

AN INHERITED ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: A STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN NGAS LAND OF PLATEAU STATE

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ABSTRACT

Studies reveal that the world is currently battling with the problem of environmental crisis. This crisis had persisted despite all efforts by global leaders to mitigate and offer solutions to the problem. The crisis on the African soil seems to have been alien before the arrival of colonial masters. There are a number of studies that suggest that the colonial masters have contributed a lot to the present environmental crisis being experienced in Africa. Using Ngas land as a case study, this study is aimed at analysing the African environment before and after the arrival of the colonial masters to African soil. Literature on colonialism and environmental crises in Africa by different scholars and also a few interviews were conducted to ascertain this claim. The studies revealed that even though Africa has some portion of blame for the crisis on the African soil, much of the blame goes to the colonial masters and their colonial activities on the African soil. The paper therefore suggests and recommends that African traditional ecological knowledge be widely engaged, as it has the capacity of sustaining the environment and is also a potential solution to the crisis.

KEYWORDS: Inherited Crisis, Environment, Degradation, African Soil

INTRODUCTION

The issue of environmental crisis is one of the biggest problems the world is currently facing (Ojomo 102). This crisis is driven by the spiralling rise in human population, the effects of industrial pollution of the air, water, and land, corporate farming and large-scale agriculture, unresolved waste disposal issues, ongoing loss and reduction of wildlife and biodiversity, and climate change (Ifeakor and Otteh 67-69). Studies have shown that no society is totally immune against the threats and dangers which the environmental crisis poses to humanity and the rest of the ecosystem (Oleq 315-316). There is a scientific consensus that the survival of communities, cultures, and the planet itself is in jeopardy due to the continued rate of resource degradation, the occurrence and intensity of natural disasters, pollution, dangers to global health, and the possibility of irreversible climate change (Ikeke 67).

Colonialism has profoundly shaped the environmental landscape of Africa, leaving an enduring legacy of degradation and exploitation (Domínguez and Luoma 65; Kandemiri and Mlambo 117). The historical context of colonial rule is marked by a relentless pursuit of natural resources, where European powers viewed African territories as mere commodities to be extracted for economic gain (Hopkins 37; Nwaokoro 3). This exploitation was not merely a byproduct of colonial ambitions; it was a fundamental aspect of the colonial project itself, leading to widespread deforestation, soil depletion, and the disruption of traditional land management practices.

The imposition of foreign agricultural systems often disregarded Indigenous knowledge and practices, resulting in significant ecological consequences. For instance, the introduction of cash crops under colonial regimes led to the clearing of vast forest areas, which not only diminished biodiversity but also altered local climates and water cycles (Brondízio et al. 485). Furthermore, colonial policies frequently marginalized local communities, stripping them of their rights to manage and utilize their natural resources sustainably (Youdelis et al. 990). This dynamic created a disconnect between people and their environment, fostering conditions that have exacerbated contemporary environmental crises. Today, the ramifications of this historical exploitation are evident in ongoing issues such as climate change, desertification, and loss of biodiversity. African nations, despite being among the least contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions, are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation linked to colonial legacies. Addressing these challenges requires a critical examination of how colonial practices have shaped current environmental policies and an acknowledgement of the need for reparative justice to restore ecological balance and empower local communities. Understanding the intersection of colonialism and environmental degradation is crucial for developing equitable solutions to the pressing ecological crises facing Africa today.

The purpose of this study is to illustrate how colonialism contributes to the environmental challenges that affect Africa today. The goal of the study is to draw attention to the fact that the majority of the factors causing Africa's environmental catastrophe are foreign, raising the possibility that the problem was passed down from the colonial overlords. The Ngas community, the subject of this paper's case study, has gone through a degree of environmental crisis due to uncontrolled bush burning, urbanisation, destructive farming practices, and other environmental issues that were not previously prevalent in the community. This study also aims to highlight how important it is to support the application of indigenous knowledge in addressing environmental challenges.

Reviews of works that discuss Africans and their surroundings, indigenous knowledge and ecological conservation in Africa, and colonialism and the African environment. To find out how the natural environment is doing in traditional Ngas society, interviews were also done in a few Ngas communities.

COLONIALISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IN AFRICA

For many years, there has been discussion on how colonialism affected the ecosystem in Africa. The impact of colonialism on Africa's environment is a complex issue that has been debated by scholars for many years. While some claimed colonialism played a role in Africa's environmental crisis, others dispute this. Shanguhya contends that over the years, African activities and interactions with outsiders have had a significant role in influencing the history of the continent. According to the researcher, European colonisation was a significant foreign factor that influenced how we view African history in general and its environmental aspects in particular (170).

Several African scholars have maintained that until the western world began colonising the societies on the African continent, there was no environmental problem in Africa (Ikuenobe 2) 2014; Obeng-Odoom 2020). According to Ikuenobe, exploitation-related colonial actions and their after-effects are to blame for a lot of the environmental issues we face today. He contends that colonial architecture is to blame for Africa's environmental issues (13-14). Three social structures—transformed social structures, migrating social structures, and emerging social structures—are mentioned by Ikuenobe as being substituted for African social systems by the colonial masters. The researcher comes to the conclusion that colonialism undermined the old peasant farming system, which guaranteed respect for nature and the preservation of land and forests (14-15).

According to Kanu, the materialistic and consumerism-based Western approach to eco-system management has had very major negative effects on the environment and contributed to the current ecological disaster. He also contends that the encounter between the African continent and the West, particularly during the colonial era, had an impact on how Africans thought and approached the environment, and that as a result, modern-day African society lacks the appropriate traditional or indigenous spiritual principles required for the preservation of the ecosystem (3). Prior to the advent of modernity, Africans developed a reverence for these aspects of the natural world through their relationships with cosmic forces connected to certain cosmic components like water, mountains, forests, and sky (Gumo et al 524; Barnhill and Gottlieb 484). This mindset has gradually given way to one of alienation and disconnection. The physical environment, such as the water, air, land, and forests, is misused and exploited as a result. The emergence of eco-spirituality is a response to the Western materialistic and technological methodology for the environment, which lacks the depth necessary to form a profound relationship with nature and has resulted in the emergence of negative effects on the natural world. Kanu (2021) insists that the structure of the traditional life of the African people was severely impacted by the development of modernity, science, and technology, and even more so by Christianity among other religions like Islam 6).

Mark Ikeke revealed that since the beginning of time, Africans have had a close relationship with nature and hold cultural traditions and beliefs that support sustainable living (236). The colonial powers drove Africans to give up some of their traditional environmental beliefs and ecological lifestyles in favour of an anthropocentric outlook. The Western informed traditions are gradually replacing the environmental stewardship and accountability of indigenous Africans that is characterised by humane and sustainable community environment relations (Dickson 36). Development also means the full contempt for traditional African holistic values and customs because of this anthropocentric viewpoint, which holds that humans only have moral obligations to other humans. This neglect has caused the natural environment to be unsustainably exploited in Africa (Tosam 172). Okpe and Oti assert that the west's unfavorable impact has caused the African to lose sight of his roots and partake in behaviors that are un-African and harmful to the environment (107). Like Ikuenobe, Okpe and Oti asserted that Africans do not naturally act in an anti-environmental manner since they value the natural world (107). The scholars maintained that decolonization and globalization, two western influences, are substantially to blame for the environmental problem in Africa.

Western colonial enterprise in Africa resulted in the introduction of some religious, cultural, political, social, and educational concepts that were not pro-environment but instead promoted the ideals of materialism, unrestrained consumerism, and capitalism. As a result of the influence of these foreign viewpoints and environmentally unsound ways of life, the African worldview that was shaped to create a mutual dependence between human life and the environment was challenged. A study of indigenous religious environmentalism in Africa was conducted by Botchway and Agyemang. The study's focal point was the Senkere population. The majority of the Sakere people's culture, according to the scholars, was suppressed as a result of European colonization. The scholars argued that the majority of postcolonial African cultures now neglect indigenous systems, particularly spiritual values, and as a result undervalue their ability to support sustained local development (35). This is closely related to the beginning of Western colonization, which dates to the 15th century. At that time, a Eurocentric Christian mindset was imposed, which denigrated and dismissed native rituals as superstitious.

Western anthropocentrism, in both its philosophical and religious manifestations, has been criticised by many as being a barrier to a more thorough environmental ethics (Droz 25). Droz assert that this anthropocentrism has led to the economic exploitation of nature and the wasteful consumption of its resources. This anthropocentrism, along with the objectification of nature encouraged by the scientific approach of observation, they contend, have contributed to these problems (encyclopedia.com).

Goldman (np) described how the Maasai people became economically marginalized, even though they were permitted to live in their homes yet, they cannot fully economically benefit from their lands because of conservation, they have lost their lands

(Cited in Wishitemi et al 306-317). But it is not just losing land or being evicted from one's home that is at stake, for the Maasai continue to have legal permission to live inside the Ngorongoro Conservation Area but when there are environmental concerns, the Maasai in Tanzania become strangers in their own country. This is largely due to colonial mentality on the approach to the environment.

Jong and Maseko also acknowledged that the current environmental problems on the African continent appear to be a direct, unfavourable result of contemporary lifestyles that have been influenced by recent African history. By recent African history, they mean the past 400 years, during which the slave trade, colonisation, a more globalised outlook, and the spread of world religions have all disrupted African traditional religion. The researchers contended that historically, from the early 1900s on, the use of land to maximise revenue for the colonial governments intensified. Local natural resources were widely utilised in cash crops, mining, the construction of transportation networks, urbanisation, and other activities (6-7). This viewpoint may mean that the land is being overused, thereby stretching the environment beyond its normal capacity.

On the other hand, some scholars argue that colonialism has not contributed to Africa's environmental crisis. The scholars suggest that the literature on conservation and environmental sustainability in Africa should be viewed through a postcolonial lens. Similarly, the scholars argued that the impact of colonialism on the African state has been overstated (Maseland 259). The authors argued that colonialism has some positive impacts in the African communities.

Colonialism as argued by some scholars has brought about the protection of African natural resources in some cases. For example, in Kenya and other African countries, the colonial government established national parks and game reserves to protect wildlife and natural habitats (Wambua , Wekesa and Mwangi 44-45; Shanguhya 163).

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM (IKS) AND NATURE CONSERVATION IN AFRICA

For a very long time, indigenous people managed and conserved their natural environments using their Indigenous knowledge (Makondo and Thomas 84; Hockings et al. 241). No one could mismanage their natural surroundings and escape punishment (Maru et al 3). Since those who mishandled their natural resources were subject to severe retribution, community members were careful in how they used the resources that were at their disposal (Mawere 104; Maru, Gebrekirstos, and Haile 176; Osei 2023). As a result, some places, including forests, water sources, mountains, and particular animals, were regarded as sacred and were not to be misused (Chunhabunyatip et al. 2842; Mawere 104).

Indigenous African communities frequently created complex resource management systems prior to the development of contemporary methods of natural resource conservation and management, as had other local communities all over the world

(Siambombe, Mutale, and Muzingili, 46; Kavu, Kajongwe, and Ebhuoma, 67). Traditional beliefs that were grounded in local knowledge existed and aided in protecting the natural resources that were already there (Kosoe, Adjei, and Diawuo 1049). Attuquayefio and Gyampoh contend that traditional cultures maintained a sophisticated religious and cultural belief system through norms, myths, taboos, totems, and closed seasons to preserve, conserve, and manage specific natural resources prior to the development of modern natural resource conservation techniques (3). Instead of serving personal interests, these belief systems were used to safeguard and advance communal well-being (Sulistiyowati et al. 2021). Little consideration is given to this informal institution, despite the importance and function that traditional African belief systems have in the administration and conservation of natural resources (Kankpeyeng 3).

African traditional rules and taboos were crucial in the historical preservation of the environment, especially sacred forests. In the perspective of African environmental ethics, taboos fit into many elements. African taboos, according to Kanu and Ndubuisi, have a variety of ecological values and are essentially viewed as the protectors of the environment (8). Africans benefit from taboos in that they better understand and interact with their surroundings. By imposing moral requirements on people to conserve the environment, they safeguard the ecosystem. In addition, taboos safeguard the ecosystem and endangered animals by promoting a metaphysical knowledge of the environment. They also underline how interconnectedness and relationality are real in the world. Taboos in African communities, in particular, prioritize environmental protection for the benefit of next generations (Kelbessa 387; Daw, et al 6950; Boafo, et al 30). The taboos serve as a deterrent against activities such as poaching, excessive grazing, deforestation, and mineral extraction in order to safeguard and sustain the ecosystem's ontological order from ongoing human damage.

Essien Essein claims that African conservation practices, which are exhibited in sacred groves, shrines, trees, forests, and other natural features, firmly conform to the people of Africa's religious convictions, cultural traditions, and traditional views on their duty to the environment (97). The moral obligation of African people to protect the environment has already been mentioned.

In establishing and implementing environmental regulations involving consumption and conservation, African political and religious elite had a big and pivotal role (Kwashirai 12). Kwashirai describes the African approach to environmental protection as follows;

The conservation of the fauna was steeped in community-based rules, beliefs and taboos. The cultural practices of totems promoted game conservation. Ethnic groups, clans or kinships adopted an animal or bird as its totem. The totem acted as a 'tag' a form of identity binding groups together in one large related family. The adopted species was neither harmed nor eaten by members of group who believed in its medicinal value. Common totem species included; elephant, eland, buffalo,

fish, and zebra. Totem beliefs also resulted from the intense admiration of the wild game by Africans generally. Superstition also played a role in forest and game preservation. The hyna, owl and snakes were feared and viewed as agents of witches and sorcerers. Some revered lions acted as vehicles for spirits. Certain customary hunting laws were generally observed by hunting parties. As with forests, it was against custom to use fire to regenerate pastures, drive game or hunt during certain periods like the breeding season when animals raised their offsprings... (12).

Ogungbemi emphasizes the reverence and wonder with which traditional Africa has coexisted with nature. In traditional environmental management, he wrote thus:

In our traditional relationship with nature, men and women recognize the importance of water and air management to our traditional communities not taking more than you need from nature is a moral code. Perhaps this explains why earth, forest, rivers 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 (206).

According to Negi et al., a variety of indigenous beliefs and practises have influenced indigenous management of natural resources (136). Religious convictions, ethical guidelines, and a variety of sacred and cultural practises were used to express collective acts in natural resource management (Reniko, Mogomotsi and Mogomotsi 96; Guri, Osumanu and Bonye 458; Preston and Baimel 146). The persistence of these practises and beliefs has been demonstrated in the management of natural resources employing taboos, totems, traditional protected areas, moral sanctions, and laws and regulations over time in Africa.

IKS provides a foundation for a comprehensive strategy for environmental preservation that acknowledges the interconnection of all things (Milgin et al. 2020). IKS offers a useful perspective on nature preservation that acknowledges the significance of community in environmental preservation initiatives (Negi et al. 140). The need of locally based resource management is emphasised by IKS, which offers insightful information about how complicated and interwoven agricultural problems are (Reniko 143).

Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are crucial to the preservation of the natural world in Africa because they offer important insights into how intricately linked and complex conservation issues are. The application of traditional ecological knowledge, community-based resource management, and IKS techniques in vegetations production are just a few examples of the multidisciplinary methods that can help achieve successful conservation outcomes.

AFRICANS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

Africans believe that nature is more than simply a physical phenomenon and that everything within it either possesses a spirit or is home to a deity. Because they both have natural spirits that are manifestations of the Creator, humanity and nature are connected (Nche and Michael 5). Africans also believe that there is a special connection between humans and nature. The connection is highlighted in different shades and forms. An illustration of this kinship between people and nature is totemism. Mercy Okpoko opined that that “the expression ‘Interconnectedness with Nature’ has a place in African eco-philosophy. The scholar further explained that, “the departure from this African eco-philosophy may be a potential contributor to present rate of forest depletion in Nigeria” (1-3). African philosophies claim that environmental philosophy seeks to define both the rights and liabilities of man towards the environment as well as the opposite.

The notion that humans are interdependent and connected to one another is a key tenet of African ontology. Family values, individual wellbeing, and communal living are highly valued in traditional African communities. By emphasising the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings, African ontology underlines the need of community in environmental ethics and practises.

Before the colonial encounter Africa had a different worldview and attitude amongst indigenous people towards nature. The traditional African attitude towards nature was that of live and let live, be and let be, which favoured sustainable management of natural resources. Ikuenobe avers that “the activities that have raised environmental concerns in Africa did not exist prior to colonialism because Africans had conservationist values, practices, and ways of life” (2). European colonization in Africa introduced a materialist worldview which encouraged the subjection and destruction of the traditional African holistic and conservationist values and practices. Traditional Western ethics was anthropocentric, ascribing very little or no moral worth to non-human creatures (Gudorf & Huchings 4).

The concept vital force is believed to be a peculiar trait in African cosmology which defines and shapes the framework within which the interwoven concept of environment is understood (Ngangan 48). The "vital force" value centres the African conception of "being" or reality, which governs their ideas and deeds. The concept is fundamentally understood as principle of all life in African thought (Nalwamba iii). It makes sense that Africans who believe in God and care about the environment would theologically appropriate the concept of vital force, which signifies the Creator as the source and giver of life, to represent the power of God that penetrates all of creation. The focus on life (vitality) and how it is connected is a fundamental aspect of the African world-view. All beings should be treated fairly because of how interconnected and dependent they are in the fabric of existence.

In Africa, two of the most fundamental notions of God are his providence and sustenance. It is believed that God does not just create; he creates, sustains and maintains the world by providing the needs of the creatures (Kanu and Ndubuisi 57). The Africans held a variety of views on how God provided for the things He created in order to preserve and sustain their existence. These views are reflected in African names, myths, and even proverbs. In order to sustain creation, God supplies life, fertility, rain, health, and other essentials.

The spiritual significance of moral notions like good and evil is contained in vital force, according to African philosophy. By emphasising the imperative for sound environmental management and the intrinsic value and holiness of all living things, this vitality-based moral philosophy underlines the importance of environmental management (Chemhuru 30). African religious ontology's views on life and nature's moral standing provide a moral and ethical framework for environmental protection by recognising the importance of the natural world for future generations (Tosam 172).

Indigenous knowledge systems might be incorporated into environmental sustainability has been a topic of discussion in recent years. While some claim that it is challenging to integrate Indigenous knowledge systems into environmental sustainability, others assert that doing so can be accomplished by enabling Indigenous communities to produce their own environmental plans and assessments (Latulippa and Klenk 7-8; Makondo and Thomas 83). Indigenous knowledge systems are complex and context-specific, making it challenging to incorporate them into conservation practises. This is due to the fact that it frequently encompasses spiritual and cultural practises, requiring a thorough understanding of the cultural context and worldview. The knowledge system is typically devalued, which hinders it since it lacks validity and recognition. When the holders of the knowledge participate actively in management through institutions that are based on community-based, adaptive resource decision-making, indigenous knowledge systems can be effectively incorporated into sustainable resource management (Chapman and Scott 942). Indigenous communities should have the flexibility to develop, assess, and publish their own environmental plans and evaluations in order to incorporate their knowledge systems into environmental sustainability (Mawere 15). However, given the divergent worldviews, it can be challenging to integrate Indigenous knowledge systems into environmental sustainability.

CURRENT STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN NGAS TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

The discovery and subsequent mining of mineral resources like tin, columbite, tantalite, and others like quartz, Zircon on the Jos-Plateau by the colonial masters has led to one of the worst environmental concern that State is currently battling with. The mine

dumps, mine tailings including radioactive waste, mine ponds, and the devastation of pastoral land during the quest for mineral resources are only a few of the environmental harms brought about by tin mining in Jos-Plateau. Numerous people have died as a result of these mine ponds. In addition, radioactive materials were discharged into the environment during the tin mining process. Erosion was the primary source of soil degradation, which led to the loss of organic matter and nutrients as well as harm to the characteristics of the soil and crops.

Deforestation, which results from the removal of trees for various purposes, is another significant environmental problem that Plateau State has recently had to deal with. To make cooking fuel, the trees are being chopped down. The chopped trees are either turned into charcoal or left in their original form for cooking. Because cooking gas and even paraffin are expensive, the charcoal industry has grown extremely profitable. The fallen trees can also be used to make furniture and roof dwellings, among other things. Deforestation has been a major contributor to the environmental crisis on the Plateau State. Before the coming of the colonial masters, issues relating to deforestation are minimal or not even heard of. Africans typically revere forests as sacred entities and, in most cases, as the abode of spiritual forces. Forests are not only important to human lives but also important for the survival of non-human lives and species (Tambiyi and Wapwera 127; Ikeke 345). Ikuenobe argued that before the coming of the colonial masters, Africans were environmentally friendly and good at preserving nature (1). The Ngas community, located in Plateau State, Nigeria, faces specific challenges in preserving their environment. Here are some of the challenges they encounter:

Harmful Agricultural Practices: With the advent of modern farming methods that incorporate the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides to control weeds and insects on the farm, the majority of farmers in Ngas Land have mostly given up on their native and traditional farming practises. Some plant and insect species that are essential to the fertility and development of the land have nearly disappeared due to the extensive effects of these herbicides and insecticides on the land (Deshi).

Another aspect of the harmful agricultural practices is linked to the dry-season farming that is currently going on in Ngas communities. In the dry season, farmers usually dig many wells in search of water where there are no streams, and these wells are all over and also left open, thereby posing threats to the communities, firstly as dead traps. The dug wells are left open and bare like mining pits, which renders the space in which the well is dug useless once it no longer brings out water. Secondly, as a result of the practice, the water levels in most of the communities have been tampered with (Kupkah). According to Dungdung, one of the interviewees, the dry season farming which is mainly for cash crops has made the people not to even care for the land. He emphasises that all the people are

interested in is what they will get from the land and if the land stops yielding, they move to the next available land.

Uncontrolled Bush burning: The challenge of protecting the Ngas ecology was significantly halted by bush burning. This is because the majority of protected areas—including shrines—have been impacted by the act. There are numerous identified protected places that have been impacted by bushfires. In Ngas traditional society, bush burning is controlled as most communities have rules regarding setting of bushes on fire, and also there are specific people (a family) that are usually saddled with that control. In most communities there are specific families that are saddled with the responsibility of controlling bush burning but nowadays this ruled is not strictly adhered to due to the influence of modernity (Nde Guskat).

Deforestation, which is evident throughout the Ngas settlements, is one of the consequences of bush burning on Ngas land. Due to this destructive practise, very few shrines remain standing after being tampered with.

Conflicting Religious Practises: While almost all Ngas communities have contributed significantly to the preservation of natural resources through traditional religion practises, there are also conflicting religious practises that hinder conservation efforts. Because they are fundamental to their religious beliefs, the Ngas people (like majority of African tribes) view specific natural regions as sacred. Examples include particular rivers (e.g. *Wuyong*), mountains (e.g. *Timan, zwall Gonzhi*), and forests lit (e.g. *lit zere*) that shouldn't be harmed by overfishing, hunting, or the poaching of other species. Based on the mystical punishment of the ancestors, the fundamental religious attitude towards land is established. The sustainable use of natural resources is encouraged by this way of thinking, which discourages individuals from endangering the environment (Shikdimma, Golbe, and Goladi).

The introduction of Christianity to the Ngas, a religion that traditionally paid little or no attention to the traditional protected locations of worship—which are usually shrouded in dense forest—led to the destruction of trees in the shrines, putting the locals at risk of deforestation (Tambiyi and Wapwera 141-142).

Urbanization: Urbanisation is a worldwide phenomenon that is especially noticeable in emerging nations such as Nigeria. Among the many issues brought about by rapid urbanisation is the urgent need for affordable housing (Adedeji 351). Rural-urban migration and economic opportunity are two variables that impact urbanisation in the traditional Ngas civilisation. Environmental degradation and a lack of housing are two issues brought on by this change. Even in the face of modernisation, customs such as protecting holy groves for ancestral worship are essential to protecting the ecosystem. But the loss of these sacred places has been exacerbated by the spread of Christianity and Islam as well as population

pressure, endangering both environmental sustainability and cultural identity (Tambiyi and Wapwera 142). The Ngas community still faces a great deal of difficulty in striking a balance between environmental preservation and urban growth.

CONCLUSION

There are a variety of both beneficial and harmful effects of colonialism on Africa's ecology. While some contend that colonialism is to blame for Africa's environmental crisis, claiming that it led to the underdevelopment of African territories and the destruction of natural resources, others counter that it has not, pointing out that in some cases, colonialism resulted in the protection of African natural resources and the spread of western education. It is glaring that the legacy left behind by colonialism on the African environment is that destruction. If such legacy is maintained, the continent will in no distant time lose a lot in the environment.

Africans need to understand that the current methods of environmental care will not be effective alone without the revival and upholding of the indigenous knowledge system which has kept the environment in good shape before the arrival of the colonial masters and their materialistic and consumerism attitudes towards nature. It is apparently clear that colonialism and its activities in the African soil has contributed immensely to the present environmental crisis being experienced in Africa. It is a clear indication that most of the problems are either alien to the Africans, or it has been there unnoticed.

We must adopt Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) for environmental conservation if we are serious about protecting the environment for future generations. Both the traditional and modern approaches to environmental conservation should be integrated through a cooperative effort between the local communities and the government. The African ecosystem will not survive if traditional knowledge is completely abandoned in the name of modernisation.

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