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CASE REPORT

THE RELEVANCE OF AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES TO SOCIETY
A case study of cultural values of Akyem Abuakwa Traditional Area

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Abstract:

Every society in Ghana has its cultural values that are adhered to as a societal norm guiding the people. These values are relevant to the society in diverse ways, for example, it is a taboo for an individual within Akyem Abuakwa to cut a tree near River Birim. This is a way of conserving the environment. This paper examined the cultural values of the people of Akyem Abuakwa Traditional Area in the Eastern Region of Ghana and their importance. This study aimed at drawing the link between cultural values and its relevance in the Akyem Abuakwa Traditional Area. The paper was mainly based on field surveys, personal observations, literature review and consultations with stakeholders. The recommendations among other things indicate that the Akyem Abuakwa traditional area has a wide range of cultural values which have so many relevance to society. These values need to be preserved in order for the society to get the maximum benefits.

Key Words: Cultural, Environment, Traditional, Norm.

Introduction

In Ghana, most ethnic groups, tribes or clans have certain peculiar cultural values. Each cultural value has reasons behind its observations. The benefits are enormous to that particular society and the entire country. The Akyem Abuakwa people, like other Akan ethnic groups, has cultural values which have been upheld from the days of their ancestors till today. In the Akyem Abuakwa traditional area, cultural practices such as the celebration of the Ohum and the Odwira festivals, the strict observation of taboos, the declaration of certain forest as sacred groves, certain animals such as Leopards as totems by some clans as well as the conservation of the river Birim are all cultural values that are adhered to by both citizens and non citizens of the traditional area. Again the respect and observation of the chieftaincy institution all together are to let the society benefit from the importance of these cultural values which range from morality, governance, environmental conservation as well as the maintenance of peace. The increased interest in indigenous cultural values is due to a paradigm which tends to support the new order of using cultural values as a tool for sustainable development. It stresses that development is more easily achieved if it is tied to the cultural values of the people.

Statement of the problem

African cultural values in recent times are being threatened by modernity and westernization and the Akyem Abuakwa traditional area is no exception. The problem therefore is how indigenous people can sustain the observations and practices of African culture values in order for the society to benefit from its relevance. The study therefore aims at revealing the relevance of cultural values of Akyem Abuakwa traditional area in order for the society to continue its observations and practices.

Objectives of the Research

- i. Identify and explain the key socio-cultural beliefs of the Akyem Abuakwa people.
- ii. Establish the relevance of cultural values and practices of Akyem Abuakwa to the society.

Significance of the research

- i. The study will contribute immensely to knowledge in indigenous traditional methods of conserving cultural values for sustainable development.
- ii. The study will also be a reference material for future researchers on cultural values in Africa and other related

studies.

iii. The study will also be a source of teaching moral and social studies in schools in the community and elsewhere.

iv. The study is also supposed to resuscitate the minds of the people in Akyem Abuakwa traditional area to be conscious of the wisdom and knowledge embodied in cultural values in the traditional area.

v. The study will be a guide to Akyem Abuakwa traditional leaders, citizens and policy formulators in the traditional area. Policies on conservation of water bodies and forest belt can be formulated based on the study.

vi. The study will assist in the general observation of traditional values resulting in moral, health and recreational uses as well as the preservation of historical, ancestral sites and place of abode for wild animals such as monkeys, birds and elephants

Study Area

The Akyem Abuakwa Traditional Area was the area of study. The Akyem Abuakwa area was used as a study because the area is one of the traditional areas in Ghana with strict adherence to traditional cultural values.

The main towns' chosen for the study were as follows:

- Enyiresi
- Kwabeng
- Sagyimase
- Maase
- Begoro
- Anyinam
- Asiakwa
- Adasewase
- Sekyere
- Abomosu
- Asafo

These communities were selected purposively because of their strict observance of the cultural values of Akyem Abuakwa traditional area. Again they are among the most developed and most accessible towns in the traditional area

The research hypothesis

The research was conducted under the assumption that certain socio-cultural values such as sacred groves, totems, taboos, festivals are still relevant to the people. The following research questions were tested:

i. What are the cultural values of Akyem Abuakwa?

ii. How do people know about cultural values of Akyem Abuakwa traditional area?

iii. What are the usefulness of cultural values such as totems and taboos?

Limitations of the research

The research had the following limitation:

Firstly due to the bad road network in the area of study, the research assistants had difficulties in accessibility to the research sites, even though they finally got to the various destinations successfully.

Secondly the Akyem Abuakwa Traditional area records a lot of rains throughout the year with the exception of December and January and because of that the researcher had problems in conducting the research during the rainy season in the traditional area.

Thirdly some of the inhabitants are non citizens of the area with different languages, therefore the researchers had problem of language during the research and in some cases has to engage an interpreters.

Finally despite all these challenges the research assistants helped in the successful collection of data.

Delimitation of the research

The research and its findings are limited to the Akyem Abuakwa traditional area. However this does not negate the relevance of the study and knowledge to apply to conditions prevailing in other traditional areas of the country.

Methodology

The research design was exploratory which is a tool employed in order to conduct research into a problem that is not clearly defined and therefore attempt to lay the groundwork that will lead to future studies. The format for the research was Historical and Descriptive research approach used in both qualitative and quantitative methods of research. Historical research deals with explanation of records of past events to an individual for a clearer understanding of the past and for predictions of the future to be made. This will include philosophy behind the cultural values. A historical study of the chieftaincy institution as well as historical analysis of documents of the traditional area was made.

Descriptive research is the collection of data for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions, prevailing practices, beliefs, attitudes and ongoing process. In the study, descriptions of various cultural values as they exist and their relevance such as the observation of taboos in the traditional area were all made.

Study Population

The targeted population for the study were citizens and non citizens who reside in the traditional area. These include knowledgeable people, Elders in the community, Clan or family heads, traditional priest, linguist, chiefs and Queen mothers.

Research instruments

Questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions were some of the instruments used for the study. A semi structured interview guide was designed for the in-depth interview which includes open ended as well as close ended questions. The key informants interviewed were Clan or family heads, traditional priest, linguist, chiefs, Queen mothers and social studies teachers in the traditional area. It took an average of 30 minutes to conduct an interview on the study. The reason was to have in-depth knowledge about the cultural values of the various communities.

Primary data

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used for the study. The respondents were purposively selected base on their in-depth knowledge in cultural values. These include traditional leaders, opinion leaders, family heads, land owners and social studies teachers in the community.

Literature review

This was done through the review of information in books such as: West African Traditional Religion by Quarcoopome(1987), The Role of religion in the institution of chieftaincy: A case study of Akans of Ghana by Awuah –Nyamekye(2009), Community institutions in resource management by Ampadu–Agyei(1990). The internet was equally used extensively.

Akyem Abuakwa People

The Akyem Abuakwa people are part of the Akan ethnic group located in the middle forest belt in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Presently it covers three major districts. The Atiwa district which covers about 1,120km², the East Akyem district which covers 725km² and the Fanteakwa district which covers about 1,150km². The Akyem Abuakwa traditional area account for about 10% of Ghana's total population of 24 million people. Some of the major towns in the traditional area are Kyebi, Anyinam, Kwabeng, Apedwa, Osiem, Asafo, Akim Apapam, Old Tafo, Begoro and Asaman Tamfoe. The traditional area experiences an annual rainfall of about 1,250 millimeters with two rainy seasons, the major rainfall season from April to July and the minor one which stretch from September to October. The traditional area has a lot of rich virgin forest which still remains intact. The area is blessed with caves and waterfalls such as the Tini Falls. The Akyem Abuakwa people were one of the early Akan groups who migrated from the Songhai Empire to the Adansi Kingdom and later on broke away from the Ashanti kingdom in the 16th century during the reign of king Osei Tutu I. After crossing the Pra river to settle at the banks of it they were pursued by King Osei Tutu I in his effort to teach them a lesson as a subservient state that has revolted against its masters. However, he was attached and killed on the river by a group of the Akyems called the Abuakwanfour or Abuakwafo translate to mean Guerrilla fighters.

Kumi(1976) in his book the kings of Akyem Abuakwa and the ninety nine wars against Ashanti, acknowledges the movement of the Akyem Abuakwa people from Adansi in the Ashanti around 16th century during the reign of King Osei Tutu I.

The first king was Nana Kuntunkunuku I referred to as Odiahenekan. The Akyem Abuakwa people settled at Kyebi from the word kyebibirie (named after the black hat) during the reign of Ofori Panin in 1733. There were other Akyem groups who also left Adansi and settled in other part of the Eastern region namely Akyem Bosome and Akyem Kotoku with their capitals in Oda and Swedru respectfully. (Kumi, 1976)

Kanay and Kraybill (1999) described culture as a set of tangible and intangible elements including things like diet, tools, technology, language and values that give shape and meaning to everyday lives of a particular group of people.

Culture according to Williams (1965) is also an agreement among a society's members about the appropriate behaviours, values, beliefs, history, heritage, rituals that should be respected and observed and so on.

Thaman(2003) defines culture as a shared way of living of a group of people, which includes their accumulated knowledge and understandings, skills and value, as expressed and constructed in their language which is perceived by them to be unique and meaningful.

All these definitions imply that culture is a man-made environment that makes life secure and enduring for the society. It promotes the security and continuity of life of a member of the society. These are indications that the members of a society share a way of life described by a set of blue prints that show what must be done and ought to have been done. These blue prints are learned, acceptable and expected patterns of behaviours which is socially constructed and transmitted by socialization to new born members of a society and by acculturation to newly arrived immigrants. Culture including indigenous traditional knowledge has come to be viewed as an economic and social asset. Culture in simple terms is a way of life of the people including the way of dressing, traditional occupations such as kente weaving, the various festivals, customs and traditions observed by a group of people. The Akyems like other Akans believed in the supreme being creator or 'Tweduampon Kwame as the controller of the mother earth'Asaaseyaa'. Osei(2000)Also says the Akyem Abuakwa people believe in life after death and share the creeds and cultures that the body is an empty thing from which the soul will eventually leave for 'Asamando'Eternity.The traditional area celebrates two main types of festivals Ohum and Odwira festivals. These festivals are classified as Ancestral festivals since they are festivals that link the people and their ancestors. The Ohum festival is celebrated twice annually in the months of June and July and are known as the Ohumkan and Ohumkyire. The Odwira festival is celebrated in December every year. However every 5 years the Odwira Kesse is celebrated. Odwira means purification and this becomes a period for purification of the Black stool which is a traditional and symbolic seat reserve as a period for cleansing bad deeds.This include issues like stealing and curses. The traditional political system of the Akyem Abuakwa people recognizes the Okyehene as the overlord or monarch of the traditional area, the political administrative head, the religious and the traditional head with his palace located at Kyebi.

In the Akyem Abuakwa area rivers such as Birim and Abonkyira are regarded as deities and so people in some cases are not to fish or bath in them , cross the river or fetch it for drinking on certain days.

Clan is a group of people that share a common blood and totem. That is people with a common ancestry. They are referred to as 'Abusua' family .Obeng(1986)defined Abusua from the Akan as a group or groups of people descended from one great grandmother on the maternal side. People within a clan due to blood relations are not permitted to intermarry. According to him this is a taboo punishable by death in the olden days. Clans are identified by their totem and the eight clans or Abusua found in Akyem Abuakwa are Bretuo,Oyoko,Agona ,Ekoana, Asakyiri,Asona ,Asenee and Aduana. Ampadu –Agyei(2003)refers to totems as vegetables or animals which are revered by individuals , particularly a group of people or a tribe as sacred, A totem can be an animal , a plant or any other natural object believed to be ancestrally related to a tribe , clan or family group as a tutelary spirit. For these reason , the members do not eat , kill or trap such animals or birds and when a totem dies members of the tribe, clans or family would show respect by mourning and burying it as human being. Quarcoopome (1978) sees totemism as the link or dealings existing between a person or group of persons and animal. Ampadu-Agyei (2003) in a paper presented at the conference on bush meat crisis in Ghana held recently postulated that all wildlife species are regarded as totems due to their historical or socio -cultural significance as well as their symbolic quality. He further disclosed that for instance each of the eight clans of the Akan tribes in Ghana has their totem and reasons for choosing a particular object or animal as totem.

Data Analysis, Findings and Discussions

260 questionnaires were distributed in the various towns and villages in Akyem Abuakwa traditional area but a total of 250 responses were received and used in the study. It was to ascertain the relevance of the following cultural values in Akyem Abuakwa

- Religious values
- Traditional political system
- Festivals
- Taboos in Akyem Abuakwa
- Totems in Akyem Abuakwa

•The conservation of rivers such as Birim

Table. 1. General characteristics of Respondents

N=250

| Description(Items) | No. of Respondents | Percentages (%) |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 110 | 44 |
| Female | 140 | 56 |
| Total | 250 | 100 |
| Age Range/Group | | |
| < 18 | 5 | 2 |
| 18-25 | 10 | 4 |
| 26-30 | 15 | 6 |
| 31-35 | 30 | 12 |
| 36 and above(35+) | 190 | 76 |
| Total | 250 | 100 |
| Educational Background | | |
| Primary | 50 | 20 |
| Secondary/Vocational | 10 | 4 |
| University | 20 | 8 |
| No formal education | 170 | 68 |
| Total | 250 | 100 |

Source: Author's construct (2013)

Table. 1 shows that (56%) of the respondents in this study were females, which is an indication that majority of people in the traditional area are females, whilst (44 %) were males. This according to an interview with one of the social studies teachers in the traditional area is due to the fact that most men have travelled to go and work in the cities.

The respondents under the age of 18 years in this study were only (2%.)This means that most of the youth are not interested in cultural values of the areas hence just a few were able to do justice to the questionnaires.

Majority of the respondents are 36years old and above which constitutes (76%) of the total respondents. This indicates that people in the area are mostly the older ones who are either on retirement or mature in age and most of youth have left the towns in the traditional area for greener pastures outside the area. Again this point to the fact that the youth are not much interested in cultural values of the area and the older ones are those well vest with cultural issues and more interested in its adherence for posterity.

Educationally, (68%) had no formal education, but (20%) had primary education, (4%) had secondary whilst (8%) had University education. This is an indication that most traditionalist in the area are not educated and lot of the cultural values being practiced are not documented but orally transferred from generation to generation and this confirms one of the key objectives of the study which is to identify and explain socio -cultural values of the Akyem Abuakwa people.

Table.2 The Religious values of the Akyem Abuakwa state and relevance

| Description/ Items | No. of Respondents | Percentages |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Offers them protection | 90 | 36% |
| Brings more harvest | 80 | 32% |
| Offers them medium of worship | 60 | 24% |
| Link with the ancestors | 20 | 8% |
| Total | 250 | 100% |

Source: Author's construct (2013)

Looking at the religious beliefs of the Akyem Abuakwa people in the Supreme Being, the divinities and the ancestors. These were the benefits that were gathered from the results of the study with 250 respondents. From table .2 (36%)of respondents believed that practicing traditional religious system give them protection from their enemies and spiritual attacks which are the highest among the respondents on religious believes.(34%)believed it offers them good harvest through fertile lands. However (24%) were of the view that religion gives them recognition of the Supreme Being who can be worshiped through the lesser spirits like water bodies and the ancestors. This confirms what Obeng (1986) said that all Akans like the Akyem Abuakwa believe in the supreme being creator or Twedeapon Kwame as the controller of the mother earth AssaseYaa.Finally, (8%)of the respondents from the study recognize the link between the living and the ancestors as one of the relevance of religious values. This goes a long way to buttress what Osei (2000) has indicated that the Akyem Abuakwa people believe in life after death and share the creed and culture that the body is empty from which the soul leave to Asamando or eternity.The Akyem Abuakwa people like other Akans believed in the supreme being or creator as the God of the universe and certain references such as Tweduampon Kwame or Asaseyaa, the mother of the earth. The Akyems believed in other deities or lesser gods which they think manifest in the Great river Birim which is the god of the water that represents the creator on earth through whom the traditional area has been blessed with fertile lands. They believed in the worship of the supreme being through the river gods especially the river Birim and other agents of the supreme Being such as shrines, spirits of lands at sacred places and caves. The Akyem Abuakwa people also recognize the spirit of the ancestors due to the believe in life after death, therefore the Akyems declare certain areas such as cemeteries, sacred groves, shrines, waterfalls and caves as a no go area as a way of showing respect for the ancestral spirit who lived there. These also conserve the land.The Daad Buo Shrine,the Aponkyira falls and the Akrumso waterfalls are just a few of them.

Table. 3. **Socio- cultural festivals of Akyem Abuakwa and their relevance**

| Description/ Items | No. of Respondents | Percentages |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Building of schools | 80 | 32% |
| Settlement of disputes | 70 | 28% |
| Promotion of Unity | 60 | 24% |
| Link with the ancestors | 40 | 16% |
| Total | 250 | 100% |

Source: Author's construct (2013)

Looking at the benefits of festivals like Odwira and Ohum to the Akyem Abuakwa people. These were the results from the 250 respondents. From table. 3 majority of the respondents (32%) agreed to the fact that festivals are occasions for initiating development projects such as schools. This confirms an article in the Graphic showbiz dated Thursday 11th August, 2005 which indicted the during the celebration of the Ohum festival at Kyebi, the occasion was used to offer scholarships for brilliant but needy students in the Kyebi in the Akyem Abuakwa traditional area.

(28%) of respondents agreed that it is used by the chiefs to settle disputes among family members and (24%)agreed that festivals promote unity amongst members of the society. Lastly (16%) said festivals always bring them closer to the ancestors. This confirms Amoako-Attah (2001) that festivals brings all indigenous or people from a particular geographical area to their hometown/village. He agreed that festivals bring the ancestors closer to the living being through libations and other prayers for protection of their souls.

The Akyem Abuakwa traditional area has rich socio -cultural practices which have been with them since time immorial. The traditional area celebrates two main types of festivals Ohum and Odwira festivals. The Ohum festival is celebrated twice annually, the month of June and another in July and known as the Ohumkan and Ohumkyire respectively. It takes 2 days normally starting from Tuesday through to Wednesday. The Ohum festivals starts with the ban on drumming and other noise making in the traditional area for two weeks before the start of the celebration with the following activities.

The preparation of mashed yam and soup to be sacrificed for the gods of the river Birim and other water bodies in the traditional area. Sacrifices to the ancestors in the cemetery, the sacred groves and shrines. The paying of homage to the chiefs and Okyehene by subjects and elders in the traditional area. The purification and cleansing of the stools of past chiefs in the traditional area.

The Ohum festival is to mark the mythical appearance of chief Okuru Banin 1 and his men from the Birim

river and their migration to present settlement. It is also to mourn the death of the past chiefs and elders of the land. The Ohum festival is to give thanks to the river god, Birim, believed to be the protector of the people and the environment.

The Ohum celebration is to usher in a new year and launch the eating of new yam. It indicates the peoples abilities in drawing inspirations from their ancestors and practices that have been conserved and handed over by deeds and words of mouth from generation to generation. The festival is also a thanksgiving symbol to the gods for the conservation of the land. Finally the festival marks the renewal of links between the living and the ancestral spirits and always request for protection and guidelines in everyday life.

Another festival of the Akyem is that of the Odwira festival which is celebrated in December every year. Every 5 years they celebrate the Odwira Kesse. The festival named Odwira means purification and so this is a period for purification of the Black stool which is a traditional and symbolic seat. The period is reserved for the cleansing of bad deeds, which include issues like stealing and curses.

It is also a period for reconciliation and planning development projects such as library and school projects by the mobilization of funds through fund raising activities. This confirms Bonye

(2011) that the role of traditional festivals in community development cannot be over emphasis. One of the activities during the festival is sacrifices to the Daad Buo shrine at Adasewase and women who are barren visit the shrine to ask for fertility. As a result a number of women who are deemed to be barren are able to get pregnant and have children. These children are mostly named after the deity Daad Buo.

The festival over the years has had the political importance of ensuring effective administration of the traditional area since on such occasions sub chiefs are to pay homage to the chief, divisional or paramount chiefs. Again the festival offers the opportunity to exchange goodwill between traditional authorities and government which often leads to the lobbying of major governmental projects such as roads and hospitals. The 2007 festival was used by the chiefs and people of Anyinam led by the Chief, Nana Benefo Kyere to start the lobbying for the construction of a new court building.

The festival has health and medical relevance since during these period people are able to release tension and stresses and this can lower the incidence of mental derangement, hypertension, diabetes and other sickness. There are also health walk and other entertaining programmes during the festival which bring happiness and Physiological benefits.

Again the Ohum and Odwira festival has economic importance of serving as income generating moment for people engage in catering and hospitality industry as well as way –side food vendors , cooked food hawkers, drinking bars and fast food joints in the area who makes money by selling of Food and drinks during the festival.

Figure.1: Picture of the Okyehene(Overlord of the Akyem Abuakwa during Ohum festival.)



Source: Author's field survey (2013)

Table.4 .The traditional political system of Akyem Abuakwa and its relevance

| Description/ Items | No.of Respondents | Percentages |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Instill discipline in the towns | 80 | 32% |
| Administration of towns | 70 | 28% |
| Spearhead Development | 60 | 24% |
| Settlement of disputes | 45 | 16% |
| Total | 250 | 100% |

Source: Author's construct (2013)

The study reveals from table .4 that the highest number of respondents (32%) believed that the traditional political institution of chieftaincy helps instill discipline in the various towns and villages of the traditional area. This confirms Crooks (2005) that chiefs are able to interpenetrate the local traditional disputes and control the land for peace to prevail. Again (28%) agreed that chiefs help in the easy administration of towns and villages whilst (24%) believed that chiefs always spearhead development. All these confirms Crooks(2005) assertion that traditional institutions in modern Ghana are political representation of the community identity as well as duty to work for the progress of the community.

The traditional political system of the Akyem Abuakwa people recognizes the Okyehene as the overlord or monarch of the traditional area, the political administrative head , the religious and the traditional head. The palace of the king is located at Kyebi and has other chiefs in the traditional area who pay homage to him. The king has other paramount chiefs under him and followed by divisional and village chief or Odikro. All these traditional leaders are viewed by the citizens and inhabitants of the area as political and religious leaders. The people refer to the Okyehene as the king of the dense forest (Kwaebibirihene). The political system also recognizes the queen mother as the one in charge of women affairs in the traditional area. The Political institution contribute to the development of peace and unity in the area through dispute settlement as well as easy administration of the area through the hierarchical arrangement of traditional powers from Family heads, clans,the village chief the Odeikro through the divisional chief to the paramount chief and then the Okyehene. This ensures discipline and peace since everyone becomes aware of his or her status and behaves as such.

Traditional political institution also ensures rapid development of the area since the chief spearheads community development activities such as communal labour and could sometimes lobby the government for development projects in the area like library projects, street lights and roads.

The chief is the leader and the link between the people and the ancestors by offering sacrifices and pouring of libations to the ancestors in order to protect them and bless the land to be fertile.

Table. 5. Conservation of the river Birim and its relevance

| Description/ Items | No. of Respondents | Percentages |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Source of drinking water | 80 | 32% |
| Source of Meat/fish | 64 | 26% |
| Source of herbal medicine | 62 | 24% |
| Spiritual blessings for rainfalls | 44 | 18% |
| Total | 250 | 100% |

Source: Author's construct (2013)

The study reveals in table. 5 that conservation of the river Birim is one of the most important cultural practices of the traditional area. The main reason or benefit being the provision of drinking water for the people. This is supported by the fact that (36%) of respondents agreed that the conservation of the river is necessary because it is a source of drinking water for the people. This re- echoes a popular saying in Ghana ‘Akyemkwaanom Birim’ translated from twi to English as every Akyem from the traditional area drinks from the Birim river.(26%)believed that the conservation of the river Birim helps in the conservation of the River Birim and the forest around it which

serves as habitat for fish from the river and meat from the animals in the forest.(24%) believed the conservations would lead to the use of the forest around the river as a source of herbal medicine. Finally (18%) believed that the conservation of the river Birim is a respect to the river deity or spirit that would continue to protect and bless the area with rainfalls. In the Akyem Abuakwa area, rivers such as Birim, Abonkyira and others are regarded as deities and so people in some cases are not to fish and bath in it, cross the river on certain days. Secondly people are not to stay at the source of the river Abonkyira. They are to stay down stream and this has helped to fight against pollution of the river.

Thirdly, it is a taboo for an individual to cut trees along the river bank of Birim because they are supposed to be reserved as they help to sustain the green environment of the river.

Fourthly, in some Akyem communities such as Anyinam, Tafo, Kwaben there are certain virgin forests which is forbidden for the chain saw operators to cut trees, to hunt and also clear the place. This is due to the fact that the area is declared as a sacred grove for the ancestors and it is a taboo for any of these activities to go on there. Again is a taboo to hunt and kill certain animals such as monkeys and leopard because they are the totems of some clans and these have made them to declare their abode as a no go area. The Akan indigenous culture is animistic and has the potential to preserve and conserve nature. Animism is the attribution of the living soul to plants and other natural objects. This concept looks at the preservation of nature for human survival. The animistic tendency is captured in the words of Danquah (1968).He states we do not hold in trust for the present and future generations all the natural resources which our welfare and continuance of the community depends but are also accountable to the ancestors.

The conservation of the river Birim has led to the preservation of exceptional number of plant species not found elsewhere but along the river such as *Leptaspiscochleata* and *miliciaexcelsa*.

The conservation of the river is important as the main source of drinking water for the communities in the Akyem Abuakwa area such as Kade, Kyebi, Oda,Anyinam and rich source of non timber forest products such as bush meat, snails, mushroom, chewing sticks and plants medicine.

Finally the conservation of other water bodies and waterlog or swampy areas reserve solely for the chief in the traditional area is a way of conserving the plant species around and also a place to rely on for water during the dry seasons when there is no water for human survival anywhere in the area.

Figure .2 .River Birim, Anyinam.



Source: Author's Field Survey(2013)

Table .6.Totems and their relevance

| Description/ Items | No. of Respondents | Percentages |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Source of meat for income | 80 | 32% |
| Traditional medicine | 70 | 26% |
| Using site for research | 60 | 24% |
| Ancestral blessing for fertility | 40 | 16% |
| | 250 | 100% |

Source: Author's construct (2013)

The study reveals in table. 5 that (32%) of respondents believed that the essence of the totems is that it tends to produce a lot of bush meat for sale and a source of meat after conserving the animals for a long time. This is asserted by the fact that the Akyem Abuakwa area is noted for the sale of many bush meat such as antelopes, monkeys, deers etc. by the roadside from Anyinam through kyebi to Apedwa. It also confirms the area being refer to as "Kwaebibirim" the dense forest. This was confirmed by the result of the study with (26%) indicating the use for medicinal purposes and (24%) using it for research. Areas such as the Atiwa forest reserve, the Aponkyira river are all areas declared as abode for certain totems such as Leopards and Parrot. By preserving these animals other species of plants and animals are protected for medicinal purposes and some of these species of plant taken to the research centers. Only(16%) agreed to the fact that totems are blessings from the ancestors. Some of the Totems are observed as ways of revering or showing respect to the ancestors. Totems are also source of identification for members of the society with their various clans .This was asserted by Ampadu- Agyei (2003)that totemic system or totemism serves as the source of identifying different geographic and dialectic identities by associating each group with a natural species, usually animals, plants and other natural items that are regarded as totemic.

According to Frazer (1910) the term totemism is derived from an Ojibway word totem and has been used by scholars to describe the way Africans relate to animals. According to Ampadu -Agyei(2003)totems refers to vegetables or animals which are revered by individuals , particularly group of people or tribe as sacred . A totem can be an animal or any other plant or natural object believed to be ancestrally related to a tribe , a clan or family as a tutelary spirit. For these reasons the members do not eat, kill or trap such animals, birds or fish. When a totem dies or is sold, members of the tribe who consider it as their totem would show respect for such animals by mourning and burying them just as in the case of human beings. Totems, therefore, are not religion, but a family's pride that gives an indelible lesson on traditional wildlife species. It is therefore one of the major traditional conservational tools which helps to conserve many wildlife species. In the Akyem Abuakwa traditional areas, therefore, all the clans have their totems which are animals in the forest. The beliefs associated with totems therefore lead to the conservation of certain areas where these animals are located and the animals are revered and not killed, harmed or eaten by these group of people. Some of the animals are leopard for the Bretuo clan, buffalo for the Ekuona clan and the falcon for the Oyokuo clan.

Table.7.Totems (Akraboa) of various Clans in Akyem Abuakwa and their relevance

| Clan /Abusua | Totem(Akraboa/ | significance |
|--------------|---------------------|---|
| Bretuo | Osebo/Leopard,Tiger | Symbol of bravery&skills |
| Ayoko | Akroma/hawk | symbol of patience, self confidence |
| Agona | Ako/ parrot | symbol of Eloquence frankness |
| Ekona | Ekoo/Bufallo | Symbol of uprightness |
| Asakyiri | Kokosakyi/vulture | Symbol of intelligence/stamina |
| Asona | Kwaakwaadabi/crow | symbol of purity of heart and eloquence |
| Asenee | Apan(bat) | symbol of bravery&diplomacy |
| Aduana | Okraman(dog) | symbol of humility&friendliness |

Source: Author's construct (2013)

Table. 8. **Taboos and their relevance**

| Description/ Items | No.of Respondents | Percentages |
|--|-------------------|-------------|
| Herbal medicine | 75 | 30% |
| Conservation for rainfall | 70 | 28% |
| Protection and blessing from Ancestors | 60 | 24% |
| Preserved the forest for trees | 45 | 18% |
| Total | 250 | 100% |

Source: Author's construct (2013)

From table.8 above majority of the respondents (30%) believed that the observation of taboos such as sacred groves has the impact of preserving the area for herbal medicine. The various species of plants and even animals face extinction due to disregard for conservation in modern day life, therefore taboos offer a traditional means of protection for them.(28%) believed that the observation of taboos would help conserve the environment. Again (24%) believed taboos bring blessings from the ancestors. Finally 18% observed that taboos help preserve the forest for people. These also confirms the high number of arts and crafts industry such as wood carvers, masks, basket weavers in the traditional area.This attested to Amoako-Attah(1998)that about 2000 hectares of land has been preserved as a result of Akan notion of sacred groves in the Eastern region.

Taboos are things which are forbidden and can be applied to any sort of prohibition. They are actions that are not traditionally accepted and breaking a taboo is physically and mystically disastrous to the society who can suffer calamities such as famine, drought and death as punishment from the gods. Consequently, ritual or sacrifice has to be made to cleanse the gods when such taboos are broken. The Akyem Abuakwa area refers to it as ‘mmusu’ and applicable to any sort of social prohibitions imposed by leadership of a community. Campell (2004) viewed sacred groves as forest of various dimensions partially or fully protected by local religious beliefs. Whilst Adarkwa – Dadzie (1997) says sacred groves refer to as Nananompo (ancestral grove or royal mausoleum) with some importance being Ecological and socio – cultural.

Another important aspect of taboos is that of morality since it represents the main source of principles regulating and directing the behavior of individuals and the community towards the Supreme Being and especially the gods and ancestors in the traditional society. Taboos are for effective moral behavior and right conduct in the society for peaceful and sustainable development since for example it is a taboo to have sex in the bush and a girl is not to get pregnant until she has gone through the puberty rite of Bragoro and these prevent teenage pregnancy in the traditional area.

Environmental relevance of taboos cannot be overemphasized. Most taboos in the Akyem Abuakwa traditional area stress on a strong relationship with the environment and its acceptance and adherence is seen as an environmental management tool. The strict adherence to the taboos has resulted in the conservation of water bodies , virgin forest and other ancestral heritage from pollution and related ailments. Some taboos relating to the environmental usage are: The digging of graves for burial without due authorization from the chiefs or traditional authorities, the clearing of sacred forest or bushes, the eating of sacred animals or fish, hunting of animals or fishing during forbidden seasons and sacred days and the felling of forbidden timber species. The relevance of these are not only to deprive the future generations of the rare plants and animal species but protect the plants and animals for food, medicine, clear water and air. Again the traditionalist knows the use of forest as wind breakers, natural foliage or cover for small streams and water sheds necessary for their survival and well being of man.

Conclusion

African Cultural values have so many relevance ranging from biodiversity, good morals, as well as environmental and economic benefits to Akyem Abuakwa Traditional area. Their conservation is therefore, a must and not abolishment. Modifications of cultural values are needed to meet the needs of the present generation as a way to ensure its continuous supplementary role in contemporary developmental efforts of the society

Recommendations

The integration of cultural values into national development by increasing community participation in observing the various cultural values through the inclusion of some of the cultural values in the district assembly's educational programmes will be a step in the right direction to help get the maximum benefits from cultural values.

Secondly financial assistance must be given to institutions such chieftaincy in order to enforce the observations of cultural values, practices and policies. These chiefs and traditional authorities can organize training workshops and durbars to increase the awareness of the people on the importance of cultural values to the society.

Thirdly citizens and non citizens who reside in the Akyem Abuakwa area should be made to appreciate, respect and observe the cultural practices of the area as a means of getting the needed benefits from cultural values. This can be done through the organization of traditional music and dancing festivals and the setting up of cultural centers in the community by the traditional rulers as a way of upholding and appreciating the cultural values of the area.

The social studies teachers, traditional leaders such as queen mothers and clan heads must organize meetings, workshops and cultural performances in order to encourage the youth to learn and know more about the cultural values of Akyem Abuakwa Traditional Area

The government through the district assemblies must spearhead the establishment of community libraries and museums in the various communities of the traditional. These places could be seen as information centers where materials on cultural practices in the area would be available for people from all walks of life including citizens, non citizens and even foreigners as a whole.

The district assemblies and local councils should integrate cultural values into policies and programmes at the local levels by coming out with by laws in the traditional area that aim at observing and preserving traditional values. This will be a guide to the citizens in their daily life by conserving the basic cultural values of the area.

Akyem Abuakwa cultural values and history should be documented and explained to the youth in the area. These can be done by the Odikros, divisional chiefs, paramount chiefs as well as the Okyehene himself. Such documents can be in the libraries and community centers in the Traditional area for people to read.

Communities in the area should be encouraged to establish herbal plants farms in order to conserve some species of plants that are on the threat of extinction due to encroachment by mining and other human activities like lumbering and bush fire.

Educational programmes aimed at protecting and sustaining the environment should be organized regularly at least once every month in the Akyem Abuakwa traditional area. The Okyehene has already embarked on an educational campaign in the area on the conservation of forest and water bodies in recent years. This research could support that move and fill the needed vacuum. This will help citizens living in the area to uphold basic environmental conservational practices such as avoidance of cutting down trees in sacred areas as well as avoiding illegal mining in such areas which threaten the environment and human survival.

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