

## GUINEA CORN HARVEST RITUALS AMONG THE KONKOMBA OF NORTHERN GHANA

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### INTRODUCTION

African traditional religions determine the identity of particular peoples and play a very important role in their life. The theoretical dimension of each religion reflected in the system of beliefs (doctrine) is supplemented by the religious rituals that facilitate communication between man and a sacred transcendental reality. Everywhere, human beings have a fundamental need to dramatize or celebrate their experiences or expectations through symbolic actions, that is rituals. Through symbolic words, gestures and actions traditions, norms and values controlling the human behaviour (the social and moral order) are transferred and emotional desires, feelings and sentiments are expressed. This what is religion for culture is ritual for religion. In the words of Monica Wilson ritual is "the key to an understanding of the essential constitution of human societies"<sup>1</sup>.

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1) Wilson 1956: 241.

This paper is concerned with analysis and interpretation of the harvest rituals among the Konkomba of north-eastern Ghana which took place after the guinea corn (sorghum) harvest. The data were gathered during the fieldwork among this people carried out from July 1984 till January 1985. I participated in the guinea corn harvest rituals celebrated in the three following villages: Nalongni, Kitek and Nabwa at the end of December 1984 and at the beginning of January 1985. In this paper the harvest feast performed in the village of Nalongni on the 25th of December, 1984 is described and analysed. The ritual took place in the homestead of Opeel, the oldest inhabitant of the Kotiengo lineage belonging to the Nalatiib clan of the Bitchabob tribe, in the sacred grove of the spirit Kuang, the protective spirit of Nalatiib clan, and in the five homesteads of the Kotiengo lineage which belonged to: Ubindam, Kpabbwanja, Ujaka-udo, Weinjimi and Mapula. This paper is divided into three parts. The first two parts comprise a concise and short description of the harvest rites performed in the homestead of Opeel and in the sacred grove of the spirit Kunang. In the third part the economic, social and religious significance of the guinea corn harvest ritual is emphasized.

There are several Konkomba tribes which are divided into patrilineal clans and lineages (maximal or major and minimal or minor). The clan members inhabit one or more villages. The village comprises several homesteads, and one of these is usually inhabited by about 20 to 30 persons, belonging to a few families of brothers or their sons. Some homesteads are joined to form a maximal or major lineages which can be divided into smaller groups, that is minimal or minor lineages. Two or three lineages are usually found in a village. The smallest group is the family which appears in monogamic and polygynic forms. The Konkomba have a segmentary system in which authority is wholly vested in the elders with the oldest village inhabitant or the oldest clan member (*uninkpel*) as head.

Members of the Nalatiib clan from the Bitchabob tribe inhabit three villages - Nalongni, Toma, and Dicheen - situated in the vicinity of Saboba. The clan is divided into three major lineages: Bwarado, Kotiengo and Wajado. Members of the Kotiengo and Wajado lineages whose ancestors were Kotien and Waja respectively, live in Nalongni, a village lying three kilometers west of Saboba.

Inhabitants of the neighbouring village of Dicheen descend from the Wajado lineage, whose members live in five homesteads, in the western part of Nalongni. The Wajado lineage is separated from the Kotiengo lineage with a belt of fields adjoining the homesteads. Bwara and Kotien were sons of Ipiin (= Kunang), father, and Lomog, mother, and grandsons of the first ancestor, Utindaaya. Kunang and Lomog function as protective spirits of the Nalatiib clan and are worshipped in two different groves which lie in the territory of the clan.

The Kotiengo lineage consists of ten homesteads. The oldest member of the Nalatiib clan (*uninkpel*) and the Kotiengo lineage was Opeel, an old man of about eighty who died 1986. Because there is no clan priest, he also performed this function (*utindaan*). I was invited to participate in the harvest feast by the elders, that is the oldest homestead inhabitants of the Kotiengo lineage: Opeel, Ubindam, Kpabbwanja, Ujaka-udo and others. Several days in advance the elders of the lineage, with its oldest member at the head,

appoint the date of the festival. It is binding on all homesteads of a given lineage. According to the traditional six-day calendar, the date of the ritual fell on the 25th of December, the third day after market day in Saboba. The market day in Saboba is called *ka-kang* in the Saboba dialect, and the third day after it is called *sakpa*. *Sakpa* day is for many clans of the Bitchabob tribe a holiday (*likpaakool*) when work on the farm is forbidden.

The celebration of all the ceremonies in six homesteads and in a sacred grove devoted to Kunang, a protective spirit of the Kotiendo lineage, lasted three hours, from 8. 30 to 11. 30. Then celebrations were held all the day, and included drinking of beer made of new guinea corn and feasting. All inhabitants of particular homesteads, men, women and children, took part in the ceremonies. They were sometimes joined by old man from the neighbouring homesteads. The rites were carried out by the oldest man from a given homestead (*lidichal*) or an older neighbour from the same lineage. In the konkomba language, the guinea corn harvest feast is called *ndipwandaan* which can be translated literally as "the day of beer from new guinea corn" (*idi* = guinea corn; *pwan* = new; *ndaan* = beer).

#### 1. Harvest ceremonies in the homestead of Opeel

Four families live in Opeel's homesteads: Opeel with his three wives, his younger brothers in the classificatory sense (taht is, the children of the brother of the Opeel's father): older, Nayempwan with three wives, a little younger Taanyan with two wives, and the youngest Nyokuni (Opeel's son) with one wife. Two old men, Kpabbwanja and Ujako-udo, the owners of two neighbouring homesteads, came to Opeel's homestead, in order to help and participate in the harvest ceremonies in the homestead of the oldest member of the Kotiendo lineage.

The harvest feast took place in the compound. It was begun with a prayer by Opeel who was holding a calabash filled with beer mixed with water. He poured it down on the ground, saying:

"Today we have the day when we have prepared beer from the new guinea corn. Ancestors Ijakaan<sup>2</sup>, Ngmaliin and Tindaan<sup>3</sup>, bring us happiness and peace in the whole year."

"May it be so" - answered all the participants of the ceremony.

"We don't want unhappiness."

"May it be so" - answered the participants.

Opeel went on praying:

"Me, as the oldest one, and my younger brothers in the village, do not want to experience anything unpleasant any more. May troubles and suffering we had last year, never be repeated on any day whatsoever. I am addressing you, all ancestors. Rise and take care of us."

Because of Opeel's old age, further ritual acts were taken over by younger participants but only those who were old enough to belong to the elders of the lineage. Opeel usually

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2. Ijakaan was Opeel's grandfather.

3. Tindaan was Ujako-udo's grandfather.

began successive cycles of the ritual ceremonies, and then sat and observed further rites.

Next, Ujaka-udo stood on the right hand side of the exit door of the hut belonging to Opeel's first wife, and holding a calabash filled with beer and water, he prayed while pouring some beer on the wall of the hut. He prayed:

"Ancestor Kotien, rise and listen to my prayer directed to you this morning. I am offering this food from the new guinea corn to you too this morning. This is your village. We have been living here for a long time, and now it is getting harder and harder to live in this place, though we do not know why. Lately, we have been looking for a solution to this problem. This is the reason why our son Bakam<sup>4</sup> has come here. His is trying to make this place peaceful for us, so that we can live here in harmony and peace. Today is the day of the new year and yhe day of sacrificing food from the new crops. Giving you this beer from the new guinea corn and making this offering, we ask you to make our lives more bearable and quiet. Give welfare and more children. Many women are barren now. Let them give birth to more children. Give us abundant food which we consume. Because of illness occuring in our village at present, we ask you, spirit Kunang, ancestor Kotien and ancestor Tindaan, to became united and free us from these illnesses. All ancestors, this beer is for you. All twins and spirits of the bush staying in the homestead, come together and take your beer. Because of some illness, many animals died last year. May such a disaster never be repeated this year. We ask for food in abundance. This beer from the new crops is for you. The water which we are offering to you is from the new crops<sup>5</sup>. We ask you to free us from any ill-fortune in the future and to secure us a peaceful life in the village as well as the best of luck."

Next, a white rooster was sacrificed by cutting its throat with a knife<sup>6</sup>. Pouring the blood on the wall of the hut, Ujaka-udo spoke:

"Through this sacrifice made today, we ask you for the life free from all trouble and suffering. We also ask for the rain to come soon so that we could prepare mounds to plant yams<sup>7</sup>. May there be a lot of rain and plenty of food."

The sacrifice made os ram was accompanied by a short prayer said by Opeel:

"Ancestors, we ask you, give the inhabitants of this old settlement freedom from chaos and privation."

The sacrifice was finished by Ujaka-udo with a longer prayer to the ancestors in which

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4) Because of illnesses which befel a few persons, three man from the Nalatiib clan were accused of sorcery. Sorcery (witchcraft) is understood as acts and practices aimed at bringing evil to a man or a community. Sorcerers are commonly considered by the Konkomba to be evil and asocial people. In virtue of a decision made by the elders of the Kotiengo lineage, help was sought from the fetisher Bakam, a member of the Nalatiib clan originating from the Kotiengo lineage and now living not far from Yendi. In the final stage of research (December - January) I participated in repeated rituals connected with accusations of sorcery, and purification of sorcerers which took place in Nalongni

5) The prayers often mention the water, even if beer mixed with water is sacrificed.

6) It is a sacrificial rite typical of the Konkomba and other African peoples: fowl and other animals are sacrificed through cutting their throats. Their blood is offered by pouring it on the wall, clay cones, pots and other shrines, while the meat is cooked and consumed during a meal which is an integral part of the feast celebrated.

7)Yams are planted in mounds prepared in rows on the farm at the beginning of the dry season or after the first rains

he asked for happiness, harmony and plenty of food. He gave thanks for all the gifts which the inhabitants had obtained so far through their mediation.

The way of sacrificing beer and the blood of animals to the ancestors on the right side of the exit door of the hut leading to the yard, was the only case which I witnessed during agrarian rituals among the Konkomba. It often happens, on the right or (more rarely) left side of the exit door leading from the homestead<sup>8</sup>. The exit door is associated with the ancestor cult among the Konkomba. It constitutes a border separating the homestead - or sacred area - from the secular area. Ancestors take care of the house which is an intimate place where a man feels secure, where children grow up and where the social group becomes more numerous.

Another set of rites concerned sacrifices offered to fertility spirits which have a special relationship to twins (singular: *kijang*, plural: *bijam*) symbolizing fertility. Pots are material symbols of these fertility spirits - twins. Libation of beer mixed with water was offered and white rooster and three guinea fowls were sacrificed.

Another group of rites consisted of prayers, libations and sacrifices meant for Taanyan's spirit (*nwiin*) which is symbolized by a turtle shell, a personel shrine of Taanyan. Bowls made of calabashes (bottle-gourds) can also symbolize the spirit of individual inhabitants of the homestead.

The last group of rites performed in Opeel's homestead consisted of prayers and sacrifices meant for the spirits of the bush (*bininkpiib*) as if symbolically imprisoned in the shrine (*bininkpiib awaal*). The shrine of the spirits of the bush consists of big calabash divided into two equal parts: the lower part (*kitoto*) symbolizes mother, and the upper one (*kitobiil* or *kitotoabiir*) - father. Moreover, the shrine consists of a calabash without the cover, called *kiyibong*, and a clapper [hand rattle] (*nchayarktuum*) used by women, as well as a string instrument (*kibiek*) used by men<sup>9</sup>. According to the beliefs of the Konkomba, *bininkpiib* means a special category of roguish spirits inhabiting the bush who can harm people, bringing different diseases, especially mental ones. After consulting a diviner, such an ill person must undergo a number of rites which last several years. They are finished when the spirits are "caught" in the bush into a bag and imprisoned in a shrine which now becomes the property of the ill person. From then on, these spirits help the person who has possessed them (such a person is called *uninkpijoor*). However, he is obliged to remember them and worship them which is expressed in the sacrifices.

This was the end of groups cycles of clearly distinguished and developed rites. They constituted the entirety of the ritual of the harvest feast which took place in the homestead of the oldest inhabitant of the Kotiengo lineage. This ritual started the celebration of the feast in all the other homesteads of the lineage. The fact that I was expected in five further homesteads, caused a delay in the beginning of the harvest rituals in these home-

8) Only one exit leads out from the traditional homestead shaped in the form of a circle and this is through the exit hut which during the day serves as a meeting place and during the night as a cattle shed. The sacrifice of the blood of fowl on the wife's hut during the guinea corn feast is also confirmed by Tait (1964: 561).

9) These instruments are used during the seances usually taking place after the ceremonies. Their purpose is to establish contacts with the spirits and to provide the fun in which everybody participates with pleasure.

steads. In four other homesteads of the lineage (the Kotiengo lineage consists of ten homesteads), the ritual of the harvest feast had been performed early in the morning.

### **In the sacred grove of the protective spirit Kunang**

The sacred place of the protective spirit Kunang is in a small grove situated on the area inhabited by members of the Kotiengo lineage, in the closest neighbourhood of Opeel's homestead. On a small elevation, in the centre of the grove there is a big pot, sticking out from the ground and laid upside down. This is a traditional and still used manner of marking the grave. All graves of the members of the Bimonkpom tribe (both men and women) are marked with single big pots, placed upside down, sticking slightly above the ground. The Bitchabob, on the other hand, mark the graves of men and boys with a stone or a log, while the graves of women and girls are marked with a pot. A pot in the sacred grove clearly points out that Kunang, progenitor of the Nalatiib clan, as people believe, rests in this place. It may be that this very way of marking a grave, used by the Bimonkpom up till now, regardless of the dead's sex, was the original way observed by all the Konkomba people. The grove of Lomog, Kunang's first wife is in a different part of the village of Nalongni, farther off from the homesteads of the Kotiengo lineage. Both Kunang and Lomog are worshipped as protective spirits of the clan (*liwaal*; plural: *ngi-waa*). So here we have to do with a case of raising the earliest ancestors of the clan to the rank of the protective spirits. Women and children may not pick up fire-wood in the groves of these spirits. Members of homesteads may visit them for religious purpose only, under the leadership of the homestead owner and with the consent of the oldest lineage member.

We were led to the grove by Nayempwan who had been delegated by Opeel. Weinjimi with his sister Gbelein, Ujaka-udo and Mapula with his wife came a little later. All together the following persons participated in the ceremonies: five old men, two women, four boys, and an interpreter Tege Tachin. The ceremonies were started with a prayer by Mpwanja<sup>10</sup>:

"I was born thanks to the spirit Kunang. Last year I lost a lot, so now I am coming here with these little gifts so that I could appease you: May my situation be better next year, and when it is so, then I will come here with a ram and a guinea-fowl to thank on my knees: I am also asking you, please look at the many ill people at my home. May peace be there. And from now on, may I spend the money I have earned not on medical treatment but on something more useful. I am asking you for fortune in the year to come that I could come here with thanksgiving gifts".

Next, Nayempwan spoke in the name of Mpwanja. From time to time he poured beer over the pot protruding from the ground. He recalled a vivid tradition among the Kotiengo lineage, according to which the earliest ancestor, Kunang, in deadly danger and prosecuted by enemies, had, in some supernatural way, been absorbed by the earth in the place

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10) Mpwanja is brother of Nidor, the owner of a homestead in the Kotiengo lineage.

where the grove is now. Before, he had ordered his companions to escape. Those who had done so and survived, came to Nalongni after some time and settled there for good.

Participants of the ritual sacrificed a red rooster, a guinea-fowl and a white rooster to the spirit Kunang. Before the white rooster was sacrificed, Ujaka-udo stated the purpose of the sacrifice:

"I promised this spirit to sacrifice a white rooster if joy prevailed at my home all the year. That is why I have brought this white rooster today".

During the sacrifice of the white rooster, Nayempwan said:

"Spirit Kunang, Ujaka-udo expressed his joy from the gift he received from you and that is why he is thanking you for help. Like before, he has come to thank you now. Bless his corn mill so that he can work without any obstacles. Do not let this machine have to stop working some day because of a break-down. So he is bringing you this white rooster to delight you and ask you for smooth functioning of the machine. Help us buy another corn mill since one is not enough for us. We go bed hungry."

It follows from the words of the prayer that the Konkomba include into the religious sphere all everyday matters, including those which point to modernization and rationalization of the economy.

Although Ujaka-udo did not mention the corn mill at all, Nayempwan, on the other hand, as the oldest participant and leader of the ritual spoke authoritatively about that important matter for the Kotiendo lineage.

An important role in the subsequent cycle of the rites was played by a woman, Gbelein<sup>11</sup> who presented her case (illness) to the protective spirit. Through the meditation of the elders she offered up a sacrifice. This is a rare case I was able to observe during my fieldwork that a woman participated actively in ritual ceremonies<sup>12</sup>. Another group of rites concerned Mapula and his wife who accompanied her husband in the ceremonies performed in the grove, carrying a child on her back. She brought with her beer for ritual purposes.

In the final phase of the ritual in the grove, requests were in turns presented by: Ujaka-udo, Mpwanja, Nayempwan, Mapula, Nayempwan, Gbelein and Nayempwan. Ujaka-udo asked for health of his wives and he promised that at the same time the following year he would remember the protective spirit. Mpwanja solicited for prosperity and children; he also asked for the possibility of buying a lorry. When this was possible he would make a thanksgiving sacrifice. In accordance with the principle of seniority, Nayempwan presented requests of Mpwanja and Ujaka-udo to the spirit Kunang.

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11) Gbelein is sister of Weinjimi, the owner of one of the homesteads in the Kotiendo lineage. After her husband had died in Kitiék, Gbelein, a widow, stayed in her brother's homestead.

12) According to the information I obtained, a woman may actively participate in the ceremonies and speak in the sacred places of the clan she belongs to in virtue of her origin. In her husband's family, on the other hand, she is only given a passive role, which is pointed out by the participation and behaviour of Mapula's wife (coming from another clan) in the grove of the spirit Kunang.

The ritual in the grove was presided over by the oldest man, Nayempwan, in accordance with the right of primogeniture<sup>13</sup>. This leadership consisted in repeating the requests presented there and in offering up sacrifices. The requests were presented by older men and an old woman from the Nalatiib clan in whose name here brother, Weinjimi, owner of the homestead, spoke too. Another woman, from another clan, participated in the ritual only passively. Her case was presented by her husband, Mapula, owner of the homestead.

### 3. Economic, social and religious significance of the guinea corn harvest rituals

The harvest rituals celebrated by the Konkomba people have economic, social and religious dimensions. Gathering of such important food plants as yam and guinea corn is connected with the rituals, expressing thanksgiving for the collected crops. First and foremost they express requests for abundance of food and for welfare in the future.

The economic life of the Konkomba is determined by shifting hoe cultivation of subsistence type connected with breeding the poultry, goats, sheep, cattle and pigs. Because of poor soil conditions and no fertilizers applied, the Konkomba must use crop-rotation system, leaving part of the land out of crop for some time<sup>14</sup>. The land is conquered by means of fire, cutting and burning down the bushes and the grass. The following grain crops are cultivated: guinea corn, millet, fonio and maize, as well as yams and manioc (bulbiferous plants), pulse crops, rice, ground nuts, okra and pepper. According to the crop-rotation system, the cycle of several years covers interchangeable cultivation of those plants on fields adjoining the homesteads (*linampal asaak*, *kinanchang*) and on fields lying at a greater or smaller distance from the homestead (*kisaak*).

The grain crops - guinea corn and millet - cultivated on savanna areas, belong to the most important food plants for the people inhabiting dry areas of the tropical zone of Africa. The situation finds its reflection in harvest rituals of the Konkomba people living in the region of woodland savannah in north-eastern Ghana and in northern Togo. Yam which belongs to important, though secondary food plants, is also cultivated in this area. The Konkomba rituals after guinea corn harvest (November - December) are certainly more important and more common than the ceremonies connected with the first gathering of yams in August. The new yam ritual in which I participated in the village of Nalongni on the 10th of August, 1984, did not take place at the same time in all homesteads of the Kotiengo lineage. The time for these harvest ceremonies to be performed was determined by the owners of particular homesteads who were given complete free-

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13) The patrilineal social order of the Konkomba is based on the principle of kinship and primogeniture. Primogeniture is the right to have precedence in inheriting the fortune and power, this right being vested in the oldest son or the oldest agnate descendant (patrilineally reckoned).

14) The land produces crops only for the period of 3-4 years, after which it is so barren that it must be left fallow for a few years so that to give it some rest. Therefore each farmer has a number of plots of ground which he stubs and cultivates successively.



dom in this respect. On the other hand, the guinea corn harvest feast was celebrated by all the homesteads of the Kotiendo lineage simultaneously<sup>15</sup>. It should also be emphasized that the rituals after the harvest of guinea corn were performed by the inhabitants of all villages around Saboba which I knew. Contrary to the harvest of guinea corn, traditional yam feasts were celebrated only in some homesteads of a few neighbouring villages.

The social structure of the Konkomba is reflected in their ritualistic and religious life. The clan is the biggest ritual unit. Representatives of all major lineages of a given clan take part in the ritual carried out in the dry season in the shrine of the Earth. Those rites are presided over by a clan priest (*uindaan*) who asks for rain, good crops and a favourable agricultural season. Representatives of other clans are also invited to take part in the ritual. They are connected with one another by means of ritual partnership (*mantotiib*). The presence of ritual partners is necessary for example in order to carry out funeral ceremonies. The Konkomba do not practise tribal rituals which are obligatory for all members of representatives of all clans of a given tribe. Guinea corn harvest rituals are celebrated by all members of the major lineage. In this case, the major lineage constitutes an independent and autonomous ritualistic unit. A decisive role in the harvest ceremonies falls to the elders of the lineage. It is the elders, with the oldest member of the lineage as head, who fix the date of the harvest ritual. It is the elders too, who perform all the ritualistic acts. The performance of rituals and sacred activities is one of the important signs of wielding power and social control. The oldest member of the lineage or individual homestead does not have the physical power which could enforce his decisions or orders. He can only define what is proper and consistent with customary law. His power is guaranteed by and originated in his relation to the land of which he takes care, and his relation to the ancestors with whom he is associated through his age. The power of the oldest member, therefore, is of ritualistic and moral nature, and not executive based on juridical and police pressure. The social authority and the power wielded by the elders result from their position in the kinship system which is due to the age and control over ritual<sup>16</sup>.

The involvement of the whole major lineage in the harvest feast is pointed out by the participation of the elders from five homesteads in the ritual celebrated in the grove of the protective spirit Kunang. The celebration of new guinea corn is a matter for both the whole lineage and individual homesteads, which are also given the function of independent and autonomous ritual units. All inhabitants are members of the feast. The ceremonies are presided over by the homestead owner if he is the oldest one among the participants. Otherwise, he is replaced by an older neighbour. If this should occur, the owner of the homestead begins the ceremony with an introductory prayer, and then he assists the older neighbour. The duty of the oldest participant of the rituals in the grove of the spirit

15) The same attitude was ascertained in the village of Nabwa consisting of four homesteads. On the 17th of August, 1984, the new yam feast took place only in two homesteads. However, the guinea corn ritual was celebrated there on the 2nd of January, 1985, in all four homesteads.

16) Of. Tait 1953: 216; E. L. Mendosa 1982: 12, 166, 198, 203.

Kunang was to preside over the ceremonies, repeat the requests presented by the participants and to offer up sacrifices.

From the content of the prayers, it clearly follows that the harvest ritual has a thanksgiving and supplicatory character connected with the new guinea corn harvest. At the same time, these feasts are rituals of passage in the sense that they end the old agrarian year and begin a new one. The ritual performed in individual homesteads consists of one group of rites, and most often of several groups or cycles of rites. The ritual in the sacred grove consisted of a few groups of rites. Two stages are distinguished in each group of rites: a) prayers combined with libation (sacrifice) of beer mixed with water, and b) prayers accompanying sacrifices of different types of fowl (chickens, roosters, hens, guinea-fowl).

In accordance with the terminology of A. van Gennep, D. Tait views the first stage as the phase of separation (*rites de separation*) from the secular world and in this phase the first contact with the supernatural world is established. He considers the second stage as the marginal phase (*period de marge*) in which the participants remain in contact with the sacred world. The third phase as the phase of return (*rites d'agregation*) from the sacred world to the secular reality consisted, in Tait's opinion, in final sacrifice and pouring beer on the shrine or feathers of sacrificial fowl<sup>17</sup>. Nowadays, this rite is no longer practised. Treating participants of the ritual with beer can be considered as the phase of return which closes the sacred acts.

Prayers are always uttered aloud. During the prayers and sacrifices, all direct participants squat down. God Uwumbor was only twice mentioned in the prayers. According to the beliefs of the Konkomba, Uwumbor is the Supreme Being, creator of all spirits, cosmos and people: the source of all life and a moral lawgiver. Man's soul (*nwiin*) comes from Uwumbor and after death, it returns to him. The name of Uwumbor is etymologically connected with the word *ubor* = ruler<sup>18</sup>. More often the Konkomba appealed for help to beings of a lower order which are closer to them. These were spirits of the Earth, protective spirits of the clan, spirits of the bush, protective spirits of the homestead, spirits of particular inhabitants of homesteads and twin spirits. Most frequently they referred to ancestor spirits who are believed to show special care and concern for their living descendants.

The content of the prayers recorded on the tape only very few of them quoted here, comprises all spheres of life and all needs felt by the participants, of both an individual and communal character. The prayers express thanksgiving, promises, and most often requests for pragmatic and very specific goals: fecundity, abundance of food, prosperity, health, rain, peace and social harmony, the possibility of obtaining articles of modern civilization (corn mills, motor-bikes, lorries). The central value for the Konkomba and other African peoples lies in the life which is continuously sanctified, renewed and multiplied. Beer mixed with water (or only cool water) and blood as a substitute of fowl are sacrificed. An integral part of the harvest feast is drinking of beer made from new guinea

17) Tait 1955: 169, 172.

18) Of the Supreme Being, of. Manoukian 1951: 89 f.; Tait 1955: 168; Froelich 1954: 180-184; 1963: 149 f.

corn and a meal which reflects joy from guinea corn crops and a hope for future prosperity. It also deepens the social bonds between the members of particular homesteads and the lineage.

The rituals of the harvest feast presented here have a religious character, which is pointed out by the content of prayers and sacrificed offerings. It is through them that the Konkomba establish contact with supernatural beings in whose existence they believe and on whom they feel dependent. These beings are personified by sacred objects and places.

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## ŽETVENI OBREDI KOD KONKOMBA U SJEVERNOJ GANI

### Sažetak

Afričke tradicijske vjere određuju identitet pojedinih naroda i igraju veoma važnu ulogu u njihovu životu. Teorijska dimenzija svake religije izražena u sustavu vjerovanja dopunjena je vjerskim obredima kojima olakšava uspostavljanje odnosa između čovjeka i svete transcendentne realnosti. Svugdje, svaki čovjek posjeduje fundamentalnu potrebu za dramtizacijom i slavljenjem svojih očekivanja ili iskustava, što izražava simboličkim djelovanjem, odnosno obredom. Ono što religija znači za kulturu obred znači za religiju. Ova teorijska polazišta autor ispituje i potvrđuje prikazujući obrede uz žetvene svečanosti u sjevernoj Gani.