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Water Imagery and The Content of J. P. Clark-Bekederemo's Song of A Goat

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ABSTRACT

Imagery's centrality to the literary artist's creative enterprise has always been emphasized by critics and literary theorists alike. Scholars have observed that literature as an art has its root and effectiveness in the imaginative capability of its creators. Thus, when we praise a literary work as good, we are invariably alluding to the effectiveness and beauty of its network of images. However, every writer has his own peculiar stock of imagery developed either by the peculiarity of his experience or by mere fancy; and each time he crafts a literary work, these images come into play. For J. P. Clark-Bekederemo, *water imagery* is an instance of such peculiar stock, which is obviously attributable to his experience in water affairs as a home-grown Ijaw man. Just as it is with all ingenious handlers of imagery, water imagery in the hands of Clark-Bekederemo is always skilfully deployed to the development of the component parts of his literary works. This essay, therefore, tries to examine how the author deploys water imagery to the exploration of the content of his first play, *Song of a Goat*.

INTRODUCTION

Water, water, everywhere.…(Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner") Imagery is a veritable tool in a literary artist's creative effort. It is the foundation of imaginative literature. Northrop Frye observes that recurring or most frequently repeated images form the tonality of a literary text, and that every literary text has its peculiar kind of images which are necessitated by the requirements of its genre, the choice of its author and countless other factors. He declares, for illustration, that the images of blood and sleeplessness in *Macbeth* have some thematic significance, as is natural for a tragedy of murder and remorse (85).

Similarly, F. C. Kolbe, a pioneer in cluster criticism, argues that a deliberate repetition of at least one set of images or ideas in harmony with the plot is what enables a writer to achieve unity in his work (qtd. in Friedman 367*)*.

In a similar statement, Norman Friedman declares that the network of images in a literary work is important to the actualization of its meanings. In his own words:
Many contemporary critics are concerned over the "structure of images," "the image-clusters," "image patterns," and "thematic imagery". Such patterns of imagery, often without the conscious knowledge of author or reader are sometimes taken to be keys to a "deeper" meaning of a literary work or pointers to the unconscious motivations of its author. A few critics tend to see the "image pattern" as indeed being the basic meaning of the work and a sounder key to its values and interpretation than the explicit statements of the author or the more obvious events of plot or action. (249)

Kalu Uka's observation about Clark-Bekederemo's *Ozidi* clearly corroborates Friedman's assertion and can be said to apply to all of Clark-Bekederemo's plays. According to Uka, "The feel of local imagery woven into the theme and texture of the play is unmistakable. Images of rain, of natural venomous creatures, of hunting, of harvest, of vengeance, of fertility and resurrection abound" (76).

One of such recurring and peculiar images in the drama of Clark-Bekederemo is that of *water*, which is manifest both as *water kinds* like the creek, river, stream, pond, sea, rain, dew, mist, bilge, and as *water attributes* like the tide, flood, wave, wetness, dampening, flowing, and drifting. A survey of Clark-Bekederemo's creative output reveals his inclination to *water imagery* which he manipulates to a great literary advantage. From his poetry to his drama, *water imagery* occupies a significant position as a tool with which the poet-dramatist fashions not only the content of his art but also its form. Different scholars have recognized Clark-Bekederemo's penchant for *water imagery* in his drama. Concerning the subject, Abiola Irele comments as follows: "It is no accident that the dominant image in [Clark-Bekederemo's drama] relates to *the tides* of the Niger Delta" ("Introduction" xxxix). And when Egbe Ifie asserts that "The most frequent images in his works are connected with *tide* and *flood*" (44), he is also alluding to the preponderant use of *water imagery* in the drama of the poet-dramatist.

Clark-Bekederemo's inclination to water imagery may not be unconnected with his experience in water affairs, being himself a home grown Ijaw man. Water is one of the most significant materials in the Ijaw environment of the Niger Delta from which Clark-Bekederemo voraciously draws imagery for his dramatic creativity, and in which most of his plays are set. In his study of the first four plays of Clark-Bekederemo, Adrian Roscoe recognizes the predominance of water in the environment that gives birth to the different plays. Describing the Ijaw setting of *Song of a Goat*, for instance, Roscoe asserts that it is "*a land of rivers, tides, and beaches, subject to enormous rainfall…"* (201-202). He observes that in *The Masquerade*, "the Ijaw setting is, once more, beautifully evoked" and that "the play is decorated with vivid images of the *Delta creeks*" (206). *The Raft*, according to him, is:

> set like Clark's two previous plays, in Ijawland, where *the creeks of the Delta are an essential element in the people's lives*, and where hard woods from the interior are floated down to the coast to be shipped to all corners of the globe… *The rivers and creeks are the rivers and creeks of this part of Nigeria. The tides encountered on them are the real tides that flow in from the Atlantic, bringing ships and sometimes fog*. (208)

And in *Ozidi*, according to the same scholar, "*we find rain, river, tide, and flood, - those basic elements of the Ijaw scene* – providing an artistically appropriate background to a play dealing with the rise and fall of a young hero and his enemies" (216-217).

Similarly, Wren observes that Clark-Bekederemo's imagery-loaded diction in his drama propels the reader "into the delta world" and enables him "to share the experience of life bound to *the great river*" (77) – that is the Niger River. And that his plays try to "evoke the images Clark knows from experience" (104), while the vehicles and figures of speech used by the playwright derive from *the river environment* and they intensify the reader's sense of place and time (109).
In this essay, our aim is to examine how the author manipulates *water imagery* to develop the content of his first play, *Song of a Goat*. Therefore, it focuses on the role of *water imagery* in the exploration of the play's major theme and in expressing its tragic significance. Before that, however, it is needful to provide a summary of the play as that will aid better understanding of the analysis.

Song of a Goat: a Summary

Song of a Goat is a tragedy based on the subject of a family curse. At the centre of the curse is Zifa, who is believed (according to the Masseur's divination), to have been inflicted with impotence by the gods for his sin of calling home the spirit of his dead and equally cursed father from the evil grove too soon into the community of free ancestors and men. Following her over three years of sexual starvation and desire for more children, Ebiere, his wife, grows cantankerous and as a result seduces Tonye, Zifa's younger brother, into a sexual act that culminates in a secret affair between the two.

Zifa discovers the sacrilegious act and feeling betrayed, threatens to kill Tonye. Riddled with shame and regret, Tonye hangs himself and Ebiere faints and supposedly miscarries the product of that illicit union. Consequently, Zifa walks into the sea, more out of grief and regret, than of anger. Their already half-crazed and epileptic aunty, Orukorere, slips further into mental oblivion, thus leaving the young Dode (the only son of Zifa and Ebiere) to grow up with neither father nor uncle but with the now melancholy old aunty, Orukorere and depleted mother about whom we hear nothing any more.

Water Imagery and Theme

Water imagery in *Song of a Goat* relates very much to the central theme of Zifa's impotence. Occasionally, it nudges the curse subject and highlights the tragic incidents in the play. However, the exploration of the theme of impotence appears to carry the bulk of the play's *water imagery*. Beginning the process is the *dew* image. In the following usage, *dew* relates to Zifa's impotence:

MASSEUR**:** Don't you see the entire grass is gone
Over lush, and with the harmattan may
Catch fire though you spread over it
Your *cloak of dew*? (6)

The dew on anything makes it moist and damp and unable to catch fire. Zifa's lack of sexual passion is compared to a dew-soaked cloak which is damp or wet. Thus, the *dew* connotes the dead sexual desire or non-virility of Zifa owing to his impotence.

Much more fascinating in the above quotation is actually its inherent antithesis. The harmattan and fire are juxtaposed with a cloak of dew and this simply speaks of the contrasting situations in the sexuality of the husband and wife. While Ebiere is burning with sexual desire due to the normalcy of her cycle, Zifa is without urge for sex

because his sexual energy or Libido has been destroyed by the impotence disease. Therefore, the Masseur is simply warning that despite Zifa's cold presence, "protection" and possessiveness of Ebiere as her husband, the sexual urge in the woman may drive her into taking drastic actions like seeking satisfaction elsewhere. In all, Zifa's dormant sexuality is expressed to us in terms of a tactile water image specifically considering the feelings of wetness, coldness and dampness all of which characterize a cloak of dew.

Rain is another water image that pre-dominates *Song of Goat* and further espouses the theme of Zifa's impotence. In its use in the following statement *rain* is a metaphor for potency or libido:

ZIFA**:** … The thing may come back any day, who knows? *The rains come when they will* (7)

Zifa believes that like the Niger Delta *rains* that are incessant and that come without warning, his potency may well be regained unannounced in the same manner as it fizzled out without warning.

On the same page, the *rain* image reoccurs and is deployed for a similar purpose. With it, however, comes *moist*, another water image:

MASSEUR**:** … The *rains a*re here once more and the forest getting
Moist. Soon earth will put on her green skirt, the wind
fanning her chicks flushed from the new dawn. Will
you let the woman wait still…. (7)

The above is the Masseur's reply to Zifa's use of the *rain* metaphor. Playing on that image, the Masseur now uses it to suggest the menstrual flow of Ebiere's while indirectly hacking at the environmental consequences of *rain* within the setting of the play. The *rains which are here once more and making the forest moist* speak of the current menstrual flow of Ebiere. Thus, like the green grasses which grow after incessant rainfall, ripe eggs needing fertilization will soon appear with the imminent ovulation of Ebiere. And the Masseur is asking Zifa whether in this coming ovulation period of Ebiere's she will still have to go un-impregnated; whether she will continue waiting for the elusive *rain* of his virility.

From *rain* imagery we move to the *pond* which, incidentally, is the first to appear in the play among the group of waters that is rooted in the soil. The word *pond*, as we know, is synonymous with its water content. Largely visual, the image, in its use here, relates, as well, to the theme under discussion. Specifically the picture painted here is that of a

pond drained of its water content:
ZIFA**:** Shall I show myself *a pond drained dry*
Of water so that their laughter will crack up the floor of my
being. (6)

Water here bears the significance of sexual energy and its draining suggests the lack of sexual drive or libido in Zifa.
In the above, however, Clark-Bekederemo alludes to the seasonal changes in the water supply of natural ponds. Most natural ponds contain water especially in the rainy season but lose same content in the dry season except there is to them constant supply from sources like the seas, rivers, creeks and streams. Thus, like a natural pond in the dry season, Zifa is sapped of his sexual power. The Masseur had suggested to Zifa to either seek medical attention or make over his wife to another man since he cannot make his wife pregnant. But Zifa believes, among other things, that these will amount to exposing his condition to the world. Here, therefore, lies the significance of the above rhetorical question exploiting the *pond* image.

The *flood* is another water image of thematic importance in the play. Ordinarily, the word *flood* evokes the picture of a risen water level, the overflow of a river bank or the excessive flow of water in places unnaturally designated for water. Given its flowing implication, the *flood* image which is ordinarily visual assumes a kinesthetic significance. Nevertheless, in its first use in *Song of a Goat, flood* does not connote water but bears the significance of a year marker. The Masseur tells Zifa: "This is the *third flood* of your hoping" (7). *Third flood* here stands for "third year" since the major floods in coastal towns are yearly occurrences. The Masseur employs the *flood* image to remind Zifa of how long he has had to wait on ends – three years to be exact. The statement is, as we know, consequent upon Zifa's refusal to seek medical attention or to make over his wife to another virile member of his family. Via the same *flood* image, Zifa admits that he has actually waited for several years hoping for the best. However, the use of the *flood* image here is slightly different from the previous even though it is also a metaphor for "year." The difference, however, comes with its detail: the *flood*'s characteristics of rising and falling come into play here:
ZIFA**:** I admit it's been so these several falls
Of the *flood* though as another rose my heart has risen
With it only to be left aground once more. (7)

It is when the *flood* rises that it overflows river banks but when it falls the water level returns to normal. The above discussion seems to be taking place just at the fall of the annual flood on the third year; and the fall of the annual flood usually ushers in the end of year in the traditional delta people's way of observing seasons. And despite the fact that floods come (rise) in the rainy season, the idea of the rising flood as it is used here seems to suggest the beginning of a new year. Therefore, each New Year, Zifa hopes to regain his potency.
The *flood* image on page ten is, unlike the previous ones, literal even though it also concerns the same subject of Zifa's impotence. However, this pertains specifically to the cause of the disease. In his discussion with the Masseur, Zifa tells him "Others grumble it was in time of *flood* (10). *Flood* here stands literally for the season in the year when floods appear due to incessant rainfall and this seems to be a time forbidden for the traditional religious practice of calling home the spirit of the dead generally or of those who died of "abominable" diseases. Zifa's disease is believed by some people to be punishment from the gods for his sin of calling home the spirit of his late cursed father too early. But in the above Zifa is saying that some other people have a different opinion, namely, that the punishment is actually because he did the home-calling in time of *flood* – which is the forbidden or sacred period.
On page twenty five is also the use of *flood* as a year-marker:

EBIERE**:** …Thus the elders pray: Only one seed
The elephant brings forth at a time until
The house is full, yes, until the house be
Full even if this takes *ten falls of the flood*. (25)
Ten falls of the flood means "ten years." Ebiere has become quarrelsome over her lack of children hence her confrontation with Tonye, her brother-in-law, in which she expresses her desire to bear many children even if it is in the ratio of one each year like the elephant and takes her ten years to flood her house with children. When the main flood rises each year, it never fails to fall, thus the fall of one flood suggests the end of one year.

Flood has yet the same year-marker significance on page thirty one. Lamenting still his ordeal, Zifa tells his aunty, Orukorere: "Misfortune has been my guest *these many floods* (31). This means that he has been facing this impotence problem "these many years." in the final use of the *flood* image, there is a shift in signification:

THIRD NEIGHBOUR**:** …
What could we? The thing was so like
A dream at *flood time* it was
Impossible to hold at anything. (44)

There is an allusion in the above to the natural situation during floods. The current at flood times is fast thus making it impossible to hold something drifting on water; even fishes find it difficult to eat baits because the high current makes the baits unstable for it either tosses them about or sweeps them away completely. That is the image evoked by the speaker to describe the swiftness of action surrounding Zifa's drowning in the sea: the speed at which he walked down the beach and plunged into the deep thus making it impossible for the neighbours to either catch up with or rescue him.

From that of *flood* we move to another kinesthetic water imagery that is perhaps the most predominant in all of Clark-Bekederemo's plays and most significant. This is the *tide* imagery. However, unlike in the other plays of the author where it has a superfluous presence, the *tide* appears a few times in *Song of a Goat*. At its first use, *tide* comes in the company of such related water images as *drifting* and *weeds of the stream* to enable it make complete sense. The Masseur tells Zifa:

In a situation like yours one may be content to drift as do the weeds of the stream. But that carries very
Little, because *the tide always turns*
Back on one. (7-8)

The pictures painted above are of weeds moving with flow of the stream, a sudden turn of the flow of water, and a surge of it on the floating weeds. The significance of the image cluster resides, however, at the connotative level where *tide* stands for "life" and *drift* for "living". Generally speaking, therefore, the above would mean that there are many occurrences in life which a man may be content to live with but such contentment may turn out dangerous at the long run. To sea farers and other water users who decide to drift down with the current to their destination, it is quite a stress-free enterprise but when the current or tide turns in the opposite direction it could head them to undesired destinations and as such they will have to take up oars or paddle as the case may be, and by serious effort, try to redirect the craft and exert much more energy to move it against the tide if they must reach their desired destination. Apart from moving one in the wrong direction, the *turning of the tide* could trigger its ebbing which is mostly a swift movement towards the sea and this is dangerous. Thus,

the *turning of the tide* has often symbolized danger in literary usages. Given the above explanation, Zifa is the *weed of the stream* and his desire to continue waiting for the return of his virility is the *drifting* which he seems to be content with while the consequences of such long waiting is possible *turning of the tide*. Therefore, the Masseur through that cluster of water and water related images is simply warning Zifa of the danger of too much waiting which may turn out detrimental or outrightly dangerous: detrimental in the sense that his virility may not return and dangerous because Ebiere could grow into menopause thus putting a permanent seal on her chance of having more children for Zifa and the family.

The *turning tide* could also mean dangers of some other kind like the tragic consequences that mark the play's climax. Thus, one could say that the *tide turning* image foreshadows the tragedy of the play for had Zifa heeded the Masseur's advice of making over his wife to another, the deaths in the family would have been averted: the *turning tide* would not have met the weed (Zifa) on top of the water not to speak of depleting or sweeping him down the stream to undesired destination.

Often when the word *tide* appears in the play, it relates to season. This is the significance of the following usages of the word in the dialogue between Zifa and Tonye:

ZIFA**:** Where is Ebiere?
TONYE**:** At the waterside to fetch water. Today
You very well know is the start of *market*
Tide and she's hurrying to cross over
With your last night's catch which by the way
Was no larger than a kit's haul.

ZIFA**:** She is not going to *market this tide.* (33)

There is bountiful evidence in Clark-Bekederemo's plays that *tide* and other water-related phenomena govern the rhythm of the daily activities of the Ijaw about whom most of the plays are. When their deployment in the plays does not show this rhythm they relate to other issues prevalent in the traditional setting of the plays. Skumpff attests to this when he writes that:

To those who live by the sea the ebb and flow of the ocean is not just a mildly interesting natural phenomenon, for it often governs the rhythm of their daily activities. It is therefore, important t hat calendars should

contain information of the position and phases of the moon. (qtd. in Ifie 47)

According to Ifie, the above uses of the *tide* image simply suggests that "market days in the Delta range from intervals of four days to eight, nine, eleven, or twelve days and fourteen days" and that "it is the first day of paddling to the market centre that is referred to as the start of market tide" (45-46). There is, therefore, in the above, an understanding that the coastal Ijaw count their market days and seasons by means of *tidal* behaviour. However, there is in the statement something suggesting that the *tide* which Ebiere must catch to cross over to the market centre is the *ebbing tide*. We have stressed earlier the benefit of riding with an *ebbing* tiide: one needs not paddle much since one is borne in the wings of the moving current heading back to sea. What one needs do is only to control one's craft and be quick to leave the ebbing current's destination when necessary.

Now, the association between *tide* and *market* seems phenomenal among the people of the Niger Delta who live close to the waters and whose main transportation route is indeed the waters. This association is evident in one of Clark-Bekederemo's poems, "Streamside Exchange," where it is accorded a symbolic significance. The exchange is between a child whose mother has gone to the market and a River bird. The setting is the streamside in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria where the numerous rivers and creeks are the transportation routes of natives to market centres far and near:

CHILD**:** River bird, river bird,
Sitting all day long
On hook over grass,
River bird, river bird,
Sing to me a song
Of all that pass
And say,
Will mother come back today?

BIRD**:** You cannot know
And should not bother;
Tide and market come and go
And so has your mother.

Coming into this world at birth is like coming to the market and going

home from the market equates leaving this world through death. This is similar to the popular Shakespearean metaphor of the world and the stage ("the world is a stage"). In the same vein, tidal flow suggests life while its ebbing connotes death. We will recall a similar analysis by Kalu Uka concerning *The Raft*. According to Uka, "water acquires a ritualistic symbolism for all, and for life - tides ebb as in death; they rise, as in birth; the river flows, as life" ("Theatre" 77).

Drift or *drifting* is another water image of significance in the play. *Drifting* is the movement of water at the sea, river or stream. It also suggests slow movement on top of water. The word, therefore, has its root with water and is perhaps the most kinesthetic water image in the drama of Clark-Bekederemo. In the following usage, *drift* connotes "understanding":

ZIFA**:** What is your meaning? I cannot
Follow *the drift* of your talk. (7)

Zifa employs this to express his failure to understand what the Masseur says when the latter, through a proverb, tells him to make over his wife to another member of his family since he can no longer perform his conjugal duty. The expression, therefore, means "I do not understand what you mean."

The next use of the image has the connotation of foolishness:

MASSEUR**:** In a situation
Like yours one may be content to *drift* as do
The weeds of the stream…. (7-8)

Now, it is the Masseur that is speaking to Zifa on the same subject of relinquishing his wife to another in the family. Zifa's waiting is, according to the Masseur, tantamount to foolishness. And this he equates to *drifting*. Zifa is simply *drifting* (foolish) in his waiting these many years without making alternative arrangements but thinking his potency will be restored. For the Igbo, the picture that comes to mind with this *drifting* image is the proverbial calabash on top of water which believes it is having fun with the river and dancing to the rhythm of the water's drumming when actually it is *drifting* down to its loss. Zifa is the *drifting* calabash because like the foolish calabash, he is bound to get lost in the sea of regret over his action of too much waiting. No wonder the Masseur adds: "But that carries very/Little, because the tide always turns/Back on one" (7-8).

The word *water* does itself appear a few times in the play. In the following, it is used as a metaphor for "many":

ORUKORERE**:** Of course. Only one elder there is to a house
And the young are *water*…. (33-34)

With the *water* image, Orukorere reassures Zifa of his position as the head of the family of many offspring. Zifa seemed, by his incapacitation and the resultant assault on his person, to have lost confidence in his headship of his family thereby asking Orukorere: "Indeed, am I head still?" (33). He is the elder and head while the other members of the family are his subjects. The abundant nature of *water* is evoked here.

Apart from expressing the impotence theme, some of the *water images* in the play enunciate the tragedy of the family of Zifa. Prominent among such images is the *rain*. The *rain* has always symbolized two major effects, namely, blessing and bad luck. In the first use of the rain to express the play's tragic incidents, it has the symbolism of bad omen. Zifa has just walked away towards the sea following Tonye's hanging of himself and Ebiere's sprawling into unconsciousness, and Third Neighbour who returns from the beach cannot bring himself to report to Orukorere (the aunty of Zifa and Tonye) of what happened to Zifa at the sea. Thus, Orukorere, persuades him:

ORUKORERE: Speak up, man, what effect
Can the words you bring have now? Don't you
See *it is raining over the sea tonight*?
On the sands sprawling out to dazzle
Point till eyes are scales.
This *outpouring* should be impression indeed…. (43)

It is a sign of bad omen when it *rains* over the sea and nowhere else. Orukorere uses the image to pre-empt the news of Zifa's demise at the sea. Experienced in natural signs as an elder, Orukerere seems to have understood through the sign of the *rain* that evil has befallen Zifa, thus, her inquisition serves merely to confirm her fears or the obvious. Moreover, she is aware of the curse that is hanging on the family.

The next time the *rain* specifies tragedy in the play, it is in company of other water kinds like the pond and flood thus depicting a cluster of water imagery. *Rain* here stands for misfortune as the Masseur exploits it in reminding Orukorere of a similar tragedy in his own house a long time ago:

MASSEUR**:** *Rain* made a pond

Of my hearth *several floods ago*.
But need we recall that? (46)

Now a pond in a hearth is not just abnormal but paints a picture of natural disaster. There could be nothing more disastrous than losing two sons and a daughter-in-law (in a sense) in just one day. The Masseur seems to have been a victim of such a loss that has befallen Orukorere and conveys same using the same image.

Furthermore, when Orukorere could "recall nothing" (46) about the incident that the Masseur speaks of due to the many seasons which have passed and which she cannot count, the Masseur deploys a similar image, but now of *raindrops*, to admit the impossibility of recalling the past years and their incidents:

MASSEUR**:** True, true; one might as well number
Raindrops on roof thatch. (46)

Raindrops on a roof cannot be counted for no one can keep track of the number of the drops. In the same manner, Orukorere is not expected by the Masseur to keep track of all events that had happened in times past especially now that the situation in her house "breeds a consort" of "frogs" in her head which "sing so many songs" (46).

The *rain* metaphor retains that significance of misfortune or adversity even on page 47 where it is used four times in relation to the same tragedy. The two old characters, the Masseur and Orukorere, have seen plenty misfortunes in their long lives and these are reasons enough not to fret like children who are new to adversity:

MASSEUR**:** Naked then we stand as before. But if
We shiver, what will children out
In their first *rain*? (47)

Dode, the son of Zifa and Ebiere, is such a child out in his first *rain* - witnessing misfortune for the first time. This is his Dode's first time of witnessing such a disaster that culminates in the harvest of deaths. The effect of the curse upon the family which began with his grandfather before his birth has now reached its climax in his presence resulting in the death, on the same day, of father, uncle and in a sense, mother. This is why Orukorere says, "ORUKORERE**:** Dode, now the *rain* has caught him too" (47). He is not just caught up by the curse plague upon his family, Dode is deep in it as it weighs heavily upon his little shoulders. He is an unfortunate child who will grow having not the privilege of parental protection. Dode is, therefore, the worst hit by the curse in the family, little wonder Orukorere describes him as "the

chicken *wet in the rain*" (47) - a pitiable sight, that is.
Of tragic significance also is the *dew* image which in the following expression proves to have two implications both of which relate to the play's tragedy. Just after the death of Zifa at the sea, Orukorere stands dazedly outside and First Neighbour tells her: "Come in out of the *dew*" (45). Firstly, the *dew* specifies the time of the tragic incidents in Zifa's family which of course is the early hours of the morning when *dews* naturally appear. The scene is actually set very early in the morning as suggested by the first stage direction of the Movement which begins with the phrase: "Day is breaking …" (30). Secondly, the *dew* may be said to connote "grief" or "sorrow" in which case the above expression of First Neighbour could be said to mean: "Get over this grief or sorrow."
When the *sea* in used again, it is with the same symbolic significance as a death-dealing agent, a dangerous and life-threatening phenomenon. The effect of the disaster that has just taken place in Zifa's house touches everyone because the traditional society which Clark-Bekederemo presents in the play is a closely knit one. Everyone is the other's brother and friend. Thus, Third Neigbour exploits the *sea* image to express the effect of the tragedy upon the entire village:
THIRD NEIGHBOUR**:** … The *sea* has submerged
Us; because we are all there under I can
Deliver my burden with little cry (43)

To be submerged in the *sea* is obviously to drown and that amounts to death. When one is drowning or is drowned, water fills his mouth and he cannot speak. That is the picture painted by Third Neighbour of the *sea*, thus using it to convey the communal significance of the tragedy of *Song of Goat. Sea*, in its next usage seems literal, but actually has a connotative import. Orukorere anxiously charges second Neighbour:

… Say has
Lightning struck him down that walked
Into the storm, his head covered with basin?
I heard the roll of thunder out to *sea.* (43)

Again, for those living close to the sea, the dying echo of thunder or other loud sounds tends, like the sun at dawn, to go down the *sea*. The *sea*, therefore, becomes phenomenal as the end of all things because of its vastness which seems endless. The dying of the echo of a loud sound seems to be traveling down the vast and endless expanse of the *sea*. The

horn of the Niger Company boat calling out to its pilot, Zifa, is mistaken by his great aunt to be "the roll of thunder" (43).

The last time the *sea* is used it is assumes an auditory and perhaps organic significance still in pursuance of the play's tragedy. The sea is personified here by being given a moaning voice:

THIRD NEIGHBOUR**:** … Zifa seemed to start out of sleep: Blow,
Blow, siren, blow he bellowed as in reply,
And blow till your hooting drown
The moaning of the sea. (44)

It is the rumbling noise made by the waves and high current at sea that is here referred to as "moaning." There, however, seems to be a suggestion, in that *moaning sea* image, of the water's disapproval of Zifa's intention to drown in it, which necessitate his desire for the siren of the Niger Company boat to get louder and drown the rebellious sound from the *sea*.
It is interesting how writers enjoy giving the *waters* a voice and ascribing meaning to their different sounds. Michael Ferber comments on this phenomenon while chronicling Homer, Emerson and Arnold's examples:

Writers have … given the sea a voice, just like babbling or murmuring rivers, usually as heard from shore. Homer's epithet for the sea can scarcely be bettered: *polyphloisbos*, "much roaring," (e.g., Iliad 1.34), which Fitzgerald forgivably overtranslates as "the tumbling clamorous whispering sea." Seas can roar, rage, bellow, pond, and "chide" (Emerson, "Seashore" 1). But even on calm days the repeating sound of waves on the shore may seem to have a message. (180-181)

There is also the image of the *wave* in the play. When the sea or any kind of flowing water like the river, the ocean, or creek is troubled, *waves* are created and can be dangerous because of their capacity to upturn boats and other sea vessels. At the demise of Zifa at the sea, Orukorere dazedly intones:

….Here only *waves* pour out
On waves, only dunes upon dunes (43)

Waves here are metaphor for the topsy-turvy situation in her household which has maintained a piling order in much the same way as *waves* pour

out on *waves* and dunes on dunes. First is the death of Tonye, followed by the fainting of Ebiere and the drowning of Zifa. Besides, events in the family of Orukorere have taken a crooked and dangerous turn like the waviness of the *waves*

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Conclusion

The foregoing has revealed that *water imagery* forms the nucleus of Clark-Bekederemo's dramatic imagination in *Song of a Goat*. The imagery's ability at intricately conveying the play's major thematic concern attests to water's natural fluidity and the handler's creative ingenuity. This obviously applies to the rest of the author's plays.

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