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Relations between Totems and Humans, the Dagara of Jirapa in the Upper West Region of Ghana, and Indigenous Belief Systems and Lessons for Modern Environmental Conservation

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Abstract

This essay investigates how the Dagara totemic relationship with totems may be used to protect biodiversity. The Jirapa municipality, one of the municipalities in Ghana's Upper West Region, is the subject of this essay. The study looked into how the totemic connection could be used to advance biodiversity protection and conservation in the Jirapa municipality and elsewhere. It made use of a phenomenological research. No matter where they are located, people who share a totem or, for that matter, a common ancestor, have similar belief systems and take part in similar cultural rituals, according to the study. One of the most important findings of the study was that people would go to great lengths to protect and never destroy their totems, whether they were plants or animals. Because they considered it to be one of them, the people whose totem it was protected the object. This resulted in the preservation of several plant and animal species. Totems represent family, clan ties, and what people view as appropriate or wrong behavior, according to one conclusion. The participants' conversation led them to the conclusion that totems are spiritual beings that defend their human relationships. In conclusion, there are numerous ways that this link might be used to protect biodiversity. The report makes the suggestion that modern conservation organizations, agencies, and partners use indigenous cultural practices in their conservation programs. In order to increase natural resource conservation, communities where these kinds of traditional or cultural practices are still practiced should be encouraged to maintain and spread these traditions abroad.

Keywords: *Jirapa, Dagara, totems, symbiotic relationships, and conservation of nature*

1.0 Introduction

Answering the question "why this research?" will be a major focus of the introduction. The purpose of this essay is to investigate how the Dagara totemic relationship with totems might be used to promote biodiversity. We can learn how this traditional knowledge can support

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biodiversity conservation by looking at the Dagara beliefs, customs, and rituals related to totems. It is crucial to understand totemism first, so to speak. In Ghana's Upper West Region, an indigenous group known as the Dagara of Jirapa has a distinctive cultural interaction with totems. Totems are images or things that stand in for a spiritual bond between people and nature. Bodomo (1989) asserts that totems are rarely feared creatures that are either poisonous, tasty, or inoffensive. The concept that a reptile, fish, or bird can be chosen as a totem comes from the thought that it once assisted an ancestor in surviving. According to legend, the chosen animal in some way contributed to the clan's survival. These totems are supposed to be conserved by their recipients because of their value to our society. The younger generation, however, does not take these creatures seriously in their life since they do not grasp the significance and spiritual protection of these totems.

Totemism, a component of Dagara oral literature, has attracted a lot of research attention. Work by Mark (2017) on Dagaare lesiri and Kyemaaloo (1995) are two examples that highlight this. However, it should be noted that this study concentrated on Dagara clans and their totems. Totemism and oral literature have also been the subject of research by academics with an interest in this genre (Puotege 2009). However, the use of totemism for biodiversity conservation has received very little, if any, research. That is the main subject of this study/paper.

1.1 The Problem statement

The problem that this study has recognized is how to use current cultural traditions for the benefit of the people (environmental conservation) in the face of environmental degradation caused by human activity. How might the Dagara's totemic connection to animal protection be investigated in this situation, especially in light of their work to safeguard critically endangered animal species?

1.2 The Objectives of the Study

- i. To comprehend the Dagara culture's use of totems and the significance of this notion to their interaction with nature;
- ii. To investigate the role that the Dagara's totemic association with totems can play in preserving biodiversity;
- iii. To determine the customs connected with totems that support biodiversity preservation and evaluate how well these customs preserve ecological balance and safeguard endangered species;
- iv. What are the potential advantages and difficulties of using the totemic bond between the Dagara for biodiversity preservation?

1.3 Research Questions

- i. How can the Jirapa municipality's efforts to preserve biodiversity examine the relationship between the Dagaaba people and their totem animals?
- ii. What do the Dagaaba people think about their totemic connections to various species?
- iii. What customs now connected to totems help to preserve biodiversity?
- iv. What advantages does this Dagaaba relationship have for the environment and for the totems as well as for the people?

These are the inquiries that have this study's attention.

2.0 Review of Relevant Literature

While reading related literature, the researchers kept the study's purpose in mind, which is to "investigate how the Jirapa Dagara's relationship with their totems might be used to further the cause of environmental preservation." The purpose of this essay is to investigate how the

Dagara totemic relationship with totems might be used to promote biodiversity. However, before moving forward, one must take into account how totemism has been interpreted by some authorities.

2.1 The Concept of Totemism

Since the goal of this study article is to analyze the totemic relationship that exists between the Dagaaba and their totemism for the purpose of environmental conservation, we will only briefly go over the definition of totemism.

Yabang (1984), asserted that totems are concepts related to animistic religions. He went on to clarify that totems are often animals or other natural figures that represent a spiritually related group of people. He believes that totems are amiable creatures who get along well with the entire clan. He also emphasized the idea that all living things, even birds and reptiles, practice a single religion, and that any that exhibit distinctive characteristics are supposed to follow a different religion.

Totems are animisms that relate to the mystical connections that people believe they have with one another, according to Levi-Strauss (1963). He went on to say that it can be difficult to prove some stories that are connected to specific totems.

A totem is an animal, plant, or other natural thing that acts as the tutelary spirit for a tribe, clan, or family group, according to Braffi (1992), who also clarified this. Native American languages are where the word "totem" originates. It is used to define both plants and animals that are regarded as sharing a unique connection with other people or members of a certain social group. For the purposes of this paper, the authors will stick to these two definitions of totemism, despite the fact that there are many others.

Totems are highly valued by humans. Every community makes use of them in various ways on a daily basis, and the Jirapa municipality's Dagara are no exception. The usefulness of totemic names as a source of identification in relation to the people who revere them is the first argument. As a result, Angbataaye (2014:4), proposed that a name is a valuable source of information, able to convey information about animals (donne), reptiles (bonvuuri), birds (nuuli), gender, tribes (bal), religion, nationality (dogbo zie), and even a person's position within a big society.

This justification is important because Dagaaba employ names that correspond to their totem animals to designate where each tribe might be found geographically. For instance, the tribe Manlr's totem animal is the dwarf (kntcma). Despite being diverse, the tribe is primarily located in Jirapa in the Upper West Region. The clans of Jirapa Township and their respective totems serve as an illustration.

Clans and Totemic Identification in Jirapa Township

It is a diverse community in Jirapa. Within the Municipality, there are numerous clans of settlers, indigenous, and migrants. All of these clans located in the Municipality are also represented by clans in the surrounding villages. Jirapa's inhabitants are locals. They are Manlr, as shown by their clan name. The dwarf (kntm) is the totem. Everyone who lives in the clan is convinced that there are dwarfs in the manlr family. Despite their dominance in Jirapa Township, we were able to locate other tribes using their totems. These are a few of the discovered Clans, along with their totems;

Clan names	Totem in Dagaare	Gloss
Bimbiglee	Gyuuni	‘Vulture’
Kusielee	Zib	‘Python’
Gbeedomɛɛ	Zib	‘Python’
Bowaalɛɛ	ɛbaa	‘Crocodile’
Birifuolɛɛ	Kperɛ	‘Squirrel’
Sozeelɛɛ	ɲmaɲa	‘Monkey’

Although these settlers brought their own totems to Jirapa, they do not dismiss or oppose the reasons why dwarfs were chosen as the Municipality's totem animal. They comply with the laws and ordinances of the community in order to live effectively and quietly there. If the totem of the settlers is also known, the indigenous won't harm it but will instead attempt to prevent it from being murdered by others who could view it as food or a treat.

The next is the role totems play in the health the people and as a source of premonition.

Totems as Early Warning and Sources of Healing

The tribe receives premonition and warning from the totem and assistance in times of illness. Some of these totems are said to aid some tribes' efforts to meet human needs. Even if they are unable to communicate vocally, some animals can point you in the direction of leaves, roots, fruits, or other things that are beneficial to human health. The dwarf clan (Manlɔɔɛɛ) hardly sees their totem ordinarily, but history said a clan member who happens to see the dwarf (Kɔntɔmɔ) with his or her eyes is automatically and potentially a traditional doctor in his respective area and people visit him for spiritual protection and healing. It does not mean that all Manlɔɔɛɛ are herbal doctors but if you are lucky and you encounter any one of them, you are eighty percent sure to be a potential herbal doctor. The dwarfs are such that if you encounter any one of them for the first time, then you are a lucky person but you would not be able to go home for some months. You will be detained by them for spiritual fortification. They would carry you to their location in a different place and enquire from you how you happen to see them. These creatures (dwarfs) cannot be easily seen by human beings because they have the characteristics of human beings but work like spirit. The interrogations of these creatures take days and months before you would be discharged to go home as a herbalist. As you are undergoing scrutiny they also school you on how to treat various kinds of sicknesses when you get back to your destination.

Symbol of Unity

Freud claimed that in Australia, people who share the same totem do not get married. If someone is found to be having sex with someone from a forbidden clan, they will be executed. Mark (2017) substantiates this claim. He confirms that the Dagaaba follow a similar cultural custom. Because they are regarded as blood relatives, those with the same totem cannot get married. He says it is illegal for people of the same blood to get married. Elders on both the man's and the woman's side are urged to counsel the pair to end their relationship when such intolerable circumstances arise. Even if the woman gets pregnant, she is urged to have the baby stillborn to serve as a warning to others. Couples with the same blood relation are not tolerated by the Dagaaba's forefathers. This has been strengthened by a number of academics who were consulted for this study. The people who revere them are also united by totems. The pleasant sensation of being unified with others in friendship and understanding is known as

togetherness. It is the sensation of being physically and emotionally close to another individual. There are things that people who share a totem have in common. They not only enjoy each other's company but also help one another out in times of need. When the need arises, they gather as a family to exchange thoughts and sympathies. This opinion is based on the fact that they all share a same totem or progenitor within that society. Both their wedding and funeral rituals are performed by them simultaneously. If there is any communal labor involved in the traditional rites, people get together and work together to complete it.

These clans are Gbeedomɛɛ, Donaalɛɛ, Kowɛɛɛ share a common totem but settle in different communities but do things in common.

Totems and Mysticism

According to Levi-Strauss (1963), totemism is animism that relates to the mystical link that people perceive to exist between them. It is challenging to prove some myths that are associated with particular totems, he continued. The Dagaaba of Jirapa therefore think that a totem's appearance could be a premonition or early warning sign for an impending occurrence or incident. For instance, the presence of a totem close to a house was frequently interpreted as a message of gladness or an announcement of an emergency for its kin. In order to stress his connection to his totem, a clan member may do so in a number of ways. For example, he may dress in the totem's skin or get a tattoo of the totem's image. Some tribes have members that dance like their totem to disguise themselves.

Sessions for Consultations

The Jiarapa people hold the supernatural abilities of their totems—powers that humans do not possess—as evidence of the mystical nature of their totems. People consult totems for their needs in some places where there are shrines dedicated to them in the hopes that they will work marvels and occasionally things will go in their favour.

Economic Benefits

Still in connection with the belief in the superpowers of these totems, some people within the Jirapa Municipality rely on their totems to perform super natural powers. The Manlɔɔɛɛ clan is not an exception. They have so much trust in their totem in so far as expansion of their businesses is concerned. They have the belief that every successful man or woman's success within the Manlɔɔɛɛ coverage was due to the efforts of their totem.

3.0 Materials and Methods

3.1 Study Subject

The Geographical Area of the Dagaaba

Dagaaba are locals of the Upper West. They are a primarily agricultural people in the north-western region of Ghana, with Burkina Faso being the neighbouring country. Dagaaba reside in the following significant towns: Wa, Jirapa, Nandom, Kaleo, Ullo, Hamile, Lawra, and Daffiama. In the Northern Region of Ghana, which shares a border with the Upper West Region, Dagaare is also spoken in Tuna and the nearby communities (Bodomo 1997). The language (Dagaare) is used outside of the country of origin, according to Bodomo (1997). In Ghana, it has mostly spread due to education and socialization across several regions of the nation. Today, Dagaare is a language that is spoken in places like Bolgatanga, Kumasi, Winneba, and Accra. According to Ghana's 2010 Housing and Population Census, the Upper West Region has a population of roughly 677 763 inhabitants.

3.2 Research Design

The research was mainly a qualitative research which used the descriptive approach

The researchers adopted the descriptive survey as the main study design because the nature of the topic requires a detailed description of the concept of totemism and the significance of totems in the Municipality. During the data collection, we moved to the setting to interact with the participants in order to gather the relevant data for the study. We chose qualitative research design because the data was collected through narration by elders. We collected the views and experiences of participants as data for the study.

Owu-Ewie (2017:26) citing Best and Kahn (2006), explained that a population is a group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common and of an interest to the researcher (s). In this study, the target population are people in these communities; Sigri, Sabuli, Ullo and Jirapa Municipality township in the Upper West Region. These communities were selected because the chosen totems were located in those areas irrespective of their distance.

The sampling used was a purposive one. Norman and Fraenkel (2000 :21) viewed purposive sampling as a technique where researchers use their knowledge of the population to judge whether a particular sample data will be representative and choose those which best meet the purpose of the study. Additionally, purposive sampling is a technique in which elements are chosen based on purpose of the study (Owu-Ewie 2012:29).The population was selected because the researchers believed they were the knowledge community.

The main objective of a purposive sample is to produce a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative of the population. This is often accomplished by applying expert knowledge of the population to select in a non-random manner a sample of elements that represents a cross-section of the population.

A purposive sampling of elderly respondents ranging from four Dagaaba communities were selected to gather the data. The researchers chose respondents between the ages of fifty and sixty ((old people in terms of age who are believed to be both repository of the knowledge of the people and their libraries) because they possess the kind of information that the study needed. The history of totems and its importance can best be narrated by old people in our rural communities. Eighteen elders both males and females, literate and non-literate were made of five elders each in two communities and four each in another two communities were randomly picked through the assistance of key informants. In each community, four different totems were analyzed, their significance to the whole clan. This was done because every community constitutes different settlers that have different totems all together.

3.3 Techniques for gathering data

In this study, a variety of data collection methods were relied on as part of the ethnographic study. Burns and Grove (2005) said, data collection is a systematic process in which the researcher collects relevant information to achieve the research purpose and objectives. The data was collected from field work in four Dagaaba communities in Jirapa Municipality, interviews and observations were the tools mainly relied on. Owu-Ewie (2017:40) explained that interviews are purposeful conversations with subjects to obtain information to answer a researcher's question.

Observation was an instrument used in some communities in the Jirapa Municipality.

During the visit the researchers placed themselves in a way that enabled them to hear and listen to whatever transpired between the elders or those who know much about their totems and their significance to their whole clan. The researchers observed elders who are classified as

historians of their clan often describe why a particular reptile or an animal is made to be their totem up to date.

Also, the researchers observed elders narrate the importance of these totems to the whole clan. Totems play a significant role to tourism as some suggested. Goldstein (1964) said Observation is a method of data collection used by field workers to obtain data by direct observation looking and describing the situation as it is. Goldstein, further added that observation is not limited to use visual aspects of the situation only but it also includes sensual experience such as hearing something and feeling. Next was the use of interviews.

Unstructured interviews were used to gather data. This type of interview has predetermined questions before the interview but these questions are not followed rigidly

Hinne (2012), posited that an unstructured interview is a technique often used to gather data in qualitative studies. As the name signifies, this instrument has no definite structure. It involves free style discussions with interviewees. Researchers who use the unstructured technique always have the purpose of their study in mind, but the question asked and how they are presented to achieve this purpose is left with the interviewer.

Because of the flexibility and freedom involved in the use of an unstructured interview, it can unearth detailed and relevant as well as sensitive information through probing. However, the instrument gathers a massive amount of qualitative data, making analysis laborious and time consuming. Also, because of the freedom, the interviewers have to pursue different interesting tangents, they could be diverted in the process. The interviewee, on the other hand, has to be 'guided' to prevent aimless 'rambling' (Wragg, 2002) while they offered the opportunity to express their opinion, feely and experience in detail.

Participants were interviewed on their experiences and knowledge on traditional beliefs on totems in their clans. Eighteen elders were purposely selected and asked questions on the topic: the concept of totemism in relation to certain species of animals in Jirapa Municipality. The questions asked were in Dagaare and answers given from such questions were the basis for the data collection.

3.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative techniques were used to analyze the data. Based on a content analysis of data from focus groups and in-depth interviews with Dagaaba in Jirapa, this was written. The repeating themes were then identified, harmonized, and displayed after the data had been tape-recorded, transcribed, and located. The identification of the prominent themes was dependent upon the transcription, according to the grounded theory approach used by Charmaz and Belgrave (2012), in order to enable the identification of the dominant themes.

4.0 Key Results

The questions that came up as the research questions were as follows;

How can the Dagaaba relationship with their totems be explored in conservation of biodiversity in the Jirapa municipality?

How do the Dagaaba people perceive their totemic relationship with different species?

What are the benefits of this Dagaaba relationship with their totems to both the people and the totems/environment?

What existing practices associated with totems promote the conservation of biodiversity?

These are the questions that captured the attention of this research.

The first finding was that every clan has a totem. Any married woman brought into the family is told to forbid or not harm the totem in their clan. Though the woman must have come with her totem from her father's home, she is told to forbid the two creatures. The married man is equally forced not to harm or eat his wife's totem for a peaceful co-existence. One elder by name Bayor (2022), intimate that these totems are not just animals or plants, they are spirits, "we therefore consider them as a link between the living and the dead. Remember these were the ones who delivered some of our ancestors/forefathers from danger and harm." In short, totems are very important to people because of the belief that it is as a result of the former's efforts that most clans came into existence.

Another finding was that the majority of the totems were animal-based, although flora was also acknowledged. This suggests that more animal species than plant species that they believed in and are protected by culture within the ethnic group.

Furthermore, the study finding revealed that because totems are revered by the people of Jirapa, they neither eat nor harm these totemic animals and plants. In fact tradition has it that they are supposed to defend these totems just like their human relations.

In answer to the question on what benefits the Dagaaba of Jirapa derive from these totemic relationships they have with their totems, here are some very practical results.

On the fostering of unity among members who hold the same totemic believes, some elders had this to say; "they perform their marriage rites and funeral rites together. The traditional ceremonies are not performed in isolation and if there is communal labour they come together and join hands to do it.

These clans: Gbeedomɛɛ, Donaaleɛ, Kowɛɛ share a common totem and though they settle in different communities they do things in common. They share information with each other if the need arises and marriage among themselves is forbidden." This claim finds agreement with Mark (2017) findings.

Source (s) of Mystics Powers

Next is the belief in the mystic nature or powers wielded by these totems. For instance, some totems are believed to have traditional medicinal powers and as such can treat disease the people believe to be spiritual. Totems are living things created by God to boost and assist mankind to perform many activities. Some of these totems contribute effectively to some clans in search of human needs. Even though they cannot contribute verbally to human kind, some guide and direct you towards certain leaves, roots, fruits or whatsoever that would be of good health to human beings. The people of Jirapa, particularly the township have their totem as the dwarf.

According to one elder called Agborebanue of this dwarf clan, the dwarf clan (Manlɔɔɛɛ) hardly sees their totem ordinarily, but history has it that a clan member who happens to see the dwarf (Kɔntɔmɔ) with his or her eyes is automatically and potentially a traditional doctor in his respective area and people visit him for spiritual protection and healing. It does not mean that all Manlɔɔɛɛ are herbal doctors but if one is lucky to encounter his or her totem (the dwarf), that person is sure to be a potential herbal doctor. The dwarfs are such that if you encounter any one of them for the first time, then you are a lucky person but you would not be able to go home for some months. You will be detained by them for spiritual fortification. They would carry you to their location in a different place and enquire from you how you happen to see them. These creatures (dwarfs) cannot be easily seen by human beings because they have the characteristics of human beings but work like spirit. The interrogations of these creatures take days and months before you would be discharged to go home as a herbalist. As you are

undergoing scrutiny they also school you on how to treat various kinds of sicknesses when you get back to your destination.

Again, the researchers found out that Sigri is one community where they have such a shrine called ‘Buyeli’. Any time there is drought, an elderly woman prepares ‘wormo’ local cakes and sings sorrowful songs before the shrine, expressing their worries of how their children are dying of thirst. They do it with the hope that since these totems were the first creatures to save their forefathers, they would be in a better position to plead with the Supreme Being to listen to their grievances. If the women really go there with sincerity, before they reach home, clouds will gather and it will rain on that same day. The totem for Sigri people is the python and they are called Gbeedomεε. It does not mean that the pythons are powerful than the Supreme Being but the women and the entire village have trust and belief in them as intermediaries to the Supreme Being.

Similarly is the belief in the abilities of these totems to expand the businesses of those who believe in them. An elder from this Manlɔɔrεε clan told us the clan members have so much trust in their totem in so far as expansion of their businesses is concerned. They have the belief that every successful man or woman’s success within the Manlɔɔrεε coverage was due to the efforts of their totem. The following crops and animal rearing can progress successfully if you have trust in your totem within the Manlɔɔrεε clan;

Dagaare	Gloss
<i>Noori guoluu</i>	‘the rearing of fowls’.
<i>Boore guoluu</i>	‘rearing of goats’.
<i>Nii guoluu</i>	‘cattle rearing’.
<i>Sensɔɔ koɔbo</i>	‘cultivation of tiger nut’.
<i>Peere guoluu</i>	‘sheep rearing’.
<i>Seŋkaa koɔbo</i>	‘cultivation of groundnut’.
<i>Kamaana koɔbo</i>	‘cultivation of maize’.
<i>Beŋε koɔbo</i>	‘cultivation of beans’.

In the above mentioned activities within the Manlɔɔrεε clan, our respondents alluded to the fact that people produced enough for commercial purposes based on the belief in their totems. Farmers believe they get good yields due to the support given by their totem within Manlɔɔrεε coverage. Farmers, who have the belief, trust and confidence in their totem progress with their business as years pass by though they sometimes encounter financial challenges and losses. Most importantly, people who are in dire need of children seek the intervention of their totem to have children.

Traditional Early Warning Systems

Another result pointed to the fact that believers of these totems see them as a source of early warning. Thus they are very helpful to the believers since they do not reveal themselves or appear in the homestead for no apparent reason. The only time these totems appear is when there is an emergency.

An emergency is a serious, sudden unforeseen situation that may cause injury, loss of life or damage to a human being. In most communities, some totems can have the gift of predicting what would negatively or positively happen to their human relations, in the near future, so they design a way of communicating non-verbally to its people. Thus, one important finding was that in some villages, for example in Sabuli, it is said that if an elderly man or woman would

pass on, their totem the porcupine' seene' would give them a signal by demonstrating its displeasure on trees with its arrows. When this happen, any elder who comes across it and can interpret it will read meaning from it but he will not be able to tell when such an unfortunate incident will occur. This happens in Sabuli by the clans 'Banyenē' and other totems also have their ways of expressing their frustration to their clan members which would be different from Banyenē clan in the Sabuli area. This warning signal is only known to the people of Sabuli alone and its surrounding communities. They have a common totem and share common thoughts. Any time a married woman is pregnant in the above mentioned clan for the first time, the totem pays the entire house a visit. This is to signify a safe delivery.

5.0 Discussions

Using Braffi's (1992), assertion as an entry point of the symbiotic relationship that exist between the people of Jirapa and their totems, the researchers see the possibility of leveraging on this totemic relation in conserving the biodiversity of the Jirapa municipality and other area. According to Braffi (1992), totems represent first and foremost, the clan's tribal ancestors, as well as its tutelary spirit and protector. Members of a totem have a sacred responsibility not to kill their totem and to refrain from consuming its meat. Any breach of these regulations will result in penalty. Thus, while totems play their significant role of offering protection and other forms of assistance to the people, the people owe it a sacred duty to ensure they preserve and keep them safe from harm. Thus, this is where the idea of conservation of biodiversity comes from.

The totemic trait is inherent not just in a single annual or entity, but in all members of the species. Festivals are conducted from time to time in which members of a totem replicate or depict the motions and features of their totems in ceremonial dances. The totem is passed down through either the maternal or paternal ancestry. In the Dagaaba tradition, children inherit their totem from the paternal side, though they will not eat or harm their mother's totem across the whole region.

Management and conservation of wildlife

The reduction of animal and plants species has been very alarming and devastating to the ecology of the region. The adherence to totemic beliefs in the study area has had positive impact in nature conservation in the Jirapa municipality. The success chalked is attributed to indigenous African belief systems like taboos and totems. For instance, it is forbidden to kill and eat totem animals such as frogs, crocodiles, and pythons in Jirapa villages this has accounted for the reduction of extinction of animals and plants and managing biodiversity.

The Jirapa totemic story is a masterpiece of a cultural landscape that can be showcased as an example of how a people's belief system and cultural practices can be used positively. Minor gods and other spirits are believed to reside in the trees and other natural objects in Jirapa. These shrines, which are in the form of wetlands and forests or woodlots, are therefore preserved. This therefore is a check on the irresponsible use of natural resources.

Controlling the exploitation of species that have a material or spiritual connection to the civilization is a customary practice in some situations (Etiendem et al., 2011). Traditional sacred woodlands are a prime example of an African inheritance that upholds the community's spiritual and material values. Relationships between nature and communities are influenced by cultural values and society perceptions of nature and the environment. While culture may help conserve biodiversity in the short term, if authorities don't support active local community involvement in protected areas at the same time, their policy may not succeed in preserving biodiversity in the long run (Adeyemi & Ayinloye, 2020).

In Ghana, preserving resources requires a respect for the ancestors. Traditional Ghanaians believe that ancestors have the authority to punish people who violate social rules or endanger the environment. Because it is believed that they are the residence of the dead, burial and ceremonial places must be kept as sacred. Farming, hunting, and tree cutting are prohibited in these areas until a series of rituals have been performed. Ecological species important to society and the economy can be found in the sacred groves (Appiah Opoku, 2006). In Nigeria, cultural values were preserved by enforcing traditional taboos (rules) and punishments, especially among the Igbo community. To preserve "sacred groves" for improved resource management and preservation was the ultimate goal of these initiatives (Anoliefo et al., 2003). Zimbabwe's Shona environmental taboos encourage ethical environmental management. The Shona people work to use nature's resources sustainably and have an esoteric understanding of the environment based on a few "environmental taboos" (Chemhuru & Masaka, 2010). The Shona people are still influenced by traditional values, taboos, and beliefs in the management and conservation of their natural resources while being exposed to cultural globalization. To save nonhuman species that are in danger of going extinct, conserve water resources, protect natural flora and animals, and preserve the ecosystem, Shona taboos are essential (Chemhuru & Masaka, 2010). They provide a foundation for environmental ethics by fostering a healthy relationship between people and nature.

Respecting taboos and totems ensure that their animal resources grow in quantity (Bonye, 2008). Traditionally protected areas are related to holy forests, water supplies, burial grounds, and sacred hills where shrines can be found nearby habitations or far out in the fields, according to Millar (2004b). He continued by saying that these sacred places are where trees and plants are allowed to grow unrestrictedly and where reptiles, birds, fish, and other animals are allowed to dwell freely without worrying about being hunted or subject to human interference. Therefore, only experts (Tindanas, fetish priests, rain makers, and other spirit mediums) are allowed to administer these territories. As a result, there were taboos that restricted certain activities and community members from entering certain restricted areas. As a result, these places survived for a while and provided a biodiversity reservoir despite the ideological conflict (Millar, 2004a). The administration of these locations is essential for the community's spiritual nourishing, according to Millar (2004a).

According to Millar, Ghana's spiritual culture is the primary factor influencing how well the traditional institutions are able to manage the country's natural resources. For clans that follow these customs and beliefs, wildlife species that are used as totems in various African regions have historical or sociocultural value in addition to symbolic meaning.

Because everyone upheld and adhered to the values, all totems were well-protected (Venkataraman & Cox, 2000). The beliefs were designed to be followed since they each had consequences or noble objectives that made people want to uphold them rather than violate them.

Animal Protection

Animal conservation, according to Santiago (2017), is the process of preserving and protecting the creatures, plants, and their habitat. According to Santiago, over exploitation, pollution, poaching, deterioration or destruction, and climate change are the main issues.

Santiago (2017), made several recommendations for safeguarding these totems in their natural environment. Given that the youth who are not adhering to these cultural values may in future disturb and endangered these totemic species, he suggested discouraging people from engaging in bush burning and hunting. However, conservation issues can be solved if people are made aware of how bush fire affects the environment.

One of the regions with a high rate of bush burning is the Upper West. The parties involved do not always think about the consequences. The few animals that are still alive are killed, and the others relocate to safer areas. The belief in totemism if strengthened will go a long way to deter such irresponsible behaviour that can have disastrous consequences on the environment. Most individuals might not be able to visibly identify their totems if caution is not taken in the near future.

Mark (2017), discussed totems in relation to society, but he did not examine how the next generation may preserve and utilize these animals.

The Necessity of Protecting Totems

Plants with special medicinal properties, which form the basis of our medicine, are protected by conservation. Our own health is in danger when the ecosystem collapses. We finally save ourselves by preserving endangered species. The oil of a dead python should be administered to the affected child to help them fall asleep, according to Gbedom (the name of a clan in Jirapa), when a youngster has trouble falling asleep at night.

Additionally, conservation will help the next generation learn about and have access to their totems. As a result, the youth's views about their totems will become more concrete, and the youth's abstract imagination and mental image of what their totem might look like will vanish. Some people have never actually seen their totems; instead, they have only heard about them through folklore since the particular totem is so uncommon. Therefore, it is crucial that this research take conservation into account.

Furthermore, according to the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), giving tourists the opportunity to witness African animals in their natural settings has had a significant positive impact on the economies of Africa. According to the AWF, ecotourism appears to support wildlife conservation. Ecotourism plays a key role in making wildlife conservation in the poor countries commercially viable, which can help protect important habitats.

Education: Students of all ages can benefit from studying animals and their environments. Teachers take their pupils on field trips to various zoos so they can get up close and personal with some animals and meet other endangered species that are thought to be their totems for the first time. Teachers may have fewer educational resources for effective teaching and learning if animal conservation efforts fail.

Regarding Agriculture, encouraging wildlife conservation may help ensure the availability of food in the future. While a single blight might wipe out an entire field of a single crop, numerous diseases can affect individual crops. Consider the fact that monkeys, certain clans' totem animals, are capable of destroying a variety of crops, fruits, and tubers that would have been useful in the near future. By protecting these creatures, a lot of people could avoid future food shortages.

It is obvious that totems have a significant influence on the Dagaaba of Jirapa, which explains why they hold their mascots in such high regard. The duty to preserve and defend these animals has never been violated because of the unique relationship that exists between humans and their totems. It is safe to assume that the typical traditional Dagara see their totem as a relative rather than an actual animal in this way. They stand for family, clan affiliation, and what the neighborhood deems to be acceptable or unacceptable behavior. The general public believes that these totems are supernatural creatures who protect their human relationships in such dire circumstances.

6.0 Recommendation

In the Jirapa municipality in particular and the Upper West Region in general, totemism is an essential management and protection strategy for biodiversity. It is a successful technique for

conserving natural resources because clan totems are fully protected by regional organizations and practices. This conservation technique ought to be endorsed because it doesn't entail the use of force.

Indigenous cultural practices should be included into conservation efforts by the organizations, agencies, and partners involved in modern conservation. A deliberate effort should be undertaken to persuade people to revert to adopting and practicing indigenous socio-cultural customs in order to safeguard our pristine natural resources, particularly those whose rates of regeneration have been found to be slower than the rates of exploitation.

It is important to promote the utilization of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems by the government and other decision-makers. To strengthen the conservation of natural resources, communities where these kinds of traditional or cultural practices are still used should be encouraged to uphold them and spread them to new areas.

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