

【Session5】 Livelihood

The Nexus of Worldview, Environmental Values, and Practices in Human-environment Relations: The Case of Midland Gedeo, South Ethiopia

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Human-environment relations have been recognized in anthropological studies since the beginning of the discipline. However, literature is still limited in the area. This study, dealing with the nexus of worldview, environmental values, and practices in midland Gedeo human-environment relations, attempts to add to the pool of such literature. The study examines how these elements are interrelated and the implications of such interactions to human-environment relations in the densely populated Gedeo. The study is based on twelve months of fieldwork that extend from February 20, 2012 to March 01, 2013. Mixed methods were employed pragmatically with emphasis on a qualitative approach. Participant observation, interviews, case studies and focus group discussions supplemented with survey constituted major methods of data collection.

The Gedeo are well known for their friendly relations with their environment and managing sustainable livelihoods. This is mainly due to their worldview, environmental values and practices. Their worldview, which considers nature and humans are a creation of Megano (God), and gives much respect for natural creations, is a base for human-environment relations and environmental values. The interactions with the natural environment through their practices are governed by the environmental values. Respect, reciprocity, keeping balance, and sustainability are major values in human-environment relations. Social institutions, like the Gedeo traditional administration (*Baalle*) system, rituals, taboos and sanctions are used as reinforcement mechanisms to implement and internalize environmental values.

Findings of this study further show that the midland Gedeo local ecology has evolved from forestry to agroforestry, through the mediumship of livelihood practices that guided by a well-developed local ecological knowledge. The epistemological root of local knowledge is mainly based on human-environments interactions. This knowledge has been serving the Gedeo as a base for natural resource management practices and sustainable livelihoods. Gedeo is one of the most densely populated societies in the country with 818 persons/km² crude density in 2012. Despite this density, agroforestry remains a major livelihood strategy for the Gedeo that covered 94.5% of their total landscape in 2006. Major elements of the agroforestry system (e.g., *enset*, coffee, trees, livestock, and apiculture), which also have ritual significance beyond their livelihood values, are purposefully selected and integrated by the Gedeo in consideration of sustainability of their livelihoods and local ecology, in the context of population pressure and acute land shortages.

Thus, the study concludes that local ecological knowledge, livelihood strategies, environmental values

【Session5】 Livelihood

and worldview are highly intertwined elements that structure human-environment relations among the Gedeo. Livelihood strategies, especially agroforestry, seem to be a medium through which local ecological knowledge, environmental values and worldview converge. The Gedeo agroforestry and cultural landscape, which nominated as world cultural heritage and consider as an identity of the Gedeo and central to their survival, is the product of the nexus between Gedeo worldview, environmental values, and practices that shape human-environment relations. This local potential has positive implication in resolving local ecological problems and global warming.

The Creation of Mobility: Viewing People on the Move in Uganda through the Taskscape Perspective

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Fish and water, the natural resources of Lake Albert in Uganda, attract people from a wide range of areas, including the northern and western parts of Uganda, the DRC, and Rwanda. My focus is on a multi-ethnic village called Runga, which is located on the east side of the lake.

The first purpose of this presentation is to describe the social space of a post-immigration society to explain the social economic contexts of their mobility. About 80% of the people in Runga are immigrants or descendants of immigrants. In reviewing their individual paths, it will be clear that most people in this village moved from their hometown as a result of global issues such as colonisation, crisis and war. For example, people moved as part of the cotton and coffee plantation labour force in the 1930s, to pay tax, and to avoid or escape from wars, such as the Congo Crisis in 1964, the Museveni Battle from 1984–1985, the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency in northern Uganda from 1986–2003, and the civil war in the DRC from 1997–2002.

Second, I will explain the two kinds of meta-mechanism that ensure a post-immigration society. One is the nationalisation of power in light of Ugandan fisheries policy, as fish resources are becoming an important means for acquiring foreign currency. Local fishing activity has conflicted with the nation seeking to profit from fisheries resources and international efforts to preserve the environment of the lake. As a result of conflicts, people's fishing nets were burned four times from 2002–2003.

The second kind of meta-mechanism is the stronger perpetuation of a mono-ethnic settlement when Ugandan policy is decentralised. Regional politics attempted to deter immigrants from participating in the political system. This was motivated not only by discrimination against immigrants, but also due to the discovery of oil, which resulted in the indigenous people rushing to this land and chasing away immigrants.

Conceptualising the movement of people across borders is a crucial research area for understanding the mechanisms underlying the production of social inequalities. I also point out the possibility of the mobility of people. Analysis of spatial and social mobility will go beyond the indicators of heterogeneity such as subsistence and ethnicity.

After these incidents in Runga, fishing people became involved in light fishing and cotton farming. Though different, there is a similarity between these two industries: the groups participating in these businesses are all trying to work independently, adapting to a difficult situation and constructing their own lives with great imagination.

Ritual as a Cultural Pathway to Improving Livelihoods in Post War Northern Uganda

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Ritual is seen as a fundamental category of human experience with power to form, influence and transform lives. This presentation, seeks to reflect and discuss the potential of rituals as a cultural pathway to improving livelihoods in post war Northern Uganda. That context will be used as a case, given that I carried out fieldwork there between 2008 to 2011 with the aim of delving into the people's feelings, experience and perceptions of rituals. In-depth interviews and observations were employed during that qualitative study. The people's life histories or everyday behaviour were explored. Different efforts; economic, political, socio-religious have been made to rebuild lives and infrastructure after the war. These have been spear-headed by different actors such as Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the government of Uganda, the international community and the Church among others. The war aftermath left villages, the people and the environment destroyed; physically, psychologically, spiritually. Trust was lost given the nature of the atrocities that were committed against the people. Against that backdrop, how can such a community live and work together again? Maybe the answer is in the transformative power of ritual. Whereas the various efforts have looked at reconstructing the region, I aim at interrogating how ritual can be organized and utilised by the people of Northern Uganda as a pathway that potentially offers distinctive prospects for experiencing life afresh, discover their synergy, work hard together and improve their livelihoods. Northern Uganda is a rich ritual community, implying that ritual occupies an important space in their lives and relationships; that being the case, I will argue that ritual can be tapped into and lives made better through social acceptance, forgiveness of atrocities committed, reconciliation of one with oneself, family, community and nature. The informants' perspectives of rituals and whether they view rituals as a cultural pathway to improving livelihoods will be discussed. The focus here is to produce local knowledge on the actual and potential place of rituals as 'African/Acholi potentials' of improving livelihoods in post war contexts. The possible limitations rituals may have in the actual process of improving livelihoods in a post war scenario will be presented as well as forces of modernity that may contend with the Northern Uganda social cosmology in order to provide a dynamic process of improving livelihoods through ritual as a cultural pathway.

This discussion will engage the works of Roy A. Rappaport 1999. *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*; Tom. F. Driver 2006. *Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual*; Lisa Schirch 2005. *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding*; Mpyangu Christine Mbabazi 2010. "The Acholi Worldview: Why Rituals are Important for the Reintegration of Formerly Recruited Girls in Northern Uganda." In *Culture, Religion and the Reintegration of Female Child Soldiers in Northern Uganda*, edited by Bard Maeland; Thomas Harlacher, et al. 2006. *Traditional Ways of Coping and Healing from War*.

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