

## Tangible and Intangible Resources in Ghana for National Development

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### ABSTRACT

Nature holds major resources for the development of people and their communities. Nature defines a geographic, political, cultural heritage, economic, military and scientific endowment of nations, communities and individuals.

The standard and quality of life, the intellectual legacy of a people is equally to a large extent influenced or affected by what exists in the environment and ecological zone of a people found in the geographical region.

This paper seeks to critically understudy and analyse how geographical locations have either promoted quality human life or poor living conditions leading to ill-health, disasters and short life span. The paper will focus on examples drawn from some communities found amongst indigenous ethnic groups within the Oti Region of Ghana. Geographical locations found in the Oti Region of Ghana are high mountain dwellings, plateau and low valley dwellings with tropical forest and tropical drainage systems and therefore, typical tropical climatic conditions.

**Keywords:** Tangible, Intangible, Religion, Ritual and religious practices, Indigenous cultural practices, Agricultural and economic practices, Spiritual and intellectual endowments, Locational and occupational practices, Tropical

A close study of indigenous people all over world confirms the relevance and importance of their intangible resources like oral traditions, oral literature, oral histories, war songs, traditional music ritual, cult and religious practices.

A study undertaken by the author of this paper throws much light on how oral tradition has stored up a people's intellectual properties where modern scientific and technological resources were absent.

A close study of Ghana indicates the significance of orality in African Studies, Sociology and Anthropology to mention but a few.

The oral histories of the Buem people helped to unearth relevant information on the history of the Buem. Oral history in the form of drum language, war songs, libation texts, hunters' dance, and shrine ritual ceremonies contribute to the unravelling of indigenous histories and in certain cases scientific inventions.

The study of Buem shrine and cult practices is a case worth noting in the area of the importance of Psychosomatic and psychoreligious practices.

The indigenous healer knows which plant could be applied and when to apply a particular plant for a particular effect. For example, a mentally disturbed patient sent to the traditional high priest may be given a concoction to drink and within an hour or two, a violent and hostile patient may go to sleep, giving the patient some relief leading to the healing of mental stress.

Another observed impact of controlling high and hypothermic pre-diabetic condition is a plant that absorbs and stabilizes patients with high sugar conditions while using the leaves for tea, it takes away sugar in the blood system within a matter of days. This means indigenous healers and modern pharmacists and medical experts need a collaboration and have academic interactions for the rescue of indigenous herbal knowledge and promotion of a medical and scientific documentation for posterity.

Nature has distributed in various geographical, economic zones, regions, ecological zones, unique and specific botanical resources as well as unique food nutrients to particular locations. The nutritional values along the coastal belt of Ghana compared to foods and crops found in the Northern regions of Ghana are vastly different comparatively. Whilst in southern Ghana, palm trees grow naturally in the forest, in Northern Ghana shea butter trees grow naturally. Comparing palm oil and shea butter oil, one realizes that, a conscious balancing of these oils in the diet or in the dietary requirement of humanity is required for better and higher health conditions.

Geography endows localities with suitable conditions to influence the nutritional requirements of a people. This is what the author terms as ETHNO-MENU and a conscious balancing of ETHNO-MENUS for optimum health benefits. Buem as a traditional area cultivates local brown rice, yellow yams, a variety of palm trees abound in the wild of Buemland, so palm-wine and game are a common-sight. These and many other tangible resources characterise Buem.

The unique soil colours in Buem are some examples resources that are untapped. It appears Buem soil comes with the seven rainbow colours, pronounced are: red, yellow, brown, black and white clays serving as local paint materials cherished by women who paint their kitchen walls daily or weekly with graffiti or various indigenous symbols and designs. The naturally coloured clays are part of the tangible resources that may have to be explored for industrial and commercial purposes in the Oti Region.

The oral tradition of Bowire as narrated by Nana Salo sheds more light on the religious practices of the Bowire people (Mountain rituals). The Kutuatu ritual, a religious ritual of the Bowire people in their attempt to win the favours of Atibluku (God Almighty) for good climatic or weather conditions for their agricultural and farming endeavours.

The traditional high priest will keep a calf for one year or yearly for sacrifice up the Kutuatu hills. It is believed that sacrificing a bull up the Kutuatu hills at a plateau serves as altars for religious interventions. The chief priest upon pouring libation and rendering some incantations instructs the bull from the centre of the village in the presence of the crowd assembled to voluntarily climb up the Kutuatu hills to lay its head on the block to be sacrificed during the ritual. This means if the bull does not go up the mountains for the sacrifice, doom, calamity and disaster would befall the community members in that given year. This bad omen must be averted by offering peace offerings continually.

Sacrifice is a religious practice known in almost all human races across the globe. Sacrifices are made in time of sorrow as well as in time of joy to court divine favours or divine interventions. The Bowire Kutuatu Mountains are two peak mountains geographically located on the Akuapim Togo Takwain ranges running through the eastern corridor of Ghana.

Between these two peaks are often a common site of multiple rainbows known as the Kutuatu male and female mountain rainbows. These are unique features worth noting. Consulting the Living achieves for their explanation of multiple rainbows appearing on the Togo ranges a common oral tradition explaining the mysterious phenomenon of rampant, circular rainbows or arch shaped rainbows are that the earth and the skies co-habit during the appearances of these rainbows and that anyone brave enough to go up the mountains to the spot or the origins of these rainbows will find pots of minerals like gold, diamond, bauxite and iron to mention a few.

Oral tradition has it that, no one should venture to chase after this wealth because whoever does that, may never return home alive. Oral tradition today, seem to be authenticated by modern geologists, surveyors and geodetic scientists when the Oti region now has been identified as a region that holds the highest mineral deposits in West Africa. Particularly with reference to the Oti iron deposits being one of the best qualities of iron in the world.

People are learning in circles, oral traditions, documented literary sources of information incidentally are confirming and affirming findings that validate claims made by both Oral Historians as well as Western Historians.

Nature provides inexhaustible resources for the development of individuals, localities and nations. There is an oral tradition among Oti Region that narrates a geographical phenomenon shrouded in mystery and awe, the Buem people of the Oti Region have a story which goes that at Old Baika (Kuyika) the earth breaths, sometimes hot and sometimes cold air on top of the sacred mountains. That place is upheld among the community members as a mysterious location where even if it is raining heavily, there is no drop of wet on whoever finds himself/herself there. The name of the place is ironically called KALOR ENWU meaning, the nostril of the Mother Earth.

This oral tradition may hold some hints worth investigating scientifically or academically just as the Kutuatu rainbow story is now authenticated, KALOR ENWU may be the tip of the iceberg leading to natural gas. In the same Oti Region is the story of a mystical friendly lion who is said to have its den in a cave between APESOKUBI and ASATO all located on the Akwapem Togo ranges. This lion is called a friendly lion because like NANIA stories of C.S Lewis, this lion protected endangered, oppressed and distressed people. Elders are said to be able to consult the said lion in critical situations by pouring libation and reciting some incantations for the lion to appear. They offer sacrifices to it yearly thus establishing cordial relationship between man and nature.

This phenomenon offers some room for eco-tourism exploration involving man and nature where a lion could be brought into human affairs. This could be different from circus display.

Oti region has quite a number of locations with exciting tourism attractions yet to be captured on the tourism map, some are:

- i. Bowire Abadie Monkey Sanctuary
- ii. Likpe Todome Cave
- iii. Akpafu Todzi Iron Mining Tunnel
- iv. The Nkonya Assakyiri White Crocodile Pond
- v. Siade Hanging Valley Dwelling
- vi. Lewef- Akrofo Ecological Park at Jasikan
- vii. Kyabobo Park - Nkwanta

to mention but a few sites located in the Oti Region. Some already well-known tourists' centres in Ghana are:

- i. Boti Falls - Boti in The Eastern Region of Ghana
- ii. Wli Falls - Wli near Hohoe Volta Region
- iii. Tsatsadu Falls - Alavanyo Volta Region
- iv. Mole Park - Mole
- v. Paga Crocodile Pond - Paga
- vi. Larebanga Mosque
- vii. Fiapre Monkey Sanctuary
- viii. Tafi- Atome Monkey Sanctuary

A mysterious site worth mentioning is at Kolangbadze near Bodada in Buem of the Oti Region. Humans are not permitted to visit the Kolangbadze ancient settlement on Fridays. It is alluded that invisible creatures believed to be the spirits of the ancestors of the Buem people who first settled at Kolangbadze and were buried in a sacred forest are heard occasionally either laughing loudly or mourning, sweeping, pounding Fufu, wired sounds emanating from the mountain top dwelling without seeing any human figure anywhere. When this happens, the chiefs, elders and traditional priests, queen mothers are summoned to assemble at a shrine at

the outskirts of Bodada to pacify the gods at a shrine known as KUVU OTTOR which is a house with two entrances.

KUVU OTTOR is a war shrine linked with the battles the Buem people fought along the emigrational journey to their present location.

KUVU OTTOR is visited on the following occasions;

- i. Upon hearing strange sounds from Kolangbadze
- ii. When the Buem people are preparing for war.
- iii. During the strange sound visitation, the elders of the town gather around KUVU – OTTOR to pour libation, slaughter a black and white ram and seek through the chief priest pacification and atonement ritual.
- iv. When (this has not taken place for a long time since there are no more wars) all physically fit and able body Buem males during their puberty rites are brought to KUVU OTTOR to prepare them militarily by bathing them with some special herbs and asking them to go through the two entrances one serving as an entrance and the other one as an exit. Those who really qualify as warriors are those who find their way out. And those who supposedly may be war victims are those who do not find the other exit though there is no door they remain locked up, blared up in their vision and cannot come out of the single room till the high priest sanctifies them. It is a process of justifying one's inclusion as an expert warrior amongst the Buem people.

Kolangbadze and KUVU-OTON can be re-enacted yearly as an eco-tourism experience should this be creatively developed as a tourism attraction.

There are numerous numbers of oral histories and stories found in the Oti Region which require expertise, sponsorship, and a conscious and systematic collection, retrieval, preservation and promotional effort.

In the author's works, on Stories from Jasikan, Buem, one realizes that, in oral dominated communities, when a knowledgeable individual and expert passes away, a yawning gap is created where vital Information, knowledge and expertise is lost forever.

The Oti region is one typical example of a geographic location where there are a multi lingual, ethnic, and multi-cultural presence giving cause to an urgent need for knowledge recovery on the numerous minority languages and ethnic groupings found in that geographical region. The amicable co-existence of these ethnic groupings so far should not only be appreciated but also consciously maintained for the purposes of peace, security and sustainability.

To conclude, I will narrate a short story hopefully to highlight some of the relevance of consciously protecting, promoting and projecting a people's cultural heritage for posterity.

Once upon time, there lived in a small cottage "Menkometrim" (Meaning in my mind alone), a village King and his subjects. They were hunters, subsistence farmers, and a happy folk. They shared whatever they have among themselves, respected their elders kept the environment neat and observed various festivals without interruption for a long time. The king and his elder did everything possible to maintain peace and order until one day the King came out with an order that all old ladies and old men above seventy (70) years should be killed because they were either witches or wizards. The whole community was shocked but reluctantly obeyed the command so all old ladies and old men were exterminated! What a disaster?

Old women and old men were killed leaving only the youth and the children.

Incidentally some identical twins in the village lost their mother at their delivery and were raised by their grandmother and decided not to kill their grandmother. So, they hid their grandmother in a cave on the mountain range on their grandfather's land and managed to smuggle provision to her at night. A year later, a hunter from the community manages to kill a

strange animal with a lot of fur, he skinned the game and as custom demands brought the game and the skin to the King of Menkometrim as a present. The king out of excitement decided to wear the animal skin which instantly got stuck to his body and for weeks tormenting him with heat (high temperatures). All attempts to remove the skin failed.

So, the king summoned all the people in the community to ask if there is anyone who can rescue the situation by taking the skin off his body. Unfortunately for the king, no one in the community had the least of idea that could resolve his situation.

The boys went to their grandmother by night as usual and during their discussions made mention of the king's dilemma to her. Strangely the old lady shared a solution with the boys. Upon returning home the next morning, the boys went to the king's palace. A lot of people gathered to know the medicine the boys have brought to heal the king. To their surprise, the boys only fetched water and poured it on the king. Instantly, the skin became soft and they were able to remove it from the king's body.

Everyone including the king was amazed at how these boys had the solution. So, the king asked them who gave them the idea and that he would like to meet the person. The boys knowing how cruel the king can be asked the king to promise that he will not kill the person if he is told that she is still alive.

Upon the king's promise, they announced their grandmother as the source of knowledge, the king ordered their grandmother to be brought to him, and as a reward, gave the identical twins half of his kingdom and accommodated their grandmother in his palace ever since, to function as the consultant and the chief adviser of the king and his elders. A title and position found today in every renowned palace called "Abrewatia" (the short old lady) she is consulted in difficult cases requiring judicious ruling and judgement.

**Relevance:** Knowledge and wisdom whether present or past are crucial to human development and must be preserved, shared and protected.

The aged have a pile of experience, insight and knowledge making them indispensable. They cannot be exempted or excluded from society because of their age and store of wisdom. The aged must be treated with dignity and respect if not for anything, but for their age. Gratitude and honour should be their portion not oppression, disrespect and elimination.

It is clear that Oti region has several development resources to contribute to modern Ghana which must be consciously recovered, processed and packaged for posterity.

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