

# **THE ECONOMIC ROLE OF GHANAIAAN CULTURE AND ITS TRADITIONS IN NATURE PRESEVATION & ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

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Decent life depends on nature's provision of stable resources. In this report I want to explore how Ghanaian cultural efforts embedded within nature preservation and environmental sustainability. Ecology and by ecology I understand the study of the reciprocal relations of all forms of life, one with the other, and with their environments is not for the scientific agriculturalist alone; its light must guide the path of the farmer ,administrator, and the statesman. Ghana like many other African countries is endowed with very rich beautiful culture and tradition. The traditional culture of Ghana stressed a strong relationship with the environment, and in the past, a culturally acceptable environmental management resulted from strictures and taboos related to water bodies, land, and deep forest. Though there are some cultural practices that are peculiar to some towns and villages, in general they have so many things in common and served the same important purpose of nature conserving preservation and environmental sustainability. This, to a large extent helped saved the environment and our ancestors rarely died of pollution related ailments. With the advent of Christianity, Islam, civilization and its accompanying technology in Ghana, however, many of these beliefs, taboos, customs and traditions have been relegated to the background and are regarded by many people, though they played a vibrant role in nature preservation and environmental sustainability.

Among the Akan community which forms the majority ethnic group in Ghana, water bodies are associated with the gods and are used in accordance with rules that are relayed to the local folks by fetish priests who are the mouthpiece of the gods. Customary laws mandate users to keep lakes and rivers pure because they are regard as the dwelling place of the gods (abosom). The abosom were highly revered and feared in the past and even they are still accorded that respect by some Ghanaians. It is believed that, these gods are highly endowed with divine powers and will strike defaulters dead instantly with no mercy or give a second chance. People feared the gods and hence adhered strictly to these directives and preserved the water bodies better than what pertains in contemporary Ghana. Apart from the general regulations, In These customary regulations worked very well in the olden days and are still common in the countryside. However, it tends to break down where population mobility has led to coexistence of groups with varying customs. In order to mitigate these drawbacks, there is the need for us as a country to device more pragmatic policies that will integrate our traditions and customs that promotes environmental sustainability with that of modern Ghanaian beliefs to achieve the ultimate goal.

In the past, the deep forests were also regarded as a place of abode of the gods and the dead ancestors. Such places were highly revered and worshiped. Farming, hunting, felling of trees for fire wood and many other activities were forbidden in those forests. It was a taboo for anyone to fell trees or farm in such restricted forests. This indisputably helped preserved the forest vegetation and biodiversity which our current generation is destroying now. Our forefathers were very conscious and protected our natural resources in what one may described as unscientific, but in effect, we inherited rich forest which was stocked with great medicinal sources and precious minerals. If our ancestors who did not know anything about schooling and technology were able to conserve the environment in such a laudable fashion, what are we doing as contemporary generation with formal education and technological advancement? I believe the time to combine technology and tradition to save our perishing natural resources is now.

Among almost all the tribes along the coast of Ghana, it is forbidden to go fishing on Tuesday. Tribes that are located in the forest zones of Ghana forbid hunting and farming in the forest at some days and some periods of the year. It is also a taboo for a hunter to kill an animal and refuse to eat. It is even a worse offence for a farmer or hunter to kill game that is young, pregnant or fending for their young ones. It is believed that earth mother will strike defaulter instantly to death. It was also believed that such a person might also not have children or loose or his children if he kills a pregnant or young game. I believe that there is the need to revisit the past and integrate good part of our traditions and customs with modern ones and to safeguard Ghana's natural recourses and promote environmental sustainability. There is an African proverb that says that 'a man who does not know where he is coming from does not know where he is going to'. This nature preservation such forest, water bodies in Ghana serve as tourism, which is growing economic activity in Ghana and has contributed greatly to the potential development of the country. These natural scenes' which was preserved through our cultural heritage generate employment opportunities for the local people in their own communities and in the long run reduce unemployment rate in that particular geographical location where these natural environment is located. These natural scenes which have preserved by Ghanaian culture contribute 6.7% to the national Gross Domestic Product the country earns. For instance eco-tourism and recreation. I will recommend to international organizations to reorient its attitude on roles of cultural leaders and institutions, conceiving them as partners in development because their contribution will only be meaningful if they are fully empowered in actions leading to sustainable development, such as environment conservation and climate change mitigation.

**Conclusion.** Development which is not grounded in past values becomes irrelevant for the present generations. Once this is manifested, it baffles future direction and sustainability. Thus, development policies, such as those on environment and nature preservation in Ghana, as well as elsewhere, must strive to consolidate what was good in the past to mutually interact with present ideals, if the future is to remain meaningful.

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