

STORYTELLING AND FAMILY THERAPY IN BOLE BUTAKE'S FAMILY SAGA

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Abstract

This paper examines the therapeutic functions of narratives as used in traditional African context, and the use of storytelling as a tool for family therapy, from the perspective of narrative therapy, as displayed in Bole Butake's *Family Saga*. It shows the process used by the playwright to showcase the African storytelling tradition in its cathartic (thus therapeutic) role, and its effectiveness in solving individual and group problems in a family context. It further demonstrates how the specific therapeutic setup is put in place in the play: stories are usually told for the healing benefit of the listener only, the storyteller being usually considered sane, and the listener the one in want. In *Family Saga*, both parties are in want. This accounts for the two-approach analysis used in this paper: the narrative therapy to examine the effect of stories on the story teller, and the therapeutic functions of traditional storytelling in traditional societies to understand the healing process in the listener. It comes to the conclusion that *Family Saga* is a brilliant demonstration of reconciliation process in a crisis context.

Key words: *Storytelling – therapeutic functions – traditional griot – narrative therapy – Family Saga – Reconciliation.*

Introduction

The storytelling tradition is anchored in African and other people's cultures. As Eno Belinga (1988:14) and Alembong (2011) have clearly put, storytelling has a threefold significance: it is an aspect of oral literature, a tool for education and development, and an entertainment to keep the equilibrium of the society. Storytelling is also reported to serve as a tool for conflict resolution and peace building (Alembong, 2011:49ss) and mental and physical healing (when associated with other practices¹). From professional storytellers (the *griot* in the Sahelian area, the *mbomo mvet* in the Pahouin zone, or the

¹ As revealed by informant, Mr. Ntieche Ismaila, *Mbamba* in Foumban, interviewed for this paper.

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mbamba in Bamun setup...) to the parents and also to the children, stories are told, particularly at night, when everyone is back from work. Unfortunately, this tradition is fast disappearing, with the death of the elders and the pressure of modernity. This remark from Mark Turin is clearly in accord with present situation in Cameroon: "Oral traditions that are encoded in these speech forms can become threatened when elders die or when livelihoods are disrupted. Such creative works of oral literature are increasingly endangered as globalisation and rapid socio-economic change exert ever more complex pressures on smaller communities..." (2012: xvii).

As part of the solution to this problem, African playwrights, among other writers, have resolved to use the aesthetics of storytelling as a narrative style to build up their plays. From the narrative-dramatic form (Soyinka, Leloup, Butake, Doho) to the contemporary forms (Tchamba, 2019), storytelling is used certainly as a mark of identity, but also to profit from all the functions of the latter among with its problem-solving capacities. That's the case in *Family Saga*. The main concern here is then to examine how the author uses storytelling to address a conflictual situation in the family and bring together the belligerents, and how effective catharsis emerges from such a situation. Therapeutic storytelling is done through Structure (external and internal) especially the theatre for development methodology used by the author, Process (narrative therapy, catharsis) and the Therapeutic Functions of storytelling in traditional African societies. A brief look at the activities of the traditional storyteller in Africa, particularly in the Bamun society sets the pace for this analysis.

1 – Storytelling and therapy in traditional context: A case of the Bamun *Mbamba*

The griot – professional storyteller – in the African traditional context is considered as the word-bearer of the community, the one who speaks on behalf of the ancestors, the one whose word brings peace, wisdom and hope to people's hearts and homes. He is a great scholar as concerns ancestral laws, knowledge and tradition. He is called *imbongi* in South Africa, *gèwèl* in Senegal, *ardo* in North-Cameroon, *ɲwèla*² in the Bamiléké tribes of West-Cameroon and *mbamba* in Bamun land. The *mbamba* sings praises to men and to the king. As Mfouapon Yaya, Bamun ethnomusicologist explains, "they flatter people to

² Pronounced /ɲwèrlā/ or /ɲwèlā/ or /ɲwàlā/ depending on the village.

get money from them, but most especially they serve as counsellors to the population.”³ This may cause them to be despised by the people especially as they often spend time in beer parlours, bars and other drinking spots to gather information for the king, the results being their eventual drunkenness: “They need to be drunk to be able to say some truths to the king and to the people”, Mfouapon Yaya⁴ argues.

However, the *mbamba* is much honoured in the village: he moves from place to place, and often intervenes in difficult situations. He is believed to have the powers to heal people through his songs. His method can be broken down into five categories: slangs; metaphors/allegory, proverbs and popular sayings; stories known to all; and ad hoc stories, created to fit a particular situation at a given time (see story number 4 below). He tells his stories mostly through **singing**. Below are some therapeutic stories gathered from the present Nji Mbamba in Bamum land, Ntieche Ismaïla⁵:

1. **Slang**. I told the king: “*You are believed to be dead*”⁶. He laughed and because of this, he decided to walk from the palace to the courthouse (about one and half kilometre) before entering the car for the rest of the journey. In my place they say “The king’s ears are herbs”, that’s why he believed me.
2. I met a sick man in his house, and I shouted: “*Hey, get up! Wonderful! You should be like your father! I was with your father; we were walking together in the wilderness. A leopard came out from nowhere and attacked us. Your father put his hand in its mouth and tore it! I was there!*” To another one I said: “*When a man is sick, he dies at once!*”, meaning a man should not get sick. All these aim at stirring the sick man to laugh, and thus forget about the negative thoughts about his sickness. There are sicknesses that weigh much on someone when his mind is overloaded. The goal of this song is to free the mind and ease the healing process.
3. “The good you do will come back to you; the evil you do will come back to you”: It is a saying in Bamum, but I said it that particular day in the palace so that if any person came there with dark motives, let him be exposed. On his way back, a man felt some fever, and when he reached his house, he said: the song Mbamba sang today touched

³ Personal Interview, 28/12/2014, Bamum King’s palace.

⁴ He also reveals that there are many therapeutic dances in this kingdom, among which the *nsoro*. Those dances heal mental diseases, not body diseases.

⁵ The stories and their interpretation are all from him. Personal interview, 08/12/2020.

⁶ He was no more seen **walking through** the village, and many things were going wrong.

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me so much; I had a dispute with my brother this morning because of my palm fruits he took. This should be the cause of this fever. So, he went and asked for forgiveness and the fever disappeared. Some did not believe his story, but those who know the power of the *mbamba* understood.

4. I was called in a family that had a problem: they were too egoistic, not caring for each other. I told them this story: *"I was a very stingy person. My brothers decided to teach me a lesson. So that day I came back home with a rat and porcupine, and I cooked a sweet meal for myself. When my brothers, nine of them, felt that I was almost done with the cooking, they sent the first person. He entered and greeted me, but I answered him rudely because I didn't want him to get seated. The second person came in, "missed" his step and fell. Since I had a bad heart, the first person went and helped him stand. The third person came in with half a cigarette he was smoking; as he was talking, he got burnt on his lips. All of these was to make me laugh, and in the meantime my meal is getting done. The fourth person came in with a cupful of palm wine. He said: I am drinking because I am married. Hey you, take and taste, so that you will know the joy of sharing what you have with others. The fifth person came with cola nut, and split it into five pieces, then asked me to choose and break it. As I stretched my hand to take the piece of cola nut, one person seized it and broke it himself. Well, I remained untouched. The sixth person came in singing, then he asked: What are you guys doing in this man's house? You came to deceive him? You sit in his house as though you were mourning. Please give me a gallon. Then he started beating everything he could see and continued singing. The seventh person came in, he was only laughing: Good day, Ha! Ha! Ha! Are you there? Ha! Ha! Ha! He would talk to me and laugh. The eighth person came in, fuming with anger: 'I must kill someone today! I must kill someone today!' So I asked him: 'What's wrong, na? Why are you so furious, who wronged you so deeply?' Then he answered me: first of all, I'm hungry eh! I answered him: So that's your problem? In the meantime, the food was ready and I was already angry with them. The ninth and last man came in, neatly clothed. He sat comfortably, feeling very important, then he said: 'my friend, when you are back from the farm, you should eat a good meal like the one that is scented in this house, with sweet meat. Because I know this man is a good hunter. But, anyway, I have my two hundred francs here, please give me raw meat, keep what you are*

cooking for yourself.’ The first man said: ‘Ah ah! So as we are talking here, there is a pot on fire?’ The third man answered: ‘Hum, man, you don’t know the odour that kept me seated here!’ The sixth man said: ‘You thought I was singing for nothing?’ I was then obliged to go and bring the pot, and we shared the food together. My brother’s plot against me and the wickedness of my heart functioned perfectly. And I changed.” That’s how the people laughed at my story and they all came to their senses. They said to themselves, so I am that stingy and wicked man, and harmony came back into the family.

From the above data, we can easily see that even though the body could get healed through some of these stories (psychosomatic healing), what is targeted is the mind. We can then draw the conclusion that therapeutic storytelling in traditional setup has as main function to bring healing to the body and the mind, through the following four sub-functions:

- Memory restoration: The story or slang is offered to bring back to the mind of the “patient” facts that would help him/her seek for solutions.
- Empowerment through knowledge: What was ignored is revealed to **revamp** the “patient”, give him/her **hope**, and grant him to have a **positive look** upon himself.
- Forgiveness and reconciliation (problem-solving): The goal, as in the story above, is to reseal the ties among the parties in conflict in view of a brighter future.
- A new beginning: This comes as a result of the previous functions.

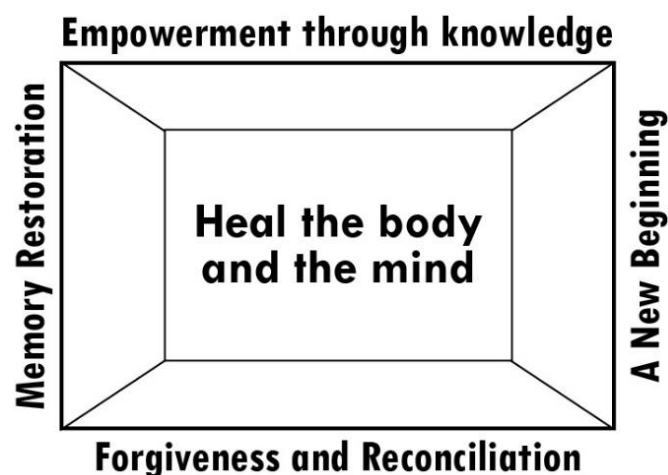


Figure 1: Therapeutic functions of storytelling in traditional Bamum society.

These will be studied in *Family Saga*, a play on family therapy, with generous use of narratives.

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2 – Storytelling in *Family Saga*

Family Saga was written in 2003 by Bole Butake during a brief trip to the USA. Upon his return he said to us: “*The only thing I brought from the United States is this play*”. Based on the author’s theatre for development process, the play is “*a hybrid dramatic experiment with an elaborate practical methodology, aimed at engaging individuals and peoples with conflicting and contending ideologies and class situations to develop analytical, perceptive and interrogative skills that would help them make sense of their world and positively change their conditions*” (Hilarious Ngwa Ambe, back cover). It revives the tradition of storytelling as a tool for problem-solving and for reconciliation.

Summary

The complexity of this play makes difficult any attempt to summarise it. The following fits only within the context of this study.

Kamalo and Kamala are twin brothers, born of the same mother, Kamanda. Kamalo is fat and huge, while Kamala is thin. Once separated to be adopted by different fathers following the madness of their mother, they decide to unite to take care of the family estate. But Kamalo, influenced by his guardian Fiekafhim, soon turns their deed of brotherhood into a deed of bondagehood by subjecting Kamala and his two kids Ngong and Sawa to slavery: “*I conceive, you execute, period!*” (p.9). When Kamala comes to claim his own share of the provisions from the family barn, Kamalo answers by raping his daughter Sawa, and forbids them from leaving the plantation. When his brother asks them to entertain him and his papa with a dance, Kamala sees in that the opportunity to bring bag peace and harmony into the family. He sends his children out to gather information about the family, and they reconstitute their story which they narrate to Kamalo and his papa, in a bid to open his eyes. At the end of the dramatised storytelling session, Kamalo humbles himself and asks for forgiveness from his brother, nephew and niece. It is the beginning of a new era in the family where everyone lives to respect and honour others.

Theme

Family Saga is mainly about problem-solving, bringing belligerents to *reconciliation* through the mechanism of *repentance* and *forgiveness*. It shows the very essence of

restoration that leads to healing and a new beginning: that both parties in conflict should seek to *know their story*, and *humble* themselves and give priority to the interest of the *family*. For love, humility and knowledge have enough power to cure madness in the people. These italicised words are the key concepts defended in the play.

Structure

The external structure is dual: the classical dramatic form when presenting the problem, from the beginning to Seventh movement, and the narrative-dramatic form, which alternates narration and dramatization (dialogues), used in the storytelling session in the eight movement. It is worth noting that the author used this form in the most important stage of the theatre for development process: the performance in the presence of all the parties in conflict. He emphasises especially on the use of folk dances and songs, and on the fact that the spectators (Kamalo particularly) could “[interfere] at any point to correct or amend or explicate a point that [the narrator] might have missed out” (p.75), in the pure tradition of storytelling in Africa, and theatre of the oppressed as theorised by Augusto Boal.

The internal structure follows Bole Butake’s 13-stage approach in theatre for development (Fofie, 2011:166), which is used in *Family Saga* as follows:

- 1) *Determination of the environment (community)*: It is called the “family estate” (First Movement).
- 2) *Identification of the parties in conflict*: Two brothers, Kamala and Kamalo.
- 3) *Identification of the individuals or groups involved*: Kamala and his children Ngong and Sawa on one side, Kamalo, his children and his papa on the other.
- 4) *Collection of data and information by listening and talking to each other*: Kamala meets Kamalo to ask for his own share of the provisions, but Kamalo refuses, claiming that his papa came and took all the provisions.
- 5) *Internal analysis of data by involved individuals or group*: While Kamala claims he signed a deed of brotherhood with Kamalo his brother, the latter argues it was a deed of bondagehood, by which he conceives and Kamala executes. This state of the matter establishes therefore Kamala and his children the oppressed group in the estate. They seek to know what the problem is and how to cure it (Fifth Movement).
- 6) *Identification of common problems by individuals or groups themselves*: As presented in the sixth movement, they are: Kamalo, no money, poverty, too much work, no future, identity, lack of discussion, bad management resulting in poverty.

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- 7) *Prioritisation or ordering of problems according to their acuteness*: 1) Kamalo; 2) His papa; 3) Ignorance. They therefore decide to go look for information about their family story (pp. 58-59).
- 8) *Creation of a dramatic story*: Ngong and Sawa come back with valuable information about their story, about the brotherhood of Kamala and Kamalo. They tell the story to their father (seventh movement), and together they decide to present it to Kamalo.
- 9) *Improvisation*: They share the various roles to be acted only by three persons (Seventh movement, pp. 69-71).
- 10) *Rehearsal*: Same movement, pp.71-73.
- 11) *Performance*: Presentation in front of Kamalo and his papa of the dramatized story of Kamanda, the mother of Kamalo and Kamala, and all the endeavours of foreign people to tear them apart (Eight Movement). The audience is called to participate. Kamalo plays part of the role of Yaman.
- 12) *Discussion*: At the end of the performance, Kamalo gets up and asks for forgiveness from Sawa (for raping her), Ngong (for maltreating him) and Kamala (for using his brute force on him). He admits his guilt and asks to be punished.
- 13) *Follow-up*: The actors and spectators mix together and strategize on how to rescue Kamanda from Fiekafhim's hold. P. 85.

One can see from the above structure that the whole play is problem-solving process that begins with the identification of the parties and the problems that exist between them and ends with a long-lasting solution that is sought by both parties through a thorough re-storying of the facts that were kept from them. The recognition of his fault by Kamalo is the beginning of the healing process.

3 – A Narrative Therapy reading of the play

As clearly stated above, the particularity of the process used in *Family Saga* is that it seeks to heal both parties: the storytellers and the listeners. The healing process of the storytellers starts when they decide to tell their own story, and narrative therapy best describes what happened.

Narrative therapy consists in re-telling one's own story using positive entries. As Dallos and Draper (2015:126) put it, "Narrative therapies recognize the natural ability that people have to possess, generate, and evolve new narratives and stories to make sense of their experiences. In doing this we draw on culturally shared narratives or ways of interpreting events and also our own family traditions." And Nichols (2017:239) gives this precision:

The underlying premise is that personal experience is fundamentally ambiguous. (...). To say that experience is ambiguous is to say that its meaning isn't fixed but instead lends itself to multiple interpretations. (...) Whether people experience anxiety or excitement depends on how they interpret their arousal. Strategic therapists give clients reframes, or new interpretations, for their experience: "The next time you're speaking, think of yourself as excited rather than frightened." Narrative therapists believe that such interpretations won't take unless they fit people's stories.

This is quite close to the second therapeutic function of storytelling in Bamum traditional society: "Empowerment through knowledge". A close look at the plot in *Family Saga* shows that from the beginning, Kamala and his children live in a sort of despair: complaining, discouragement, laxity and bitterness. They are complacent in their enslavement. In that state they tend to point accusing fingers, which aches them the more when they meet the deafened ears of Kamalo, their common problem, who even denies them as part of his family. The healing process begins in their heart when they pause from the negative and decide to find out about their family story. And to do that they went through two major steps: deconstruction and reconstruction.

Deconstruction

This consists of questioning and dismantling assumptions about the common belief in the estate that Kamalo is the conceiver and they are the executors; that the deed they signed was that of bondagehood and not brotherhood; that as Kamalo claims they are not of the same family. They have learned that Fiekafhim is not Kamalo's father and Baakingoom is not Kamala's father, but rather they are twin sons of Wakadu and Kamanda. The stunting truth of Kamalo and Kamala's brotherhood is the greatest revelation from their investigations. From this deconstruction process, they come out invigorated: "It is not good to be in the dark na?" (Sawa) and "Knowledge is power!" (p.60). Kamala says: "My dear children, good people, now I know that the easiest way to make someone your slave is to deny that person knowledge. To deny that person an identity", and Ngong concludes: "... Knowledge of who we are has liberated us and given us dignity, pride and a sense of purpose in life" (p. 61).

Reconstruction

"So what did you find out about your? Our family story?" (63): this question introduces the restoration of family facts as now known by Kamala and his children. They re-tell the story, no more with anger, but with joy and "excitement". They give "new and more optimistic accounts of experience" (Nichols, 2017:244). Through the process of

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externalisation, they now view the problem no more as inherent to their family, but as external: "It was not your fault na? It is that your papa who was fooling you na?" (p.82). It therefore becomes easier for both parties to solve the problem together: "We can (...) sit together and discuss what to do na? There is no problem without a solution na. We can sit in a circle and discuss what to do na?" (p. 83).

Thus, the story that was thought to be very dark in the beginning is re-told in very positive terms and point of view. The MC/impresario makes reference to Kamalo with all reverence: "Your Excellency Uncle Kamalo, the one who conceives"; this prompts Kamalo to be very enthusiastic and to follow the performance with great interest. He even took part in the drama, playing the role of Yaman when he felt that Ngong was not doing it well. That's why at the end of the performance, he is inevitably lead to seeing that same story with new eyes and weeping in repentance. The end result is the easy flow of forgiveness that binds the family back and opens ways for a brighter future together, among other therapeutic functions.

4 – Therapeutic functions of storytelling in *Family Saga*

The last section of this paper examines the therapeutic functions of storytelling, that is, the various modes in which healing is brought into the heart of the listeners, then in both parties. It is an application of the model drawn in the first section to *Family Saga*. As a reminder, those functions are: memory restoration, empowerment through knowledge, reconciliation and forgiveness and a new beginning.

Memory restoration

The story reminded the spectators, Kamalo and his children, of the genuine story of Kamanda and all the rapes she suffered from foreigners (Yaman, Fiekafhim and Baakingoom), and of the blood ties between the brothers Kamala and Kamalo. In so doing, it restored their identity: Kamalo who at the beginning said to Sawa: "Don't call me uncle" (25), is now so much confounded that he begs her to call him Uncle: "Sawa, my daughter, if you have forgiven me, call me uncle Kamalo" (83). Thus, the historical truth is fully restored.

Empowerment through knowledge

Empowerment is the heir result of the story: Kamalo, whose motto was: “Papa came, that’s what my papa says” now has the courage to stand in the presence of his (fake) papa Fiekafhim and claim: “Nothing can be hidden from the face of the sun! History can never be changed or forgotten. The truth at last has come out!” (82). He frees himself from the enslavement he was subjected to:

This suit, the first symbol of my enslavement, shall never
Touch my body again.
Brother Kamala, give me one of your jumpers.
I feel so free and relieved without those clothes of enslavement” (84).

He fully adheres to Sawa's maxim: “Knowledge is power!” The attitude that follows naturally, in this setup, is repentance which is prior to any forgiveness. Kamalo repents to all he wronged, Sawa, Ngong and Kamala, and this rejoices their hearts because their storytelling had the desired effect: Kamalo’s healing from his madness.

Forgiveness and reconciliation

Forgiveness is the act of absolving someone of his sin, fault or mischief. To forgive is to “stop blaming or being angry with someone for something they have done, or not punish them for something” (*Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*). Forgiving is so capital in human experience that Shakespeare thought it to be divine. Yet, this is what happens in the play once Kamalo acknowledges his faults: he asks for and is granted forgiveness: from his niece, nephew and brother:

My daughter, Sawa, I do not ask for forgiveness
For such abominations are not, and can never, be forgiven.
Sawa, my daughter, I ask you to condemn me to the cruellest death...
My nephew Ngong, Ngong my son, what I deserve...
My brother, Kamala, I am not worthy to be called your brother
I wronged you most ignominiously by using my brute force on you. (82-83)

Sawa, Ngong and Kamala all forgive Kamalo. Ngong says to him: “Uncle Kamalo, it is enough that you have realised that you were in error and that you are very sorry for your terrible acts against your own brother and us your children. There is no illness without a cure. The mere fact that you have finally consented to mingle with us is the beginning of the cure” (83).

Reconciliation, on the other part, consists of bringing back harmony among persons that have gone through disunion. According to Lederach (quoted by Fofie, 2011:295-297),

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reconciliation seeks to bring together an anxiogenic past and a prosperous future to a meeting point, and draw profitable prospects for the present:

Reconciliation, in essence, represents a place, the point of encounter where concerns about both the past and the future can meet. Reconciliation-as-encounter suggests that space for the acknowledgement of the past and envisioning of the future is the necessary ingredient for reframing the present. For this to happen, people must find ways to encounter themselves and their enemies, their hopes and their fears. (Lederach, 1997:27).

It is for the sake of a brighter future that the protagonists in this story decide to mend the present in order to live in harmony. Reconciliation, in Lederach's terms, comes as a result of Truth, Justice, Mercy and Peace, as can be seen in the following figure:

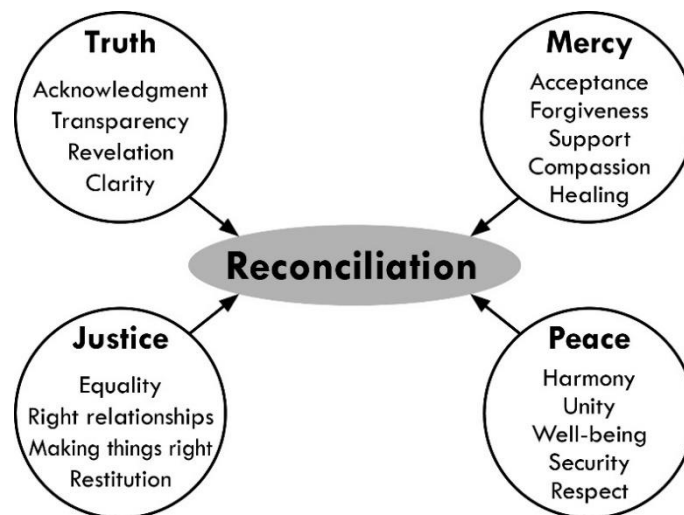


Figure 3: The Place Called Reconciliation (Lederach, 1997:30).

And as Fofie concludes, *Family Saga* is a perfect illustration of this chart. One can see indeed that these four values are at work from the moment the reconciliation started:

- **Truth:** Kamalo acknowledges as true the story that has been told, admits his fault in all transparency of his heart;
- **Justice:** He quickly admits that, because of what he did, he is unworthy of living, and asks to be punished accordingly; he is ready to pay for his crimes;
- **Mercy:** Sawa, Ngong and Kamala accept his repentance, grant him forgiveness; they show him support and compassion for he acted inadvertently, on false information he received from his papa;

- **Peace:** the arrogant attitudes from both parties has now given way to unity, sense of harmony and togetherness, and mutual respect. The reconciliation has been put to place.

To complement the reconciliation, Kamala demonstrates the apex of compassion by seeking to restore Kamalo from the blood sin he committed. For, though forgiveness has been granted him, it remains that Kamalo committed incest with his niece and needs to be cleansed. Kamala gives a solution which will appease their gods:

But first, we shall cleanse you from the incest that you committed inadvertently. All that is required is a spotless, white he-goat, a piece of rope, a club, a mat, seven cowries and some palm-wine. Having made peace with our forebears, we shall then sit in a circle and, as you have suggested, strategize to release our mother from the claws of Fiekafhim. (84-85)

A broken family is now fully reconstructed through reconciliation and cleansing, and ready for a new and brighter take-off.

A new beginning

“Brother, tune the song about one family. From today, it will be our rallying call, our anthem in the land of Kamanda” (85). These are the last words of Kamalo and of the play. But more to that, they strategize on how to rescue their mother, Kamanda, from Fiekafhim’s grip. For their future can only be bright if they have their mother freed.

Figure 3 below summarises these therapeutic functions of storytelling in Family Saga. We can find that the general goal is to cure, not the “baboon”, but the entire family. The four sub-functions that evolve from this goal are the actual gains of the various protagonists:

- Restored Identity
- Deliverance from slavery and madness
- Family reconstruction
- New prospects for the future.

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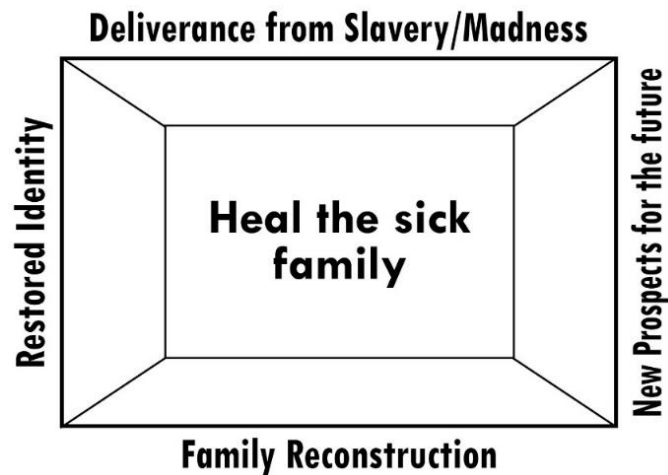


Figure 3: Therapeutic functions of storytelling in Family Saga

It is worth noting that the healing that took place in the process (narrative therapy) eased the reconciliation phase, because Kamala and his children came towards Kamalo not with bellicose intentions, but with love, respect and consideration. This approach laid the foundation for their peace seeking action. Furthermore, the story was told in a way that Kamalo could take an active part in it, either by just nodding the head, or by actually playing the role of Yaman, for when someone is involved in a story, he feels more concerned, and he tastes the benefits of the purgatory power of role interpretation. The fact that he joined in the play was already an encouraging step into the reconciliation. The therapy is therefore complete, because it took place within, and did not come from without.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, one sees that while in normal situations, stories are usually told for the healing benefit of the listener only, in *Family Saga*, storytelling heals the storytellers and the listener for both parties are in want. This paper has therefore examined the therapeutic effect of storytelling on each of them, hence the use of two different approaches. It looked at the storytelling tradition of the griot in the Bamum society, the techniques used by the Mbamba to instil healing in the people: slangs, proverbs and sayings, known stories and *ad hoc* stories. From this stories, four therapeutic functions were identified, which were later applied to *Family Saga*: memory restoration, empowerment through knowledge, forgiveness and reconciliation, and a new beginning. We further examined the healing received by the story tellers through the lenses of

narrative therapy, and came to the conclusion that this play is brilliant demonstration of reconciliation strategy in times of crisis.

It has been demonstrated in many occasions (Fofie 2011; Tchamba 2019, among others) that *Family Saga* is a giant metaphor of Cameroon's history. Thus, all the conflicts raised and all the resolutions proposed in this play are addressed to the people of Cameroon. When he wrote this play in 2005, little did Butake know that an open conflict between Kamalo (French-speaking Cameroon) and Kamala (English-speaking Cameroon) will break in the land of Kamanda (Cameroon) and last for such a long period because both parties are slow to consider repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. The inevitable condition of truth, justice, mercy and peace is yet to be laid, so that the children of Cameroon can witness a new beginning, and free the land from the grip of the ever-present colonial master. Once again, the playwright acted as a visionary, as he rightly wrote in 1996. If this play were to be acted today in the presence of all the powers that be, there is no doubt that the revelation of truth will free many from the lies they have believed till date, and hence prompt some to start a "normal" reconciliation process. That was Bole Butake's desire when he wrote this play in a form of a theatre for development experience.

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