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FACULTY OF ARTS **DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

ETHNO-ETHICS AND ECOCULTURAL SPIRITUALITY IN THE POETRY OF BONGASU TANLA-KISHANI AND NOL ALEMBONG

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Buea in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in African Literature

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Mrs. Quirita Anangasong and Mr. Nicodemus Nkemchop.

CERTIFICATION

UNIVERSITY OF BUEA

FACULTY OF ARTS | **DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

CERTIFICATION

The thesis of **Nguni Mackeus (AR20P120)** entitled; **"Ethno-Ethics and Ecocultural Spirituality in the Poetry of Bongasu Tanla-Kishani and Nol Alembong",** submitted to the Department of English and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Arts of the University of Buea in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Award of the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Degree in African Literature, has been examined, read and approved by the examination panel of:

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ABSTRACT

This study entitled "Ethno-Ethics and Ecocultural Spirituality in the Poetry of Bongasu Tanla-Kishani and Nol Alembong" set out to show how spirituality is declining in African ecoculture, and how Nol Alembong and Bongasu Tanla-Kishani have handled the problem in their poetry. More explicitly, the thesis set out to show the manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the natural space, and the ethical consequences of violating such connection. Using Alembong's *Forest Echoes* and *The Passing Wind,* and Kishani's *Konglanjo!* and *A Basket of Kola Nuts* as primary sources of data, the study employs the tenets of Ecocriticism and Afrocentricity to argue that, the poetics of Alembong and Kishani reposition the ecological, cultural and spiritual links that have been distorted by the New World order accentuated by capitalist greed, and the evolution and advancement of modern technology. The study revealed that, there has been a decline in the link between humans and nature as humans are systematically shifting from nature. Given that Africa is spiritually tied to nature as Mazisi Kunene, Chinua Achebe, Kashim Ibrahim Tala, Nol Alembong etc have argued, it becomes problematic when human/nature link begins to wane. This study also revealed that, African spirituality is both earth-centered and sky-oriented, and this makes Kishani and Alembong to reaffirm the interconnectedness among nature, humans and spirituality. Poor treatment of nature thus leads to a decline in African spirituality. Another main finding is that, the continuous decline in African spirituality persists because when it comes to mores and ethos governing nature and spirituality, focus is largely on Western notions which are capitalistic and individualistic in nature. There is the need to include African communalistic approach in the fight against human destruction of nature and spirituality. The ultimate revelation of this study is that, the Africans' search for spiritual meaning out of their cultural practices has contributed to the physical destruction of the earth, thereby causing the disruption of the order of the universe and the essence of beings.

Keywords: Ethno-ethics, Ecoculture and Spirituality

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INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The encroachments of humans on nature have taken a different turn with mass aggressions of nature by humans. Nature, as it were, has witnessed the numerous human activities that serve as a threat to both nature and humans. In this regard, it is basically becoming difficult to come across nature which has not experienced human aggressions. Holmes Rolston, III succinctly captures this when he argues that, "with the arrival of humans, their cultures, and their technologies, pristine nature vanishes."(155). Still in the same line of thought, he posits that,

> Certainly, nature now bears the marks of human influence more widely than ever before ... nature that is little or only partially disturbed remains 63.7% of the habitable Earth. If nature means absolutely pristine nature, totally unaffected by human activities, past or present, there is relatively little remaining on Earth—if our detection instruments are keen enough. (155)

The aggressions of humans on nature have undergone severe critical observations by fellow men and women who see everything wrong with such aggressions. People from different walks of life have increasingly embraced the responsibility to put these aggressions on check. As such, the relationship between human beings and nature has been addressed in subjects like philosophy, sociology, economics, and biology. With these schools of thought addressing this issue, literature, in the last few decades, has found it necessary to provide fundamental thoughts on the subject matter too.

Teke Charles Ngiewih posits in “The Eco-Existential(ist) Dimension of Nol Alembong’s *Forest Echoes* that,

> The English Romantics are among the precursors of eco-critical thinking and the conceptualizations and critical construction of the relationship between man and his environment advocated and advanced by ecocritics such as Jonathan Bate

> (1991), Lawrence Buell (1995, 2005), Cheryll Glotfelty, and Harold Fromm (1996) and Alan Bedell (1999) who acknowledged eco-philosophy in Romantic literature and phenomenology (38).

This is to say that the Romantic school of thought addressed issues related to the relationship between human beings and nature. They laid a foundation for the emergence of studies between literature and the environment. Elizabeth Ayuk Ako has provided thoughts on the role of the Romantics in the preservation and conservation of nature. She argues that,

> The value and usefulness of nature was unquestionable before the mid nineteenth century. Man's dependence on nature implied that nature had a significant role to play in human survival. The veneration of nature as a physical and sometimes spiritual part of human existence was championed by the Romantics. (191)

She focuses on the case study of William Wordsworth, Nature's High Priest (192). According to Ako, nature is given a formative character through the poetry of William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge. In this sense, she thinks that nature in their poetry is considered a teacher, guardian, nurse, law and maker. In fact, nature is deeper than it appears. The examples of "The Prelude" and "Tables Turned" are seen here where, Wordsworth perceives and presents nature as a God through whom spiritual, physical and psychological healing, growth and survival of humans depend. To summarize everything, Ako posits that "the beauty of nature, its moral effect on mankind and the necessity for people to establish a useful and reciprocal relationship with nature form the essence of the poetry of Nature's High Priest, Wordsworth" (192). The tentacles of Romanticism spread across the globe and thus, influenced America's transcendentalists. In fact, Transcendentalism originated from English Romanticism.

Transcendentalism was a literary and philosophical movement that developed in the late 1820s and 1830s in New England. It was heavily focused on seeking individual truth

and growing to become more and more self-reliant. Furthermore, the movement can be described using three essential characteristics or principles: individualism, idealism, and most importantly directed to this thesis, the divinity of nature. In addition to these, nevertheless, it should be noted that they also took progressive stands on women's rights, abolition of slavery and slave trade, reform, and education. They also criticized government, organized religion, laws, social institutions, and creeping industrialization. Transcendentalists advocated the idea of a personal knowledge of God, believing that no intermediary was needed for spiritual insight. They embraced idealism, focusing on nature and opposing materialism. Leslie Perrin Wilson noted that "above all, the Transcendentalists believed in the importance of a direct relationship with God and with nature" (4). This is to say that, transcendentalists, as well as Romantics, were concerned about the material and the immaterial substances. Ralph Waldo Emerson was one of the transcendentalists. Emerson in his essays, "Nature" (1836), "Self- Reliance" and "Over soul" (both 1841), and Henry David Thoreau in his book, "Walden" (1854) expressed the basic ideas underlying transcendentalism. Based on these, they regarded nature not only as beautiful, but as a reflection of divinity, which is literally the face of God. According to them, macrocosm" (the universe) and microcosm" (the individual) were in direct connection with each other. They both also took hold of all animate and inanimate objects, and the divine as well.

Jerry Phillips in his book *Romanticism and Transcendentalism* mentioned:

> Emerson‘s romantic philosophy is most clearly seen in his work, *Nature* (1836). In Nature, Emerson describes a world in which nearly everything in it is a symbol of the spirit. For Emerson, nature is the material world, everything that exists outside the self. This world is one-half, a cover over a greater realm, the spirit or Soul. (52)

Despite the strong position of Romantics and Transcendentalists on the preservation of nature, they did not sustain the course for a long time in the global space. This is

because in the last few decades, the Westerner has begun to distance himself from these Romantic and Transcendental ideas. The question is, why this distance? Teke Charles Ngiewih posits that Western powered postmodernist and structuralist thoughts ... "distanced the Westerner from his transcendental roots with nature and environment" (36). This has created great problems as it has given leverage for continuous destruction of the earth and the essence of being.

This perpetual problem did not end in the Western World because the Westerners migrated, explored and conquered territories in which they spread their philosophies and ideologies. African countries were victims of such circumstances in the 19th century. The Westerners came to Africa with their philosophies and ideologies such as capitalism, individualism, World evolution, and technological advancement. The arrival of Westerners immediately caused a paradigm shift with respect to human-nature or human-spiritual link. According to Mahmood Mamdani in "A Great Leap Backward; a Review of Goran Hyden's *No Shortcuts to Progress"*, “Africa's pre-capitalist past was ignored in favour of its capitalist present; in other words, there was a strong inclination to argue Africa's case in relation to global or external rather than local and internal forces” (178). This shift has been discussed by a great number of scholars who argue mainly that Africa’s pre-capitalist past (pre-colonial Africa) is sharply contrasted with her capitalist present.

Joseph Ndalilah, for example, carried out a study entitled “African Pre-Capitalist Environmental Cosmology and Labour” and came out with the conclusion that pre-capitalist was natural. Unfortunately, capitalism came with commercialization which disrupted African cosmology, ecology and disoriented adaptation to the environment. The paper further notes that, African societies were not only close to nature but to them the environment symbolised life, a departure from western view that this world is not

my home. In his unpublished Ph.D. thesis entitled “Capitalism and Nature in South Africa: Racial Dispossession, Liberation Ideology and Ecological Crisis”, Donna Andrews is of the opinion that capitalism with its attendant ills has caused great harm on African nature or environment. He posits that, “current strategies of overcoming racial dispossession on the basis of capitalism rely on increasing and unbridled exploitation of natural resources.” (iii)

Fundamentally, the arrival of capitalism in Africa has brought more harm on nature and spirituality than good. Western capitalism started the destruction of the African cosmic order, but Africans have embraced these ways without taking the consequences into consideration. This suggests that we check inward examination first.

Before their arrival, Africa had their communal, *Ubuntu*, and cultural values which helped to protect their nature and spirituality. In “Ubuntu is Not Only about the Human! An Analysis of the Role of African Philosophy and Ethics in Environment Management” Danford T. Chibvongodze posits that “the very essence of Ubuntu hinges on consolidating the human, natural and spiritual tripartite (Museka et al. 2012). This tripartite that forms the foundational base of Ubuntu has been crucial in the preservation and conservation of the environmental” (157). He adds that, “environmental conservation in traditional societies of Africa has been effectively achieved through the epitomes of Ubuntu such as taboos, totems, clan names, folklore and proverbs” (157). The emergence of capitalism and individualism is to the detriment of Ubuntu values. In “Ubuntu: Revisiting an Endangered African Philosophy in Quest of a Pan-Africanist Revolutionary Ideology” Temitope Fagunwa argues that “Ubuntu expresses the humanistic tendencies that are fast going into extinction in today’s individualistic society. Ultimately, the withering of Ubuntu is not unconnected to the dominance of

capitalism. The economic system through alienation has not just distorted the relationship among humans, but also between humans and nature." (1)

As seen above, pre-capitalist Africa had a systematic way of using the environment. Unfortunately, capitalism came to Africa and the aggression on nature took a different turn. The need to address this issue has found itself in literary studies too. Given that this discussion has found expression in literary studies too, we must indicate that for literature to treat issues related to human beings and nature is but normal. Many scholars (such as Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm 1996, Lawrence Buell 2005 and 2011, Suresh Frederick 2007 etc.) have termed this link that exists in literature, nature and human beings as Ecocriticism. A broad range of discourses has been made in this area and much scholarly research is still alive on the same area. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm are committed scholars in this area of study with an engaging book on the subject, in which they serve as editors, entitled *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmark in Literary Ecology*. According to them, Ecocriticism is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xvii).

Eco-critics like Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber have indicated that Ecocriticism started as an organized movement within literature studies in the early 1990s and the attention given to it has been growing at an alarming rate. The recent increase in the attention given to Ecocriticism has broadened its scope, thereby increasing eco-relationships. Cheryl Fisher opines that, Eco-relationships can be sensual, political and spiritual, and offer a context to our whole human story. In Africa, eco-relationships are incomplete without a spiritual relationship. This is why eco-studies that have been done about Africa cannot be valid until they align with the culture of the people. In his article titled "The Relevance of African Cosmological Systems to African Literature Today", Mazisi Kunene asserts that, "Studies of African cosmological

concepts have been done mostly by foreigners, and sometimes by Africans who had been deeply influenced by foreign concepts or anthropologists" (190). In doing this, they either present wrong facts, or present right facts wrongly, or worst still even leave facts without presenting. This is the case with the spiritual connection between humans and nature. Nature has been studied and improved through diverse areas such as philosophy, sociology and biology etc. (as seen in the works of Laurence Buell, Cheryll Glotfelty, and Harold Fromm, just to name but a few) but despite the treatment given to its spiritual dimension it is still declining. This thesis sets out to use the poetry of Nol Alembong and Bongasu Tanla-Kishani to look at this spiritual dimension, that is, its decline, its violation, and the ethical consequences of violating it. Thus, supporting Aurélie Choné's view that answers to ecological crisis "should not be merely technological or material but should be sought on a spiritual level, through the foundation of an 'inner ecology' and an enlightened reflection about the meaning of life, the Other, the sacred" (7).

The thesis dwells on Ecocultural Spirituality. On the one hand, "Ecoculture is an emerging focal concept reflecting the inextricability of nature and culture" (Parks 54). Its focus is on the interconnectedness between nature and culture. On the other hand, "The concept of Eco-spirituality immediately suggests that there is a kinship between ecology and spirituality, that there is a spiritual dimension to ecology and that spirituality is indissociable from ecological concerns" (Choné 1). In other words, Eco-spirituality looks at the spiritual connection between humans and nature. Choné concludes his paper by arguing that:

> The concept of ecospirituality thus refers to a wide range of discourses, whose common interest is in showing that the current ecological crisis is an essentially spiritual crisis of values, so that answers to it should not be merely technological or material but should be sought on a spiritual level, through the foundation of

> an 'inner ecology' and an enlightened reflection about the meaning of life, the Other, the sacred. (7)

What Choné means is that, we need to go beyond the physical paradigm of solving ecological problems. We need to look for spiritual perspectives in solving the problems. This spiritual perspective lies within our general approach to nature because nature and spirituality are connected. Drawing supportive evidence from the poetry of Nol Alembong and Bongasu Tanla-Kishani, this thesis recognizes that the world has diverted from the Romantic and Transcendental core values, and Africa has embraced capitalism and individualism which go a long way to threaten the spiritual realm.

Aim and Objectives

The preoccupation of this study is to show how spirituality is declining in African ecoculture, and how Kishani and Alembong rehabilitate this spirituality. In other words, the thesis sets out to show the manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the natural space, and the ethical consequences of violating such connection. Humans have violated this connection thereby threatening the spiritual realm. Moreover, the work has the following objectives:

1. To examine the relevance of studies done in ethno-ethics, ecoculture, spirituality and the poetry of Kishani and Alembong
2. To discuss the epistemological foundation of the poetry of Kishani and Alembong.
3. To discuss the causes of the decline in African spirituality in relation to man's anthropogenic culture;
4. To show how this decline can be revived;
5. To also demonstrate the fundamental difference that exists between the Western and African conceptions of nature, culture and spirituality.

Statement of the Problem

The existence, being and essence of the African is embedded in his spirituality which is the nucleus of his culture. The increasing decline of spirituality in the African cosmic, accentuated by colonialism, imperialism, modernism and globalization poses a huge threat to the collective existence of the Africans. This compromise is attained because, under the influence of Western ideology, Africans are shifting from and destroying nature which carries their spirituality and culture.

Seen from this perspective, this study sets out to examine how Alembong and Kishani in their poetic imagination try to revitalize and revive African Ecocultural Spirituality. It is the contention of this thesis that, Ethno-ethics and Ecocultural Spirituality constitute the life-wire of African existence.

Research Questions

The above research problem has been broken down into the following research questions:

1. What is the relevance of the literature reviewed in this work?
2. How do Kishani and Alembong handle ecocultural and spiritual issues in their poetry?
3. What is the cause of the decline in African spirituality?
4. How can this decline be slowed down since it cannot be stopped?
5. How can the suggestions from Kishani and Alembong contribute to slowing down this decline?

Hypothesis

Based on the research problem and questions posed above, this thesis argues that Nol Alembong and Bongasu Tanla-Kishani have used their poetry for the repositioning of the ecological, cultural and spiritual links that have been distorted by the New World order informed by capitalist greed and global technological advancements which undermine core spiritual values, ethos and mores. Linked to this is the predication that, this thesis reconciles this artificial dualism between humankind and nature created by capitalist greed and modern technology.

Definition and Conceptualization of Terms

Five terms/concepts are defined and conceptualized in this work for clarity, precision and conciseness: Ecoculture, Ecocriticism, Spirituality, Bioethics and Ethno-ethics. The reason why some terms which are not on the topic of this study are defined and conceptualized here is because they serve as a gateway for the understanding of other terms.

Ecoculture

Ecoculture is the interplay between the human culture and the environment that it exists in, including but not limited to the challenges of regaining and retaining this connection through means such as sustainable development. It combines ecological and cultural elements. But Alain Hays says the notions of nature and culture are complex; they are “scientifically” differentiated in our modern societies but deeply embedded in tradition nal communities, in particular rural societies and indigenous peoples.

According to Kelvin Ngong Toh, "discourse on eco-culture has multiple meanings to peoples depending on their interpretation of the landscape in which they find

themselves." (262). This means that the way one culture treats ecology is intrinsically different from the way another culture treats it.

Adrian Ivakhiv posits in an online article that, "The development of the field of cultural studies in the last few decades has provided a number of theoretical and analytical tools useful in understanding the ways "culture" in its many forms is implicated within the perpetuation and contestation of relations of power." Part of these power relations is nature. Ivakhiv puts forth that Ecocultural studies sees culture as the "battleground" or terrain within which different ideas about nature and the environment, human-environment relations, and environmental politics and action, are articulated and contested. Given these, we will consider that Ecoculture is the link between nature and culture. According to Tala,

> All those who share the same culture are expected to behave predictably. Anybody who ignores the cultural guidelines must be prepared to suffer the consequences. Hence, ecocriticism cannot afford to ignore culture because it is what connects man to physical nature and also regulates man's interaction with nature. (141)

Briefly, Tala here establishes a clear relationship between people and their culture. The people have to follow their cultural ways that encourage the protection of nature otherwise they will suffer the consequences.

According to Alain Hays, “Eco-culture” is not the same as “traditional culture”, although in many parts of the world, the cultural built heritage, as bearer of traditions, provides countless examples of cultures of living in harmony with nature. For us, “Eco-culture” is timeless; it means any form of human culture that may demonstrate a strong ability to protect nature. Eco-culture invites us to preserve its material as well as immaterial legacy — in particular its environmentally friendly built heritage — what contributes to ecosystem conservation efforts. In this study, we shall consider ecoculture

as the interplay between the environment and culture. This is because ecoculture examines nature and culture simultaneously.

Ecocriticism

Michael Ryan and Robert Eaglestone in *The Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory: Literary Theory from 1966 to the Present* postulate that:

> Eco-criticism is the most popular term for the study of literature and culture from a perspective informed by environmental politics or scientific ecology, although some critics prefer the term 'environmental criticism' (Lawrence Buell), 'ecocritique' (Tim Luke), or 'Ecopoetics' (Jonathan Bate). Just like feminist critics share a moral and political commitment to women's liberation in spite of their theoretical disagreement, all eco-critics are motivated by an acute sense of the threats to natural environments from human population levels, unconstrained technological development, the ecological consequences of both wealth and poverty, and ideologies considered hostile to environmentalism, such as consumerism, Christianity and patriarchy. (570-571)

Garrard here places ecocriticism within the spectrum of literature and culture as accentuated in environmental politics or scientific ecology. He likens the commitment of ecocritics to the struggle of feminists to liberate themselves. This is indication that both ecocritics and feminists are committed scholars even though with different courses. While the formal seek to liberate nature from the oppression perpertuated by humans, the later seek to liberate women from the oppression of the gender biased population.

The origin of ecocriticism dates back to 1637 following the works of philosophers such as Rene Descartes and Francis Beacon. Though they wrote about nature, they did not use the word ecocriticism in any of their works to describe the relationship between literature and the environment. It was William Ruekert who first used the word ecocriticism in 1978 in his essay entitled, “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-criticism” to talk about the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature.

The theory fully started in America in the 1980s with special sessions at American conferences, and the founding of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) in 1992 which holds conferences in North America and encourages other continents to hold similar conferences to protect nature. Some committed scholars argue that the theory started in the 1990s. Kashim Ibrahim Tala, for instance, states that "Ecocriticism which takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies started as an Anglo-American literary discourse although it has grown exponentially since the 1990s, especially in Europe, America and part of Asia" (136). The increase in the study of literature and environment is said to be motivated by the environmental crisis facing the world today, and the near absence of the ethics of responsibility (Tala 136, Donald Wooster qtd by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm xxi). Gilbert Fai Tarka insists that, “ecocriticism emerged as a result of the yearning to go beyond the gender, class and racial issues that were the major preoccupations of postcolonial studies in the late 20th century” (277).

Tala states an obvious fact in "Ecoculture and Environmental Apocalypse: The Case of Bakweriland" that "many definitions and descriptions of ecocriticism have been given by various scholars" (141). It is therefore important to examine some of these definitions and then appropriate the most suitable one for this study. In this regard, four different definitions will be examined here, and then a working definition will be fashioned out from them.

Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm define ecocriticism as "The relationship between literature (art) and the physical environment." (xviii) They add that:

> All ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnection between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one

> foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman. (xix)

One pertinent part of this definition worth noting is the inclusion of the nonhuman aspect. This nonhuman aspect does not limit itself only to the physical, but it includes the spiritual aspects. On top of that, we must note the inclusion of culture. This is because our attitudes toward the environment are reflected in our cultural beliefs.

Tala contends that, "I intend to see ecocriticism as a literary approach which analyses and promotes oral or written literature which raises moral questions about how humans interact with nature" (141). Here, we see a three-sphere connection which is literature, humans and nature. The three are interconnected in that literature takes from, and gives to the environment about humans, shaping humans and improving their environment. Furthermore, Tala insists on the surfacing of "moral questions" because when we look at nature, we look at human's dos and don'ts which can help improve it. This gives a sense of bioethics.

Another critic who proffers a definition of ecocriticism is Lawrence Buell who briefly defines ecocriticism as, "The relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmental praxis (quoted by Elizabeth Ayuk Ako 196). A very similar definition to this one goes as follows: "Ecocriticism takes a nature-centred approach to literary and artistic studies" (Visi Sumbom Tubuo 158).

Given that there are so many definitions of ecocriticism, we shall have to summarize a working definition in this thesis. Asika, Ikechukwu Emmanuel and Madu, Bridget Ngozi opine that:

> Other definitions exist on eco-criticism which vary in their perspectives and dimensions but irrespective of the several variations and differences in approach, the critics have something common which is their collective interest in

> examining the relationship of literature and nature as a way of renewing and stimulating a reader's awareness of the non-human world and his or her responsibility to sustain it. Those critics share in common, a fundamental premise that all things are inter-related, and that they are actively concerned about the impact of human actions on the environment (33).

It is important to note that Emmanuel and Ngozi here simply are of the opinion that there are a pluralistic number of definitions of ecocriticism even though these definitions have the same basis. It is for this reason that we must have a working definition in this thesis. In this study therefore, we shall consider ecocriticism as a literary approach which deals with the physical and non-physical relationships that exist among literature, nature, and human/nonhuman species and cultures. The inclusion of non-physical relationships is because in the African context, human relations with nature go beyond the physical. As Chinua Achebe says in *Morning Yet On Creation Day,* "Africa is not only a geographical expression; it is also a metaphysical landscape—it is in fact a view of the world and of the whole cosmos perceived from a particular position" (50). Even what happens in the physical could have effects in the spiritual realm. Therefore, it would be incomplete to limit the definition of ecocriticism only to the physical as some ecocritics have done. One could say that, they are influenced by Western ecologies.

The third concept worth defining in this thesis is Spirituality.

Spirituality

Laurence Lepherd argues that, it is complex to provide an all encompassing definition for spirituality. In this case we can only describe it. He therefore describes it as follows:

> If the human spirit refers to mind, soul or inner being, then spirituality can refer to the state or condition of the human mind. Spirituality is also regarded as a universal human phenomenon and that it is present in everyone whether religious, humanist, hedonist or atheist.This is an important factor in responding

> to people who state that they are not spiritual because they are not religious. The significance of all these statements is that no single faith or religious tradition can claim that their understanding of spirit is unique to a specific way of thinking but rather it is a characteristic of humanity. (568)

In summary, Lepherd equates spirituality to the mind of human beings and believes that everyone is spiritual whether you are religious or not.

According to Dinar Sari Eka Dewi and Hazaliza Binti Hamzah, "Spirituality can be understood as the set of beliefs that brings vitality and meaning to the events of life. It is the human propensity for the interest of others and themselves. Spirituality can encompass both secular and religious perspectives." (145)

Spirituality as used in this study looks at the relationship between humans and higher beings. It is all about humankind's mind and how he/she uses it to think about connection with the spirit world which in turn helps to shape his/her view of the world.

Bioethics

The term "Bioethics" is formed from the combination of two words: "Bio" and "Ethics". Bio- is used at the beginning of nouns and adjectives that refer to life or to the study of living things. Ethics is a word used to describe moral issues. Thus, bioethics in other words is the study of the moral issues of life. But we have to note that "while the bio part of *bioethics* gives the field its urgency and immediacy, we should not forget that the root word is *ethics*" (Levine xiii)

Bioethics, according to Albert R. Jonsen, is "the systematic study of the moral dimensions – including moral vision, decisions, conduct and policies – of the life sciences and health care, employing a variety of ethical methodologies in an interdisciplinary setting" (vii). One factor which needs to be hinted here is that bioethics

has gone beyond the medical field. Its tentacles are now found in all walks of life. Despite this, some people, as seen in Jonsen's definitions, attempt to limit bioethics only to biomedicine or biomedical sciences, but it goes beyond it. Tristram Engelhardt Jr. argues that:

> The questions addressed in bioethics are not restricted to the province of physicians, but concerns nurses, other health care professionals, patients, and laymen. The term *bioethics* in fact encompasses issues that fall outside health care ethics in the strict sense of an exploration of the moral issues raised of health care and the biomedical sciences. Issues concerning non-moral values regarding what ought to be treated (e.g., signaling a state of affairs as pathological, as physiologically or psychologically abnormal) and ontological issues concerning when persons begin and cease (e.g., questions about the point at which fetuses should be acknowledged as persons), are also customarily gathered within the compass of bioethics (bioethics in a broad sense). (7-8)

According to Fayemi Ademola Kazeem and Macaulay Adeyelure, bioethics is a normative and empirical consideration of moral issues and controversies about values emerging from biotechnologies and the health sciences. They further say, bioethics in Africa is an application of bioethical ideas and moral commitments irrespective of their provenance in the consideration of moral problems emerging from the effects of globalization on healthcare and human wellbeing in Africa. It should be noted that they deny the phrase “African bioethics” and instead assert “bioethics in Africa”.

All the three definitions are relevant to this study because they all look at moral issues of life and their controversies. The first and second definitions focus on life and morality. The third definition adds controversies because for it to be bioethics there must be dilemmas and/or controversial things or ideas. Thus, the three definitions are relevant in this study. According to Tristram Engelhardt Jr., bioethics "is a philosophy engaged in one of its central tasks; aiding a culture to clarify its views of reality and of value” (8). It all boils down to what is right and what is wrong, to whom and at what time?

It is important for us to have a more succinct knowledge of bioethics. Bioethics is more like an ethical dilemma. "An ethical dilemma, by definition, is one that poses a conflict not between good and evil but between one good principle and another that is equally good … The choices are hard because the decisions that are made ... will influence the kind of society we have today and the one we will have in the future" (Levine I)

According to Carol Levine in *Taking Sides*,

> Bioethics began in the 1950s as an intellectual movement among a small group of physicians and theologians who started to examine the questions raised by the new medical technologies that were starting to emerge as the result of the heavy expenditure of public funds in medical research after World War II. They were soon joined by a number of philosophers who had become disillusioned with what they saw as the arid abstractions of much analytic philosophy at the time and by lawyers who sought to find principles in the law that would guide ethical decision-making or, if such principles were not there, to develop them by case law and legislation or regulation. Although the four disciplines - medicine, theology, philosophy, and law - still dominate the field, today, bioethics is an interdisciplinary effort, with political scientists, economists, sociologists, anthropologists, nurses, allied health professionals, policymakers, psychologists, and others contributing their special perspectives to the ongoing debates!" (xii-xiii)

Levine is of the view that, "if bioethics is at the frontiers of scientific knowledge, it is also a field with ancient roots. It goes back to the most basic questions of human life: what is right? What is wrong?" (xiii) This gives a sense that bioethics is simply ethics with controversies. This supports Carol Levine's view that "while the bio part of *bioethics* gives the field its urgency and immediacy, we should not forget that the root word is *ethics*" (Levine xiii). But different societies have different moral codes of ethics. Given that different societies have different moral codes and values, ethical relativists like Michel Foucault (1926–84) and Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) have argued that there can be no universal moral judgments: What is right or wrong depends on who does it and where, and whether or not society approves of it. The rightness or wrongness of an act depends on the doer and the environment and the time.

Levine argues that:

> Although it is certainly true that moral values are embedded in a social, cultural, and political context, it is also true that certain moral judgments are universal. We think it is wrong, for example to sell people into slavery - whether or not a certain society approved or even whether or not a person wanted to be a slave. People may not agree what the universal moral values are or ought to be, but it is hard to deny that some such values exist. (xiv)

As we have earlier observed, Kazeem and Adeyelure argue that bioethics is a normative ethics. Normative ethics is an analysis of what moral judgments ought to be. It is a branch of philosophy. Bioethics is one branch of normative ethics. Levine posits that, "Bioethics is based on the belief that some solutions to the dilemmas that arise in medicine and science are more moral than others and that these solutions can be determined by moral reasoning and reflection" (XV). This also relates to the core of our study which is ecocultural spirituality. There are some ecocultural and spiritual issues which are normative in nature and must be classified as bioethics issues. For example, the way people ought to treat nature is based on every cultural belief and does not need to be overemphasized. However, every culture is supposed to treat nature in a way that will not lead to its extinction.

Bioethics can implement ethical theories for better understanding. The question that often arises is that if the practitioners of bioethics do not rely solely on cultural norms and emotions, what are their sources of determining what is right or wrong? Levine makes readers understand that:

> The most comprehensive source is the theory of ethics -- a broad set of moral principles (or perhaps just one overriding principle) that is used in measuring human conduct ... A theory of ethics must be acceptable to many groups, not just the followers of one religious tradition. Most writers outside the religious traditions (and some within them) have looked to one of three major traditions (theories, my emphasis) in ethics: teleological theories, deontological theories, and natural law theories." (Levine xv)

It is important that we briefly describe the major arguments in these theories. Teleological theories are based on the idea that the end or purpose of the action determines its rightness or wrongness. Example, *utilitarianism* (which is one type of teleological theories) in its simplest formulation says an act is moral if it brings more good consequences than bad ones. Proponents are Jeremy Bentham (1748- 1832 and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873).

According to the Deontological theories, the rightness or wrongness of an act should be judged on whether or not it conforms to a moral principle or rule, not on whether it leads to good or bad consequences. The primary exponent of deontological theory was Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), a German philosopher. Kant declared that there is an ultimate norm, or supreme duty, which he called the "Moral Law." He held that an act is moral only if it springs from a "good will," the only thing that is good without qualification. We must do good things, said Kant, because we have a duty to do them, not because they result in good consequences or because they give us pleasure (although that can happen as well). Kant constructed a formal “Categorical Imperative," the ultimate test of morality: "I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become universal law." Recognizing that this formulation was far from clear, Kant said the same thing in three other ways. He explained that a moral rule must be one that can serve as a guide for everyone's conduct; it must be one that permits people to treat each other as ends in themselves, not solely as means to another's ends; and it must be one that each person can impose on himself by his own will, not one that is solely imposed by the state, one's parents, or God. Kant's Categorical Imperative, in the simplest terms, says that all persons have equal moral worth and that no rule can be moral unless all people can apply it autonomously to all other human beings. Although Kant's Categorical Imperative is merely a formal statement with no

clear valid and universal claim on its moral content at all, he gave some examples of what he meant: "Do not commit suicide", and "Help people in distress". It is worthy to note that Kant was highly criticized especially as he did not say anything about the clash of ethics.

The third strain of ethical theory that is prominent in bioethics is natural law theory, first developed by St. Thomas Aquinas (1223-1274). This theory holds that, actions are morally right if they accord with our nature as human beings. The attribute that is distinctively human is the ability to reason and to exercise intelligence. Thus, argues this theory, we can know the good, which is objective and can be learned through reason. References to natural law theory are prominent in the works of Catholic theologians and writers; they see natural law as ultimately derived from God, but knowable through the efforts of human beings.

All these theories are discussed by Carol Levine in a more succinct way and they directly link to bioethics. Their importance in this study cannot be underestimated because it is through them that we can determine if an act or action on nature, culture and spirituality is morally justifiable or not. So, the foundation of true bioethics lies on these theories even though there are not African inclined. There is therefore the question of an ethics that is African inclined. This is called ethno-ethics in this work.

Ethno-ethics

This refers to ethics that views things from the African perspective. It is what some critics and scholars like John Barugahare call African bioethics. Barugahare contends that African bioethics (ethno-ethics) is supposed to be indigenous to Africa and reflective of African identity. This means that its point of focus is on Africa and it judges the rightness or wrongness of actions from the African cultural perspective.

Ethno-ethics is an attempt to Africanise bioethics, presenting it as a set of moral principles derived from African communitarian/ ubuntu values. African ethno-ethics is thus the exploration of African contribution to what is right or what is wrong through indigenous African moral principles. In the words of Cletus T. Andoh, ethno-ethics "consists of a set of shared beliefs, values, categories, and assumptions that are implicit in the languages, practices and beliefs of African cultures" (69). Andoh specifically identifies traditional phenomena and practices like proverbs, maxims, tales, songs, mythology, male circumcision and marriage as sources of African ethno-ethics.

One key African contribution to bioethics is the communitarian moral theory which changes the whole show from bioethics to ethno-ethics. In communitarian ethics, relationality is salient in understanding aspects of ethical discourse in African contexts such as healing, wellbeing, care for patients, and the resolution of ethical issues. An African relational ethics (ethno-ethics) emphasises harmonious coexistence among individuals and between individuals and the universe as a whole, respect for human dignity and the preservation of the physical environment (Andoh 69 – 70). This touches all facets of the universe, including the environment and spirituality.

In this work therefore, we shall consider ethno-ethics as the African approach to moral issues of the environment, which dwells on the African cultural elements to determine what is right and what is wrong about the way we treat our environment and spirituality.

Significance of the Work

The thesis helps to reposition the ecological, cultural and spiritual links that have been distorted by capitalist greed, world evolution and technological advancement.

Furthermore, this study is also important in that, it reveals the spiritual and ethical dimensions of the connection between human beings and nature. This sensitizes and directs people to protect nature. It should be noted that scholars like Wangari Maathai, Adriaan van Klinken and others have opined that, one of the most urgent issues facing African communities in particular and the world at large today is the environmental crisis of the 'physical destruction of the earth'. The earth, however, is not only physically destroyed, but there is also a psychological and spiritual destruction of the essence of being.

The thesis also helps readers understand that when it comes to disciplines that contribute in providing solutions to ecological crisis, literature is not left out. Here, the poetry of Nol Alembong and Bongasu Tanla-Kishani play great roles. Therefore, the thesis adds to the body of knowledge already existing in the field of ecocriticism and ecoculture in particular and literature at large.

Scope of the Work

The field of ecology is so broad, and as such, it is basically easier, and of course better, to break it into various components so as to facilitate deeper studies. In line with this, this thesis recognizes components earlier mentioned above such as ecofeminism, deep ecology, and eco-spirituality. The thesis largely focuses on Eco-cultural spirituality in the poetry of two contemporary writers, namely, Nol Alembong and Bongasu Tanla-Kishani. These two poets emanate from two cultural contexts namely, Nweh and Nso. Basically, the poets write from these cultural backgrounds. From these two backgrounds we can do an inductive reasoning to expand the findings of the work to Africa and the world.

Sources of Data

Primary data for this study was gotten from four poetry collections by two poets, Nol Alembong and Bongasu Tanla-Kishani. Alembong's collections include *The Passing Wind* and *Forest Echoes.* Kishani's collections include *Konglanjo! Spears of Love Without Ill-Fortune* and *A Basket of Kola Nuts*. The rationale for the selection of these texts is basically the desire to situate ecocritical discourses within the Nweh and Nso cultural contexts. There have been global and African perspectives of ecocultural and spiritual discourses. The need for an Nweh and Nso cultural perspectives is necessary. It is for this reason that this researcher has chosen the afore-mentioned texts. The choice of the two poets, both from the English-speaking part of Cameroon, owes more to their shared tropes and motifs than to their generic similarities and place of origin.

Relevant library data were gathered from published and unpublished books, articles in journals, websites, Ph.D. and Master's theses. These were only used as supplements to our primary data. Some materials would have been gotten from Alembong and Kishani through interviews, but all the attempts to meet and/or interview them failed. On the one hand, Alembong promised this researcher twice that he was going to give him an appointment when he would be less busy, but it was not successful. On the other hand, Kishani told the researcher to write his questions down and send to him on WhatsApp or call him again on the following day to ask his questions. Unfortunately, Kishani's number, as well his WhatsApp, never went through again after that day. This was one of the challenges faced in the course of this study.

Structure of the Work

In addition to the introduction above, this study consists of five chapters and a conclusion.

The first chapter is titled "Literature Review and Theoretical Framework". In this chapter, we begin (as the first part of the chapter) by summarizing, analyzing, and synthesizing the works of other critics who have carried out studies around the same or similar area of study. In this sense, we have conceptual review, empirical review and theoretical review. The second part of this chapter looks at two theories that inform the analysis and interpretation in this study. These theories are Ecocriticism and Afrocentricity.

Chapter two is captioned, "Eco-spirituality as Epistemological Foundation". Here, we look at the unseen dimensions of the environment in the poetry of Alembong and Kishani. The following thematic clusters emerge under this chapter: African Ontology and Epistemology, The Epistemology of Ecology in the Poetry of Alembong and Kishani, The Epistemology of Spirituality in the Poetry of Alembong and Kishani, and finally, Nature and Transcendentalism.

Chapter three is, "The Anthropocentric Culture and Nature". The focus here is to examine how humans divert all their attentions towards themselves, thereby causing great harm on nature. The chapter also dwells on attitudes of different cultures to nature. In this regard, we have the following subtitles under this chapter: Ethnocentrism and Egoistic Tendencies as Human Cultures, and The Impact of Human Actions on Nature.

Chapter four is entitled "The Ethics of Eco-Cultural Spirituality". Here, the preoccupation of this chapter is to examine the dialectical and symbiotic relationships that exist between Western Bioethics and African Ethno-ethics in relation to Eco-cultural Spirituality. This chapter is subdivided into the following thematic clusters: An Overview and Western Notions of Bioethics, Ethno-ethics and African Experiences:

The Ecoculturality and Spirituality Evolutions, and Critical Perspectives and the Ethno-ethics Visions of Alembong and Kishani.

Finally, chapter Five is captioned, “African Ethno-ethics and Ecocultural Spirituality”. This chapter demonstrates the complexity of ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics, and the focus is on African ecology, culture, spirituality and ethno-ethics. One of the aims of this chapter is to deconstruct and decolonize Western bioethics which has been Eurocentric and to give it an Afrocentric dimension with the help of African ecocultural spirituality. The chapter has the following subtitles: Perspectives on Pristine African Ecoculture, Critical Standpoints on Pristine African Spirituality, Reflections on Pristine African Ethno-ethics, The Hybrid Concept: The Meeting Point of Western and African Ecocultural Spirituality and Ethics, and Distilling African Ecocultural Spirituality and Ethno-ethics.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The fundamental aim of this chapter is to summarize, analyze and synthesize existing literature in and around this area of study, and then clearly talk about the theories which have been employed for the interpretation, analysis and evaluation in this thesis. At the end, this chapter would have clearly shown the existing gap which this thesis sets out to fill. It will do this by indicating, clearly and concisely its point of departure. On top of that, the chapter will also clearly state and explain two theories which inform the analysis and interpretation in this thesis.

Literature Review

In the field of scientific writing, it is but normal to show what other researchers have done in one's chosen area so as to facilitate visibility of one's point of divergence and convergence. This is in line with Isaac Newton's famous saying that he could see further because he stood on the shoulders of giants. It is for this reason that we have dedicated a section of this work for literature review. We have focused on three main review categories, namely, conceptual review, empirical review and theoretical review. The final section of this part of the study shows the researcher's point of departure from what the above literature review reveals.

Conceptual Review

There are three principal concepts to be reviewed: ecoculture, ecospirituality and bio/ethno(ethics).

Ecoculture

As the interplay between the human culture and the environment that it exists in, ecoculture combines ecological and cultural elements. It is a very complex issue to lump nature and culture together. According to Alain Hays, the notions of nature and culture are complex; they are “scientifically” differentiated in our modern societies but deeply embedded in traditional communities in particular rural societies and indigenous peoples. This could be because there are pluralistic meanings when nature and culture come together. Kelvin Toh opines that, "discourse on eco-culture has multiple meanings to peoples depending on their interpretation of the landscape in which they find themselves." (262). This means that the way one culture views and treats ecology is intrinsically different from the way another culture views and treats it. According to Alain Hays, “Eco-culture” is not the same as “traditional culture”, although in many parts of the world, the cultural built heritage, as bearer of traditions, provides countless examples of cultures of living in harmony with nature. For us, “Eco-culture” is timeless; it means any form of human culture that may demonstrate a strong ability to protect nature. Eco-culture invites us to preserve its material as well as immaterial legacy — in particular its environmentally friendly built heritage — what contributes to ecosystem conservation efforts.

Another dimension in which nature and culture have been studied is from the perspective of power relations. Adrian Ivakhiv puts forth that, Ecocultural studies see culture as the "battleground" or terrain within which different ideas about nature and the environment, human-environment relations, and environmental politics and action, are articulated and contested. Ivakhiv adds that, the development of the field of cultural studies in the last few decades has provided a number of theoretical and analytical tools useful in understanding the ways "culture" in its many forms is implicated within the

perpetuation and contestation of relations of power. Part of these power relations is nature. Nature and culture are locked in a state where one is affecting the other and being affected by the other. Kashim Ibrahim Tala is of the view that, “ecocriticism cannot afford to ignore culture because it is what connects man to physical nature and also regulates man's interaction with nature” (141).

Ecospirituality

Ecospirituality refers to the unseen aspect of the environment. A number of critics and scholars have written on this concept and it is important for us to examine some of their views.

Cheryl Fisher bases his paper titled "Eco-spirituality and Nature-Informed Therapies" on the possibility of treating disease using natural resources. In this sense, he outlines a number of therapeutic measures which can be used easily only from an eco-based method. He dwells more on horticulture therapy and wilderness therapy. According to him, horticulture therapy, on the one hand, is "the use of plants as a modality through which clinically defined goals may be met. It is the process by which individuals may develop well-being using plants. This is achieved by active or passive involvement." (Quoted in *Growth Point*, 1994 p.4 as cited by Jordan, 2015). On the other hand, wilderness therapy “focuses on the interaction between and within humans and the outdoors (quoted in Jordan, 2015)." He also talks about Eco-therapy at large which he says was "coined by Howard Clinebell in 1996 in his book, *Eco- therapy: Healing Ourselves, Healing the Earth.* It has been described as the process of healing the human-nature-relationship through connecting and reconnecting with natural processes (See Buzzell, 2014, Jordan, 2015).

With respect to the spiritual connection between these natural therapeutic measures and human beings, Cheryl Fisher acknowledges the fact that African communities, such as the Korekore of Zimbabwe, are spiritually informed by sacred sites (e.g. rivers, mountains, and forests), trees (e.g. baobab, tamarind), and animals. This means that Africans derive spiritual knowledge from nature. Natural elements, in other words, serve as a source of spiritual lore to the people. Quite unfortunately, nature is good to humans, but humans are hostile to it. Some humans kill animals and use them for food or sacrifices. Nol Alembong condemns this. According to him "when animal life is sacrificed in order to placate spiritual beings, as it is the case in ritual performances, this is considered, in all ethical consciousness, as evil perpetuated against innocent creatures" (132). Mazisi Kunene supports the view of Fisher. He argues that, "The ecological imperatives of the African continent have made it possible for the African people to develop thought systems that describe their world in a common language of common symbols" (191). Simply put, African knowledge is derived from its ecology. This knowledge, according to him, can be projected through African myths. Further studies reveal that the knowledge is also projected through other forms of African oral literature such as proverbs, songs and incantations as stipulated, for instance by Nol Alembong in his 2011 book entitled, *Standpoints on African Orature.*

According to Oscar C. Labang, Emmanuel Fru Doh "perceives an inextricable and inevitable connection between the life of nonhuman species and human beings in the postcolonial context." (103). He further argues that, to Doh and to other African poets,

> the Western form of civilization, which prioritizes the building of cities over the preservation of forests and other natural forms, is the wrong approach for African societies because the forest to the African symbolizes (not simply a collection of trees) an existential cosmos that encompasses medical, and nutritional elements as well as spiritual and transcendental forces which are vital life-links to the people's survival (120).

The forest serving as a bastion for spiritual and transcendental forces gives a sense of spirituality in the ecosphere. One would not be wrong to deduce that Labang envisages a dual core sensibility of the environment. This, he adds, is not the case with western perceptions of the environment/ forest. He says:

> Unlike in Western literature and culture where forest is placed in binary opposition to civilization (Addition 2007:116), in African culture forest is an integral part of the life of the communities as it serves as the locations for religious, social and healing practices (Koppell, 1990) as well as the source of livelihood (Labang 104).

Quite unfortunately, Labang laments that the colonial master in collaboration with African leaders have destroyed some of these symbolic connections with nature. Destroying the physical connections with nature may have spiritual implications in the African context. Labang posits that:

> Through the personification of forest/trees, Doh establishes a connection between the postcolonial people and the natural world of trees; and shows that the relationship was both symbiotic and synergetic. However, the intrusion of Western exploitative agents and their collaboration with postcolonial leadership has destabilized the relationship. The ecopoetic is categorical in his insistence that there must be a balanced approach of mutual interdependence between human and non-human species. (104)

The cry is that of a reconnection with the nonhuman world for betterment. As seen in the review in this section of the work (basically eco-spirituality), a lot is yet to be done on the relationship between nature and spirituality. On top of that, the wounded connections precipitated by colonial and postcolonial leadership need to be healed. It is the desire of this thesis to critically examine the spiritual dimension of humankind's interconnectedness with the ecosphere. This interconnectedness in the spiritual basis has a religious foundation.

So many religions exist (even though spirituality is one aspect) in the world today such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islamism, Christianity, and African Traditional Religion. There is a cross-section of works (by Africans and Westerners) which hold the belief that nature and environmental crisis cannot be fully understood without looking at them from the Western religious perspective. In view of this, they rely on the Bible and Koran (representations of Christianity and Islam respectively) to trace the root of the problems and solutions. Here, we cite scholars such as Wangari Maathai of Kenya, Adriaan van Klinken, etc.

Wangari Maathai's role is acknowledged by many scholars (for instance. Eddah Mutua and Susan Kilonzo 2018, Musila 2020, and Adriaan van Klinken 2021). In an attempt to discuss Maathai's 'spiritual legacy', Eddah Mutua and Susan Kilonzo (2018, 189) draw attention to the way in which she sought 'to maintain the spiritual connection between everyday life and the environment'. She draws most of her facts from the Bible. It has been argued that, it is generally acknowledged that religion and spirituality are an important part of Maathai's personal motivation, her activist work, and her ecological thinking (Du Toit 2019; Mutua and Kilonzo 2018; Mwangi 2020).

Even though Adriaan van Klinken does not see many African studies relying on the Bible for solutions to their problems, he believes that the Bible is part of the problems. He argues that, the field of African cultural studies does not demonstrate a great deal of interest in the messages decorating the matter, are not made subject of analysis, and the idea that they are in a juxtaposition appears to be unquestioned assumptions. Furthermore, he regrets this Bible. Even in instances where Biblical quotes are mentioned, he argues that the significance of these bible quotations, and their meaning in relation to the other symbols create a vacuum in most studies. He says the apparent lack of scholarly interest in the Bible in the field of African studies is surprising when

taking into account the Bible's long history in Africa, its wide dissemination and reception across the continent, and the considerable linguistic, cultural, social, and political impact it has had, still has, and most likely continues to have in African communities and societies, as well as in the African diaspora (see Adeyemo 2006; Page 2010; Stiebert and Dube 2018; West and Dube 2000; West 2015).

He attributes this neglect of the Bible to its violent and exploitation motive by quoting, "When the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us, 'let us pray.' After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible." (Dube 3) The irony of this is that the land which the white man took away is tied to the culture of the people. Since the white man doesn't succumb to the culture, he misuses the land, thus violating African cosmological systems. This has prompted postcolonial writers to produce a good number of writings. In fact, postcolonial ecocriticism finds this area rich and worthy of materials.

Furthermore, one may want to use the Bible to position literature and nature as far as the relationship between human and non-human species is concerned. Here, we use Biblical quotes to explain why we need to protect nature. The Book of Job, for example, instructs us to consult the creatures of the air, land and sea, "Ask the beasts and they will teach you" (12.7). We use this to trace the root of the interconnectedness between human beings and nature (physically and spiritually).

Despite the arguments above, Ogaga Okuyade claims that, 'the church remains a colonial capitalist instrument for devaluing African belief systems founded on pragmatic interrelatedness of all the worlds' (203). If this is the case, it will be necessary, as it is, for us to summarize, analyze and synthesize the works of some committed scholars who tackle ecological issues from African spirituality which is based on the environment.

To begin with, Emmanuel Udokang opines that "many scholars hold the view that African ethics and morality is derived from traditional religion" (268). In a sense, his argument is that African Traditional Religions are fundamental in its ethics and morality. He believes that religion is responsible for ethical principles in Africa. The following are quoted in his article:

> Traditional African society made no clear distinction between religious law and moral law. It is what religion forbids that the society also forbids and the society approves what religion approves. Religious values are the same as moral values" (Divine, 1986, p.37).
>
> Among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, "Morality is certainly the fruit of religion. They do not attempt to separate the two and it is impossible for them to do so without disastrous consequences" (Idowu 1962, p.146).
>
> The religious basis of African ethics also attracted the comment of Bertrand Russell. According to him, "many traditional ethical beliefs are hard to justify, except on the assumption that here is a God or a World Spirit or at least an immanent cosmic purpose … without a theological basis, they lose persuasive force and the power of psychological compulsion." (Russell, 1992, p.27)
>
> It is an incontrovertible fact that for the African, ethics is tied up with the religious worldview. This agrees with Abogunrin's view that, "the ethico-religious conception of the universe prevails in traditional societies … and morality rests upon the commandment of the Deity" (1982, p.4).
>
> This implies that African Traditional religion is the bedrock of traditional ethics. The Supreme Being, the divinities and ancestral spirits were the main sources of African morality and ethics. This is why moral laws were inviolate and immutable and no offender was left unpunished. (268)

If the foundation of morality in Africa is in its religions, then it immediately suggests that human actions on nature (either good or evil) are largely driven by religious beliefs about nature. Fundamentally, African religions are earth-centered and no one would want to destroy the abode of his/her own deities. It follows that Africans strive to protect nature. Oscar C. Labang argues that, the wanton destruction of nature in Africa has been caused by imperialists who, after granting independence to their territories in Africa, left their representatives who are current African leaders to continue the process.

The attitude of these leaders towards nature is not different from that of their former colonial masters. They take from their colonial masters to disrespect the spiritual connection between humans and nature. The question which crops up here is; is it ethically appealing to respect the spiritual connection between humans and nature? This leads us to what is generally called bioethics.

Bioethics and Ethno-ethics

Bioethics has a pluralistic view in different communities. Here, we will summarize, analyze and synthesize some of these views. To begin, Stripling, Mahala Yates in *Bioethics and Medical Issues in Literature* postulates that, a running theme throughout his book is “the Hippocratic need to be useful... offering a way to understand how to balance advancing technology with individual human rights as well as responsibilities". (viii). He draws from the ideas of Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine who sought a balance between technology and human rights and responsibilities. The problem here is that, advancement in technology is gradually shifting people from their responsibility of protecting nature and themselves. Hence, they turn to destroy it in attempts to follow technological trends. Linking his argument to the largely supported vision of distrusting science, Stripling abides with the Faustian theme that, the "theme that man’s unchecked search for knowledge and for god-like perfection threaten humanity." (2). He further summarizes this in the bioethical perspective when he argues that, "the most relevant bioethical theme centers on the Prometheus syndrome of creating technology without thinking ahead of the consequences" (10). Yates throughout his book seeks a more balance between technology and responsibility to put this technology on check. His usage of literary texts to exemplify this argument rhymes with the objective of this thesis to show how Kishani and Alembong demonstrate African bioethical issues in their poetry.

Like Yates, Adami Valentina also uses literary tales to demonstrate the whole concept of bioethics in *Bioethics through Literature: Margaret Atwood's Cautionary Tale.* Here, Valentina attributes the origin of bioethics to the American oncologist, Van Rensselaer Potter, who in 1970 published an article entitled, "Bioethics, the science of survival" and in 1971 followed it with the book, *Bioethics: Bridge to the Future.* He believes that,

> Potter understood bioethics as an interdisciplinary ethics that could create a bridge between the two cultures of science and the humanities, taking into account our obligations not only to other human beings, but also to the biosphere as a whole. Therefore, Potter's bioethics was actually closer to today's environmental ethics than to medical ethics. (9)

Like in this thesis, Valentina takes bioethics out of the medical field. On their part, Grant Gillett and Lynne Bowyer in an article entitled "Bioethics and Literature: An Exciting Overlap" stablish a relationship between bioethics and literature as they postulate that, "There is a certain thematic unity as one might expect where the poetic and literary treatment of human phenomena comes into engagement with scientific biomedicine and its understandings of the vulnerabilities and failings that flesh is heir to" (35). Like previous scholars, they are concerned with the interplay between bioethics and literature.

In the same line, Nathan Emmerich in "Literature, History and the Humanization of Bioethics" "considers the disciplines of literature and history and the contributions each makes to the discourse of bioethics"(112). Emmerich confirms that, "literature can be a tool for the teaching of bioethics" (113). This is because some analytical aspects of bioethics can only be fully apprehended through Literature. This is also because Literature "presents an account of moral or ethical issues in such a way as to raise questions and prompt reflection in the reader" (Emmerich 113). Emmerich thinks that bioethicists have a lot to benefit from Literature. In his words, "just as the medical

professional may benefit from the humanist education offered by literature so might the bioethicist" (114).

Unlike this thesis, the critics above do not actually situate bioethics in a unique cultural background. This is probably because their concern is to establish a link between bioethics and literature. However, in an article entitled, "What Is “African Bioethics” as Used by Sub-Saharan African Authors: An Argumentative Literature Review of Articles on African Bioethics", Albert Mark E. Coleman streamlines bioethics in the African perspective by clearly defining what African bioethics is. According to him,

> The term “African bioethics” is more often used by some Sub-Saharan African (SSA) authors to denote an African framework of resolving pertinent moral dilemmas arising in the interface of human persons with biomedical sciences, as juxtaposed against what is deemed “Western bioethics paradigms/theories, considered otherwise as a form of “moral/ethical imperialism”; and considered foreign to SSA tradition(s) (31).

Coleman finds out the following about Sub-Saharan African scholars who have written on African bioethics:

> Interesting principal themes that cropped up during the literature review were issues bordering on imposition of Western bioethics on SSA countries otherwise considered as ethical imperialism (Andoh, 2011), and the relational/communitarian traditional driven moral life of SSA countries (Gbadegesin, 1993; Tangwa,1996; Murove, 2005). Some African authors have posited that “African bioethics” was based on “common morality”, as opposed to “individual morality,” albeit not defining the terms common or individual morality, stressing however that African bioethics is relational dependent (Chukwuneke, Umeora, & Maduabuchi Egbunike, 2014). Others have insinuated that African bioethics is a reality in an attempt to counter the imposition on SSA of Western bioethics paradigms, a process described as ethical imperialism (Andoh, 2011). A clear and dominant theme in the majority of the articles reviewed was the relational and communal nature of African morals and life as exemplified in nine (9) of the reviewed articles (Gbadegesin, 1993; Tangwa, 1996; Murove, 2005; Azetsop, 2011; Behrens, 2013; Chukwuneke, Umeora, Maduabuchi, & Egbunike, 2014; Mbuaga, 2008; Ogundiran, 2004; Onouha 2007). This was of significance especially when one author went to the extent of indicating “that individual morality affects the flourishing of a community in African ethics (Awujiusak, 2014). This particular author goes further to assert that in the African community “all human behaviour is expected to conform to the communal morality, which she

> described as a “unity of human relationship” in order to “ensure social harmony”. This notion was well articulated by archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa in his book “No future without #forgiveness” in which social harmony derived from the community, constituted the “summum bonum” or greatest good (Tutu, 1999). This then determined a lot of what happens around the individual, and extended into the realm of Sub-Saharan ethical life.

Coleman’s depiction attempts to cancel popular opinion that the African voice is completely absent from discussions of bioethics. This does not cancel the existence of a strand of bioethics which is typically African and is called ethno-ethics. It only suffices to say that African scholars have neglected the bioethical thinking of their societies. John Barugahare argues that,

> To date, some African bioethicists have correctly observed the lack of African voice in existing bioethics generally. Others have attempted to articulate specific bioethical principles from an African worldview while at least some have gone further to propose a theory of African bioethics. At the same time, other contributors have attempted to confront the challenge of methodology or generally the rigour with which bioethics research and scholarship in Africa are proceeding; one, by emphasizing the importance of employing critical thinking in ‘African bioethics’ and two, by explicitly calling for an inquiry into methodologies in African bioethics. In these discussions generally, a widely implied foundational premise is that existing bioethical principles and guidelines are foreign to Africa. From this premise there follows a conclusion that existing bioethics lacks ‘authenticity’ in Africa. (2)

If existing bioethics lacks authenticity in Africa, there is the question of the origin of bioethics in Africa. Can we therefore argue that bioethics is a colonial legacy in Africa? Barugahare emphasizes that "A trend called ‘African bioethics’ is growing on the continent due to perceptions of existing bioethics, especially guidelines for international collaborative research, as ‘ethical imperialism’" (1). This gives the sense that African bioethics has its origin from the general notion of bioethics. He adds that,

> As a potential alternative to ‘Western Principlism,’ ‘African bioethics’ is supposed to be indigenous to Africa and reflective of African identity. However, despite many positive insights in the on-going discussions, it is feared that the growth of bioethics in Africa lacks a clear direction. Some of the views threaten to distort the essence of bioethics and its development on the continent. (1)

One pertinent point worth noting is the emphasis that ‘African bioethics’ is supposed to be indigenous to Africa and reflective of African identity. The strand of ethics which ties to this is ethno-ethics. We argue in this thesis that there has always been this strand of ethics in Africa and this has been evident in African oral literature. Barugahare's argument doesn't seem to have this backing in oral literature. Moreover, his argument lies in the medical sense of bioethics. He argues that,

> In particular, current international bioethical principles and guidelines for health-related research, and their claim to universal validity, are widely criticized as both a colonial or neocolonial feature of the West intended to stifle the influence of other cultures in the development of global bioethics. Consequently, there is strong encouragement of critical thinking in discussions of bioethics in Africa. On this view critical thinking ‘would require bioethicists from Africa to root their enquiries on ethical values in African traditions … enable Africans to suspect or be suspicious of the moral authority and authenticity of foreign principles and values (my emphasis). (2)

Thus, the origin of African ethics/ morality or moral authority dates back to the origin of African traditions. If we are to root our bioethical values in our tradition therefore, it would mean that our ethno-ethics is as old as our tradition. The worldview has it unfortunately that "all ethical theories, principles, values, beliefs and consequent practices rooted in African traditions or indigenous to Africa, ought to always take precedence over those from the West whenever implemented in Africa" (Barugahare 2). It is in this line that some scholars have attempted to address the question of African (bio)ethics by aligning it with the Western notions of the concept. But again, others see a need to simultaneously look at the concept from a two-way perspective, paralleling Western and African views.

Emmanuel J. Udokang supports this view. He "advocates a harmonization of the positive elements of traditional ethics with Western culture for a better moral society in contemporary Africa." (266). Systematically, the positioning of two imperatives with

respect to ethics is not different from doing same in bioethics and ethno-ethics. Bioethics/ ethno-ethics in Africa can also find itself in this situation where both views are examined for a better social understanding and practice. We cannot outrageously say in contemporary African society that there is still a unique entity of African ethics (ethno-ethics) which is purely African in all aspects. But this does not eradicate our original claim that ethics in Africa is as old as African traditions and/or African oral literature. It is in the state of evolution and this evolution is in constant flux as Africa continues to have new experiences on daily basis. The current notion of blending bioethics and ethno-ethics in Africa has been likened to the general transition of Africa. Kwasi Wiredu argues that contemporary Africa is in the middle of a transition from a traditional to a modern society. This process of modernization entails changes not only in the physical environment but also in the mental outlook of our peoples, manifested both in their explicit beliefs and in their customs, and their ordinary daily habits and pursuits.

African ethno-ethics is a reality. What remains pending is if it is necessary, especially given that Africa has had a very cruel experience. The history of the African people which encompasses their experiences has not been very favorable. This explains why bioethics in Africa cannot be same as bioethics in the West. This leads to the emergence of ethno-ethics. According to Kazeem and Adeyelure there exist some differences between African and Western bioethics in terms of roots/source/ history.

> While cultural, intellectual, political and technological backgrounds formed the emergence of bioethics in the Western world, such kinds of experiences in the West are unparalleled with that of Africa. In establishing African bioethics, the issue to consider must be what the historical, social, economic and political contexts of bioethics are which unavoidably [will] influence its nature, ambience and trajectory. (10)

The history of Africa or more explicitly, the African experiences lead us to recognize the need and processes of ethics perculiar to Africa. It has been argued, for example, that our colonial experience has led to massive destruction of nature. This could be in terms of massive exploitation of native forests, animals or generally plant and animal species. But do we have to compromise on our ethical principles because of these? There is a great need for the promotion of African ethno-ethics because it is going to help enhance African ecoculture and spirituality. It should be noted, and it has been mentioned earlier, that some early European explorers in Africa asserted false claims that Africans have no morality and consequently, no bioethics or ethno-ethics. Typical among them were Richard Burton 1946, Nadel 1954, and Baseden 1966. Udokang opines that:

> These unpopular, derogatory and unscholarly observations, (unscholarly because they were not based on an honest research, recognition and consideration of the culture of the people being studied), portray the bias and wrong notions which early Europeans and Christian missionaries had about African peoples, their religion, morality and culture. (267)

This view of Udokang emanates from that of other scholars such as Tempels 1959, Mbiti 1969, Opoku 1978, Nwosu and Kalu 1982, Ozumba 1995, and Asouzu 1998. The fundamental factor worth considering here is that the African experiences include these false claims by Eurocentric critics and scholars. We can thus, support the motion of African ethno-ethics because arguments of the non-existence of African ethno-ethics partly stem from the false claims. The tendency for the constant existence and evolution of ethics in Africa largely depends on the decolonization of European-imposed mental senses of what Africa should be.

Fayemi Ademola Kazeem and Macaulay Adeyelure focus on the repositioning of bioethics in Africa. According to them, "The call for decolonization of disciplines in

Africa is not new. Decolonization in this context means a process of self-critical awareness of foreseeing, discovering and avoiding hegemonic institutionalization as well as mental colonization of concepts and disciplines in contemporary African scholarship." (1-2). If there is decolonization of bioethics, it means that it has been colonized before. Andoh Cletus opines that, "current bioethics is foreign to Africa and, therefore, lacks 'Africanity'/'Africanness' or 'authenticity' in Africa" (67). This gives us a reflective memory on the fact that if it is current bioethics which is in this state, then there used to be bioethics that was full of "Africanity". This immediately suggests pristine African bioethics. This is ethics that is deeply rooted in African cultural practices and beliefs. This ethics might not have been well-defined or well-known to everyone, not because of deficiencies in its nature, but because of lack of scholars who concentrated in the area of bioethics at the time. It was therefore colonized and given a different notion. This was and is ethno-ethics.

This goes same with other concepts. The white man, as we have mentioned earlier, came to Africa with his own notion of concepts. In doing this, he dismissed African notions and implemented his own. Africans, for many years, lived with these white notions until the postcolonial period where these notions are being questioned. Ethno-ethics happens to be one of such concepts. Fayemi Ademola Kazeem and Macaulay Adeyelure opine that, we cannot fully understand bioethics in Africa until we decolonize it. When we decolonize it we will have African ethno-ethics.

The view of decolonization of bioethics in Africa is supported by other scholars such as Catherine Myser, and Christy Rentmeester. Myser remarks that:

> I believe the time is right in the development of the field for some "custom checks" on all sides of the national borders in question, exploring what is intentionally or unintentionally being developed and exported or imported, any unintended (negative) effects of exporting or importing "nonnative" species of

> bioethics into other countries, and relevant “local” developments or transformations that are taking place, whether noticed or unnoticed, outside or inside the countries in question." (see Kazeem and Adeyelure 2016)

She believes that there exists a native species of bioethics which ought to be implemented in Africa. What she calls nonnative species of bioethics is that which may be imported. Thus, bioethical principles must be culturally based according to her. This is because every culture has its unique way. It is in the global market that cultures begin to meet and mix. Some cultures tolerate what other cultures see as ills or taboos. This further explains why native bioethics must be distinguished from nonnative. This distinction will create ethno-ethics for Africans.

Rentmeester thinks, for instance, that Western bioethics (nonnative bioethics) with its origin in nineteenth-century physical and biological scientific and technological development in biomedicine “sprang from the same objectifying tendencies that nourished nineteenth-century racism, sexism, and imperialism.” (see Kazeem and Adeyelure 2016). Despite this, Kazeem and Adeyelure think that "Rentmeester’s claim can be argued to be mere association of bioethics evolution with the historical context and epochal events that marked the nineteenth-century, the blossom of imperialism during the period may not necessarily be connected with bioethics." However, Rentmeester could be right in the sense that, the West has always believed that it is/was ethically right for them to consider themselves superior to all other races. This superiority and inferiority question has been a foundational theme in postcolonial literature.

In spite of the fact that Rentmeester, Myser, Kazeem and Adeyelure (together with other scholars not mentioned here) assert that there has always been bioethics in Africa (as well as anywhere else) other scholars argue that Africa, as well as other developing countries, never knew anything about bioethics before. It was only imported, and this

importation has been a threat to those receiving countries. De Vries Raymond and Leslie Rott view the exportation of bioethics to Africa and all developing countries as a threat to the culture of the people. They liken it to the importation of Western religions into Africa which has played a vital role in the extinction of African Traditional Religions. Thus, they do not support the importation and exportation of bioethics into Africa. They completely wipe out the idea of bioethics, ignoring its benefits to the African cosmology. Kazeem and Adeyelure acknowledge that there may be secondary reasons for bringing Western bioethics to Africa, and training Africans to follow Western bioethical ideas, but we cannot completely argue, as De Vries and Rott do, that Africans derive no positive outcome from Western bioethics. They say:

> the primary motivation of training Africans in the West and establishing collaborations in many parts of Africa through research institutions and projects is to share experiences and provide aid. Though secondary reasons may be inferred, the fundamental factor is sharing of experiences and expertise, which is unavoidable in a globalizing era. Some benefits have no doubt, accrued directly and indirectly to Africans and African institutions through bioethics training programmes funded by some countries in the West. The training is an invaluable resource for members of ethics committees, biomedical researchers and other bioethics practitioners in different African states. Besides the direct impact of in-building in the trainees, analytic and critical minds of being abreast with contemporary moral issues involved in biotechnology, the training programmes have indirect relevance for influencing and shaping public health and bio regulations in order to promote better health, life and care for the citizenry. On this note, bioethics education of Africans, whether in Africa or offshore, has a noble and laudable intent. (4)

The further argument is that even if bioethics importation/exportation is an imperialist project in Africa, "bioethics exportation to Africa is then an unintended imperialist project." (5). One may want to argue from the above that as long as bioethics is imperialist in nature, either intended or not, it has to either be avoided or decolonized. But Kazeem and Adeyelure prefer that we decolonize bioethics. According to them,

> Decolonizing bioethics is about developing strategic mental, conceptual and structural resistance to the infiltration of real or foreseen hierarchies that tend (or

> may tend) to continue legacies of colonial hegemony whether implicitly or explicitly in every aspects of bioethics. Understood in this sense, decolonizing bioethics in Africa is therefore not a useless engagement. (6)

The reasons for decolonizing bioethics are plentiful. They range from social, political, economic to cultural. Scholars such as Chikezie Onuoha support the Decolonization of bioethics for cultural reasons. According to him, "The theory and practice of bioethics have cultural underpinnings. Thus, culture is significant to the understanding and articulation of justifiable bioethics in a given society." (20). In this sense, each culture should have its own (bio)ethics. This gives African ethno-ethics an authentic place. It follows that, as earlier mentioned, bioethics has a pluralistic tendency. Thus, if we want to give culture a pride of place in bioethics, we must decolonize bioethics. Once bioethics is decolonized, the African cosmology will have its own notion of the concept. In addition to this, bioethics can be fully understood when it is segmented and ascribed to specific cultural environments. Bioethics, simply put, is culturally sensitive. Leigh Turner argues that, it is only when bioethics is culturally sensitive that it is authentic. To be authentic in this sense is to be free of external domination whether subtle or not. Turner notes that, cultural explanations of health and illness, along with understandings of the appropriate social roles of family members and health care providers are interwoven with interpretations of what constitutes thoughtful moral conduct and moral reasoning.

If bioethics is culturally based, then there is a need for African bioethics (which we call ethno-ethics) as argued by scholars such as Godfrey Tangwa, Kelvin Behrens, Clemetus Andoh, Munyaradzi Murove etc. Kazeem and Adeyelure argue that, going by the view of these scholars (in support of the need for an African bioethics), the way to proceed on decolonization of bioethics in the African context is to pursue African bioethics. This means that we should pursue what is purely African and that is African Ethno-ethics.

Unfortunately, Kazeem and Adeyelure claim that bioethics cannot be fundamentally African in this modern time. This is same with other postcolonial issues such as culture. There is no virgin culture in this era of interculturality and multiculturalism. Kazeem and Adeyelure note that, "bioethics in contemporary Africa cannot be uniquely indigenous ... nor can it be entirely grounded on endogenous post-modernist ethical traditions." (9). Udokang supports this view too. In his article, he "advocates a harmonization of the positive elements of traditional ethics with Western culture for a better moral society in contemporary Africa." (266). Moreover, Kwasi Wiredu falls in the same category. He argues that, contemporary Africa is in the middle of a transition from a traditional to a modern society. This process of modernization entails changes not only in the physical environment but also in the mental outlook of our peoples, manifested both in their explicit beliefs and in their customs, and their ordinary daily habits and pursuits.

Having ascertained the existence and credibility of African bioethics or what we call African Ethno-ethics, it is good to look at the current debate as to the relationship between African Bioethics and African Traditional Religions. According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, African ethics (which could also be African ethno-ethics) is not based on African Traditional Religions. It is argued here that, it would be correct to assert that, rather than regarding African ethics as religious (or, religious-based), it would be more correct to regard African religion as ethical. In a revealed religion, what is revealed is generally elaborate and can be conceived to include moral principles and ideals as part of the will of God thus revealed. A morality that is founded on religion is thus a necessary concomitant of a revealed religion. Since the indigenous African religion is not a revealed religion, there is no way by which the people would have access to the will of God that contains elaborate moral principles upon which a coherent

moral system can be erected. In the context of a non-revealed religion, then, to make divine or supernatural commands the source of moral values and principles would be conceptually impossible.

Here, African ethics is based on what the society judges as good or bad, not what religion prescribes. According to Kazeem and Adeyelure, however, there exist some differences between African and Western bioethics in terms of roots/source.

> While cultural, intellectual, political and technological backgrounds formed the emergence of bioethics in the Western world, such kinds of experiences in the West are unparalleled with that of Africa. In establishing African bioethics, the issue to consider must be what the historical, social, economic and political contexts of bioethics are which unavoidably [will] influence its nature, ambience and trajectory. (10)

It should be noted that some early European explorers in Africa asserted false claims that Africans have no morality. Typical among them were Richard Burton 1946, Siegfried Frederick Nadel 1954, and George Thomas Baseden 1966. Udokang opines that:

> These unpopular, derogatory and unscholarly observations, (unscholarly because they were not based on an honest research, recognition and consideration of the culture of the people being studied), portray the bias and wrong notions which early Europeans and Christian missionaries had about African peoples, their religion, morality and culture. (267)

This view of Udokang emanates from that of other scholars such as Placide Tempels 1959, John Mbiti 1969, Godfrey Okechukwu Ozumba, 1995, and Innocent Izuchukwu Souzu 1998.

Bioethics bodies have been created in Africa such as the Pan-African Bioethics Initiative (PABIN) and the West African Bioethics (WAB). International institutions and projects such as the John Hopkins-Fogarty African Bioethics Training Program

(FABTP) have also been set up. The proceedings of the third Pan-African Bioethics Initiative (PABIN) held in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia revealed that an ‘African voice is not sufficiently included in the development of existing bioethics’ (PABIN 28 - 30). Tangwa (183 - 200) also supports the view. It is recently that African scholars started adding their voices to the development of bioethics in this era of globalization.

The question of a clear Afrocentric ethics is still pending because a large number of critics are of the opinion that African ethics is a colonial legacy. Barugahare contends that whereas formal knowledge and practices of existing bioethics have their origin and deeper roots in the West, bioethics is still an emerging field of enquiry and practice in Africa. He adds that one outstanding challenge facing the growth of bioethics in Africa is the looming distortion of its essence. Even though there are potentially many views on the essence of bioethics, given its background, its raison d’etre seems to be ensuring that the means by which we address our health needs and challenges are morally justifiable and socially acceptable, wherever such means are applied. The looming misrepresentation of the essence of bioethics seems to be a consequence of methodological difficulties that characterize some contributions to the discussion. These methodological problems are marked by disproportionate concern with assertions of ‘difference’, ‘identity’ ‘the indigenous’ and ‘tradition’ along with attempts to uncritically demonize their opposites such as ‘universality’, ‘otherness’, ‘the foreign’ and ‘modernity’. The threat of distortion becomes even stronger with the rhetoric of ‘Africanity’/ ‘Africanness’ and other terms with similar connotations.

Barugahare titles a whole section in his article "Some Dominant Views on ‘African Bioethics’" in which he discusses critical standpoints on African bioethics. The difference with his study and this study is that this study examines mostly pristine African Ethno-ethics while his article focuses on bioethics in Africa at large. When we

look at an overview of bioethics in Africa, we may likely find ourselves in the same argument like earlier scholars who keep focusing on whether there is any such thing as bioethics in Africa. However, if we focus on pristine African bioethics, then we have already accepted that there is a brand of ethics in Africa which has its origin in Africa because bioethics cannot be pristine when it is imported. By pristine African bioethics, we are referring to what we shall call in this thesis, “Ethno-ethics”. We argue that there has been African ethno-ethics and it has evolved following the evolution of the world. To a greater extent, ethno-ethics contrasts bioethics.

The evolution of bioethics in Africa has reached a point where theories have been formulated to facilitate the understanding of bioethics in the continent. For example, Rakotsoane Francis and van Niekerk AA propose a theory for African bioethics. This adds to Metz Thaddeus' theory in "An African Theory of Moral Status: A Relational Alternative to Individualism and Holism." Hence, bioethics has been enhanced with theoretical considerations. It is with deep regret that, as Barugahare contends, one plausible and unfortunate implication of these lines is, arguably, that without any further qualification, all ethical theories, principles, values, beliefs and consequent practices rooted in African traditions or indigenous to Africa, ought to always take precedence over those from the West whenever implemented in Africa. New theories of African bioethics are supposed to go deep into African aspects of orality to give concrete and substantial support to the understanding of bioethics principles. African orality has to do with its oral literature such as folktales, proverbs, songs, etc. It is important that we look at some aspects of this African orality.

The link between bioethics and eco-spirituality is very important in this study. To begin with, most African societies believe in the interconnectedness of everything (not leaving out ecology) to religion. By extension, they believe in the significant connection

between religion and morality, although there are schools of thought that deny recognizing this connection. It is argued that, "The connection has been taken by most scholars to mean that African moral values and principles derive from religion, implying that African morality is, thus, a religious morality" (Opoku 152, Danquah 3, Sarpong 41, Busia 16, Parrinder 28–9, Idowu 146). The claim means in turn that the moral beliefs and principles of the African people derive from those of religion, that religion provides the necessary justification for moral values and beliefs, and that moral concepts, such as good, bad, right and wrong, are defined (or, must be defined) in terms of religious prescriptions or commands. However, there are other scholars, such as Godfrey Wilson, Monica Wilson, Maquet, Wiredu, who deny the religious basis of the moral systems of the societies they studied. Religion and nature are vital pairs in the African context because the spirituality in religion is earth-based, affecting the earth and being affected by the earth. How moral or immoral we treat the earth can stem from our religious beliefs (spirituality) and our religious beliefs can influence the way we treat the earth. Therefore, ecospirituality and bioethics are connected in the sense that they both affect each other and are being affected by each other, either negatively or positively.

Nevertheless, Kwasi Wiredu observed that, "the Akan moral outlook is thus logically independent of religion" (Kwasi Wiredu in H. Odera Oruka and D. A. Masolo 13). Godfrey Wilson wrote that, "Among the Nyakyusa the ideas of social behaviour are not connected with religion, nonetheless they exist" and, after mentioning the moral virtues of the Nyakyusa, he added that, "But the positive, ideal statement of these virtues is not made in religious terms." (Godfrey Wilson in Ottenberg and Ottenberg eds. 348). On the morality of the Rwanda, Maquet wrote that 'Thus the ethics of the Banyarwanda are not integrated on a religious basis such as the will of God' (J. J. Maquet in Forde 184).

In Mende ethics, “Wrong behavior is regarded as a breaking of some specific rule of conduct, not as the flouting of some divine or absolute law of the universe” (Kenneth Little, in Forde 134). These are clear statements of the nonreligious foundation of the morality/ bioethics of at least some African societies. However, based on the fact that some scholars still uphold its religious, or at least its spiritual foundation, it is normal to link the ethics of ecology to the ethics of spirituality. In this sense, we are bound to conclude that spirituality and ecology have a link which is yet to be explored. This is one of the issues that this thesis investigates on.

There are critics who have positioned bioethics under the secular field of enquiry. An example is H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. He posits that,

> The discussion of issues in bioethics now transpires within the compass of secular pluralist societies. That such societies are secular is in part the result of recent historical forces that have led to the major institutions of most democracies no longer being associated in a significant fashion with an established church, even where vestiges may remain. Such societies are pluralistic in encompassing a wide divergence of moral sentiments and beliefs. Such divergence has likely always been present, however hidden. (4)

He stresses that a society must be pluralistic if it has to be large. In other words, it is a small society that may find it plausible to operate on a non-pluralistic basis. Engelhardt, Jr. argues that,

> Europe of the Middle Ages, though nominally Catholic, included significant populations of Jews, in addition to heretics and some agnostics. In order to fashion a society that is not pluralist, one quite likely must settle for a society on a very small scale, probably not exceeding the compass of a Greek city- state. Whenever one considers a society of greater scope, or for that matter a society that has not voluntarily assembled around a full, willing, and complete submission to a particular moral or ideological perspective, one will have a pluralism of moral beliefs. (4)

This immediately suggests that the bigger the society, the more the population with different ideas of moral conduct. When a society is big, it has different bioethics

principles and this makes the society stronger. It is for this reason that Engelhardt, Jr. argues that,

> It is this ever-present inclination to diversity of opinions that makes the single heretic so to be feared. In this volume I will talk of peaceable secular pluralist societies so as to indicate societies including a diversity of moral viewpoints, and enjoying in addition a freedom of moral opinion without the fear of repression. "Peaceable secular" is best interpreted broadly to indicate the absence of any particular religious or moral orthodoxy imposed by force. I place among the religions of the world, at least by metaphor, such Christian heresies as Marxism. The problem is how to fashion an ethic for biomedical problems that can speak with rational authority across the great diversity of moral viewpoints. This problem is especially acute given the collapse of many of the traditional certainties. (4)

How do we fashion an ethic for a particular group that can speak with rational authority across the great diversity of moral viewpoints remains a fundamental question. This is because the larger the society and the larger the number of moral viewpoints, the more confusing it becomes to fashion a particular ethical principle that will be universally valid for everyone.

The human condition is in the state of angst. This means that humans are always suffering and seeking possibilities of making meaning out of life. This puts humans in an existentialist state. Existentialism as a universal element in all thinking is the attempt of man to describe his existence and its conflicts, the origin of these conflicts and the anticipations of overcoming them. According to Samuel Ravi "Existentialism is a philosophy of reaffirming and regaining the lost status of man in the advanced scientific and technological society. Therefore, this is a theory of individual meaning which asks each man to ponder over the reason for his existence" (185). This simply means that man gives meaning to life. In the words of Viktor E. Frankl,

> It did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us. We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life - daily and hourly.

> Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfil the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual.(122)

In order to find these right answers, man needs to make a choice, act and then justify. According to Soren Kierkegaard, selfhood and integrity are achieved when one makes a choice, takes action and justifies it. These constitute the basic underlying principles of existentialism.

The human condition in terms of ecocultural spirituality is highly affected by bioethics. This is because bioethics helps in shaping human choices, actions and responsibilities. It is in this line that humans know how to dwell on their cultural heritage, maintain their spiritual values and protect their environments. Therefore, bioethics helps to improve the human condition in terms of ecocultural spirituality. Much critical studies have linked this to the religious mentality of the people. This is because bioethics has a direct relationship with religion in particular, and spirituality at large. But it is important to reiterate that some critics have argued that African bioethics/ ethics has no relationship with African Traditional Religions.

According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, for example, African ethics (which could also be African bioethics) is not based on African Traditional Religions. It is argued here that it would be correct to assert that, rather than regarding African ethics as religious (or, religious-based), it would be more correct to regard African religion as ethical. In a revealed religion, what is revealed is generally elaborate and can be conceived to include moral principles and ideals as part of the will of God thus revealed. A morality that is founded on religion is thus a necessary concomitant of a revealed religion. Since the indigenous African religion is not a revealed religion, there is no way by which the people would have access to the will of God that contains elaborate moral

principles upon which a coherent moral system can be erected. In the context of a non-revealed religion, then, to make divine or supernatural commands the source of moral values and principles would be conceptually impossible.

This argument is flawed because it appears not to recognize the intricate link among nature, spirituality and ethics. This means that if we insist on separating ethics from religion, it negates the link between nature and spirituality. Moreover, Mbiti has argued that, religion touches on all facets of human existence in Africa. He adds that, "African peoples do not know how to exist without religion" (3). It is therefore plausible to observe this link while recognizing the freedom that humans have towards nature. African ethics is based on what the society judges as good or bad, but what the society judges is also based on African Traditional Religious precepts. Failure to do this puts humans in a free world where they have to make choices without being influenced by religious beliefs. In addition, they have to take their actions and responsibilities without religious influence. In this case, the choice to protect nature is a free choice and that which is so free cannot be respected. The choice to maintain cultural values is also a free choice, and finally the choice of spirituality is free. But, if we have the freedom to protect nature (and we are careful not to misuse the freedom), we will do and it will help us from suffering from nature-centered problems.

Empirical Review

There are studies which have been done in the texts under study. These studies approach these texts from economic, social, cultural and political domains. Much related to this thesis, some of the studies use these texts to demonstrate issues related to the environment as well. The following are such studies:

Environmental and Cultural Perspectives

Oscar C. Labang has done a scientific study on the works of Alembong, mostly from the cultural and environmental perspectives. In an article titled "Artistic Synergism and Disruptive Continuity: Narrativ Intertextuality in Nol Alembong's "The Beginning", for example, he demonstrates how Alembong makes extensive use of intertextuality in the way he correlates Biblical style in Genesis with his environmental issues. According to him,

> Alembong's intertextuality connectivity is evident in his ability to neatly connect his poetic texts to traditional wisdom derived from the communal repertoire or collective archive of his people … His intertextuality is also evident in the (in)direct synergy between his poetic texts and precursor texts from varied centres of culture and knowledge which comes across through easily perceptible references or playful reworking … Thus, to understand Alembong's poetry, it is inevitable for the critic to engage a comprehensive hermeneutical process while maintaining a perceptual view of the poetics of the text. (10)

In doing this intertextuality study, Labang gives a different interpretative process to the poetry of Alembong thereby invoking a meaning which is innovative and novel. He contends that, it is not a new thing for Alembong to include biblical texts in his poetics but, one fact which one must notice is that Alembong does this repeatedly in his poetics. In his words,

> The presence of biblical texts in Alembong's poetic texts is a pretty frequent occurrence. For example in the poem "Christmas Chicken", he attracts the reader with the Christian focused title but engages a poetic treatise that places the traditional sacrifice of fowls on equal planes with the Christian sacrifice made by Jesus Christ .(11)

In terms of theory, Labang uses Steve Moyise' Narrative Intertextuality and Bloomcon's concept. He posits that,

> Alembong's narrative intertextual connections are complex and complicated because they do not directly involve a retelling or rereading which Moyise and

> Bloom conceptualize, rather the connections are built on an uncommon borrowing not of idea or pattern but of narrative frame. However, Moyise's idea of narrative intertextuality, Abrams postulation about the adoption of features of earlier texts and Bloom's concept of misreading and "influence-relation", provide sound theoretical angles from which one can understand how Alembong uses an old biblical story as the frame for a postcolonial poetic narrative. (Labang, 14)

Using Narrative Intertextuality, Labang asserts that" … the paper engages a re-reading of the poem and examines the various connections it has with other texts or discourses that evoke similar thematic preoccupations" (13). To conclude his paper, he contends that,

> Within the edging of the analyses, Nol Alembong is what Bloom describes as a "strong poet"; one who has the "capable imagination" (The Anxiety, 5) to appropriate biblical narratives to his own use by not merely retelling the stories but giving them a completely new narrative essence. Through this poetic misreading, Alembong creates space for the poem in the imaginative sphere. The poem divides the mind of the reader and directs it towards two different targets. The first is that the reader is made to remember and revisit an old story, and the second is that the reader is taken back to an old text. The poem is both an act of retelling and rereading as the poet grapples with a story he knows and tries to narrate it in his context. In the act of rereading and retelling, he transforms the original text and takes it away from its context to the context he best understands. The reader therefore reads one text but understands and interprets two texts. He is present in the world of Alembong's text, yet through creative and critical consciousness, he lives in the world of the text and the world from which the text burrows. (23-24)

In a sense, Labang's argument centers on reading the poetry of Alembong with an understanding of a second story in mind which serves as the source of the story in the poetry. Though this leads us to understand the two stories better, the fundamental question is; what is the essence of bringing these two stories together? On the one hand, one may want to see different cultural aspects that emerge from there, but, on the other hand, it is worthy to note the significance of the point that Alembong is positing. This gives a different appreciation of the poetics as seen below.

According to Gamal Muhammad A. Elgezeery, Alembong's principal occupations are,

> Approaching the forest from an outsider‘s perspective and conveying an insider‘s view of it ... I will focus in this article on how *Forest Echoes* calls our attention to the way(s) nature and culture cross-reference each other and how the forest has its own culture which converges with and diverges from human culture. (27)

Here, the forest becomes an outstanding entity on its own. Unlike Labang whose focus is on showing the interconnectedness between or among texts, Elgezeery’s focus is on showing how:

> a human culture based on difference has—depersonalized the forest of which humans themselves were a part, and replaced it with a forest projected from the lenses of a superior self upon an inferior collective and anonymous Other. When the forest enters the cultural eyes of humans, it becomes fractured and loses its identity through putting it into a limiting and circumscribing perspective. (Elgezeery 28)

One can thus, deduce that the forest in the poetry of Alembong has a cultural basis which can be used to situate aspects of intercultural praxis. This is because, as seen in the works of the two critics above, the forest stands on its own and needs to survive without human destruction, and in addition to that, the origin of the forest can be linked to the origin of the world. As humans have been part of the forest before setting themselves apart from it, they must uphold values that lead to its preservation and conservation.

Still in the environmental dimension, Teke Charles Ngiewih attempts an eco-existentialist reading of Alembong’s poetry collection entitled *Forest echoes.* According to him, Alembong’s

> *Forest Echoes* is a seminar collection of forty poems which grapple with a plurality of aesthetic and thematic issues. A critical survey of the poems based on an eco-philosophical paradigm lends credence to the depth of existentialist issues deciphered from their presential [sic] and elliptical texts. (35)

Ngiewih argues in his paper that the forest is still important in spite of the fact that humans have distanced themselves from nature. He posits that the eminence of words like "sanctuaries, sacred, worship, divine, reverence and belief, point to man's positive metaphysical attachment to trees and forest" (37).

In addition, Ngiewih argues that Alembong's poetry is mystic and it shows the relationship between human and non-human. He says,

> Alembong's art though not shrouded in obscurity cannot be underestimated in interpretive quality. It certainly strives for a genuine synergy of the exotic and esoteric/ mystic; between all components of forest (plant and animal life) and the social, economic, political and spiritual being called man. His use of the lexicon *forest* is encompassing as it is emblematic of the vast array of natural phenomena; fauna, flora and elemental objects, and how these relate with the deeper undercurrents of human existence. (37)

He argues against the forest as an evil space as represented in the works of scholars like Nathaniel Hawthorne and Joseph Conrad. While reformulating the argument, Ngiewih asserts that "the forest in its natural variety/ diversity does not signal unusual or negative resonances" (43). Instead, "Alembong conceives forest as natural self-generative in its diverse but non-conflicting characteristics" (52). Even though Ngiewih acknowledges the link between human and non-human species, and the fact that humans are systematically shifting from the forest, he does not reconsider the problem in an African cultural context where everything is spiritual. He acknowledges the spiritual nature of forest in the poetry of Alembong, and how it is connected to man's daily life. However, he does not show the cultural implication of abusing this connection.

Eunice Ngongkum focuses her argument in raising consciousness on the ills of environmental crisis on the future. She believes that,

> This article is informed by the centrality of consciousness-raising in ecocritical ideology, which, according to Christine Gerhardt, "has come to hold the many

> different perspectives and techniques in ecological criticism together". It seeks to examine a selection of contemporary Cameroon poetry in English to foreground its concerns with the environment and its futures. The paper aims at showing that through familiar, comprehensive and meaningful culture-specific metaphors, the poems increase general environmental awareness first, by foregrounding the effects of human-nonhuman nature dynamic and secondly, by suggesting some solutions to the environmental crisis. This perspective ... is rooted in an African tradition that assigns a functional dimension to art. (1)

From the articles reviewed above, it is clear that this study is not the first to be done in the texts under study under the theme of environment. However, it is important to note that all the works above are based on the physical aspects of the environment. Moreover, the works reviewed below will show an extensive review on the texts under study, though not in terms of the environment.

Cultural Aesthetics

There is another dimension where the texts under study have been studied by some researchers. This dimension is the use of cultural aesthetics to handle current socio-political and economic issues. Andrew Ngeh is one of such researchers. In his book titled *Critical Issues in Anglophone Cameroonian Poetry*, he sets a whole article titled "Cultural Aesthetics and Commitment in Anglophone Cameroonian Poetry: A Study of Bongasu Tanla-Kishani and Nol Alembong" to "examine how Bongasu Tanla-Kishani in *Konglanjo!* (1988) and Nol Alembong in *The Passing Wind* (1991) explore the oral aesthetics in their poetry to espouse political, economic, social, cultural and global patterns. These poets use elements of the oral traditions as poetic ornaments to emphasize the commitments in their poetic works." (1). Ngeh uses Cultural Materialist Theory in this article to argue that "cultural aesthetics and poetry have a primary commitment to freedom and can only thrive in a free state" (1). He contends that Kishani and Alembong "suggest a dual approach to life: that is, the imperative of

looking inward toward the ancestry and the imperative of looking outward towards the wider humanity" (1). Going into details, Ngeh argues that,

> Bongasu's "Konganjo" which is the title poem in his collection entitled *Konganjo!* is a demonstration of the authenticity and credibility of the African way of life before the coming of the white man to the African continent. This particular poem debunks the views held by some Eurocentric writers/ critics like Charles Larson, Joseph Conrad and Joyce Cary who had misinterpreted the African people in their works by insinuating that they did not have a culture (7).

In summary, Ngeh shows how the two poets establish their poetics with folklore and culture which encompass legends, myths, riddles, proverbs, oral tales, wellerisms, African Traditional names, songs etc. In addition, he sets out to demonstrate that African oral traditions are still relevant and can be used to interpret African contemporary issues like politics, economics and culture, in spite of the negativities and denial from Westerners.

Political Perspective

Andrew Ngeh and Salliane Liengu Wolete note that,

> Anglophone Cameroonian intellectuals have always subscribed to the view that, Anglophones in Cameroon are not fairly treated as they are socially isolated, politically marginalized and economically exploited. It is against such a background that radical and revolutionary poets like Nol Alembong, Emmanuel Doh, John Ngong Kum Ngong, Bate Besong and Mathew Takwi write. Unlike the poetry that was written by their predecessors like Bongasu-Tanla Kishani, Bernard Fonlon, Mbella Sonne Dipoko and Sankie Maimo, the poetic works written by Alembong, Besong and Takwi are devoid of mysticism and subjective idealism; they reflect the concrete reality of a people fighting for freedom, social injustice and political oppression. They write with the conviction, orientation, and consciousness that if something is not done the beleaguered and plagued lives of Cameroonians will continue to be a bewildering dilemma and a vexing enigma. (25-26)

From this, we see how these critics position Kishani in an earlier school of poetic writers in Anglophone Cameroon, whose focus was on “mysticism” and “subjective

idealism." These poets as seen in the earlier article of Ngeh above were assertive about their own culture in relation to Western propositions.

Still in the political arena, some critics believe that poetry has created the way forward for the liberation and democratization of most economies. Eric Nush Zumboshi is one of such critics. He studied the poetics of Nol Alembong and Titus Moetsabi and garnered that,

> The production of politically committed and functional art was the clarion call of many African writers in the 1990s who saw their artistic vocation as a call to duty to help advance the democratization process as revealed in Nol Alembong's *The Passing Wind* and Titus Moetsabi's *Fruits and Other Poems*. This paper, therefore, aims at analyzing the poetry of Alembong and Moetsabi in order to articulate the response of African poets to the re-introduction of political liberalism in African in the 1990s (Zumboshi 173 -174)

Even though Zumboshi appears to be focused on the entire African continent, he narrows his arguments in the case of Alembong to the Cameroonian society, a society where the poet in question emanates. History holds that the political situation in Cameroon in the 1990s was marred by enormous changes resulting from the struggles which marked the political atmosphere in Cameroon at the time. Coincidentally, this was when Nol Alembong published his collection of poems titled, *The Passing Wind.* Zumboshi posits that,

> … in 1991 an Anglophone Cameroonian poet, Nol Alembong, published his maiden collection of poems entitled *The Passing Wind*. Most of the poems in this collection reflect the political change and impasse that swept across Africa during this period and Cameroon in particular although a few of the poems handle other discursive issues such as the conflict between tradition and modernism. This collection, there-fore, contains poetic expressions which are functional in vision and depict the political and socio-cultural realities of the post-colonial African society at the time – realities such as political injustice, corruption, dictatorship, political sycophancy, and social revolution and upheavals (Zumboshi 176 - 177)

The political uprising in Cameroon in the 1990s was, and has always been, a characteristic of politics in Africa. The role of the poet dwells in the criticism of these political ills, and sometimes economic and social practices, which keep destroying societies and stopping them from thriving. Zumboshi captures Alembong's poetic vision when he states,

> Nol Alembong projects himself as an anti-establishment poet because his poetic discourse exposes the socio-political anomalies and tribulations of the 1990 African society in highly symbolic terms through his ample use of African local imagery, cultural symbolism and African folklore. Thus, the title of this collection, *The Passing Wind* symbolizes a political and revolutionary change from one system of governance to the other. (177)

One will not be wrong to state that, it is all about change. Change is the driving force behind Alembong's poetics, like the poetics of other African poets. This change comes across when there is an abnormality and then the need for revolt. Critics and creative writers often propose solutions to societal problems through change. The case at hand is Andrew Ngeh, Nformi Dominic Nganyu and Ignatius Nsaidzedze.

Using the Lacanian concepts of lack and desire, Ngeh Andrew T, Nformi Dominic Nganyu and Ignatius Nsaidzedze argue that the ruling class possesses what the masses lack. Thus, the masses desire what the ruling class has. In their words,

> This paper argues that the perception of the nation's wealth as "a national cake" by both the rulers and the ruled has placed many African countries in a dilemma and this poses a challenge to nation building. The nation is conceived and perceived by both the superstructure and the base in the dyadic image of a perishable cake that if not eaten, will get bad. The cake as a metaphorical symbol is reminiscent of the Lacanian concept of lack and desire. As an absent centre around which major conflictual actions are enacted, the cake, like the nation is not respected, worshipped, served or maintained, but it is delicious, fragile, edible and appetizing. The paper concludes by recommending a socialist state or what Julius Nyerere calls Ujamaa where everyone is involved in decision- making (124 _ 125)

In the social and cultural domains, some critics have described the poetics of Kishani and Alembong as the poetics that express the communal repertoire of Africans. Andrew T. Ngeh and Nformi Dominic Nganyu argue that, Bongasu's, "Konglanjo" expresses the political, religious, psychological and philosophical aspects of the African communal existence. For example, while calling on "Nga'a'-Mbom" to unite and purify the land, the high priest pleads for more harvest among other things. The speaker, however, thinks his people have to watch out against the influence of alien cultures because they can be insidious and devastating to the African way of life." (21)

The call is thus, that of unity against cultures that seek to strangle and eliminate African cultures and communal lifestyle. These critics encourage Africans to stick to their cultures as they posit about Kishani's poetry,

> The poet insinuates that even if the Africans do not know where they are going to, at least, they should know where they came from; and it is only their culture that can give them these directives. He uses the past to evaluate the present situation and anticipate the future. The writer, should therefore, not only dwell in the past because the past is only a transitional stage in which he must prepare the ground for the present and the future. It is only a stage for comprehension of the values with which he must judge and recommend the choices for the present and the future. This poem is a recreation of the dignity of a people without any romanticization and idealization although it is nostalgic in tone. (21)

Despite these concerns, Ngeh and Nganyu agree with Kishani that there is no culture without good and bad sides. In a sense, African cultures have both good and bad sides and it is our responsibility to choose the good and ignore the bad. In the words of the critics,

> The poet/persona admits that the African culture had/has its strong and weak points; that is the African culture had/has its good and bad aspects. The alliteration, 'feats' and 'failures' (f, f,) reinforces the objective perception of African cultural reality. This shows that as glorious and as good as African culture was, and is, it had/has its own weaknesses. The sun symbolizes those positive aspects of African cultural values and the rain signifies the negative

> aspects. The objective presentation of African socio-cultural reality is one of the preoccupations of Bongasu. (22)

The significance of these good and bad aspects is that it refreshes our minds on ethics or bio-ethics as is the case of this study. We move a long way to understand the good and bad sides of some of our practices thereby arousing the desire for improvement. For example, the critics introduce us to corruption which is a canker worm eating up most African countries in particular and the world at large. They present the facts as follows,

> In Bongasu's "A Taxi Driver's Lawsuit", the poet dwells on the issue of corruption which is a bane to socio-political development. He uses a proverbial language and wise saying to enhance his ideological posture. This particular poem brings out the theme of corruption. The poem is a complaint of some sort launched by a taxi driver who is molested, harassed and psychologically tortured by law enforcement officers for no good reason. This poem highlights two important issues: corruption and the absence of social justice in post-colonial African societies. Taxi drivers are important people in the society. This explains why a one- day strike by taxi drivers can paralyze the economy of a whole nation. The taxi driver who is the protagonist in this poem is conscious of this vital service he renders to his community. (27)

The act of making these ills public is not intended to simply show them, but to seek possibilities of condemning and putting them to an end. Until these bad practices are put on check, social justice will always be threatened. Nevertheless, the fundamental point in the work of these critics is to ascertain that there is no modernity without a source. What is modern today has its source in a certain archaic society. They conclude their article by saying that,

> it could be said that what seems modern in the poetry of Bongasu and Alembong has an African source. But rather than the reactionary revivalism or conservative traditionalism which attempts to bring back or continue an unaltered past, Bongasu and Alembong have in mind the kind of continuity that T.S Eliot wrote about in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" which says that each new significant text added to a tradition will both alter and confirm that tradition. Although their poetry can be read on its own as modern English-language poetry and within a context of modern themes and forms, it is also rooted in African culture. (28)

So from the reviews above, it is evident that the texts under study have been studied from an environmental perspective, cultural perspective, socio-political perspectives and economic perspective. The foundation laid by these critics positions the works of Kishani and Alembong in a state that makes it easier to visualize the area which has not been tackled and requires the addition of another body of knowledge. We have come to the conclusion that existing critical material in the poetry of Alembong and Kishani does not tackle the declining nature of African spirituality in relation to ecoculture. In fact, it does not study the spiritual connection between humans and nature. This is a gap in knowledge.

Theoretical Review

Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism has gained some grounds in contemporary African literature in particular and literature as a whole. The following are some of the scholarly research which have been done in the theory:

Eunice F. Fombele classifies three ecocritical perspectives in African and postcolonial literature. She says:

> Ecocritical perspectives on African and postcolonial literature have largely taken three dimensions. The first perspective constitutes sceptical view points from some postcolonial African ecocritics like William Slaymaker, Jhan Hickman ... who consider ecological and environmental criticism as a non-liberating hegemonic discourse from the west and therefore calling on African writers and critics to be cautious as they respond to the call for global green ... The second perception entails space-clearing gestures that point to the ways in which Africans have mobilized against environmental degradation and grave environmental problems in conjunction with social problems faced by Africa ... The third standpoint is based on attempts by some critics like Byron Caminero-Santangelo, Jonathan Highfield, … to apply forms of ecocriticism to African literary texts. (63-64)

Furthermore, Fombele argues from Liking's point of view that, "environmental representation in Africa must be shaped by social history and must challenge the various ways human societies have constructed themselves in hierarchical relations to other human and nonhuman communities" (64). By implication she is technically bonding New Historicism and Post Structuralism in Ecocriticism. This goes a long way to expand the scope of ecocriticism thereby "de-westernizing" it. Despite this, the true essence of including environmental issues in literature is to reduce environmental crisis. "Literature can play an important part in environmental protection by creating awareness on some of man's destructive activities to the environment while at the same time encouraging sustainable nature-friendly activities and relations" (Fombele 65). In doing this however, there are fundamental questions which come up. Fombele asks a fundamental question related to the center theme of this thesis. The question is "What lessons do we learn from Liking's discourse on the human/ nonhuman nature interdependence and relationship?" (65). By providing answers to this question, we will definitely dive into the nonhuman aspect of nature which includes the spiritual dimension too. Fombele does not clearly indicate this aspect, perhaps, because it is not the central argument in her paper. This happens to be a focal point in this thesis.

Another scholar who has raised a series of questions about ecocriticism is Kashim Ibrahim Tala. Even though he uses ecocriticism in his article, he is very skeptical about the fate of the theory on the African cosmological context or in African eco-space. As earlier indicated, he opines that:

> … ecocriticism which is essentially a Western concept fails to achieve its objectives in Africa because of deficiencies in its conceptualization ... That is why I am proposing in this discourse that ecocriticism as a concept can benefit enormously by drawing inspiration from the indigenous ecological knowledge contained in traditional African culture and expressed in the oral literature. This is because Africans have always been aware of the environment and have been using it wisely. (135)

With such opinion, one begins to doubt the credibility of ecocriticism in tackling African ecological issues. However, in a global setting where every culture is beginning to affect another and get affected by others, one is able to understand that ecocriticism can find its way into discourses about African ecology with little or no bias. Given the vast nature of some research areas, and/or their interconnectivity with other areas, it is worthy to discredit the applicability of a one-sided theory which will not seek all nuances adequately. Hence, we should learn to adapt a theory to fit our context. In spite of the fact that critics like Tala and Slaymaker, either partially or fully condemn it, it is important to adapt it to fit the context for which it is being used.

William Slaymaker postulates that:

> Black African critics and writers have traditionally embraced nature writing, land issues and landscape themes that are pertinent to national and local cultural claims and that also functions as pastoral reminiscences or even projections of a golden age when many of the environmental evils resulting from colonialism and the exploitation of indigenous resources have been remediated. A review of any number of bibliographies, literary histories, and anthologies of black African literature and criticism in the past several decades will bear out this intense interest in the local recapture of a violated nature. (683)

Going by this quotation, one becomes conscious that Africans knew about the need for environmental protection before the term ecocriticism was even coined. This is because the theory, Ecocriticism, is a new theory.

> Ecocriticism is a new critical movement that attempts to link literary criticism and theory with today's ecological issues. It studies the relationship between literature and the science of ecology by applying ecological concepts to literature. Its aim is to synthesize literary criticism and the environmental matters by focusing on the literary analyses of the representations of nature in literary texts, and the literary constructions of the environmental crisis in eco-literary discourses. (Serphil Oppermann 29).

Serphil Oppermann argues for the need of an expansive theoretical approach in studying the intersections of the literary and the natural phenomena. He also emphasizes the

importance of eco-literary discourses in the practice of ecocriticism through an ecocritical evaluation of two postmodern novels. In short, his article focuses on the new ecologically oriented literary criticism in the literary viewfinder. A pertinent point here seems to suggest that Oppermann is not comfortable with the scope of Ecocriticism. This is why he wants a yet another theory that can cover beyond the bounds of contemporary Ecocriticism. Oppermann continues by saying that,

> Ecocriticism actually launches a call to literature to connect to the issues of today's environmental crisis. In other words, ecocriticism is directly concerned with both nature (natural landscape) and the environment (landscape both natural and urban). But the attempt to synthesize natural phenomena with literary criticism raises conceptual problems, because ecology itself is an abstract concept that emerged in a historical process of academic formation. (30)

The view is common in the sense that it stresses the parallel reading of literature and environment. Inasmuch as nature and literature come in contact with each other, there is a sense of Ecocriticism. Oppermann stresses the fact that the possible relations between literature and nature are examined in terms of ecological concepts. Ecocriticism, then, says Oppermann, attempts to find a common ground between the human and the nonhuman to show how they can coexist in various ways, because the environmental issues have become an integral part of our existence. This is one problem that ecocriticism addresses in its attempt to find a more environmentally conscious position in literary studies.

Christopher Arigo is of the opinion that "[t]here is virtually no landscape, no ecosystem on this planet that has been untouched by human intervention, by technology and its byproducts" (Arigo, 7-8)

Oscar C. Labang argues in support of Simon Estok that, ecocriticism is different from one locality to another and from one period to another. Estok argues further that,

"American ecocriticism will differ significantly in its material implications from, say, a Korean or a Canadian ecocriticism" (84). In Labang's words,

> While people and writers think globally of the environmental crisis, the response is often within the background of local cultural signification of the material circumstance and social conceptions. The way an American ecopoet conceives of nature, views nature, interacts with nature, approaches nature and responds to the calls of nature are without doubt different from the way an African ecopoet does. Although the general tendency is to adopt the praxis of Western criticism and literary approaches in the reading of postcolonial text, the environmental crisis is uniquely important because local/regional activities have global consequences and so writers/critics must respond in ways that best reflect their cultural philosophies and individual perceptions of the environment. (13-14)

The main point here is that societies are different and as such deserve different ecocritical approaches in dealing with them. Africa, for example has her specificities in terms of environmental approaches. Labang succinctly captures this when he posits that, postcolonial African ecopoetics provides insight into other-than-Western environmental realities by showing how African writers reconcile their personal/subjective environmental experiences with ontological ecological philosophies and culture environment norms as well as a history of environmental violence in a language that is strange but culturally rich and dense. He adds that,

> Postcolonial African ecopoetics extrapolates the hermeneutics and poetics of the poetry of other cultures (mostly African/colonial) to show how writers from such cultures use language and form to create encounters that reveal the historical, cultural and personal realities which shape individual's environmental experiences. This ecopoetics uses new Englishes and other regional languages, as well as oral/written poetic forms to account for and preserve unique personal, physical and transcendental experiences with the environment. (14 - 15)

Significantly, if we must talk about ecocriticism, we must be careful not to generalize the concept where it should not be generalized. This is because, as the argument above shows, each cultural system and epoch has its own unique environmental issues which require its own approach. This explains further why a single critical tool could not cover

the analysis and interpretation in this thesis. We had to combine Ecocriticism with Afrocentricity in order to improve the quality of the analysis and interpretation because it is focused on one cultural system which demands a tool that tackles its specificities.

The colonial master/ white man came with massive destruction of the environment and he was still the one who brought the term ecocriticism to the African continent. Should we therefore say because of these ills of the white man on our environment, we will be reluctant in accepting a theory which will help in improving our environment? The answer is certainly “no!” we need to adapt the theory to suit our context, and possibly attach a typical African concept like Afrocentricity to it in order to explore environmental issues in Africa.

Afrocentricity

In the area of Afrocentricity, there is a considerable amount of literature which needs to be reviewed. This literature ranges from the beginning of the theory in the 20th century in the Temple School to the present. Molefi Kete Asante claims that Afrocentricity seeks to re-locate the African person as an agent in human history in an effort to eliminate the illusion of the fringes. He adds that Afrocentricity as a theory of change intends to re-locate the African person as subject, thus destroying the notion of being objects in the Western project of domination. As a Pan-African idea, Afrocentricity becomes the key to the proper education of children and the essence of an African cultural revival and, indeed, survival.

Molefi Kete Asante says, "Afrocentricity is the conscious process by which a person locates or relocates African phenomena within an African subject content or agency and action. It is therefore location as opposed to dislocation, centeredness as opposed to marginality" (97). Asante also defines it by saying that, "Afrocentricity is a mode of

thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives predominate. In regards to theory, it is the placing of African people in the center of any analysis of African phenomena."(2). He argues as an Afrocentrist that, the Western dogma which contends that Greeks gave the world rationalism effectively marginalizes those who are not European and becomes the leading cause of the disbelief about African achievements.

The Afrocentrists contend that, the dogma that the Greeks gave the world rational thought is historically inaccurate and that the construction of the Western notions of knowledge based on the Greek model is a relatively recent construction beginning with the European Renaissance when Cosimo de Medici of Florence asked Marsillio Ficcino to translate the Corpus Hermeticum and Plato's *Republic* in that order. In the standard Western view neither the Africans nor the Chinese had rational thinking. Only the Europeans had the ability to construct rational thought. Thus, the Afrocentrists contend that, the Eurocentric view has become an ethnocentric view which elevates the European experience and downgrades all others. To him, Afrocentricity is not the reverse of Eurocentricity but a particular perspective for analysis which does not seek to occupy all space and time as Eurocentrism has often done.

Asante uses the following example; to say classical music, theatre, or dance is usually a reference to European music, theatre, and dance. However, this means that Europeans occupy all of the intellectual and artistic seats and leave no room for others. The Afrocentrists argue for pluralism in philosophical views without hierarchy. All cultural centers must be respected; this is the fundamental aim of Afrocentricity.

Positioning the above as the fundamental aim of Afrocentricity was critical in the 20th century. However, the theory has evolved systematically, even though its core is still consent for Africa. Abu Shardow Abarry posits that,

> This concept, as articulated by its main proponents-Diop, Asante, Karenga, Clarke, Carruthers, Keto, and others- holds that any meaningful and authentic study of peoples of African descent must begin and proceed with Africa as the center, not periphery; as subject, not object. Complex and multidisciplinary, the concept embodies a humanistic philosophy, a scholarly methodology, and a model of practical action. The main objective of its creators, however, is to liberate the research and study of African peoples from the hegemony of Eurocentric scholarship, whose concepts, history, and traditions have been the absolute yardsticks against which all other cultures are evaluated. (123)

Evidently, Asante and Shardow have similar views on the theory. They share the fundamental premise that the Eurocentric approach of considering themselves superior in all things is a sine qua non for the emergence of an African centered theory of Afrocentricity. However, Asante is considerate as he doesn't directly put Afrocentricity as a counter theory to Eurocentrism. He rather sees it as a moderation and sees Eurocentrism as an extremist approach. In this thesis, this idea is essential because the researcher’s plan is to moderate eco-thought, and give a moral dimension of life to it. In other words, the plan is to inculcate a spiritual dimension of ecology in the mainstream culture of ecocriticism, while also treating its moral values.

Afrocentricity is in constant review and present-day critics are constantly on it. Ama Mazama is one of the present day Afrocentricity critics. He argues that,

> Today, Afrocentricity is widely discussed in the United States, of course, but also in Africa, Europe, South and Central America, and the Caribbean. In short, it has become a formidable Pan-African force that must be reckoned with. The reason for its appeal lies both in the disturbing conditions of African people and the remedy that Afrocentricity suggests. (Mazama 387)

Evidently, one cannot supposedly classify Afrocentricity as an outdated tool, reason being that critics such as Mazama still see it flourishing and defending the African perspective on myriad of issues. As far as this work is concerned, the African perspective of the environment needs attention. This attention cannot be fully achieved with a Western theory such as ecocriticism. There is a need for an African approach and that is why in this work, we have also chosen, apart from ecocriticism, a theory of African cultural perspective which is Afrocentricity. Anderson Renaldo postulates that "the Afrocentric perspective that emerged in the wake of the late twentieth century was and is a natural human intellectual response to the cultural imposition and biases by Eurocentric theorists and their sympathizers." (6). The intricacies of Afrocentricity are spellbinding. It discusses African problems from African perspectives. Mazama further argues that,

> Afrocentricity contends that our main problem as African people is our usually unconscious adoption of the Western worldview and perspective and their attendant conceptual frameworks. The list of those ideas and theories that have invaded our lives as normal, natural, or even worse, ideal is infinite. How many of us have really paused to seriously examine and challenge such ideas as development, planning, progress, the need for democracy, and the nation-state as the best form of political and social organization, to name only a few? Our failure to recognize the roots of such ideas in the European cultural ethos has led us, willingly or unwillingly, to agree to footnote status in the White man's book. We thus find ourselves relegated to the periphery, the margin, of the European experience, to use Molefi Asante's terms-spectators of a show that defines us from without. In other words, and to use Afrocentric terminology again, we do not exist on our own terms but on borrowed, European ones. (387)

Once we look at Afrocentricity as an African framework which can be used to discuss African worldview, we are at least a step towards decolonizing our minds. The basic claim here is that Africans have unique issues which can only be tackled through African lenses. In addition, it is basically going to be difficult to fully address the cultural underpinnings of Africa using a European theory. To this effect, one must consider an African framework. Husain Lateef explores Afrocentricity theory as an

alternative non-western framework to guide social work practice with Black American youth. According to him, "Very little research has been conducted in recent years concerning Afrocentricity, one of few non-western African theoretical frameworks employed by social work practitioners" (26). His paper provides clarity on what is the theory of Afrocentricity, by "providing an overview of the theory's historical foundations and assumptions. This paper concludes with an application example of the use of Afrocentricity theory within a prevention program for Black youth."(26) He reaffirms that the theory started in the late 20th century following Asante's coinage and definition of the word. Lateef gives the historical evolution of the theory, its assumptions on human identity, spiritual and affective knowledge, application and critique of the theory, and then concludes that, the theory of Afrocentricity has been proposed to be useful in forming intervention and prevention programs for Black youth. Still in the conclusion of his paper, Lateef outlines the strength of Afrocentricity. He says,

> A strength of the Afrocentricity theoretical framework is that the importance of Black/African derived cultural experiences are placed at the center of its conceptualization of the issues facing Black Americans (Asante, 2003; Washington, Watts, & Watson, 2008; Gilbert, Harvey, & Belgrave, 2009). It is from this perspective that the root causes of social problems for Black people are proposed to stem from oppression and disconnection from their culture's spiritual/metaphysical assumptions (Asante, 2003). Applying these assumptions to the issues of Black American youth, various academic scholars have noted that the non-responsive nature of certain prevention and intervention programs in reaching Black youth may be due to the lack of an Afrocentric cultural framework (Stepteau-Watson, Watson, & Lawrence, 2014). As a result, an additional strength of the Afrocentricity theory is that it may provide an alternative framework for reaching Black youth who are previously unreachable by programs using traditional western derived models of intervention and prevention. (29-30)

Having in mind strength of Afrocentricity, it is worthy to note that the theory finds itself in this work as a complementary framework because its complement (Ecocriticism) is highly Western in nature. The two theories, as reviewed here, complement each other to

form a solid framework for the discussion of eco-spirituality and bioethics in Africa with illustrations from the poetry of Alembong and Kishani. With a clear review of the theories, it is important to do a review of the concepts.

Statement of the Research

Our concern in this study is to examine the eco-cultural spirituality dimensions of the poetry of Alembong and Kishani. In this sense, we want to show how African spirituality is declining in relation to ecoculture. This deviates from previous studies which focused on political and socio-cultural standpoints of these poets.

It has been argued that the British Romantics and American Transcendentalists paid great attention to the preservation of nature. However, humans have deviated from this call. This is as a result of capitalist greed, world evolution and unbridled technological advancements. This thesis attempts to use the poetry of Alembong and Kishani to reposition the ecological, cultural and spiritual links that have been distorted by these.

Alembong asserts that, there is "a link between belief systems, partly seen through human action or culture, ethical behaviour and the ecosystem" (125). Drawing on this, we argue that, many critical and convincing studies have been done in the relationship between human beings and nature, but the domain of nonhuman relationship with nature is yet to be fully explored. This leads to a bias. The need to study and improve the link between belief systems and ecosystem becomes increasingly important here. These belief systems encompass the culture of a people, their spirituality and their moral standards.

Theoretical Framework

As earlier mentioned, two theories inform the analysis and interpretation of this study. The theories are Ecocriticism and Afrocentricity.

1. Ecocriticism

Definition and Historicity of Ecocriticism

As earlier indicated at the level of definition and conceptualization of terms, Ecocriticism is used in this work as a literary approach which deals with the physical and non-physical relationships that exist among literature, nature, and human/nonhuman species and cultures. Greg Gerrald postulates that:

> Eco-criticism is the most popular term for the study of literature and culture from a perspective informed by environmental politics or scientific ecology, although some critics prefer the term 'environmental criticism' (Lawrence Buell), 'ecocritique' (Tim Luke), or 'Ecopoetics' (Jonathan Bate). Just like feminist critics share a moral and political commitment to women's liberation in spite of their theoretical disagreement, all eco-critics are motivated by an acute sense of the threats to natural environments from human population levels, unconstrained technological development, the ecological consequences of both wealth and poverty, and ideologies considered hostile to environmentalism, such as consumerism, Christianity and patriarchy. (570-571)

Garrard is simply insinuating that ecocriticism is a fight against human oppression of nature which is like feminist fight against the oppression of the woman.

The origin of ecocriticism dates back to 1637 following the works of philosophers such as Rene Descartes and Francis Beacon. Though they wrote about nature, they did not use the word ecocriticism in any of their works to describe the relationship between literature and the environment. It was William Ruekert who first used the word ecocriticism in 1978 in his essay to talk about the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature.

The theory fully started in America in the 1980s with special sessions at American conferences, and the founding of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) in 1992 which holds conferences in North America and encourages other continents to hold similar conferences to protect nature. Some committed scholars argue that the theory started in the 1990s. Kashim Ibrahim Tala, for instance, states that "Ecocriticism which takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies started as an Anglo-American literary discourse although it has grown exponentially since the 1990s, especially in Europe, America and part of Asia" (136). The increase in the study of literature and environment is said to be motivated by the environmental crisis facing the world today, and the near absence of the ethics of responsibility (Tala 136, Donald Wooster qtd by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm xxi). Gilbert Fai Tarka insists that, “ecocriticism emerged as a result of the yearning to go beyond the gender, class and racial issues that were the major preoccupations of postcolonial studies in the late 20th century” (277).

From the above listed continents where ecocriticism is said to have gained ground, one may be tempted to ask about the place of African. Oscar C. Labang argues in conformity to Emmanuel Fru Doh that:

> The Western form of civilization which prioritizes the building of cities over the preservation of forests and other natural forms, is the wrong approach for African societies because the forest to the African symbolizes (not simply a collection of trees), and nutritional elements as well as spiritual and transcendental forces which are vital life-links to the people's survival. The forest, therefore, is the life of the postcolonial community and it is encountered, respected, revered and in differently at different times for different purposes. (120)

Victoria Lakpu Beri opines that:

> African Literature, both oral and written, has a link with the environment as authors employ features from the environment to give meaning and local colour

> to their art. Before the upsurge of environmental and ecological discourses, most of the nature and environmental images went unnoticed because there was little or no interest in relating oral literature and the environment. The environment was considered as physical setting and natural images were analysed as aesthetics that enhanced understanding or the development of the plot. With increasing awareness about the need for cultures to be ecologically friendly and the introduction of ecocriticism as a theory in literary studies, critics started reinterpreting the relationship between nature and environment in literary studies. (169)

This view underscores that ecocriticism was not known earlier in Africa even though African writers were implementing natural and environmental elements in their art. The view has been supported by other scholars such as Byron Santangelo and Garth Myers. Other scholars such as William Slaymaker argue that, African critics and creative writers write environmental literature, but they do not put much concern in it because such literatures are:

> promulgated from many of world's metropolitan centers ... To some African critics and writers, who directly participated in the liberation of their nation-states from colonialism, what ecocriticism offers is not another theory of liberation like Marxism. Rather, it appears as one more hegemonic discourse from the metropolitan West. (132)

In the same line of argument, Tala opines that:

> while Western writers and critics tend to see nature mainly as an object of aesthetic appreciation, African writers and critics tend to adopt a mystical and utilitarian outlook on nature ... It is therefore not surprising that African writers and critics should be skeptical in their reception of yet another Anglo-American critical theory under the name of ecocriticism. (138)

These arguments sum up to project the inability of ecocriticism alone to fully give a clear view and interpretation of the African environment and environmental outlook. However, it is necessary to utilize some tenets of the theory which fit most in the said context.

Tenets of Ecocriticism

Jelica Tosic states that, "ecocriticism is concerned with the relationship between literature and environment or how man's relationship with the physical environment is reflected in literature" (qtd in Forbang-Lo-oh 83). It follows that in reading the poems required for the analysis in this work, we shall pay attention to how literature relates to the environment, and how man's relationship with the physical environment is rooted in his spirituality as reflected in the various poems.

Greg Garrard argues that in addition to examining the idea of nature and critiquing anthropocentrism in literature, eco-criticism in the 1990s is marked by a suspicion of the excessive emphasis on texts and their relationships to each other in poststructuralism and New Historicism, that is, their interest in semiosis and inter-textuality rather than literal reference to reality. Jonathan Bate's *Romantic Ecology* (1991) is expressly meant to counter Marxist readings of Romanticism and return William Wordsworth to his position as an inspirational nature poet in a period of environmental crisis. Similarly, Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) places Wordsworth's American counterpart Henry Thoreau at the head of a "green" tradition of American nature writers. Relating to the texts under study, we shall not only focus on relating the four texts under study to other texts which treat similar issues, or limit them to their historical realities, but we shall also strive to tie them to their environmental realities.

Gilda Nicheng Forbang-Lo-oh states that "William Ruerkert is of the opinion that, ecocriticism should experiment with the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature because ecology […] has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world we all live in" (83). The question which apparently comes to mind here is that: what are some of these ecological concepts? We shall be looking at

ecological concepts such as ecoculture, ecospirituality and bioethics in the four texts under study.

According to Laurence Buell, “The majority of ecocritics... look upon their texts of reference as refractions of physical environments and human interactions with those environments, notwithstanding the artifactual properties of textual representation and their mediation by ideological and other socio-historical factors" (30). In a sense, texts under study are scouted from a particular society, about that society and capable of reshaping that society. We shall see how to do these. This is similar to the proceeding tenet from Greg Garrard.

"The eco-critic's concern is always in some sense to ask how a given text or genre might shape the readers' environmental perception, and perhaps their actions as well." (Garrard 572)

Eco-critics have always sustained interests in other reading practices, most notably feminism. Eco-feminist literary criticism sees environmental destruction as conceptually and practically interlinked with male domination of women, and "advocates the centrality of human diversity and biodiversity to our survival on this planet" (Gaard and Murphy 12). In summary, inter-textuality and cross-referencing will be necessary in this work, sparingly.

Greg Garrard says that in recent years, eco-critics in North America have gone on to place increasing emphasis on the cultural dimensions of environmental racism and justice, because social exclusion of ethnic groups and exposure to toxic environments frequently go together.

According to Asika Ikechukwu Emmanuel and Madu Bridget Ngozi, “Eco-criticism takes its concern in the fact that man is part of the natural existence and that actions

against nature invariably are actions against humanity and well-being of man" (33). They add that, "it tends to mediate between man and nature as means of providing more conducive, comfortable and habitable environment for man in his world" (33).

Ecocriticism positions human as a partner to nature, not its superior. In this sense, humans are supposed to function in correlation to nature. This explains why Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm argue that, "all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it" (xix).

In Africa, Ecocriticism seeks to destroy Westerner views on environment, and cultural superiority over nature. According to it, culture should not be superior to nature. Nature and culture should be partners.

Ecocriticism examines human perception of the wilderness and how current environmental issues have changed over history. Here we face questions like: how do we perceive the forest? At what time? Within which locality?

Ecocriticism also claims to cherish and activate areas of ecological values such as earth, rivers, hills etc. In this case, we cherish these areas by looking at them beyond the physical paradigm, and by seeking possibilities of protecting and preserving them.

To conclude here, ecocriticism is a fundamental theory required to interpret the relationship between human/ nonhuman species and nature. Since this study seeks to analyze such relationships, the theory is required despite its shortcomings.

2. Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity is also known as Afrocentrism. It was first propounded by Molefi Kete Asante in the 1980s. Nol Alembong opines that,

> Afrocentricity, an ideology propounded by Molefi Kete Asante (1987), places African ideals at the centre of discourses that involve African culture and behaviour. It proposes a cultural reconstruction that incorporates the African perspective as a part of an entire human transformation. (128)

Other proponents include, Marimba Ani, Jacob Carruthers, Cheik Anta Diop, Asa Hilliard, Chancellor Williams and Ivan Van Sertima etc. Cognizant of the fact that Ecocriticism is a Western theory, and that it cannot fully cover African environmental issues, there is an urgent need to devise another theory to fill in the gap. This supports the view of Tala where he argues that:

> … ecocriticism which is essentially a Western concept fails to achieve its objectives in Africa because of deficiencies in its conceptualization ... That is why I am proposing in this discourse that ecocriticism as a concept can benefit enormously by drawing inspiration from the indigenous ecological knowledge contained in traditional African culture and expressed in the oral literature. This is because Africans have always been aware of the environment and have been using it wisely. (135)

From the quotation above, it becomes evident that we cannot rely on ecocriticism alone in this work. Hence, the need for an additional approach which views things using African lenses. This additional theory is Afrocentricity/Afrocentrism.

What is Afrocentricity/Afrocentrism?

According to Alembong, Afrocentricity "places African ideals at the centre of discourses that involve African culture and behaviour. It proposes a cultural reconstruction that incorporates the African perspective as a part of an entire human transformation" (128). It is all about the African worldview. The African worldview, most often, contrasts the western worldview. This is in line with the definition of John H. Milan. According to Milan, “Afrocentricity is defined, partly, in contrast to Eurocentrism … everything which does not come out of Afrocentric perspective is believed to be Eurocentric” (9). Thus, Afrocentricity is in some respects a response to

global (Eurocentric) attitudes about African people and their historical contributions; it seeks to correct what it sees as mistakes and ideas perpetuated by the racist philosophical underpinnings of western academic disciplines as they developed during and since Europe's Early.

This paradigm is based on the idea that African people should re-assert a sense of agency in order to achieve sanity. In other words, it is basically a revolutionary shift in thinking proposed as a way of constructing the adjustment to black disorientation, decenteredness, and lack of agency.

The Historicity of Afrocentricity

The origin of Afrocentricity is deeply rooted in other earlier Black Nationalist Movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, Pan-Africanism, Negritude and Civil Rights Movement. With respect to the Harlem Renaissance, black Americans who had migrated to North America in Harlem as a result of the Great Migration sought reincarnation into the African cultural belief systems and ways of life. Between 1919 and 1920, there were meetings where African-Americans assembled to chat a way forward for Africa and African-America. Most of their works before this time had been emulating Western styles of writing. There was an artistic debate during the Harlem Renaissance which resulted in a split and brought about: (i) Proponents of low arts such as Alain Locke and Claude McKay who argued that in terms of aesthetics, Africans and African-Americans had nothing to learn from the West, and (ii) Proponents of high arts like Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois who argued that Western forms of writing should be maintained in the works of Africans and African-Americans.

With Pan Africanism, there emerged a number of activists such as Marcus Garvey and Du Bois who promoted the idea of an African diaspora and called for a separate African

state for Black Americans. Pan-Africanism is a worldwide movement that aims to encourage and strengthen bonds of solidarity between all Indigenous and diaspora peoples of African ancestry. Based on a common goal dating back to the Atlantic slave trade, the movement extends beyond continental Africa with a substantial support base among the African diaspora in the Americas and Europe. It can be said to have its origins in the struggles of the African people against enslavement and colonization and this struggle may be traced back to the first resistance on slave ships—rebellions and suicides—through the constant plantation and colonial uprisings and the "Back to Africa" movements of the 19th century. Pan-Africanism is based on the belief that unity is vital to economic, social, and political progress and aims to "unify and uplift" people of African ancestry.

At its core, Pan-Africanism is a belief that African people, both on the continent and in the diaspora, share not merely a common history, but a common destiny. Pan-Africanism is the idea that peoples of African descent have common interests and should be unified. Historically, Pan-Africanism has often taken the shape of a political or cultural movement. There are many varieties of Pan-Africanism. In its narrowest political manifestation, Pan-Africanists envision a unified African nation where all people of the African diaspora can live. Pan-Africanist intellectual, cultural, and political movements tend to view all Africans and descendants of Africans as belonging to a single "race" or otherwise sharing cultural unity. Pan-Africanism posits a sense of a shared historical fate for Africans in America, West Indies, and on the continent itself, it centered on the Atlantic trade in slaves, African slavery, and European imperialism. Du Bois organized world conferences about Pan-Africanism from 1919 to 1927 which helped laid the foundation for Afrocentricity.

In the 1930s, Francophone African intellectuals such as Léopold Sedar Senghor, Aimé Césaire and Léon Damas brought about Négritude literary movement where they preached not only the need for a black homeland but also the cultural and genetic superiority of Blacks. The word Négritude is from the French words "Nègre" and "-itude" which denote a condition that can be translated as "Blackness". It is a framework of critique and literary theory, developed mainly by francophone intellectuals, writers, and politicians of the African diaspora during the 1930s, aimed at raising and cultivating "Black consciousness" across Africa and its diaspora. In other words, Négritude was an anti-colonial cultural and political movement founded by a group of African and Caribbean students in Paris in the 1930s who sought to reclaim the value of blackness and African culture. It gathers writers such as sisters Paulette and Jeanne Nadal (known for having laid the theoretical basis of the movement), Martinican poet Aimé Césaire, Abdoulaye Sadji, Léopold Sédar Senghor (the first President of Senegal), and Léon Damas of French Guiana. Négritude intellectuals disavowed colonialism, racism and Eurocentrism. They promoted African culture within a framework of persistent Franco-African ties. The intellectuals employed Marxist political philosophy, in the Black radical tradition.

The writers drew heavily on a surrealist literary style, and some say they were also influenced somewhat by the Surrealist stylistics, and in their work often explored the experience of diasporic being, asserting ones' self and identity, and ideas of home, home-going and belonging. It is important to note that Surrealism is a cultural movement that developed in Europe in the aftermath of World War I in which artists depicted unnerving, illogical scenes and developed techniques to allow the unconscious mind to express itself. Its aim was, according to leader André Breton, to "resolve the previously contradictory conditions of dream and reality into an absolute reality, a

super-reality", or surreality. It produced works of painting, writing, theatre, filmmaking, photography, and other media. Négritude formed the firm basis in which Afrocentricity relies.

The 1960s saw the Civil Rights Movement which made Afrocentricity gain significant legitimacy in the United States. This movement came along with the immigration of large numbers of nonwhites. The desire to carve out the African cultural values and ideologies and praise them became very eminent. It was in this regard that Molefi Asante by 1980 had published a book titled *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* in which he speaks of the need for an Afrocentric orientation to data. This led to the birth of Afrocentricity with its specific tenets.

Tenets of Afrocentricity

It is committed to finding the subject-place of Africans in any social, political, economic, or religious phenomenon with implications for questions of sex, gender and class. In this case, the focus is on the defense of African cultural elements as historically valid. This is done by making use of powerful imperatives from historical sources to revise the collective text of African people.

According to John Milan, “Afrocentric researchers pay attention to symbols, affect, instinct, intuition, and imaginary as multiple ways of knowing” (Milan 13). This means that Afrocentrism is highly interested in the psychological. This is determined by elements like symbols, motifs, rituals, and signs. In fact, the Afrocentric method locates the imaginative structure of a system of economics, bureau of politics, policy of government, expression of cultural form in the attitude, direction, and language of the *phenon* (recognized by similarity of characteristics), be it text, institution, interaction, or event.

It declares artistic independence (that is, it is a kind of revolution) from bourgeois art. This challenges Africans and African-Americans not to write like Westerners in terms of form and content. Moreover, African and African-American art must come from the people. The poet or writer is simply a middleman who transmits the message. The artistic base is the folk culture which includes songs, proverbs etc. Afrocentricity advocates art which is inspired by the third World cultures, history and civilization.

Afrocentricity also seeks to challenge established-hierarchies.

It categorically rejects the notion of art for art's sake. That is, one which puts a lot of emphasis on form. This is to emphasize that Africans do not write only for beauty, but there are didactic reasons behind their works. So Afrocentricity emphasizes that a work of art should not be viewed only in terms of beauty, but also from the didactic perspective. Isidore Okpewho says,

> The essence of true poetry lies in its power to appeal strongly to our appreciation and, as it were, lift us up in the sense of forcing us to recognize its effects ... There are essentially two ways in which a piece of poetry can affect us. One is by touching us emotionally so that we feel pleasure or pain; the other is by stirring our minds deeply so that we reflect on some aspect of life or some significant idea. (8)

It follows that it is not only about the beauty of the art, but also about what we are using that beauty to address. It is thus clear that Afrocentricity focuses mainly on the African worldview. It is an African approach to African issues. When combined with ecocriticism, it gives a better way to analyze the texts under study. This is the reason for choosing and using the two theories in this study.

It examines etymological uses of words and terms in order to know the sources of an author’s location.

It strives to combine with other theoretical enterprises that value human freedom. For example, Socialist Realist Theory.

To conclude, the chapter sets out to summarize, analyze and synthesize existing literature in and around this area of study, and then clearly talk about the theories which will be used for analysis and interpretation in this thesis. The chapter clearly shows the existing gap which this thesis sets out to fill. It shows its point of convergence with previous works, and also its point of departure. In this chapter we have been able to discuss literature review and theoretical framework. We have classified the reviews under three categories namely; conceptual review, empirical review and theoretical review. Having done the reviews, we have shown our point of departure. We have also discussed two different theories (Ecocriticism and Afrocentricity) which inform the analysis and interpretation of texts under study.

The central argument in this chapter is that it is evident that much of the body of works done on ecocriticism, eco-cultural spirituality and bioethics is on ecocriticism itself, culture itself, bioethics itself, postcolonial worldviews on the two concepts, cultural dimensions and physical approaches to nature. This thesis expands the frontiers of ecocriticism by including a spiritual dimension to ecology with reference to cultural implications. Moreover, the concern of this researcher is neither on the political stake nor on the political observations of the poets under study. In addition, we are not paying much attention to the socio-cultural praxis.

Our concern in this study is on the spiritual and environmental dimensions of the poetry of these poets. We show how they reposition the ecological, cultural and spiritual links that have been distorted by world evolution and technological advancements. Alembong asserts that there is "a link between belief systems, partly seen through human action or culture, ethical behaviour and the ecosystem" (125). Drawing on this, we argue that many critical and convincing studies have been done in the relationship between human beings and nature, but the domain of nonhuman relationship (particularly the spiritual

realm) with nature has not been fully explored. This leads to a gap in knowledge. The need to study and improve the link between belief systems and ecosystem becomes increasingly important here. These belief systems encompass and encapsulate the culture of a people, their spirituality and their moral standards.

CHAPTER TWO

ECO-SPIRITUALITY AS EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The collective text of the poetry of Alembong and Kishani has a root of its knowledge in the spirituality of the society from which it is written. This is to say that the epistemological foundation of the poetry is in its ecology and spirituality. Eco-spirituality, in other words simplified as ecology and spirituality, form the basis for the interpretation of the texts under study as per the topic of this research. There are so many definitions ascribed to eco-spirituality. Among them are the following:

The term eco-spirituality (or ecospirituality) is formed from the combination of an adjective and noun: "eco" and "spirituality" respectively. On the one hand, "eco" simply means environment or environmentally friendly. On the other hand, "spirituality" means concern for that which is unseen and intangible, as opposed to physical or mundane. According to *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, spirituality is a heightened form of religiosity reached by certain individuals in the community who have, or claim to have, mystical contacts with the supernatural, the divine. Eco-spirituality thus refers to the unseen aspect of the environment.

As earlier indicated in the Background to the Study, Aurélie Choné defines eco-spirituality as follows: "The concept of Eco-spirituality immediately suggests that there is a kinship between ecology and spirituality, that there is a spiritual dimension to ecology and that spirituality is indissociable from ecological concerns" (1). Here, we notice one fact which is that Eco-spirituality looks at the spiritual connection between humans and nature. This view is similar to the view of Cheryl Fisher who views Eco-spirituality as the fundamental belief in the sacredness found in nature. It has been a

foundational experience for most cultures since time began. Choné concludes by arguing that:

> The concept of ecospirituality thus refers to a wide range of discourses, whose common interest is in showing that the current ecological crisis is an essentially spiritual crisis of values, so that answers to it should not be merely technological or material but should be sought on a spiritual level, through the foundation of an 'inner ecology' and an enlightened reflection about the meaning of life, the Other, the sacred. (7)

What Choné simply means here is that, when seeking solutions to environmental problems, we need to go beyond the mundane. When we go beyond the mundane, we get to the spiritual realm. We consider all the above definitions in this work because they share a fundamental premise: that eco-spirituality evaluates and reevaluates nature and spirituality. It connects the seen with the unseen; it relates the physical world with the supernatural world.

In this chapter, we show that the root of knowledge in the texts under study is deep in ecological and spiritual ideas. With respect to the main frame of this study, this chapter answers the question, how do Alembong and Kishani handle ecological and spiritual issues in their poetry? In fact, this chapter looks at the relationship between ecology and spirituality using the poetry of Alembong and Kishani. This relationship can either be symbiotic or dialectical. It is symbiotic when it is cooperative and mutual. However, when it is hostile, it is said to be dialectical. These relationships have a variety of headings that they can be grouped into. This will constitute the thematic clusters of this chapter. The chapter, in more explicit words, has a broad range of issues to tackle and we shall group these issues into; African Ontology and Epistemology, The Epistemology of Ecology in the Poetry of Alembong and Kishani, The Epistemology of Spirituality in the Poetry of Alembong and Kishani, and finally, Nature and Transcendentalism. It is important to note that, we cannot fully understand this chapter

without understanding the nature of beings in Africa. For this reason, we shall start the chapter with a brief overview of African ontology and epistemology.

African Ontology and Epistemology

There are many aspects of African ontology and epistemology which have been misrepresented by Eurocentric critics and scholars. In view of this, we shall highlight Western perceptions of African ontology and epistemology (with respect to eco-cultural spirituality) which are false and then show what exactly constitutes African ontology and epistemology with respect to ecology, culture and spirituality. The main questions which come to mind are: what is African ontology? And what is African epistemology?

> Ontology is the philosophical understanding of the nature of beings, existence or reality as well as the basic classifications of beings and their interaction. Ontology often deals with questions about the existence of entities or beings and their categorization and relationship within a hierarchy including their sub-divisions depicting their similarities or otherwise. Ontology thus, concerns itself with fundamental questions about existence of things and their categories, the meaning of beings and their various modes as well as their interactive relations and reactions attendant thereto. (Agbo 52)

In essence, African ontology is what is out there in Africa to know. With respect to Eco-cultural spirituality, questions surface such as: what aspects of African culture exist? What is African ecologies? What is African spirituality? Is African Eco-cultural spirituality real or perceived? It has to do with the questions of either what exists in Africa is real (realism) or perceived (subjectivism). Thus, African ontology is the theory of African existence, concerned with the nature of reality and that of human existence. Ontology always goes along with epistemology.

Bernice Quampah et al. define epistemology as,

> the theory of knowledge embedded in the theory [of ontology], methodology, and method of investigation. It is a way of understanding and explaining how we

> know what we know. It is about what we can hope to know about reality and how we can acquire knowledge about the reality (854).

This is to say that African epistemology deals with the theory of knowledge about Africa, a way of understanding and explaining what we know about Africa. Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama posit that,

> Epistemology deals with questions such as, “How did the universe come into existence?” “Where do human beings come from?” “Does God exist?” “Is there life after dead?” “How should one live in order to join the village of the ancestors?” “What does it mean to be a good human being?” These types of questions stand at the core of African religious worldview and suggest that knowledge is an important component of religion. (242)

According to Salliane Liengu Wolete in her unpublished PhD thesis, the term 'epistemology' etymologically originates from two Greek words, namely, ‘episteme’ and ‘logos. 'Episteme' means knowledge and 'logos' means theory. Hence, epistemology thus means the theory of knowledge. She adds that, "epistemology addresses philosophical problems that hinge around the theory of knowledge. In other words, it focuses on the different ways through which cultures use to attain knowledge of life's issues (192). To buttress this, Wolete cites P.H.Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux who, in *The African Philosophy Reader*, provide readers with an elaborate insight into the concept of epistemology. They are of the opinion that, "Epistemology is the study of theories about the nature and scope of knowledge, the evaluation of the presuppositions and bases of knowledge and the scrutiny of knowledge claims. In short, epistemology is a branch of philosophy whose main focus is to analyze and evaluate claims of knowledge" (260).

According to Emmanuel Efem Etta, African epistemology is embedded in African metaphysics which is in turn rooted in African philosophy. So to understand African epistemology, one needs to understand African philosophy. Again, every knowledge

claim embodies a certain way of understanding what is to know (ontology) as well as a certain way of understanding how to know what to know (epistemology).

The Western perception of African ontology and epistemology with regard to Eco-cultural spirituality is quite different from its reality. Wolete also argues that, contrary to Western perceptions of African epistemology, "African epistemology prescribes a holistic relationship between humans and the natural environment for sustenance of life and for resolution of life's issues. In other words, existence is void and meaningless without the harmonious interconnectivity between the physical and the spiritual environment." (Wolete 196). It is worthy to reexamine the Western notions while showing clearly how Alembong and Kishani debunk them and present the reality of African eco-spirituality as their epistemology.

Eurocentric critics and scholars like Joseph Conrad and Bishop Ajayi Crowther perceive Africa and its belief systems, including its eco-cultural spirituality, different from its reality. This section debunks how they misunderstood African spirituality which connects with nature and culture. African spirituality acknowledges that beliefs and practices touch on and inform every facet of human life and therefore African religions cannot be separated from the everyday or mundane. More accurately, the spirit world in Africa is directly connected to the physical world. This explains why Africans connect with the spirit world by linking or aligning with the earth. Many African religious scholars have argued that Africans cannot be defined without taking their spirituality into consideration. John Mtuwafhthu Mafunisa says, “African traditional religion is a way of life and a search for well-being within the community in the here and now of everyday experience. It encompasses beliefs concerning a supreme being, ancestors and the mediation of diviners and/or rainmakers” (120). This is explained intricately and forcefully by Ng’weshemi when he argues that, “For Africans all life is religion.

Religion infiltrates through every dimension of people's lives and experience to the extent that separation between the sacred and the secular, the visible and the invisible, or the spiritual from the material, is impossible" (140). One can confidently say that Africans are so religiously and spiritually inclined that they turn to treat their ecosphere with a spiritual backing which helps to sustain nature. It is therefore their culture.

There is the belief among some, if not all, tribes in Africa that when we offer sacrifices and atonement to the spirits, for example, our earth will do well and it will blossom. This belief underlies the sacred beliefs of the people. It is profound in the cultures of the two authors under study, that is, Nso and Nweh. Kishani demonstrates this in the poem, "Konglanjo" which is in the collection, *Konglanjo!* From the wordings of the persona we are able to deduce that, as they offer sacrifices and atonement to Ngàà-Mbóm, they expect him to bless the land in return. This transcends to being in harmony with the spirit realm. One of the ways to preserve and conserve nature is by aligning with the spirit world so as to prevent any natural disasters which may lead to damage. The persona in the poem sacrifices and atones as follows:

> Nay! Ngàà-Mbom!
> Once more take and pour fortune on our lands!
> Let him that goes, go with the peaceful steps of fortune!
> Let him that comes,
> come with the tidings of a good harvesting season!
> Let these trickles sprinkle fortune on our lands and times! (*konglanj*o!, 25)

Ngàà-Mbom here is the Creator among the Nso people. This gives us a sense of the author's origin thereby supporting the Afrocentricity tenet which says that we can know the author's place of origin by understanding his/her etymological use of words. He (Ngàà-Mbom) is the creator of the created. Every creature depends on Him for survival. The people rely on Him for their daily needs. This is the reason why they have to offer sacrifices to Him while making their atonement. Lines two as quoted above says "Once

more take and pour fortune on our lands!" This immediately suggests the habit of mutual understanding among Africans. They give and take and this makes life simple. This keeps the complications of individualism far from the people. As they are giving to the Creator they also expect blessings from Him. This may depart from the Western biblical notion of Luke 6:35-36 which says “But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked." This does not immediately suggest that Africans only give while expecting, but it suggests more that they have giving as a culture. The culture of giving has led to the emergence of concepts like Ujamaa socialism. This does not only end at the physical paradigm, but it goes beyond. It touches the world of spirits which consists in the Supreme Being, gods/goddesses, ancestors and divinities.

However, the concepts of God, spirits, ancestors and divinities in African traditional religious ontology have been so misunderstood by many Western scholars to the point of seeing Africans as people who do not know the Supreme Being nor worship Him. Moreover, the Eurocentric classification of Africans has been nothing apart from viewing all African beliefs as paganism. This does not exclude their beliefs in their relationships with nature. According to Emeka C. Ekeke and Chike A. Ekeopara,

> Various factors led to this controversy and misunderstanding, such as prejudice by Western scholars who measured African traditional religious concept with Christianity. Other factors include lack of in-depth study of African religion leading to hasty conclusion. Most of those who came to study the religions of Africa were armchair scholars who depended on data from missionaries who themselves concentrated in one community or tribe. They used the scanty information derived from one or two localities in Africa to draw conclusion about the ontology of God, divinities and spirits in Africa. (209)

These false conclusions by Europeans put forth the description of African spirit world as evil. It incarcerated African eco-cultural spaces and identities. It should be noted that

Western perceptions of traditional religions initially depended upon a Christian framework for understanding variations in religious beliefs and practices, which often resulted in the characterization of non-Christian religions as somehow unfit to be called religions or to be the work of the devil. In such light, no serious attention was given to African traditional religions which are earth-centered and bent to preserve the earth. According to them (Eurocentric critics), Africans worship many gods, do not believe in a supreme God, worship dead spirits and are pagans in nature. They did this without understanding that our ways are different from their ways. Kishani makes it clear in the poem "Our Way" (in the collection, *Konglanjo!*) that our ways are completely different from Western ways, per se. The persona in the poem says,

> Not even the Grecian Mars can forge
> Your gongs
> Nor can the "lunar artisan" carve
> Your old doors
> Nor the Beatles belittling
> Or Händel handling sing
> Your songs
> Sound
> Your drums
> And dance
> Your dance. (40)

In the lines above, the words "songs", "drums" and "dance" are typically used as metaphorical symbols for the things that Africans do. These things are tied to their cultures, thus, working in line with the Afrocentric tenet that, Afrocentricity is committed in finding the subject place of Africans in everything. In order to understand these things, one needs to belong to the cultures or at least, do an in-depth study of the cultures. Unfortunately, the Westerners did not really do this and this explains why they made false claims about Africa spirituality. Kishani makes this clearer when the persona in the poem further says that,

Mongo may meet the Thames
And both shake hands
And wed in the encircling
Depths of the seas; But
Mongo rains fall not on the Thames

Ours is our Culture
Let's soothe Her Wounds
And betroth Her indoors. (41)

Mongo represents river Mungo which is in Cameroon, Africa while Thames represents river Thames in London, England, West. To say that "Mongo may meet the Thames/ And both shake hands/ And wed in the encircling/ Depths of the seas; But/ Mongo rains fall not on the Thames" is a poetic way of saying that the Western and African cultures can meet and mix, but African ways will never become purely Western. The ways of the African remain African no matter the negative assumptions of the West. The persona tells us that "Ours is our Culture" which means that the African ways emanate from African cultures. Despite this, the West still considers Africans as people who do not know God, and people who worship the "devil". Originally, they equally viewed African Traditional Religions as magic. John Mbiti argues that, "Magic belongs to the religious mentality of the African people. But religion is not magic, and magic cannot explain religion. Religion is greater than magic, and only an ignorant outsider could imagine that African religions are nothing more than magic" (10).

Contrary to Western perceptions of African Traditional Religions, Africans believe in a Supreme God, gods/goddesses, ancestors, herbalists/diviners and the natural environment. Alembong ridicules these Western perceptions in the collection, *The Passing Wind*, particularly in the poem, "Exchanging Planes in Mid-Air" when the persona says:

My mother
Who they say

Is my small sister
Is now the white god's child-
The white god who lives
In a country in the sky.
And she says
I am the child of the black god.
The black god
Who lives in rocks
And in streams
And in baobab trees.
She says
Her god is the true god.
That my god,
The god of my fathers
And
my fathers' fathers,
Is a thing of the imagination. (36)

The excerpt above shows an African woman who has been lulled into Western religious beliefs at the detriment of her African beliefs. She now conforms to the Western system more than the African. She has been brainwashed into believing that her African religion is evil. In the poem, the persona uses contrast to sharply position our minds on the existence of two foundational religious groups which are profoundly African and Western. In their religious precepts, the West does not rely on the environment. On the contrary Africans relate with nature based on their culture and spirituality. Their gods are fashioned from nature and they pay great respect to nature because it harbours the essence of their beings. This does not repeal their acknowledgement of the existence of a Supreme Being and other deities. Their spirituality has a certain order from God to nature/ environment. The Supreme God is the highest in the order of African classification of spirits and any other spirit bows to Him and takes orders from Him. According to Md Didarul Islam and Shafiul Islam,

> God is the Supreme entity to the adherents of the traditional religions of Africa and is considered to be the origin of everything in this universe. In Africa, God is viewed in both immanent and transcendent dimensions. This very idea of Oneness of the Supreme Being is core to the followers and this belief creates no place for the atheists in their traditional concept of God. There is no sacred text

> in written form, but the root of this traditional idea of God is mainly taken from proverbs, short statements, stories, religious rituals, prayers, songs, myths, etc. The knowledge of God is a gift given at the time of birth to a newborn baby. According to an Ashanti proverb, 'No one shows a child the Supreme Being'. Knowing about God is believed to be an instinctive knowledge to the religious adherents. (1)

Besides, different African societies attribute different names to God based on their respective languages. The Bangwa of Cameroon (where one poet for this study, Alembong, comes from) call Him "Ndem". Here, they do not move to Him directly for their prayers. In addition, there are no ancestral places to worship Him. They channel their prayers through ancestors and "melem" (gods) who in turn intercede for them. The Supreme God or Supreme Being in the Nso Community as depicted in *Konglanjo!* is called Ngàà-Mbom. The Swahili-speaking peoples of East and Central Africa use "Mungu" as the name of the Supreme Being. The most used name of the Supreme Being among Akans in general is "Onyame". In the Yoruba community He is called "Olorun", also called "Olodumare". Humans do not worship Olorun directly; there are no sacred areas of worship or ordained person. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, He is called "Chukwu" etc.

In the order of spirituality in Africa, the Supreme God is followed by gods/goddesses. Mazisi Kunene offers a great description of gods when he argues that:

> The gods are not worshipped in Africa but revered. They are participants in man's life as allies. They themselves may sometimes enlist the services of special men and women to convey their will. Man equally has the right to appeal to them on issues affecting his welfare. It is forbidden, however, to appeal the destruction of a personal enemy unless it can be demonstrated that the opponent has violated a fundamental ethic. The gods are forces that link man with the unknowable Supreme Creator. This does not mean that man must approach the Creator through them but rather that they are delegated by the Creator with specific creative and divine responsibilities. The gods utilize this potential on behalf of man. Man can appeal to them for their gifts but their power is limited, for man already has a direct relationship with the Creator through the agency of his ancestors. (192-193)

Hence, Western perception that Africans worship gods is false. They only revere them. Thus, the magical and evil attributes perpetuated by the Westerners on the African belief systems are false. Africans only use nature to revere God and gods/goddesses. Therefore, we must acknowledge that there is no way we can detach Africans from spirituality without detaching them from nature. Mbiti succinctly captures this when hs says, “It emerges clearly that for African peoples, this is a religious universe. Nature in the broadest sense of the word is not an empty impersonal object or phenomenon: it is filled with religious significance” (56).

Furthermore, Africans believe in the existence of their ancestors. Asante and Ama Mazama argue that, “the ideas of reciprocity, circularity, and continuity of the human community are essential elements in the discourse on African religion. At the core of this continuity is the belief that ancestors remain active in the community of the living” (xxii). Both Alembong and Kishani observe and understand the importance of the ancestors in their poetry and societies. The four collections of poetry under study all touch on the place and importance of ancestors. For example, in the collection *The Passing Wind,* the poem "Exchanging Planes in Mid-Air" mentions that the mother whom they say is the persona's "small aunt" calls him pagan as if she didn't eat the palm-oil at the ritual when his manhood was cut off:

> To let blood wet the earth
> The blood
> That quenched the thirst of our ancestors. (Alembong 34)

These lines show the significance of the link between the physical and the spiritual. It also shows the link between nature and spirituality. The earth represents nature while ancestors represent the spirit world. The ritual of circumcision which involves spilling of blood stands for culture. The culture of the people warrants them to sustain the link between nature and spirituality by performing the rites that harmonise nature and

spirituality. This involves ancestors. Therefore the role of ancestors cannot be underestimated.

Still concerning ancestors, in the collection *A Basket of Kola Nuts*, the poem "Relics and Reins" shows the chaotic and corrupt society where everyone is cheating to survive and also allowing others to do same. Despite these, the persona says of ancestors that,

> Yet, the ancestors pour their graces
> On those recalling to recycle ruins of songs
> We lost in idioms that sprout the splendour of prosperity! (Kishani 55)

Here, we see the role of ancestors. They reward those who do good. Africans believe that the ancestors are beneath the earth and so, the earth must be honored. This shows that there is a kinship between the earth which harbours humans and ancestors who belong to the spirit world. Here, the earth serves as a thin layer which does not only separate the living from the dead, but also connects and reunites them. The ancestors to Africans are alive-- they are the living dead. P.J. Nel opines that:

> Ancestors are generally not perceived to be ghost or spirits, but living dead, and they are portrayed as departed family member(s) and thus identifiable family members. It is, however, also true that only specific members of the living dead, and not all deceased, occupy the position of ancestors ... Ancestor belief is, however, also integrated in what would generally be termed cultural practices, such as birth, name giving, marriage, etc. (37)

Africans have perfect connections with the Supreme God through their ancestors. Most often, they cannot contact God directly except through the connection of ancestors. This is because God is a spirit and communicates only or mainly with spirits. In this case, African ancestors are their intermediaries.

Western worldviews have reduced African Traditional Religions to ancestral worships. This is a great misconception. African Religion is not ancestral worship; Africans only

remember ancestors and then believe that the ancestors can help as intermediaries between human beings and the Supreme God since there is a thin layer (nature/earth) separating them from God/ ancestors. A way to connect with these ancestors is a direct connection with nature/ environment.

The belief in the existence of ancestors results from the belief of the continuation of life after death. This is found in all African societies even though, according to Mbiti, there is neither hell fire to be feared nor paradise to be hoped for after death among true Africans.

Herbalists/ diviners also form part in the order of African spirituality. They are traditional healers who are capable of connecting with the spirit world for the betterment of humans. They use nature as a therapeutic measure for humans. Unfortunately, Eurocentric view has linked their activities to fetishism and barbarism which is completely wrong. Some of them simply use herbs for treatment while others treat spiritual issues. They work on the environment which is the final part of African spirituality. Animists believe that everything in the environment is inhabited by spirits.

Nevertheless, it is worthy to note that Gyekye Kwame opines that, some objective Western travelers have written that Africans before the coming of Westerners had an idea of the true God, and ascribed to Him the attributes of Almighty and Omnipresent; they believe He created the universe, and therefore vastly prefer Him before their idol-gods. Kwame adds that they do not pray to Him or offer sacrifices to Him. He also adds that it is this true God that Africans respond to in their daily engagements, upon whom they depend for their moral law through the divinities, spirits and ancestors. Africans love Him and what He created. Among these created things are: the universe, nature

and/or environment so that humans can connect to Him through it. Therefore, spirituality and nature are indissociable.

In traditional African societies, the Supreme Being may not be directly involved in the affairs of humans. This is why Idowu calls the Yoruba religion (same as Bangwa and Nso religions) “diffused monotheism”. They had a monotheistic religion originally, but as the religion lost its pristiness over time, many people turned to rely on divinities. Thus, the Supreme Being is not exclusively worshipped by traditional Africans. They instead use divinities and ancestors as intermediaries to link with the Supreme Being through nature. The hierarchy of beings is therefore highly respected in Africa so that eco-balance can be maintained and sustained.

Below is a summary of the hierarchy of beings in African and Western spirituality.

A// Levels of Spirituality in Western Religions (eg. Catholicism)

Supreme God
Angels
Saints
Priests
Environment

B// Levels of Spirituality in African Traditional Religions

Supreme God
gods/goddesses
Ancestors
Herbalists/Diviners
Environment

The representations above show that the order of beings in Western religions starts from Supreme, to Angels, to Saints, to Priests, and to the Environment. That of African spirituality begins with the Supreme Being on top, followed by gods/goddesses, ancestors, herbalists and the environment. Nol Alembong argues that,

> despite being separated by numerous geographical barriers, many cultures have developed creation myths with the same basic elements. Our adherence, therefore, to a particular religion should not make us blind to those elements that unite us as translated by the commonalities between our creation myths. True, there are some significant differences between all of them that reinforce the individuality and uniqueness of each culture. These differences should not create a disposition of mind that makes us see the other as different from us, especially as we are all from one source, the mouth of the Creator, whether Divine breath created us or God vomited us up as believed by the Boshongo of Central Africa. The recognition and acceptance of difference and our ability to cope with it should enhance understanding, help build bridges and minimise the possibility of conflict. In this connection, inter-religious dialogue is not only necessary but it should constitute the basis of human understanding. (38)

What Alembong means is that each culture is unique in its own ways. This transcends to cultural diversity and difference. This difference is not supposed to be regarded as a defect, but as strength. Through it, we should connect cultures. As we have seen above, each culture has its own religious hierarchies. The hierarchies rely on the foundational religious beliefs of the people. There are essentially, four foundational religious beliefs in African Traditional Religion: the belief in mystical power, the belief in spirit beings, the belief in divinities/gods and the belief in Supreme Being. All these foundations relate with humans through nature. This explains why Africans value nature as much as their spirituality. Thus, the epistemological foundation of spirituality in Africa stems from its ecology. But, how Alembong and Kishani represent this in their poetry will be addressed in this chapter.

The Epistemology of Ecology in the Poetry of Alembong and Kishani

Alembong and Kishani have significant insights as far as ecology is concerned. This forms the basis of the epistemological foundation of their poetry. By epistemology here, we are referring to a branch of philosophy which deals with the study of knowledge. Our focal point here is on the knowledge of ecology in the poetry of the poets whose poems are under study. The principal reason for looking at ecology before spirituality is

to open up discourses that encompass a larger sphere of eco-cultural spirituality so that we can gradually and successfully create our way into the crux of the matter without facing enormous barriers. This is to say that we want to reason from a general perspective before narrowing our insights into a particular perspective. Looking at the epistemology of ecology in the poetry of Nol Alembong and Bongasu Tanla-Kishani, we are convinced that they have divergent and convergent perspectives which warrant us to group the epistemology of their works into some minor themes. This will facilitate and ensure a maximum apprehension of the manner in which these two poets convey their core ideas in the ecological sphere.

We are going to start by looking at their views on the forest. The forest cuts across the works of the two poets under study. They address the forest from their respective cultural backgrounds which form the centrality of the essence of nature. We cannot tackle ecological issues addressed by Alembong and Kishani without knowing their cultural backgrounds coupled with the fact that it is from knowing their cultural backgrounds that we can fully understand their ecological concerns. Labang argues that poets who write about the environment and nature fundamentally "echo the aesthetics of the locality where the poet dwells or has dwelled"(18). This gives us the latitude to indicate here that Alembong, it should be noted, is from Nweh while Kishani is from Nso. Nweh, as well as Nso, are grassfield inclined. They both have great respect for the forest because it is believed to be a harbour for spiritual essences and beings.

It is important to indicate here that, as Ranyay Singh puts it, "A potential spiritual treasure possessed by people plays a significant role in shaping the natural resources." (10). Ngiewih argues that "the forest is a natural environment which signifies so many things, depending on the discourse or ideology of the observer. The malicious nature of

humans gravitates to the forest and the forest becomes misconstrued and misrepresented as an uncanny space (39). He further opines that,

> Human perceptions and conceptions of the forest are so complex, unfixed and unreservedly relative so much so that it is difficult to have a unified discourse on it. Images and representations of the forest have been ingrained in diverse cultural, ethnic, philosophical and ideological locations and bear boundless significations and codifications in human memory (40).

In the above quote, it is evident that Ngiewih believes that different cultures have different approaches to the forest. In this sense, it basically difficult to have a unified stand on the treatment of the forest. This is because what one culture perceives as the right treatment of the forest, another culture may see it as a wrong approach to the forest.

To begin with, Alembong has a particular alignment with the forest. He sees it as a harbour of spiritual beings. Destroying it means destroying spirituality. Capitalist greed leads to mass destruction of the forest, thereby leading to a decline in African spirituality. The poems "The Beginning", "Forest" and the title poem "Forest Echoes" all call our attention to the importance of the forest. The forest harbours spirits, provides foods, and also provides medication, amongst others. Despite all these, we do not give the forest the respect that it deserves. We tend to destroy it without considering the implications of such destruction. Alembong metaphorically presents this situation in the first poem in the collection, *Forest Echoes*, titled "The Beginning". The poem reads as follows.

> In the beginning was the forest,
> The forest was with the earth,
> The forest was the earth.
> The forest was one.
> It had one head.
> It had one mouth.
> It had one eye.
> It had one ear.
> But the fire came,

The fire came ... (Alembong 1)

The shape of this poem on paper speaks volumes of its meaning. It is in the form of a triangle which is upside-down. It indicates reasoning from general to particular. In more explicit words, the length of sentences keeps reducing as we read the poem from up, coming down. This symbolizes the state and evolution of the forest. The longer lines at the beginning show how the forest was whole at the beginning. As time went, it began reducing based on human activities. Therefore, the constant reduction in the words of the poem is in direct relation to the harm on the forest which leads to decline in African spirituality.

In this poem, the persona makes extensive use of metaphors and symbols to show a nature/forest and human relationship which is gradually becoming so hostile. Using the biblical model of John 1:1 which says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ...” the persona makes a distinction of how the forest used to be, and how it is now. This condones with the Afrocentric tenet that, it makes use of powerful imperatives from historical sources to revive the collective text of the African people. The forest used to be part of the earth, it used to be the earth itself, it used to be one and apparently no one thought it was divisible. It was in unison with every other facet of nature and everything was going well. Unfortunately, "the fire came". The fire here is coded. It is a metaphorical symbol for humans. It signifies the reckless attitudes of humans towards nature which came and the remaining story is not to be told. The poem ends in suspense, leaving us to figure out what happened when the fire came. No one needs to be taught before they understand the unquestionable hazards which fire causes, although fire may still signify purification. Therefore, using fire as a metaphorical symbol for humans in this poem was a well calculated and creative innovation to compare and condemn human inhumanity to nature. It is, however,

incomprehensible that humans inflict all the adversities on nature without fully mastering it. What we know about it is perhaps the opposite of what it really is.

Alembong affirms that human conception of the forest is different from its reality. In the poem "Forest" in *Forest Echoes*, the persona uses a series of proverbs to present this appearance versus reality dichotomies of the forest. We do not seem to know more about the forest/nature because we focus on exploiting and destroying it rather than making ourselves associates to it. The first three stanzas of the poem "Forest" read thus,

> A forest is dense
> To those who see it from without;
> When in, we see
> The position of each tree.
> A forest is green
> To those who see it from without;
> When in, we see
> The colour of each tree.
> A forest is a chorus
> To those who listen from without;
> When in, we hear
> Each tree singing its own song. (Alembong 2)

In this poem, the persona uses repetition as he constantly says "To those who see it from without". This repetition helps build trust in the idea of differentiating idea from reality. This is because the persona uses repetition as a way of ascertaining that what people see from without is not actually what is within. The rhyme scheme of the excerpt is ABCC in the first stanza. This is almost the same in the second stanza to show the firm position of the persona in the view that appearance is different from reality. When we are aware of this, we are left with two imperatives: the imperative of knowing and preserving nature, and the imperative of not-knowing and abusing nature. It is evident that you cannot protect what you do not know. Since humans do not fully understand nature, they fail to protect it. Simply put, they destroy it. Destroying the forest goes beyond physical destruction. It means destroying the people's spirituality. When the people's

spirituality is destroyed, it means their culture is tempered with. Thus, what appears to be a simple destruction of the forest turns out to be a destruction of the totality of a people's collective existence. It is destruction of the people's eco-cultural spirituality.

In short, at the literal level, the three opening poems of the collection, *Forest Echoes*, center on the forest. Opening a collection of poetry with poems that dwell mostly on forest is to show the significance of the forest to the culture from which the poems are written. The forest has great value for the Bangwa people. It does not only harbour spirits, but it serves as a place where the people's livelihood depends. But, what happens when this forest is extinct by the reckless activities of humans? It becomes a doom for the people concerned. It is worthy to note that, when we narrow the forest to trees, the result we get is that trees particularly have a direct impact on human spirituality. The link is that of reconnection with the nonhuman world. Some trees are marked out as outstanding entity for deities and other spiritual essences. These trees serve as houses for spirits.

Kishani's poetry collection, *Konglanjo!* begins with the poem "Konglanjo" which opens with "Calling" and it has ideas related to the forest. The first stanza reads thus,

> There,
> Where fields pasture our cattle,
> grow our corn,
> sáár-millet,
> Kikeng-plant where forests
> that nest our birds and shrines
> from sunburns and sunstrokes;
> Where drums blend breathings
> Of festal Mànjòng gongs
> Inviting, summoning
> For the Fon's Solemn Call
> To a sacrificial grove with palm-wine,
> camwood, basket of black fowls, a tethered goat,
> corn-loaves and bags of unmasked capsules of Kola nut,
> We stitch'd and webb'd
> All the edges of smiles, to season

The smouldering log fires of incense
Invoking mighty Ngàà-Mbóm. (Kishani 11)

The poem contains cultural symbols which help to project the African culture, aligning with Afrocentrism. These symbols include: palm-wine, camwood, basket of black fowls, a tethered goat, corn-loaves and bags of unmasked capsules of Kola nut. One pertinent thing about these symbols is that they are all fashioned from nature and then used to appease nature. This depicts the link among natural elements and the smooth flow of nature when these elements work in collaboration. Also, palm-wine, camwood, basket of black fowls, a tethered goat, corn-loaves and bags of unmasked capsules of Kola nut are all traditional symbols which project local colour. The mention of these words creates a mental picture of a ritual process which can help curb nature. As Kishani indicates in the Glossary of the poetry collection, Fon is a title, a name of the highest royal ruler and leader of the Nso. His mention in the excerpt above is meant to situate a representative in the ritual process. Usually, he leads people in sacrifice to the gods/God.

The forest here is qualified as a habitation for other natural elements such as birds. As the persona reveals in lines 5 and 6, the forest provides space for shrines. The shrines play a golden role in the lives of the people as we shall see in the proceeding analysis. Chandra Prakash Kala argues that, groves are fundamental in human history. He concludes his paper by arguing that the importance of sacred groves, sacred landscapes and sacred species should not be viewed merely in the economic and livelihood perspectives but these entities need to be respected as the historical evidence of human relationship with nature and its components. At present, many causes of biodiversity loss are discovered, which include increasing disconnection of urban population from nature. It is thus, a fact that we as humans are disconnecting from nature.

Another ecological area where the two poets under study dwell on is the shrine. The shrine is a dense symbol with metaphoric possibilities in the poetry of the two poets under study. At a certain point, like the forest, it serves as a harbour for the habitation of spiritual beings. In this sense, it is a holy ground where gods are revered. It is here that the connection between human beings and nature manifests in the physical, but transcends its tentacles into the spiritual realm. The shrine receives other elements of nature such as salts, oil, and groundnut etc. These are put together as offering to the deities. The importance of the shrine is emphasized by Kishani in his collection, *Konglanjo!* In the opening pages of the collection, the persona mentions that,

> Behold the prayerful spears of rain we keep showering
> On these nubile shrines, the anvil of your name -
> Shrines of sure choice, not of our making,
> To crop and awaken life
> For the strong, the sick, the dead
> And those being born into life and death. (14)

In the fifth line of this except, the persona makes use of words such as “the strong”, “the sick”, and “the dead” to create the image of the world at large with all sorts of humans who form a part of nature. Furthermore, the persona uses a hyperbole and a metaphor in the first-two lines as he says “Behold the prayerful spears of rain we keep showering/ On these nubile shrines”. Here, he is comparing the prayers with spears of rain. This shows how sharp their prayers are. The use of words such as “spears” create a mental image of a weapon. Thus, prayer here becomes a weapon used to create changes. Also, the shrine is ascribed feminine qualities when the persona says in the second, third and fourth lines that,

> On these nubile shrines, the anvil of your name -
> Shrines of sure choice, not of our making,
> To crop and awaken life (14)

This is to underscore its propensity to procreate and multiply humanity; it is the source of humanity. The shrine in Kishani's eco-spiritual standpoint is the hospital in the western sense of it; from the shrine comes life; those who have come with ailments are restored. Further still, the shrine is perceived as a place where supplications are made to Ngàà-Mbóm for blessings and healing.

The shrine invokes aspects of oral poetry in the works of the two poets. It is through the shrine that we come across incantations, for example. The language used for incantations is purely poetic. When one reads the poetry of Alembong and Kishani, one leaves with the impression that they were both influenced by their oral literature. This is because they both implement orality as a resounding aspect in their works. Their texts are a collective text of oral literature which tackles present day issues.

> Heralds all!
> We cling to the shrine
> of our védó'ó's father's father's ... father.
> For,
> On this stone lay the first victim
> From this stone ran the first trickle
> To this stone we return
> Around this stone we flirt with the gods. (*Konganjo!* 12 - 13)

Here, the persona makes use of alliteration and metaphor to invoke the idea of making atonement at the shrine. In the course of this atonement, the following incantation ensues,

> Ngàà-Mbóm! May we keep to the spoors of faith!
> May evil omens pass and go their solitary ways,
> And leave our children and lands in peace!
> If they come in the winds,
> Let them fly above the highest clouds!
> If they spring from our soils,
> Let them be washed away by rain and stream!
> If they fall from the heavens,
> Let thunder and lightning consume them!
> And should they suddenly appear

in our lands as if from nowhere,
May you enlighten our innermost spider-college
of medicine-pot boilers to determine
whether they were brought by man and, not by a god!
Ngàà-Mbóm!
Behold the prayerful spears of rain we keep showering
On these nubile shrines, the anvil of your name -
Shrines of sure choice, not of our making,
To crop and awaken life
For the strong, the sick, the dead
And those being born into life and death ... (12 - 14)

This stanza starts with a wish and the persona continues to gain confidence as he proceeds. His confidence makes him to stop using the phrase, "may we" and to instead use "let there be". The excerpt contains four, out of five, layers of spirituality in Africa. The layers mentioned here are lands which stand for environment, medicine-pot boilers which stands for diviners, gods, and finally Ngàà-Mbóm that stands for the Supreme Being. These layers work in unison to ensure smooth functioning of the universe. Their presence in the incantation makes readers to align it to a specific cultural environment which is typically African.

We notice from this incantation that the speaker constantly invokes elements of nature such as soils, streams, and heavens which work in unison to ensure that there is a link between African spirituality and nature. As if that is not enough, the persona delves into the world of celestial bodies by mentioning the sky and clouds. This is still part of nature. Celestial bodies are things floating around in space outside of the earth. They include things like the sun, the moon, planets, and stars. Because Western religions are sky-oriented, they turn to condemn African Traditional Religion because it is earth-oriented. As seen in the Old Testament, when sacrifices were burnt, the smoke was expected to move to the sky so that it could be confirmed that God had accepted the sacrifices. In Africa however, sacrifices are offered to the earth and the sacrifices are expected to be received by ancestors who are in the earth. This means that African

notions of spirituality focus on the environment or earth in particular while Western notions focus on celestial bodies.

Africans rely on celestial bodies for different purposes. To begin with, the sun serves a great purpose in the African belief systems. They use it for time and other related purposes. In Africa it is very evident for an elder to say the time based on the position of the sun. Eurocentric view fails to acknowledge this and instead view these practices as rudimentary and uncivilized. This is due to false knowledge that they have about Africa and Africans.

The moon is another celestial body which serves a great purpose in Africa, yet, Eurocentric worldview does not recognize it. In most cases, the moon detects seasons for certain activities in Africa. In a cross-reference, Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* presents Ezeulu as the chief priest of Ulu who is the timekeeper and he uses the new moon to track time. The new moon indicates the time for the New Yam festival. However, Ezeulu cannot eat the yam and pronounce different planting season because he has not completed the twelve yams that he is supposed to eat all together.

The sky too serves an important purpose in African belief systems and spirituality. Many myths have been formulated to talk about the sky. Some hold that the sky was once on earth and it was pushed up by a woman pounding cocoyam. Another one holds that the sky was designed to show the fate of greedy animals like the tortoise in tales. These tales form an indisputably rich African cultural heritage which cannot be underestimated in any way. These myths are important in African cosmological systems because they reinforce African ecospirituality. African myths connect with her spirituality in that the myths teach about the spirituality and the spirituality helps to sustain the myths. It is therefore a dual core sensibility.

Whatever be the center of debate, the fact remains that the ecological knowledge of Africa connects with its spirituality. This knowledge is culturally based and culture cannot exist out of the environment. Holmes Rolston, III argues that,

> we must be cautious. Nature is the milieu of culture. Using a metaphor, nature is the womb of culture, but a womb that humans never entirely leave. Nature can do much without culture—the several billion years of evolutionary history are proof of that. Culture, appearing late in natural history, can do nothing without nature as its ground. In this sense, culture will always have to be constructed out of, superposed on nature. (154)

Our ability to acknowledge the importance of nature in cultural matters is pertinent. To argue that the ecological knowledge of Africa connects with its spirituality is to link nature and culture. "From the foregoing study we conclude that culture, spiritual values and livelihoods are inextricably linked with natural resource use and sustainability. (Singh 23). But we must understand that nature can operate without culture, but culture cannot exist without nature.

The Epistemology of Spirituality in the Poetry of Alembong and Kishani

Spirituality occupies a core position in the poetry of Alembong and Kishani. It is the center of values that the two poets convey. This means that the Essence of Being forms a core place in their poetry. It doesn't take a long time or reading to understand that African spirituality cuts across the works of the two poets. But since spirituality is unique, we must be careful not to confuse it with religions which are diverse. In African societies, spirits are essential and they are harboured in the earth. They can be in trees like baobab, wooden objects like ‘Afo-A-Kom’ among the Kom people, caves like ‘Mbegwi’ among the Bangwa people, and stones like ‘Totankeng’ still among the Bangwa people. The Supreme God, ancestors, divinities, witches and wizards, as seen above, all function in the spirit world. According to animists, spirits inhabit some or all

classes of natural objects or phenomena. In essence, the supernatural coexists with the natural. The Spirit World witnesses both peaceful and conflict moments. The spirit world is mostly in conflict when the physical world 'misbehaves.'

A thorough reading of the poetry of Alembong and Kishani shows a lot of interest in the spiritual realm of the African people. The two poets view the spirit world as an integral part of human existence wherein, without it, it is basically difficult to understand human nature. Spirits have the probability of participating in human affairs. Humans can only participate in affairs in the realm of the spirits through songs, incantations, prayers and other forms of oral poetry. Human participation, most notably, makes humans come in contact with nature. Therefore, nature is the gateway to spirituality. This means that the epistemology of spirituality cannot be fully explored without connecting it to nature. This is the more reason why in Africa, spirits inhabit some natural elements such as trees, caves and rivers.

Just like there is conflict in the physical world, there is also conflict in the spiritual world. When conflict or misunderstanding occurs between the physical and non-physical worlds, humans need to appease the gods or spirits. Africans believe that in order to enjoy a good relationship with ancestors, one needs to appease them, especially when nature is not friendly. The results of this act of appeasement abound. Most often, it leads to good health, success and prosperity. Misfortune awaits those who fail to appease the ancestors. Such people could suffer from poor harvest, illness, theft, unemployment, etc. Appeasements can be done by offering sacrifices. This is why in the collection *Konglanjo!* Ngàà-Mbóm is appeased in the poem "Konglanjo". They appease him with items like goats, Kola nuts, and salt.

> For the Fon's Solemn Call
> To a sacrificial grove with palm-wine,

> camwood, basket of black fowls, a tethered goat,
> corn-loaves and bags of unmasked capsules of Kola nut,
> We stitch'd and webb'd
> All the edges of smiles, to season
> The smouldering log fires of incense
> Invoking mighty Ngàà-Mbóm. (Kishani 11)

The Fon here is the cultural and spiritual custodian of the people's cultural heritage. He is a metaphor and a guarantor of people's spiritual welfare, and he works in collaboration with Chiefs. Where necessary, he leads people in sacrifices. As seen in the opening lines of the quote, his call to a sacrificial grove is accompanied by sacrificial properties. It is with items of cultural symbolism such as palm-wine, camwood, basket of black fowls, a tethered goat, corn-loaves and bags of unmasked capsules of Kola nut. Palm-wine, for example, is of great cultural importance. Most often, it is used as a tool to unite people together. This explains why in most African cultures, palm-wine is used at marriages to seal and enforce mutual connections between the bride and groom. Kola nut on it's part is significant in building relationships and ensuring livelihood. Using palm-wine, camwood, basket of black fowls, a tethered goat, corn-loaves and bags of unmasked capsules of Kola nut to appease the Supreme Being is a sign of mutual understanding and respect. Ngàà-Mbóm has been blessing the lands and people, and they need to pay Him homage.

Sometimes people face misfortune, but do not understand exactly what is going on. In this case, nature may not be working in their favour. Most people at this juncture meet traditional doctors who communicate with the spirits and interpret for humans. Traditional doctors sometimes advise people facing misfortunes like accidents to do appeasements so as to free themselves. Nature is calmed by making appeasements. Where rivers overflow, appeasement is used to restore the river to its course. When

earthquakes occur, appeasement is used to calm the gods. In line with this nature acts like a fiber linking humans to spirituality.

Human quest for spirituality is indissociable from the desire to preserve nature. This is because, in the African context, man's spirituality is believed to underscore nature. The earth is believed to serve as a gateway to spirituality given that spirits inhabit the earth. This explains why Africans offer sacrifices to the earth. They believe that their gods and ancestors are beneath the earth. This explains the interconnectivity of things in Africa. Using women's songs in rural areas in Cameroon, Victoria Lakpu Beri stresses on the importance of natural features like hills, rivers, trees as there are "places of worship for the Africans as they see the 'Supreme Being' in them" ((170). This critic supports the view that Africans are so close to nature. In the words of Beri,

> African oral literature possesses a huge repertoire of themes which explore the dynamics of nature and its relationship with humans. The African's closeness with nature can be described using Karen Blixen words that, "Africans, we are told, have no sense or taste for contrasts, the umbilical cord of nature has, with them, not been quite cut through ... (Beri 170)

This means that humans are connected to the spirit world through nature. It becomes difficult to cut the link between humans and nature without destroying spirituality. This is because everything is linked to the other for an effective flow of the chain. A disruption of any aspect will cause the entire system to malfunction. This is like a communication system where there is a sender, a message, a channel of distribution, a receiver of information and a feedback. The sender sends a message to the receiver through a channel. When the receiver receives the message, he/she sends a feedback in order to complete the process. If any of the parts of this system fails to perform their task, or cease to exist, the system will not function properly. This is the case with nature, humans and spirituality. Humans exist as part of nature. There exist a natural world and

a spiritual level. Humans communicate with the spirit world through nature. If nature fails to communicate, the entire system will not work. If humans cease to exist, there will be a breakdown in the entire chain. If spirits are dissatisfied with human actions or thoughts or words, they will reveal it through nature; they will cause nature not to align with humans. When nature does not align with humans, humans seek possibilities of improving their relationships by seeking to understand the problem and doing atonement if need be. The following lines (in *Konglanjo!*) show a sentimental incantation made to the gods to prove loyalty to nature so as to commune with the spirit world:

> Heralds all!
> We cling to the shrine
> of our védó'ó's father's father's ... father.
> For,
> On this stone lay the first victim
> From this stone ran the first trickle
> To this stone we return
> Around this stone we flirt with the gods (Kishani 12 - 13)

The stone in the poem is nature. It is a simple stone with deep metaphysical possibilities; it is a gateway to spirituality; it is a fiber linking humans to spirituality. Until you are connected to the culture, you will never understand that this stone goes beyond the physical stone. This stone which has been given spiritual possibilities is stronger than the people who gave it the spiritual possibilities. It has been argued that Africans make their gods, but the gods become more powerful than them. In the same line, the stone which is classified as a gateway to spirituality here is more powerful than humans who made it so. Alembong also shows a similar idea in his poetry. In the poem "Exchanging Planes in Mid-Air" in *The Passing Wind*, the persona makes a comparison of the two cultures: his culture which is African and the white man's culture. This is in terms of God and gods. The persona says,

My mother
Who they say
Is my small sister
Is now the white god's child-
The white god who lives
In a country in the sky.
And she says
I am the child of the black god.
The black god
Who lives in rocks
And in streams
And in baobab trees.
She says
Her god is the true god.
That my god,
The god of my fathers
And my fathers' fathers,
Is a thing of the imagination. (Alembong 35)

These lines use contrast to further stress the fact that African Traditional Religions are earth-centered while Western religions are sky-oriented. This is evident when the persona says that the white God lives in the sky while the African gods live in natural elements. In addition to this, the lines throw more light on the conflict between tradition and modernism. The persona and his ways represent traditional values while his mother whom they say is his small sister represents modernism with her ways. The idea of inferiority versus superiority complexes is also seen when the two cultures are compared in terms of religion. All these are done with the use of contrast where one culture is sharply contrasted to the other. Asante claims that anything which is not Eurocentric is Afrocentric. Edward Said demonstrates these binaries in his concept of Orientalism too. All these are postcolonial discourses. The concepts of orientalism and Occidentalism are pitted against each other in order to bring out the cultural differences that exist between Africa, Asia and Europe and America.

Nature and Transcendentalism

This is about the divinity of nature. American transcendentalism which started in late 1820s and 1830s was a literary and philosophical movement. It largely focused on seeking individual truth and growing to become more and more self-reliant. Furthermore, as earlier mentioned, the movement can be described using three essential characteristics or principles: individualism, idealism, and most importantly directed to this thesis, the divinity of nature. In addition to these, however, it should be noted that they also took progressive stands on women's rights, abolition of slavery and slave trade, reform, and education. They also criticized government, organized religion, laws, social institutions, and creeping industrialization. Transcendentalists advocated the idea of a personal knowledge of God, believing that no intermediary was needed for spiritual insight. They embraced idealism, focusing on nature and opposing materialism. Leslie Perrin Wilson noted that, "above all, the Transcendentalists believed in the importance of a direct relationship with God and with nature" (4). This is to say that, just like the Romantics, transcendentalists were concerned about the material and immaterial. Ralph Waldo Emerson was one of the transcendentalists. Alireza Manzari postulates that,

> Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essays, "Nature" (1836), "Self- Reliance" and "Over soul" (both 1841), and Henry David Thoreau in his book, "Walden" (1854) expressed the basic ideas underlying transcendentalism which regarded nature not only as beautiful, but as a reflection of divinity, which is literally the face of God ... For them ―macrocosm" (the universe) and the ―microcosm" (the individual) were in direct connection with each other. They both also took hold of all animate and inanimate objects, and the divine as well. (1793)

Jerry Phillips remarks that, "Emerson‘s romantic philosophy is most clearly seen in his work, *Nature* (1836). In *Nature*, Emerson describes a world in which nearly everything in it is a symbol of the spirit. For Emerson, nature is the material world, everything that

exists outside the self. This world is one-half, a cover over a greater realm, the spirit or Soul"(52).

Transcendentalism in Africa has a similar outlook as seen on the Western worldview above, but there are fundamental specificities which make it uniquely African. First, the belief in individualism is questionable in the African context. Africans believe in a communal lifestyle. This means that their approach to the spirit world is not basically from an individual spectrum. This explains why they use songs including chorus to commune with the world beyond. The poem "The Gospel Singers" (in *The Passing Wind*) shows the use of such songs even though the poem in its entirety is sarcastic in both form and content. The poem begins thus,

> Transcribed alleluias
> Placed on the tongue
> of a dried throat cantor ...
> One, two, three, go
> And metallic voices
> picked up the celebrated jingle
> in mid air
> apostrophizing
> eulogizing
> deifying
> earth.
> The eye of the blind: ye!
> The feelers of the numb: ye!
> The mouth of the dumbfounded: ye!
> The easel of human lives: ye! (Alembong 16)

This stanza is about a group of singers. Their goal is to sing praises. Alembong is sarcastic in the presentation of these singers as they focus on singing while neglecting their responsibilities. This stanza of the poem has some lines which are made up of a single word. The effectiveness is to create the musical quality of the poem. Lines 12, 13, 14 and 15 are poetic lines with the same word beginning successive phrases or lines.

This word is "the". The litery technique here is a anaphora. This is used to create repetition which helps in building the musicality of the poem.

The principal point in this song is to demonstrate that everything in African transcendentalism is not individualistic. It is a communalistic experience. It is about the collective consciousness of the African people who do not operate on the basis of Western individualism. This collective interest has been a cultural identity of African people since time immemorial. It is in their oral literature. Critics such as Tala, Alembong, Mbunda Frida, Isidore Okpewho, etc. have shared this view too. They all believe in the communal repertoire of Africans, although some argue at a certain point that this communal lifestyle is fading away due to contact with Western ideologies which are highly individualistic in nature.

The idea of the divinity of nature is practically African inclined. Africans from the beginning of the world have always considered the divinity of nature. It has earlier been argued here that African Traditional Religions are earth-centered. When we read the following lines from the collection, *The Passing Wind*, we are convinced that African spirits reside in nature.

> I am the child of the black god.
> The black god
> Who lives in rocks
> And in streams
> And in baobab trees. (Alembong 35)

For the persona to affirm that his god lives in rocks, streams and trees is just a reaffirmation that nature is divine, divine in the sense that it inhabits divinities. Mbiti and Alembong have supported this argument fully. In order to understand African spirituality, you must understand its nature. Its nature is embedded in its philosophy. Its philosophy transcends its spirituality. Therefore, it is a whole process of

interconnectedness which must be understood holistically. The collective consciousness of the African people is embedded in their philosophy. Their philosophy shows a cross-section of relationships: relationship with God, relationship with ancestors, relationship with nature, relationship with other people, relationship with other cultures etc. The transcendental forces in the African context consist in the ability of Africans to maintain these relationships with nonhuman species, beings and essences.

It is important to indicate that spiritual values, as argued by Raymond and Kenter, and Kenter et al, can be characterised as transcendental values in that they are fundamental conceptions of the relationships of humans and nature. Sometimes people may not be aware that they hold these values until they are evoked by an apparent threat or until they are elicited by sensitive group work. People may also be reluctant to express them for fear of social embarrassment or shame in talking about religion in public or of ridicule for holding such views in an increasingly secularist society.

Given that human/nature relationship transcends beyond the physical realm, it becomes probable that nature in itself can be said to be metaphysical. In fact, **n**ature is metaphysical in nature. Everything which exists in the physical world has its spiritual layer. Nature is the fundamental location for African spirituality. Since they don't believe in paradise or hell after death, they consider the earth as the basis for their spirituality. In Africa we offer sacrifices to ancestors on earth. We believe that the ancestors are underneath the earth and that they will absorb the sacrifices underneath the earth. This means that what happens here on earth has its spiritual equivalence underneath the earth. In addition to that, Africans believe that all the components of the earth are inhabited by spirits.

Animists hold the view that there are spirits all over the earth, be it in the sea, trees, caves, river banks or any similar places. On earth, there are herbalists who constitute part of the chain of African spirituality. They link the common man with other components of the spirits like the ancestors and gods. In a sense, the earth inhabits the living, the death and the unborn. The metaphysical nature of the earth allows it to operate in two layers which are diverse, but also closely related because what happens in one layer happens in another, or at least has effects there. When one reads the poetry of Kishani, for example, one leaves with the impression that he explores natural elements which have metaphysical underpinnings. In the collection, *Konglanjo!* he points out natural elements which have a dual core sensibility. In this aspect, he makes extensive use of imagery, the flora and fauna elements to pinpoint these elements of nature which go beyond the physical, not because of animist postulations, but because it is culturally agreeable that African cosmology harbours dual core elements.

> We are pilgrims from a cradle
> In our ancestor's land
> With shoulders laden with palm-wine' calabashes
> palm-oil, palm-bags of groundnuts,
> palm-kernels and baskets of towering cocks
> That sing the morning or the evening hymns
> At each majestic stone - now
> Becoming a mushroom home
> With florid ornaments of blood. (Kishani 12)

This stanza is about the persona and his fellow countrymen who are on the ritual process of appeasement. With them are cultural symbols which constitute natural elements such as palm-wine' calabashes, palm-oil, palm-bags of groundnuts, palm-kernels and baskets of towering cocks. These elements are culturally significant in that, they are used to connect with the spirit world through sacrifices. In fact, these people are on a sacrificial mission with sacrificial properties which go a long way to placate the world beyond. Here, we note the extensive use of local colour to present the

metaphysical dimension of nature. The persona lists these things which will be used for ritual. Victor Turner defines ritual as a “prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings and power.” He quotes Monica Wilson who studied African rituals with her husband, Godfrey Wilson, and posited that:

> Rituals reveal values at their deepest level ... men express in ritual what move them most, and since the form of expression is conventionalized and obligatory, it is the values of the group that are revealed. I see in the study of rituals the key to an understanding of the essential constitution of human societies. (6)

It follows that rituals are symbolic. Moreover, they are deeply rooted in culture as they are prescribed by the people’s culture. This is the reason why we have indicated that the ritual in the stanza above is culturally based. The mentioning of cultural elements such as palm-wine' calabashes, palm-oil, palm-bags of groundnuts, palm-kernels and baskets of towering cocks in lines 3, 4, and 5 attest to this. Rituals may emanate from the spontaneous or pre-arranged acts or actions of an individual or a group of people. This is why there are personal and communal/group rites. The ritual in the excerpt above is a group ritual because it involves the persona and his fellow countrymen. We detect this from his usage of pronouns which denote plurality such as "we" in line one and "our" in line two. Some common rites in Africa include: worship rites, rites of passage, atonement and purification rites, oaths of allegiance, dedication rites, coming of age rites, coronation rites, marriage rites, funeral rites, and graduation rites.

In a nutshell, this chapter sets out to show that the root of knowledge in the texts under study is deep in ecological and spiritual ideas. In fact, we had the aim to look at the relationship between ecology and spirituality in the texts under study. This relationship was premeditated to either be symbiotic or dialectical. It is symbiotic when it is cooperative and mutual. However, when it is hostile, it is said to be dialectical. We have

been able to discuss African Ontology and Epistemology, The Epistemology of ecology and spirituality in the poetry of Alembong and Kishani, and Nature and Transcendentalism.

The chapter has argued that, there is a huge misconception of African eco-cultural spirituality by Western critics. African spirituality is misrepresented and misconstrued by Eurocentric critics because of their prejudices and because it inspires Africans to directly fight and challenge the powers of colonizers. The point is that African spirituality surpasses Eurocentric critics and scholars. Their negative attributes to African spirituality have diverted the attention of some Africans from their spirituality, thereby leading to a decline in African spirituality. Another major argument in the chapter is that, African spirituality is earth-centered and this makes Alembong and Kishani to reaffirm the interconnectedness among nature, humans and spirituality. Unfortunately, capitalist greed has led us to destroy nature massively and this is leading to a decline in our spirituality. The chapter also argues that, nature is a fiber that links humans to spirituality. This was highly supported by the English Romantics and American Transcendentalists. However, the world has deviated from the Romantic and Transcendental core values which favoured nature. This puts spirituality in danger. Even though the world has deviated from the Romantic and Transcendental core values which favoured nature, Alembong and Kishani reposition the ecological, cultural and spiritual links that have been distorted by world evolution and technological advancement.

In the next chapter we shall discuss the anthropocentric culture and nature". The focus here will be on how humans divert all their attentions towards themselves, thereby causing great harm on nature and spirituality.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ANTHROPOCENTRIC CULTURE AND NATURE

The aim of this chapter is to show how humans divert all their attentions towards themselves, thereby causing great harm on nature and spirituality. The human society has been described by scholars such as Herbert Spencer (coined in *Principles of Biology,* 1864) as that of survival of the fittest. The fittest here are the dominant species in the society. In this kind of society, human beings are self-centered as they focus on building themselves, even if the process involves the destruction of nonhuman species. To a greater extent, this is an existentialist condition. This self-centeredness is known as anthropocentrism. In her PhD thesis, Salliane Liengu Wolete observes that there are many definitions of anthropocentrism, but they all centre on human centeredness. She proceeds to quote Goralnik L. and M. P. Nelson who, in the Second Edition of the E*ncyclopedia of Applied Ethics*, denote that "Anthropocentricism literally means human-centered, but in its most relevant philosophical form, it is the ethical belief that humans alone possess intrinsic value...all other beings hold value only in their ability to serve humans or in their instrumental value" (146). In the same line of thought, Fomin Edward Efuet contends that, anthropocentricism refers to an act of Man's highhandedness and excessive authority and lack of concern over the non-human entities in the world.

Wolete links the emergence or origin of anthropocentrism to Jewish and Christian theologies as articulated in the Bible in Genesis 1: 27-30. She proceeds to argue that, "Great philosophers like Immanuel Kant, Aristotle and Descartes who had influenced tremendously the study of modern philosophy seem to have been influenced by this ancient biblical philosophy of humans being at the center of the control system of world

activities that determine the future of other world entities." (95) She mentions Borerel Sally who happens to have quoted Aristotle who says that, "plants are created for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of men...As nature therefore makes nothing either imperfect or in vain, it necessarily follows that she has made all things for men" (17). Aristotle continues as he states that, "Not dissimilarly, 'man' was accorded dominion or mastery over other creatures in Genesis" (18).

The anthropocentric state of humans has a direct impact on eco-cultural spirituality which is mostly negative. Also, it is in this process of human centered activities that humans turn to abuse the spiritual connection between them and nature. This chapter is discussed in two thematic clusters namely: Ethnocentrism and Egoistic Tendencies as Human Cultures, and The Impact of Human Actions on Nature.

Ethnocentrism and Egoistic Tendencies as Human Cultures

Human cultures are diverse and different. Nol Alembong reiterates that with such diversity and difference, we need to build bridges to link cultures together, rather than destroying such links. More often than not, some cultures fail to recognize the uniqueness of every culture. In a sense, they turn to feel superior to such cultures and seek possibilities to dominate. This habit has been inculcated in the human system and human beings have adapted it, and continue to implement it in their relationships with nonhuman species. Humans have the tendency of feeling superior to all other species. They place themselves above the sea, land, forest, animals etc. Some even back this with religious precepts given that the Bible places humans above all other species. In fact, they consider themselves above every flora and/or fauna. This pushes them to minimize all other species as they feel that they can dominate at any time. At a certain point, humans even set themselves apart from nature. This has prompted some

environmental philosophers, scholars and critics like Holmes Rolston, III to argue that, "humans are a part of and not apart from nature" (153). Others who support this argument are J. Baird Callicott, Val Plumwood and Freya Mathews.

J. Baird Callicott desires a new concept of nature that includes culture. He argues that nature as "Other" is over. The modern picture of nature is false and its historical tenure has been pernicious. A new dynamic and systemic postmodern concept of nature, which includes rather than excludes human beings, is presently taking shape. Callicott hopes to cure us from the "sharp dichotomy between man and nature," which has too long been a feature alike of religion and philosophy, "both wellsprings of the Western intellectual heritage. He further says that we are therefore a part of nature, not set apart from it.

Val Plumwood, analyzing the wilderness idea, worries about human dualism and complains that humans cannot recognize the continuum of nature and culture, since human dualism blocks recognition of the embeddedness of culture in nature. This nature/culture dualism distorts the way we can think about land, obliging us to view it as either pure nature or as a cultural product, not nature at all. Recovering the lost ground of continuity that dualistic conception has hidden from us allows recognizing nature in what has been seen as pure culture and culture in what has been seen as pure nature.

Plumwood goes on to say, however, that she wants to eliminate not "the distinction" but "the dualism." We ought to recognize "the presence of the Other," reaching "a non-oppositional account of the relationship between humans and the wild Other." Further, it is not true that "everything that humans do is natural". At this point, Plumwood says, she begins to wonder if her mind is subtle enough to catch the distinction between making a distinction between humans and "the wilderness Other," and distinguishing

significant differences between nature and culture, an otherness that indeed sets them apart.

According to Freya Mathews, it is no longer controversial to state that a human individual is essentially a cultural being, and that culture is an emanation of Nature. "Emanation" is a flexible term and in the root idea of "flowing forth/ from." He agrees that culture has, over evolutionary history, flowed from sources in nature. We need a stronger term; culture is an "emergent" from nature. Nature evolved into culture; culture evolved out of nature, but nature did not evolve out of it. Over the millennia, humans make an increasing "exodus" from nature. Mathews agrees that we humans are "essentially cultural beings," but that means we are not just emanations from nature.

As cultural beings, we seek to implement our culture on other species. This includes our dominant aspects. We seem to be launching a warfare on other species. The warfare here-mentioned is a metaphor that represents the dominance of humans. This dominance leads to the destruction of thousands of plant and animal species annually. This is a reflection of man’s relationship with nature in literature. Thus, in the course of struggling to dominate, humans destroy nature and culture at the same time. This is given that nature and culture correlate in one way or the other. Nature affects culture and it is being affected by it too. Akem Henry Mesappe Egbe argues that, "we gain insight into how much nature affects the cultures and even modes of life of people. When nature produces healthy yams, there is joy and the cultural practices of the people can go on uninterrupted. When it does not, the opposite can be expected" (157).

This means that nature has the capacity to shape the way of life of a given people; their food, their dressing, their songs and dance. In fact, it can shape their material culture, literary culture and social culture. Material culture has to do with tangibles such as

cuisine, and gastrocentrism etc. Literary culture has to do with things like painting, architecture and sculpture etc. Social culture has to do with the social way of life like their religion and association with other people etc. All these are precipitated and controlled largely by nature or environment. Inasmuch as nature influences these, nature can also be influenced by them. Nature is influenced by them based on human actions on nature. This does not immediately suggest that humans can change nature into non-nature. They can only change its form.

The influence of culture on nature can either be positive influence or negative influence. Quite unfortunately, we live in an era where there are highly reckless activities on nature than ever in human history. This has emanated from human ideologies such as individualism, capitalism and colonialism etc. which focus on enriching individuals or individual nations to the detriment of others. Our concern is not in stopping humans from making use of nature or environment, but to be mindful in the way they use it. In his unpublished PhD thesis, Mesappe Egbe posits that,

> Such situations may include when mankind is in dire need. Even when this occurs, it should be in order that man might continue to survive and keep the link in the food chain/web intact. It is important to understand that man has his place in the running of the ecosystem by carrying out his (harmless) daily activities. (152)

Therefore, it is in case of extreme necessity that man may use nature (Michael 99). A cursory glance at the poetry of Alembong and Kishani gives the impression that they pay keen attention to the minute details that humans give to nature in order to enrich themselves. The poem "The Beginning" in *Forest Echoes*, for example shows clearly how Alembong is of the opinion that everything was going well with human relationship with nature until humans turned hostile to nature. The last two stanzas of the poem read thus,

> The forest was one.
> It had one head.
> It had one mouth.
> It had one eye.
> It had one ear.
>
> But the fire came,
> The fire came... (Alembong 1)

These lines show unity among nature. This unity existed over a long time. The persona denotes this with the use of the anaphora "it" from lines 2 to five. This anaphora strengthens the duration of the period where nature existed in good terms with culture. The first stanza above equates nature to the parts of the body such as head, mouth, eye, and ear. The body signifies life. Thus, the equation of nature to body parts is to show that nature was living like humans. It was the fire lighted by humans which came and destroyed nature. This fire could be industries pouring toxic waste into rivers that destroy aquatic animals. The fire could be farmers causing soil erosion without care. It could also be colonial masters lumbering and carting away our trees. This is a mighty blow on nature which goes a long way to hamper human/nonhuman relationships. On his part, Kishani ridicules humans for eating a life's co-partner instead of building with it. The persona in the poem "Ad Lib Kola Baskets" in *A Basket of Kola Nuts* stresses that, in spite of the importance of kola nuts as

> One splits and shares a lobe of kola nut,
> Out of kindness with someone else, rather than
> Out of selfishness! Such lone kola lobes weave ropes
> Of endless conversations - even about the strong kola nuts
> We plant and crop, sort and eat as life’s co-partners on earth! (Kishani 5). .

These lines begin by getting our minds fixed on the unending importance of kola nut in human affairs. It keeps relationships, shows acts of kindness, and sustains conversations. However, humans eat it. This is not to kick against eating of kola nuts, but it is against excess eating which leads to destruction. According to Kishani, kola nuts is "life’s co-

partners on earth!" It is therefore not plausible to eat life's co-partners on earth! When we eat something, we destroy it. Thus, eating here is a metaphor of destruction. The persona in the poem above uses anaphora to link two contrasting words together in lines 2 and 3. These are "out of kindness" and "out of selfishness". This is aimed at emphasizing on the reasons why we share kola nuts.

The excerpt is indicative of our nature as destroyers of nature. Furthermore, this gets intensive when the hostility and confrontation goes beyond the physical praxis to shaken the spiritual realm. Most often than not, human hostility on nature tends to interfere with the realm of the spirit because in Africa, it is a cumbersome task, and even impossible to dissociate nature from spirituality. This is why as we destroy nature, our spirituality continues to wane. Therefore, one will not be wrong to argue that humans capitalize on the modern ideologies of paying attention only to themselves to inflict pain on nature, without knowing that the irony is that, they are inflicting pains on themselves since nature will react from the spiritual realm. For example, we could trace the origin of earthquakes, floods and fire outbreaks by arguing that, it is the result of the failure of humans to treat nature well. Similarly, the title poem in the collection *The Passing Wind,* literally shows simple wind which blows off and causes great changes which are both positive and negative. In the literary sense, this wind goes beyond normal wind as it can be given a metaphoric interpretation. The poem begins thus,

> It came suddenly
> And caught us as if unawares.
> It came limping
> As a child learning to walk.
> It came naively
> As the chameleon in a race to immortality. (Alembong 6)

The persona constantly uses simile here to compare the coming of the wind. But there is a fundamental question which he does not answer. This question is: what is the cause of

the wind? In most African cultures, a serious wind which dislocates nature like the one in the poem has a spiritual backing. It is usually caused by irregularities in the spiritual realm which result from human's actions in the physical world. We are told in the poem that the wind cracks our lips, soils, falls the leaves of our trees, causes famine and drought. In fact, the second stanza reads thus,

> And we saw our soft lips
> Turn to scabs.
> We saw our tough soil
> Crack to let microbes in.
> We saw our trees
> Shiver in their shoes.
> We saw them
> Drop their leaves in a falling sickness.
> We saw our fowls
> Lose their feathers to the chill.
> We saw our animals
> Abort their babies for lack of food.
> We saw our rivers
> Expose their stony ways
> And our fishes preyed on by hawks. (Alembong 6)

This poem has a political undertone as in the democratic wind of change. The passing wind is a metaphorical representation of the democratic wind of change sweeping across African countries. When this finally takes its full course, we shall experience enormous changes qualified in the poem as our soft lips turning to scabs, our tough soil cracking to let microbes in, our trees shivering in their shoes and dropping their leaves in a falling sickness, our fowls losing their feathers to the chill, our animals aborting their babies for lack of food, our rivers exposing their stony ways and our fishes being preyed on by hawks. In broad terms, culture enhances politics in the creative imagination of Alembong.

The poem also outlines the effects of the wind. The persona uses personification in lines 6 and 8 of this stanza to show the degree of the destruction caused by this wind. One

may begin to ask what we can do to prevent this kind of disaster. The best way is to live in harmony with nature so that the spirit world will not show its wrath. The wrath of the spirits usually results from the cruelty of humans on nature. According to Kishani, we must follow the ways of our ancestors in order to prevent these natural disasters; we must do what our ancestors used to do. Our ancestors used to treat nature well before we came with modernity/technology and its repercussions. The persona in *Konglanjo!* says,

> We are pilgrims from a cradle
> In our Ancestor's Land!
>
> Behold libations going before our feet
> Proclaiming our coming to the departed beyond our feet!
> Let our children lead the way!
> Let our children continue our way! (Kishani 28)

The first two lines here indicate that our stay on earth is not permanent. We are pilgrims. But, of course, in our ancestor's land and our children have to continue with our way. Here, Kishani is seen as an advocate of the link among the unborn, the living, and the dead. This link is very pertinent because it ensures continuation of life. Life stems from the unborn, to the living, and to the dead. This continuity makes life a cycle. In this cycle, there is the manifestation of tradition. As such, the good old ways are preserved.

If we continue with the good old ways of treating nature, our relationship with nature and spirituality will be cordial. This will prevent our spirituality from declining. But how is this possible in a modern era and a period where cultures are meeting and mixing? How is it possible in an interculturality period? How is it possible in an era of globalization? Like Alembong says, we need to build bridges to link cultures. This does not mean destroying any culture. It follows that there is still a possibility to maintain the good old ways of preserving nature while dealing with other cultures. In this way, eco-cultural spirituality will be in harmony with human actions. This is only possible if

humans do not position themselves at the center of the universe and give other elements of nature a peripheral position. We need awareness on this. Given that the need for awareness for the preservation and conservation of nature are very important, Kishani encourages people to give a keen attention when they are being oriented on how to treat nature. He believes that the raising of awareness can go a long way to solve some ecological problems. He represents this in the poem "Konglanjo!" in the collection, *Konglanjo!* when the persona says,

> Let the eyeless bear and follow the eye-owners' counsels
> For the welfare of our peoples and lands!
> Let the weathering days never disdain and break out
> From the hands of the rain-maker!
> Let our medicine-pots duly reward
> the innocent, the thief and the witch!
> May our spears of good omens never return unstained! (16)

These lines show a lot of pessimistic determinism in the creation of awareness. Moreover, Kishani falls back on his cultural artifact to project the importance of creating and being watchful to awareness. This is Afrocentric in nature. He puts two opposite tendencies together in order to reinforce this importance. For example, he puts the "eyeless" in direct connection with the "eye-owner". The first two lines above read thus, "Let the eyeless bear and follow the eye-owners' counsels/ For the welfare of our peoples and lands!" This is indication that in order for our land and people to be fine, we must create and listen to awareness. The eye-owners are those who are endowed with the knowledge and they ought to create awareness, while the eyeless are supposed to listen and take it serious. This is in no means a stratification of the society. It is just a matter of confirming that in any scenario, there are leaders. It suffices to say that the poem can also be interpreted from a political perspective. The eye-owners ought to be political leaders, but the irony is that, they do not work for the people. They focus on themselves and see people as tools which can be used and discarded at any time.

Generally in contemporary societies, the eye-owners are visionary writers. They create awareness and people follow their words sometimes for the betterment of our society.

In the same line of creating awareness and listening to awareness, the persona advises the youth to always listen. He calls them wà'bìn to refer to youth of every land and youth of every time. He advises them as follows:

> Listen! Wà'bìn listen!
> To every voice blowing centuries of dreams into your ears!
> Wa'bin!
> Listen to them saying from within this caravan of streams
> That we are more than a start, more than an end !
> Let us name, write down and praise
> The first of things, peoples, lands and times
> known and unknown,
> born and still to be born,
> harvested or planted:
> Things first spoken but never done!
> Things first done but never spoken !
> A wedlock of webs of silence and words,
> As the cobweb-spinners of our times ! (Kishani 21)

The meaning of the lines above can be traced from the beginning. The poem is about advice. The persona is encouraging the youth to always listen to advice because it is only by listening that they can maintain the good old ways of their ancestors. It is by listening and aligning to advice that we can know how to preserve and conserve nature.

Kala proposes a series of ways in which we, through government agencies, can preserve and conserve nature. He further argues that,

> revitalizing traditional human connections with the natural world is a need of hour in view of respecting and conserving nature. Since religion change influences fundamental values of human beings, it has been supporting nature conservation since antiquity. As Albert Einstein believed that the serious scientific workers are profoundly religious people in the present materialistic age, the religion-based belief system can save our planet from the ongoing degradation. The spiritual context of nature conservation, which is ignored in satisfying human needs and quality of life, must be recognized without further delay. There are numerous temples, gurudwaras, churches and mosques across

> the countries in the planet earth. A large number of devotees visit these sacred places every day to pay homage. If the priests, clerics, granthi (sikh priest), molvi (Muslim cleric) and Dalai Lama issue decrees to their respective devotees for nature conservation, it is expected that the outcome will be fruitful. The religion-based conservation models need to be developed. In the present era of global warming and anthropogenic climate change, the values of religion, if injected wisely, can help to resolve the problems and facilitate in maintaining the nature and natural resources. (Kala 32)

By implication, we must avoid ethnocentric tendencies and focus on ways that boost human relationships with nature. We have come across laws that help in nurturing these relationships. Bas Verschuuren and others argue that a relatively new set of legal tools is emerging where ecosystems, natural features or protected areas might be given a legal right to be managed well. This may mean that any stakeholder, or in some cases a legally appointed stakeholder, could take legal action on behalf of a protected area, its species or specific natural features. Verschuuren with his team add that, recently, an increasing number of jurisdictions have granted juristic personhood to natural features that have special spiritual significance to people. To date, this has included ...

> The role of spirits inhabiting a natural feature or landscape is common to many indigenous peoples' belief systems. Using juristic personhood, the courts and legislatures have provided a suite of new legal approaches that can be used to strengthen and complement spiritual governance. By protecting natural features, landscapes and waterscapes, the spirits that inhabit them are also protected and hence, their cultural and spiritual significance is safeguarded (Verschuuren et al 14).

As if that is not enough, we need to build nature. Kishani in the collection, *A Basket of Kola Nuts* encourages us to plant trees in order to build nature. In the "Prologue" the persona says,

> One who eats kola nuts also needs to sow a seed,
> For the newly born to crop, eat or sell after seasons
> Of unspoken memories of a dream few discern to crop
> From the dusty locks of kola tombs, riddles or proverbs!
> Today we still bank kola nuts of a by-gone planter or tiller!
> Wiser consumers of kola nuts till and sow kola seeds that feed

Members of the UN General Assembly in a full rainbow session! (Kishani 9)

The lines quoted above suggest continuity. They revitalise our minds deeply and conscientalise us to do afforestation if we must do deforestation in order not to keep upcoming generations in danger. We must plant more trees to replace the ones that we keep felling. As an encouragement for humans to plant more trees, the persona in the poem "Baskets of Kola Nuts" says, "It takes an agent to plant, but a village's world to eat a kola nut!" (Kishani 15). We thus, need to plant more trees in our environment in order to build it rather than destroying. As a means of cross referencing, Peter Vakunta shares a similar view in his collection of poetry titled *Green Rape: Poetry for the Environment*. According to him in the poem "Gray Matters", It takes one unknowing/ man to destroy a forest/ But one town to replace it (63). He also emphasizes this in the poem "One Man One Tree" when the persona says,

> Did you know?/
> It takes a single/
> unlettered man and
> one chain saw to demolish/
> an entire forest/
> But an entire village
> to plant a single forest?/ (Vakunta 20)

The impression gotten from the lines above is that, the people who are not learned in the domain of environmental protection can easily destroy nature which will take more time and people to replace the destroyed nature. The persona uses the rhetorical question "did you know?" to prepare our minds before exploring what it takes to replace a forest which is destroyed by a single person. Typically, the stanza is about creating awareness on how difficult it takes to replace nature if we destroy it. Vakunta is therefore, advocating that we must be careful the way we use our environment. All these are because of the importance of nature in human existence. Wolete argues in her Ph.D

thesis that over the past couple of centuries, the world has experienced human exodus where the need for space to accommodate the ever-growing population had been a great preoccupation. To this challenge comes the need for human survival, which to humans, is located within the ambits of the non-human world. For this reason, humans in search of fulfillment have for centuries, waged a violent and masochistic attack against the ecological system. Because nature is important in human existence, it has to be rebuilt rather than destroyed. At the beginning of the poem "Konglanjo" in the collection, *Konglanjo!*, Kishani outlines the importance of nature. The persona tells readers that while they invoke the spirit of Ngàà-Mbóm, they make great use of the elements of nature. The poem begins with the following lines:

> There,
> Where fields pasture our cattle,
> grow our corn,
> sáár-millet,
> kikéng -plant; where forests
> that nest our birds and shrines
> from sunburns and sunstrokes;
> Where drums blend breathings
> Of festal Mànjòng gongs
> Inviting, summoning
> For the Fon's Solemn Call
> To a sacrificial grove with palm-wine,
> camwood, baskets of black fowls, a tethered goat,
> corn-loaves and bags of unmasked capsules of kola nut,
> We stitch'd and webb'd
> All the edges of smiles, to season
> The smouldering log fires of incense
> Invoking mighty Ngàà-Mbóm. (11)

As seen from the lines above, nature serves as a grazing arena for other elements of nature which include grazing animals; it serves as a source of food for some elements of nature and it also plays many different roles. Destroying it now means depriving other species of their basic rights. In fact, when we destroy nature, we make other species to suffer because they depend on it for survival. They can go up to the extent of dying

when nature begins to vanish because of human cruelty. According to Siga Asanga, as quoted online by *African Books Collective*, “Konglanjo” which is the title poem relates to most important poetry of all ages: it reveals how, in the search for right images, metaphors and most apposite expressions, we often find ourselves listening to the voice that ‘bids us return to our own sources.’ Since the poet has discovered the right idioms, he has, throughout the poem, undergone the process of depersonalization, has indeed obtained objectivity: little of himself is felt in the poem. He obtains this effect by the use of the appropriate voice – that of the priest at the ceremony. The role of the priest here is to help direct us what to do to go back to our roots which involves carefulness in using our environment. We don’t have to abuse it.

One fundamental issue which must be understood holistically is that nature destruction did not start today. In other words, the destruction of nature is not a thing which starts only today. Kishani goes down memory lane to invoke and show readers how the process has evolved. There were first people who started this destruction and the process has evolved up to what we have today. The persona in "Konglanjo" says,

> The first of things and peoples
> to have overridden and despoiled
> The first lands for our revolving stock,
> Oh Tikari Wà’bìn!
> The first to have driven all like a river
> Into the first ebb and flow of new names! (21)

To mention that they were the first to do harm on land and water is to say that they destroyed the earth. Only space elements are not mentioned here, but human activities are generally hostile on nature. However, the first people did not only destroy nature, but they did other things too. For example, the persona says, these people were also:

> The first to have evaluated the first of nature's cowries !
> The first to have inaugurated the first market

with the first anointed tree!
The first to have plucked the first calabash
for the first libations!
The first to have worn the first tattoes
with the first hairstyles!
The first to have carved
The first wooden doors and hearthposts!
The first to have boiled
The first medicine-plants in the first medicine-pots
The first to have translated
The first biddings of an earth-spider!
The first to have sent and deciphered
The first message with porcupine-quills !
The first to have harkened to the first voice
of kola nut parings! ... (Kishani 22)

Everything here-mentioned that they were the first to do relate to nature: the nature's cowries, the trees, wooden doors, first medicine-plants, earth-spider, porcupine-quills, and kola nut. All these natural elements have cultural significance. The trees and wooden doors, for example, are typically natural. A tree is part of nature and from it a wooden door is made. This denotes a chain in the natural environment. The porcupine-quill has a cultural symbol in some African cultures. Even though it is natural, it is used to symbolise class in some societies. Some red feather chiefs have porcupine-quills on their caps to make a difference in class. The persona in the lines above uses imagery to invoke these natural elements in order to show that the first people did not only destroy nature but they did other good things to it. If we were talking based on the Bible, these first people would be Adam and Eve as the Bible holds that they were the first people on earth. The positive and negative aspects of their actions support our initial premise that culture affects nature both positively and negatively. But human culture is at the top of the dominance. In other words, in the nature/human dichotomies, humans position themselves at the center.

In binary studies, there is the question of center. This is central in postcolonial studies and it is similar in the human/ nature center. In postcolonial studies, to begin with, the

myth of European supremacy and the inferiority of the "others" is a fundamental issue which is debated upon. This myth reduces the image of non-whites and raises that of whites. It has been made to appear so natural that no one seems to know that it is a myth. George Lamming clearly explains this myth when he says:

> This is what I mean by the myth. It has little to do with lack of intelligence. It has nothing to do with one's origin in class. It is deeper and more natural. It is akin to the nutritive function of milk which all sorts of men receive at birth. It is myth as the source of spiritual foods absorbed, and learnt for exercise in the future. This myth begins in the West Indian in the earlier stages of his education. It begins with the fact of England's supremacy in taste and judgment: a fact which can only have meaning and weight by a calculated cutting down to size of all non-England. The first to be cut down is the colonial himself. (Ashcroft et al 15)

As seen from the quote above, the colonial master begins the implantation of this myth in the minds of people when they put themselves superior, and then inferiorize any other person. The colonised therefore internalise the myth and grow up with it. It is in postcolonial discourses that this myth is contested against, and debunked. The myth is sustained with the use of contrast. The contrast shows the various binaries which have emerged from European constructs. The idea of European supremacy can also be discussed using different terms and concepts/models such as Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, and the Manichean Allegory as carefully explained by Abdul R. Janmohamed in "The Economy of Manichean Allegory." **T**his issue of postcolonial binaries makes the idea of center/margin explicit. The question that prevails is that: is there really a center here? When we relate this to nature and humans, we have the same question surfacing. Are humans, like the West, really at the center of activities? Do humans really control the universe or nature? When answering this question, we must understand the importance of nature. In Kishani's poetry collection titled *A Basket of Kola Nuts,* the importance of the kola nut is a symbol for the importance of nature. The kola nut brings unity, does away with sloth because "As basic etiquette or a first step to

shun sloth, a youth at heart toils/ To pick a kola for an elder and freely gain an upper hand in sharing!" (Kishani 16), "A kola nut to split and share opens a lively makarapaati anew!" (Kishani 43), “A kola harvest drills/ The youth in the art of stealing kola pods, not bills!" (Kishani 45), "We offer a kola basket to open doors of hospitality, / As we plant kola forests to uphold our patriotism!" (Kishani 46). It is common acknowledgment that despite the importance of nature, humans have placed themselves at the center. Timothy Clark observes that humans are instead supposed to acknowledge the fact that they are part of nature. In his words,

> The very term 'nature' has several incompatible meanings whose interrelation can be said already to enact some distinctive environmental quandaries. At its best, 'nature is the sum total of structures, substances and causal powers that are the universe. In this sense, evidently, humanity is part of nature ... (6)

Humans place themselves at the center and this is principally because humans are thinking beings unlike other species of nature. But the presence of humans at one center does not immediately suggest that there is only one center and that it is occupied by humans. Nature takes the center occasionally when it wants to react to unacceptable human actions. No matter the position that humans bestow on themselves, they remain a partner to nature because nature is always compensating them to survive. Rolston, III uses perfect words to capture this state of things when he posits that,

> No matter what kind of exodus humans make from nature, they are going to remain male or female, with hearts and livers, and blood in their veins, walking on two feet, and eating energies that were originally captured in photosynthesis by chlorophyll. Culture remains tethered to the biosystem and the options within built environments, however expanded, provide no release from nature. Humans depend on air flow, water cycles, sunshine, nitrogen-fixation, decomposition bacteria, fungi, the ozone layer, food chains, insect pollination, soils, earthworms, climates, oceans, and genetic materials. An ecology always lies in the background of culture, natural givens that underlie everything else. (155)

At this point, we cannot say again that there is only one center and that the center is occupied by humans; we rather think that there are many centers and each center holds when its time is due. There are a number of reasons why humans feel that they are always at the center. These reasons constitute the lies that put them at the center. We shall examine some of these lies in the subsequent paragraphs.

In fact, there are a series of lies that put humans at the center of activities, thereby giving them the power to subdue nature. These lies are societal constructs that reduce nature to an inferior of humans. This is to say that nature is inferiorized by culture or the society. The first lie is that of the superiority of human beings over all other species. This emanates and transcends to our belief in individualism. We believe that we are all powerful and can thrive as individuals. We fail to understand that the hazards of individualism are growing as it becomes increasingly associated with the belief that we are independent of other species of nature, and other human beings. We must learn to collaborate with the earth because it is full of sacredness and sacredness is part of our whole human existence. We cannot do without other elements of nature which inhabit components necessary for our survival. Kala observed from a historical perspective that, historically, a sort of hierarchy of sacredness of landscapes was made, which was embedded within the religious philosophy. He added that the land of gods was considered as a kind of invulnerable and holy territory. Kala was convinced that the Roman and Greek landscapes, traditionally, were dotted with sacred places generally having groves, and Romans often personified these trees as the ‘Forest King’. He was also convinced by his study that the ancient Celts, a European cultural group, worship nature and believe that nature is alive as the same creative life force that humans share. According to him, nature spirits animate springs, river, forests and mountains.

This confirms the fact that humans cannot do without nature. Humans therefore need to reshape their thoughts on their superiority to other elements of nature. Kala even extends thought to religious denominations. In Hinduism, five elements such as earth, space, air, water and fire have special mention and each element is worshipped as a deity. The Greek and Romans have many common gods. Greeks believe wind as a god and hence celebrate ceremonies on the hill tops. The followers of Islam believe that the al-Buraq site and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem are some of the holiest sites on the earth, apart from Mecca and Medina, because of their association with holy Prophet Muhammad's journey to heaven.

Typically, it has been argued that nature embodies habitats that are necessary for human existence. Groves are natural and are fundamental in human history. The evolution of sacred grove concept is mainly based on the strong interactions of society with the surrounding forested areas, which secure the group of species and natural habitats in the long run. There could be pluralistic definitions of sacred groves but we see sacred grove here as a forested area that is associated with deities, ancestral spirits, rituals and taboos, culturally speaking. We can ascertain that such groves are the live manifestations of historical, cultural and emotional attachment of human beings with forests. They unify rural communities religiously, culturally and socially. The sacred grove concept has been adopted by various indigenous communities worldwide, such as aboriginals of Australia, Caucasus Mountains community, ancient Slavic people, German tribes], Greeks, Romans and Kikuyu and Bangwa of Africa, people of China, Japan, and Native America, Mbeere tribe of East Africa, and Khanti tribe of Siberia.

Before the spread of Christianity and Islam, the sacred groves covered much of the Middle East and Europe. The sacred grove concept is still relevant and exists today, especially in many parts of Asia, Africa and Mexico. In India, it is estimated that over

13,720 sacred groves exist across diverse topography and climatic conditions from south to north. However, the actual number is thought to be much larger than that.

It is important to note that a sacred groves ranges from few square meters to many hectares and are known by different names at different places. Among the Bangwa of Cameroon, for example, a sacred grove is called "lefem". In Zimbabwe, the loss of forests remains considerably less in the forests considered as sacred forests, which reflects that spiritual values influence human behaviour and hence help in protecting the nature and natural resources. Among the Bangwa of Cameroon, no one can destroy or cut trees in the sacred groves (lefem). Collection of dried wood is also not allowed. The trees inside the sacred groves are not touched by the axe except when the wood is required for the repair of sacred buildings. The Bangwa people also believe that forest gives power to their deities. In some indigenous communities, especially during festivals, the power of deity is brought to the village temple through rituals and once the festival is over, the same power is returned to the forest again by performing some specific rituals. These indigenous communities have created various beliefs through their experiences, which are molded and reflected in their folklores.

Another fundamental lie is that of viewing nature as separate from humans. Bas Verschuuren and others argue that, humans tend to view nature as a separate entity which exists outside the human world. This gives the impression that humans can exist without nature.

> The cultural and spiritual significance of nature, including intangible cultural heritage, cover a growing area of interest to practitioners that may previously have been overlooked or otherwise excluded from the governance and management of protected and conserved areas. This may be due to a historic reliance on the natural sciences and more recently economics that can view humans as separate from nature and potentially detrimental to it. It shows a lack of understanding or consideration of the cultural and spiritual significance that nature has for people in general as well as for Indigenous peoples, religious

> groups, and the public that make up large sections of their users. (Verschuuren et al xiv)

The truth is that nature can never exist as a separate entity from humans. We must admit connections that can embody and foster more environmentally sustainable decisions and practices which include connections between humans and nature. Humans cannot explore and operate their full capacity without being connected with nature. This is because nature is the foundation for human existence.

Another lie which puts humans at the center is the belief that humans are alive while nature is dead. Nature is, however, only suffering from the cruelty of humans. It is not dead. Nature is alive. Because of these, we need to restructure power relations in the nature/human tussle.

Given that the foundation of power in the relationship between human beings and nature has always been thought to have exerted from humans to nature, there is a need to reconsider the power structure and seek possibilities of restructuring. The basic claim here is that humans put themselves at the center of activities and believe that they have full control of the universe. They decide whether or not other species live. They decide if animals will live and when they will die. In a similar way, they determine if trees should grow or die. Some of these instances are backed by Biblical models. According to Toh, humans, as Harold Fromm puts it, are an "idealized emphasis on "rational" in the concept of man as a rational animal which characterized Platonic-Christian thought ... , have ascribed difference to nature.

> This means that nature becomes the "other" in the self/other binary that humans have constructed. The concept of rationality also points up to the privilege space that humans arrogate to themselves, and which essentially in the Christian age comes from the reading and interpretation of the Bible where God commands humans to subdue the earth. Though ecocritics see this as the base for nature's problems, it seems that it is just a justification by humans, to always shirk their

> sense of responsibility and constantly looking for who to blame elsewhere; including blaming deities. God, by the Bible, asks humans to subdue the earth and live in it, and not plunder the earth and feel threatened by it. Cultural contacts have led to differences among humans and so, non-Europeans have been plundered alongside their environment. (Toh 262 - 263)

The ability of human beings to be rational gives them extreme confidence about their superiority. This gives them the impetus to believe that they control nature. This way of thinking has been chastised by critics like Ako. According to her,

> The concept of what nature is has therefore evolved with time and within different societies to mean different things. Simply put, nature is the entire ecosphere. Although some "single minded" ecocritics think that humans are out of nature (Lori Gruen 60), increasingly, and from the ecofeminist perspective of Gruen in the article "Dismantling Oppression: An Analysis of the Connection Between Women and Animals", humans constitute part of nature which include animals, plants, rivers, mountains, and even urban space. (192 - 193)

Thus, humans are part of nature and do not necessarily need to claim ownership of nature. There is power beyond human comprehension that drives things. The fundamental argument here is not to repeal the power of humans, but to demonstrate that the force that humans think they are exerting on other species is actually going down on humans, themselves. It can be argued that it is nature which actually possesses the power that humans think that they possess. This is because nature has full capacity to revenge in any case where necessary. It is in a common phenomenon to witness natural occurrences such as earthquake, landslide, collapse of buildings and fire outbreaks, floods etc. These are the various ways in which nature fights back in order to reclaim the center. In Western societies, these are all considered evil. On the contrary in Africa, there are various ways in which nature fights back the evil exerted on it by external forces such as humans. The persona in the first part of the poem "Konglanjo" in *Konglanjo!* titled "Calling" does an incantation in which he prays against all evil that is

coming to attack nature, particularly humans and lands. In this respect, he places nature and humans at the same level because they are one. The incantation goes thus,

> Ngàà-Mbóm! May we keep to the spoors of faith!
> May evil omens pass and go their solitary ways,
> And leave our children and lands in peace!
> If they come in the winds,
> Let them fly above the highest clouds! (Kishani 13)

Still in the incantation, the persona contends that, nature should fight back any evil that is coming to attack it. This supports the view that nature is capable of fighting back when faced with adversities either from humans or cultures. The persona says,

> If they spring from our soils,
> Let them be washed away by rain and stream!
> If they fall from the heavens,
> Let thunder and lightning consume them!
> And should they suddenly appear
> in our lands as if from nowhere,
> May you enlighten our innermost spider-college
> of medicine-pot boilers to determine
> whether they were brought by man and, not by a god!
> Ngàà-Mbóm! (Kishani 14)

Among the Bangwa people, what is going on in the excerpt above is "giving mouth". This is a situation where people rebuke things that have happened or that are yet to happen. The lines quoted above mean a lot in a cultural scenario. There is first of all, uncertainty about where evil will come from. But, no matter where it comes, it is already rebuked. Since Westerners mostly view evil in the broad sense, they perceive some of these occurrences in Africa as evil without taking into consideration the belief systems of the people. They consider natural occurrences as evil but fail to realise that Africans do not believe in natural occurrences. The storm on the eve of great people's death is not regarded as a natural storm; it is seen as an omen by the people and most often it really is an omen. In the Eurocentric perspective, every natural occurrence

which brings about damages and which does not result from direct human action is viewed as “physical evil”. In other words, “physical evil” does not stem from direct human activities; it seemingly appears to occur in accordance with nature. This is contrary to African beliefs. The stubbornness of the people can also make nature to react adversely. Natural occurrences take the following forms: starvation and famine, accident, fire outbreak, poverty, social illness, flood, collapse of buildings and earthquakes. All these are various ways in which nature fights back. It thus, becomes problematic to say with wholeness and certainty that humans are always at the center. This gives us the latitude to reconsider power structure between nature and humans. In summation, our argument here is that power flows from two paradigms, namely, from humans to nature and from nature to humans. This means that we have to restructure the power dynamics and power politics in relation to human/nature dichotomies. We can deduce that power is not possessed by a single end when it comes to the relationship of nature and humans. It is shared.

There are some tendencies which humans use to deprive nature of its own comfort of the universe. Here, we are looking at how humans are partners to nature but do not treat nature fairly. If people are partners in business with equal shares and rights, then they deserve equal treatment and equal returns. But when one party begins to feel better than others, it begins to desire a greater portion of the profits and proceeds. This is the exact situation with humans in respect to their relationship with nature. Humans are egoistic.

Egoism is one of the canker worms eating up most societies. Egoism is the tendency of wanting to have everything for yourself without considering others. Humans want everything for themselves. They do not think about securing a safe space for nonhuman species. This has been a blow on nonhuman species because with the egoistic

tendencies of human beings, human beings tend to venture into activities that constitute a threat to nonhuman species. Robert McDermott argues that,

> Because ecology is increasingly inseparable from ethics, religious and spiritual ideals need also be attentive to the needs of the billions of human beings, as well as animals who are suffering and increasingly being driven to extinction as a direct result of human behavior. Until the 20th century, religious and spiritual ideals need not have been devoted to ecology, but at this time in human and ecological history they must be positively related. While ecology, social justice, religion, and spirituality do not necessarily or uniformly implicate each other, when they are brought into harmony they are mutually enhancing. (8)

This, first and foremost indicates that both humans and animals are suffering in a greater number and almost getting out of existence because of human activities on nature. In explaining the survival of virtue ethics, Robert McDermott posits that, the survival of virtue ethics "will need help from those of us who are committed to joining virtue and spirituality to ecology" (11). In most cases, humans do not regard their behavior which is damaging the ecosphere; all they focus on is what will work in their interest. It therefore takes a different level of courage to figure out what can be done to remedy this situation, even if the solution will work against human interest. McDermott makes it clear that, this cannot be the responsibility of a sole person. But, is everyone ready to save nature? The answer that McDermott provides is that most people only sympathize, but do not take drastic measures for improvement. He states,

> Once informed concerning the fate of Earth and the suffering of individuals and groups due to ecological devastation (e.g., desertification, polluted water, disasters), an individual whose character is compassionate will almost automatically (there are surely exceptions) sympathize with the sufferers and strive to overcome the cause of these disasters as well as reduce their suffering. By contrast, a person who is incapable of compassion toward a hungry child or a victim of rape is not likely to feel the pain of Earth or the extinction of thousands of species. It is the capacity that is crucial. Individuals who are obsessively driven by the pursuit of money, sex, power, and prestige at the expense of others will, and do, pursue their goals irrespective of the cost to Earth. (Robert McDermott 12)

It is worthy to note that it is a collective effort which can be used to preserve nature. To ensure this collective effort, we need to avoid egoistic tendencies. We must not, in Alembong words, "mortgage the air we breathe for a mosaic of fragile fragments" (9).

Mankind's Quest for Spiritual Meaning and Nature

Religion, irrespective of its type, is a great tentacle. Its primary motive is to spread the word of God. This word has played a great role in the poetry of Alembong. He typically does what Labang calls intertextuality as he uses forms of texts in the Bible to present ecological poems. The first instance is in the poem "The Beginning" in *Forest Echoes* where he uses the form of a passage from the Bible to tell the story of nature; - how nature used to be until the fire came. In another poem titled "The Christmas Chicken" in *The Passing Wind*, he invokes the images of the story of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. The persona in the poem says,

> For the man whose birth we celebrate
> Washed down our sins with his blood
> So too must we offer innocent blood
> To welcome this great washerman.
>
> The message had been swallowed
> With the greed of Tortoise in the sky.
> Unknown to him he was in foreign lands
> With the bird's feathers stuck on him.
> And so we folded our arms and closed our eyes
> And swallowed this strange communion
> Forgetting we could be stripped of our borrowed feathers
> And abandoned in mid air. (13)

Here, the persona makes use of a myth and a folktale, linking the story of Jesus to that of the fowl which is also an element of nature. To reinforce his point, he brings in the story of the tortoise that borrowed winds from birds to attend a party in the sky. There in the sky, the tortoise tricked the birds in order to eat all the food offered them alone. It had to suffer the consequences alone too as birds took their feathers back when it was

time to come down. Bringing these mythical stories into poetry in order to demonstrate ecological issues is a style used by Alembong. These stories are African mythologies which are rooted in African spirituality because they attempt to explain things that cannot be scientifically explained/ proven. The aim of bringing in these mythologies is to project African cultural element. This aligns with Afrocentrism which focuses on the defense of African cultural elements as valid. There is a point where we find religion so instrumental in the conservation of biodiversity in particular and nature at large. Scholars like Kala find religion as a wonderful tool for nature protection. They place great value on religion as a direct way of eradicating environmental hostility. Their primary argument lies on the premise that environmental problems can be or at least may be solved from a religious angle. "The growing interests among society in spiritual ecology, which focuses on the interrelationship between religions and environment may help to address various environmental issues and problems within the realm of religion" (Kala 24). This increases the tendency of believing in the power of religion as an answer to ecological crisis.

However, there is a degree to which clinging to religion in order to search for meaning in life only leads to the destruction of nature. It is a good thing to search for spiritual meaning, but it is bad to do it to the detriment of the ecosphere. In the poem "The Gospel Singers" in *The Passing Wind,* Alembong presents a very complex argument in a poetic language which is full of metaphors. In this poem, there is a strong clash between western religion and African culture/nature. The Christians spend their time in church singing, dancing and praying while their crops get bad in the bush. The irony here is that, they could be praying for their crops to do well instead of taking care of the crops. The poem opens with these Christians in church, singing. The persona says about this singing and praying that,

> And the sounds rippled
> The surface of the wind
> While corn decayed in the fields
> with neglect.
> They sing,
> With speckled eyes riveted on the sun
> and a riptide running rife
> how can manna be a gain
> or the boat be brought ashore? (Alembong 16-17)

This is the complexity of the whole show. Humans are in a state of two imperatives; - the imperative of praying and waiting for manna to fall from heaven, and the imperative of making things happen. In the domain of nature, humans have the imperative of hoping for it to get better and the imperative of bettering it. Based on the extract above, the Christians have chosen the imperative of praying when in fact, God has already given them the power to take control of nature and protect it. This is an existentialist criterion. Existentialists make a choice, take action and take responsibility of their action.

Given that religion in particular and spirituality at large are culturally based, Visi Sumbom Tubuo argues that, "though ecological studies claim that culture has destroyed nature, culture seems on the contrary to speak for nature" (157). One may want to capitalize on this to assert that, spirituality which is culturally based only protects nature. This is what other critics have said contrary to our argument. Ranjay K. Singh, for example, opines that, the intensity of feeling and following of the spiritual and religious customs is closely tied with natural resources and livelihoods. In Singh's words,

> Conservation of biodiversity and other natural resources over a long period of time has been possible because of the cultural, spiritual and other social institutions that have guided the relationships between local communities and their resources. Despite the richness of ethno-ecological knowledge among tribal communities, such knowledge is often absent from research agendas or published literature, being regarded either as insufficiently 'scientific' or not relevant to modern 'development.' Maintaining effective, sustainable and ethical agriculture and resource use for the future benefit of all peoples will require

> greater scientific respect for, and enhanced collaboration with, those who possess the wisdom of generations of locally-based farming and resource conservation. (Singh 2)

In further arguments, Singh adds that, “Cultural and spiritual values of biodiversity have always been decisive factors in conserving and maintaining the biodiversity and ecosystem and these values can sometimes be more important than monetary values in conserving some wild-lands" (20). But far from this, our argument here shows that Christianity destroys nature. Tubuo uses Michael Jackson's "Earth Song" to show that artists use art at the crossroads of cultures to create environmental awareness. This is true. When man's quest for spirituality leads to the destruction of nature, there is the need to address it. Kishani contrasts man's destruction of nature with nature itself. In the poem "Ad Lib Kola Baskets" in *A Basket of Kola Nuts,* the persona contrasts the human destructive tendency with the way kola nuts lobes stay together. In his words,

> A kola lobe nourishes itself together
> Within each single kola nut as a partner
> In service, moulding the fold for its own part
> Against every trick to tear living members apart
> From the centres or pivots that grip kola in droves!
> A kola lobe yokes wholesome in nuts of each kola pod
> From birth as distinct but similar in their shape and size! (Kishani 5)

This is to say that unlike humans who destroy nature (here in terms of spirituality), nature builds nature. Our spiritual capacity should be directed towards the preservation of nature. Based on the controversial points here, there is a need to build a strong connection from and between the two views. A more accurate way is to say that even though man's search for spiritual meaning has contributed to the physical destruction of the earth and the essence of beings, it is important to redirect spiritual quest to the preservation and conservation of nature. This can best be done by mediating between

spiritual values and natural values. The essence of this is to boost human relationships with nature and spirituality.

We have argued that mankind's search for spiritual meaning has contributed to the abuse of nature. This is a general observation. Alembong and Kishani see this from the perspective of Western imported religions. They situate African spirituality in the guise of spirituality that can play a key role in the conservation of nature. In fact, they view African spirituality as an environmental conservation tool. Our focus in this part of the study is to provide concrete evidence to justify the fact that African spirituality serves as a tool for the conservation of the environment. The first instance is from the poem "Konglanjo" in *Konglanjo!* where the speaker uses a set of incantations to plead with Ngàà-Mbóm to dismiss any evil that is coming to the land/nature or humans who are also part of nature. In this sense he says that,

> Ngàà-Mbóm! May we keep to the spoors of faith!
> May evil omens pass and go their solitary ways,
> And leave our children and lands in peace!
> If they come in the winds,
> Let them fly above the highest clouds!
> If they spring from our soils,
> Let them be washed away by rain and stream!
> If they fall from the heavens,
> Let thunder and lightning consumethem! (Kishani 13 - 14)

In a similar way, African spirituality encourages Africans to plant trees. Some of these trees can in turn serve as medication or food for the people. It can also serve as a habitat for spiritual reverence. The speaker in "Konglanjo" adds that, "we pour libations and plant anointed trees" (Kishani 14). All these give a supportive evidence to justify the fact that African spirituality serves as a tool for the conservation of nature. The persona further pleads with Ngàà-Mbóm to inspire us through the dicta of these kola nut parings!

/ To scry the witch, / to sight the parasite jiggering within our family-trees" (15). The end product is the preservation of nature through African spirituality.

The Impact of Human Actions on Nature

As demonstrated above, human actions on nature have great impact both on humans and nature, and also physically and spiritually. The impact can be positive or negative depending on how humans interact with nature. It is sad that humans always act in a hostile way towards nature. They create a jungle in their relationships with nonhuman species. A typical example is in the poem "Tell Me" by Alembong. This poem is in the collection *Forest Echoes*. The poem is a short conceit which reads thus,

> Bees need flowers for honey
> As men need bees for honey.
> But do bees kill flowers for honey
> As men kill bees for honey? (Alembong 64)

As seen in the poem, the persona uses conceit to present human hostility on nature. Here, the persona insinuates that humans annihilate nature in the process of fending. Unlike humans, bees do not destroy other elements of nature in the course of hustling for food even though they badly need flowers for food as humans need bees for honey. The rhetorical question in the poem is a stylistic device par excellence. The insects represented by the bees are more considerate and more environmentally friendly than the rational humans. This rhetorical question which is also a paradox is effective.

This is just a simple exemplification of the idea of turning the ecosphere into a jungle by humans. Most often, humans only reap without sowing. Alembong demonstrates this in the poem "Song of Awambeh" in *Forest Echoes*. The persona cries out loud that the co-wife does not do anything to ensure continuation in anything, including nature. The second stanza of the poem reads thus,

> And now ...
> You are harvesting bananas,
> You are harvesting plantains,
> You are harvesting plums,
> You are harvesting pears.
> I planted them all.
> The sun knows I planted them.
> You are sitting on everything.
> I do not even own a ridge.
> I have left everything to you.
> Yes, the sun knows I have. (Alembong 54)

This stanza presents two ideological frameworks: that of the past and that of the present. These in other words are tradition and modernism. Tradition, represented by the persona, was bent on building, planting, reconstruction, preservation and conservation. On the contrary, modernity, represented by the new wife only destroys. It follows that the persona has greened nature in her own way. Given that she is the older wife, she metaphorically represents the older generations that took great care of nature. The second and newer wife represents the present generation which only loots, destroys and annihilates. This generation cannot be underrated when it comes to the destruction of the universe. The earth has endured enormous pains because this generation does not treat it as an equal, but as a subordinate. The old woman in the poem has full confidence that this generation is a consumer generation. She is ready to swear to this. She says,

> The sun knows I can lick the soil saying this.
> And now you want my head.
> Know you cannot have your way.
> I say this while the sun is shining.
> I say this looking at the sun. (Alembong 54)

For her to go up to this extent is indication that she really knows what she is talking about and she is very certain about it. The continuous destruction of the earth allows us to suffer some consequences. These consequences have hampered human beings from

enjoying nature, though it is entirely grounded in human actions. In the following paragraphs we shall be discussing some of these consequences.

To begin with, human actions on nature lead to natural disasters. Human actions on nature can possibly lead to natural disasters if care is not taken. Natural disasters include famine, drought, flood, earthquake etc. Famine occurs when there is severe shortage of food and this usually leads to starvation. Even though it is not caused by direct human action in the physical realm, it is considered absolutely bad and classified by worldview under evil. In the African context, this is seen as a result of unfriendly human activities on nature. Thus, famine serves as an indication of an imbalance in the spirit realm. This eventually leads to starvation and sometimes death. While discussing the relationship between water (nature) and spirituality George Panyin Hagan posits that, nowhere, however, is the spirituality of water more evident than in the general mind-set and conviction that water connects all living things directly to the Supreme Being making manifest the importance of the divine in human survival. In the African mind, drought, unfavourable patterns of rainfall, famine and the conflicts that result from these are the consequences of the individual and collective moral and spiritual offences that humans commit against nature and the Supreme Being. In all African cultures, droughts and famine bring communities to reflect on their state of spiritual pollution, degradation and weakness due to various acts that offend the Supreme Being (2).

Natural disasters usually lead to the physical destruction of the earth. This could be the destruction of aquatic elements, land elements or space elements. With respect to aquatic, we are looking at actions such as water pollution. By land we are looking at actions like deforestation. By space we are looking at actions like air pollution, destruction of the ozone layer. All these are detrimental to humans even though they are still caused by humans. This has been demonstrated in much literary and nonliterary

works that show that nature is not in good terms with humans because of human actions. Because people are stubborn, and because they are carried away by Western ways of life, they ignore the cries of their people and the result is a natural disaster. Nature reacts and sometimes kills many people in the community. Fundamentally, this shows how human actions can cause damage on the ecosphere and in turn affects humans and nature itself.

But there are cases of mutual and hamomious coexistence of humans and nature when humans behave well towards nature. This happens when humans respect nature. When humans do the contrary, nature is not at peace with humans. The result is natural disasters. This is to say that nature speaks. But nature does not speak like humans. It simply takes action which is then interpreted by human beings. In case where humans do not interpret the action, it usually keeps reoccurring until it is interpreted. When we read the poetry of Alembong and Kishani, we realize that they talk about this physical destruction of the universe which has a deadly impact on human beings. The poem "The Christmas Chicken" in *The Passing Wind* satirizes us for terminating the lives of animals in order to celebrate the birth of Christ. The fourth stanza reads thus,

> For the man whose birth we celebrate
> Washed down our sins with his blood
> So too must we offer innocent blood
> To welcome this great washerman. (13)

The point here is that we are destroying elements of nature to celebrate what appears to us as life. The consequences of this are numerous. We stand the chance of losing these animals that we kill on a daily basis for celebration. Moreover, we have to cultivate the habit of multiplying these species rather than only killing them.

Another effect of human actions on nature is disruption of the spirit realm. Achebe argues that Africa is not only a geographical expression, but it is also a metaphysical landscape. It includes the spiritual aspects. If Africa has a spiritual dimension, then it must be well preserved because if it is neglected, it will cause havoc. However, human actions on the physical environment transcend to cause irregularities in the spirit world. This leads to anguish as the spirit world is capable of showing dissatisfaction by unleashing irregularities in the physical world too. Sometimes it shows this dissatisfaction through natural disasters such as the ones discussed above.

The argument here is that, human actions on nature can cause the spirit realm to malfunction. More explicitly, human actions on nature are hostile and can lead to the destruction of the essence of beings. In the case where the essence of beings is attacked, it is basically going to retaliate through the permission of natural disasters. Therefore, there is a kinship between the spirit realm and natural disasters in the context of the African cultural belief systems.

The point here is that humans destroy the spirit realm with their actions on nature because nature is spirit and humans are in dire need of nature. Egbe argues that "The interaction between nature and man indicates mostly that man needs nature more than nature needs him. His need for nature is so insatiable that sometimes he needs to be checked so that he can exercise restraint in his exploitation" (198). The destruction of nature is typically the destruction of the spirit world. And when we destroy nature, making it angry, it becomes difficult for us to appease it. The best way therefore, is to preserve it and keep the spirit world at peace with us. Ngiewih posits that, "In some African communities like the Grassfields of the Cameroons, the shrine, the grove, village market trees, and the sacred forest (the palace forest for example) are heterotopic spaces which connect with the life wires of society and memory; here the physical,

spiritual and transcendental unite" (35)). It is important to stress here that, this is not only visible in the Cameroonian society but also in other parts of Africa and the world. This is seen when Teke further states that,

> This phenomenon is very far from being uniquely Cameroonian or African; it is human and cuts across all world civilisations. Flora and fauna, nonhuman natural components, have an inextricable connection with humanity's cultural, anthropological, mythological and philosophical yearnings and modes of living. They are existentialist resource centres from which energy giving forces are tapped and shared among a people. Alembong's undoubted enriching global consciousness, localized at his African ancestral origins in the Cameroons, has provided the substance of his poetic texts with regard to the existentialist contentions raised in this paper. (35)

With this, one will not be wrong to argue that the human/nature link goes beyond the physical paradigm. But what happens when humans begin to destroy nature? What also happens when humans begin to drift away from nature? With respect to the West, Teke says, "While Western powered postmodernist and poststructuralist thought might have distanced the Westerner from his transcendental roots with nature and environment, there is still the survival of patterns of reverence for forest, woods and trees deeply rooted and ingrained in the West (36). The point is that (post)modernity and (post)modernism, together with poststructuralist thought have greatly changed the way people used to do things. They have also changed people's minds in relation to nature and it has become difficult to maintain some links. This is making humans to distance themselves from nature. But this has not completely effaced human/ nature links. The words "sanctuaries, sacred, worship, divine, reverence and believe, point to man's positive metaphysical attachment to trees and forest" (Teke 37). The argument is supported by Fombele Eunice when she argues that,

> The animals, the forests, the rivers, the living-dead, the ancestors, the complete biosphere and ecosphere and the spiritual forces are important in ensuring unremitting interconnectedness and interdependency between man and the supernatural ... human nature is connected to the physical, and spiritual sphere,

> affecting it and is affected by it and that there are interconnections between nature and culture ... Every river, tree, mountain or land formation has its spirit inhabiting it and this spirit can be invoked for particular purposes ... For this reason, human nature is bound to be connected to the forces of non-human nature; it owes non-human nature respect and therefore cannot engage in destructive acts against nature and the environment. (67 – 68)

The point she makes is in line with that of Teke and by extension, it is universal. It all boils down to the fact that humans are connected to nature spiritually. But the worry is that humans do not understand this and take good care of nature. They instead destroy it, thereby destroying the link. In summary, human abuse of nature leads to the disruption of the spirit realm which affects the physical realm.

Furthermore, economic stagnation is another impact of human actions on nature. Human actions on nature slow down economic growth. This is because human actions are always individualistic and capitalistic. Humans engage in deforestation without afforestation. They generally destroy nature without improvement. This has both short-term and long-term consequences. Whatever term the consequences are, the most important thing is that, the consequences still come back to humans. So, humans inflict pains on nature and then suffer the consequences. The economy does not prosper where there is massive destruction of the earth. This is because the wealth of the state comes from nature. Egbe posits that, “it would seem that to have enough food, there must be harmony amongst the elements of nature. This includes the lake and the river for water bodies, the healthy shade, the leaf and the nut to represent the forest, and the rainbow for the season. "155) In order to ensure economic growth therefore, we need to strive to protect the ecosphere rather than destroying it.

When we destroy nature, we lose its support. We lose its medical solution. In the poem "Tekwombuo" in *Forest Echoes*, we are made to understand that some elements of nature are used for medical purposes. The tenth stanza is as follows:

> We place fve'afu on your forehead,
> It will protect you.
> We put Ndindi' in your mouth,
> It will calm you.
> Let the man with the owl's eyes
> Receive wood ash on the face.
> Let the man with the chameleon's mouth. (Alembong 58)

The act of destroying nature is detrimental to economic growth. How do we expect plants to grow if we keep burning the earth and destroying it? The economy that experiences a lot of nature destruction is difficult to experience economic and spiritual growth. This is why governments are always striving to put in place measures and policies that can help curb the destruction of nature. Nevertheless, there is still great passivity both on the part of the government and individuals. It is our responsibility to take care of our nature.

We are all culprits for the destruction of nature and we are also victims. Thus, the blame is on both sides if our economy is not moving forward. Our forests are raped and we only stay quiet which is indication that we are taking part in the process. We ought to resist this in order to improve the human condition. If we must desire the improvement of our economy, we must also contribute to the preservation of nature. We need to follow ways that lead to the preservation of nature. Singh thinks that, we have been implementing some of these ways,

> Incorporation into biological and ecological studies of local-use patterns and of the social, spiritual, cultural and institutional background that guides the relationships between people and nature, has led to a greater understanding of the relationship between social and ecological dynamics. (Singh 1)

The need for the preservation of nature is because of its cultural and social importance. For example, Kishani explains that kola nuts (nature) helps to unite people. He says, "Each handshake you exchange with kola nuts as pure gifts turns up/ To openly, freely

and fairly build bridges of family ties or encounters/ That thrive in tested traditions of a people's timeless ethics to fight on/ At every turn when alien handles of power break tragedies in the open!" (Kishani 6) Elsewhere like the case in the Igbo society, kolanut is life because he who offers or brings kola nut brings life.

Further still, representation, instead of reality, is another impact of human actions on nature. As human actions on nature continue to threaten the flora and fauna, there is high probability that in the near future there would be a vast majority of animal and plant species that will no longer be in existence. This will play a key role in creating a vacuum in the world of these species. In an attempt to immortalize these species, humans will tend to represent them in different forms such as in art and poetry. This may play a role in immortalizing the species, but it will never make them real. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin posit that,

> The various symbolic uses to which the beaver was put in French colonial society - as example of social co-operation and orderliness, for instance - indicates the diverse but always pervasive roles animals (and the figure of the animal) have played in all human societies. But for most contemporary urbanists, as Steve Baker notes, animals are encountered more frequently in representation than in the real', something that indicates the scale of destruction of the complex biotic communities encountered by Europeans after 1492. (492)

This becomes a warning sign that the future may experience the inability to visualize the reality of beings. If real animals and plant species continue to suffer from the harmful actions of human beings, it is highly probable that the future is bleak for humans to visualize the reality of beings. In future we may experience symbols rather than actual animals and plants. Ashcroft et all add that,

> The post-Enlightenment symbolic role of the animal and the animalistic in Western societies is closely connected to the actual destruction of other peoples and animals. It is, as Cary Wolf (citing Jacques Derrida and Georges Bataille) argues, our determined constructions (and maintenance) of the human/animal divide the so-called species boundary which is responsible for our continued

> killing and enslavement of animals worldwide, and which itself forms the inescapable basis of racism and genocide. Apparently impermeable, yet always shifting and politically, socially or economically contingent, it facilitates and has facilitated 'the non criminal putting to death' as Derrida terms it, 'not only of animals, but of other humans as well by making them as animal. (492)

It suffices to conclude here that human massacre of nonhuman species is growing exponentially and leading humans to a situation where they will have to represent plants and animals in generations yet to come, rather than show them actual plants and animals, or at least some species. This is going to create a vast vacuum in the system as representation can never be as good as reality. We thus, need to cooperate. Alembong explains this in a more accurate way by saying in support of Rob Nixon that we don't have to be stranger in the eco-village. In Alembong's words,

> In sum, the relationship between man, culture, the physical and metaphysical worlds and the ecosystem is at the centre of the African philosophy that relates to the ethics of ecoculture. This relationship hinges on the idea that no one is a "stranger in the eco-village", to use Rob Nixon's phrase (2011). Not being a stranger in one's eco-village presupposes that one should be familiar with the ethics of the ecoculture, that is, the ought, the value, the moral and amoral, the bad and evil, as they relate to the environment. (132)

It is by understanding that we need to protect rather than abuse nature that we can be saved. We must understand that by destroying nature we are destroying ourselves. We must also understand that we cannot discover our full selves if we continue to destroy ourselves. It is in this sense that we must protect nature and protect ourselves.

One of the major problems that humanity is facing in contemporary society is the gradual and systematic destruction of nature. A number of studies have been done in order to curb this deadly problem. Despite the studies, humans still find it difficult to succumb to the solutions proposed. They continue to extinguish nature and to rubbish the ecosystem, thinking that they are doing it to their advantage. To a larger extent, nature destruction has been attributed to colonialism. This is because colonialism came

with a huge level of nature destruction. Ashcroft et al summarize Alfred Crosby's argument and posit that,

> Disease, destruction of native flora and fauna, the felling of forests and land clearing, and the introduction of grazing animals and 'pest' species all transformed not only the land, but reconstituted the ways in which 'land' could be apprehended. Instead of an intrinsic part of human being' and at least partially constitutive of human identities, it became the inert background for profit making and taking. Early despoliation paved the way for many contemporary environmental problems - salinification of soils in Australia and the lowering of the water table in Eastern Canada. In the colonies of occupation, traditional patterns of crop rotation were often replaced by the (enforced) growing of 'cash' crops, a practice that eventually resulted in loss of soil fertility and desertification leading to famine in, for example, the countries surrounding the Sahara Desert. (491)

As it is, colonial legacies were also seen in the environmental domain. Colonialism left attendant ills on the people who were colonized. This is why until today, we still suffer. Our environment still suffers. We inflict more pains on nature with our aggressive behavior on nature. In a sense, the present aggressions on nature are not still perpetuated directly by the colonial masters, but by us. The colonial masters left us with a mentality similar to theirs. Our focus is to enrich ourselves without caring about our immediate environment. This habit has gone a long way to damage our biosphere and ecosphere and it has also damaged us since damaging nature is equivalent to damaging humans and their spirituality.

There are scholars and critics who have the convention that if we do not reduce the rate at which we destroy nature, nature may one day come to an end. We shall cite some of them here. Holmes Rolston, III posits that,

> Nature has not been brought to an end, not yet at least. But we do have to face that possibility in the future ... So it does seem possible to end nature by transforming it into something humanized. This has already been taking place, and the future promises more, at an escalating pace. Over great stretches of Earth, wild nature has been already or likely will be diminished in favor of civilization. In some sense, that ought to be so. This ending may be always, in its

> own way, a sad thing; but it is an inevitable thing, and the culture that replaces nature can have compensating values. It would be sadder still, if culture had never appeared to grace the Earth, or if cultures had remained so modest that they had never substantially modified the landscape. (156)

Daniel Botkin subscribes to this when he argues that, nature in the twenty-first century will be a nature that we make because we have the power to mold nature into what we want it to be. In all aspects, we need to improve the quality of our relationship with nature.

To wind-up this chapter, we set out to show how humans divert all their attentions towards themselves, thereby causing great harm on nature and spirituality. We have discussed Ethnocentrism as a Human Culture, the Egoistic Tendencies of Human Beings, the Impact of Human Actions on Nature, and Man's Quest for Spiritual Meaning as a Way to the Destruction of Nature. We have also discussed natural disasters, disruption of the spirit world, economic stagnation and physical conflict as impacts of human actions on nature. In addition, we have shown that different cultures have searched out and constructed different meanings and purposes for nature.

In summary, the principal argument in this chapter is that, humans used to be friendly with nature and as such, spirituality wasn't in danger. Suddenly, technological advancement and ideological frameworks like capitalism, individualism and colonialism surfaced and are effacing this link. "The continuous population growth and technological advancement, which to Western epistemology is a sign of civilization continually, jeopardizes both the environment and human existence" (Wolete 93). Moreover, man's search for spiritual meaning out of his cultural heritage has contributed to the physical destruction of the earth, thereby causing the disruption of the order of the universe and essence of beings. Here, human actions on the physical environment cause the spirit realm to malfunction. This is because there is a kinship between the spirit

realm and natural disasters in the context of the African cultural belief systems. However, we have also argued that African spirituality leads to the preservation of nature. Finally, humans feel superior to nature and this makes them have total control over nature. This also forces them to disrupt the spiritual connection between humans and nature. Most often, this goes against culture. Humans use three main lies to sustain this; the first is the belief in the "Otherness" of nature, the second is the belief that humans are alive while nature is dead, and the third is belief in the superiority of humans over all other species.

The next chapter is titled "The Ethics of Eco-Cultural Spirituality". Here, the focus is on the dialectical and symbiotic relationships that exist between African ethno-ethics and Western bioethics in relation to Eco-Cultural Spirituality. We shall discuss an overview and Western notions of bioethics, the question of African ethno-ethics, and we shall move towards an African ethno-ethics as reflected in the visions and critical perspectives of Alembong and Kishani.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ETHICS OF ECO-CULTURAL SPIRITUALITY

The question of the rightness or wrongness of human actions on nature has surfaced frequently in various scientific inquiries such as the works of scholars like Richard Grove. In "Green Imperialism", Grove appears to give a supportive evidence to justify the fact of European so-called preservation of conservation sites. In this sense, his argument is that, it was but normal, right and justifiable for Europeans to extend their tentacles because this made them to preserve nature. Grove sees this as a right act without considering its wrongness. Its wrongness resides in the fact that the so-called conservation sites were mostly European pleasure sites rather than sites truly marked out for conservation. Therefore, the question of their rightness or wrongness on preserving nature becomes a complex question capable of withstanding dilemmatic situations. In most appropriate philosophical terms, this is a dilemma that requires cultural backgrounds for clarification as to whether it is right or wrong. It falls under ethical or moral issues.

One of the moral issues of life that deserves great attention is human actions on nature. In this chapter, we shall examine the rightness or wrongness of human actions in relation to ecoculture and spirituality. One of our major preoccupations in this chapter is to examine the dialectical and symbiotic relationships that exist between African ethics (which will be termed ethno-ethics throughout this thesis) and Western ethics (bioethics) in relation to Eco-cultural Spirituality. This chapter is discussed under the following thematic clusters: An Overview and Western Notions of Bioethics, Ethno-ethics and African Experiences: the Ecoculturality and Spirituality Evolutions, and finally, Critical Perspectives and the Ethno-ethics Visions of Alembong and Kishani.

An Overview and Western Notions of Bioethics

One of the fundamental differences which exists between Western bioethics and African ethno-ethics is that the former limits itself mostly to biomedicine while the latter focuses on every facet of human existence . In the African context, what appear as bioethics situations go beyond the medical field. In fact, one factor which needs to be hinted on here is that African ethno-ethics has gone beyond the medical field and its tentacles have now been stretched to all walks of life. Alembong and Kishani demonstrate this when they situate ecocultural spirituality in a dilemmatic situation which is so complex. It is in this way that their poetry becomes outstanding and positions African ecocultural spirituality in its original form. In the poem "Growth in Nature" in the collection, *Konglanjo!*, for example, Kishani takes bioethics out of the medical field and places it in an environmental spectrum, there by aligning with ethno-ethics. According to the persona,

> In this ecstacy I gaze at the rains
> rooted deep in the sky
> Trees shooting out from the ground
> Winds germinating from the cardinal points
> grow into an equilibrium ;
> The moon, the stars and the sun
> smile from their heavenly topography
> into the dazzling eyes of nature in movement :
> the streams, the rivers and the sea
> merge into unison to satisfy
> a scientific mind rootless, homeless, bedless
> where streams and rivers sleep daily in their beds
> and sing in procession into a common home - the sea -
> without losing their roots in the spring.
> Out of this ecstacy I find man abandoned
> struggling for a home in the trees
> In the seas, – he even now talks with the moon.
> But finds himself rootless, homeless
> In a space where liberty is his. (Kishani 80)

The persona puts the equilibrium of nature in sharp contrast with human comfort. As nature is in equilibrium, humans turn homeless even though humans have the freedom. The dilemma here is in choosing whether to remain homeless or distabilise nature. In the poem, the persona qualifies nature with a series of positive images when it is not in contact with human actions. Trees shoot out, the moon, the stars and the sun smile, the rivers and the sea merge into unison, and streams and rivers sleep daily in their beds and sing in procession into a common home - the sea. Amidst all these natural processes, humans are not pleased. They become unhappy to witness this smooth flow of natural elements. Humans begin to drift away from nature and cause harm on it because, as seen in the ending lines of the poem, man finds himself abandoned, struggling for a home in the trees, in the seas, and -he even talks with the moon. Talking with the moon here signifies communicating with nature. In a sense humans are in a bioethics situation which places them and the environment in a chaotic state. Situating bioethics out of biomedicine and biomedical sciences denotes that Kishani is polishing a strand of bioethics that we can call African Ethno-ethics which is sharply contrasted to Western bioethics.

Alembong also demonstrates this in the poem "Living East of Mungo" in the collection, *Forest Echoes*.

> I rose with the cock's crow
> As with sunlight crops grow
> And saw the path that I must
>
> Take to get out of the dust.
> But the dust swallowed me up
> As palm-wine overflows a cup
> For the path was of naked earth
> This to the woe of our commonwealth
>
> And when I trod this common path
> And emerged from my dusty bath
> Then did I know that loving tonic

That taught me never again to panic. (Alembong 15)

The literal meaning of this poem presents someone in a situation where they have to rise from dust. This process is qualified with natural elements such as "sunlight crops grow" and palm wine overflow. The persona has to walk on what he calls "naked earth". This is nature in its original state. It is nature which has not been distorted by human actions. This nature is spiritual as the persona says it is full of dust. The ethical complexity here is that the persona is in an attempt to either move out of this ecstatic nature or remain there. The persona uses a series of similes to tell the readers how he rises, thereby moving away from nature and thus, believing that he has gained liberty even though he is out of his natural sphere. He says in the first stanza that, "I rose with the cock's crow/ As with sunlight crops grow". Here, he is comparing his rise to the growth of crops which have sunlight. The problem is that, the world is shedding crops of this sunlight due to capitalist greed and technological advancement. Thus, the use of the simile is to call our attention on how nature will be beautiful and will flourish if we do not interfere in an exaggerating way in our use of nature.

In the poem above, Alembong uses a regular rhyme scheme of AA, BB in each stanza to signify man's steady attempt to rise above nature. This helps to sustain the dilematc tendencies of human beings constantly struggling to dominate nature. We can therefore maintain the premise that both Alembong and Kishani take bioethics out of the medical field to tackle their ecological concerns. They do this based on their cultural backgrounds. This suffices us to say that they are ethno-inclined as far as ethics is concerned.

In spite of this, some people (particularly the West), as seen in Jonsen's definitions of bioethics, for example, attempt to limit it only to biomedicine or biomedical sciences. It

goes beyond it. It encompasses issues related to the rightness or wrongness of human actions. It questions whatever we do, why we do it, and says why (or why not) we do things. Tristram Engelhardt Jr. is in support of the attempt of Alembong and Kishani as he argues that, the questions addressed in bioethics (and in this case ethno-ethics) are not restricted to the province of physicians, but concerns nurses, other health care professionals, patients, and laymen. He believes that the term *bioethics* in fact encompasses issues that fall outside health care ethics. He justifies that,

> As an undertaking in philosophy, bioethics is an attempt to clarify concepts and to search for conceptual presuppositions. It is an intellectual endeavor. But one must recognize that intellectual undertakings have concrete roots that touch us in our everyday lives. For example, the widespread use of IUDS (intrauterine devices) for contraception, with few of the users feeling any guilt in the matter, presumes that: (1) people do not find such a practice unnatural, or if they do, they judge that state of affairs to be of little or no moral consequence, and (2) people do not find the wastage of zygotes that do not implant as a result of the use of IUDs to involve the taking of the lives of persons, or if they do, they judge the circumstances to have no serious moral significance in that context. When one then wishes to know whether one ought to use an IUD, one will likely be pressed to clarify such views. One will need to examine concepts of unnatural actions and their moral implications, if any. One will need to draw distinctions between human biological and human personal life. Such are intellectual undertakings, philosophical endeavors. However, they spring from practical interests, in this case choosing an acceptable means to avoid an unwanted pregnancy. (7)

It is in this light that Alembong and Kishani are skeptical about bioethics and take it out of the medical field to become ethno-ethics. They seek to address practical interests that are peculiar to their cultural backgrounds. They choose to use ethno-ethics in the field of ecology to create awareness about the way humans are using their environment. Given that the environment is spiritual, ethics in this case tends to witness two different categories namely: Religious and secular ethics.

In fact, having strengthened bioethics outside the medical field, it is also important to note that bioethics finds itself both in the religious and secular spheres. Engelhardt Jr

gives supporting evidences to show that bioethics might have stemmed from the religious praxis, but it is now present in the secular society. He posits that,

> The discussion of issues in bioethics now transpires within the compass of secular pluralist societies. That such societies are secular is in part the result of recent historical forces that have led to the major institutions of most democracies no longer being associated in a significant fashion with an established church, even where vestiges may remain. Such societies are pluralistic in encompassing a wide divergence of moral sentiments and beliefs. Such divergence has likely always been present, however hidden. (4)

The case of African societies may be different in the sense that they may not be secular because of the same historical forces that Engelhardt is pointing out. Their originality and uniqueness reside in their cultural heritage which has been present since time immemorial. As we will discuss in subsequent sections, we must understand that bioethics in Africa is fundamentally linked to the culture of the people. This adds to the reasons why it is ethno-inclined. At a certain point, this ethno-ethics is not about rightness and/ or wrongness (as bioethics is), but what we shall call in this work "lower rightness" and "higher rightness". This is because two actions may be right and still find themselves in dilemmatic situations.

From the discussion above, we can deduce that Western bioethics is:

1. A discipline of applied ethics and;
2. It comprises some sub-disciplines including medical ethics, religious ethics and secular ethics.

In fact, for anything to have bioethics underpinnings, it must possess the following qualities, or at least some of the qualities.

1. It should be normative and have empirical consideration.

2. It should have possibilities of having at least two imperatives, that is, the imperative of being right and the imperative of being wrong, or the imperative of being good and the imperative of being better, or the imperative of being bad and the imperative of being worst.
3. It should dwell on the moral issues of life, about someone and at a certain time.
4. It should be a philosophy engaged in one of its central tasks; aiding a culture to clarify its views of reality and of value.
5. It should be capable of falling under medical ethics, religious ethics, or secular ethics.
6. It should seek to address a pertinent issue of life.
7. It should constitute two possibilities.
8. The two possibilities that it constitutes should both have tendencies of appearing appealing enough so that it becomes confusing to say, right from the start, which is right and which is wrong.

These principles of bioethics are Western and may not squarely fit in the African context. They dwell on the Western approach to ethics. Elvis Imafidon argues that, "the Western approach to bioethics remains only one lens or vantage point from which to approach bioethical issues, and any attempt to impose such an approach on other peoples and cultures will result in an unchecked hegemony and supremacy, and the colonisation of knowledge" (10) This explains why there is every culture's bioethics. His argument is that we should not only focus on the Western principles of bioethics that the West has provided. He adds another one which is relationality/ ubuntu/ communalism when we are dealing with the African context. He says "Autonomy, justice, nonmaleficence and beneficence would not be the only factors that count but relationality as well" when dealing with African ethics. (13)

Within the context of this study, we are looking at ethno-ethics which encompasses this communalism in environmental ethics. More explicitly, we are aligning African ethics with code of conducts, and in relation to ecology, culture and spirituality. But before looking at the African perspective, it will be good to look at the Western perspective so as to ensure continuity.

Having had a general overview of bioethics, it is important to look at the Western (in relation to the African) notions because this is where the crux of the matter lies. The West believes that bioethics started in the West. As we mentioned earlier, Jonsen is one of the founders of Western Bioethics and he believes that bioethics emerged in the 1940s. In fact, he says his book titled *The Birth of Bioethics* "designates the forty years between 1947 and 1987 as the era during which bioethics emerged as a distinct discipline and discourse" (xii).

Alembong and Kishani do not support the motion that bioethics started in the West. Based on their poetry, the term bioethics might have been coined by Westerners, but this does not efface the fact that there were already such practices in Africa in relation to ecoculture and spirituality. In fact, some ecocultural spirituality issues **o**f the African people from time immemorial had been in bioethics situations before the world was coined. In the African context, this is ethno-ethics and ethno-ethics encompasses some elements of bioethics, but goes beyond it.The poets under study situate these in the cultural practices of the Nweh and Nso people which is unique to these cultures. Kishani makes this clear in the poem "Our Way" in the collection, *Konglanjo!* when the persona insists that what makes us unique and outstanding is our way. Our way depicts our culture which encompasses our ethno-ethics in relation to, but not limited to, our ecocultural spirituality. The fourth stanza of the poem "Our Way" reads thus,

Not even the Grecian Mars can forge
Your gongs
Nor can the "lunar artisan" carve
Your old doors
Nor the Beatles belittling
Or Händel handling sing
Your songs
Sound
Your drums
And dance
Your dance. (Kishani 40)

This poem clearly depicts two cultural possibilities: their way (Western cultures) and our way (African cultures). Our way is in direct contrast with their way. Andrew Ngeh posits that Kishani in this poem, "appeals to contemporary audience to conserve and preserve the positive aspects of their time-honoured cultural heritage without which there will not be any national culture" (11). By doing this they situate it under the context of the ethics which clearly valorises African ways. In fact, ethno-ethics and ecocultural spirituality are not left out in this cultural heritage. The fact is that we cannot preserve and protect what has not been in existence. African ethno-ethics is so unique and rooted in African cultures that "not even the Grecian Mars can forge" "nor can the ‘lunar artisan’ carve" "nor the Beatles belittling or Händel handling sing".

Alembong also demonstrates a similar way of practicing such ethics in relation to ecoculture and spirituality in the poem "Cycles" (in the collection *Forest Echoe*) which is about Fonji-nya, the late Fon of Attah. The first three stanzas of the poem go as follows:

Fonji-nya,
You are back to the earth,
The earth in whose hearth
Deep down the womb of our hills
Your human parts took form.

Today you have become earth.
Your flesh and the soil of your birth,
The soil that received your umbilical cord,

Are now one, like the wood and the statue,
Like the ant's spittle and the mud of the anthill,
In order that the fortress of our hope
May rise to touch the sky.

Well,
You are back to the earth
But the Fonship of Attah
Continues for ever, for ever,
For a forest never loses its lions. (Alembong 46)

As indicated in the excerpt above, Fonji-nya has gone back to the earth from which he was made. This ties with the myth of the origin of human beings from the soil which depicts nature. From this, it becomes clear that human existence is a whole process which starts from nature and ends on nature. This process involves spirituality as some rituals are performed at every given stage. For example, in the second stanza above, we mention the ritual which involves the planting of umbilical cord in the soil from which we are made. This is typically an African spiritual practice which helps to connect humans to nature.

The ethno-ethics tendencies that emerge from this poem, and which relate to African ecocultural spirituality emanate from the spontaneous celebration and mourning of the late Fon. With respect to the celebration, African cultures are projected. These cultural elements surface when the persona tells us that,

In the village square
Alung-achaba masquerades
Dance on cobwebs
Like cats in a sprint show.

From a hill in watch
Amiliteh warriors file in,
Like ants dissecting a path,
Saluting the air with smoking guns.

Emerging from their *ndep*
Alung-ndeng'a dancers
Spin on bamboo tips

> Like feathers being tossed on wind beams.
>
> See how nkeng plants dance
> On the tombs of the Ancients of Attah!
> Hear how Lefem groves echo
> The throb of sleeping tombs! (Alembong 49)

The Alung-achaba, Amiliteh, and Alung-ndeng'a as mentioned above are all traditional masquerades, warriors and dancers that spice traditional festivals. They transform cultural celebrations by bringing in much ecstatic feelings among the people. Despite the celebration, the persona still regrets the death of Fonji-nya. He thinks that ten strong men should have been sacrificed so that Fonji-nya could live. The celebration and mourning bring out the controversial issues in death which is connected to nature and spirituality as explained above. This is ethno-ethics in relation to ecocultural spirituality. It has always been part of the African cultural belief systems even though the term bioethics was used to silence it.

The most recurring thing to note in Western bioethics is that it dwells mostly on the areas of individualism and health. This is particularly with early bioethics studies in the West. By the West here, we are generalising. Even though Albert acknowledges that bioethics started in the Western world, he is still careful to draw a thin line between the bioethics in America and that of Europe. He posits that,

> European bioethics knows patterns of socialized health care that have never touched the United States. Many decades of universal availability of health care to the citizens of most European nations color views about the value of both persons and medicine. The ideal of solidarity, the communal responsibility to help those in need, has religious and socialist roots that pervade bioethical thinking across Europe. Solidarity is a European bioethical principle that has only a weak reflection in the American principle of justice. (379)

Despite this distinction between bioethics in America and Europe, most Western studies laid down principles for the practice of bioethics in the individual patient or health

sciences. Fundamentally, these principles may (and may not) be the same outside health sciences. But we must acknowledge that the foundation of bioethics in the West resides on these principles. In addition, we must understand that these principles may vary in terms of time, place and the area of study in which we are implementing bioethics. Despite this, the West generally have their own notion of concepts and believe that those notions are universal. This explains why Albert thinks that principles of bioethics should be the same in every part of the world. He is of the opinion that,

> Principles obviously have a place in the bioethical method wherever it is found. The standard principles of American bioethics, respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, are cited everywhere, perhaps because of the welcome given to foreign scholars at the Kennedy Institute where these principles were framed. However, these principles are often criticized as inadequate and even inappropriate. European scholars have suggested alternatives: for example, liberty, therapeutic wholeness, and social subsidiarity. Justice is often reinterpreted as solidarity. The principle of respect for the autonomy of persons particularly perplexes bioethicists outside the United States. They find the American interpretation of this Kantian notion peculiar. While bioethics everywhere aims at securing the rights of individuals in health care and rejects the medical paternalism that has often been even more oppressive in non-American cultures, the strong emphasis given to personal autonomy seems an exaggeration. It is, says Patrick Verspieren, "an excessive reaction against paternalism to give an absolute primacy to autonomy and to affirm that the sick person has the right to decide by himself his choices and the rules that should be applied to him." He believes that the American notion of autonomy, particularly as expressed by H. Tristram Engelhardt, is a way of absolving physicians of their responsibility for the sick. (379)

Bioethics principles cannot be the same across the globe because each society has a culture that shapes its ethical principles. Also in sharp contrast to African views, most Westerners continue to limit bioethics in the individual patient or health sciences. This cannot hold in the African context because Africans believe in a communal lifestyle. This explains why their ethno-ethics resides on the spirit of Ubuntu. Kishani discusses the communalistic lifestyle of Africans in the poem “Baskets of Kola Nuts” in the collection, *A Basket of Kola Nuts*. The speaker says,

A Basket of Kola Nuts
At its best,
A modest exchange
Of our handshake, blest
With a kola, pod or seed,
Often calls for the mutual sharing
Of our life's joys and sorrows, our cry
And our laughter! As an omen and a token,
A catalyst and a stimulant of success and failure,
An offer of kola nuts often opens all kinds of roads
We take to walk at once in life like trickles down cheeks (15)

The poem is about the importance of kila nut as a means of reconnecting people. Kola nuts easily link people together when they share it. It is a symbol of communalism or Ubuntu. The speaker believes that when we share kola nuts, we share our joys and our sorrows all together. In this sense, there is no individualistic tendency. The people's communal lifestyle enables them to achieve universal failure or success. Furthermore, the speaker makes us to understand that when we offer kola nuts and gain a communal way of life, our life's roads are opened. In his words "An offer of kola nuts often opens all kinds of roads/ We take to walk at once in life like trickles down cheeks" (15). The use of this simile is to project the nature of life in a society of communalism. All these support the fact that, unlike Western bioethics, African ethno-ethics aligns with communalism or Ubuntu and it can go a long way to prevent the declining nature of African spirituality. Kishani expatiates on the idea of kola nuts leading to the Ubuntu spirit in the poem "An Open Kola Nut Basket" where the speaker tells us that,

A kola nut to split and share opens a lively makarapaati anew!
Since teenagers and mad people only like to mimic, a partaker
Keenly celebrates such a kola festival in the open and brings
Both fiends and friends together! (43)

Bringing both fiends and friends together means a communal lifestyle in the African context. It is a way which has been in the tradition of Africans before the ever presence of Westerners with their individualistic tendencies and capitalist greed.

Engelhardt thinks that "Bioethical questions arise against the backdrop of a moral crisis that is closely tied to a series of losses of both ethical and ontological conviction in the West" (1). It suffices to say that there has been a great fall in the value attached to the respect for ethical and ontological convictions. This has brought insecurities and skepticism into some moral issues of life which, as it were, had no uncertainty originally. The current state of affairs in moral conduct has driven humans to visualize a world of possibilities where there is no absolute truth. This has played a great role for the emergence of bioethics and ethno-ethics. The historicity of bioethics can therefore, not be a smooth line of flowing storyline. It varies from one individual to another and from one society to another. It is for this reason that the African strand is important in this study and we call it ethno-ethics. This diversity of opinions in the concept(s) explains why Albert situates the birth of bioethics within a context of American evolution process while Engelhardt Jr places it against the backdrop of moral crisis. Alembong and Kishani position it in relation to African ecocultural spirituality as we have observed. In this light, we cannot outrageously use the same compass to examine bioethics and we cannot make it universal as Western critics have always attempted to do.

African Ethno-ethics and African Experiences: the Ecoculturality and Spirituality Evolutions

Given that numerous questions surround bioethics, especially when it is placed in the African context, it is plausible to discuss the evolution of ecocultural spirituality from an ethno-ethics paradigm. African ethno-ethics is its moral philosophy. Imafidon posits that, “It is therefore practically impossible to separate African ethno-ethics or moral culture from African ethics or moral philosophy” (8). The question of African bioethics is a controversial question to which answers cannot be granted at ease. To tackle this,

we must first of all understand clearly and concisely what Africa is. It is in this line of thought that we shall begin this part of the work by contextualizing and situating Africa in its most understandable way. The *Library Education in Africa: A Foundational Perspective* describes Africa as the world's second-largest and second-most populous continent, after Asia. At about 30.3 million kilometers Square (11.7 million square miles) including adjacent islands, it covers 6% of Earth's total surface area and 20% of its land area. With 1.3 billion people as of 2018, it accounts for about 16% of the world's human population.

In *An Overview of The Physical Geography of Africa Physical Features,* Africa is said to straddle the equator, having an almost equal south and north extent. This division of Africa into almost two equal parts (lengthwise) across the equator makes the climatic and physical conditions in the north repeat themselves in the south. For example, the Kalahari Desert is the South's answer to the Sahara; the Karoo matches the Maghreb, while the conditions in the Cape area are almost identical to those of the Mediterranean region. Africa is the most tropical of all continents. Climate and vegetation range from equatorial rainforests, tropical deserts and savanna grassland to Mediterranean. The Sahara Desert, the largest of its kind anywhere in the world, is over 10.4 million kilometers square. North to south is approximately 1800 kilometers and east-west is 5600 kilometers.

The above is a physical description of Africa. We must understand this physical description because there are a lot of derogatory descriptions of Africa from Europeans like Hegel. In the *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel's last words on Africa are as follows:

> Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained -- for all purposes of connection with the rest of the world-- shut up; it is the Gold-land compressed within itself - the land of childhood, which lying beyond the days of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night.

> The negro as already observed exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality – all that we call feeling - if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character ... .
>
> At this point we leave Africa never to mention it again. For it is no historical of the world; it has no movement of development to exhibit. Historical movement in it that is in its northern part - belongs to the Asiatic or European World ... .
>
> What we properly understand as Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's history...
>
> The History of the World travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of History, Asia is the beginning.

This is just a tip of the iceberg to indicate how negative some critics and scholars of European origin have described Africa. A continent attributed such misconceptions will probably face a situation where there would be doubt about the existence or non-existence of certain concepts. But one fact that is certain is that these negative descriptions are not true. Isidore Okpewho argues that these people are not versed in African cultures. In his words,

> There used to be a widely held view - especially among European intellectuals who observed African societies in the nineteenth century (see Burton 1865) - that there was nothing of true poetic merit in traditional African literature. Poetry, these scholars argued, is a mark of an advanced culture or civilization and the business of men of specialized skill and training who devote their time to observing and commenting on life with beauty and with seriousness. Traditional African societies were, on the contrary, still groping in the dark and battling with elementary problems of existence and had not yet attained the level of perception where men could engage in the pursuit of poetic excellence; besides, their languages were not yet sufficiently developed to cope with the complex techniques of poetic expression. For a long time, the study of traditional African literature was done by scholars who had very little feeling for the languages and customs they met. Some of them tried to understand the basic grammatical systems of the languages and even mastered the patterns of speech; but this was nothing compared to the empathy of those for whom the words have meanings and implications that go beyond the ordinary patterns of sound. Within the last three decades, African scholars have undertaken to collect and present samples of their people's poetry to the outside world (e.g. Nketia 1955, Babalola 1966. Kunene 1970, Awoonor 1974); it is no exaggeration to say that in these publications we can feel the vitality of the traditional sensibility more

> deeply than in earlier publications, and that the skills of the poets are far more convincingly represented. (4 - 5)

This is a typical example to show that the people who have written negative stories to tarnish the image of Africa either have little or no knowledge of Africa or do not have a mastery of the language/culture of the people. The poetry of Alembong and Kishani give a more realistic thought and impression of Africa and her culture which can help to reposition the misconceived realities. Alembong, for example, in the poem "Bamenda" (in the collection *Forest Echoes*) gives us the impression that there are misconceptions of Africa (here represented by Bamenda), but it remains what it is. According to the persona in the third stanza of the poem,

> Bamenda,
> heterodox people to some,
> scathing tongues to others,
> But Bamenda is Bamenda. (26)

The poem suggests difference. It denotes a people who are different, not necessarily inferior. Only misconceptions inferiorise them. When the persona says that the people of Bamenda are "heterodox people to some", it suggests a difference in their spirituality and other areas of life. Despite the misconceptions attributed to Bamenda, the persona tells us that "Bamenda is Bamenda". This means that the destructive epigones given to Bamenda cannot change its state, so too is Africa. The misconceptions that have been attributed to Africa cannot repeal its state. Africa remains unique in her ways.

In the poem "Yaounde" in the Collection *Konglanjo!*, Kishani repositions the ecological, cultural and spiritual misconceptions of Yaounde (Africa). He, like Alembong in "Bamenda", stresses on the uniqueness of Yaounde. According to the persona, Yaounde is a,

City of greenness
City of freshness
City of godly winds
City of camwood-maidens
City of unsung names
City – green of our mustard-seeds
of the calabash and the iron-leaf
I pray thee to shelter our tears and bones. (63)

The persona in the poem is aware of the negative and derogative attributes of Africa. His focus on the city of Yaounde builds in some qualities which the world has deprived Yaounde of. Like Bamenda, Younde is full of pessimistic determinism. Its natural environs are full of hope as it is green, fresh, full of godly winds etc. Yaounde is full of experiences like African experiences which make it unique and different.

The continent of Africa has undergone a series of experiences that are unique and can unquestionably be used to differentiate Africa from other continents of the world. We need to do away with some of these experiences in order to have full control of our ecological and spiritual places and spaces. This is because some experiences are destructive. According to Val Plumwood, we must avoid destructive epigones such as capitalism, economic rationalism, unbridled technological development etc. in order to survive. In fact, "our survival and that of other species on this planet requires us to recognize our place in the 'more than human' world and our dependence - whatever a naturalized Cartesian dualism may have led us to believe – both spiritually and materially on it" (492). African experiences are many, but we shall focus here on slavery and slave trade, colonialism, Neo Colonialism, and Globalization. All these have played a role in African cultures in which the question of African ethno-ethics in relation to ecoculture and spirituality can be traced.

To begin with, slavery and slave trade were fundamental in the destruction of Africa and its people, thereby negatively slowing down African ethno-ethics in relation to ecocultural spirituality. V. Y Mudimbe posits that,

> From the beginning of the eighteenth century, there had been a tremendous increase in the slave trade and a profitable trans-Atlantic economy which involved most of the Western countries. In West Africa, Dahomey was a powerful commercial partner of European traders. The Ashanti empire expanded, dominating the Akans and the Oyo kingdom further to the east and increasing its power as it grew. Freed slaves and impoverished Africans were settled by European sponsored organizations in present-day Sierra Leone. (23)

But slavery and slave trade were fought and abolished. Mudimbe adds that,

> Africans expelled the Portuguese from their fortresses in the northern region of Mozambique; and down south, in 1770, there was the first war between Dutch immigrants and Bantus. Two years later, James Bruce, traveling from North to Central Africa, reached the source of the White Nile in the very year that Chief Justice Mansfield declared in England that slavery was against the law (Verger, 1968). (23)

Slave trade witnessed attendant ills such as massive death, loss of African population, loss of trust etc. These played a role in the evolution of Africa ethno-ethics which has found a place in ecocultural and spirituality discourse in this thesis as we shall see subsequently. But these did not mark the end of the negative fate of Africa. A new phase emerged and that was colonialism. G.D Nyamndi defines colonialism as "the act of one culture sitting on another culture" (35). This gives the impression of subordination of one culture by another. Subordinating one culture means subordination of its ecocultural and spiritual values too. The question of the rightness or wrongness of this act immediately transcends into numerous questions.

One will not be wrong to cite Polycarp A. Ikuenobe who contends that, "African epistemology was destroyed by the exploitative ethos of European colonialism and modernity" (2). Alembong and Kishani set out to reposition this destroyed epistemology.

For example they question Western bioethics which aligns with capitalism and support African ethno-ethics which falls under the auspices of communalism. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin say "The term colonialism is important in defining the specific form of cultural exploitation that developed with the expansion of Europe over the last 400 years." (40). Another name for colonialism is imperialism. Quoting Edward Said, Ashcroft et al posit that,

> Although many earlier civilizations had colonies, and although they perceived their relations with them to be one of a central imperium in relation to a periphery of provincial, marginal and barbarian cultures, a number of crucial factors entered into the construction of the post-Renaissance practices of imperialism. Edward Said offers the following distinction: ""imperialism" means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; "colonialism", which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory' (Said 1993:8). (40)

Africa experienced the cruelty of this colonialism, fought against it and, even though it was not completely eradicated, it transformed and took a different form. Ashcroft et al argue that "Thus colonialism, far from disappearing as the century goes on, too often merely modified and developed into the neo-colonialism of the post-independence period" (44).

Neo-colonialism simply means a new form of colonialism. The term was coined by Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana. Nkrumah was also the leading exponent of Pan-Africanism. He coined the term in his book titled *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism (1965)*. Ashcroft et al define Neo Colonialism by saying that "The term has since been widely used to refer to any and all forms of control of the ex-colonies after political independence." (146). They add in support of Nkrumah that,

> the last stage of capitalism, suggested that, although countries like Ghana had achieved political independence, the ex- colonial powers and the newly emerging superpowers such as the United States continued to play a decisive

> role in their cultures and economies through new instruments of indirect control such as international monetary bodies, through the power of multinational corporations and cartels which artificially fixed prices in world markets, and through a variety of other educational and cultural NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). In fact, Nkrumah argued that neo- colonialism was more insidious and more difficult to detect and resist than the direct control exercised by classic colonialism. (146)

In essence, one will not be wrong to deduce that colonialism and Neo-colonialism are birds of the same feather. They both have impact on the evolution of ethical considerations in Africa. Another which comes within and after them is globalization. "Globalization is the process whereby individual lives and local communities are affected by economic and cultural forces that operate world-wide. In effect it is the process of the world becoming a single place" (Ashcroft et al 100). These forces could be Christianity, global communication, world military power etc. Vivian Tah Bongka posits that,

> The consequences of globalisation affect all aspects of land and life in the new millennium, though the prime mover that pushes globalisation may be economic activities. Profound changes are taking place as far as social development, political arrangements, and cultural patterns are concerned. The process of globalisation has rendered natural resources to become global commodities. thereby implicating the planet's physical environment. Financial decisions made in faraway places affect and alter local ecosystem which affects detrimentally the world's climate, waterways, oceans, and forest. Because lives are now profoundly entangled with the phenomenon of globalisation, understanding how it manifests becomes a challenging and necessary task. (235)

Ashcroft et al add that Globalism is the perception of the world as a function or result of the processes of globalization upon local communities. According to them, the term has had a meteoric rise since the mid-1980s, up until which time words such as 'international' and 'international relations' were preferred. Globalization has outrageous negative effects on developing cultures and nature. It is partly because of globalization that the West things that their bioethics principles are universal. They do not consider

that each culture is unique and has its own ethical considerations. Ranjay K. Singh posits that,

> In the context of community-based projects, global perceptions of biodiversity conservation and scientific understanding of ecosystem dynamics are confronted with local communities‟ knowledge, practices, perceptions and values associated with the different components of the ecosystem. (2)

Discourse on African ethno-ethics in relation to the evolution of ecoculture and spirituality tend to be highly affected by globalization in contemporary era. This is as a result of the meeting and mixing of cultures. What appears ecologically friendly in one culture could be unfriendly in another culture. But since cultures are mixing, the line of ethical considerations is blurred because we no longer stick to cultural beliefs of what is ecologically friendly based on our culture. It is against this backdrop that Alembong and Kishani demonstrate a strong emphasis on our need to reclaim our cultural roots in order to maintain our ecological and spiritual balance. This can only happen if we stick to our ethno-ethics principles about nature and spirituality.

Even though globalization has outrageous negative effects on developing cultures just as Neo-colonialism, it is basically different from it. Ashcroft et al say of globalization that,

> This should not be mistaken for an assumption that somehow globalization is neo-colonialism per se - the two phenomena are very different and result in a different range of material effects. But the principles and strategies of engagement are similar." (Ashcroft et al 7).

The two are both colonial tools which have been a source of threat for the development of Africa, African ethno-ethics, African ecosystem and African spirituality. With this brief knowledge of Africa and her experiences, it is now worthy to examine in details the question of African ethno-ethics in relation to the evolution of ecocultural spirituality with evidence from the four texts under study.

There is a huge debate about the existence or non-existence of an African bioethics (ethno-ethics). The problem begins from the general European notion of non-existence of some typical concepts in Africa. Europeans rejected the fact that Africa, before the coming of the white man, had these concepts, or even practiced them. In some cases, they brought their own notion of concepts. The white man came to Africa with his own notion of concepts. In doing this, he dismissed African notions and implemented his own. Wolete argues that,

> Western expansionism and colonialism around the world have been largely responsible for the destruction of other worldviews. It is through their intrusion into other places that they finally introduced and spread their own worldviews, imposing them on other people as a universal model of attaining knowledge. Western philosophers used their discourse to propagate their epistemology as the only logical, rational and scientific way to attain knowledge, thereby dismissing any other forms of episteme that do not conform to their model. (190)

Africans, for many years, lived with these white notions until the postcolonial period where these notions are being questioned. Bioethics/ ethno-ethics happens to be one of such concepts. Kazeem and Adeyelure argue that we cannot fully understand bioethics in Africa until we decolonize it. There are so many complexities in European perception of concepts in Africa, partly because of lack of in-depth knowledge of Africa. This warrants us to always decolonize these Western notions. Alembong and Kishani use their poetry to decolonize these Western notions with respect to Western bioethics and African etho-ethics, linking the latter to African Experiences. The peculiarities of these experiences reside on the fact that it is basically in the domain of ecocultural and spiritual evolutions.

In the poem "Green Call" in *Forest Echoes*, Alembong uses a series of repetitions to recall the importance of green in an ecocultural atmosphere. In the poem, the persona reveals that green enables the smooth functioning of all other aspects of nature.

Technically, Alembong is presenting an ethno-ethics situation in the ecocultural praxis in the sense that, we are facing two imperatives: the imperative of greening nature and the imperative of destroying nature. According to the persona, green is the more preferred of the two imperatives. The persona says,

> Roses yield tons of green
> As dung yields hectares of green
> Life thrives on green
> As elephants do on tons of green.
>
> Green, green, green as green
> Melon is sweet when green.
> Green, green, green as green
> Traffic flows when lights are green. (Alembong 66)

To say life thrives on green as seen in the third line of the first stanza above is to say that green is more preferable. Green here metaphysically stands for flourishing nature. It stands for nature at large. Nature does well when it is typically green. In fact green shows rebirth in nature. It is most often during good weather conditions that green is rampant.

The persona in the poem constantly repeats the second stanza above which says:

> Green, green, green as green
> Melon is sweet when green.
> Green, green, green as green
> Traffic flows when lights are green. (66)

The aim of this repetition is to stress on the importance of green/ nature or ecology in human life which encompasses issues of ethno-ethics. The fact that Alembong also places the green earth in contrast to its “ungreen” counterpart puts the situation in an ethno-ethics perspective. Therefore, the ecocultural sphere of the poetry of Alembong is rich in ethno-ethics. Kishani also depicts this in his poetry. The poem "Ruins" in *Konglanjo!* depicts our cultural values which we have left in ruins, probably because of

our acquisition of new cultural values. In the fourth and fifth stanzas, the persona qualifies our abandonment of nature with our neglect of our cultural values which are significant in developing our lives and local culture. The persona says,

> Kola trees we abandon unplucked in dismay
> inquiring from spiders and egg-pods,
> from our *kidiv* calabash-portions of rituals
> in seasons of want and bloom
> amidst dirges of the legacy we began to till
> on the eve of their lives.
>
> Ruins!
> The tattered music-notes of ages
> we still nurse for incoming
> I salute you. (Kishani 32 - 33)

The above quoted lines of the poem demonstrate our abandonment of nature in ruins. This is as a result of our reception of foreign cultures which prevent us from focusing on ours. He qualifies our music as "tattered music-notes" to show that this has experienced the test of time. Despite this, "we still nurse for incoming". This means that we still make ourselves receptive to foreign music or cultures. In our dilemmatic state of two cultural possibilities, the persona wants us to turn to our cultural roots. This encapsulates turning to ethno-ethics rather than bioethics. He insists that,

> And in search of other words
> Let drums and xylophone notes soothe
> and embellish the names you bear! (Kishani 33)

What the persona expects of his people is reincarnation. His people need to go back to the things that used to hold them together. That is their cultural heritage. This cultural heritage is metaphorically represented by drums and xylophone-notes. They are calm and the people can easily align with them more than forcing themselves to new cultural values while leaving theirs in ruins. There is a universal cry about the destruction of nature. This cry resides on the general premise that humans tend to abuse green/ nature

rather than preserve it. This has been the major preoccupation of most ecocritics. Clearly, neither ecology, nor culture, nor spirituality is basically new in the field of literature. In fact, Ecocultural spirituality has been studied from diverse perspectives. Studies of an outlook from the Romantic through the Transcendental and industrial era show that, there has been a decline in the link between humans and green/ nature. Scholars such as Glotfelty, Fromm and Ngiewih (demonstrated in the background to this study), have argued that humans are systematically shifting from nature by causing damage on green. Glotfelty and Fromm reinforce this contention when they submit that,

> in the early days, man had no power over Nature and turned, instead to his mind and its gods for consolation. Meanwhile, his mind produces a technology that enables his body to be as strong as the gods, rendering the gods superfluous and putting Nature in a cage. Then it appears that there is no Nature and that man has produced virtually everything out of his own ingenuity and it can be bought in a supermarket or a discount store, wrapped in plastic. By now, man is scarcely aware that he is eating animals and producing wastes or that the animals come from somewhere and the wastes are headed somewhere. This "somewhere" turns out to be, practically speaking, a finite world whose basic components cannot be created or destroyed although (and here is the shocker) they can be turned into forms that are unusable by man. As more and more of these basic materials are rendered unusable by man, it becomes apparent that man has failed to see that now, as in the past, the roots of his being are in the earth; and he has failed to see this because Nature, whose effects on man were formerly immediate, is now mediated by technology so that it appears that technology and not Nature is actually responsible for everything. This has given to man a sense that he mentally and voluntarily determines the ground of his own existence and that his body is almost a dispensable adjunct of his being. (35)

This excerpt adds to the problem raised in this thesis that the human being is gradually shifting attention from nature as he/she is gradually giving credit to technology at the expense of nature. In doing these, humans systematically violate the spiritual connection between them and nature thereby leading to a decline in spirituality. But the fundamental question is: how has this violation of this connection been tackled, and from which critical perspectives?

In summary, a thorough study from the Romantic through the transcendental era shows that there has been a decline in the link between humans and nature thereby leading to a decline in African spirituality. Scholars like Ngiewih, Glotfelty and Fromm argue that humans are systematically shifting from nature. But given that Africans are spiritually tied to nature as Kunene, Achebe, Tala, Alembong, Asante etc. argue, it becomes problematic when human/nature link begins to subside.

If Africans do not want their spirituality to decline, their human/nature link must not wane. Moreover, we should be receptive of our ethno-ethics which clarifies our doubts based on our cultural backgrounds rather than forcing ourselves into bioethics which is Western inclined. The dilemmatic complexity of forcing into a new culture and remaining with your own culture finds itself present here. Thus, Alembong and Kishani prefer that we hold our cultural values strong and with a lot of care too. In this regard, the question of doubt about African ethno-ethics in relation to the evolution of ecoculture and spirituality becomes crystal clear. It is simply an ideal input of Western thought patterns.

Aden Husien and Olira Kebede postulate that, "there has been a divergent view regarding the concept and philosophy of African morality. Some aliens tend to cogitate Africa as devoid of morality, moral consciousness ..."(57). This happens equally with regards to African etno-ethics. While some European schools of thought say there is no ethics in Africa, others say even if there is ethics in Africa, it was brought by Europeans. This suggests that there is bioethics, rather than etho-ethics. In either of the ways, it follows that the absence of the white man in Africa would have meant the absence of ethics, based on Western opinions. In this sense, they submit to the fact that African ethics is directly connected to the African experience of colonialism. This happens to be a false claim because based on our arguments above, illustrated with pertinent poems

from the poetry collections of Alembong and Kishani, African ethno-ethics has been so inclined to her culture and ecocultural spirituality.

In the African perspective, there are scholars and critics who do not care to know if there was ethics in Africa before the coming of the white man or not. Their greatest concern is the fact that the West has already come in contact with Africa and there must be that drop of mulattoism in every facet of life. This has ethics inclusive. African ethics has already gone in contact with the West and so can no longer be purely African. There is therefore the need to decolonize it since there is a general wind of change intended for the decolonization of concepts and disciplines in Africa. Alembong's "The Passing Wind" does not only signify a political wind of change, but it also involves change in our perception of some concepts in Africa. Our ecocultural spirituality cannot experience its originality if we do not rethink about it. We rethink about it because it has come in contact with the West thereby putting it in a dilemmatic situation. Given that ethics itself has undergone colonization, we need to understand that in order to reposition our ecocultural and spiritual values we have to start from decolonizing ethics, which is a way of seeing things from our cultural lenses. It is for this reason that we prefer the term ethno-ethics. Ethno-ethics here is a strand of African ethics. It may also be referred to as African bioethics or bioethics in Africa.

Kazeem and Adeyelure focus their article titled "Decolonizing Bioethics in Africa" on the establishment of pure Africa bioethics which is ethno-ethics. Elvis Imafidon says "Thus, the ethno has found its way into philosophical discourse because researchers in philosophy are more than ever aware of the importance of the place of culture, context and race in understanding the various aspects of philosophical concerns" (3). He adds that, "African moral culture can thus be described aptly as African ethno-ethics ...

African ethno-ethics provides a rich resource for theorisation, articulation and conceptualisation in African moral philosophy.” (4 – 5)

According to Kazeem and Adeyelure, "the call for decolonization of disciplines in Africa is not new" (1). They make it clear that when they talk about decolonization they are referring to "a process of self-critical awareness of foreseeing, discovering and avoiding hegemonic institutionalization as well as mental colonization of concepts and disciplines in contemporary African scholarship" (1 – 2). Supposedly, ethics is one of these concepts that need decolonization. One clear idea in this sense is that if there is decolonization of ethics, it means that it has been colonized before. When we decolonize ethics, we reshape the way we think about our cultures, ecology and spirituality at the same time. This goes same with other concepts. A concept, thus, cannot be decolonized when it has not been colonized before. It is in this sense that we have argued that the ecological, cultural and spiritual links that have been distorted by capitalist greed, world evolution and technological advancement involves the effects of colonization on African ethics. The good thing is that Alembong and Kishani reposition these links.

This gives a sense that there used to be pure African ethics which was ethno in nature, but out of the sudden it got in contact with the West and was colonized. The West experienced evolution and technological advancement which distorted the link between humans and nature. Africans plunged into the same situation because of their contact with the West. This made their notions blurred and thus, suddenly again, there is a call for decolonization. It goes without saying that the question of African etno-ethics is in support of the existence of African strand of ethics even before the coming of the white man. It is this ethics which Alembong and Kishani think that we can focus on if we want to experience a different cultural, ecological and spiritual integrity. In order to

project this clearly, Alembong and Kishani demonstrate that this is evident in our oral literature.

Contrary to Western bioethics which is in Western Philosophy, African ethno-ethics at this point was/ is in African oral literature. There are African oral tales, proverbs, songs, etc. which teach about the rightness or wrongness of human actions in relation to ecocultural spirituality. Imafidon posits that, "In articulating and defending African moral theory as communitarian, African philosophers and ethicists have thus depended largely on African moral culture or ethno ethics, drawing resources from maxims, proverbs, adages, lived experiences, storytelling and community systemic structuring and organisation"(6). These are all oral forms. The oral forms help in building the society that is void of actions that can destroy nature, culture and spirituality. In short, moral issues of life that help in the preservation of nature, culture and spirituality are fundamental in the oral tradition which has been in constant evolution. For example, in the poem "Denying Melpomene" (in the collection *The Passing Wind*) the persona uses a number of proverbs which are rich in ethno-ethics situations that reposition African ecological, cultural and spiritual links. The first stanza of the poem reads thus,

> Who knows if one
> should hold fast to dream
> harbouring in his skull's roof
> a red glow to thaw the heavy night,
> tending in cerebrum's nursery
> unsung lilies to unseat hawthorns
> He'd go flying like the eagle
> or sink like a beaten vessel (Alembong 38)

These lines demonstrate the dilemma in dreams. The two imperatives there are the imperative of becoming a reality and the imperative of not becoming a reality if we hold fast to them. The persona uses elements of nature such as "the eagle" to sustain this proverb. Moreover, he uses similes to expand the depth of the two ethno-ethics

probabilities as he says in lines 7 and 8 that, “He’d go flying like the eagle/ or sink like a beaten vessel”. The dream in this poem could be the dream of repositioning our cultural and spiritual links. In the same poem, the persona makes use of another proverb in the fourth stanza when he says,

> Unless a grain lies beneath the clay
> it remains an only grain. (Alembong 38)

This immediately suggests that we need to take action in defining our ethics in terms of ecocultural spirituality. This will be explained in details later. We will not be wrong to argue, therefore, that there is African ethno-ethics and it has an interconnectedness with the African experiences of colonization since it has been colonized before.

The view of decolonization of bioethics in favour of African ethno-ethics in Africa is supported by other scholars such as Catherine Myser, and Christy Rentmeester. Catherine Myser remarks that:

> I believe the time is right in the development of the field for some “custom checks” on all sides of the national borders in question, exploring what is intentionally or unintentionally being developed and exported or imported, any unintended (negative) effects of exporting or importing “nonnative” species of bioethics into other countries, and relevant “local” developments or transformations that are taking place, whether noticed or unnoticed, outside or inside the countries in question." (see Kazeem and Adeyelure 2016)

She believes that there exists a native species of bioethics which ought to be implemented in Africa. This species is ethno-ethics even though she does not use the word, ethno-ethics. What she calls nonnative species of bioethics is that which may be imported. Thus, ethno/bioethical principles must be culturally based according to her. This is because every culture has its unique way. This gives more reasons why African ecocultural spirituality is been repositioned by Alembong and Kishani to fit in the category of African cultures. It is in the global market that cultures begin to meet and

mix. Some cultures tolerate what other cultures see as ills or taboos. This further explains why native bioethics must be distinguished from nonnative. That is, ethno-ethics being differentiated from bioethics. This has been addressed by a good number of scholars and critics.

Their views have convergent and divergent points which make the whole show complex at a certain point and then easy at another point. Our focal point here is on discussion of some of the typical critical perspectives on African ethno-ethics which have been advanced by other scholars and critics. It is only by doing this that we will be able to see clearly and precisely the relationship between African ethno-ethics and ecocultural spirituality which are different from Western worldview. We have briefly discussed some of these views at the level of literature review. At this juncture, we shall be discussing the views in details while also adding others that were not discussed earlier.

As seen above, the question of the decolonization of bioethics in Africa is one of the highly-talked problems of human society in Africa. The Postcolonial era has been an era for the decolonization of concepts and disciplines that contribute to the destruction of Africa and her environs. A good number of scholars and critics alike have laid emphasis on this decolonization process. To begin with, Rentmeester talks about nonnative bioethics. By this, Rentmeester is referring to bioethics which is Western inclined. He thinks, for instance, that Western bioethics (nonnative bioethics) with its origin in nineteenth-century physical and biological scientific and technological development in biomedicine, “sprang from the same objectifying tendencies that nourished nineteenth-century racism, sexism, and imperialism.” (see Kazeem and Adeyelure 2016).

This is to say that nonnative bioethics had a meteoric inclusion in the African experiences. It is not every critic who abides to Rentmeester’s claim. Some critics think

that he forced this premise and that it will be difficult for the premise to hold. For example, Kazeem and Adeyelure think that "Rentmeester's claim can be argued to be mere association of bioethics evolution with the historical context and epochal events that marked the nineteenth-century, the blossom of imperialism during the period may not necessarily be connected with bioethics.

However, Rentmeester could be right in the sense that the West has always believed that it is/was ethically right for them to consider themselves superior to all other races. This superiority and inferiority question has been a foundational theme in postcolonial literature. On top of that, the West has always believed that it is their own notion of concepts and disciplines that is higher in terms of goodness and originality. This explains why unlike African ethno-ethics, Western bioethics sees its values as universal. In fact, it values the issue of universalism. It is therefore palpable that the West believes that the preamble of bioethics in Africa cannot be complete without a mention of the West which is the so-called father of bioethics. The argument, however, so far is that ethics (either "bio" or "ethno") is not new in Africa and Africans did not learn about it from the West.

Alembong and Kishani criticize Western bioethics because it refuses to see the environmental problem in Africa from the perspective of Africans. According to them their poetry, the root of ethno-ethics is deep in Africa like the root of bioethics is from a faraway origin in history or culture. They do not vaguely support the claim of ethics emanating from the West. In the poem "Baskets of Kola Nuts" in *A Basket of Kola Nuts*, Kishani valorises the kola nut which is a cultural symbol and which has been in existence for so long and signifies pong history of ethno-ethics. The persona in the poem says,

> Nature’s kola nut ever numbers its lobes or pods
> With unique varieties of colour, smell, size and taste
> That woo the mind with a fine touch to speak in a tongue
> Of no accents to other consumers both indoors and outdoors!
> It takes an agent to plant, but a village’s world to eat a kola nut!
> As honest partakers expect to win rather than to corrupt a kind gift,
> The kola nut we offer heals to uphold peace in its golden handshake! (15)

The speaker describes the kola lobes and gives them human feelings and qualities such as "smell", "taste", "colour" and "size". The kola unites people despite the languages that they speak. To show that one existing culture can go down to an unpredictable number of generations, the persona tells us that "It takes an agent to plant, but a village’s world to eat a kola nut!" This means that an entire village can practice a specific culture for long.

The ethno-thics equivalence of this process is that, ethno-ethics can be practiced by an entire community for quite a long time. The long duration of cultural practices embodies the ethno-ethics practices of the community in question. We cannot therefore, join the West to argue about the origin of their bioethics, and we cannot limit the origin of ethics in Africa to the West. Its origin is as long as the origin of cultures in Africa and it is ethno-ethics in the context of this thesis.

Given that there is no school of thought without controversies, we must acknowledge another school that debunks the ever early presence of ethics (be it “bio” or “ethno”) in Africa. They argue that Africa learnt about ethics and its notions from the West. They argue in spite of our clear arguments that there has always been ethno-ehics in Africa, rooted in African culture. They argue that Africa, as well as other developing countries, never knew anything about bioethics/ ethno-ethics before. To an extent, the African mind was conceived to be shallow in thinking and could not conceive any ethics ideas. Salliane Liengu Wolete argues that,

> Deeply convinced about their worldview on truth and reality, Western philosophers find it difficult to comprehend how a people who depend on myths, rituals, deities, ancestors, communalism, family and divinations can pretend to interpret and make sense of the truth and realities concerning human existence. To them, only inferior minds like those of Africans can depend on such frivolities as a valid model to attain truth and reality of existence. Consequently, by upholding and disseminating stereotyped impressions of Africa's inferiority, they find justifications to impose their worldview as part of their civilizing mission." (191)

It should be noted that the critics here are not ultimately in support of Western bioethical thinking in Africa. They are not also against the decolonization of bioethics in Africa. Their primary argument here is that bioethics was brought to Africa and needs to either be abolished or decolonized. They argue that it was only imported, and this importation has been a threat to those receiving countries. Their shortsightedness is of ethno-ethics which is of African inclination.If we go by their views, we may be tempted to limit our ecocultural spirituality because it will mean that it was also imported since ethno-ethics is imbedded in it. But as our argument goes, Alembong and Kishani are of the opinion that our ecocultural spirituality cannot emanate from Western ecocultural spirituality. The two have met and mixed and this is why Africans are beginning to deviate from nature, but the two poets help to recreate typical African ecocultural spirituality by situating it in a ethno-ethics paradigm. Alembong and Kishani believe that cultures should be opened to one another and be dependent on one another. That is a mutual dependence of cultures. They mediate the biews of radicalists like De Vries Raymond and Leslie Rott.

Raymond and Rott view the exportation of bioethics to Africa and all developing countries as a threat to the culture of the people. In a larger paradigm, the importation of foreign bioethics in Africa means that Africans need to reshape their view of their nature, culture and spirituality. Raymond and Rott liken it to the importation of Western Religions into Africa which has played a vital role in the extinction of African

Traditional Religions. Thus, they do not support the importation and exportation of bioethics into Africa. They completely wipe out the idea of bioethics, ignoring its benefits to the African cosmology. Bioethics to them is more of a colonial tool. This means that bioethics is capable of transforming the mentality of Africans. Kishani depicts this transformation in the poem, "A Change of Heart" in the collection *A Basket of Kola Nuts*.

> A change at heart
> Takes place at best
> Within the kernel too,
> Where a crook turns tail
> To become an expert cook
> A cook of all the body feeds on!
> A cook of all, the entire mind chews
> And digests still to awake at every risk!
> A cook of all the life-styles we live in bunches!
> Such a baptism changes aspects of life! (53)

The transformation of the crook into a cook comes with a lot of risks which are equivalent to the transformation of an African into a Westerner in thought. Western bioethics importation into Africa is a strategy for this kind of transformation and these schiolars are against it because in this sense, it is simply a colonuial tool. In this sense, the argument is that there is little to no positive outcome from Western bioethics in Africa as it will only subdue our ecocultural spirituality. If a concept has no positive impact in a society, it is therefore useless. By implication, their argument is that bioethics is not important in Africa and to Africans. Alembong and Kishani do not really fall in this category because they reposition distorted ecocultural and spiritual links through their ethno-ethics stance. Ethno-ethics does not completely deny all the values of bioethics, but it argues that African cultures should be given top position when dealing with ecocultural and spiritual issues of Africans. Even Kazeem and Adeyelure highly contrast Raymond and Rott. They acknowledge that there may be secondary

reasons for bringing Western bioethics to Africa, and training Africans to follow Western bioethical ideas, but we cannot completely argue, as De Vries and Rott do, that Africans derive no positive outcome from Western bioethics. They say:

> the primary motivation of training Africans in the West and establishing collaborations in many parts of Africa through research institutions and projects is to share experiences and provide aid. Though secondary reasons may be inferred, the fundamental factor is sharing of experiences and expertise, which is unavoidable in a globalizing era. Some benefits have no doubt, accrued directly and indirectly to Africans and African institutions through bioethics training programmes funded by some countries in the West. The training is an invaluable resource for members of ethics committees, biomedical researchers and other bioethics practitioners in different African states. Besides the direct impact of in building in the trainees, analytic and critical minds of being abreast with contemporary moral issues involved in biotechnology, the training programmes have indirect relevance for influencing and shaping public health and bio regulations in order to promote better health, life and care for the citizenry. On this note, bioethics education of Africans, whether in Africa or offshore, has a noble and laudable intent. (4)

They further argue that even if bioethics importation/exportation is an imperialist project in Africa, "bioethics exportation to Africa is then an unintended imperialist project." (5). Rather than arguing that bioethics has no importance to Africa, Kazeem and Adeyelure prefer that we decolonize bioethics. The question now is what they mean by decolonization of bioethics. When we decolonize bioethics, we will have ethno-ethics. They explain that,

> Decolonizing bioethics is about developing strategic mental, conceptual and structural resistance to the infiltration of real or foreseen hierarchies that tend (or may tend) to continue legacies of colonial hegemony whether implicitly or explicitly in every aspects of bioethics. Understood in this sense, decolonizing bioethics in Africa is therefore not a useless engagement. (6)

The reasons for decolonizing bioethics are plentiful. They range from social, political, economic to cultural. In this thesis, we support the decolonization of bioethics as the two poets under study use their poetry to call for return to African ethno-ethics which is imbedded in ecocultural spirituality. They adhere to the fact that Africans can go back

to some pertinent ecocultural and spiritual values if they decolonize bioethics or adopt their ethno-ethics. This means that the stronghold of Western ecological, cultural and spiritual values in Africa is (partly) as a result of the dominance of Western bioethics principles. Kishani in the poem "Our Way" suggests that we need to go back to our ways. This means that we need to go back to our ethno-ethics. It means we need to decolonize Western bioethics principles so that our ecological, cultural and spiritual values may thrive. The personal tells us that we should:

> Tend it in, Boys
> And lull it
> Like a child his toys
> Rebuilding every broken bit.
>
> Tend it in rhythm
> Like a xylophonist his strokes
> That hit bit by bit
> Into fallen wood from brooks
> And move eager crowds
> To shake their heads
> Clap their hands
> Weave their steps
> And take their share. (Kishani 40)

The poem means that we should fall back and rebuild our ideals: our culture, our spirituality, our ecology etc. We need to shun or at least be careful the way we incorporate foreign principles into our system. The persona uses a style which brings out several images such as a cultural dance. The poet's use of language creates musical qualities that help in projecting the strength of African culture. Using a simile, he encourages us to adapt to our culture with passion like a xylophonist who masters his art and does it with passion. This immediately suggests a sense of decolonization for cultural reasons. It suggests that we follow what is right in our culture. Ethno-ethics is right and works with our culture.

Scholars such as Chikezie Onuoha support the decolonization of bioethics for cultural reasons. According to him, "The theory and practice of bioethics have cultural underpinnings. Thus, culture is significant to the understanding and articulation of justifiable bioethics in a given society" (20). If bioethics is decolonized, our cultural tendencies will flourish and so too our ecocultural spirituality. Thus, if we want to give culture a pride of place in ethics, we must decolonize bioethics. Once bioethics is decolonized, the African cosmology will have its own notion of the concept which favours the improvement of African environment, culture and spirituality. This is exactly what ethno-ethics does.

From this perspective, bioethics can be fully understood when it is segmented and ascribed to specific cultural environments. Bioethics, simply put, is culturally sensitive. Leigh Turner argues that it is only when bioethics is culturally sensitive that it is authentic. Western bioethics therefore, should not be used as a testing standard for all bioethics. This rolls out the idea of universalism of bioethics. This is why it is pertinent to understand the place of culture in all ethical issues because it is central to this study. It is by understanding it that the relationship among bioethics, ethno-ethics and ecocultural spirituality in Africa can align with African cultures. The sensitivity of bioethics to culture gives the impression that every culture has its unique bioethics which clearly defines it. A typical African society with its specific ethno-ethics principles is bound to practice unique ethno-ethics standards which may not be found in other societies. It is by understanding the culture of a people that you can say exactly what is right and what is wrong in that given society. G. D Nyamndi calls this in *Facing Meamba* "roots". Without roots you are a no body and with roots, you are everything. When you understand people's roots, you can easily conquer them. This is culture! The implementation of strategies that systematically introduced Western bioethics in Africa

all originated from the Western claim of understanding African roots and destroying such roots. The reception of Western bioethics is seemingly yet the reception of another colonial order. This usually comes from the implementation of, first, their culture on other cultures. Their culture has bioethics underpinnings because, generally, bioethics is culturally based. Hence, in order to reclaim and project our cultural values in our own way, we must use ethno-ethics which sees things using African lenses.

If bioethics is culturally based, then there is no right claim for the nonexistence of theAfrican strand which is ethno-ethics in relation to ecology, and spirituality. But what happens in contemporary societies where cultures are meeting and mixing? Kazeem and Adeyelure claim that bioethics cannot be fundamentally African in this modern time. In a sense, there is the mediation of Western bioethics and African ethno-ethics. This supports why the poets under study call for the openness of cultures to others. It is same with other postcolonial issues such as culture. There is no virgin culture in this era of interculturality and multiculturalism. Kazeem and Adeyelure note that "bioethics in contemporary Africa cannot be uniquely indigenous ... nor can it be entirely grounded on endogenous post-modernist ethical traditions." (9). In this sense we see another African experience coming in which is globalization. Globalization is making it difficult for a culture to be unique in all its ways. Every facet of cultures is being affected by other cultures. Ethno-ethics is not different in this sense. It is difficult now to say this is particularly African ethics and that is Western ethics. But this does not efface our original argument that there has always been ethics in Africa, shown in African oral literature.

As we shall see in subsequent sections, the evolution of literature has also included an evolution in African ethno-ethics as ethno-ethics is now demonstrated in written literature too. In this case, we shall see in the poetry of Alembong and Kishani.

By means of concluding this point, it is important to summarize as follows:

1. There is certainty about the existence of African strand of bioethics which is ethno-ethics.
2. African ethno-ethics is as old as African traditions.
3. African ethno-ethics is evolving with the constant evolution of the world.
4. Globalization has affected African ethno-ethics as it is no longer purely African, but has stains of Western bioethics. This gives the impression that ethno-ethics has an effect on the human condition in relation to ecocultural spirituality. The human condition in terms of ecocultural spirituality is highly affected by ethno-ethics. This is because ethno-ethics helps in shaping human choices, actions and responsibilities. It is in this line that Africans know how to dwell on their cultural heritage, maintain their spiritual values and protect their environments. Therefore, ethno-ethics helps to improve the human condition in terms of ecocultural spirituality.

Critical Perspectives and the Ethno-ethics Visions of Alembong and Kishani

Alembong and Kishani have visions in their poetry which are of great importance in this study. Their ethno-ethics stance in ecoculture and spirituality is one of the areas where we find the two poets relevant in terms of vision. The term ethno-ethics studies the moral issues of life in the African context. Our focus here is on the moral (and controversial) vision which is reinforced by the various literary devices. Alembong is of the opinion that we must abandon our ill practices which result in harm, either on nature or other elements of nature and spirituality. The poem, “Tell Me” (in *Forest Echoes*) is a typical example where the speaker, in an ethno-ethics paradigm, calls our attention to the damage that we inflict on nature. The poem goes thus,

Bees need flowers for honey

As men need bees for honey
But do bees kill flowers for honey
As men kill bees for honey? (64)

The poem is a quatrain and depicts an ethno-ethics situation which questions the activities of humans on nature which lead to the extinction of nature. According to the poem, bees are mindful of the way they use nature unlike human beings. The first line contains the use of the assonance, "[I:]" in the words "bees" and "need" to depict the alignment in the way bees use nature. This is contrasted to the way humans use it. Both humans and bees need honey, but the human method of acquiring honey leads to the destruction of nature unlike the bees' method. Since nature is spiritual, destroying nature means destroying the essence of being. We must stop this destruction if we want our nature to progress.

Furthermore, we must stop our wayward ways, as politicians, as farmers, as custodians of culture etc. He makes great use of literary devices to put forth his vision in terms of ethno-ethics. We must focus on the right way if we want to thrive in these areas. Directly related to the focus of this study, we must do right things that will lead to the preservation and conservation of ecology, culture and spirituality. This is also seen in the poem, "Come, Brothers" in *The Passing Wind*.

Leave this chosen vale of your lives
this vale, this vale of tears.
Grope your way up the anthill
and let the mound give way
under your weight. (Alembong 7)

Using personification, the persona in the second stanza quoted above invites people to leave the destructive and wayward way of life which compromises nature and culture's beauty. This wayward way could be the reception of capitalism. Until we leave this chosen vale of ours, a vale of tears which leads us nowhere, we cannot realize our full

potential. The persona grapples with the intention to experience changes which can only result from human's ability to avoid immoral aspect of life and focus on the moral aspect. In this case, he encourages us to change our actions. The Supreme Being has given us the ability to choose what to do and we must choose good over evil. We must choose to construct rather than destroy. The 4th and 5th stanzas (of "Come, Brothers") encourage us to use our strength from the spiritual world to fight what could be immoral issues of life. In terms of African ecocultural spirituality, these immoral issues could be cultural practices that are effacing African cultural values. The persona says,

> So,
> let us roll our God-given strength
> and run up the anthill, for it must collapse
> under the lead that is our weight.
> Did you say the queen ant
> will raise a stink?
> But what does it matter if one is stunk
> in the dust of the mound? (Alembong 7)

This is indication that we have the latitude to reconsider our actions and seek good over evil. One significant point here is that humans possess the wisdom, power, and ability to choose. The existentialist contentions of making a choice, taking action and justifying are the basic foundation of Alembong's argument here. He believes that the Supreme Being has left us with all options and we are free to choose. Why then do we choose evil when we have freewill and we know that good is a better option? We must be brave in choosing right over wrong. The poem "Facing the Odium" (in *The Passing Wind*) is an encouragement for humans to be brave in their fight against the immoral aspect of life that destroy our ecoculture and spirituality. Some of the lines read thus,

> But put on the tortoise's shell
> If you don't want the elephant to stop your breath.
> Or will you continue with your gift of shades
> When the darkness is swallowing you up?
> You may as well ask the owl to pluck off its eyes. (Alembong 8)

The persona invokes the images of animals which are evident in folktales to reinforce his moral vision. We must face our odium with courage. Odium here is dislike or hatred. This means that we must face what we dislike by doing away with it. Is it capitalist greed? Is it the repercussion of advancement in technology? We need to fight it with courage so as to maintain ecobalance. This is a collective fight. It falls under communalistic ethics or what we call ubuntu. It is important to note that, African ethno-ethics as a decolonisation imperative, has emerged and become a vibrant research area in, roughly, the last three decades as a reaction to the strong tendency in bioethics scholarship to present bioethics as a purely Western discourse. It is an attempt to Africanise bioethics, presenting it as a set of moral principles derived from African communitarian/ ubuntu values. African ethno-ethics is thus the exploration of African contribution to what is right or what is wrong through indigenous African moral principles. In the words of Cletus T. Andoh, ethno-ethics "consists of a set of shared beliefs, values, categories, and assumptions that are implicit in the languages, practices and beliefs of African cultures " (69). Andoh specifically identifies traditional phenomena and practices like proverbs, maxims, tales, songs, mythology, male circumcision and marriage as sources of African ethno-ethics.

One key African contribution to bioethics is the communitarian moral theory which changes the whole show from bioethics to ethno-ethics. In communitarian ethics, relationality is salient in understanding aspects of ethical discourse in African contexts such as healing, wellbeing, care for patients, and the resolution of ethical issues. An African relational ethics (ethno-ethics) emphasises harmonious coexistence among individuals and between individuals and the universe as a whole, respect for human dignity and the preservation of the physical environment (Andoh 69–70). In the words of Kevin Behrens (34)

Kelvin Behrens argues that, the emphasis on community, identifying with others and solidarity and caring makes ubuntu a relational ethic that prizes harmonious relationships. This challenges Western bioethics, which focuses on individual autonomy and the rational application of abstract theories and moral principles to ethical issues. It also resonates with the ethics of care, highlighting the central importance of caring, emotion and relationships in moral decision making. This philosophy echoes the call from other communitarian perspectives for bioethics to take the fact that we are embedded in communities and families more seriously where we are our brothers' keepers. We therefore have to fight to preserve the communitarian/ Ubuntu values which hold us together. We have to face our odium by resisting any ethical principle which does not include the communalistic approach to ethics and way of life. Alembong insists that we must fight this with courage and avoid slowing down as depicted in the poem "Hunting". The persona in "Hunting" (*Forest Echoes*) says,

> The Python caught its prey
> It laid it wait
> For the poor swine to pass out as faeces
> And got killed by the soldiers of the ant colony
>
> The leopard caught its prey
> It prowled on for a bigger catch
> Having left the rest of the poor deer
> For the vulture's feast. (Alembong 63)

As seen in the poem, if we do not fight on, we will be like the python that loses its own life as it lays waiting, unable to move. We have to be like the leopard that prows on. The presence of animals in Alembong's poetry is underestimated. It depicts orality. In this sense, we encounter the presence of oral literature which is very pertinent in African ethno-ethics. The paradigm is that African ethno-ethics has been in existence for so many years and it has been evident in their oral literature. Significantly, the most important thing is that of the moral issues of life that it treats.

The two poems, “Come, Brothers” and “Facing the Odium” above are subject to pluralist interpretations. For example, they have political undertones. “Come, Brothers”, for instance, is a universal call to fight against political injustice in postcolonial Africa. In this poem, Alembong has a socialist realist vision which centers on diagnosing the problems of the society and proposing doses of socio-therapeutic measures in the form of rebellion and resistance. Thus, Alembong is calling for a rebellion against political injustices too.

The poem "The Game" (in *The Passing Wind*) is a representation of a typical ethno-ethics debate where the speaker represents one camp/team which is not supported by the referee and the other which is supported. The speaker's team is a metaphorical representation of the moral dimensions of life which is the right way; a way that can lead to the preservation of African ecocultural spirituality, but it is always or at least most often, subdued by the immoral aspect. The intention of the poet is not to project the triumph of the immoral, but we interpret here that it is rather to ridicule it. Evil is always a lower of the two imperatives (moral/good and immoral/bad). It is the less in relation to the good and that is why the persona represents it with the weak team. He says,

> The other team was there
> And the team was his
> In the ground of play
> And the boys were lead
> And their legs were slow
> In the ground of play. (Alembong 27)

The bad team finally wins by fraud. This is peculiar in situations of the two facets. The bad mostly dominates, but this does not cancel the probability of the good winning. In matters of conscience, the mind struggles to make full grasp of the good, but at the center is the practice of evil. The point here is that, human beings choose evil when they

ought to have chosen the good. The true foundation of wrongdoing is the point where humans are given the freedom to choose and they choose evil. Alembong satirizes the choice of humans and the goal here is to effect proper changes in the society.

It is important to note that this poem ("The Game"), like other literary texts, has been interpreted from a pluralistic dimension. An example is Ngeh Andrew who interprets it from the perspective of elections where two parties are involved and the organizing committee is already in support of one party. He says "this poem depicts the irregularities that characterize elections in post-colonial Africa in general and post independent Cameroon in particular. The poet perceives politics as a game wherein only the perfect manipulators find themselves comfortable in the result of the game." (31)

Given that ethno-ethics has the tendency of involving controversial issues, it is important to look at some of the controversial issues that Alembong dwells on in order to reposition the ecological, cultural and spiritual links that have been distorted by capitalist greed, World evolution and technological advancement. It is evident from our definitions of ethno-ethics that it deals with questions of controversies and the moral issues of life.

Alembong presents dilemmas that systematically reveal the weaknesses of humans in relation to ecocultural spirituality and in terms of morals, knowledge, existence, life etc. The underlying question in the ethno-ethics principles of Alembong in terms of controversies is that of intentionality. We are faced with situations in which we cannot determine if the human condition is an intentional condition where humans plunge themselves into (in order to distort ecology and spirituality), or unintentional condition which occurs without human knowledge. This is because one condition emanates from another and if we do a successful trace, we go back to the origin which is the point of

freewill. Do we blame the person who gives the freewill or humans who make wrong choices by choosing the immoral aspect of life?

The poem, "The Gospel Singers" is a typical ethno-ethics dilemma with two imperatives; the imperative of praying and the imperative of taking care of our crops. This stems from freewill. As the gospel singers keep singing, their crops keep getting bad. As they sing, the persona says,

> And the sounds rippled
> the surface of the wind
> while corn decayed in the fields
> with neglect.
>
> The deity gone
> (how short-lived the canonizing sermons!
> new cantatae now stick to the lips
> of these self-proclaimed griots...(Alembong 16)

The poem is a satire of church goers who spend all their time in church, singing. It is worthy to note that the persona has no issue with going to church. The problem comes when we spend all our time in church while our crops get bad. The controversy here is that, the people in church are serving God, singing praises to Him to help them (perhaps for their crops to do well), but they forget that they need to help themselves first by providing the required labour force. This is the mistake that most people usually make. They spend all their time praying and asking God for help, not knowing that God helps those who help themselves. This boils down to humans choosing the immoral aspect of life over the moral aspect. Human beings, unlike nature, choose to practice actions that will lead to damage. Alembong further explains this in the poem, "The Tap Root" in *The Passing Wind*. The poem focuses on the penetration of the tap root into the earth without harm and without being harmed. This is contrary to the doings of humans who damage the earth in their own activities. The poem states,

Oh, how sandy
The soil you explore!
How sandy, yet slippery it is!
How sensitive the touch of your hairs are
That you bore through the foggy darkness,
Of man-mace-earth unharmed?
Could it be your cap shading the has light
That you would have the rock on your downward path?
Perhaps the will to die for your straightness
Does make the thorns in the soil shut off.
Perhaps the joy in seeing things straight
Does dry up the venom in verminous curves. (Alembong 21)

To say that the tap root goes down into the earth successfully without harm because of its "will to die for your straightness" and “joy in seeing things straight" is to say that good attracts good. This is contrary to human actions. Human actions are harmful to nature and that is why, as we argued, nature is sometimes hostile to humans too. However, Wolete argues that "the African believes in the unity of elements of the universe like nature, humans and the spirits." (196). But once this unity is trampled upon, there is bound to be chaos. Wolete proceeds to quote Peter Narh who infers in his article entitled "Philosophical foundations of knowledge Creation on Africa" that, “In the environmental ontology...the natural environment is more than just biological. It is also spiritual, with the power to guarantee the existence of every member of the community ... (7)” (Wolete 196). The purity and straightforwardness of the tap root as demonstrated in the poem is a metaphorical representation of the purity and straightforwardness of nature without human intervention. This is what we call virgin nature. The purity and impurity of nature and humans respectively can also be seen in the poem "Eye to Eye". The poem "Eye to Eye" (*The Passing Wind*) shows the complexity of the hybrid state of the girl being described in the poem. The persona presents the purity of one aspect of her hybridity and the darkness in the other. The 4th stanza reads thus,

Eye to eye
the iris and the white
betray the hybrid in her:
the one showing the darkness of Eve,
the other the purity of Eden. (Alembong 18)

This further explains the nature/human purity and impurity complexity which can only be explained from an ethno-ethics perspective. This perspective is that of controversial issues of life. The impurity of humans has put them in a state of anxiety. This is why they are always hoping for the better. These hopes are vain hopes. Vain in the sense that they hardly materialize. Alembong presents this in another dilemma. This is in the poem "Vain Hope" in *The Passing Wind*. The poem "Vain Hope" is typically about the dilemma of a fisherman who doesn't make a catch. He only hopes, but wherever he throws his hook, he does not make a catch. The poem ends with superstition. The poem reads thus,

I dropped hooks
but baits anchored
on the edge of life and death
and the catch that I thought was mine
became a stubborn hope - for ever!

The surface of the deep is rocky
but he knows the mossy parts of the bed
that should attract happy lovers.
Could it be that the fished were so caught
in the web of love's greasy tentacles
that my hooks were seen as greenhorns?
Or that the whole surface shook
with my aging hands at the hooks' end
that I couldn't notice the exact spot
of the love-dance?
But who will first reveal to me
why an owl had wailed on my roof
the night before the fish hunt? (Alembong 22)

As seen on the poem, the persona raises a series of rhetorical questions which help to sustain the fluency of the poem from the beginning to the end. The questions are raised

because of his inability to make a catch which only makes him live on hopes. These hopes are vain.

Culture is one of the areas where Alembong invokes ethno-ethics in order to reposition the ecological, cultural and spiritual links that have been distorted by capitalist greed, world evolution and advancement in technology. The poem "The Christmas Chicken" is a satire based on a strong etno-ethics principle where people are at the crossroad of neglecting their cultures in favour of a foreign culture which doesn't value animals (nature). From the 4th stanza, it reads thus,

> For the man whose birth we celebrate
> Washed down our sins with his blood
> So too must we offer innocent blood
> To welcome this great washerman.
> The message had been swallowed
> With the greed of Tortoise in the sky
> Unknown to him he was in foreign lands
> With the bird's feathers stuck on him.
> And so we folded our arms and closed our eyes
> And swallowed this strange communion
> Forgetting we could be stripped of our borrowed feathers
> And abandoned in mid air. (Alembong 13)

As seen in the poem, there is the use of contrast, metaphor and folktale. The alien culture is sharply contrasted with the local culture. Because of this difference, there is the use of the myth that attempts to explain why the tortoise has got cracked body. The use of this folktale is to show us that we can also be stripped of the borrowed culture at any time. Thus, we are advised to hold our local culture firm. We do not need to let change sweep our culture away. We see the consequences of change in the poem "The Passing Wind". These are the consequences of change which could be resulting from the abnormal issues of life. In the second stanza of the poem we are told that,

> And we saw our soft lips
> Turn to scabs.

We saw our tough soil
Crack to let microbes in.
We saw our trees
Shiver in their shoes.
We saw them
Drop their leaves in a falling sickness.
We saw our fowls
Lose their feathers to the chill.
We saw our animals
Abort their babies for lack of food.
We saw our rivers
Expose their stony ways
And our fishes preyed on by hawks (Alembong 6)

These are all products of change. Change comes and if we are not careful, we can get drawn in it. We can lose our cultural values in favour of foreign cultural values. It is in this line of thought that Alembong in "Christmas Chicken" advises that we should not forget that "we could be stripped of our borrowed feathers" (13). Borrowed feathers here symbolize foreign cultural values.

Another ethno-ethical issue raised by Alembong is in the controversy of science and life. He demonstrates this in the poem "Science and Life" in *The Passing Wind*. We can argue that the poem, "Science and Life" demonstrates a pertinent ethno-ethics dilemma. It reads thus,

We were told that.
If X is the sufficient cause of Y
Whenever evidence X occurs
There will be an occurence of Y.
But when millions of mouths
Are said to feast on meatballs
In morphean paradise (as founded by Moses)
While one sees Kwashiorkor children
Comb earthen streets for juicy termites
The eye loses the glimmer of the half-blind
Upon examining the evidence of X. (Alembong 12)

The argument here is that there are some situations where X will not lead to Y even though it has been proven scientifically that "If X is the sufficient cause of Y/ Whenever evidence X occurs/ There will be an occurrence of Y." (Alembong 12). In a sense, there are some exceptions to everything that exists.

In summary, Alembong's ethno-ethics vision tackles moral issues and controversies of life. With respect to moral issues, on the one hand, he advises people to leave this wayward way of life which is the metaphorical representation of the immoral aspect of life, encourages us to use our strength from the spiritual world to fight what could be immoral issues of life, encourages us to be brave in choosing right over wrong or to be brave in our fight against the immoral aspect of life. On the other hand, the controversial issues that he raises include cultural issues, religious issues and spirituality, and science. In all Alembong wants us to do good, and follow "our ways" which are our cultural ways evident in what our ethno-ethics prescribes.

It calls to our attention that bioethics should be cultural or national as one society may have its own set of bioethics principles. It is in this sense that we argue that Africa has its own strand which is ethno-ethics. Arguing from a Western frame, however, H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. posits that, bioethics, unlike many codes of ethics, tends not to be national or parochial, because these developments in health care and in the biomedical sciences are tied generally to the development of industrial societies. His focus is only on biomedicine and biomedical sciences because the West mostly limits bioethics only to these two fields.

Engelhardt, Jr. makes us understand that though bioethics is a major focus of Western society, that society itself is ever less parochial, and embraces not only North America and Europe, but societies such as Japan and Taiwan as well. Western health care and its

problems are no longer solely Western problems. This could be as a result of globalization because this is the Era of globalization. As it addresses this wide range of societies and their difficulties with "Western" biomedicine, bioethics draws on a tradition of the West that in fact attempts to step outside the constraints of particular cultures, including Western culture itself, by giving reasons and arguments anyone should accept. In this sense, bioethics is a general attempt in secular ethics. Although specific problems surely are tied to the particular health care systems of particular cultures, throughout the world the number of areas of common concern is growing. In every country, for example, a contraceptive ethos is in place, and abortions are available nearly everywhere. The result has been a need to reconsider sexual and reproductive mores. The general availability of expensive life-sustaining technology has made the use of extraordinary care an issue for at least a few in every country. And every nation faces choices regarding the allocation of its resources to health care endeavors. In short, elements of Western culture are international, bound to the character of industrial or industrializing society. These give a common cast to health care and its problems, and evoke international interest in bioethics. In the latter part of the twentieth century, one finds bioethics spanning national boundaries as well as religious political groups.

Kishani is not very different from Alembong when it comes to bioethical and ethno-ethical considerations. Their visions in that aspect are similar. Like Alembong, he discourages many immoral issues of life which he thinks if abolished, will make the world a better place. He begins right from the preface of the collection, *A Basket of Kola Nuts*, to question immoral acts like theft. In the preface of *A Basket of Kola Nuts*, Kishani tells readers about the theft of the original manuscript of his poetry collection and then adds that the present collection is "like vox clamantis in desertis (a voice calling out from the wilderness), specifically against stealing." (ix). Thieves broke into

his house and went away with the manuscript and other items like his phone which he later saw with a gendarme officer. Wondering why the gendarme officer who bought his stolen phone was protected by his colleagues, Kishani in the Preface of the collection, *A Basket of Kola Nuts* raises a series of questions which form the basis of African ethno-ethics in the collection:

> But, is it because the truth at times hides as if in a lie, when one steals a glance at someone in the mirror or when one steals a march on someone else; or is it because justice as part and parcel of human life never punishes every theft that some traditions allow one to still steal a certain permissible quantity of kola nuts during a kola harvest or as the Nso' say 'God can steal a child' and one can also steal the Fon's hands to thank someone else, that such burglaries still continue unchecked in Cameroon or elsewhere? (Kishani ix)

Generally, theft is bad; but humans steal even from nature. We get more than what we are supposed to get from nature and this renders nature helpless and desolate in all aspects. Kishani's negative views on theft immediately suggest that it is a cause for concern because it is a canker worm eating deep into most societies. The need to reshape the society is eminent. Kishani thus, indicates that we must do what is right in the eyes of both man and God. In his words,

> *A Basket of Kola Nuts* is a kind of Vox Clamantis in Desertis by dint of the story of its composition, themes and plea for a change of some of our attitudes and mentalities towards the kola plant and its fruits or certain erroneous moral values on the one hand, and towards certain perceptions of the interface of content and form in the poetic genre on the other hand. (Kishani ix)

Hence, it is all about the moral issues of life. So, Kishani does not only preach the practice of morality, but he also questions the rampant existence of immortality. Why do people steal? Why do people who are supposed to judge thieves also steal? Why does the law fail to be implemented when morality fails? These are questions which surround the etno-ethics vision of Kishani. The poem "A Taxi-Driver's Lawsuit" (*Konglanjo!*) depicts some of these ills. The second stanza of the poem goes as follows:

I drive men, women and children in taxi
yes, men and children and women
of all professions and social standings;
yes, men and women and children and not wood!
He sues but the nation who sues me
for a crime I never committed - my license
my taxi-vignette, relevant documents -
have scarcely rounded their honey-moon
of a valid marriage in our land of justice.
Yet, because of her, our girlfriend and prostitute,
you sue me for them. (90)

The literal meaning of the poem is about a taxi-driver who faces the law for a crime that he does not commit. He is been sued, probably by an officer of the law, under the flimsy pretext that his car documents are not valid. However, the true reason for suing him is that the said-officer of the law shares a girlfriend and prostitute with him. Hence, the society has turned into a lawless state where people who are supposed to enforce the law are taking the law into their hands. In this state of affairs, humans rely on nature to take its course as it is spiritual and capable of fighting back. The Taxi-Driver in the poem relies on nature for vengeance. According to him,

We remember what otherwise we forget
that the soils of the hills, the soils of bone-meal valleys
and plains will outlive our generations as millions before.
I fear the dust which blinds the eyes.
I fear the dust which moulds
the cooking-pot and the bricks
I fear the dust which germinates seeds
and devours our dead
and still remains as hungry as ever
I fear the soil and the lot
of those who never fear her.
I fear the lot
of those who stand on dust to promote injustice. (90 – 91)

The Taxi-Driver's fear originates from the background of his spiritual belief as an African. Nature is powerful. The people who stand on nature to promote injustice shall face the consequences when nature reacts. The persona depicts this through repetition

when he constantly repeats the phrase “I fear” followed by an element of nature such as “dust” or “soil”. It follows that we need to build nature because of its diverse role that it plays in our lives. It is easier to build nature if we all adhere to the course because elements of nature are very adaptive. Holmes Rolston, III argues that,

> Plants and animals modify the landscapes on which they live. Despite the changes they introduce, however, plants and animals are largely adapted to the environment in which they find themselves. These adaptations are genetic, behavioral, morphological, physiological—fur or horns or teeth, or thorns or deciduous leaves or camouflage. Culture makes possible the deliberate and cumulative, and therefore the extensive, rebuilding of nature. Humans reshape their environments, including new ones into which they expand, rather than being themselves morphologically and genetically reshaped to fit their changing environments. (155)

Another area where Kishani shares his ethno-ethics vision is on the weather which is part of nature. In the poem "A Kola Nut of Life," the persona talks about the fact that,

> We’ve always spoken to you all about by name in bad
> And good weather as we thrive intact from dawn to dusk!" (Kishani 2)

This is an ethno-ethics approach to weather. The weather has the tendency to be good or bad. The goodness and/ or badness of the weather can stand the equivalence of morality in the weather condition. The persona uses the phrase “good and bad weather” here as a metaphor for good and bad times. A similar usage of binaries to present ethno-ethics is in the poem, the "Prologue" where the speaker says "People cherish kola with names like bïùy, gooroè, Oft, in spite of the abusive role it plays as ñgoèmboè!" (Kishani 9). This also signifies good and bad. It is also all about morality.

It is important to indicate that the manner in which Kishani presents the poems in *A Basket of Kola Nuts* speaks volumes of ethno-ethics too. Alobwed ‘Epie postulates in his description of the poetry collection that,

> We see the meanings of the poems intertwined with the shape of the poems. Where the kola baskets are overturned they build into pyramids of hope and despair but with hope superseding. Where they are upright, they uphold the camaraderie kola nuts engender – the poet's substratum. As such, the poetry is grotesque, astute, enriching and fascinating." ()

So, hope and despair are ethno-ethical in nature as far as controversial issues of life are concerned. The triumph of hope is indication that, with respect to nature, there is hope that nature will get better with the awareness that Eco critics have expressed. The goal is to make humans to understand that they are part of nature. It is to make culture a part of nature and not its superior. The persona in "Konglanjo" touches on ethno-ehics elements while he praises Ngàà-Mbóm. He says,

> But Ngàà-Mbom nay!
> Within your seasons we give birth to all:
> The good-hearted and the evil-doer,
> The wise and the foolish,
> The thief and the witch,
> Ngàà-Mbóm again avert it!
> Our times now burn
> With uncontrollable flames
> driving us headlong to embrace the unknown
> With our blameless arms. (16)

As seen above, the persona touches controversial issues such as the good-hearted and the evil-doer, the wise and the foolish etc. to indicate that there are all classes of people with different character traits. In fact, humans procreate all groups of people with ideal and unique qualities which form the basis for ethno-ethics for the repositioning of ecocultural and spiritual links that have been distorted by capitalist greed, world evolution and technological advancement.

In summary, both Alembong and Kishani address the issue of morality, but unlike Alembong, Kishani questions the rampant existence of immortality. Alembong only advises people to leave this wayward way of life which is the metaphorical

representation of the immoral aspect of life, encourage us to use our strength from the spiritual world to fight what could be immoral issues of life, encourages us to be brave in choosing right over wrong or to be brave in our fight against the immoral aspect of life. This means that Kishani is more inquisitive about the reason for evil while Alembong is more of an avant-garde because he suppresses the questions and goes directly to seeking possibilities of stopping or reducing evil/wrongness.

To conclude, this chapter discusses ethno-ethics in relation to ecocultural spirituality. We have looked at the rightness or wrongness of human actions in relation to ecoculture and spirituality. We have also focused on the dialectical and symbiotic relationships that exist between African ethno-ethics and Western bioethics in relation to Eco-cultural Spirituality. We haven divided the chapter into the following: An Overview and Western Notions of Bioethics, African Ethno-ethics and African Experiences: the Ecoculturality and Spirituality Evolutions, and finally, Critical Perspectives and the Ethno-ethics Visions of Alembong and Kishani.

The arguments in the chapter can be summarized as follows: Western notions of bioethics are different from African notions. The West focuses on bioethics which mostly dwells on health sciences, biomedicine and biomedical sciences while Africa focuses on ethno-ethics which dwells on African culture, evident in their oral literature such as proverbs, riddles and songs. Also, Ethno-ethics existed in Africa before the coming of the white man and bioethics. The African experiences of slavery, colonialism, globalization, Neo Colonialism etc. have played a great role for the evolution of African ethno-ethics. Finally, Alembong's vision with regards to ethno-ethics focuses on turning people away from immoral practices which serve as a threat to nature and spirituality while Kishani's vision is to question why humans venture into activities that lead to the abuse of nature and spirituality. As we have observed, Kishani is more inquisitive about

the reason for evil while Alembong is more of an avant-garde because he suppresses the questions and goes directly to seeking possibilities of stopping or reducing evil/wrongness.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECLAIMING PRISTINE AFRICAN ETHNO-ETHICS, ECOCULTURE, AND SPIRITUALITY

This chapter demonstrates the comp lexity of ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics, and the focus is on African ecology, culture, spirituality and ethno-ethics. One of the aims of this chapter is to deconstruct and decolonize Western bioethics which has been Eurocentric and give it an Afrocentric dimension with the help of African ecocultural spirituality. This empowers ethno-ethics. This chapter is examined under six thematic clusters, namely: Perspectives on Pristine African Ecoculture, Critical Standpoints on Pristine African Spirituality, Reflections on Pristine African Ethno-ethics, The Hybrid Concept: The Meeting Point of Western and African Ecocultural Spirituality and Ethics and Distilling African Ecocultural Spirituality and Ethno-ethics.

Perspectives on Pristine African Ecoculture

Pristine ecoculture is that which is still with its original purity. It is ecology and culture in the original state. Akem Henry Mesape Egbe found out in his unpublished Ph.D thesis that, "African literature immensely contributes not only to literature pertaining to ecocriticism as propagated by Western scholars; it also contributes in extending theoretical and conceptual perspectives on ecocriticism in the context of African ecocultural philosophies" (v). The question which begs for answers here is: what is African ecoculture or ecocultural philosophies? It is by understanding African ecoculture that we can situate aspects of pristine African ecoculture within the confines of this thesis. This can be done by using the Afrocentric Ecocultural lenses. An Afrocentric Ecocultural lens can contribute both to problematizing and redefining conventional concepts of self amidst a crisis of group and individual identity marked not

only by a fierce fixity of identity labels but also by a pernicious anthropocentrism that fixes humanity at the center of existence. This is propounded by Milstein and Jose Castro-Sotomayor. Kishani depicts this concept in the poem "Our Way". Our way is as opposed to their (Western) way. The fifth and sixth stanzas of the poem are as follows:

> Mongo may meet the Thames
> And both shake hands
> And wed in the encircling
> Depths of the seas; But
> Mongo rains fall not on the Thames
>
> Ours is our Culture
> Let's soothe Her Wounds
> And betroth Her indoors. (Kishani 41)

This poem is about two cultural worldviews. It places the Western worldview alongside the African worldview and comments that each is unique in its ways. In the first stanza above, the persona creates an atmosphere of interculturality when he says: "Mongo may meet the Thames/And both shake hands/ And wed in the encircling/ Depths of the seas". This means that these two cultures can meet and mix, but African culture is not Western culture. The irony is that, the persona insists that their meeting and mixing cannot blur the pristine lines of the cultures. This is seen when the persona says, "But/ Mongo rains fall not on the Thames". As if that is not enough, he adds that "Ours is our Culture/ Let's soothe Her Wounds/ And betroth Her indoors." Generally, a thorough reading of the stanzas above leaves us with the impression that, even though African and Western ecocultural ideologies have come in contact with each other, there is still high probability of Africanness in African ecoculture. At the centre here is the position of human beings.

This takes us back to the notion of human centered activities. When tackling the discourse on African ecoculture there is the question of whether we position humans at

the centre or not. Humans have cultures and they ought to be environmentally friendly with their cultures. Tema Milstein (University of New South Wales) and José Castro-Sotomayor (California State Channel Islands) begin *Ecocultural identity: An introduction* with the statement that "We humans are cultural and ecological beings." This supports the view that humans have cultures, but what remains doubtful to an extent is whether they are ecologically friendly with their cultures.

When human culture is ecologically friendly, there is high probability for the sustainability of pristine nature. On the contrary, when human culture is not ecologically friendly, pristine nature is in danger and it becomes an endangered species. The continuation of culture is sharply in relation to the natural elements that sustain it. Culture finds a place out of nature and this is the more reason why pristine nature is necessary. Both nature and culture can be sustained by mutually respecting each other. The persona in the poem, "Konglanjo" uses a series of onomatopoeia to produce the musicality which helps to project the relationship between nature and culture. The persona tells us that, "while, driven into ecstatic spells, we welcome/ Every incoming season with flutes, drums and gongs. (Kishani 17). The pure musical lines go as follows:

> Thus the fááy sounds the flute:
> fee!
> Thus the fááy sounds the flute:
> fee ! fee!
> Thus the fááy sounds the drum:
> ti-nding !
> Thus the fááy sounds the drum:
> tí-nding ! tí-nding !
> Thus the fááy sounds the gongs:
> ki-nging !
> Thus the fááy sounds the gongs:
> ki-nging! kl-nging !
> Thus the fááy sounds the wooden-gongs :
> kú- ngùng!
> Thus the fááy sounds the wooden-gongs:
> kú-ngùng! kủ-ngùng !(Kishani 17 - 18)

The fáay is a title -name for some lineage heads among the Nsó. Here, he is presented as a natural ruler at both the family and quarter who works in synergy with the Fon who is the custodian and guarantor of the people's cultural heritage. As the head, he represents each family. He sounds the flute, drums and wooden gongs which are cultural symbols used to communicate information across the community. This sounding creates an onomatopoeia whose effectiveness is to create a mental sound that correlates with the original sound. The use of onomatopoeia here leads to the emergence of an alliteration that helps sustain the cultural artifact of the people. These cultural artifact are drums, gongs and flutes. There are communicative instruments used to reach out the ancestors and the gods. These make the atmosphere pristine.

With pristine nature, there are many benefits both to humans and cultures. Kishani depicts a similar idea in the collection *A Basket of Kola Nuts.* The first poem in the collection *A Basket of Kola Nuts* entitled, "A Kola Nut of Life", depicts pristine African nature through the use of Kola nut which is discovered by a "discoverer". The discoverer uses it for peace making which indicates the peaceful nature of nature when it is pristine. The poem reads thus,

> A kola pod may hide in leaves
> As in the undergrowth out of sight!
> But its missionary task persists at heart,
> As its first discoverer brings it into the fold,
> Anew for fiends to shake hands with each other
> As with peace plants in the friendship of the friend,
> We've always spoken to you all about by name in bad
> And good weather as we thrive intact from dawn to dusk!
> He ever gives solace to everybody as insiders and outsiders,
> At every second of our life here or beyond where a basket tilts
> And turns at times as mirthfully as woefully upside-down within
> The divine ear and eyeshot as with hands and nose of a mind we seek,
> To so acknowledge Jesus as the friend in love, offering a new kola lobe
> To all entities as a wholesome meal for every proverbial friend to share
> In the universe full of woes and joys we no longer contain but sing out Daily as:
> Les choses qui arrivent aux autres commencent à m'arriver! ... (Kishani 2)

The lines quoted above explain literally the natural significance of kola nut in human existence and affairs. The kola is important because it inspires people and brings friends and family together. It also plays a reconciliatory role as seen in line five where the speaker says " ... anew for fiends to shake hands with each other". Going beyond the literal level, kola nut is a cultural symbol and identity. It is a metaphorical representation of nature. Its use here brings out a sense of synecdoche as it is part of nature that is representing all of nature. This creates an inductive sense of reasoning which helps to situate nature in its original spectrum, using only one element. The persona in the poem uses simile as he says, "its first discoverer brings it into the fold,/ Anew for fiends to shake hands with each other/As with peace plants in the friendship of the friend ..." Here, he compares the way in which friends linked by kola nuts shake hands with the way peace plants operate. This intensifies the peacefulness of nature. The persona brings in the Western cultural link by introducing Jesus in line 13. The significance of this is to strengthen the level of peace that kola brings because Jesus is peace. If kola/nature brings peace when it is pristine, therefore, we must seek to let it remain pristine.

Pristine nature is of great importance as it serves many different purposes in human life. We therefore need to be careful the way we use our environment so that its pristine nature will not be completely rubbed off within a short while. In the poem "Ad Lib Kola Baskets" in *A Basket of Kola Nuts*, Kishani makes us understand that nature (represented by Kola Nuts) serves an important purpose in human existence and life, but humans abuse this purpose. They use the kola nut to bribe their ways into unmerited positions which is against both human and natural laws. In the poem the persona says,

> One splits and shares a lobe of kola nut,
> Out of kindness with someone else, rather than
> Out of selfishness! Such lone kola lobes weave ropes

Of endless conversations - even about the strong kola nuts,
We plant and crop, sort and eat as life's co-partners on earth!
For, like the truth, neither late nor early,
At home as well as abroad,

A nice kola nut too attracts all,
Though it's still puzzling to know
Why a kola fruit ever entices so much,
In spite of its bitter tastes and small sizes!
Why we plant to crop, sell and eat kola nuts!
Why the untold fame of kola nuts rubs shoulders
As if forever with utter bribery on altars as in embers,
We fuel to the brim with currencies of a mixed blessing! (Kishani 5)

The focus of the stanzas above is on the importance of kola nut and how humans abuse it by using it wrongly. The wrong way of using kola nuts is the same wrong way that we use our environment. We use it in an abusive way thereby doing away with its pristine nature. Adding to the importance of nature, the persona in this same poem talks about the importance of the natural basket that is used to carry kola nuts. He says the weaver makes and sells this basket out of love and pride, not out of bribe as humans generally do. In his words:

A kola basketry spills over
Into a career of a red feather!
A basket weaver plaits kola baskets
Of choice in beauty, name and strength
Out of bamboo, cane, elephant grass, palm,
And a fibrous rope that easily bends and twists
With the skills of hands as with the skills of minds
To dye and print the design that invites the eye-catcher
On roads that confer power to banana and plantain fibres,
A factory weaver now melts together with rubber to lengthen
The age-bracket of a basket's unique make up from birth to death!
A basket-worker weaves and produces a kola basket that'll ever carry
The kola fruits we crop to eat and sell rather out of pride than as bribes! (6)

More importance of the kola nut as enumerated above is that it saves life just like breast milk. The comparison between the usefulness of kola nut and the importance of the breast is to show its indispensability in the process of human existence and survival in a

world where humans are full of ignorance and concentrate on building only themselves at the expense of nature and their environment. The persona consciously puts kola nut and breast milk side-by-side in order to establish a link that is necessary to revive the lost values of nature. In fact, he says:

> Since every species of kola nuts excels
> In the kola tastes of its own unity in diversity,
> A breast also feeds the wholesome truth of plurality
>
> As one within many!
> Kola and breast-milk feed to cure!
> Both the poor and the rich, men and women, young and old,
> Today as of old, in secret or in public, eat kola fruits in chains!
> Each handshake you exchange with kola nuts as pure gifts turns up
> To openly, freely and fairly build bridges of family ties or encounters
> That thrive in tested traditions of a people's timeless ethics to fight on
> At every turn when alien handles of power break tragedies in the open!
>
> We deck basketfuls of kola nuts out
> In the finest banana leaves of each season,
> To envelop the kola seeds we pack off in doubt!
> We plant and crop to sell a kola fruit for its lesson!
> Together we consume kola nuts for a thought that frees
> Our souls and soils from cheating to embezzle public fees!
> One throws the first stone with a kola lobe to avoid a crime! (Kishani 6)

As seen above, these lines continually provide fundamental thoughts on the similarities between kola nuts and breast-milk. The two provide as they are used to feed all classes of people. Their importance cannot be underestimated because every human from every facet of the society seem to have come across their importance and usefulness. Both kola and breast-milk feed to cure and this is done to everyone. Because of the significant role that kola nut plays, there is that need to preserve it. Preserving kola nut is equivalent to preserving nature. Preserving nature is putting it in its original state which is its pristine state.

As we earlier mentioned, "people cherish kola with names like *bïùy, grooroè, Oft*, in spite of the abusive role it plays as *ñgoèmboè*" (Kishani 9) This still gives a sense of the

importance of nature even though humans have forcefully misused it in every facet. Pristine African nature is used as a source of inspiration in many aspects of human life. The persona in the poem, "Konglanjo" pleads with Ngàà-Mbóm to inspire us with elements of nature which are in their pristine state. He says:

> Inspire us through these leafy cards of Mfúú!
> Inspire us through the oracular spider's gait!
> Inspire us through this porcupine's quill!
> Inspire us through this kilún egg-plants and egg-fruits -
> Chosen and cropped unbroken from nature's best!
> Inspire us through the dicta of these kola nut parings!
> To scry the witch,
> to sight the parasite jiggering within our family-trees
> And to scan the remnant isthmuses
> still stemming from our florid homes! (Kishani 15)

Evidently, the persona desires that Ngàà-Mbóm inspires us from nature's best which is pristine nature. It is in this way that we can find genuine love in and for nature, and nature will in turn reciprocate the love. The persona, however, sees us as parasite. We deduce this from the metaphor where he says Ngàà-Mbóm should inspire them "to sight the parasite jiggering within our family-trees". The family-trees here represent nature at large. The parasites are humans. Thus, humans keep attacking nature. We see nature, culture and spirituality being entangled here. They are at loggerheads. This is because the connection among the three is in constant conflict.

The persona seeks inspiration from multiple areas which are generally productive. "Leafy cards of Mfúú" symbolise freshness, "oracular spider's gait" symbolises rapidity, "porcupine's quill" symbolises sharp, traditional and energetic ways, "egg-plants and egg-fruits" symbolise agility and multiplicity or abundance, and finally, " dicta of these kola nut parings" symbolise unity. These qualities sum up to support the importance of pristine ecoculture.

Adding to Kishani, Alembong also gives a sense of importance of pristine nature which is necessary in the African context. A typical sense of pristine African nature is in the poem, "The Beginning" where the speaker makes us understand that there was once pristine nature. This pristine nature has been destroyed by the exploitative activities of humans. Pristine nature was "one", with "one head", "one mouth", "one eye", and "one ear". This means that it was whole. It was complete; one, until humans came across it. Pristine nature began to disappear when humans came. The last two stanzas of the poem read thus,

> The forest was one.
> It had one head.
> It had one mouth.
> It had one eye.
> It had one ear.
>
> But the fire came,
> The fire came... (Alembong 1)

This poem is about two fundamental contrasting stages in nature. The first stage is that of evolution, prosperity, uniqueness and more. This was the original state of nature. Nature was pristine in this state. It was complete and whole. Out of the sudden, the second stage emerged. This stage is that of extinction. It is the stage where nature started bleeding because of man's inhumanity to nature. It is herein metaphorically represented by the time fire came. When it came, the remaining story is suspended. The use of suspense here suggests that the inhumanity of man to nature is cumbersome, beyond explanation.

Furthermore, the poem "Lebialem" in the collection *Forest Echoes* depicts pristine African nature. In this poem, the persona gives a very fascinating description of Lebialem which is a Division in the South West Region of Cameroon. The persona says at the beginning of the poem that,

> Lebialem sanctuary,
> cave of caves,
> a watery furnace,
> quaffing for ever
> the releases of sleeping hills.
> From upland,
> sleeping hills empty their bowels therein,
> some with ease, some with speed,
> with vaginal denial.
> From upland,
> peaks add their foggy crowns
> to that of Lebialem
> with reverential denial. (Alembong 38)

As seen above, the persona uses imagery gotten from descriptive words such as watery, sleeping, foggy etc. to describe the calm and beautiful nature of Lebialem which is still in its original state or which has not experienced much of the devastating effects of the cruelty of humans on nature. The speaker describes Lebialem as a sanctuary which indicates that it is a sacred or holy place. As if that is not enough, he likens it to god. In his word he says:

> Lebialem!
> like the Serpent god
> you hiss by the hour
> and trees from lowland and upland,
> bow to let your breath pass.
> Lebialem!
> like the rain god
> you shower surrounding countries with nectar,
> and their wombs open to let it in
> for the good of men, animals and plants.
> Lebialem!
> like a full bladder its content
> you ejected the Betenten
> and asked it to spread germ on its path
> as it crawled to meet the Manyu, and both the sea. (Alembong 38)

Likening Lebialem to a god like the rain god that showers "surrounding countries with nectar, and their wombs open to let it in for the good of men, animals and plants" is an indication that pristine African nature is good for the general population of humans,

animals and plants. With pristine nature, all other elements of the universe are in a good cosmic order.

Adding to the importance of each element of nature, the persona says in the poem "Bangwa Tiger" in *Forest Echoes* that,

> The sun
> from yonder clouds
> ripens ready grains
> and prepares them
> for the moist soil.
> The moisture
> from beneath the clay
> buds the stalks
> and prepares them
> for the harvest sun. (Alembong 41 - 42)

These lines present a chain of a great circle. It presents a line of activities that work together to form a circle in nature. As seen above, grains ripen as a result of the sun which stems from above the clouds. This also prepares them for the moist soil. In return, the moisture buds the stalks and prepares them for the harvest sun. This forms a full circle. From a critical perspective, this insinuates that there is unity in the cosmic elements. This unity flourishes when nature is not attacked by humans. In other words, it blossoms when nature is pristine.

Pristine nature is a direct reflection of its originality. This originality features components that help each other survive. This transcends to the fact that pristine nature encompasses elements that help each other get better and not destroy each other. Alembong is very informed of this ecological process and he carefully shows this in his poetry. He shows how animals help other species to survive unlike humans who destroy. The poem "Forest" in *Forest Echoe,* illustrates this phenomenon. The last stanza of the poem reads thus,

A forest is a jungle
To those who see it from without;
When in, we learn that
Bugs suck to live, not to kill,
As bees sting to give, not to take. (Alembong 3)

As seen in the poem, bees do not destroy nature, but they sting to give. Similarly, bugs do not suck to kill but to live. The major point raised here is that humans use nature as an end while other species use it as a means to an end. This therefore creates a considerable difference in the ways in which nature is treated/ maltreatment. We can conclude this section by restating that critical standpoints on pristine African nature seek to encourage a return to the original way of treating nature so as to ensure ecofriendly relationships. With ecofriendly relationships, nature and culture can coexist harmoniously. And in this way culture and nature can enjoy sustainability.

Critical Standpoints on Pristine African Spirituality

Spirituality is an individual's connection with a sense of a higher power or Supreme Being. The most fundamental aspect of Afrocentrism is its conceptualization of the spiritual nature of human beings. Wheeler Evangeline, Ampadu Lena and Wangari Esther assert that,"[s]pirituality is deeply embedded in the healthy life-span development of people of Africa and the African Diaspora" (77). "When we place spirituality at the centre of human development, we gain a better appreciation for the enormous influence it has on our cognitive, social and emotional development." (Schiele 77).

Spirituality refers to the non-material or invisible substance that connects all elements in the universe. David Este outlines a number of the importances of African Spirituality as suggested by other scholars and critics. He says that African centered spirituality serves as a form of resistance (Hooks, 2003), a tool for coping and healing (Bernard, 2002;

Wheeler, Ampadu & Wangari, 2002), and a strategy for promoting health and wellbeing (Bowen-Reid & Harrell, 2002; Chase, 2001).

> Spirituality means attitudes, beliefs and practices which animate people's lives and help them reach out towards super-sensible realities. Spirituality" includes several interrelated levels of reference such as the level of lived experience, which means the attitudes and behaviors of human beings which are typically influenced by their "ultimate values," and therefore their "spirituality". On the communal level, "spirituality" may be used to refer to the shared "ultimate values" and ideals promoted by a particular group or tradition. On the academic level, "spirituality" refers to the emerging scholarly discipline which studies the lived communal and individual experience of that "energy, power, or force" (Gumo et al)

As we have argued elsewhere in this thesis, African spirituality encompasses the divinity of nature. It is the sum total of the belief in the multilevel functions of natural elements. It is basically rooted in African Traditional Religions which are said to be earth-centered in nature. South African Johannes J. Knoetze defines African spirituality as a holistic concept that stemmed from the historical, cultural and religious heritage of Africa, and includes among others, folktales, beliefs, rituals and culture. He says that African spirituality must be understood as originating from Africa's soil, but also developed through contact with people from other countries and continents. To put it differently, Phemelo Olifile Marumo & Mompati Vincent Chakale, in their paper captioned "Understanding African Philosophy and African Spirituality: Challenges and Prospects", detail that Africans believe that there is a need to communicate with those who have left this world and gone to the spiritual realm. This communication serves as a relationship even after death. They express that the contention of African philosophy is that people leave the human stage for the spiritual stage wherein they can be approached in times of joy and calamities. The spiritual world serves to allay the fears and to offer protection at all times.

Sussy Gumo et al opine that, indigenous African spirituality, based on their studies, involves deeper human values, attitudes, beliefs and practices, based on various African worldviews. These arise from the experiences of black people, south of the Sahara, articulated and lived in the African context, shaped by African problems, needs and aspirations, expressed using symbols derived from the immediate African environment, and handed down by African forebears before colonialism. African spirituality in its unspoiled state is said to be pristine. Pristine African spirituality is virgin in nature and without external influences. It is basically supported by the principle of originality. The poem "Mentchem Falls" (from the collection *Konglanjo!*) below illustrates aspects of pristine African spirituality. Some of the stanzas go thus,

> Fresh like the Ba'tum and his attendant Na'tum
> from the labyrinth of cross-roads
> your pilgrim's fruition sets you anew
> into the unique site of this godly sanctuary
> with her chasm belchingly awing you into stillness
> And you shuffle your feet no more
> within these fringed areas of human time.
>
> And in view of her single sliceless laugh
> pouring down, shooting over the heights unharnessed
> into a sacred receptacle of boiling eddies
> where she forges breezy mats of sacred smoke
> with headloads of her prey,
> tongue-tied you utter no syllable,
> wrapped up as you race with the flow
> of her water-clock of laughter
> now marking your being.
> Waaaaaaaa ------!
> She pours and spills and drives out time
> Waaaaaaaa------!
> She nurses awe - the genesis of your worship
> and choice of this anvil of our necromancy.
>
> Waaaaaaaa------!
> She quiets the frenzied fauna!
>
> Waaaaaaaa------!
> She feeds the sacred fauna and tames the birds

to shun your sight with awry songs of sacredness.
Waaaaaaaa------! (Kishani 42)

The poem is about the Menchum water fall in Wum, the North West Region of Cameroon. This fall is attributed spiritual qualities and also compared to a cross-section of spiritual essences. The persona tells us that where the fall plunges is a godly sanctuary. This demonstrates the presence of spirits in this habitat. Its plunges are represented with the use of onomatopoeia when the speaker tells us that it falls "Waaaaaaaa". The fall plays an enormous role in the existence of other species of nature. For example, we are told in line 2 of the fifth stanza that "She feeds the sacred fauna and tames the birds". In addition, it is important to indicate that the sound produced by the falls helps in building the musical quality of the poem.

Pristine African spirituality involves songs, prayers, atonement, and incantations etc. These help in building the spiritual realm of the African people. Kishani depicts this in the poem "Rootless Branch" in *Konglanjo!* The poem reads thus,

Monday begot Tuesday and men rejoiced.
But then, I saw the plants weep
The dew, the grass dew dripped
And fell with drops of blood.
The blood of our past heroes
Dripped with speed but still
Like ice it cooled the wounds
Of a ravaged mother-earth, the land we love.

We knew the sun would rise
Though on our way from doom,
We judged the trees rejoiced with us
To lose the old to bud the new.

So we plucked the orange-
So we plucked the mango-
So we plucked the guava-
And plucked the palm-tree branches.

And beneath the rootless branches
We sang our songs and lullabies of joy

And soothed our wounds in groups
As we waited for the day of days. (Kishani 51)

The poem depicts the suffering of the earth under human attack which eventually leads to rejuvenation. The weeping of plants as said in line 2 of the first paragraph is equivalent to the weeping of the earth. It is as a result of man's inhumanity to nature which requires a spiritual atonement for the well-being of nature.

The title of the poem "Rootless Branch" signifies a very great lack in human existence, especially in terms of culture. A tree with branches and without roots cannot sustain. So too is culture. If we do not know our cultural roots, it will be difficult to develop our cultural values. While developing our cultural values, we also cultivate our spiritual values.

The ritual process in the poem "Konglanjo" is a clear demonstration of African spirituality. It exemplifies how African spirituality functions. Humans pray to, and request fro divinities, spirits, ancestors and/ or God and they answer them. The poem begins with "Calling" which is all about requests, atonement, prayers and Thanksgiving. The excerpt below is an example from the poem, illustrating request from the spiritual realm, Ngàà-Mbóm the Creation.

Ngàa-Mbóm
Inspire our furrowed fruits !
Inspire the soils
whither our proverbial lineage head first ventured
To woo, crown, govern and nurse our years
With royal tools and stools now frizzled and freshened
With due slaps of stately usage and libations,
Ngàà-Mbóm !
We pray Thee, inspire our Tikari Stock
to order, feed and enrich our necromancy as of yore!..
Inspire this revolving stock to scan the silence of our days
Still girded and yoked
to the very navel of mirroring generations !
Inspire us through these unfolded hymns of our incorning!

> Inspire us through these leafy cards of Mfúú!
> Inspire us through the oracular spider's gait!
> Inspire us through this porcupine's quill!
> Inspire us through this kilún egg-plants and egg-fruits -
> Chosen and cropped unbroken from nature's best!
> Inspire us through the dicta of these kola nut parings !
> To scry the witch,
> to sight the parasite jiggering within our family-trees
> And to scan the remnant isthmuses
> still stemming from our florid homes! (Kishani 15)

The poem above is a request from the spiritual realm for inspiration. This explains the fact that Africans rely on the spirit world for their needs and existence. In line number 3, the persona pleads with Ngàà-Mbóm to inspire the soils. The inspiration will go a long way to reposition the ecological and spiritual links. The land will be fruitful and people will live in harmony. This is only going to happen if Ngàà-Mbóm answers them and their pleas.

After calling, Ngàà-Mbóm answers. This demonstrates the direct relationship between humans and the spirit world. These two collaborate for the effective functioning of the universe. Ngàà-Mbóm answers the people by directing them to live in the good old ways of their people. In his words,

> Behold libations before, beneath and behind our footfalls -
> let our fathers endorse our beliefs
> And our mothers endear them
> Let our sons consider and consolidate our courage
> Let our daughters propagate our hopes
> And our ancestors quicken and sprout them
> May our bags of yesterday reveal their contents tomorrow,
> If now we must march on like rivers with arms spreading
> On the bigamous banks
> of ancestors and youth,
> with the footholds
> Of new clothings and monetary units,
> of new carvings and names - - -
> Heralds!
> Those who inspire the way,
> Those who inquire a way,
> Walk within the wisdom steps of their inquiry,

Say no more about your incoming --- !
Let our children's children's children's children ---
Let our mother's mother's mother's mother ---
Let our father's father's father's father
Let our parents' children's children's children ---
Let our ancestral parents' parents' parents - - -
Let Lè' and Jíng, nay, the last born of this second
Re-echo our feats and failures up and down
Time's sun and rain within the planets
Be ye gods or humans! (Kishani 29 - 30)

The lines above show a lot of pessimistic determinism in African spirituality. Ngàà-Mbóm is so concerned about the spiritual well-being of the people who come before this generation. In a sense, his greatest desire is to see people maintain the good old ways which are rarely practiced nowadays. Using a series of alliteration, Ngàà-Mbóm encourages people to follow the ways of their ancestors. The use of alliteration comes in play when he continuously mentions family relations like: children's children's children's children ---/ Let our mother's mother's mother's mother ---/ Let our father's father's father's father/ Let our parents' children's children's children ---/ Let our ancestral parents' parents' parents - - -. The effectiveness of the alliteration is to stress on the importance of these links in the spiritual chain of the people. This also connects the living with the living-dead. This goes a long way to invoke the spiritual essences of beings.

The spiritual bond shown above embodies pristine African spirituality. However, it is difficult to see pristine African spirituality nowadays because of interculturality and multiculturalism which are essential stakes of globalization. Gumo et al posit that worldviews are changing with changing times due to the influence of secularization and modernization. Consequently, a new hybrid of African spirituality has been developed consisting of traditional African beliefs and practices, Christianity, Islam and the culture of modernization. We can call this African spirituality in its hybrid state. Hence, the

question of pristine African spirituality becomes fluid in contemporary era of globalization. In spite of this, however, we must understand the ever-present place of African spirituality in contemporary scholarships. Gumo et al argue that it must be noted that African traditional religions continue to influence the lives of many people today, including some of the highly educated, as well as many African Christians and Muslims. The influence of African spirituality continues to be effective even though the spirituality is no longer pristine. We find situations where there is a massive blend of African spirituality and other religious worldviews. It is not very strange that some Africans want to be subsumed in African spirituality even though they have been following Christianity throughout their stay in out of Africa. They blend Christianity with traditional African region. This immediately suggests the hybrid state of spirituality. It must also be noted that African religions are not static. Just as Mbiti remarks, although Christianity and Islam have added distinct elements to African religions, each has been and continues to be adapted to and shaped by Africa's indigenous religious heritage.

Gumo et al are of the opinion that, African spirituality is handed down from one generation to another because it is tradition-based. According to them, African spirituality is traditional, not because it is a fossil, static and incapable of adaptation to new situation and changes, but because it is a spirituality that originated from the people's environment. It originates from the people's ways of life as shaped by their cultural heritage and environmental outlook. It is a culture which is learned and imitated by all belonging to various specific spiritualities. Consequently, an African spirituality is one where an African is inserted into his/her traditional beliefs and practices through a well-defined system of rites of passage which make up a culture. Each person is born

into it, lives it, practices it and is proud to make it his/her own. This explains why Ngàà-Mbóm encourages the people to maintain the ways of their ancestors. He says,

> Heralds!
> Whatever news you bear
> We still cleave to the best
> Inquirers on a pilgrim's staggered step.
> Nyùy-Mbom sends you as He sends us !
> We are pilgrims from a cradle
> In our Ancestor's Land!
> Behold libations going before our feet
> Proclaiming our coming to the departed beyond our feet!
> Let our children lead the way!
> Let our children continue our way! (Kishani 28)

The last line which says "Let our children continue our way!" is a call for retreat into the ways of the ancestors. This is the only way which can free the people. To an extent it is a call for decolonization. It is the creation of awareness in order to establish a link between the people and their tradition. The continuation of traditional ways is only maintained when there are people ready to maintain it. Thus, there can be no sustainability of pristine spirituality if there are no people to sustain it. Ngàà-Mbóm serves as a symbol for the return to roots. It is important to note that in Africa, each tribe has a way of practicing African spirituality. In other words, the way in which African spirituality is practiced varies from one community to another, explaining why African worldview is expressed in plural terms—African worldviews, and not African worldview. The African spiritual worldviews create respect for nature, reverence for hills, forests, animals, and rivers.

Despite the fact that Ngàà-Mbóm encourages us to go back to our roots, there are people who see our traditional old ways as evil. Esnala Banda posits that, the portrayal of African spirituality in the mainstream media does little to show African Traditional Religions as a means for anything other than bad or madness. Often, the thought of

traditional African spirituality fills us with foreboding thoughts, before we can get around to considering that African spirituality has positive elements. This is the exact case that Alembong demonstrates in the poem "Exchanging Planes in Mid-Air". The persona presents a woman who has been carried away by Western ways and she sees the ways of her people as evil. The persona says,

> My mother
> Who they say
> Is my small sister
> Is now the white god's child-
> The white god who lives
> In a country in the sky.
> And she says
> I am the child of the black god.
> The black god
> Who lives in rocks
> And in streams
> And in baobab trees.
> She says
> Her god is the true god.
> That my god,
> The god of my fathers
> And my fathers' fathers,
> Is a thing of the imagination. (Alembong 35)

As seen above, African spirituality has been demonized in a number of ways. The first is by classifying African spirituality as spirituality where the people worship a God of imagination. This is seen in the poem above. On top of that there are mistranslations of the names of deities.

Let us take Eshu (also known as Eshu Elegbara) as an example. He's a highly revered trickster god of the Yoruba of Nigeria. Samuel Ajayi Crowther — an Oxford-educated Nigerian who became the first Anglican Bishop in Nigeria — wrongly translated Eshu to mean 'Satan.' Sena Voncujovi is an Afro-Asian, West African Vodu herbal and spiritual practitioner and Founder of ReVodution — a Voodoo education initiative aimed at digitally preserving and demystifying the herbal and spiritual traditions of Ewe

Vodu (Voodoo). Voncujovi states that by equating Eshu to the devil through translation, Crowther succeeded in demonizing an entire spiritual tradition. Even today, many Yoruba Christians view Eshu and the entire Yoruba pantheon of deities as the epitome of sin and evil. Voncujovi goes on to explain that African spirituality was also demonized because of its association with slave rebellions and uprisings. Slave masters believed that through these spiritual traditions, slaves would coalesce and fight for their freedom. The practices were, therefore, discredited and/or banned. In fact, African spirituality got tied to Satan and explains in detail where many of the modern day misconceptions of African spirituality stem from.

As Jaco Beyers puts it, the African understanding of religion is an understanding of the connectedness of all things. He clarifies that there is a close relationship between all things with one reality, and no distinction between physical and spiritual, adding that meaning in life is derived from unity. Just as rituals are an expression of this unity, so too are morals and ethics, all share a universal bond. Beyer asserts that as such, religion is universal and expressed contextually according to local culture. For a long time, religion has been understood solely according to Western thought patterns, and as a result, anything different and inherently African was seen by the colonialists and missionaries as a threat. However, if the Haitian — and indeed many other revolutions—are anything to go by, it can be seen that African traditional religions have been for centuries a conduit of unity.

Simply put, African spirituality is seen as many things but for those who practice it, it is seen as fulfilling — a great way to find unity within oneself, with the earth and the spirits of those who have gone before us. Cuthbeth Tagwirei postulates that the Conradian journey into the African interior also signified, in the Western colonial imaginary, an encounter with a seemingly incomprehensible spirituality. This depicts

the narrative of Joseph Conrad who sailed into the Congo basin and came across a spirituality that was somehow different from Western spirituality. According to Conrad's narrative, "African spirituality was the site of excess, epitomized by darkness, frenzy, madness, superstition, and illogicality." (Tagwirei 22). Tagwirei's article proposes that white-authored Zimbabwean narratives written after colonialism display a wider range of attitudes toward African spirituality, which are at once multiple and ambivalent. The two narratives that he uses entitled *The Cry of the Go-Away Bird* by Andrea Eames and *Mukiwa: A White Boy in Africa* by Peter Godwin, appearing at least a decade after Zimbabwe's independence from white minority rule, work against the dominant “white” fear of Christian decline and the attendant descent into spiritual darkness and enable a secondary non-secular experimentation with African spirituality.

Africa spirituality can be described or understood from the following characteristics: beliefs, practices, ceremonies etc. Sussy Gumo, Simon O. Gisege, Evans Raballah and Collins Ouma in an article titled "Communicating African Spirituality through Ecology: Challenges and Prospects for the 21st Century" examine African worldviews, determine how African spirituality is communicated through the environment, evaluate African ways of regulating the use of the environment, and explore challenges facing African spirituality and ecology today. Their results show that,

> African spirituality has been enhanced through the environment where humanity worshipped and venerated everything under the earth, on earth, between the earth and heavens and in the heavens above. Consequently, various methods to restrict the utilization of certain natural resources are employed as a way of conserving the environment. Additional findings demonstrate that African spirituality and ecology are currently facing a number of challenges, hence a major challenge of sustainability of African spirituality in regard to environment. From a spiritual point of view, it is therefore recommended that environmental diversity should be conserved through sustainable development where every person from grassroots level is involved in protecting and maintaining God’s creation. We conclude that African knowledge and belief systems on environmental sustainability could be revitalized and used in environmental conservation. (523)

The Lausanne Movement connects influencers and ideas for global mission, with a vision of the gospel for every person, disciple-making churches for every people and place, Christ-like leaders for every church and sector, and kingdom impact in every sphere of society. According to the Lausanne Movement, African spirituality underlies in African Traditional Religions which encompasses four foundational religious beliefs namely: (1) the belief in impersonal (mystical) power(s); (2) the belief in spirit beings; (3) the belief in divinities/gods and (4) the belief in the Supreme Being. The realm of the supernatural operates mystical power, magic, witchcraft, sorcery and many others. The spirit world or the realm of the supernatural is, in a sense, a battleground of spirits and powers that use their mystical powers to influence the course of human life. These mystical powers can be designated as positive or negative, good or evil, which may bring blessings or curses. If man only knew how to master and control the realm of the supernatural, the world would be a much happier place. Belief in the mystical powers as described already, the spirit beings behind them and the human quest to control or influence them had produced a variety of specialists such as medicine men, rainmakers, mediums, diviners, sorcerers, magicians and witches. Superstitions, totems, taboos and rituals grew out of such beliefs. It is in this line of thought that during the incantation, Ngàà-Mbóm is been pleaded to talk to, and protect the people through the medicine men. The persona says,

> Let thunder and lightning consume them!
> And should they suddenly appear
> in our lands as if from nowhere,
> May you enlighten our innermost spider-college
> of medicine-pot boilers to determine
> whether they were brought by men, not by a god! (Kishani 14)

The medicine-pot boilers mentioned in the excerpt above are traditional healers who rely on the spirit realm for protection and healing. The society in the poem depends on

them for messages from gods and the Supreme Being. They are the diviners, seers and possess the same powers as rainmakers, mediums, sorcerers, magicians and witches. As we discussed in chapter two, African divinities are many in number and varied in nature and each has its specific area of influence and control. Some of these divinities were originally mythological figures in some African legends and primordial histories and cosmologies, while some were tribal heroes or heroines. Divinities covering different aspects of life, society and community were usually established, such as divinities of the sea or the waters, rain, thunder, fertility, health or sickness, planting or harvest, tribal, clan or family deities. African divinities took the forms of mountains, rivers, forests, the mother earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, and ancestors. So, nature is part of African spirituality. The plurality of the divinities with their varying powers, influence, hierarchy, territoriality, even within one ethnic group or community, says a lot about the African religions, worship, beliefs and practices. This leaves an open door for religious accommodation, tolerance, assimilation and adaptation within the traditional religious thought.

In his quest to establish links and relationships with cosmic, spiritual and mystical powers and forces, man in traditional Africa has developed a variety of religious and social practices, rituals and ceremonies as means of achieving this quest. This explains why Alembong talks about a variety of faiths such as Christianity in “The Gospel Singers” and African Traditional Religion in “Exchanging Planes in Mid-Air”. Arguing that African political actors make use of African spirituality’ Benson Igboin posits that in spite of the presence of Christianity and Islam, many people continue to hold spiritual beliefs derived from traditional cosmologies which they apply to their everyday activities. Spiritually, it is believed that there exists a continuum between visible and invisible worlds, and that mankind shares the environment with spirits of various types

that have a determining influence on the outcome of everyday transactions (Igboin 2014; Gyekye 1995; Danquah 1968). Most Africans believe in the existence of invisible forces which share the world with visible ones and that the ultimate cause of human suffering or prosperity lies in the spirit-world (Mazama 2002).

There are two types of religious and social practices that are used in traditional Africa in order to establish links and relationships with the cosmic, spiritual and mystical powers and forces: (1) through the means "of exercising control" over the world of the mystical and spiritual powers and (2) through the means of restoring cosmic and spiritual harmony/balance. As Philip Steyne argues, cosmic, mystical and spiritual control can be exercised through the practices of: (1) incantations and power of words such as the one in "Konglanjo"; (2) the power of symbolism such as the symbol of kola nut in *A Basket of Kola Nuts*; (3) the power of magic; (4) the power of charms; (5) the power of fetishes or "juju" and (6) the power of witchcraft and sorcery. He adds that cosmic and spiritual harmony can be restored through the practices of (1) sacrifices and offerings/gifts like the ones in "Konglanjo" and (2) taboos like the ones in "Konglanjo".

The spirit beings who dispense powers to man are still in charge of the spirit world even when things go wrong. It is the humans who are required to do something so that harmony, peace and fellowship can be restored. Some fundamental questions that need answers surface here. What types of offences, or wrongs, violations and sins do humans commit against the spirit world or the spiritual order? If wrongs are admitted, what fears, feelings or guilt do they generate? Who gets hurt when the humans sin or go wrong? Why is maintaining cosmic harmony and order necessary for man? What specific religious practices, sacrifices and offerings are efficacious in acts of reconciliation and peace making between the humans and the spirit world? We are told in *Lake God* by the chief priest that the lake must explode except the Fon leads people in sacrifice. Answers

to the questions above are in the poetry of Alembong and Kishani. For example, in the poem "The Taxi Driver's Lawsuit" (*Konglanjo!*), Kishani depicts the manifestation of African deities in nature and some of the above questions find solutions here. The last stanza of the poem goes as follows:

> I fear the dust which germinates seeds
> And devours our dead
> And still remains as hungry as ever
> I fear the soil and the lot
> Of those who never fear her.
> I fear the lot
> Of those who stand on dust to promote injustice. (Kishani 91)

According to the persona in this poem, the officer of the law who is supposed to enforce the law against crimes is the one committing the crimes. He sues the Taxi-Driver for documents which are still valid because of their tussle on a girlfriend. In this poem, nature (dust) is chosen as the best judge because it knows no injustice and acts according to the law of nature which rewards good for good and evil for evil. In this sense, nature is presented as a harbour for deities. This explains our earlier premise that the spirit beings who dispense powers to man are still in charge of the spirit world even when things go wrong. When things go wrong such as the ones in the poem, the spirit realm also takes its course by acting in accordance with nature. This is because this world in essence is spiritual rather than material and life is saturated with supernatural possibilities. Steyne describes this view further by saying:

> Everything in life can be influenced by and responds to the world of spirits. Whatever happens in the physical realm has a spiritual co-ordinate and, likewise, whatever transpires in the spiritual realm has direct bearing on the physical world. Man is related to and dependent upon the unseen. For this reason, all of life is to be understood spiritually. The correct response to any situation is spiritual, whether the matter is a family affair, sickness, or ceremonial practice (59).

This religious worldview is called spiritualism and it is pervasive and dominates the entire life of man. The reason for this spiritual pervasiveness and dominance is stated thus:

> The whole universe is interconnected through the will and the power contained in both animate and inanimate objects. Everything man is, does, handles, projects and interacts with is interpenetrated with the spiritual. His socio-cultural structures, down to their finest details, are under the control of the spiritual powers or forces. Nothing in man's environment escapes the influence or the manipulation of the spirit world. The world is more spiritual than it is physical and it is spiritually upheld. If life is affected by spirits, then it is of utmost importance to maintain good relations with the spirits and secure their favor (Steyne 37).

Steyne used various concepts and terms to describe the traditional religious worldview. In traditional religious worldview, the "question of meaning" in life is dominated by the spiritual emphasis. "Life's questions and answers revolve around the spiritual rather than the physical". We have seen how the Taxi-Driver relies on nature which is more spiritual to solve his physical problem with the officer of the law. This means that nature is not dead but alive. Furthermore, nature is more spiritual than mundane. It is on account of this spiritual view of life, that "when personal resources fail, religious specialists will divine and supply satisfactory meanings". Pristine Traditional Africans both recognise and understand this quest for meaning in the everyday happenings of life and would want to find out what lies behind every incident in life, such as "catastrophes, natural disasters, disease, untimely death and the other exigencies of life". One must look "beyond the obvious" in order to find the spiritual "reasons" or causes in life. In the poem "Cycles" (in the collection, *Forest Echoes*), Alembong portrays our connection with the ancestors in the spirit realm which helps to strengthen the argument that we both recognise and understand the quest for meaning in the everyday happenings of life and would want to find out what lies behind every incident in life. In

the poem, the death of the Fon, Fonji-nya, helps to strengthen the connection between human and the spirit worlds through nature. The eighth and ninth stanzas read thus,

> Therefore,
> Chart your way with the snail's feelers
> Leave behind as you glide
> *Nduat* in every home,
> Dung on every farm plot,
> Steam in the loins of every man,
> Cold water in the womb of every woman.
>
> Go in peace to the home of Mankem.
> Tell Njingu we continue to look up to him.
> Tell Lekeateh Ateng'a Lekang has swallowed itself.
> Tell Tanjo'nji Aduiiha-nkeng had long developed legs.
> Tell Asongtia our goats no longer produce triplets.
> Ask Abouatmboh to send us more cows.
> Join them in looking after us
> Until the fire on our hilltops burns out. (47)

Here, the persona sees the death of the Fon as a way to distribute blessings with the living. Departing from the physical means re-incorporation with the world of the spirits. This is why the persona has a lot of things to tell him to commune with the ancestors. Names mentioned in the excerpt above such as, Njingu, Lekeateh, Tanjo'nji, Asongtia, and Abouatmboh are ancestral names. They listen to the pleas of the people and act accordingly. This is the more reason why they are called "the living dead" in Africa. The persona's use of the anaphora "Tell" in the second stanza quoted above demonstrates the interconnectedness among these ancestors. It also depicts the fact that the unseen is present in all phenomena.

Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor observes that there is also a mystical order of the universe, especially in pristine African cultures. Africans believe in the existence of a mystical, invisible, hidden, spiritual power in the universe. This power originates from God but is possessed hierarchically by divinities, spirits, and the living dead, and it is available to some people, in various degrees. This is a universal belief among Africans. Those to

whom this power is accessible can use it for good, such as healing, rainmaking, or divination, while others can use it for harm, through magic, witchcraft, and sorcery. This power is not accessible to everyone, and in most cases, it is inborn, but the person has to learn how to use it. We have demonstrated that among the Bangwa, *Molabia* possesses such powers. Mbiti says that access to this power is hierarchical in the sense that God has most and absolute control over it; the spirits and the living dead have portions of it; and some human beings know how to tap, manipulate and use some of it. Each community experiences this force or power as useful and therefore acceptable, neutral or harmful and therefore evil. Mbiti adds that human beings have a privileged position in the universe. Everything is said to center on them. Human beings are the link between the heavens and the earth, between the visible and the invisible universe. This view influences the way humans relate to the universe: on the one hand, they strive to maintain harmony between themselves and the invisible universe by observing the moral and religious order; at the same time, humans see the universe in a utilitarian way, from the point of view of what is beneficial or harmful to them.

Jacob Olupona holds the view that African spirituality simply acknowledges that beliefs and practices touch on and inform every facet of human life, and therefore African religion cannot be separated from the everyday or mundane. African spirituality is truly holistic. For example, sickness in the indigenous African worldview is not only an imbalance of the body, but also an imbalance in one's social/spiritual life, which can be linked to a breakdown in one's kinship and family relations or even to one's relationship with one's ancestors. The poem "Exchanging Planes in Mid-Air depicts the mystery that Africans attribute to sickness. The persona says,

> This mother
> Who they say
> Is my mother's sister

Said I shouldn't
Clean their heads
All in one day
Because when it comes
To falling sick
They all will fall sick
In one day. (35)

As seen on the poem, sickness is not simply an imbalance of the body, but a signal that something has gone wrong somewhere—in this case, it the spiritual life of the people. They are not supposed to shave on the same day because if they do, they will all fall sick on the same day. This is a bond that holds African spirituality together.

African spirituality has a number of clearly discernible tenets. African cultures share a common belief that whatever exists, visible and invisible, is spiritual in nature and is endowed by the Supreme Being, the Creator of all things, with intrinsic dignity, special attributes and distinct power. This Supreme Being is what the persona in Konglanjo" calls Ngàà-Mbóm. It is also a common African belief that the Creator/ Ngàà-Mbóm had a purpose for creating everything; and gave each entity a definite place and mission in creation. On the myriad entities in creation, Africans also posit that all existents have mutual spiritual relationships and interact according to a principle of cosmic order.

The ideas and norms of African cultural spirituality subsist in many forms of expression in African communities. As we have mentioned before, they can be found in myths of creation, legends, folktales, aphorisms, proverbs, libation prayers, sacred songs and dirges. They subsist in well-established rules and taboos for the protection and conservation of nature, in clearly defined cultural values, moral norms, social norms, attitudes, etiquette, traditional rules of conduct, in established patterns of behaviour and in ceremonial and ritual acts and processes. These varied forms of expression constitute a rich source material for the study of the commonalities and divergences in African

cultural spirituality. And it is in these forms that we also discover the place and utility of natural elements like water in African spirituality. Different people may observe this differently, but the essence of that which is natural does not change. Akbar is one of the leading Afrocentric scholars. He wrote that:

> The concept of humanity's essential spirituality merely suggests that when men and women are reduced to their lowest terms, they are invisible and of a universal substance. Such an assumption implies that, ultimately, people are harmoniously alike and not dissimilar to the essence of all that is nature. (139)

A critical glance at the poetry of Alembong and Kishani reveals that they have a similar way of treating natural concepts, behaviours, occurrences and all other patterns of nature. They both believe that nature is natural, or should be natural, and all its facets are natural including human components. George Este supports the spiritual nature of humans by arguing that in contrast to Eurocentrism, which stresses the materialistic aspect of life, Afrocentrism maintains that the non-material aspects of human beings are important. Every other proponents of the perspective stress the importance of the holistic view that mind, body, and spirit are one. Hence, this belief is directly tied to the principle of interconnection. It is therefore plausible to argue that pristine African nature, culture and spirituality are linked together and separated only by a thin line. The three go together, affecting each other at every given point. In other to let one flourish, we must not destroy the rest.

Reflections on Pristine African Ethno-ethics

The question of pristine African ethno-ethics originates from our earlier argument concerning the origin of bioethics in Africa which we concluded that before the coming of the white man there was ethics in Africa. Our focus here is on ethno-ethics in its original state. In this sense, we are looking at controversial issues of life and issues

which involve rightness and wrongness, as it were, in Africa, and with regards to African culture. These wrongness and rightness originate from the divine power. According to Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor, the universe has dimensions of order and power as follows: first of all, there is order in the laws of nature. This order, established by God, guides the functioning of the universe, preventing it from falling into chaos; and it ensures the continuance of life and the universe itself. Thus, everything is not completely unpredictable and chaotic because of this order. This is the function of God's providence and sustenance of the universe. These laws are controlled by God directly or indirectly through God's intermediaries. It is the power of Ngàà-Mbóm as Kishani depicts in his poem titled, "Konglanjo". Ngàà-Mbóm possesses the power to do and undo, and this explains why the people channel their supplications to him. They say,

> Ngàà-Mbóm!
> Thou who gave us to our times and lands,
> Receive our supplications from within this grove
> Inflated by the silence of your presence! (17)

These lines indicate that Ngàà-Mbóm is the God of creation as he possesses the power to have created the people. To say that he is the one "who gave us to our times and lands" is to say that, he created "us". His presence is only felt by his silence because he is an unseen creator. He is the Supreme Being who sees everything but is never seen physically. People only feel his presence from his doings.

Secondly, there is moral and religious order. This is where ethno-ethics comes in. According to Mbiti, Africans believe that God has ordained a moral order for humans, through which they came to understand what is good and what is evil, so that they might live in harmony with one another and safeguard the life of the people. This order, according to Mbiti, is knowable to humans, by nature. Knowing the order directs our

actions in the universe. But how do we know our actions in a ethno-ethics situation where there are controversies of life? It is a matter of cultural acceptance or rejection.

African cultures have specific ethical principles which surround their pristine ethno-ethics. These principles might have been distorted by capitalist greed, world evolution and technological advancement, or by interculturality and globalization. However, it does not efface their existence from the onset of African ethno-ethics. John Barugahare contends that African bioethics (ethno-ethics) is supposed to be indigenous to Africa and reflective of African identity. However, despite many positive insights in the on-going discussions, it is feared that the growth of ethno-ethics in Africa lacks a clear direction. Some of the views threaten to distort the essence of ethics and its development on the continent. Barugahare might be right because it is generally by positioning ethics in a particular area that we can understand it better. For example it was by positioning it in the ecocultural and spiritual spaces that we could clearly understand it in this thesis. Some critics would situate it only in the medical field. One fundamental fact is that, no matter the area in which ethno-ethics finds itself, its root is in African oral literature such as folktales, proverbs, myths etc. The fact is that African ethno-ethics (particularly in relation to ecocultural spirituality) is buried in folklore. It is important to show this with evidences from the texts under study.

To begin with, folktales are traditional narratives. Ayo Kehinde studied folktales in the Nigerian society and he says, "folktales comprise various kinds of narrative prose literature found in the oral traditions of the world" (1). Folktales are imaginative; they are in prose form, their authorship is anonymous and they are orally transmitted from generation to generation. Edward Qinn posits that once a folktale assumes a written form, it remains a folktale, but its form becomes fixed. In the poetry of Alembong folktales are used to play different roles. Besides being a method or style of

embellishment, they are used in solving both existential and essential problems because each tale always ends with a message, a point and a truth to remember as one confronts life's problems. Folktales are also used in the poems to educate, to entertain and to celebrate.

In the poems "Facing the Odium" and "Some Day for Sure", Alembong uses metaphors of the tortoise and the elephant to demonstrate the oppression of the masses by the ruling class. He makes use of an allusion to the folktale of "Why People Die" to show that there is a sense of optimism in spite of the oppression. By this folktale, at first death did not exist. People grew old and rejuvenated. But the dog and the chameleon had a fierce argument. The dog argued that people should live forever, so that there would be no sorrow. The chameleon felt that people should die. They went to convince God. The argument was evenly weighted, and God decided to organize a competition for them to run to the top of a hill and whoever arrived there first was to drum his message and his pleas would be accepted. When the race began the chameleon went on steadily. The dog ran at full speed, but then fell into eating and drinking on the way, on the assumption that he would overtake the chameleon. Then he slept; only to be awakened by the sound of chameleon's plea on the drum that there should be death and God accepted this plea. So, death came to the world.

Alembong's ability to tap and use this folktale to address contemporary issues supports the Afrocentric paradigm of interpretation where elements of orality are constantly being used. The essence is to promote African culture. It is worth noting that he also mentions this folktale in the poem "Lebialem" where the persona concludes by saying:

> Lebialem!
> Spider!
> see so that we may see.
> before you, naked we stand,

arms stretched, hands open,
waiting for the dog's message
or that of the chameleon. (Alembong 44)

The suspense which is used at the end of these poetic lines puts the reader in a dilemma as to whether it is the dog's message of 'no to death' which will come or the chameleon's 'yes to death'. This creates anxiety and pushes us to read further. In "Facing the Odium" the persona says:

You may have this lens
Now that the mist has come to stay.
What is man if he can't see beyond his nose?
But put on the tortoise's shell
If you don't want the elephant to stop your breath (Alembong 8).

Here, the advice is for the need for protection. It could be protection of nature or African ethno-ethics. The tortoise uses its shell to protect itself against attacks by the elephant. In most African societies where there is oppression of nature, there is the need for protection similar to that of the tortoise's shell. In another sense, however, the oppressed nature does not only need to hide itself but fight against oppression. This rather means that it needs to get out of their shells to fight back. This is because, if it is not done this way, nature will continue to suffer. It is for this reason that the persona in "Some Day for Sure" (*The Passing Wind*) cries out in the beginning of the poem that:

Oh, how snake-like the trembling cry
Twines the small of my brains!
The feeble cords of that voice
Spell the agonies of the Tortoise
Down trodden by the Elephant
But for how long will this last
When the Tortoise's shell is hard to crack? (Alembong 20)

The elephant here is still serving as a threat to the tortoise, but the fact is that the shell of the tortoise is hard to crack. This is same with nature. Humans can continue to

oppress nature but they can never destroy the bond that holds it together. It will be slow to react but they will never lose a sense of optimism. Thus, the folktale is simply the representation of life and nature here. Lekau Eleazar Mphasha argues that "Folktales are regarded as reflections of real life" (296).

Another aspect of oral literature which depicts pristine African ethno-ethics is proverbs. Proverbs are phrases that express basic truth which may be applied to common situations. According to Ruth Finnegan, a proverb "is a saying in more or less fixed form marked by 'shortness, sense, and salt' and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it" (393). Chinua Achebe posits that "proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (7). Proverbs have a strong influence on contemporary ethno-ethical works in general, and the poetry of Alembong and Kishani in particular as far as this study is concerned. George J. Sefa. Dei posits that "Within the African traditional context proverbs as a way of knowing are deeply embedded in the community's cultures, histories, Indigenous cosmologies and worldviews" (48).

Alembong and Kishani use proverbs as a tool of orality to express contemporary African ethno-ethical issues plaguing the society. They use proverbs to reveal the power of learning communities characterized by resilience, resistance, creativity, resourcefulness, responsibility, stewardship, and vulnerability. They also use them to speak to acts of reconciliation and knowledge reciprocity, and the coming to terms with expectations of daily existence. In the poem "Mores" by Alembong, the persona says in the last stanza that,

> It is only when
> An egg drops that
> A messy secret is
> revealed." (30).

This proverb teaches us what secrets look like. Secrets are hidden, but no matter how long they are hidden, they must be known, especially when the right time reaches (when the egg drops). This reflects the rightness or wrongness of actions. A morally upright action remains morally upright despite the time that it is considered immoral.

Song is another aspect of orality where pristine African ethno-ethics is demonstrated in the poetry of Alembong. These are chants performed in specific occasions and situations of life. There could be lullabies, nuptials, dirges, secular panegyrics, topical songs, war chants and/ or work songs. Alembong explores the artistic strengths of songs to express his ideas in his poems. This is what Kishani rarely does in his two collections under study. The tool used to pass information across in the poem "The Gospel Singers" is song. The persona introduces this song in the second stanza of the poem and then, the song commences in the third stanza. He says:

> One, two three, go
> And metallic voices
> Picked up the celebrated jingle
> In mid air
> apostrophizing
> eulogizing
> deifying
> earth
> The eye of the blind: ye!
> The feelers of the numb: ye!
> The mouth of the dumbfounded: ye!
> The easel of human lives: ye! (Alembong 16)

Alembong ridicules these gospel singers because as they sing, they do not put to work. Even when they work, they still neglect their crops in the bush in order to go and sing. They only believe that manna will fall from heaven and make their crops do well. In the persona's words,

> And the sounds rippled
> The surface of the wind

While corn decayed in the fields
With neglect (Alembong 16)

Even though the song is geared towards ridiculing a situation with the aim of correcting it, it plays a role in the reader's sensation. Okpewho has argued that "much of the emotional delight that we get from oral poetry comes from the musical quality that is contained in the song or chant" (10). Hence, we derive much emotional delight from the poetry of Alembong. It is worthy to note that in some instances these songs are sung during some specific rituals.

Folktales, proverbs and songs are just basic element of orality. African ethno-ethics is in such forms of orality. In fact, African ethno-ethics is buried in folklore and explained through it in order to sustain African ecocultural spirituality. This is not a denial of the basis for bioethics theories that take their undercover origins from Western core values, but it is a proposal for a return to base which can help enhance and preserve pristine African ethno-ethics. Fundamentally, we are not against theories that have been formulated from Western theories, but we are looking forward to the implementation of African cultural elements in the creation of theories that can help project pristine African ethno-ethics. One flaw of the whole is that some African ethics scholars have the proposition that even the ethics in Africa is a leftover of Western bioethics, talk less of the theory.

Tangwa opines that bioethics in Africa seems to be primarily aimed at challenging what has been described as ‘a strong impulse to present Western bioethics and Western cultures as the only rational and universally valid ones’ (125 - 138). This immediately falls under the general call for decolonization of concepts in Africa. As we earlier observed Fayemi and Adeyelure argue that "the teaching and implementation of bioethics in Africa is an attempt by the West to re-colonize and dominate, and exploit

Africa" (68). In fact, while Africa is fighting to develop its ethno-ethics and decolonize bioethics, the West is making attempts to re-colonize and dominate Africa through bioethics. This brings a tussle in the fields of ethno-ethics and bioethics.

In support of Fayemi and Adeyelure some critics have argued that current bioethics and efforts by Western partner institutions to encourage its growth on the continent are all an unholy scheme to create or sustain the Western colonial or neocolonial hegemony, to perpetuate Western dominance and exploitation of the continent (Tangwa 101 - 110, Tangwa 183 - 200, Tangwa 125 - 138). This view is not supported by all proponents of African ethno-ethics. John Barugahare, for example, posits that the regrettable impact of proceeding on such a negative assumption is that it fosters arbitrary mistrust and bias, all of which negatively impact objectivity as seen, for example, in an uncritical rejection of everything Western while uncritically accommodating everything indigenous and traditional to Africa. It further explains the common cognitive biases prevalent in the discourse particularly 'in-group/out-group bias', characterized by the rhetoric of '*otherizing*', evidenced by use of oppositional terms such as 'they/their' Versus 'us/our' and 'foreign' versus 'local/indigenous'. It simply brings biases. Our stand is that of ethics that sees things from the African perspective and that is ethno-ethics.

Debunking Tangwa, Barugahare argues that even though anger against colonialism, neocolonialism and worst of all, apartheid are good explanations for this attitude, they are not a sound justification for such an attitude in the kind of practical reasoning that ought to guide the growth of bioethics or ethno-ethics on the continent. This means that effective normative analysis of elements of ethno-ethics in Africa and our chances at influencing global bioethics will depend on our aptitude and willingness to identify and guard against such potential cognitive distortions that undermine and sabotage impartial critical analysis. This task needs to begin with a critical examination of the existing

negative assumption about the aim of the current ethics movement in Africa and the rest of the non-western world.

As we have rightfully illustrated, the poem "The Game" is a representation of a typical pristine African ethno-ethical debate where the speaker represents one camp/team which is not supported by the referee and the other which is supported. The speaker's team is a metaphorical representation of the moral dimensions of life which is the right way, but it is always or at least most often, subdued by the immoral aspect. We earlier mentioned that the intention of the poet is not to project this triumph of the immoral, but we interpret here that it is rather to ridicule it. Evil is always a lower of the two imperatives (moral/good and immoral/bad). It is the less in relation to the good and that is why the persona represents it with the weak team. He says,

> The other team was there
> And the team was his
> In the ground of play
> And the boys were lead
> And their legs were slow
> In the ground of play. (Alembong 27)

Given that pristine African ethno-ethics requires two imperatives, that is, the moral and immoral aspects, it becomes probable that the ultimate goal is to situate these imperatives in a context that is more African in nature. It is but normal that Alembong depicts pristine African ethno-ethics in an era which has experienced globalization and therefore it is difficult to experience pristine ethno-ethics in reality. The fact is that the world has deviated from pristine ethics principles of specific cultures like African cultures because of factors such as globalization here mentioned and interculturality. With this, there is fear that the generations yet to be born may not have any sense of pristine ethics principles in Africa. It is for this reason that Alembong repositions the pristine ethno-ethics principles which are feared to disappear in the nearest future.

Kishani does same as Alembong. This gives us a clear direction on the state of ethics in Africa today. The fear of the sudden disappearance of pristine African ethics is as a result of its association with other ethics such Western bioethics. The need to calve out African ethics is necessary and this explains why we have focused on ethno-ethics as a strand of African ethics. This association/meeting is same with ecocultural and spiritual meetings. It is against this backdrop that we have the hybrid concept of ecocultural spirituality and ethics in Africa.

The Hybrid Concept: The Meeting Point of Western and African Ecocultural Spirituality

Having demonstrated the disparity between African and Western ecocultural spirituality through ethno-ethics and bioethics, it is necessary to balance the equation by showing the meeting points of the two cultures in terms of ecocultural spirituality. This is going to go contrary to the claim that everything which is not Eurocentric is Afrocentric as postulated by John H. Milan. He says, "Afrocentricity is defined, partly, in contrast to Eurocentrism ... everything which does not come out of Afrocentric perspective is believed to be Eurocentric" (9). If we accept this definition blindly, we will lose our sight on the hybrid concept which combines the two worldviews. It is against this backdrop that in this section of the work we discuss the meeting points of Afrocentric and Eurocentric attitudes towards ecocultural spirituality. This is the contribution of this study to knowledge as the work proposes that we should accept good qualities or elements of Western and African views that can help to protect nature and consequently African spirituality. Alembong and Kishani suggest that, when Western and African cultures meet, the ideals (positive aspects) of each culture should be taken into consideration. Therefore, the West has something to learn from the Africans and they must be humble enough to learn.

Ecocultural spirituality has a universal belief in the divinity of nature. In the Western worldview this was postulated by New World Transcendentalists and the animalistic school of thought. Despite the fact that New World Transcendentalism preached the divinity of nature, the world has been deviating systematically from this notion. This does not repeal the fact that it was one of the major preaching of the transcendental school of thought.

With respect to the animistic school of thought, everything is believed to be connected to the realm of the spirit. Animism (from Latin: anima meaning 'breath, spirit, life') is the belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. Potentially, animism perceives all things—animals, plants, rocks, rivers, weather systems, human handiwork and perhaps even words—as animated and alive. Animism is used in anthropology of religion as a term for the belief system of many indigenous peoples, especially in contrast to the relatively more recent development of organized religions. It focuses on the metaphysical universe, with a specific focus on the concept of the immaterial soul.

Although each culture has its own mythologies and rituals, animism is said to describe the most common, foundational thread of indigenous peoples' "spiritual" or "supernatural" perspectives. The animistic perspective is so widely held and inherent to most indigenous peoples, that they often do not even have a word in their languages that corresponds to "animism" (or even "religion"); the term is an anthropological construct.

Just like Transcendentalism and animism that perceive the notion of a dual essence of nature, the African cosmology is believed to be dual in nature too. Nature, as we have argued elsewhere in this study, is spiritual in Africa. For example, George Panyin Hagan discusses tenets of African spirituality which include (1) All things are Spiritual

and have Divine Attributes and Power (2) All Entities relate and interact as Spiritual Forces – The Opposites in the Cosmic Order (3) God created every entity to fulfill a divine purpose and so designated a Place and Time for every entity (4) All Existents interact and Human Beings have a responsibility to ensure the Integrity of Entities and the Harmony of Cosmic Order. This adds to the argument that nature is spiritual. As we have seen in the poem, "A Taxi-Driver's Lawsuit" nature is spiritual. The Taxi-Driver fears the soil because it has a spiritual underpinning. The last stanza of the poem goes thus,

> I fear the dust which germinates seeds
> and devours our dead
> and still remains as hungry as ever (Kishani 91)

To show that humans and nature are indissociable elements of the universe or environment, Sussy Gumo et al posit that,

> environment covers the social, political, economic, spiritual and natural environment which comprises living and non-living things, including water, air, land, all plants, man and other animals and the existing inter-relationships. They further explain that humankind, according to the African thought and belief, is not an isolated creature. Humanity is only part of the universe which is full of animals, plants and inanimate objects. All these components are related to each other in various ways, and all these are dependent on the Supreme God for their appearance and their continued existence. The relationship between humanity and the surroundings are in different categories, depending on the use to which humankind puts them, and on the beliefs which developed in the creation of myths (1 - 2)

Given that both Afrocentric and Eurocentric views consider nature as divine and spiritual, it will not be wrong for us to argue that there is a meeting point in the perception of African and Western ecocultural spirituality. This meeting point, however, does not immediately suggest a hybrid state. The hybrid state emerges from the attitudes of these cultures to nature which goes a long way to affect their spirituality. This means that when African and Western cultures meet in relation to ecoculture and spirituality, it

is the interaction of the cultures that can lead to a hybrid concept. If each culture is operating on its own norms of the connection between nature and spirituality, no hybrid state will be formed. A hybrid state is mostly formed when the two cultures begin to interact and one culture begins to copy the attitudes of another towards ecocultural spirituality.

The poem "Exchanging Planes in Mid-Air" clearly illustrates this phenomenon. In the poem, the persona is worried that the mother whom they call his mother fears his Western perceptions because he is doing things contrary to their culture. The persona is an African who has been subsumed by the attitudes of different cultures and is bent to manifest a hybrid state because he has two cultures embedded in him

Another area where the hybrid concept is evident is in ethno-ethics and bioethics. We have seen already that some critics hold the view that African ethno-ethics emanates from its Western counterparts which is bioethics. Our focus here is neither to accept nor to refute these claims, but to show how the claims lead to the creation of a hybrid state of ethics in relation to ecocultural spirituality. Prominent among these views is that of De Vries Raymond and Leslie Rott who view the exportation of bioethics to Africa and all developing countries as a threat to the culture of the people. This means that the importation/exportation of bioethics led to cultural hybridity. De Vries Raymond and Leslie Rott likened the importation of bioethics to the importation of Western Religions into Africa which has played a vital role in the extinction of African Traditional Religions. Africans resist the term bioethics partly because of this colonial sense. As we have observed, they do not support the importation and exportation of bioethics into Africa. They completely wipe out the idea of bioethics, ignoring its benefits to the African cosmology. However, Kazeem and Adeyelure acknowledge that there may be secondary reasons for bringing Western bioethics to Africa, and training Africans to

follow Western bioethical ideas, but we cannot completely argue, as De Vries and Rott do, that Africans derive no positive outcome from Western bioethics. They say:

> the primary motivation of training Africans in the West and establishing collaborations in many parts of Africa through research institutions and projects is to share experiences and provide aid. Though secondary reasons may be inferred, the fundamental factor is sharing of experiences and expertise, which is unavoidable in a globalizing era. Some benefits have no doubt, accrued directly and indirectly to Africans and African institutions through bioethics training programmes funded by some countries in the West. The training is an invaluable resource for members of ethics committees, biomedical researchers and other bioethics practitioners in different African states. Besides the direct impact of inbuilding in the trainees, analytic and critical minds of being abreast with contemporary moral issues involved in biotechnology, the training programmes have indirect relevance for influencing and shaping public health and bio regulations in order to promote better health, life and care for the citizenry. On this note, bioethics education of Africans, whether in Africa or offshore, has a noble and laudable intent. (4)

An additional argument is that even if bioethics importation/exportation is an imperialist project in Africa, "bioethics exportation to Africa is then an unintended imperialist project." (5). The focal point here is that Western bioethics coming to Africa must affect the African brand of ethics. This goes same with ecological, cultural and spiritual worldviews. This is because when two cultures meet and mix, there is high probability of the emergence of hybrid states. It is difficult to experience pristine African ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics or bioethics because of the meeting and mixing of cultures. This act of cultures meeting and mixing is called interculturality. This has both positive and negative consequences.

To begin with, life gets easier when there is the meeting and mixing of ecocultural spirituality because knowledge is shared when cultures meet and mix. This is interculturality. According to Ieva Bilbokaitė,

> The category knowledge about others is expressed in a perception that interculturality as well as living among different individuals "make life easier ... help to expand the circle of knowledge", the possibility "to know about life on

> other countries" arises. The content of the subcategory acceptance of other cultures is revealed through comparison that "interculturality - is the other side of nationality - it is recognition of other cultures, knowledge about customs and traditions, attitudes and values ... The importance of new contacts and possibility to know the world is emphasized (4865).

In a similar way, the overall idea of ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics/ bioethics meeting and mixing from different cultural backgrounds suggests exchange of knowledge thereby making life easier. This aspect of knowing other cultures in order to make life easier is very important as it helps to improve relationships. In a different cultural background something may be ethically wrong and in others it may be right. With such cultures sharing this knowledge, there is high probability of adjusting their bioethical principles as to what is right and what is wrong. People from different cultural backgrounds learn and this makes life easier, even though some cultures still look at others as sub-cultures.

Thus, when we get to know about other cultures and the world gets easier to move along, we nonetheless, adopt the problem of interculturality too. This aspect has been demonstrated and illustrated by other scholars like Malgorzata Rozkwitalska. According to him, “A series of meta-analyses based on previous research that was conducted by Stahl et al. (2010a) proved the following positive aspects of Cross-cultural interactions in terms: increased creativity, satisfaction and more effective communication” (234).

Another good effect of people of different cultures coming together has been advanced by Dominique D. Fisher, Meaghan Emery and Donna G. Wilkerson. In a sense, Dominique et al. see interculturality as a way of breaking identity boundaries as it wipes out the limits brought in by alienations and restrictions. Hence, with interculturality, there is free interaction of persons and cultures. The cultural superiority that the persona in the poem "Steve Biko and His Fist" (by Alembong in *The Passing Wind*) presents,

and which led to apartheid, would have been avoided if everyone understood cultural differences and lived with it. The persona tells us that the whites gave blacks all sorts of names because of cultural differences. He says:

> They said these people
> with skins of soot smell
> like the shit of a dog
> That they smell
> like the anus of a cat.
> That they smell
> like the urine of a woman.
> And for this reason
> they must stay apart. (Alembong 42)

This cultural stigmatization existed until "when those with skins of soot/ got up from their childlike sleep/ their eyes saw how the walls that/ divided them from their brothers were." (Alembong 41) In this form of society where there is no room for interculturality, it is difficult for knowledge to be shared. It is also difficult for life to get easier.

There is the need to break all identity boundaries and interact with people of different cultures. This is unlike people who make it difficult for people of different cultures to come together by establishing intercultural boundaries. In summary, when people of different cultures come together, there are limited identity and cultural boundaries thereby enhancing free correlation of people. Again, this goes a long way to enhance intercultural communication.

Another advantage of bringing people of different cultures together is that it reevaluates and rehabilitates different belief systems. As Dominique D. Fisher, Meaghan Emery and Donna G. Wilkerson put it,

> More than a non-problem, the modernity/tradition opposition is the work of a long ideological rerouting that continues in the so-called postcolonial period, wherein both Eurocentrism and "inverted-Eurocentrism" combine ... Indeed, as Memmes specifies, the road to modernity calls for a crossing of epochs and an

> errancy within cultures in order to define mentalities and unveil underlying ideologies. (98)

As seen from the extract above, many misconceptions have been in the perception and presentation of modernity (Western system) and tradition (Global South system). This is due to lack of good knowledge of interculturality. With interculturality, people get to acquaint themselves with cultures aside from theirs. This helps in establishing and improving the perceived differences between modernity and tradition. The poem "Exchanging Planes in Mid-Air" is a typical mélange of modernity and tradition. The speaker in the poem represents tradition while the mother whom they say is his aunt; the sister of his mother is a metaphorical representation of modernity. She sees the speaker as an embodiment of waywardness because he doesn't see things from her perspective. The irony here is that he is highly educated and his education has made him to understand that Western perceptions have gradually transformed African mentalities. The persona tells us that,

> She says
> Big book has
> Ruined me like faggots
> That have been ruined by black ants.
> She says
> I don't go to church,
> The white man's house of worship,
> Because my books teach me
> Strange things,
> Things that make me
> Turn my back to the god
> Who they say lives in the sky.
> Things that make me
> Follow the black path
> That leads to satan's chiefdom,
> Things that shall make me
> Feast in fires
> In the country of wizards.
> When I try to picture this mother of mine-
> This black skin with white blood-
> Sleep finishes in my head. (Alembong 34)

Furthermore, according to Malgorzata Rozkwitalska,

> Cross-cultural interactions bring together individuals with diverse patterns of behaviours and cognitive blueprints that are used to interpret the surroundings ... As a result, cross- cultural interactions reflect how representatives of various cultures affect one another and behave in a given situational context ... Cross-cultural interactions embrace all the types of internal and external, direct and indirect contacts of individuals in every element. (232)

It is in this perspective that the said speaker in "Exchanging Planes in Mid-Air" has gotten to know other people's perception of their cultures. This has transformed him. It is also in this perspective that people get to know the perceptions of other people about African cultures. Through cross-cultural interaction, they know, for example, that the "entire world" is against the black race. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that intercultural interaction brings together individual characters with diverse and different patterns of behaviours and cognitive blueprints that are used to interpret their surroundings. We can interpret the surroundings based on the fact that some people believe to be superior to others. In spite of this, people do not have to relent their efforts to deconstruct that myth by showing their worth. It is good to know that the coming together of people of different cultures helps in breaking stereotypes. Stereotyping is an indication of one group of people exhibiting superiority over another group of people usually by some sort of negative connotation that undermines their values. Intercultural relationships help to break down these types of negative actions allowing for a different perspective and a better understanding. Stereotypes like what Edward Said demonstrates in *Orientalism* have been the myths which have created boundaries in cultures. The *occident* has been thought to be the center and as such, superior to the *orient*. Similarly, texts like Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* have painted a very bad image of the African continent and its peoples. Through interculturality, these myths are deconstructed as different people get to know and practice different cultures thereby

understanding the values of such cultures. Hence, breaking of these stereotypes is an advantage of cultures coming together.

Cultural awareness is another advantage of bringing people of different cultures together. This means having an understanding and appreciation for different cultures as well as your own. Being culturally aware allows you gain more insight and increases your knowledge on the way of life in other countries. You get a different perspective and a better appreciation for other cultures thereby eliminating close-mindedness.

However, when different cultures come together, it leads to binaries such as acceptance and rejection, ascendency and descendency, and skepticism and suspicion. These binaries have two poles which are positive and negative. With regards to acceptance and rejection, for example, when cultures are accepted, there are accommodated and as such, there is no room for conflicts. This is positive. On the contrary when cultures are rejected, prejudices and stereotypes follow, thereby leading to conflicts. The case of the Western and African cultures exhibited in the poem "Exchanging Planes in Mid-Air" is prominent here. The mother whom they say is the speaker's aunt; the sister of his mother brings prejudices and stereotypes about the speaker and his culture. She thinks he does not go to church. She thinks he serves a dead god. These negative stereotypes and biases result from binaries which are capable of destroying other cultures. Some people find it difficult to accept the culture of indigenous people. As such, conflicts ensue. Similarly, some people are influenced by Westerners to reject the culture of the people which demands them to partake in traditional rituals as leaders. Since they keep rejecting their culture under the influence of the white man, calamity befalls the land as nature reacts and takes many lives. Therefore, the binary of acceptance and rejection leads to more serious problems in the society. Thus, it is not wrong to conclude that when different cultures come together it can lead to binaries which in the end tend to

lead to intercultural conflicts. We have seen ethno-ethics/ bioethical conflicts. We have also seen ecological conflicts and spirituality conflicts which result from the merging and mixing of cultures.

Furthermore, merging people of different cultures can lead to acculturation. Peter J. Guarnaccia et al say that, "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (3). In other words, acculturation is a process of attitudinal and behavioral change experienced by individuals who live in multicultural/ intercultural societies or who have come in contact with a different culture due to colonization, invasion, political change, globalization, and the increased mobility of society due to technological advances. One ecocultural spirituality and ethics is affected by acculturation when mixed with that of another culture. This explains further why we argued that it is difficult to find pristine ecocultural spirituality and ethics in an era of globalization.

Another disadvantage of bringing people of different cultures together is that it can lead to cultural marginalization. As Fisher et al put it,

> Assia Djebar's expression of an "untranslated Algeria" is at the crux of the Maghrebian question and allows one to glimpse the causes of the marginalization of the intercultural word. A veil of silence continues to reign over History, not only that of Algeria, but also that of the Maghreb and even of the entire Arab world, whence the numerous "traps" and "ambiguities" confronted by the proponents of interculturality on a daily basis. (89)

Based on the extract above, the Maghreb consists in diverse cultures which interact. When many cultures interact with one another, there is high probability that one will consider itself superior and look down on others. Some people see the Western culture

as superior to African cultures and they are determined to destroy these cultures in order to institute the Western culture. This forces them to marginalize the cultures. Marginalization of cultures must not only be across international borders. It can be national sometimes. Marginalization is a product of cultures coming together. This explains why it is easier for one culture's ecocultural spirituality and ethics principles to be subdued by another culture.

Also, the coming together of different cultures can result in intercultural conflicts and social alienation. It is for this reason that Fisher et al have postulated that in the Maghrebian world, as well as other countries, interculturality is more in writing than in practice. They argue that:

> The voices of interculturality, as undesirable in Maghrebian society as in Western society, are gagged, exiled, extradited, symbolically or physically sentenced to death. They have in effect no other territory than the written page, its rustling, and its blank spaces. (87)

Distilling African Ecocultural Spirituality and Ethno-ethics

This is the notion of purification of African ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics. How is this possible in the era of Globalization? The suggestion here is that, how we lived in the past should be carried to the future. By carrying how we lived in the past to the future means going back to our roots and reviving our pristine ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics. It is basically a tough challenge and for this reason we are proposing that we should revive some core elements of our ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics and situate them in a global space. In this way we will not be losing our ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics principles, but we will be evolving them with respect to the evolution of the world. In an attempt to answer the question "Are we losing our culture due to globalization?" Arwa Waqar Libri argues in an online article

without pagination that, globalization gives us a chance to represent our culture in front of the whole world and give all different societies a chance to explore our culture. Nowadays different people from different society live together in different culture society, so by seeing the surrounding culture shown by that society it gives a chance for the migrants to adapt and adjust with their culture and values as they can learn and explore what they are seeing in their surroundings.

In a sense, and in a similar way, African ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics should not disappear from the global scene, but should stand the chance of spreading its tentacles to other cultures. We are quite aware of the osmotic complexity of cultures where stronger cultures dominate the global scene while weaker ones are being absorbed. This may disturb this process, but it cannot completely stop it.

Libri adds that cultures are the core values that cannot be disappeared just because of globalization. Globalization is system that helps us learn and explore different society culture by not forgetting our own culture because the main stream of any culture of any society is not weak that it can be affected by any globalization. But we can't say there is no effect on cultures but, they won't change the rituals and values of a culture of certain community or society.

The argument, therefore, is that we can distill African ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics by positioning its core values and principles in the global scene. We suggest that these core values are embedded in African oral traditions, explained intricately in African Philosophy. With this, we can protect our declining spirituality.

In conclusion, the aim of this chapter is to show the complexity of ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics. We have been able to discuss Perspectives on Pristine African Ecoculture, Critical Standpoints on Pristine African Spirituality, Reflections on

Pristine African Ethno-ethics, the Hybrid Concept: The Meeting Point of Western and African Ecocultural Spirituality and finally we have looked at the possibility of distilling African ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics.

The chapter argues that, pristine ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics are proportionate to culture. If a culture is ecologically friendly, there is high probability for the sustainability of pristine nature, spirituality and ethno-ethics. The chapter also argues that, when nature is pristine and it is being used mindfully, it remains peaceful and useful. Pristine nature is used as a source of inspiration. With it, all other elements of nature such as humans, animals and plants are in harmony and there is a balance in the cosmic order of the universe. Another major point raised in the chapter is that, there is a need to go back to our roots to acquire knowledge on how pristine African ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics function in order to promote our ways in a global space. This is because pristine African ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics are losing their position in the global sphere. Even though it is difficult to see pristine African spirituality nowadays, African spirituality continues to influence the lives of many people. There has been pristine African ethno-ethics and it has evolved following the evolution of the world. Given that the world is experiencing globalization and interculturality, it is feared that there may not be pristine ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics in the nearest future. Alembong and Kishani therefore reposition these values by immortalizing them through documentation. We have also argued that, since nature, culture, spirituality and ethno-ethics are connected, it follows that pristine African nature, culture, spirituality and ethno-ethics are also connected. This adds to the general African belief that all existents are connected, especially to the spirit realm. Our final argument in this chapter is that, it is difficult to go back to our pristine ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics. That is, it is difficult to carry how we lived in the past to

the future. For this reason we propose that we should revive some core elements of our ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics and situate them in a global space.

CONCLUSION

To begin with, the fundamental premise in this study is that African spiriruality is declining and Alembong and Kishani have tackled the problem in their own way. It is for this reason that this thesis seeks to show how spirituality is declining in African ecoculture, and how Alembong and Kishani have handled the problem in their poetry. The focal points here are the causes of this decline and how the suggestions made by the authors under study can contribute in slowing down the decine. In more explicit terms, the thesis sets out to show the manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the natural space, and the ethical consequences of violating such connection. This is given that, spirituality decines in African cosmic as a result of poor treatment of nature or neglect of the link between human beings and the natural space.

Briefly, the work has a good number of points that it discusses in order to achive its aim. In fact, the work achives its aim by discussing the causes of the decline in African spirituality in relation to ecoculture; by showing how this decline can be slowed down; by showing, generally, how Alembong and Kishani have handled ecocultural spirituality issues in their poetry in relation to mankind's anthropogenic attitude; by demonstrating the cultural implications of abusing the spiritual connection between humans and nature; by also demonstrating the fundamental difference that exists between the Western and African conceptions of nature, culture and spirituality.

Evidently, the thesis dwells on the problem of the decline in African spirituality principally as a result of a shift from nature. In other words, the problem worth investigating emerges from the declining nature of spirituality in African ecoculture. This is given that, Africans are gradually shifting from nature and their spirituality is waning. This is a cause for concern. And as a result, the thesis argues that Alembong

and Kishani have used their poetry for the repositioning of the ecological, cultural and spiritual links that have been distorted by the New World order informed by capitalist greed and global technological advancements which undermine core spiritual values, ethos and mores. One of the objectives of this thesis is to reconcile this artificial dualism between Man and nature created by capitalist greed and modern technology.

The first chapter is titled "Literature Review and Theoretical Framework". In this chapter, we have three broad review categories, namely: conceptual review, empirical review and theoretical review. Under conceptual review we have reviewed material in ecoculture, spirituality and ethics. We have grouped empirical review into environmental and cultural perspectives, cultural aesthetics, and political perspective. Under theoretical review we have reviewed two theories namely: Ecocriticism and Afrocentricity. The two theories that inform the analysis and interpretation of this study are, Ecocriticism and Afrocentricity.

Chapter two is captioned, "Eco-spirituality as Epistemological Foundation in the Poetry of Alembong and Kishani". Here, we looked at the unseen dimensions of the environment in the poetry of Alembong and Kishani. The following subtitles emerged under this chapter: African Ontology and Epistemology, The Epistemology of Ecology in the Poetry of Alembong and Kishani, The Epistemology of Spirituality in the Poetry of Alembong and Kishani, and finally, Nature and Transcendentalism.

Chapter three is "The Anthropocentric Culture and Nature in the Poetry of Alembong and Kishani". The focus here is on how humans divert all their attentions towards themselves, thereby causing great harm on nature. The chapter also dwells on attitudes of different cultures to nature. In this regard, we have the following thematic clusters:

Ethnocentrism and Egoistic Tendencies as Human Cultures, and The Impact of Human Actions on Nature.

Chapter four is titled “The Ethics of Eco-Cultural Spirituality”. Here, the focus is on the dialectical and symbiotic relationships that exist between African ethno-ethics and Western bioethics in relation to Eco-Cultural Spirituality. The thematic clusters discussed here include: An Overview and Western Notions of Bioethics, Ethno-ethics and African Experiences: the Ecoculturality and Spirituality Evolutions, and finally, Critical Perspectives and the Ethno-ethics Visions of Alembong and Kishani.

Chapter five is, “African Ethno-ethics and Ecocultural Spirituality”. This chapter demonstrates the complexity of ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics, and the focus is on African ecology, culture, spirituality and ethno-ethics. One of the aims of this chapter is to deconstruct and decolonize Western bioethics which has been Eurocentric and give it an Afrocentric dimension with the help of African ecocultural spirituality. This empowers ethno-ethics. The chapter has the following subtitles: Perspectives on Pristine African Ecoculture, Critical Standpoints on Pristine African Spirituality, Reflections on Pristine African Ethno-ethics, The Hybrid Concept: The Meeting Point of Western and African Ecocultural Spirituality and Ethics and Distilling African Ecocultural Spirituality and Ethno-ethics.

Secondly, the thesis has the following findings:

There is a deliberate misconception of African eco-cultural spirituality by Western critics. Here the argument is that African spirituality is misrepresented by Eurocentric critics because of their prejudices and because it inspires Africans to directly fight and challenge the powers of colonizers. Unlike Western spirituality which is sky-oriented, African spirituality is earth-centered and this makes Alembong and Kishani to reaffirm

the interconnectedness among nature, humans and spirituality. The fact that Western spirituality does not dwell on the earth plays an important role for their deviation from nature. Africans naively deviate from the earth without considering the fact that the earth harbours their spirituality. It is for this reason that even though the world has deviated from the Romantic and Transcendental core values which favoured nature, Alembong and Kishani reposition and revalorise the ecological, cultural and spiritual links that have been distorted by capitalist greed, world evolution and technological advancement. Humans used to be friendly with nature and as such, spirituality wasn't in danger. Suddenly, technological advancement and ideological frameworks like capitalism, individualism and colonialism surfaced and are effacing this link.

Another major finding of this study is that, mankind's search for spiritual meaning has contributed to the physical destruction of the earth, thereby causing the disruption of the order of the universe. Here, human actions on the physical environment cause the spirit realm to malfunction. This is because there is a kinship between the spirit realm and natural disasters in the context of African cultural belief systems. It starts with humans feeling superior to nature and this makes them to have total control over nature. This also forces them to disrupt the spiritual connection between humans and nature. Most often, this goes against culture. Humans use three main lies to sustain this; the first is the belief in the “Otherness” of nature, the second is the belief that humans are alive while nature is dead, and the third is belief in the superiority of humans over all other species. The question of whether these lies are good or not form the basis for ethics which is pertinent in this study.

This study also finds out that, Ethno-ethics existed in Africa before the coming of the white man and Western notions of bioethics are different from African notions of ethno-ethics. The West focuses mostly on health sciences, biomedicine and biomedical

sciences while Africa incorporates every facet of life as demonstrated in their folklore. One of my principal arguments is that despite the effort put in place to prevent the destruction of nature and spirituality, there is persistence because focus is largely on Western notions of bioethics. There is the need to include African communalistic approach in the fight against human destruction of nature and spirituality. Mbiti is famous for aptly capturing this when he says that "only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people... The individual can only say: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (108–109). Here, the spirit of Ubuntu, Ojama and/or communalism is eminent. It is important to emntion here that, African ethno-ethics is no longer the same. The African experiences of slavery, colonialism, Neo Colonialism, globalization, etc. have played a great role for the evolution of ethno-ethics in Africa.

Another finding in this study is that, Alembong and Kishani have different ethno-ethics visions. Alembong's ethno-ethics vision focuses on turning people away from immoral practices which serve as a threat to nature and spirituality while Kishani's vision is to question why humans venture into activities that lead to the abuse of nature and spirituality. As we have observed, Kishani is more inquisitive about the reason for evil while Alembong is more of an avant-garde because he suppresses the questions and goes directly to seeking possibilities of stopping or reducing evil/wrongness.

It is also a finding in this work that, pristine ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics are proportionate to culture. If a culture is ecologically friendly, there is high probability for the sustainability of pristine nature, spirituality and ethics. When nature is pristine and it is being used mindfully, it remains peaceful. Also, pristine nature is used as a source of inspiration. With it, all other elements of nature such as humans, animals and plants are

in harmony and there is a balance in the cosmic order of the universe. This ensures a connection among nature, culture, spirituality and ethics. Since nature, culture, spirituality and ethics are connected, it follows that pristine African nature, culture, spirituality and ethno-ethics are also connected. This adds to the general African belief that all existents are connected, especially to the spirit realm. Unfortunately, there is no longer pristine nature and spirituality because of human intervention. Even though it is difficult to see these pristinesses nowadays, African spirituality continues to influence the lives of many people. One petinent thing here is that, there has been pristine African nature, spirituality and ethno-ethics and it has evolved following the evolution of the world. Given that the world is experiencing globalization and interculturality, it is feared that there may not be pristine ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics in the nearest future. Alembong and Kishani therefore reposition these values by immortalizing and valorizing African ecocultural spirituality to give it the value that it deserves. Thus, giving that signal that there is a need to go back to our roots to acquire knowledge on how pristine African ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics function in order to promote our ways in a global space. But it is difficult to go back to our pristine ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics. That is, it is difficult to carry how we lived in the past to the future. For this reason we propose that we should revive some core elements of our ecocultural spirituality and ethno-ethics and situate them in a global space.

Thirdly and finally, we make the following suggestions and recommendations for further academic pursuits:

A field study of Nweh and Nso ecocultural and spiritual practices to reaffirm that the poetry of Alembong and Kishani is a product of their cultures. This is given that this thesis relies on the texts under study.

We also recommend a study of ecocultural spirituality in areas other than Nweh and Nso to give a general valid inductive knowledge about African ecocultural spirituality.

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