

empowering for folklorists, giving their studies a new relevance, which can sustain them limitlessly. This is a perfectly logical position; but only if one's primary concern is with the present. Historians, by contrast, are primarily concerned with the past, and the investigation and invalidation of historical claims represent a large part of their work. If it is unlikely that the whole truth of any portion of the past can be recovered by the present, it is none the less possible to refute some claims made about it and prove others. Many others can be shown to be more or less likely. There is therefore no doubt for a historian that some statements about the history of traditions are more or less genuine or false than others; and that it is important to demonstrate the difference. This exercise need have no implications for the validity of a tradition as a part of the contemporary world, but for many members of the public, it is likely to do so.

A study of the concept of tradition suggests that the academic world is now even more than before divided within itself, and from non-academics, by a common language. But that is perhaps in itself a feature of the postmodern condition.

Anna Niedźwiedz

"Tradition(s)" – The Making of Discourses and Discourses in the Making

"This is our tradition!" was a statement often made by people among whom and with whom I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork in central Ghana. Between 2009 and 2015 I spent ten months focusing on how locally constructed Christian identities were lived by Ghanaian Catholics in a fairly typical, newly established Roman Catholic parish. To my anthropologically trained ear the term "tradition" sounded both intriguing and suspicious enough to turn on the "attention lamp" anytime the word appeared in private discussions, small talks or more official circumstances such as church sermons, ceremonial speeches given during pompous funerals, which were one of the frequently discussed and celebrated local "traditions", or during various interreligious and multi-ethnic meetings and festivities so common in Ghana's religiously and ethnically diverse society.

I soon realized that the statement about tradition was usually proclaimed with particular emphasis, emotion and pride. Sometimes it was also directed to me – as a visitor, a foreigner, and a white person. Additionally, as an anthropologist, I was often defined as the one who "surely wants to know about our culture and traditions" and so deserving precise directions about what "tradition" is. At the same time, this strong declaration about "our tradition" functioned within a complex network of local identities, power relations and politics. During my research I started to realize that while studying contemporary Ghanaian Catholicism – a global Church lived in its post-missionary West African version – I needed to understand not only how "traditions" were made, lived, invented and re-invented by Ghanaians who identified with various ethnic and linguistic groups. Equally important was to grasp how discourses about "tradition(s)" emerge and function in the complex context of contemporary Ghanaian society. While, from a theoretical point of view, "tradition" shares its fate with many other anthropological terms that have lost their innocent definitions and are perceived as polythetic, contextual and dynamic categories, the popularity of the emic uses of the word cannot be ignored by ethnographers, but rather treated as a significant sign suggesting necessary analytical traces.

In the case of my fieldwork in Ghana the cultural interface between "religion" and "tradition" appeared to be highly instructive. It revealed the complexities and ambiguities of "tradition" discourses in the context of post-colonial African identities. Probably one of the most telling examples is a discourse concerning "African Traditional Religion" (ATR) – an issue pointed out also by many other anthropologists working in Africa as well as hotly debated by numerous African scholars (see Olupona 2001; Adogame, Chitando & Bateye 2012). Although the concept of ATR was coined to academically grasp tremendously diverse and variously lived phenomena, soon it developed an artificial picture of "traditional religion" and reified it in popular imagination. On a discursive level "traditional religion" functions within two main trajectories. The first describes ATR as a "traditional" phenomenon that is structur-

ally and historically different from Christianity (or other “world religions”) and is treated as part of the “past”. In some contemporary Ghanaian Christian discourses, the image of ATR is defined as “pagan” or even “satanic” (Meyer 1999). The second trajectory situates ATR at the heart of “African tradition” and a positively valued heritage. The first trajectory refers to “traditional religion” as “barbarian”, “uncivilized”, “dark”, something to be dropped by “modern”, “enlightened” Ghanaians, who usually see Christianity through the lens of “modernizing discourse” and “civilizational” advance (Steegstra 2005: 285). The second trajectory, on the other hand, refers to a positive image of the “past as a source of continental heritage” and points to “genuine” and “unique” African identities and values where “being religious” is part of the “tradition” (see e.g. Platvoet & van Rinsum 2003).

These two discourses concerning ATR are produced and re-produced in various institutionalized contexts, that is academia, religious organizations, state and African political bodies. Sometimes they get mixed and reformulated. For instance, Kwame Nkrumah – the first leader of independent Ghana – consciously incorporated elements of “traditional religion” as “national tradition”. On the other hand, the creation of the Afrikania Mission in the 1980s was an attempt to reformulate the ATR in terms of “global religion” and make it “modern” (de Witte 2004). Another example might be the Catholic concept of inculturation that promotes incorporating “local traditions” into the Gospel. Also, as revealed during the second Synod of Africa (2009), the image of “African traditions” as inevitably spiritual was depicted by Catholic leaders in terms empowering the continent. Africa was described as a precious “spiritual lung of humanity”, and juxtaposed against “fallen, secularized Europe”.

While recognizing the significance of the institutionalized making of “tradition” discourses, it is equally important, and I believe anthropologically fruitful, to focus on grassroots’ usages and transformations of these discourses. The paradoxical co-existence of two ambiguous discourses concerning ATR in the lives of contemporary Africans and

within their common routines and practices, reveals a flexibility and contextuality of what “tradition” as well as what “religion” is. Most Ghanaian Catholics, like other Christians whom I met during my research, declaratively distanced themselves from “traditional worship” and “our fathers’ way of life”. At the same time, they usually not only accepted but also followed rules or celebrated certain rituals that usually belong to a typical ATR scenario. This was usually related to family or ethnic group obligations, particular annual celebrations and ties to local “traditional” shrines and priests. In these cases, the term “tradition” appeared to be crucial. The concept of “our tradition” was extensively used in these circumstances by Ghanaian Catholics, thereby replacing the concept of “traditional religion” and labeling phenomena not in “religious” but “traditional” terms. It seems that this juggling with terms and discourses enables numerous Ghanaians to maintain a consistent identity and pride as both “good Africans” (respecting their tradition and heritage) and “good Christians” (respecting their religious affiliation).

Through this case study of Ghanaian Catholics, I aim to emphasize the vitality of “tradition” as a discursive and emic category. I believe that for ethnologists of religion, working in various cultural and geographical contexts, the interface between “religion” and “tradition” can be an important platform in the study of contemporary identities, power relations, negotiations and transformations of institutionalized, as well as lived and practiced discourses. These discourses not only make and construct “tradition(s)” but also reveal the power of “tradition(s)” in the making.

Dorothy Noyes

Tradition Against Transaction in the Land of the Free

Oh dear, that man again. He is succeeding in his agenda of monopolizing the world’s attention, for as I struggle for something new to say about the much-discussed concept of tradition, I can only think about the upcoming NATO meeting, where Trump will continue to smash up the alliance of Western democracies. An ambiguous thing, that alliance, productive of evil as well as good. Still, it has been a