle and Morality plays.

These efforts certainly enhanced not only the availability of greater literature but also a greater understanding of the content and message of the plays, as the priests enacted them before the congregation. For example, *Quem Queritis* Cohen (2000) which means *whom do you seek* was performed in the sanctuary as part of the feast of Corpus Christi (*The Body of Christ*) and *Everyman-a morality play*.

This work is thus; to provide a study of a similar situation in the Ghanaian society which is very rich in traditional myths and folk narratives, but have not provided greater opportunities to experience the wider benefits of theatre. It provides theatrical inputs such as spectacle; i.e. Scenic Design, Dance, Costume, Make-up, Props, Music, Lighting effect and Sound effect, all aimed at arriving at a total Ghanaian theatre.

3. THE AKU SIKA FOLK TALE

Aku Sika as an old Akan folktale (anansesem) that has been passed on from generations to generations. In the narration, a farmer, called KwadwoBani, who according to the story was described as the “*Tibone*” (the unlucky one) lived at Sikasu Village. He married AsiBuruwa who was unable to give birth for a long time. So KwadwoBani married another woman and had children with her. Later Buruwa had a baby girl and Kwadwo named her after his mother, Aku. Before Aku walked, her mother died from some strange sickness.

Kwadwo mourned his wife for some time at Sikasu. Upon advice from his friends and relations, he returned to Sikasu to continue his farm work to be able to get money to pay some of his debts. Aku was about two years when his father set a trap, which he intended to send to the bush to catch some animals. He just went behind the hut to look for club to test the potency of the trap because it hadn't been used for some time. In his absence, Aku went to touch the trap that severed her left arm at the wrist. With the help of Aku's stepmother Obenewa, she was taken to AbabioOpoku, a herbalist, to stop the oozing blood and to save her life. Two months passed before Aku was properly healed. Out of grief and self-blame, KwadwoBani took to drinking until he got sick and died as a result. KwadwoBani's brother Yaw Manu was to take charge of Aku, her step-mother and her two daughters who hated Aku because of her beauty. Obenewa declined to re-marry his husband's brother who was a drunk and lazy. She with her ugly daughters left for her hometown.

Aku stayed with her father's brother, her uncle, because he did not allow Obenewa to take her along with her daughters. Aku grew with a dazzling beauty and caught attention of all the young men in the village. She concealed her deformed hand in her cloths all the time, so people did not know about her deformity.

During an Odwira festival, the Omanhene, Nana FosuAgyeman, saw Aku during the festive activities and enquired about her family. Omanhene's delegates slaughtered a sheep and poured the blood on the feet of Aku in the presence of his Uncle Yaw Nnam at their home. The delegates hanged some palm-fronds on the door of Aku's home that signified that the Omanhene desired Aku as a wife, because of her beauty. Three days after, Nana FosuAgyeman performed the marriage rites. Aku became the darling of everybody in the palace to the annoyance of Omanhene's first wife, Sekyeraa. Even though the King saw the deformity of Aku, he promised to be with her after Aku had explained the circumstances leading to her misfortune. Sekyeraa did not know why Aku continued to cover her left hand all the time so she set her maid-servant, Dede, to monitor her after her own unsuccessful attempts. Dede intentionally went to the bathroom to see Aku's nakedness and revealed the secret to her mistress.

With that weapon in hand, Sekyeraa summoned her husband, the King, into the presence of the subchiefs, Adontenhene, Nifahene, Benkumhene and Kyidomhene, that her husband's new bride was a woman who was deformed and it was against the customs and traditions of the people. It was agreed that the Maize Pounding Festival was getting close so the wives of the King will pound for them to ascertain the truth.

Aku visited her Uncle, Yaw Manu and his wife AkuaDuoduwa, who did not wish her well and they reprimanded her for marrying an Omanhene when she knew her physical status. A week to the festival, they forced her to go back to her husband, lest the people will say he was hiding her. When she was returning to her husband's town, she stopped at the bank of the mighty river, Sikasu, by whose name her village was known. She wept for a long time, knowing the day was a bad day for activities around the river. She dressed up with some new clothes and ornaments the King had bought for her, went upstream and tied her scarf to a tree and was about to hang herself when a voice like a lightening called her name. It was a very huge, tall man who just smiled at her.

Aku narrated all her ordeals to him. This elderly man calmed Aku down after looking at her deformed hand. The stranger whistled and a huge snake appeared from the river and coiled up. There was something made of gold on its head that looked like a crown. He instructed Aku to put her amputated hand into the mouth of the snake which she did reluctantly. When she removed her hand, upon the strange man's instruction, her severed limb was back adorned with gold ornaments. When Aku got home, it was only the King, her husband, which she told of her encounter with the river god, Sikasu.

Aku was the last to pound her maize on the day of the festival. To the amazement of all the people, her hand was covered with gold when she finally revealed it from the cloth. Sekyeraa repented, but it was too late for her, for she vowed with Ntamkesee. She was asked to slaughter seven sheep and offer drinks to appease gods for slandering a King's wife.

Aku and the king paraded the street of Sikasu to thank all and sundry, and the people praised and adored her. They named her Aku Sika literary meaning Aku, the woman of gold.

As stated in the introduction, folktales do not have a single author. There appears to be another account of the Aku folktale from Nana Kwame Ampadu I, a highlife musician who told the story in one of his songs.

4. THE FOLK SONG OF AKU SIKA BY NANA KWAME AMPADU I

Nana Kwame Ampadu I, *Adwontofohene*, used the folk narrative of Aku Sika in his music in the early nineteen seventies. In the song, he narrated the misfortune and the ordeal Aku went through.

He said a long time ago, there was a man who stayed with his wife for a long time without a child. Later, God gave them a gift of a child that they named Aku. The pathetic story was that, the mother of Aku died not long after she was born. Aku's father, the farmer, married another woman and entrusted Aku to her care but she maltreated Aku. When Aku was a toddler another misfortune happened. Her father, the farmer, set a trap, a jack, meant to catch some wild animals destroying his food crops. He put the trap at the corner of his compound, getting ready to take it to the bush. The vibrant innocent toddler crawled to the trap oblivious of its usage and put her left hand into it. Her hand was trapped and the deafening cry that issued out of the baby's heart was so sympathetic. When the father managed to rescue the baby from the grips of the trap, the canine jaws like trap, the baby's hand had been severed off.

Out of the pain of his carelessness, which he blamed himself for, the father farmer died leaving the little orphan behind. Aku claimed that she was a pathetic child whose parents were dead, leaving her alone to face her life. This ended the side "A" of the record, which was much bigger than the current Compact Disk (CD). The whole song of the disk "A" was less than five minutes.

The side "B" of the record continued the story by saying that Aku grew up to be a beautiful young woman. Because of her dazzling beauty, many young men were afraid to approach her to ask of her hand in marriage. One day, the king of her community organized a durbar which Aku attended. She hid her deformed arm in her cloth all the time. At the durbar, the king saw Aku and proposed to her.

According to the folk story, Aku became Nana's wife.

The King's first wife accused her husband of marrying another woman, Aku for that matter, who was deformed and this case was brought before the elders of the community. A day was set aside to find out whether the accusation was true or not. Aku decided to drown herself because she knew that she was deformed – short of one limb. At the bank of the river, an elderly man met her and performed some magic and a very big snake came out of the river. The man encouraged Aku to put her hand into the mouth of the beast. By the time she removed her arm from the animal's mouth, her arm was restored. The young stranger put gold ornaments on Aku's hand.

In the end, the king's wives are ashamed, because Aku's hand turned out to be a golden hand in the presence of everyone present at the gathering. The king therefore named her Aku Sika. Nana Ampadu ended by putting out a moral message that everyone must put his or her trust and problems before God, cry unto Him and He will listen to you for you to be successful often to the chagrin of your enemies.

5. THE PROCESS OF TRANSPOSITION

Transposition can be defined as the artistic process by which the elements of reality are ordered, shaped or distilled into an ensemble that satisfies the psychological needs of the audience (Cor, 2018). The practice of transposition is a method of re-tooling theatre forms and creating new dramatic pieces from existing ones. According to Whittlesey (2012), transposition involves a freer rendering of an original work to suit a newer setting or geographic context. In this regard, transposition preserves form but may change in context. The transposer comprehends the original work and decides to preserve or slightly alter the content based on the relationship between the past and current context.

In the words of Nwamuo(1996), “playwriting is the art of creating replicas of human action and experiences, with a view to improving the human being.” It entails carrying thoughts and information from the mind of one person into the mind of another. Playwrights therefore in selecting their subject matter looks at the happenings in the society in order to satisfy their audience.

In transposition, the transposer attempts to produce the original of the source material but presents it in a different contextual milieu considering the socio-historical time and place of the transposed work and retained the consciousness that created the original. In the instance of *The Legend of Aku Sika*, the playwright holistically took the content of the folk tale as it is and turned it into a dramatic piece by using Propp theory of Character Narratives. Therefore, the story in the tale became character driven in accordance with Propp’s theory espoused in his *The Russian Folktale*(Sibelman2012).

He argues that, stories are character driven and that plots develop from the actions and inactions of these characters are functional in a dramatic piece.

Juxtaposing the folktale, *Aku Sika* and the play *The Legend of AkuSika*, one can deduce that the playwright employed mainly Content and Form transposition. In content transposition, the orientation of the transposer is informed by the original tale, which goes to shape and give better meaning to the transposed work. The world of the dramatic piece is set in the same time and space as the original folktale. *The Legend of Aku Sika* maintains a high level of fidelity as far as time and characterization are concerned. Characters may be loosely changed and added on to suit the setting of the transposed work, but most often, character description remains untouched. In transposing the form, the playwright adopted the simplification method of transposition. This is where the transposer maintains the central themes in the original. He does not attempt in any way to change the identified themes to suit his artistic whims. An analysis of the folk tale and the dramatic piece reveals both works have the same central idea. In simplification, the length of the original story may be reduced but the central meaning and ideas drawn always remain unchanged. Inferences and allusions are made to the original to take care of the issues, which might have been “cut off” during the content reduction stage. The language and diction will reflect the current setting, which may be quite different from the original.

The Akan folktale has audience interaction and participation as a prominent element. This element, the playwrights craftily and subtly introduces in his work. Some of the characters directly interacts with the audience by way of dialoguing.

6. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE LEGEND OF AKU SIKA –THE STAGE PLAY BY MARTIN OKYERE OWUSU

From the perceived original narrative folk tale by Nana Kwame Ampadu, Martin OkyereOwusu wrote a play entitled *The Legend of Aku Sika or The Python*. It is a play for the African Theatre Stage. Martin Owusu has written a few traditional African plays focusing on other folktales like *The Story Ananse Told*, which is purely fictitious from his own creative prowess.

But in the case of *The Legend of Aku Sika*, the playwright depended on the narrative folktale to craft his play. This is an attempted translation or transposition of the folktale from its narrative form into dramatic form.

We explored the Theme, Setting, Form, Plot, Characterization and the Stylistic Devices of the stage play, *The Legend of Aku Sika* as was used as the medium of transposition by Martin Owusu.

Theme

Theme, is the central idea of the play. According to Soame (2006), “Theme is the subject of talk, piece of writing, etc.” It is the message or the lessons learnt after reading or watching the play. The main concerns of the playwright is deformity and chieftaincy or royalty. Many people in our society look down upon the deformed as though they themselves are not deformed in other ways than one. And when it comes to royalty, it is worse because no king or chief is supposed to be deformed, or to marry someone deformed. The lessons derived from this story are that; God will intervene when there is no iota of hope “Deus ex machina” (Intervention of God). Also jealousy is evil, love conquers all; and the tree that nature has planted no one uproots.

Setting

Setting, is the place and time of the action. The place is the geographical position or area of the action. It could be the wider or immediate environment. And the time is the era or the period the play is set. Hornby (1989) defines setting as a way or place in which something is fixed or fastened, or surroundings or environment. It is the physical and sometimes spiritual background against which the action of the drama takes place. The Setting of *The Legend of Aku Sika* as a stage play is a multiple one. The action of the play begins on a setting of the heavenly realms where Odomankoma, the Supreme Being, with His Royal Elders and Fate determines the destinies of men before they embark on the journey to earth. The time could be the past, the present or the future. In this context however, that was before Aku, her father and NanayereAmaTakyiwa – the King’s Eldest Wife were born. The palace of the King, Aku’s Home and the Riverside are the other settings.

Plot

Plot, according to Effiong(2013) Understanding, Analysis and Interpretation For Performance,

Is the involvement of characters in action, which usually follows the traditional pattern: Exposition where the concerns of the drama are introduced, the Rising Action delineates the first major take off of the action or objective of the play, Crisis occurs when oppositions or blocks withstand the moves of the play or where counter – schemes from the antagonist meet with the progress of the protagonist. Crisis generates conflict and creates suspense. Crisis heightens to the climax of the play after which there is the Denouement.

Simply put, the plot is the sequential arrangement of events in the play that constitutes, the Beginning, the Middle, and the End.

The plot of *The Legend of Aku Sika*, by Martin Owusu, is made of the Prologue, that is the Point of Attack or the Exposition of the scene. The Prologue deals with the activities of the Supreme Being with His Royal Elders determining the destinies of men. Among these people is Aku who is to go through a lot of problems before getting it smooth. This dramatic gimmicks of the Sage and the Supreme Being at the helm of affairs from the beginning of the play was not portrayed in the music by Nana Kwame Ampadu. In the play, the Sage, who handles the prologue leads the audience into his incantation with the pouring of libation with a calabash. He serves as a narrator or story-teller. The Sage introduces Aku, already grown, as a young maiden as compared to Ampadu’s toddler baby and her parents from the start, in the first scene. The Sage describes Aku’s beauty as well as her deformity and trials. The King, Nana Kasapreko, his eldest wife, the Okyeame and other citizens are also introduced. There is the installation of the king and the swearing of oath of allegiance. It is at this ceremony that the King’s eyes meet that of Aku and loves her at first sight. He pauses to look at her and his first wife sees him doing so. After the coronation, the king sends Okyeame, the Linguist, and YaaBoahemaa, the king’s sister to propose to Aku on his behalf. Aku tells them of her deformity and the circumstances leading to her deformity. When the true message of Aku’s deformity is relayed to the king, he rubbishes it, believing that Aku is perfect. He goes ahead to marry Aku, but his first wife, NanayereAma, becomes hysterical about Aku’s presence in the palace. Her rivalry becomes very intense to the extent that she summons her husband, the king before the Queenmother and the elders of the king’s court. She then accuses her husband of breaking tradition by marrying another woman without her consent. The elders present agree that, it is not against tradition for the king to marry another woman of his choice.

NanayereAma, emphasizes that, the woman in question is Aku, and that, Aku is deformed. That one of her arms ends at the elbow. This kind of allegation gains currency to the extent that the Queenmother concludes that Aku must appear before the whole citizenry to proof that the allegation is false.

Upon hearing the message of the exposure of her deformity to the entire public, she decides without telling her grandmother to go and commit suicide. She goes to the river bank to throw herself into the river and gets drowned.

But as fate would have it, as per what the Creator, Odomankoma, tells Fate, one of the elders in the Celestial Realms to keep watch on Aku and save her at the appropriate time, an elder appears from nowhere, to conjure a python, whose flaming mouth serves as a healing point for Aku. The elder instructs Aku to put her severed hand into the flaming mouth of the mysterious python. By the time the strange elder asks Aku to remove her hand, the severed hand has been restored back to a full arm. The elder puts gold ornaments and bangles around Aku's restored hand and tells her to continue to conceal it in her cloth as usual and also not to tell her grandmother about the miracle. It is said that secret is best kept by the owner.

NanayereAma had sworn to be executed when her allegation is false. Her informant, simply known as "The Man", has been shielded all this while. The king's sister YaaBoahema and the Okyeame had been very calm, knowing the truth about Aku's deformity.

Today is Saturday and the people in the community have met according to the orders of the Queenmother and Aku is to appear before everybody to reveal her concealed hand. The king is ready to be dethroned in disgrace, while the eldest wife, Ama and others, including the Queenmother are ready to take their revenge. The king is sitting on tenterhooks. Aku appears wrapped in her cloth as usual. (In Nana Ampadu's version, the wives of the kings pounded their maize and she was the last to pound hers). All eyes are on her, some citizen make remarks shouting at her, that if the hand is there, she should bring it out. With a little bit of suspense created, Aku drops her cover cloth that conceals her left arm to reveal an elegant arm, shining with gold. There is jubilation for those who are on her side, and confusion mixed with disappointment in people like The Man and NanayereAma. She physically goes to inspect Aku's hand to make sure she is not dreaming. The informant, The Man sneaks out in disgust.

This awesome scene greets everybody present and the king concludes that it is because of Aku's golden hand that she had hidden it from the sight of men so, from that moment onwards, Aku will be known as Aku Sika. Meanwhile, the executioner is instructed to hold NanayereAma firm. But the king says that he is not going to soil his victory and enjoyment with the spilling of the blood of his eldest wife.

The plot of the stage play does not entirely follow the narrative aspect of the song. The song has gone through some transposition from the Folk Narrative to a Stage Play as it were.

Attention could be drawn to other transposition of folk stories to plays. They include *The Marriage of Anansewaa* play by Efua T. Sutherland (1967) which is based on a local folktale, Ama Atta Aidoo's (1968) *Anowa*, a play, based on another folktale, Ola Rotimi (1979) *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, is a transposition of Sophocles (1967), *Oedipus Rex*, which is originally taken from a Greek mythology. Another example is Euripides' *Alcestes*, a Greek myth, from which Efua T. Sutherland (1967) wrote *Edufa*.

Form

The Form of this play, *The Legend of Aku Sika*, is Melodrama because of the sad beginning of Aku's life turns out in the end to be dramatically joyful.

Melodrama, according to Hornby (1989) is a "drama full of sensational events and exaggerated characters, often with a happy ending or events, behaviour, language etc. resembling, drama of this kind. This sensational and exaggerated story is full of wits and suspense. Aku's amputated hand is restored in the end by an elder who conjures a python to do that magic in a form of *Deus ex Machina* – intervention of the gods. Indeed, according to the plot of the play, Aku's situation is so hopeless, she wants to commit suicide until the magic of a saviour saves her with a new hand, which looks impossible in a normal human endeavour.

Characterization

In terms of characterization the narrative version of the song does not introduce a lot of people in the story. The stage play introduces characters like Supreme Being, His Royal Elders, Aku, Grandmother, Nana, NanayereAma, The Man, The Sage, The Okyeame and YaaBoahemaa. But for the purpose of this paper, we shall limit ourselves to a few of them.

Characters are people created by the playwright for the world of the play. And characterization in this context is the Nature and the Role of the character. The Nature is the human quality of the character; whether the character is good, bad, humble, respectful patient, tolerant, disobedient etc.; and the Role is the character's contribution to the development of the plot or the action. For instance, Aku, the main character is, beautiful, humble, patient and tolerant. And she plays the role of a maid with deformity who wins the heart of the King. She is a daughter to her father, the farmer. Also, she is the grand-daughter of the Old Woman her grand-mother.

The King (Nana) naturally is a kind hearted man who, despite Aku's deformity is ready to abundance his throne to marry her. He is also kind to have forgiven his wife, NanayereAma, after she commits herself in Aku's case. In addition, the king is patient, because during the accusations of his wife, the Queen-mother and the elders, he keeps his calm.

However, he plays the role of the king of his people, a husband to his wife, NanayereAma, a relative to the Queen-mother and later a husband to Aku.

Dramatic or Stylistic Devices

There are a lot of dramatic devices in the composition of stage play by Martin Owusu as compared to the original story. Examples of such devices used by the playwright are; Conflict, Suspense, Irony, Humour, Foil and Symbolism.

Conflict

Conflict is the clash, a fight or struggle between two opposing forces. There are three main types of conflict; they are Man against Man, Man against Nature and Man against Himself. Man against Man is the most common conflict, Man against Himself is the most dangerous and Man against Nature is the most devastating.

In the Conflict of Man against Man, NanayereAma clashes with her husband, the King. There is another struggle between NanayereAma and Nana's sister, YaaBoahema.

The conflict of Man against Himself is portrayed when Aku is torn between facing the community with her amputated hand and drowning herself in the river. In the conflict of Man against Nature, the Supreme Being instructs one of the elders to watch over Aku in her earthly life and when the time is due, he rescues Aku.

Suspense

The device of Suspense, is the poised anticipation of the reader or audience as to the outcome of the event of the dramatic story that creates interest for the reader or audience as what will happen to the character which he has sympathy for. The major suspense is created at the river side when Aku is about to throw herself into the river to drown. The reader or the audience does not know whether she will accomplish this feat, then her benefactor appears from nowhere to save her. In the presence of the citizenry at the durbar or gathering the people do not know whether Aku's hand is full or half amputated. There is great suspense here until she finally reveals it.

Irony

The other device is Irony which refers to the recognition of a reality different from appearance. There are three kinds of Irony-Verbal, Situational and Dramatic. There is a dramatic irony when audience knows that Aku's amputated hand has been restored. And she and the elder know too, but the King, the Okyeame, YaaBoahema, Aku's grandmother and the whole citizenry do not know. And a situational irony occurs when the unexpected happens. NanayereAma, Okyeame, Boahema, Aku's grandmother and the man are surprised to see that Aku's hand that she conceals in her cloth is full of gold after all.

Humour

Humour, another device, is meant to evoke some kind of laughter. A major humour occurs when Elder says:

“It does no matter whether it is a birth defect or accidentally inflicted. A deformity is a deformity”

Foil

Foil is the term applied to any person or sometimes an object that serves a sharp contrast to another character. The foil in this play can be Aku’s humble character and that of NanayereAma who is always fomenting troubles for her husband, the King.

SYMBOLISM – It is one of the dramatic devices in this play. A Symbol is something that suggests or stands for an idea, quality, or concept larger than itself. The python conjured by the man who saves Aku from drowning serves as a symbolism. Traditionally, the snake is used as a symbol of healing, this is alluded to the biblical allusion of the snake on the pole which the Israelites looked to and lived.

7. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TRANSPOSITION

According to Soanes (2006) transpose is to “make two or more things change place with each other, or move to a different place or situation, or write or play music in a different key from the original”. As a matter of fact, the narrative story is first transposed to music, and then to the stage drama (play) being dealt with now. In the course of the transposition, the main story are maintained. Apart from the maintaining the theme, the main character and few other characters are kept and in this context Aku, the King and the King’s wife, Nanayere are inseparable in the plot structure. Aku, the protagonist together with the King, is struggling it out with NanayereAma, the antagonist.

The story itself is a folktale that has been told over and over from generation to generation. Such folktales or stories are meant for moral education, or information. Stories are told by elders in the evening after supper, mostly on moonlit nights around a fire-place in the house. Lessons are learnt, social status are strengthened, physical and economical status are accepted, with the ultimate anticipation of a better situation even at the last minute before one’s demise. Hopes are restored and confidence levels raised to wait on the Lord for His miracles or otherwise. These kinds of stories are well planned before they are told. They have good plots – the beginning, the middle, and the end, with all the dramatic elements and stylistic devices.

The story appeals to its audience because of its subject matter. Issues on deformity has been a concern for many individuals and the country at large. The deformed in the society especially, Africa, and for that matter Ghana, are looked down upon as social mis-fits and are maltreated in several ways. Sometimes, their own family members despise and treat them with contempt. Some of these disabled people have come to terms with their conditions and are making frantic efforts to contribute their quota to society, for it is said that “disability is not inability”. Others in the society have accepted some of these unfortunate people in their work places and other social organizations. Some writers have also written copiously by way of encouraging such people. The playwright of, *The Legend of Aku Sika*, puts his ideals and philosophies in what the King says in the play that there are no perfect people in this society of ours. The King says;

“There are so many of us in this kingdom, including would-be kings and power-thirsty corrupt men and women, who are morally and spiritually deformed. Yet, society seems to sanction the moral bankruptcy and spiritual cancer, and rather seek out and humiliate the pure in heart, whose physical

make-up is neither a social crime nor the measure of human imperfection. We consider the physically blind and lame deformed, and yet we ourselves do not see truth and cannot walk three up-right yards in life’s journey. The blind and the dumb see no evil, speak no evil, and hear no evil. But we bathe in the waters of filth and moral degeneration”

The King believes that Akuis not deformed no matter what he hears about her. He concludes by saying that;

“Aku is not deformed. But if I had met her before ascending this ancestral throne, I would have married her ten times over if I had discovered that she was physically short of a limb. My Aku is not and has never been deformed”

Some school of thought ascertain that this positive reaction of the King in the presence of the Queenmother, his wife and the elders, coupled with love is what saved Aku’s situation. Love is said to be a conqueror of even stubborn hearts. Many will sacrifice a lot to obtain love.

The dramatic piece of *The Legend of Aku Sika* by Martin Owusu, as drama, has more positive effects on its audience and readers, than the mere listening to the music of Nana Ampadu I or just listening to the folk narration. The power of theatre is able to bring live into the narration which cause more empathy. In the event of producing the play, the cast who will take part in the theatrical presentation are likely to have firsthand information on the education, information, and the entertainment values of the play. And they feel and sympathize with the characters in the dramatic piece. The performers therefore understand the message better and their profound understanding affects their audiences at any given time. As it were, the playwright’s message is well understood, therefore achieving his objective of bringing the problem forthwith.

8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is appropriate to convert some stories, especially folktales, to stage drama for better understanding and assimilation by audience. The presence of the audience is a good motivation for the performers, just like story-telling sessions of the olden days. In recent times, films, videos, television telenovelas and soap operas have caught the attention of the youth, especially young ladies, who are loosing with speed what used to be moral educational grounds to foreign stories that have no bearing to African life styles. Their minds are polluted with foreign ideologies and philosophies, learning of robberies, deceits, greed, killings, acquiring of money and wealth at the expense of other people and lottery maneuvers. Of late, a lot of foreign stories have been translated into Akan languages to catch attention of the media’s propaganda for cheap content for their stations. Meanwhile, there are relatively good stories from our own backyard which could easily be churned into literary pieces that are possible to be enacted, recorded and shown as our own stories – about our cultures, traditions, folktales, festivals, myths, legends, rites, rituals, taboos, politics, religions, norms, identities, marriage, funerals, names, games and many others. The practices of such will lift the spirit of our society very high and providing theatre practitioners and directors with quality plays of Ghanaian origin.

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