

1 **THE INDIGENOUS CULTURAL WAYS OF DIAGNOSING DISEASES IN THE**
2 **ASHANTI REGION OF GHANA**

3
4 **Abstract**

5 The primary aim of this study is to make the indigenous cultural ways of identifying diseases
6 known in order to promote and remove the mystery and superstition associated to them. Due to
7 the differences of individuals in the population, ~~the~~ quota sampling was employed and the
8 population was divided into various strata. Interviews and observations were the main data
9 collecting instruments used. The four study areas which are *Bongari Shrine* at Adumakasekese,
10 *Asuo Abresua Shrine* of Ahwirewam, *Bokankye Akua Gyabon Shrine* (currently situated at
11 Mankranso Peposo), and *Apomasu Kwao Shrine* of Ntensere were purposively selected. The
12 study revealed that the traditional healers use items ranging from natural to artificial such as
13 eggs, talismans, cowries, money and other objects to diagnose various diseases. In diagnosing of
14 diseases, the traditional healers take a holistic approach which are the social, natural, spiritual
15 and the cosmic environment which are not in the case of the orthodox medication. It is therefore
16 important for government and stakeholders to give recognition to these diviners and spiritual
17 healers by putting up nice buildings (clinics and hospitals) and providing them the necessary
18 needs like what they have been doing for the orthodox health centres and if possible integrate the
19 traditional medication into the orthodox ones.

20 **Keywords:** Cultural, Indigenous, Diagnosing, Diseases, Ashanti Region, Spiritual Diagnoses,
21 Diviners, Traditional Healer

Comment [a1]: Good article. A few aspects need attention.

1. There is no expansion of comparison in the results and discussions between findings of the orthodox versus the unorthodox. Remember acceptance has to show levels of comparison and belief in effectiveness.

2. Literature appears scarce in the study, however quite a number of studies have been done now and are available open access.

3. It will be strikingly interesting to have previous studies elsewhere compared especially at discussion level.

4. Much of the descriptive data needs the voice of the authors to give significance to the study.

5. The literature citations in text are few and old. Furthermore the referencing style needs to be consistent.

6. We need to see a perspective of practices for explaining and affirming practices. This adds more value to the current findings and shows a continental or global trend of acceptable practice for better understanding and appreciation.

24 1. Introduction

25 Indigenous culture is an integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes the language,
26 thoughts, actions, medication, customs, beliefs and institutions of racial, ethnic, social, or
27 religious groups (California Endowment, 2003). This definition denotes that indigenous culture
28 is intricately intertwined with every aspect of the entire human life within every group of
29 persons. Twumasi and Bonsi (1957) argued that medical systems have ties with the way of life of
30 a people and that the institution of diagnosing has ties with philosophy, religion and belief
31 systems.

32 Detecting the root cause of ailments in traditional medication entails a systematic quest for
33 answers to the origins of a particular disease to determine, who or what caused it and why it has
34 affected a particular person at a particular time (Mahame, Busia, Kasilo & Mhame, 2010). This
35 is a key part of African traditional medication. According to Yawar (2001), human beings can be
36 regarded as having two realms of existence, which may conveniently be labelled inner (spiritual)
37 and outer (physical). These traditional healers (the diviners) are able to address both the physical
38 and the spiritual aspects of the patient while orthodox practitioners address or concentrate only
39 [on](#) the naturalistic aspect. Similarly, Abdullahi (2011) affirms that diagnosing to identify the
40 cause of disease among traditional Africans is reached through spiritual means. The idea behind
41 the use of divination to find the root cause of diseases, [emanates](#) from the practitioners
42 philosophy. [The view is](#) that infirmities are not seen as chance occurrences but are believed to
43 arise from the actions of individuals and ancestral spirits according to the imbalance between the
44 individual and the social environment (Anyinam, 1987; Hedberg, Madati, Mshigeni, Mshiu &
45 Samuelson, 1982; Ngubane, 1987; Staugard, 1985; WHO, 1976). With similar arguments,
46 UNESCO (2013) states that traditional means of diagnosing diseases are very effective and they

47 | [are](#) based on theories that see human beings as inseparable from their social, natural, spiritual
48 | and cosmic environment. With this holistic approach, disease is considered and diagnosed [d](#) as a
49 | phenomenon that arises when an imbalance affects the vital powers governing the patient's
50 | health; these powers range from the most powerful deity to the smallest living organism. Buor
51 | (2002) suggests that the fundamental theory in traditional medicine is that, there is a triune nature
52 | of man, that is, physical, mental and spiritual and the diagnosis and therapeutic approaches
53 | should be buttressed on that basis. May and Mead (1999) state that recognizing a patient's
54 | spiritual concerns is viewed as an essential part of the patient-centered medicine increasingly
55 | seen as crucial to high-quality patient care. For this reason, the traditional healers delve much
56 | into the entire system of the client holistically to scrutinize him or her.

57 | The traditional healers are able to reveal hidden things which the spectacles of orthodox
58 | practitioners cannot see. A perusal made by Yawar (2001) on the standard general medical
59 | textbooks similarly affirms that spirituality is not considered in medical teaching. D'Souza
60 | (2007) also added that in academia, little attention has been paid to spirituality. In view of this,
61 | most medical doctors do not regard spiritual issues as very important in their practice. [Yawar](#)
62 | (2001) further established that [medically](#) trained doctors cannot claim special knowledge or
63 | [insight into the spiritual condition of patients as in the case of traditional healers. Educating](#)
64 | [medical personnel on how to deal with the spiritual or personalistic aspects of medical care is not](#)
65 | [a typical part of medical school or college curricula, yet evidence is emerging that it is something](#)
66 | [patients want and expect medical personnel to do as part of the care they provide \(D'Souza,](#)
67 | [2002, Mathai & North, 2013 and Beer, 2000\).](#) [The World Health Organisation \(2000\) reports that](#)
68 | in the United Kingdom (UK) almost 40% of the physicians make some referrals to alternative
69 | medication. It is for these reasons why ~~the World Health Organisation encourages~~ African

Comment [a2]: To balance this argument, reference to counseling and human services maybe essential in the discussion.

70 | member states [are encouraged](#) to uphold and incorporate traditional medication in their health
71 care system.

72 Accordingly, most people including doctors, health practitioners and Christians, in most cases,
73 continue to shun the effective indigenous ways of identifying the causes of ailment despite their
74 contribution to providing the health needs of the population (Conserve Africa, 2002). It is
75 important therefore to make the indigenous cultural ways of diagnosing diseases known through
76 this study in order to remove the mystery and superstition associated to them. This paper
77 concentrates on the diagnostic practices of the traditional diviners (Priests and Priestesses) and
78 spiritual healers in the Ashanti region, Ghana. Information provided in this paper were obtained
79 through primary data and other relevant published papers and books. Researching into this area
80 of study will help serve as a wakeup call to the general public to further embrace the effective
81 indigenous cultural ways of identifying the cause of diseases and to shun the negative attitudes
82 towards the traditional methods of diagnoses. This will go a long way to attract the necessary
83 attention of traditional cultural ways of unearthing the cause of ailments.

84 2. Methods

85 Specifically, the studies were conducted in four Traditional Medical Centres in the Ashanti
86 Region of Ghana. They are the *Bongari* Shrine at Adumakasekese, *Asuo Abresua* Shrine of
87 Ahwirewam, *Bokankye Akoa Gyabon* Shrine (currently situated at Mankranso Peposo), and
88 *Apomasu Kwao* Shrine of Ntensere. These medical centres were purposively selected because
89 they have successfully been practicing the indigenous cultural ways of diagnosing diseases.

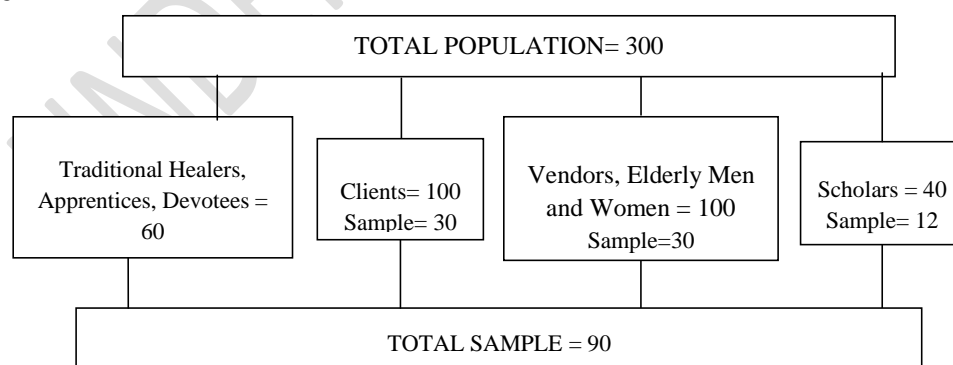
90 The study was driven by the qualitative research method. According to Leedy and Ormrod
91 (2005), qualitative research is typically used to answer questions about the complex nature of

Comment [a3]: Much of the literature in this section is not current. It will be good to add more recent literature e.g. 2015 – 2019.

92 phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the
93 participants' point of view. This research approach was used to solicit insiders' perspectives in
94 order to identify and describe the indigenous cultural ways of detecting the various causes of
95 diseases as well as its relevance for the development of the nation. The research methods
96 employed in successful accomplishment of this study were descriptive study, case study and
97 phenomenological study which are under the qualitative approach. Interviews and observations
98 were the main instruments designed and used by the researcher to solicit data from respondents
99 on their opinions relating to the major concerns of the study. In-depth interviews were
100 extensively used to allow the researcher to understand deeper with the participant, and gain more
101 extra knowledge and insight about the traditional modes of identifying diseases. The observation
102 also gave the researcher the chance to collect live information from live situations.

103 The population for the study was made up of traditional healers (traditional priests and
104 priestesses), elderly persons, patients and devotees of the selected centres. The populace was first
105 selected purposively and then quota sampling technique was employed to categorise them into
106 four homogeneous groups because of the heterogeneous nature of the population. In all, a total
107 sample of forty-two (90) respondents was engaged in the study. The sampling design is shown in
108 Figure 1.

Comment [a4]: Check, there is incoherence.



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118 | Fig. 1: Sampling Design

119 | [Source: Researcher's Construct from Sample Survey 2018](#)

120 | The sample percentage is in line with Busha's and Harter's (1980) contention that for a quality
121 | research, thirty percent (30%) of the total respondents are accepted. Similarly, the rule of thumb
122 | sample size selection also states that a researcher carrying out a qualitative study must select
123 | 30% of a population of less than a thousand (Puopiel 2014).

124 |

125 | **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

126 | **4.1 Diagnoses of Ailments in Traditional Medication in Ashanti Region**

127 | Among the traditional medicine practitioners in the Ashanti region, the ability to diagnose illness
128 | is considered as a gift from God the Supreme Being. The study revealed that ancestors, dwarfs,
129 | gods and other spirits who are believed to be the messengers of God can also invest powers into
130 | man or manifest through man to diagnose all kinds of diseases.

131 | In diagnosing, a major emphasis is placed on determining the ~~cause~~ underlying cause of the
132 | illness. The study brought to light two main ways of diagnosing in traditional medicine
133 | administration. In affirming this, Dime (1995) strongly argues that the diagnosis of diseases in an
134 | African traditional healing system is a two-fold event. They are the physical and the spiritual. In
135 | relation to this finding, Hewson (1998) also noted a passionate ambivalence towards the two
136 | main forms of diagnosis. According to him, illness may be caused by physical and/or spiritual
137 | factors that relate to African cosmology and thus, threatens the health of individuals. This study
138 | is based on the spiritual ways of identifying diseases, since the diviners and other spiritual
139 | healers incorporate the physical ways of identifying diseases in their diagnostic processes.

140 | **4.2 Spiritual Diagnoses in Traditional Medication**

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141 Spiritual diagnoses is the consultation of the 'spirit world' to find the root cause of disease and
142 also to discern whether there is infringement of an established order from the part of the sick
143 person. According to Agbor and Naidoo (2011), the spiritual healers usually consult spirits for
144 diagnosing diseases, their causes and treatments especially when an illness fails to respond to
145 treatment, whether home remedies or western medication. From the foregoing, the traditional
146 healers strongly base their healing method on the personality disease theory which addresses the
147 physical and the spiritual aspect of mankind. They believe that man does not wrestle against
148 flesh and blood but against other unseen spirits and for this reason, man needs diviners to reveal
149 to them the unseen problems.

150 The participants repeatedly reported that they strongly believe that certain diseases have spiritual
151 connections and these diseases are the main reason for seeking spiritual medical care. Diseases
152 that have spiritual underpinnings can only be diagnosed and treated or reversed by spiritual
153 means. This is related to Newton's third law of motion which states that action and reaction are
154 equal and opposite. That is personalistic diseases must be treated by spiritual means while
155 naturalistic diseases must be treated by natural means. It can be observed that this law is
156 conveniently practical in diagnosing and treating health problems in traditional African societies.

157 The study brought to light that in spiritual diagnoses, maturity on the part of the practitioner is
158 very significant in order to prevent misuse of some mystical powers. The respondents stated that
159 as diviners, they are able to hear, understand, interpret and respond to voices and images of the
160 supernatural beings. In a related argument, Agbor *et al.* (2011) and Truter (2007) contended that
161 diviners are believed to have extra-sensory perception and can see beyond the ordinary.

162 In spiritual diagnosing, ancestors, dwarfs, gods and other spirits who are strongly believed to be
163 the intermediaries between man and the Supreme God are consulted about the cause of a

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164 patient's illness or problems. If favoured responses are granted to the practitioner, the cause of
165 the disease is revealed and the possible remedies are shown by the spirits. The purpose of the
166 consultation is to seek the express permission from the ancestors, dwarfs, gods and other spirits
167 to treat the case.

168 The study unveiled that both methods of diagnosing (spiritual and physical) diseases and other
169 problems are used integrally and interchangeably by some traditional healers depending on the
170 problem at hand. In order to achieve total balance in the patient's life, the healers embrace the
171 two methods (spiritual and physical) of diagnosing ailment and other cases. Below are the modes
172 of diagnosing diseases that came out of the study.

173 **4.2.1 Casting of Cowries**

174 Casting of cowries is another medium of diagnosing diseases and other problems among some
175 traditional healers in Ashanti Region. It was explained that before throwing the cowries, special
176 incantations are invoked in order to salute and invite the spirits in charge. The study revealed that
177 the number of cowries used depends on the instructions given by the dwarfs and the other spirits
178 in control. Sometimes shells, money, seeds, dice, and other objects that have been appointed by
179 the spirits to represent certain spiritual elements are added to the cowries. These cowries are
180 sometimes cast on a prepared table or in a basketry tray and in some cases it is cast in a sacred
181 circle of kaolin on the floor. In affirming this, Lindsay (2005) and Thorpe (1995) stated that in
182 some African cultures, casting of cowries is performed, using sacred divination plates made of
183 wood or performed on the ground, within a circle.

184 The informants stated that the cowries talk to them when they cast them and they also have the
185 power to read and interpret the meaning of each cowry depending on the pattern of its

186 orientation. Related to the above narration, Luna (2019) stated that the cowries are the doorway
187 through which one can access the world of the ancestors, the world that holds infinite knowledge
188 and wisdom and a timeless view one cannot otherwise tap into. According to the traditional
189 priests, there are male and female cowries and they are consecrated before they can be used. The
190 study revealed that healers who throw cowries to identify the cause of various diseases and
191 misfortunes operate with the power of dwarfs and are initiated by them before they can cast the
192 cowries.

193 Interestingly, if a patient doubts the result of cast cowries, he or she has the privilege to request
194 the diviner to cast them again. The patient may tell the healer that if his divination is authentic,
195 he should for example, let five of the cowries intersect. And surely five of the cowries will
196 intersect to [the](#) conscience [of](#) the patient. Moreover, in Asuo Abresua Shrine also when the client
197 is not convinced of the outcome of the cowries, the priestess with the assistance of her
198 spokesman slaughters a local fowl and asks the deity to accept it if really the outcome of the
199 cowries she threw is correct. The deity instantly accepts the fowl by allowing it to recline at its
200 back if the outcome is right. Aside slaughtering a fowl, an egg can be thrown to confirm the
201 result of the cowries. When the priestess throws an egg and it bursts and all the broken shell lies
202 at its outer part (back) it means the outcome of the cowries is correct. A similar act of
203 confirmation was exhibited when the researcher was about to enter the shrine room to take
204 photographs.

205 The throwing of the cowries helps the medicine man to determine the root cause of diseases
206 especially those that emanate from spiritual means.

207 **4.2.2 Diagnosing with Special Leaf**

208 According to the priestess (Personal Communication, Asuo Abereasua Shrine, 24th October,
209 2018), early in the morning she fetches a special leaf and performs rituals on it (that is she puts
210 the leaf in her palm and while standing with the hand containing the leaf opened, she stretches it
211 forward to make incantations to call on the spirits to activate the leaf to function effectively in
212 the diagnostic processes). She then puts the leaf on her stool and sits on it or sometimes hides it
213 around her to prevent people from seeing it. After this act, she is able to detect the root cause of
214 every problem clients come with, even without telling her. The priestess explained that the
215 moment she sees the patient or the client coming, she gets to know the entire problem he or she
216 is going through. All the respondents at the Asuo Abresua shrine were of the firm conviction that
217 diagnosing by the use of the leaf is very effective.

218 **4.2.3 Diagnosing by the use of money**

219 Interviews and observation revealed that the priest of Bongari shrine diagnose various cases
220 through the use of money. In a related argument, Okonkwo (2012) confirmed that diagnosing
221 through divination or by spiritual means can be done through the use of money, sand, cola nut
222 and other objects valuable to the deity or spirit. When a client consults the shrine, the priest does
223 not physically delve into the client's problem or reasons for consulting him but rather asks the
224 client to take an amount of money and whispers out his or her problem on it. This practice is very
225 similar to what most Christians do when requesting for something from God. The elders of the
226 church normally ask the congregation to verbalize all their problems on the money and offer it to
227 the Lord and he will answer their request. There is a strong belief that spirits hear the requests of
228 their devotees when they speak through valuable items like money, cola and gold and offer it to
229 them.

230 After speaking on the money, it is then presented to the traditional priest who at this time is fully
231 possessed by the spirit or deity. The possessed priest just looks at the money and reveals
232 everything the client said or requested; how the client got ill, people or a particular person
233 responsible for the client's illness and also prognosticates what is ahead of the client. A typical
234 example was what the researcher experienced for the sake of authenticity when he wanted to
235 dialogue with Bongari, the deity of KuneGyendu/Bungari shrine at Adwumakase-Kese in the
236 Ashanti Region. The researcher took an amount of money and spoke on it with a very low tone at
237 distance away from the shrine thus "I want to see you and discuss with you how you diagnose
238 and treat diseases". About an hour later the money was presented to the possessed priest, he
239 observed the money for some time and stated "*You want to see me and discuss with me how I*
240 *diagnose and treat diseases?*" The possessed priest began to disclose hidden things about the
241 researcher which he did not even ask for. For more proof, the possessed priest ordered the
242 spokesman to call the next person on the line. In the presence of the researcher, the moment the
243 person entered the room (shrine) the possessed priest stated

244 Antwi your illness is as a result of a curse invoked by a lady who used to be your
245 girlfriend. In fact many people are accusing you that your illness is as a result of
246 theft but that is false accusation. Antwi, you have been to a lot of hospitals and
247 taken a number of scans and x-rays but the doctors are unable to even identify the
248 illness.

249 Afterwards, [Bongari, Bongari](#), the deity who is manifesting through the priest told the researcher
250 to ask Antwi if what he has revealed to him is false. The patient boldly testified that everything
251 said is the truth.

252 This avowed to the fact that these traditional healers with the assistance of the deities are able to
253 diagnose diseases and see the future of people through the use of money and other valuable items
254 of their interest. All the testimonies that came from the clients as well as the researcher testify
255 that the deity's means of uncovering the unknown through the priest by the use of money indeed
256 is not manipulated in any way. Such acts psychologically builds a very potent trust in the deity
257 and his priest and also goes a very long way to attract more people to consult the shrine.

258 **4.2.4 Diagnosing by Carrying the Image of the Deity**

259 This is a way of consulting the spirit world to identify the cause of the problem and also to
260 discover whether there is violation of an established order on the part of the client at Bongari
261 Shrine. Libation and incantations are made by the priest and the client's reasons for consulting
262 the shrine are presented to the deity. With the assistance of the spokesman, the image of the deity
263 which is housed in a brass pan is carried by the priest on his head. The moment the priest carries
264 it, he becomes unbalanced and acts as if the brass pan containing the image of the deity is falling
265 from his head. At this point, the spokesman supports by holding part of the image of the deity the
266 priest is carrying to help him. It may be that the spirit is too heavy to balance the priest's body
267 weight. Even though he is in trance and unstable, the image of the deity will not fall from his
268 head. This is because when the image is carried, ~~it~~ it is believed the spirit takes absolute control
269 of the priest and he starts to disclose hidden things associated with the patient. The image of the
270 deity in the brass pan then gets stuck on the priest's head and nothing can separate it from the
271 head unless the deity has finished operating. From the aforementioned, it can be deduced that
272 mere human beings do not have the power to stop deities when they are operating through
273 beings. Through this activity the deity unveils the cause of the problem through the priest.

274 Similarly, the priest of Asuhyiae Tano and his spokesman also explain to the researcher when the
275 priest also carries the image of the deity. According to the researcher's informants, after
276 performing libation, three eggs are presented to the deity. With the assistance of the elders, the
277 deity which is said to be housed in a brass pan is carried by the priest with the help of the
278 linguists. The moment the priest carries the deity on his head, he starts to behave as if the brass
279 pan is falling from his head as in the case of the priest of KuneGyendu/Bongari shrine which has
280 been discussed above. The spokesmen then help the priest to sit in an *asipim* chair while the
281 image of the deity in the brass pan is on his head. It was revealed that he sits on the *asipim* chair
282 used by Asante chiefs because the deity is believed to be the King of the Tano gods. One of the
283 spokesmen throws white kaolin or powder on him continuously while he is seated with the
284 maximum support from the other spokesmen. The client is then permitted by the elders to kneel
285 before the possessed priest. The possessed priest then takes one of the eggs brought by the client
286 and moves it around him or her and critically observes the egg and starts to disclose the root
287 cause of the problem to the client. From the above discussions, it is realized that even though
288 there are similarities in carrying the image of the deities at the healing centres visited by the
289 researcher, there are slight differences in their acts.

290 **4.2.5 Diagnosing through Trance**

291 At Bongari shrine the priest (Personal Communication, 11th March, 2018), stated that he
292 sometimes enters into trance when a patient is brought to his shrine. While he is in trance, words
293 spoken by him are noted in a book by the secretary of the shrine. This is because when he is out
294 of trance, he cannot remember a single word he said. Similarly, Schmidt and Huskinson (2010)
295 offer a useful dialogue on deity possession. According to her, deity possession is a complete but
296 temporary domination of the priest or priestess' body, and the blotting of his or her

297 consciousness by a distinct alien power of known or unknown origin. The pronouncement made
298 during this time is usually bizarre and unclear as observed (18th of March, 2018). The
299 practitioner uses this medium not only to diagnose illness, but also to find the necessary
300 treatment.

301 | The practitioner whiles in trance is thought to link up with his divine being and the spirit of the
302 sick person to find out the one responsible for the problem or the root cause of the illness. In the
303 course of this, the divine spirit narrates the root cause of the illness through the practitioner, and
304 indicates as well the sacrifices necessary to appease the gods. This piece of information is also
305 acknowledged by Sofowora (1993) in his study of Medicinal Plants and Traditional Medicine in
306 Africa Spectrum.

307 The priest stated emphatically that he serves as a horse that is mounted by their deities and use
308 them as they want. According to Coffie (1996) this expression points out the fact that gods
309 mount human beings, just as a rider mounts a horse. From the above manifestation, the priest or
310 the priestess is a “horse” while the deity is the “rider.” The researcher’s informants further added
311 that while the priest is possessed, he throws white powder on his face and head. Sometimes a
312 fowl is sacrificed for the deity when he mounts on the priest. At this time, they command with
313 | power and authority and unearth all the secrets behind people’s problems. According to the
314 respondents, while the possessed priests are displaying, they sometimes reveal concealed issues
315 about the audience

316 The informants of the present researcher were absolutely convinced that the trance is indeed
317 helping in diagnosing diseases and other problems at the shrine. Twenty four (24) of the healers’
318 clients at the shrines representing 100% of those interviewed about trance stated emphatically

319 that the deity through the priest was able to uncover the unknown about their problems. In a
320 testimony to prove a point, a member of a focus group discussion had this to say;

321 'I and my husband brought our daughter who had been ill for a year to this shrine
322 some weeks ago. When the priest went into trance, he told us that the illness of
323 my daughter was spiritual and he mentioned the one behind it. It was my junior
324 sister who stays with us under the same roof. The deity instructed us to perform
325 some rituals when we went home. We did what we were instructed to do and my
326 junior sister started shouting 'I will say, I will say everything'. She stated that she
327 was behind my daughter's illness. According to her, she was being whipped by
328 some spirits and was shouting all over the house. I brought her here and she was
329 freed and my daughter too regained her health. We are even here to thank the
330 priest and his god for what they have done for us. Look my brother I will not
331 waste my time here ooh if he is not potent (TMAFC 1, Personal Communication
332 at Bongari Shrine, 18 March, 2018).

333 This and other experiences shared by the clients with the researcher confirmed their belief in the
334 effectiveness of the deities' powers and their total trust in the priest and their deity. Testimonies
335 like this attract more people to consult the gods since many people have great trust in this kind of
336 divination. This explains why many people consult diviners before taking any action in their
337 lives.

338 **4.2.6 Diagnosing through Dreams**

339 According to the priests interviewed, dreaming on the cause of a client's illness is very vibrant in
340 traditional medication. In affirming this, Mettle – Nunoo (1990) stated that the deities teach and
341 inspire through dreams and guide the traditional priest in his daily activities which include

342 diagnosing various diseases. The priests further stated that in most cases the gods and the
343 ancestors come and divulge everything about the cause of a particular sickness to him through
344 dreams. Scientifically, Freudian theory of dreams state that dreams reveal insight into hidden
345 desires and emotions (Carey & Norton, 2009). From the above assertion, it could be inferred that
346 what the priest desires and thinks about is what he may dream of. But this may not always be the
347 case. One may also dream about something he or she has not thought about before.

348 The priests again declared that in most cases the gods and the ancestors reveal to them the patient
349 who will be coming to the shrine, the type of problem the patient will be coming with, the cause
350 of the problem and how the problem can be solved. Sometimes this information is revealed to
351 him some days or even weeks before the person comes. One of the spokesmen stated that there
352 have been several instances in which the priest (of Bongari Shrine) told them that a patient will
353 be coming to the shrine and further stated the type of illness the patient will be coming with.

354 The traditional healers again disclosed that they sometimes grind some herbs and smear it on the
355 client's body and leave him or her to sleep. In the patient's sleep, the cause of patient's illness is
356 revealed to him or her. A client who had such experience thus shared his sentiment;

357 I am someone who is doubtful, so when I came to Nana, he just ground some
358 leaves and applied it on my body without asking me why I came to him. In the
359 night, I dreamt and found out that it was my co-worker who was using 'juju' on
360 me. Everything on how he used it to cause my illness was revealed to me
361 (TMAMC 2, Personal Communication, 18th March, 2018).

362 Similarly, the priests also made it known that sometimes they squeeze the leaves and drop the
363 sap into the client's eyes and leave him or her to sleep. In the course of his/her sleep, the root
364 cause of the illness and anyone associated with the illness are revealed to the client.

365 | **4.2.7 Staring at the client**

366 | Another means through which the traditional healers use to diagnose diseases and other problems
367 | is by just looking fixedly at the client with her eyes widely open. They stated that the deities had
368 | opened their eyes and ears to see and hear beyond the ordinary. Likewise Parish (2003) in her
369 | study found that special herbs are squeezed into the eyes and ears of the traditional priests and
370 | priestesses so that they can see and hear things that an ordinary person cannot. This means of
371 | diagnosing helps the priestess to identify all kinds of problems the moment she sees the client.
372 | An instance observed at Asuo Abresua shrine was when priestess by just looking at a man
373 | disclosed to him that he has been cursed. The gods revealed through her to the man that he
374 | fought with his wife when the wife accused him of committing adultery with another woman.
375 | She further unveiled to the man that he whipped the wife with paddle and as a result the wife
376 | called on a river deity to curse him while he was not aware of the curse. The man confirmed that
377 | the priestess' revelation was correct but declared that he did not know his wife had cursed him.

378 | Moreover, the priests and the priestesses also stated that the deities mostly come and stand by
379 | them during diagnostic processes and tell them hidden things about clients the moment they see
380 | them. In some cases too, they sit in deep concentration, in front of the client and through that the
381 | gods reveal to them everything about the client. It is for this reason that Scott (2005) contended
382 | that the deities interact with humans in ways that carry humans to new level of consciousness
383 | beyond the grounded preoccupations of ordinary life.

384 | **4.2.8 Diagnosing by the use of Talisman**

385 | My informants said that they sometimes diagnose by wearing a special prepared talisman
386 | (*bansre*) around their waist wrist. They added that this talisman has been empowered by the

387 | deities and it performs a lot of wonders. In [a](#) related matter, Varner (2008) states that the secret
388 powers and magical effects of amulets and talismans come from the special ritual done over
389 them. It was unveiled that before wearing the talisman, special incantations are recited over it in
390 order to activate it. Varner (2008) further supported this claim by stating that the effectiveness of
391 the amulets and the talisman depends on the incantations made during the ritual process.
392 Inferring from the researcher's observations, the use of talisman and amulets bring about contact
393 between the traditional healers and the divine beings.

394 According to the traditional healers, with the talisman on their waist, they are able to reveal the
395 problems affecting the people who come to them. The talisman when worn around their waists
396 and wrists open their eyes and gives them the power to see beyond the ordinary. In similar but
397 different dimension, Whitehurst (2016) opines that the use of a pendulum helps her to access the
398 akashic records (a compendium of all human events, thoughts, words, emotions, and intent ever
399 to have occurred in the past and present, and to happen in future.), or the omnipresent energy
400 field that links everything about the client. Whitehurst explained that the pendulum tool helps her
401 tune into the client's place and situation even when she is not in close physical proximity to the
402 client.

403 One of the clients indicated how a traditional healer asked him questions that surprised him
404 when he went there because the healer had not even met him before and did not even know the
405 town in which he lived:

406 The moment I entered the shrine room, she pronounced my name and welcomed
407 me with a beautiful smile, then she asked me, "Why did you fight your mother on
408 Thursday three weeks ago?" Now you are not in good terms with your mother.

409 Your father even came in to resolve the issue but you didn't agree. Why? I was
410 shocked because all that she was saying was correct. I just had a very strong belief
411 in her (TMAMC 3, Personal Communication, 17th October, 2018).

412 Such revelations psychologically send a strong signal to the client making him or her
413 believe every information given by the priestess.

414 **4.2.9 Diagnosing with a pot of water**

415 Stirring a pot of water to identify the cause of diseases and other problems is mostly used by
416 some traditional healers in the Ashanti Region. According to a priestess (at Bokankye Akua
417 Gyabon shrine), the pot has been spiritually sanctified and contains special water from River
418 Tano and other substances. The reason for using water from River Tano is because the deity is
419 one of the Tano deities. The priestess stated that during diagnosis, she knocks the pot three times
420 before she opens it. This is a sign of alerting the deity that she is about to enter into her abode.
421 The priestess then performs libation alongside incantations to invite the deity into the client's
422 matter and also presents to the deity the reasons behind her invitation. In a related matter, Lawal
423 (2012) in his study of Traditional Medicine practices among the Yoruba people of Nigeria
424 established that incantations are made before the medical history of the patient and the events
425 leading to the imbalance of the patient are revealed through the pot. In the process of stirring the
426 liquid in the pot with a special made paddle, the deity speaks out of sight issues concerning the
427 client's problem to her. The deity through the priestess unveils the nitty-gritty of the problem to
428 the client.

429 The deity, according to the priestess of Bokankye Akua Gyabon, makes sure that all the news
430 about the clients' problems revealed through her, always gets to the clients without distortion by

431 the priestess. She further stated that if she changes the statement given to her by the deity, the
432 deity repeats the same statement and if she does not provide the client with the correct statement
433 made by the deity, she at that instance enters the priestess and possesses her. Without her
434 knowledge, the deity rectifies the false information given by her to the client. The moment the
435 deity finishes, she leaves the priestess and she becomes normal again. The deity according to the
436 researcher's informant is a white god (*bosom fufuo*) and does not condone to lies.

437 The respondents interviewed stated categorically that they were diagnosed to know the cause of
438 their worries and troubles by the use of the pot. For instance one of the respondents disclosed to
439 the researcher that;

440 My seven year old son was suffering from epilepsy. While seeking for remedy for
441 him, one medical doctor hinted me to send him to a spiritualist since the illness
442 had spiritual affiliation. When I came to Nana, she was able to disclose of the
443 problem by stirring the water in the pot. The priestess as she stirred the pot asked
444 me; "Do you remember a day your neighbour in the compound house gave your
445 son a hot plantain which scalded his hand?" I remembered it and said yes, and the
446 priestess continued by saying that was when she gave the illness to your son. She
447 performed some ritual for my son and instructed me to sacrifice some items.
448 When I completed all the rites, my son got healed (TMAFC 4, Personal
449 Communication, 20th September, 2018).

450 | This statement and other claims given by the respondents suggests that all what the priestess says
451 | is divine since they come from the deity. In relation to this case, Azongo and Yidana (2015)

452 affirmed that the individual diviners have no influence on the outcomes of divination
453 consultations even though some of them have been accused of being quack diviners.

454 **4.2.10 Diagnosing with Egg**

455 Egg is another medium through which the priests and the priestesses use to identify and expose
456 hidden things about clients. The egg according to Miro (2014) has long been regarded as a
457 symbol of life, the idea is that it takes on energy. The deity sometimes directs them to pass the
458 egg around the client and then throw it on the floor. The moment the egg bursts, they look into
459 the egg which has been split open with their maximum concentration. Through that they see
460 everything troubling the client and begin to tell the client his or her problems. Miro (2014) adds
461 that when using the egg, the diviner is essentially going through the client's aura, and body,
462 pinpointing specific areas and allowing the eggs to absorb the energy. The egg traps the energy
463 and the negativity transfers from the client to the egg.

464 The priest Asuhyiae Tano Shrine (Personal Communication, 13th October, 2018) also explained
465 how he uses the egg to uncover the unknown. Stressing the same point he stated:

466 When someone comes with a problem, an egg is given to him or her to speak onto
467 it and stating the reasons for seeking the deity's assistance. Afterwards, I collect
468 the egg back and draw it to my ears and act as if I am listening to something
469 from the egg. I then throw the egg on the floor for it to burst. Afterwards, I look
470 into the broken egg and tell the client the root cause of his or her problem. I have
471 tried this method of diagnosing for so many years and I have never failed
472 (Personal Communication, the priest of Asuhyiae Tano Shrine, 13th October,
473 2018).'

474 It could be observed that egg plays tremendous role in divination and has the power to do
475 wonders only when it is used very well.

476 **4.2.11 Mirror Gazing (Scrying)**

477 The mirror is a surface, usually of glass coated with a metal amalgam, which reflects a clear
478 image. Mirror gazing is also called crystallo-mancy, and it refers to the use of reflective surfaces
479 for the purposes of divination. The healers revealed that mirror gazing is another way they use to
480 diagnose hidden illnesses. A priestess of Bokankye Akua Gyabon shrine stated that she mostly
481 goes by this method when she is possessed by 'Naaho Zugu' (a deity from Northern part of
482 Ghana). She explained that the moment the patient enters the consulting room, she (priestess)
483 who at that time is fully possessed by 'Naaho Zugu' just looks into her mirror and discloses
484 everything about the client.

485 According to some of the healers, when a patient consults them to find out the cause of his or her
486 problems, they sit in front of the mirror with their maximum concentration and makes some
487 incantation to invite the spirits and instantly, everything about the sickness is disclosed to them.
488 Even though the mirror is a normal one like what we have been seeing and using, it has been
489 imbued with power (*ye adwira*) which helps the priest to see hidden things.

490 More so, during crystallo-mancy, the traditional healers are able to see the future of their patients.
491 Similarly, Regal (2009) and Guiley (2010) affirmed that mirror gazing is ~~practised~~practiced in
492 many cultures with the belief that it can reveal the past, present, or future. Worstell (2018) also
493 points out that the outcome of gazing through the mirror may emanate from the subconscious
494 mind or imagination of the priestess. Regal (2009) rebuttal by stating that, there is no systematic
495 body of empirical support for such view in general.

496

497 **Conclusion**

498 The indigenous cultural ways of diagnosing ailments were successful and are still successfully
499 used by many traditional healers for identifying diseases which in most cases the orthodox
500 medication cannot identify. Most people perceive the indigenous cultural modes of diagnoses as
501 fetish, idolatrous, pagan and are less progressive and as a result, many groups of people
502 especially the educated, Christians and the younger generation are influenced to devalue their
503 natural culture and adopt new life style and technology. But this study has brought to light that,
504 these indigenous diagnostic measures are very effective and less time and energy consuming.
505 The ability to diagnose illness is considered as a gift from God, the Supreme Being since all
506 powers belong to him and every good thing is from him. These traditional healers also use their
507 divine powers to unearth the cause of all kinds of ailments to help mankind which are part of the
508 good deeds of the Supreme Being. In diagnosing of diseases the traditional healers take a holistic
509 approach which are the social, natural, spiritual and the cosmic environment which is not in the
510 case of the orthodox medication.

511 The diviners and some people believe that the neglect of the indigenous cultural ways of
512 identifying the cause of diseases in the public health care centres has resulted in increasing [the](#)
513 rate of mortality, infertility and other problems in the country which could easily be identified
514 and treated by the traditional healers. The best solution to this issue is that the government and
515 the stakeholders should give recognition to these diviners and spiritual healers by putting up nice
516 buildings (clinics and hospitals) and providing them the necessary needs like what they have
517 been doing for the orthodox health centres and if possible integrate the traditional medication

518 into the orthodox ones. By so doing people will fully patronize it and this will go a long way to
519 sustain and sell our culture.

520 **Competing Interest**

521 We declare that we have no significant competing financial, professional, or personal interests
522 that might have influenced the performance or presentation of the work described in this
523 manuscript.

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