
FOLKTALES AND GENDER AMONG THE BIKPAKPAAM 'KONKOMBA' OF GHANA

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Introduction

Many researchers, writing on the folkloric traditions of Africa, have attested, in no uncertain terms, to the profound needs that these oral genres serve in communities and societies in Africa. For instance, in a study on *Kasena* riddles, Tangwam (2012:150) indicates that riddles constitute a nucleic aspect of the education system in the *Kasena* milieu. He goes further to specify that this oral gnomic genre is not only a means of sharpening the reasoning skills of the young ones and providing recreation to participants, but also to orientating them on their culture and beliefs. Similarly, Agozie (2000:6) notes that proverbs serve to reflect the thoughts and insights of people into the realities of life. Indeed, several researchers have sought to inquire into various aspects of societies and cultures through oral traditions. A classic example can be the study of parental preferences and racial inequality as an ideological theme in *African Oral Literature* by Gorog-Karady (1997). Apparently, folktales is one of the oral genres that have greatly attracted the interest of innumerable scholars across the globe. Finnegan (1967), Philip (1992), Acquaye (1987), Ukala (1992), Ofori-Mankata (1995) and Winston (1998) etc. are examples of such works devoted to the subject of tales. In particular, African trickster tales, (popularly known by the Akan of Ghana as *anasesem* 'spider tales/stories'), an allotrope of folktales have received systematic scholarly studies by many prolific academics on the continent. Mention can be made of Tekpetey (1979), Yankah (1983), Sutherland (1995), Ryan (1999), Terkper (2008), Mireku-Gyimah (2012) and Adjei (2012) among others. The afore-listed works all engage in analysing one aspect or the other of the trickster tale.

Perhaps, the key justification for the wide attention given the subject of folktales is the immense values or functions attached to them. These functions, as discussed by Ahenkorah (2011:182), can be classified dually into manifest and latent levels, from a sociological perspective. The functions/benefits of folktales further come in the forms of aesthetic, social, didactic and therapeutic. To highlight the significance of tales, Bulsa (1993: 5), in a study of the folktales of the Bulsa in northern Ghana, notes that African tales form an important source of information on certain aspects of the cultural traditions of African peoples, especially on their attitudes and value systems. In much a related sense, Ahenkorah (2011: 184) argues that the folktale functions as a chronicle and vehicle of the Akan social ideology, adding that it also serves as a bastion of the Akan cultural identity while allowing the outsider a glimpse into the Akan psyche.

In spite of the widely acknowledged importance of folktales and the attendant great deal of research on the subject, there seems to have been no single such work carried out in relation to the folktales of the *Bikpakpaam* of Ghana. This situation may appear paradoxical, given

that the ethnic group known as *Bikpakpaam* constitute a whopping 1.6% of the entire Ghanaian population, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (GH) (1996). It is against the preceding background that this paper seeks to venture into *Bikpakpaam* folktales, looking at how this oral genre mirrors the gender phenomenon of the people and, by extension, provide some solid ethnographic data on the *Bikpakpaam* as a people. This is done by collecting a number of folktales in the *Bikpakpaam* repertoire and trying to juxtapose the gender issues depicted in the folkloric tradition and world with the prototypical reality in *Kikpokpan*.

The tradition of storytelling among the Bikpakpaam

From the cultural actor's perspective, the culture of *itiin* 'folktales' among the *Bikpakpaam* stretches as far back as their anthropogeny on earth. However, at the moment, there is no known concrete account as to the origin of folktales in the culture. All that is known is that these tales descended from their remotest ancestors and continue to enjoy perpetual sustenance, by way of being handed-down from one generation to another. This is unlike the case with some other cultures where there are various conjectures, sometimes through mythological tales or by normal etymological accounts on the genesis of folktales as indicated by Rattray (1930: iii), Atakorah (1964:4-5) and Ahenkorah (2011:174) about the Akan of Ghana.

In *Kikpokpan*, storytelling remains, purely, an oral performance, unaccompanied by any other form of instrument(s) (musical instruments or performance props). The song interludes in *Bikpakpaam* folktales are not even backed with the clapping of hands, even though a lot of the tales in the *Bikpakpaam* repertoire have intermittent melodies. A story simply begins by the teller making an oral declaration as *Ma tiin ncha yaa* 'Here goes my story/tale' and then continues with the story, usually, with the affirmation of the audience. There is also no any rigidly defined form of response expected from the audience as they may simply respond *anhaa* 'an oral gesture that can be used as a response to a call' or the audience may say *Tipili* 'We are listening or *Lichaa* 'Go'. The end of a story may be marked by any of a number of concluding remarks/statements by the tale teller as: *Ma tiin do* 'My story ends' or *Ma tiin mɔ ɲa mɔ, n pri ki di lii ... bu* 'Whether my story is interesting or not, I carry it on ...' In the second utterance, the storyteller ends by nominating, from amongst the audience, the one to take over by mentioning the one's name in the ellipsis as shown above.

A third option to ending a tale is for the teller to say: *Ma tiin ngru ka mmuu chaa kei n-yajah agbinja yaa* 'My tale or story be stunted and let me grow tall like my grandfather's male kapok tree.' This third way of ending a tale seems to have linkage with the *Bikpakpaam* creed, as earlier indicated, that storytelling can have a toll on one's physical growth. A close study of the *Bikpakpaam* folktales reveal that all manner of objects, both animate and inanimate can feature as characters. However, in the characterization style, non-human creatures or entities are either anthropomorphized or personified in the tales. The tale below is a quintessence of a *Bikpakpaam* tale with both animate and inanimate characters.

Why it now happens that the broom is tied

Long before now Mr. Broom lived with humans and could talk like humans do, without anybody ever thinking of tying him in rope(s). Around this same era, there also lived a great king who had nine (9) wives. Unimaginably, despite this king having many wives, he still developed an amorous interest in his own biological mother and, on a secret note, began going to bed with his mother at night. Mr. Broom, who lay in the room there, witnessed this despicable act. One day, Mr. Mouse descends from the roof to cut some part of Mr. Broom to make his (mouse's) nest. Just as Mr. Mouse was about to pounce on Mr. Broom, he (Mr. Broom) asked Mr. Mouse to kindly spare him (Mr. Broom) in return for a very fascinating story.

This story is that the king has been having carnal knowledge of his (king's) mother. Mr. Mouse found this story rewarding enough for him (Mr. Mouse) to spare Mr. Broom's life. The next moment, Mr. Mouse also runs into Mr. Cat who threatens to devour him (Mr. Mouse). He (Mr. Mouse) also made the same appeal to Mr. Cat to spare his life for the reward of an interesting secret that was not known to anybody else. The king's scandal with his mother (king's mother) is then further divulged to the cat. Soon after Mr. Cat and Mr. Mouse parted company, Mr. Cat also clashed with Mr. Dog who wanted to smash him (Mr. Cat). To save his (Mr. Cat's) life, Mr. Cat also repeated the same plea to Mr. Dog and was saved.

Unfortunately, the following morning, Mr. Dog goes to the riverside to drink water. At the riverside, Mr. Dog encounters Mr. Crocodile who wanted to swallow him (Mr. Dog) up. Mr. Dog then begged Mr. Crocodile to forgive him (Mr. Dog) so that he (Mr. Dog) would tell him a very great and wonderful story. Mr. Crocodile got curious and decided to spare Mr. Dog and hear the story. Mr. Dog then went ahead and also disclosed to Mr. Crocodile that the king had gone to bed with his (king's) own biological mother. Mr. Crocodile then composed this story into a song and began to sing it at the riverside to the hearing of those who went to fetch water. Eventually, the king learnt of this and ordered the arrest of Mr. Crocodile. Upon interrogation, he (Mr. Crocodile) confessed that it was Mr. Dog who told him the story. This chain of interrogation continued until it was finally settled that Mr. Broom was the one responsible for the leakage of the king's sacrilege with his (king's) mother. In anger and punishment to Mr. Broom, the king decreed that his (Mr. Broom's) neck be tied firmly with a rope. Since then, Mr. Broom has remained tied in ropes.

From the above tale, it is confirmed that both animate and inanimate objects can constitute characters in the *Bikpakpaam* tales. Thus, the broom, the mouse, the cat, the dog, the crocodile and the human king constitute characters. The storytelling platform in *Kikpokpan* is confined to *lichiln* 'the compound within a household' as the houses of the people are predominantly the compound type. Storytelling sessions are hardly held outside the domestic arena. This is different from the Akan situation where, in addition to the confines of the household, the storytelling theatre can also be held more as a larger public event, that is, at the market square, the *adwabirem* 'royal durbar grounds' etc., Ahenkorah (2011: 27). The use of 'domestic arena' to refer to the story telling forum in *Kikpokpan* is not to say that it is only the members of a household that are admitted at a session. In fact, a tale telling session underway in a household is open to all other members of the community.

May be, something, particularly, interesting about the tradition of folktale performance among the *Bikpakpaam* is the fact that the storytelling session is a period when all members of the family or community- males, females, adults and children are brought to a common platform for mutual interaction. There is no any form of social stratification at a storytelling session, as every participant, regardless of age or gender, has an equal opportunity to listen and to have a turn(s) to tell a tale(s). In effect, the household or community becomes highly egalitarian at the moment of storytelling.

This is, of course, a remarkable rarity among a people like *Bikpakpaam* in whose culture there are rigorous lines of social polarity along age and gender lines. For example, among the *Bikpakpaam*, a person of the opposite sex is not expected or encouraged to sit in a gathering of the other sex and to share in their discussion(s)/conversation(s), unless all can agree that the occasion demands it. In the case of boys and girls, anyone violating this social-cultural observance will often attract upon himself or herself the verbal rebuke: (a) *A san ubuninja a bamba do?* ‘You are a boy; What do you want here?’ or (b) *A san ubunimpɔ abamba do?* ‘You are a girl; What do you want here?’ That is, on such an occasion of one falling foul of this social etiquette, ‘a’ and ‘b’ above are used in reprimand to boys and girls respectively.

The timeline for storytelling among the *Bikpakpaam* is during the night, specifically, the time after supper. It is *likobil* ‘a taboo’ to tell a folktale during the day and no adult ever thinks of a tale, if it is not at night. Among the repercussions for violating this socio-cultural norm are that a culprit’s mother will develop protruding testicles or that one will have a stunted growth, in the case of children. On the rare occasion that a child has or wants to breach this cultural norm to tell a tale in daytime, the child can only do so without suffering the afore-mentioned retribution if and only if s/he has self-imposed some sanctions on himself or herself. These include pulling out one’s own eyelash, hair from the armpit or the head. One (1) or two (2) or all three (3) could be done in a single instance of one wanting to tell a tale during the day. It must be added that the supposed calamity that one would incur on telling a tale during daytime is yet to see any scientific corroboration, but to a most significant extent, this belief still remains very well regarded by the people.

Up to date, storytelling in *Kikpokpan* has not drifted from the amateur level. The term ‘amateur’ is employed here for no other meaning, except to say that among the people concerned, the art of storytelling has not yet become a profession or an economic venture. Folktales are still maintained in *Kikpokpan* as a means of regaling members of the community for no form of direct economic gains from the practice. On this basis, it appears that the use of folktales in *Kikpokpan* ties up much with what pertains with the Wala of Wa in Northwestern Ghana. For, in a study of the oral traditions of the Wala, Fikry-Atallah (1972) establishes that folktales, which the Wala call *silima*, to them, are for entertainment and are not to be taken seriously. This is not like the situation in some cultures where the tradition of folktales has received adaptations and metamorphosed into an income earning avenue. Ahenkorah (2011) reveals this ‘modern’ trend in the folktale traditions of the Fante in the Central and Western Regions of Ghana. This comes in the form of the emergence of what has been described as semi-professional storytelling groups. Ahenkorah mentions the *Asassan Anansesemkuo* at Asassan in the Central Region, the *Kurunkun Ananseasem* at Elmina in the

Central Region and the *Ananse Akuamoa* Group in the city of Sekondi, Western Region as examples of such semi-professional storytelling groups. This account does not purport to pontificate that the tradition of folktales in *Kikpokpan* could not have assumed any form or level of adaptation, but that if this occurs, then it does so on quite a subtle or latent note and this paper does not delve into that, since that is not in focus, at least for now.

Storytelling does carry intriguing benefits for the *Bikpakpaam*, apart from the universal entertainment, moralization and pedagogic benefits/functions that come with folktales. It is discovered that, among the *Bikpakpaam*, telling of tales becomes especially useful when there is some work to be done in the night and people need to be kept awake and refreshed as they do this work. Notable among such tasks include the cracking of groundnuts and the thrashing of maize. Aside the fact that storytelling is used to keep participants refreshed through such tasks, it is also to lure others to join the gathering and to add to the work force. Therefore, the *Bikpakpaam* as agrarians who rely fundamentally on manpower for the processing of their farm produce for both domestic consumption and for the market find their folktales a very useful ally in mobilizing the necessary labour force. By indirection, then, storytelling can be seen to have a socio-economic value for the *Bikpakpaam* too.

Beyond, the foregoing function(s), it is fascinating to learn that a young man who is prolific at storytelling can win admiration and get a wife or at least a girlfriend by virtue of that. This comes in different ways, *mutatis mutandis*. A parent who so cherish such a young man for his prolificness at storytelling could invite him and offer him a girl to marry. It could also be a girl herself developing or showing a soft spot for the young man who might end up in a love affair with her. From a contemporary perspective, it is indicated that the use of folktales in *Kikpokpan* is a practice in debilitation. Storytelling sessions are now seldom held and this has been attributed to new trends such as increasing urbanization where even villages, by reason of the explosion of multimedia tools and the attendant globalization are no longer villages in terms of exposure to other forms of entertainment such as carried out on the radio and the television channels. This means that one anywhere can now entertain himself or herself with world class music, sports and a host other entertainment oriented programmes, regardless of one's location. Also, the vibrancy of modern formal education, the resultant carrier paths and the advent of technology have contributed their quota to the dislocation of the traditional storytelling system in *Kikpokpan*.

In the face of western formal education, children who would usually gather at storytelling scenes at night now have to spend time with their books. An *Ukpakpanja* 'a Bikpakpakpaam man' or an *Ukpakpanpii* 'a Bikpakapaam woman/lady' who is now in a teaching or a nursing profession will hardly find time for folktale sessions in the night as that might be the time to prepare for the classroom lessons ahead or to attend to patients at the hospital during night shift. To crown it all, in view of the new technological impetus, there is machinery available for tasks like thrashing of maize and cracking of groundnuts. Hence, the call for storytelling avenues through the performance of such tasks at night is visibly heading for extinction.

The portrayal of males as kings/ lords in the folkloric communities

It is a clear observation that the power structure in *Kikpokpan* is absolutistic in favour of males. The nature of power sharing, as reflected in decision making and property owning, largely amounts to a less inclusion of women, even though women play an indispensable role(s) in the very survival and progress of every society. This is as often reported in many circles where gender issues have received consideration. For instance, Bottah (2010) comments that in every African country out there, women outnumber men in terms of population, but, paradoxically, they (women) are abysmally under represented at the commanding heights of the economy and power.

As a patriarchic people, the leadership landscape of the *Bikpakpaam*, from the household through the clan to the larger community/township level witness the dominance of men. Within a household in *Kikpokpan*, the leadership superstructure is the *uchindaan* 'owner/head of the house.' Though a neuter item, *uchindaan* almost invariably remains a title to males, usually referring to the father of a household. Likewise, at the clan level, there is *uninkpil* 'male elder' who, by established tradition, is vested with a leadership mandate over the entire clan. At the macro community/town level, the legitimate authority figure is the *utindaan* 'land owner'. The *utindaan*, in *Kikpokpan*, has always been a man who, as revealed by Maasole (2006), exercises his powers more in his religious recognition and duties. The absence of female figures in the power hierarchies of the *Bikpakpaam* is, therefore, a corroboration of a sort of 'men-take-all' character of a culture. Even in current times when chieftaincy as an institution is solidifying among the *Bikpakpaam*, with the setting up of their own local chiefs over their towns and people, the corresponding practice of getting queen mothers in the towns/communities to partner the chiefs is much less gravitated towards. As power and wealth are inseparable, it comes as no surprise that, in a stereotypic sense, a woman does not acquire or own valuable property such as land, a house, a car or the mechanical corn mill etc. by herself. Her wealth is supposed to be sent or given to the males of her father side where she is thought to belong by all intents and purposes.

Numerous *Bikpakpaam* folktales have representations of males as kings and, for that matter, rulers over their people. Similar representations of females as queens in the folktales of the people are not easily seen, at least if compared with the characterization of males as kings in the tales of the people. This is clearly seen in quite a number out of the about sixty (60) tales that were collected in three different communities in the Nkwanta North District of Northern Volta. In one of the tales, there once lived a king and his people. Any time any member of the community went for hunting and had some game, the king was served some of the meat. Somehow, one of the king's wives thought that the king's subjects did not respect him enough for not bringing the animals killed whole to the king, but cut only portions of the meat for him. This wife of the king kept pestering him about the fact that the meat the people brought him was not appreciable/big enough. This compelled the king to decide to go for a hunting expedition himself so that he could get more meat for his household as was being demanded by his wife. At the hunting grounds, the king dips his hand into a hole in an attempt to catch an animal, but, unfortunately, got bitten by a very venomous snake inhabiting the hole. This leads to the instantaneous demise of the king. Also, in another tale, there once lived a pregnant woman with her husband in another village far from where the

woman's parents lived. One day this pregnant woman decided to pay her parents a visit, but en route to her parents' village, she gave birth to twins- a boy and a girl. Since there was nobody around to help the woman carry her twin babies home, she chose to pick the girl and abandon the boy. Her reason for deciding to take the girl instead of the girl was that the girl would be more of a service to her (the mother) in terms of performing domestic chores. Later on, an old lady came to find the abandon baby boy and went to raise him. The boy grew into a youth and began to herd cattle for his surrogate old lady mother. Many years later, while taking cattle to drink at the stream, he met his biological mother and mysteriously identified her. He began to communicate his identity to his mother by insinuating through a song he played on his flute. This moved his mother to run home and report the incident to her husband and, for that matter, the boy's biological father. The couple now traced the boy to the old lady's house and tried to make claims to their child. This leads to a heated debate between the old lady and the couple over ownership of the boy. The matter is then taken to the king's palace for settlement. The king, unable to resolve this enigmatic controversy, decides that the boy be slashed into two and given to the contending parties. The old lady readily accepts this verdict, but the boy's biological mother throws in the towel, suggesting that the boy rather be left alive and given to the old lady. This convinces the king that the woman, instead of the old lady is the true mother of the boy and so she should have her child back.

As exemplified in the two (2) tales above, in addition to the one earlier on 'how the broom now comes to be tied', one sees a projection of male characters as kings or overlords in *Bikpakpaam* tales, so reflective of the power and leadership practicalities of the people. A keener curiosity arises when one comes to know that in the collection of *Bikpakpaam* tales used for this study, it is only one tale that portrays a female character in the fashion of a queen. Even in this tale, the said female figure is depicted more as an epicurean personality than someone having established, legitimate traditional authority. As the tale has it, there lived a woman who went into marriage. In her matrimonial home in a distant land from her family of orientation, she enjoys prosperity and the associated privileges. Out of affluence, she acquires a lot of maids and decides to build a room without a door around herself. She never stepped foot outside the room to do anything and had her maids relish her with delicacies posted to her through an only window in the room she built around herself. She also never remembered to visit her family back home until all her relatives were dead. One day, a dove comes to perch on her roof and, in a song, scold her for neglecting her people and place of birth. This awakens her to mount her horse and go to visit her people, but this becomes too late. On her arrival, she realizes that the whole place was left in total desolation, as no remnant of her kinsmen was still alive. In excruciating anguish, she turns into the grass/bush that grows on house compounds.

The inducement of males by females

In the de facto gender relations between males and females in *Kikpokpan*, the *Bikpakpaam* belief and, indeed, confirm that their women easily prevail on the attitudes, decisions and actions of their men. No wonder, it is common to hear, among the people,

remarks like: *Unimpu lan ɲani wɔ* ‘His wife/lady will deceive him’ and *Unimpu ɲani wɔ* ‘His wife/lady has deceived him’. What this means is that even though women are not in frontline decision making in the *Bikpakpaam* society, they may end up being the originators of the decisions that the powerful men make and the propellers of the actions that are engaged in by the powerful men. It seems incongruous that in a culture where all power and wealth is the preserve of the males, females can still so effectively employ their manipulative tendencies to exert their influence on the men and the larger community/society. This form of female influence in the *Bikpakpaam* culture is confirmed in the view of Budgen (2005) that the female sex developed deceitful forms of domination and applied their charm as a political instrument for the cultivation of power over men.

A number of folktales in *Kikpokpan* really tend to show that women are capable of prevailing upon men and, indeed, do so for whatever reasons. This does not come by way of physical confrontation, but normally, by playing on the psyche of the male(s) concerned. An example of such a tale is ‘How the Pied Crow Gets an Ugly Beak/Mouth’. This tale says that the pied crow’s mouth used to be nicer than it is today. The pied crow went in for a girlfriend who advised him (the pied crow) to take his (pied crow’s) mouth to a blacksmith to refine it to look more appealing than it was. Unfortunately, the blacksmith rather deteriorates the beauty of the pied crow’s mouth, leaving it in the ugly shape that it is seen today. A similar story goes that there once lived a king who had two wives. One of the two wives happened to be a hermaphrodite. The other wife (the normal wife) who did not like her rival kept inciting their husband (the king) to murder her rival on the basis of her hermaphroditism. The king eventually succumbed to the wife’s incitation by setting aside a day for the murder of his hermaphroditic wife. By the mysterious intervention of a monster hawk, the hermaphroditism is transferred from the victim to her uncompromising rival. On the day of execution, the known victim gets exonerated as the condition was no longer there while her treacherous rival rather got killed.

Thus, in foregoing tales, it is the pied crow’s girlfriend who influences his resolve to make his mouth better than how God designed it, but this ends him up in disappointment. Also, it is the king’s wife who pushes him into taking such a deadly decision against his innocent wife. Even though the king is in no qualms with his hermaphroditic wife, the other wife manipulates him into attempting to eliminate her (the earlier hermaphroditic wife). Before rounding off this discussion on the question of how females can influence males in *Kikpokpan*, the influence from females seems to be held in some reservation. As indicated in the tales above, the inducement of men by women is a phenomenon that rather leads to disastrous consequences. The picture rather appears to be that women, most often, use such influence as cunning schemes and that these schemes either backfire or bring destruction in society. This is crystalized in cases of the Pied Crow and the hermaphroditic wife.

Tale preference as a point of gender disparity

A careful attention to types of tales based on the folkloric scenes, activities and characters point to some differences in tale preferences between males and females. In the collection relied on for this analysis, it is revealed that males or men in *Kikpokpan* tell more

of tales that bother on adventurism, mostly, featuring hunters as characters. In comparison, women or females tell tales that will often feature domestic scenes and, generally, with less adventurous activities. This is evidenced, in for instance, a storytelling session of four (4) tales held with the researcher's mother and younger brother at Kpassa. Two (2) of the stories told by the brother both featured hunters and some amount of horrific experiences. The other two (2) told by the mother showed no such elements. The turn-taking at this four (4) story session was only one (1) story at a time by each of the two storytellers.

The 1st tale of the brother was that there lived a young man who was a great hunter. This young man killed innumerable animals in the forest. Notable about him was the fact that he could survive all kinds of attacks by wild beasts. A buffalo turns into a very beautiful lady and then comes to charm the young man into a love affair, just as a subterfuge to unravel his hunting secrets. One day, while the young man and his buffalo-turned-human lover were engaged in a lively chat, she tricked the young man into revealing how he escaped all attacks by wild beasts in the forest. The young man divulges two of his secrets, but his father who happens to be around during the conversation intervenes to stop the young man from letting out his third and last secret. The secrets were that anytime he shot at a wild beast and it charged at him, he first turned into a tree stump, then if attacked again, he changed into grass and the for the third time, he turned into a needle. On that note, his buffalo-turned-human girlfriend got to know only two (2) of his secrets and not all the three (3).

The next time the young man goes for hunting, the buffalo he spots is his buffalo-turned-human lover, but unknowingly, the young shoots at the buffalo. The buffalo charges at him, but as he turns into a tree stump, the buffalo still onslaughts him. He changes into a standing-by grass and the buffalo tries to squeeze him, but he further changes into a needle, unknown to the buffalo and clings firmly to its tail. As the buffalo could not find him again and began to walk away, he dropped off behind and shot it completely dead. Upon the young man's return from the forest, he discovers that his lover has disappeared from home without anybody knowing her whereabouts. On another occasion, another wild beast turns into an equally beautiful young lady and comes to marry this same young man. His parents protests vehemently against his marrying the lady but he turns deaf-ears to the calls of his parents. This time round, the beast-turned- human lady succeeds in knowing every secret about the young man, eventually crushing him on one of his hunting sprees.

The brother's 2nd tale was that there were two young men who lived together as friends. One faithful day, one borrowed the other's gun to go for hunting. While hunting, he saw a wild beast and shot at it, but could not kill it. The beast ferociously pursued the young man who got so scared that in the course of fleeing for his dear life, he lost the gun he had borrowed from his friend. Upon reaching home and narrating his ordeal to his friend, his friend insisted that he went back to the forest and found the gun back. He (the gun borrower) goes back and, fortunately, retrieves the gun and, in addition, also discovers and takes home a wonderful egg that can sing so melodiously. During a social function, the other friend also borrows the wonderful egg from his friend, but accidentally breaks the egg at the function while performing with it. On his return, his friend (the owner of the wonderful egg) questions him if it is good to also demand that he (the gun owner and now egg borrower) replaces his wonderful egg which will be impossible for one to get.

The mother, on her part, told the following two (2) tales: first, that in the olden days, people with visual impairment could borrow eyes from the other people, but were expected to return the borrowed eye(s) timely to their owners. One day a young blind man went to borrow an old man's eyes to enable him (the young man) travel to another town to woo a lady. He (the young blind man and eye borrower) went to over stay at his destination. This compelled the old man to trace him for his (old man's) eyes. Since then, no one lends his eye(s) to the blind any more. The second tale of the mother goes this way: *Sandee* 'Rabbit' (the trickster character in *Bikpakpaam* folktales) and his wife lived together. Rabbit's wife had a goat that he (Rabbit) wanted a way of slaughtering the goat and eating it up all by himself. Eventually, Rabbits schemed out to do this, but ended up being severely and cruelly punished by a monster testicle that he encountered in the bush where he (Rabbit) went to slaughter the goat.

From the tale samples above, one comes to the realization that all the stories told by the male, in this instance, feature hunters and their escapades whilst those told by the female do not entail similar characters and activities.

Conclusion

This paper has provided an account on the tradition of storytelling among the *Bikpakpaam* of Ghana. Particular attention has been paid to how this important traditional lore serves a portraiture of the gender world of the people. In specific terms, the paper has argued out that true to the socio-cultural characteristics of the *Bikpakpaam*, their folktales depict them as a patriarchic society and that women, though culturally sidelined in power, decision making and the distribution of wealth, have a recognizable form of prevalence over the men. Added to the above is the paper's assertion that the storytelling session is one of the rare moments when all members of the household or community, across sex and age are brought into an egalitarian polity and that there appears to be some amount of differences between males and females, with regard to tale preferences.

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