

TRADITIONAL BELIEF KNOWLEDGE

(For Natural Resources Conservation)

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For

Natural Resources Conservation

@ Akpofure RIM-RUKEH 2024

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DEDICATION

This Book is Dedicated to All Lovers of Peace and Sustainable Development

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PREFACE

There is global tension between the availability of natural resources and conventional pathways to socio-economic development. Studies have proposed the application of effective and culturally relevant strategies natural resource management. The role of traditional beliefs in the conservation of a large number of elements of local biodiversity, regardless of their use value, dates back to creation. The International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN), have described the application of traditional belief systems as useful strategy in the conservation of natural resources (IUCN). Biodiversity loss has been a major concern to mankind, especially during the last quarter of the previous century and actions at addressing this issue have mimicked western theories, while the contribution of indigenous cultures and institutions are often overlooked. The Book *Traditional Belief Knowledge* interrogates and presents robust and comprehensive contributions from interdisciplinary experts and scholars. Offering a range of perspectives and opinions through the prism of understanding the past about African Traditional systems and, more importantly, capturing their dynamics in the present and projecting their sustainability and relevance for the future. This volume is an essential resource for knowledge and understanding of Traditional belief knowledge in the conservation and management of natural resources.

This text is unique in its approach with special focus on the application of traditional belief knowledge in the conservation of natural resources drawing examples from local communities where such practices exist in Nigeria. The book is suitable for introductory courses in environmental management programmes. The author have tried to make the text readable with relevant pictures to drive home it's presentation. It is devoid of the complexity of religion. The various natural resource management (national and international) policies, programmes and strategies have marginalized the involvement of traditional institutions and indigenous knowledge systems. It has become necessary that more feasible and sustainable approaches for natural resource management have to be pursued if the drastic loss of biological ecosystem and cultural diversity is to be curtailed and reverse.

The textbook is divided into eight chapters. It is organized to provide a logical flow of concepts devoid of spiritual terminologies.

Chapter One: Introduction. Traditional belief knowledge (TBK) is also known as traditional religious beliefs (TRB) that is concerned with the application of such knowledge in the areas of medicinal and herbal needs, food supply, conflict resolution and spiritual growth. This chapter introduces the reader to meaning of traditional belief knowledge inclusive of its

dimensions. Basic characteristics and key elements of traditional belief knowledge are also discussed. The benefits of the practice of traditional belief systems are discussed.

Chapter Two: Objects of Traditional Belief Knowledge. In Africa society certain objects and plants as classified as sacred. These objects and places are seen from the perspective of the divine and as such, they are not to be toyed with; they are given special reverence especially as objects of worship. Details on the spiritual implications of such objects and places (sacred groves/forests, totems, sacred hills/mountains, sacred caves, sacred waters, sacred trees are presented. Strategy of implementation of sanctions using the placement of taboos is also discussed.

Chapter Three: Traditional Belief Knowledge Practices in Nigeria. This chapter focuses on local communities where the practices of traditional belief knowledge are exemplified as; Orogun Community in Ughelli North LGA Delta State; The Community of Ode – Itsekiri in Warri South LGA Delta State; The Communities of Useifurun and Ujevwu in Ughelli South LGA Delta State; The Community of Orohoakpor in Ethiope East South LGA Delta State; Ovu Community in Ethiope East LGA Delta State; The Community of Umuaja in Ukwani LGA Delta State; The Community of Okorobi in Ethiope East LGA Delta State; Ase Community in Ndokwa East LGA Delta State; The Community of Akwa in LGA Anambra State; The Community of Idemili in Idemili LGA Anambra State; The Community of Umulelu in Obingwa of Abia State and The Biseni and Osiami people in the Bayelsa State

Chapter Four: How Traditional Belief Systems Contribute to Conservation of Natural Resources. Local people have developed a variety of consistent resource conservation and management strategies in many parts of Africa in the past. Traditional African societies also observe environmental principles that help in regulating their interactions with the natural environment. This chapter discusses the ways traditional belief system contribute to the conservation of natural resources. In addition, evidences that traditional belief systems actually contribute to conservation of natural resources are presented.

Chapter Five: Challenges of Traditional belief Systems in the Conservation of Natural Resources. Despite, the interdependence of local people and sacred forests, a decline in the areas of sacred forest has been documented. The consequence of this is that many of the people's indigenous knowledge built over the years as well as the endemic forest diversity are at the risk of becoming extinct with the loss of sacred forest. Within the past few decades, international fora targeted at discussing the challenges faced in the conservation of biodiversity

have identified the need to intensify protection of landscapes categorised as protected areas (sacred groves, sacred trees, sacred caves, sacred rocks/hills). This chapter presents a detailed discussion of identified factors affecting these traditionally protected Areas.

Chapter Six: Strategies for the Protection and Promoting of Traditional Belief Knowledge. Globalization has had a profound impact on traditional belief and practices. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, traditional ways of life and indigenous knowledge are often marginalized or threatened by dominant global cultures. The rapid spread of Western ideologies, technologies, and economic systems has led to the erosion of traditional belief systems, as well as the loss of traditional practices and languages. This process has not only resulted in the loss of valuable knowledge about sustainable resource management and conservation, but it has also contributed to the marginalization and disempowerment of local and traditional societies. Furthermore, the imposition of Western education systems and values has often been detrimental to traditional practices. As a result, indigenous ways of knowing and understanding the world are often dismissed as primitive or outdated. This erosion of traditional values must be reversed. This chapter presents strategies for the protection and promoting of traditional belief knowledge.

Chapter Seven: Policy Direction for the Protection and Promotion of Traditional Belief Knowledge. A policy and in this case for the protection and promotion of traditional belief knowledge aims to develop a system that does more than merely document and preserve traditional belief knowledge created in the past which may be on the brink of disappearance. It also envisages a system that contributes to the promotion and dissemination of innovations which are based on the continuing use of tradition, but also about preserving what exists as an indispensable and powerful tool for fostering continuous traditional innovation and creativity to contribute to national development. This will encourage and foster innovation and creativity. This chapter presents policy direction for the protection and promotion of traditional belief knowledge. This includes, goal, objectives and guiding principles and scope of the policy.

Chapter Eight: Connecting Traditional Belief Knowledge to Sustainable Development Goals. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals includes the eradication of poverty, hunger, provision of health and education, promotion of gender equality, clean water and sanitation, clean energy, as well as the promotion of decent work and economic growth. The global goals also include the promotion of innovation, reduction of inequality, promotion of sustainable cities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life on land and water,

promotion of peace, justice and strong institution as well as partnership in achieving the goals. Traditional Belief Knowledge (TBK) is the unique knowledge confined to a particular culture or society. It is also known as local knowledge, folk knowledge, people's knowledge, traditional wisdom or traditional science. This knowledge is generated and transmitted by communities, over time, in an effort to cope with their own agro- ecological and socio-economic environments. This chapter examines the ways the elements of traditional belief systems (culture - traditional way of life, taboos, and spiritual ecology contributes to achieving some if not all of the 17 Goals.

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