



Indigenous Religious Environmentalism in Africa

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Introduction

It has been said that the worldview of a people is like a super structure that anchors behavioural patterns, providing an ideological framework that underpins society's interpretation and interaction with the world.¹

The worldview of indigenous people can be understood in terms of their indigenous knowledge systems, I.K.S., which is a unique intellectual foundation that embodies the different corpora of practices, thoughts, skills, techniques and epistemologies. It is a system of knowledge that is invented over a long period of time, passed on by generations, which existed in indigenous communities prior to the advent of exogenous/foreign ones. I.K.S.'s relevance to this paper is that it encompasses indigenous spirituality which consists of beliefs, values, practices and rituals concerning the meaning of life and the universe, and includes lifestyle practices that bring

harmony between humans and the environment.

The I.K.S. of ethnic groups like the Asante Sekyere – from the tropical rainforest and coastal shrub of Southern Ghana – challenge the Wittgensteinian school of thought that there is one objective worldview, and confirm the growing consensus that there is a relativity of worldviews.² Thinkers like Ohaegbular believe that the African appropriation of shared human experience is unique³, whilst globally it has been observed that indigenous peoples have a peculiar perception of reality that directly underpins their understanding and attitude towards human experiences, including the environment.⁴ It is this unique understanding that we explore in the context of the Asante Sekyere community's I.K.S, which we use as a framework to explore the cosmology, beliefs and values that connect with their environment.

The Asante Sekyere are a subgroup of the Asante (also known as Ashanti) people, who are themselves an ancillary *Oman* (nation) of the major Akan ethnic group. This paper is intended as a contribution towards the prevailing discourse on the usefulness, or otherwise, of I.K.S. to the conservation of the environment. It examines the relevance of the indigenous spiritual customs and cosmology of the Asante to ecological harmony and sustainability, and it does so by exploring the Asante Sekyere⁵ community. The study opines that Sekyere I.K.S. is rooted in an indigenous worldview which creates a link between spirituality and the environment, set in a system of values that form the basis of a type of 'indigenous religious environmentalism'. This paper will describe how the Sekyere's strong affinity with nature underpins their attitude towards the environment, and how this connection has been weakened by the historic impact of Western colonialism and the prevailing phenomenon of Westernisation and its cultural ramifications.

Westernisation and Asante cosmology

Most aspects of the culture of Asante, and by extension Sekyere, were suppressed by European colonialism, through Westernisation and Christianisation. However, vestiges of the indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices still exist today. Asante spiritual traditions determined the Sekyere's worldview on metaphysics (concept of time, destiny, soul and

the afterlife), values, technology and methods of inquiry, and crucially their understanding about life and the environment. That tradition also defined the nature of the relationship that should exist between humans and the physical environment in order to make life liveable. Such a relationship was based on reverence and compassion, i.e. human reverence for the transcendent sacred within the environment, and compassion for the fragility of the environment and its limited resources. The vital need to conserve the environment for posterity and the continuity of human life made such a relationship essential.

Currently most societies in post-colonial Africa disregard indigenous systems, especially spiritual values, and consequently overlook their potential to facilitate sustainable local development. This is directly linked to the beginning of Western colonisation, dating back to 15th century, which introduced a Eurocentric Christian mindset that deemed local customs as inferior and superstitious; a mindset carried through the imposition of their rule, economic mechanisms, philosophical and social values, formal schooling systems and faith on the 'conquered'.⁶ These suppressed the indigenous customs and spirituality of the subjugated ethnic groups and nations.

The dominance of exogenous civilisations and paradigms in Africa continues to draw more of the younger generation away from the African cultural milieu, subsequently resulting in disinterest in the potential



of indigenous ‘knowledges’⁷ to solve social problems. And yet, it is apparent that even with rapid advances in Western sciences and technologies, the global environment of the twenty-first century is still degrading. It is clear that the scientific and technological values of Western culture are limited and that their know-how is not *conditio sine qua non* for dealing with the environmental problems at hand. Ecological protectionism is a cross-cultural issue that requires us to go beyond the dominant Western mindset that initiated this disconnect in places like Ghana in the first place. Thus a

return towards indigenous knowledge systems could help provide sustainable insights and practical approaches to the environment, and we now turn to the case study of the Sekyere to illustrate the potential for future ecological protectionism.

Sekyere Spiritual Worldview and Environmental Conservation

Sekyere spirituality contains ‘ecocentric’ values and practices which are derived from environmental considerations. As is characteristic of indigenous African spirituality, the Sekyere’s have a variety of beliefs encompassing a transcendent



reality (God or Goddess with many manifestations); the veneration of ancestors; nature spirits that animate the natural environment (also known

as animism); and totemic beliefs based around a sacred identification with an animal, plant or natural phenomenon. These components are firmly based

in and operate within the concepts of ecological 'curiosity'⁸ and ecological 'concern'⁹, or stewardship.

Sekyere cosmology centres around the eternal question: 'Where does it all come from?' Sekyere cosmology posits that the world (*ewiase*) including the earth (*asase*), plants, animals and humans were created by *Odomankoma Nyame* (Creator God). Though the specifics as to how creation was done are not given in Sekyere creation myth, names and titles given to the Creator reflect this notion. They believe that after creation God put an aspect of Himself in all creation, an aspect called *sunsum* (spirit). God is believed to have also created *abosom* (divinities) to protect humans and guard various aspects of creation such as the earth, itself understood to be the mother goddess, *Asase Yaa*.

The Sekyere believe that all natural things are either domiciled by a deity and/or have their own inherent spirits, so nature is not just a physical entity. Nature shares its in-built spirit, which is part of the Creator, with humankind,¹⁰ thus, giving humankind a kinship with nature.

This human affinity with nature is further seen in totemism. The Sekyere have eight clans and each has an animal which it regards as a totem (*agyinaboa*) and kinsman. This kinship relationship is not physical but spiritual.¹¹ Sometimes the relationship between a clan and an animal may not necessarily be kinship but there may be certain qualities that a clan admires in an animal and, consequently, adopts it as a totem. This is based on the belief that animal

life is endowed with different types of intelligence and characteristics from which humans can learn and find meaning to life.¹² However having adopted the animal, the relationship becomes spiritual. Below are the clans and their associated totems:

Aduana – Dog
Agona – Parrot
Asakyiri – Vulture or eagle
Asona – Crow and *Asona wo*
(a snake)
Asenee – Bat
Bretuo – Leopard
Ekoona – Roan
Oyoko – Hawk

The spiritual component, or God aspect, of nature is considered to be the activating life principle in nature. Consequently, priority is given to the spiritual aspect because it is prior in the order of existence and function.¹³ Moreover, the spiritual property of nature has its own hierarchy, whereby some plant and animal species are believed to have strong or weak (*sasa*) spirits. For example, *Odum* (*Chlorophora excelsa*), *Esa* (*Celtis mildbraedii*), *Twe-neboa* (*Entant drophragma*), *Homa-kyem* (*Dalbergia saxatalis*) and *Odii* (*Okuobaka aubrevillei*) are some plants with strong spirits, whilst the bongo (*otrom*), leopard (*etwie*), and tiger (*sebo*)¹⁴ are strong spirited animals.

The Sekyere worldview sees all existence as related. Though this relationship is often limited to human-human and human-sacred relationships,¹⁵ it transcends them to include human-nature relationships too.¹⁶ Thus,



a Sekyere is a being-in-relation not only with the Creator and fellow humans but also in relationship with all of creation. This relationship is embodied in the belief that the essential nature of all creation is, *Odomankoma Nyame*, the aspect of the 'supreme creator God' that is endowed in creation. Moreover, the worldview posits that nature is the arena where the sacred is manifested (a nature temple), where the sacred is at

once inside and outside of nature, and the spiritual dimension is unlimited by the physical dimension of nature.

Religious environmentalism, the religious perception and practice that nature is considered sacred and in need of protection, is embodied in the Sekyere worldview, which aims to establish healthy relations of community and interdependence between humans and the rest of creation. It holds the

view that the relationships that exist between humans and the natural environment are greatly enforced if religious and ethical moral norms inform such relationships.¹⁷ The Sekyere alignment with this moral intention is evidenced by their attitude towards nature, as informed by values couched as 'taboos'; such taboos underpin their I.K.S. and the values enshrined within them. To demonstrate the indigenous religious environmentalism inherent in the Sekyere I.K.S it is informative to turn to aspects of their spirituality relating to natural phenomena, firstly we turn to the connection between water bodies and the taboos that regulate them.

Water bodies

The major water bodies found in the Sekyere locality are the rivers *Afram*, *Onwam*, *Afiafi*, *Onwam*, *Mukuruwa* and *Yaaya*; and other rivers *Atonsu*, *Kwaabena*, *Abura Kofi*, *Gyedu* and *Abena*. There are also numerous creeks and streams. The usage of these rivers is regulated by some values couched as taboos, too numerous to list, but the following are examples of some of the rules that are inspired by these taboos:

- i. The removal/destruction of vegetation along the banks of these water bodies;
- ii. Defecating along their banks;
- iii. Using chemicals to fish in them, especially, river *Afram*;
- iv. There are specific days that fetching water from these rivers and workings on farmlands in proximity to some of the rivers are forbidden. These days include: Tuesdays (all lands of some ratio around the river *Abena*

e.g. *Abenaso*, *Adaawa* and *Agyedua* all in Kwaman; lands around river *Mukuruwa* at Odwaa-Asokore and river *Yaaya* of Seniagya); Thursdays (all lands around river *Onwam* of Kumawu); Fridays (farmlands around river *Afiafi* of Effiduase) and Sundays (lands around part of river *Afram* on Sekyere lands);

- v. Stealing food stuffs from farmlands around the rivers;
- vi. Pre-puberty pregnancy -- only river *Atonsu*;
- vii. Stepping into rivers with foot wear on -- *Gyedu*, *Atonsu* and *Mukuruwa*; and
- viii. Fishing especially in the smaller rivers between the months of March and October.

Earth

Like many indigenous societies the Sekyere deem the Earth to be endowed with a motherly spirit which sustains life. One major drum language of the Sekyere declares:

Earth while I am yet alive,
It is upon you that I put my trust,
Earth who receives my body.....
We are addressing you,
And you will understand ...¹⁸

The notion that the Earth is a mother or a grandmother emphasises a deep link between the Sekyere and the Earth. It becomes clearer if one views this motherhood of the Earth through the role of women in an indigenous society such as Sekyere. Women help society to grow through their child bearing and in the course of bringing up children

they encounter all sorts of hardships. Yet they show love and affection to their children. Moreover, they sustain life through the provision of food. To the Sekyere the Earth performs similar functions, for they grow their food on it for sustenance and when the living rejects a corpse the Earth receives it.

However the link goes further than this. The Sekyere have a saying: *Nnote na ode nwenee nipa* (lit. Soil was used to mould the human being). This indicates their perception that humans were created out of the Earth and at death a person goes back to the Earth. Thus the Earth is considered to be the home of the ancestors.¹⁹ This link between the Sekyere and the Earth is further strengthened when one considers the Sekyere belief that a mother goddess called *Asase Yaa* inhabits the Earth.

Earth in the form of land is also linked with the ancestors. The link is due to two factors. The ancestors are regarded as the real owners of land and particular places where the ancestors are buried create a link between the living and the ancestors. The Sekyere call land belonging to the ancestors *Nananom asase* -- 'Grandparents land'. Rattray confirms this by asserting that among the Asante the ancestors are the real owners of the land and 'they still continue to take a lively interest in the land from which they had their origin or which they once owned.'²⁰ The Sekyere have a deeper understanding of land not only through the burying of their ancestors in it but also through the practice of burying the umbilical cord. Nelson-Adjakpey explains that

this practice, which also takes place in other parts of Ghana, creates a link between the person and the place where the cord is buried. This, he says, is due to the special role of the umbilical cord joining the mother and child together.²¹ The Sekyere buries the umbilical cord to link a person to the land (Mother Earth's Womb).

Consequently, the Sekyere observe the following taboos in respect to the Earth and land in general.

- i. Tilling land on Thursdays;
- ii. Selling of land;
- iii. Hunting on lands where the ancestors are buried;
- iv. Any form of land use that leads to its degradation;
- v. Working on the land during certain sacred days/time;
- vi. Having sex in the bush;
- vii. Suicide, murder and all manner of death in the bush;
- viii. Burying pregnant women without removing the foetus;
- ix. Stealing items from farms and
- x. Burying people and building or tilling the land without seeking her permission through libation and sacrifice.

Plants

Besides the general outlook towards plant life, as a source of food for example, specific attitudes were observed among the Sekyere towards trees and forests. There is a practice among the Sekyere where trees are ritually planted as the foundation of towns. This ritual is called *kuro gyina* (lit. 'stabilising the town'). The idea is



that the trees so planted would ensure the growth in size and population of the town. In all the towns that these trees were found the following taboos were observed:

- i. The branches of the trees could not be cut by anybody except the chief's servants (*nhenkwaa*);
- ii. The trees should not be felled and even if dead they are felled only after appropriate rites were performed;
- iii. No one should urinate around them;

- iv. Menstruating women should not go near them and

- v. Birds found on them should not be killed.

In addition to trees, strips of forest are reserved for a multitude of reasons, but often it is the case that the forest serves as the burial place for members of royal families. For example, a strip of forest is called *Mpanin Adae* -- 'Elders sleeping place'.

We also observed the attitude of reverence to trees and plants believed to be inhabited by deities and those

with strong spirits. Those trees are not to be felled; the creeping plants are not to be cut; medicine men that use parts of these plants for healing perform rituals like libation and sacrifice before they take any part.

Animals

As well as the totemic relations that the Sekyere have with some animals, they also keep domesticated animals such as cats, dogs, chicken, cows, goats and sheep. The first two are often kept as pets and the rest for dietary purposes. The unnatural death of a domesticated animal is seen as an omen and interpreted to mean that a mishap would have happened to the owner or a close relative if the animal had not died. We even learnt that some owners consult diviners to know the cause of the death of their pets. Others also make sacrifices to their deities and thank their souls, or possibly relatives, for helping them escape possible danger.

Discussions with medicine men explained that such practices come from the belief that over time a mystical link and spiritual bond is created between the owner, his or her relatives on one side, and the animal on the other. They say '*Aboa ne ne wura sunsum ye baako*' (lit. The animal and its owners' *sunsum* become one'). The *sunsum* relationship is believed to function as a protection for human life, which is conceived to be more 'valuable' than that of animals, and so by mystical arrangement the pet's life must be sacrificed for that of the owner.

Values

The Sekyere's attitudes towards these aspects of nature, which are embodied in their way of life, reveal positive values that correspond with the discourse on religious environmentalism. When we go beyond the taboos and really understand the values enshrined in them, then we see their relevance. It is our opinion that knowledge is holistic when it includes values and in environmental discourse we need to embrace any form of knowledge that positively impacts on the environment. We do not argue that everything about the Sekyere spirituality is good for environmental conservation. Nicolson rightly argues that certain ethical challenges Africa faces, like corruption and authoritarianism, indicates that it is simplistic to think that the wholesale embracing of traditional African ethics is a panacea to the crises Africa is facing.²² In the same way a wholesale adoption of Sekyere worldview cannot be a solution to contemporary environmental crises bedeviling Africa and the rest of the world. Nevertheless, lessons can be learnt from the Sekyere for a meaningful environmental discourse. It is with this understanding that we now endeavour to unearth the values in the Sekyere way of life, including their taboos.

Respect

Respect is an important value among the Sekyere. Though often this respect is limited to the elderly and generally to humans, careful observation from our discussion on nature reveals that the value of respect is geared towards

all creations. The respect is often seen in the form of veneration of aspects of nature because of their association with the sacred and *filial* relationship with humans, as we see in the totemic values of the community. Respect is translated into attitudes such as not defecating around water bodies; not exposing the *nakedness* of water bodies by clearing strips of forest around them; not disturbing the honoured ancestors with gunshot in pieces of forest serving as their final place of rest, a taboo that also benefits animals who use these places as sanctuaries.

Communalism

Communalism is the sense of belonging, connectedness or 'we-feeling' among a group of people that result in the group participating in a shared community.²³ This sense of connectedness as already argued in this paper extends to cover all

creation. After all if the Earth is a mother or grandmother, then ontologically, every Sekyere person is related to all creations. Humans are in relationship with not only humans and the sacred but also all creation. This idea, though quite absent in Western philosophical reflection, has been advanced by Aldo Leopold. Land ethics, Leopold explains, 'simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively, the land.'²⁴ Furthermore, '[a] thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community [and abiotic community]. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.'²⁵ Communalism also imposes obligation on all members in the group²⁶, including the duty of ensuring the perpetuation of the group by preserving its members and extends to both 'biotic and abiotic communities'. Nature plays





its role in sustaining humans, whereby the environment meets the basic needs of human survival. Sadly, some humans tend to exploit it because of their failure to see the interdependence that should exist between humans and nature. By contrast, the Sekyere have an environmental ethic that advocates a symbiotic relationship between humans and nature through a sense of community, whereby the life of humans is interwoven relationally with that of all creation.

Co-operation

It follows from the discussion so far that all humanity must co-operate to nourish creation. The value of co-operation is a *sine qua non* in any environmental discourse. Though the Sekyere understanding of community is limited to the sub-ethnic group, and to an extent the rest of the Asante, there is a strong indication that there is also a broader understanding of community from the saying *Nnipa nyinaa ye Onyame mma* – All humanity are children of *Onyame* (God). The implication is that there must be a confluence of all paths of spirituality in the protection of God's creation. It is the failure of Western scientific ideas and foreign religious realities, notably Christianity and Islam, that has led to the dismissive labelling of Sekyere religious environmentalism as 'superstitious' and 'nature worship'.

It is a strong belief among the Sekyere that breaking an environmental taboo which constitutes sin does not just affect the sinner but also the whole family and larger community. Consequently, it is a team-effort that

requires all sections of the community to work together, and where one section fails the whole community's actions are rendered invalid. For this reason the resource of all religious and ethical values, scientific values, economic and political values must be brought to bear in a co-operative way, as humankind moves to fulfil its obligation towards a neglected member of the community of creatures i.e. Nature.

Care

A corollary to the above discussion is the 'ethics of care'. Ogungbemi, a chief proponent of this virtuous value, explains ethics of care to mean an outlook in life that engenders humans not taking more than we need from nature. He explains thus:

In our traditional relationship with nature, man and women recognize the importance of water, land and air management. To our traditional communities the ethics of not taking more than you need from nature is a moral code. Perhaps this explains why earth, forests, rivers and wind and other natural objects are traditionally believed to be both natural and divine. The philosophy behind this belief may not necessarily be religious, but a natural means by which the human environment can be preserved. The ethics of care is essential to traditional understanding of environmental protection and conservation.²⁷

This value is not unique to Africans, and for that matter the Sekyere, because it is universal. Moreover, as Ogungbemi rightly point out there are some fundamental questions on this

value of care. These questions relate to the criteria of determining the needs of humans and managing the human tendency towards greed, and the necessity to enforce a rule of need.²⁸ The value of care implies not 'hurting' the environment. Over exploitation, of any form, shows the absence of the value of care.

Reciprocity

To the Sekyere, the value of care is a gesture of reciprocity. Reciprocity is a form of showing gratitude for a past benefit. A Sekyere proverb: '*benkum dware nifa, na nifa adware benkum*' (lit. The left (hand) washes the right (hand) for the right (hand) to wash the left (hand)' captures this value succinctly. Reciprocity encompasses gratitude, which is one of the most important values of the Sekyere.²⁹ It is a truism that humankind has benefitted immensely from nature and must reciprocate. This value of reciprocity is articulated by the address to the Earth as indicated in the Sekyere drum language above. It simply says that 'humans depend on the Earth'. Dependency is reciprocal in order not to be parasitic unless the other party cannot in any way reciprocate. Among the Sekyere even a simple 'thank you' from a pauper is a blessing to the giver and to the pauper.

Values in religious environmental discourse must be expressed in practical terms and must be reciprocal in relation to Nature. The taboo of prohibiting any form of action that degrades land allows for regeneration, which is a step towards reciprocity. The Sekyere

allow their farmlands to fallow for long periods for regeneration. Many of the taboos that manage etiquette towards land, animals and plants are expressions of reciprocity. The value of care obliges us not to harm the environment and the value of reciprocity imposes an obligation on humankind to repair the damage caused to nature through human activities.

Conclusion

Western colonial enterprise in Africa, led to the introduction of certain religious, cultural, political, social, and educational concepts which were not pro-environment, that instead promoted the ideals of materialism, unfettered consumerism and capitalism. Due to the impact of these foreign philosophies and environmentally unsound ways of life, the Sekyere worldview, that created a mutually dependency between human life and nature, has been challenged. The challenge is in the form of ideas that decouple human life from nature, thereby making humans exploit nature. This egoistic outlook is a big challenge to the Sekyere worldview, which seeks the promotion of harmony between the biotic and abiotic spheres of the world. Nonetheless, the Sekyere contact with the rest of the world could offer opportunities for the sustainable use of the environment. Sekyere spirituality possesses the capacity to generate knowledge and pragmatic interventions for environmental conservation. Some paradigms in Western science, and values in other religions such as the Abrahamic faiths, complement those of the Sekyere in providing answers to the

prevailing environmental devastation. The study shows that in order to solve the present problem of environmental degradation, humankind needs to

examine the cultural resources of indigenous people so that they might seek alternative ways to nurture the earth and ecosphere together.

Notes

- 1 Diederik Aerts, Leo Apostel, et al, *World Views: From Fragmentation to Integration*, (Internet Edition 2007) originally published in Brussels: VUP Press, 1994, pp. 8-9. www.vub.ac.be/CLEA/pub/books/worldviews.pdf [accessed on 28 June 2012].
- 2 For example see Michael Kearney, *Worldview*, Novato, California: Chandler and Sharp, 1984.
- 3 F. Ohaegbunan, *Towards an Understanding of the African Experience, from Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Lanham MD: The University Press of America, 1990, p. 22.
- 4 Consult Gloria Emeagwali, "African Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Implications for the Curriculum," in *Ghana in Africa and the World: Essays in Honor of Adu Boahen*, ed. Toyin Falola New Jersey: African World Press, 2003. www.africahistory.net/AlKhtm [accessed on 26 June 2007]; Michael R. Dove, "Indigenous People and Environmental Politics," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 35, 2006, pp. 191-208. www.abdn.ac.uk/anthropology/notes06/Level4/AT4515/03-Dove_2006IP_and_env29.pdf. [assessed on 29 June 2012].
- 5 They can also be called Sekyere. Hereafter, we will use the term Sekyere.
- 6 De-Valera N.Y.M. Botchway, "Descending the Ivory Tower: Unveiling Khmet's Legacy in Africa's Quest for an Afromorphous University," in *Polishing the Pearls of Ancient Wisdom: Exploring the Relevance of Endogenous African Knowledge Systems for Sustainable Development in Postcolonial Africa*, ed. D. D. Kuupole and De-Valera N. Y. M. Botchway, Cape Coast, Ghana: Faculty of Arts, University of Cape Coast, and Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development, 2010, p. 39.
- 7 The term 'knowledges' indicates that knowledge expresses and manifests itself in a variety of ways.
- 8 This implies the study and detection of new features about nature. This pursuit of information is for the purposes of explanation and comprehension of the dynamics of the environment.
- 9 This denotes a commitment to safeguard and enrich the environment, which is a spirit, through the attitudes of empathy and respect.
- 10 See R.S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti*, London: Oxford University Press, 1927, p. 2.
- 11 Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect*, Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974, p. 59.
- 12 E. Dovlo, "The Place of Nature in African Traditional Religion," typescript, n.p., n.d. p. 7.
- 13 Y.S. Agyemang, "The Influence of some Akan Religious Thought on the Lives of the Akan: A Case Study of the Sekyere," MPhil Thesis, Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, 1994, pp. 202-203.
- 14 See Y.S. Agyeman, *Ibid.*; T.C. McCaskie, *State and Society in pre-colonial Ashanti*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- 15 See J. Omoade Awolalu, "Sin and Its Removal in African Traditional Religion," *Journal*

- of the *American Academy of Religion*, 44, 2, 1976, pp. 275-287.
- 16 Y. S. Agyemang and Benedicta Quashigah, "African Communalism: An Asante Religious Reflection," *Oguaa Journal of Religion and Human Values*, 1, 2011, pp. 55-66.
 - 17 Roger S. Gottlieb, "Religious Environmentalism in Action," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, ed. Roger Gottlieb, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 472-3.
 - 18 R.S Rattray, *Ashanti*, London: Oxford University Press, 1923, p. 278.
 - 19 Ancestors have a specific meaning. They are the 'special' dead; men and women who have physically died and have moved on to live in the spiritual world (in the Earth) where they continue to be active members of their living relatives. The emphasis on 'special' is to show that not all dead people become ancestors. Instead the 'special' dead are those who led exemplary lives when they were alive. The living continues to venerate and pray to them for their spiritual blessings. The Sekyere believe that these ancestors can reincarnate; they are born, as children, into their societies to help with the development of society and the perpetuation of life.
 - 20 R.S. Rattray, *op.cit.* p. 216.
 - 21 T. Nelson-Adjakpey, *Penance and Expiatory Sacrifice among the Ghanaian Ewe and their Relevance to the Christian Religion*, Rome: Alsonsian Academy, 1982, p. 36.
 - 22 R. Nicolson, "Introduction," in *Persons in Community: African Ethics in a Global Culture*, ed. R. Nicolson, Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008, pp. 1-13.
 - 23 Y. S. Agyemang and Benedicta Quashigah, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
 - 24 Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1949, pp. 243-44.
 - 25 *Ibid.* p. 262.
 - 26 I. A. Menkiti, "African Philosophy: An Introduction," 1984. <http://courseweb.stthomas.edu/sjlaumakis/Reading%203-AFRICAN%20VIEW.pdf>. [accessed 20 February 2011].
 - 27 Segun Ogungbemi, "An African Perspective on the Environmental Crisis," in *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*, ed. Louis J Pojman, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997, p. 204, as quoted in P.A. Ojomo, "Environmental Ethics: An African Understanding," *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4, 3, 2011, p. 107. www.jpanafrican.com/docs/vol4no3/4.3Environmental.pdf [assessed on 29 June 2008].
 - 28 Segun Ogungbemi, *ibid.* p. 208 as quoted by P.A. Ojomo, *ibid.*
 - 29 See C. A. Ackah, *Akan Ethics: A Study of the Moral Ideas and the Moral Behaviour of the Akan Tribes of Ghana*, Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1988.

