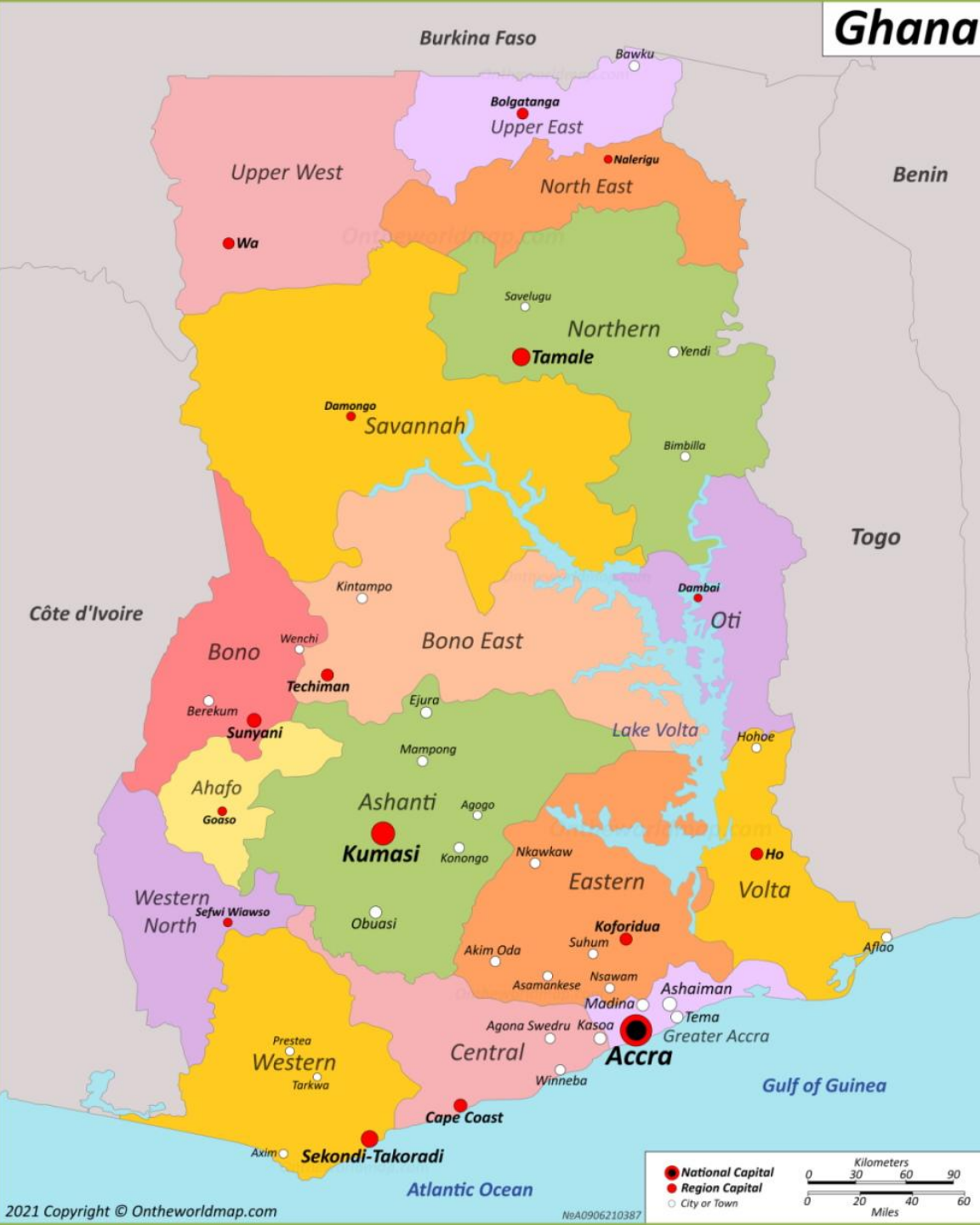


Climate change ● Green & Just Transition
through Human Rights Prism
in West Africa and Spain

*Conference “Green and Just Transition 2024”
Narva, Estonia*

--Rashid Iddrisu







K'SA AWULE

THE EARTH BELONGS TO US

[GONJA TRADITIONAL SONG/POEM]

The *suspended in space* belongs to us
Is the only reliable hope we have
We must consistently take good care of it
It arrives to our time as an obligation to take care of it

Any strange things that come out of it,
we should not excavate them
If we do, it will scar each one of us
Protect it constantly, constantly, constantly
So that we can together take good care of it



The suspended in a space belongs to us
Is the only reliable hope we have
We must consistently take good care of it
It arrives to our time as an obligation to take care of it

Any strange things that come out of it,
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If we do, it will scar each one of us
Protect it constantly, constantly, constantly
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INTERPRETATION

In Gonja, “K'sa awule” refers to the Earth but the literal translation from Gonja to English is: “It is hung in space.” or, “suspended in space.” It refers to the entire earth, which belongs to all mankind.

Is the only hope for us. Without Earth, there is no life.

We must consistently take good care of it. If we want to live, then we have to take care of the Earth (this is a warning to mankind).

It arrives to our time [our generation] as an obligation to take care of it. The ancestors who wrote this song foresaw some danger coming (possibly global disasters) and wanted to prevent it for future generations, so taking care of the Earth is the solution.

Any strange things that come out it, we should not excavate them. Here the ancestors are talking about materials that have turned the world to disaster and created war all over (gold, oil, diamonds, coltran, *et al*).

If we do, it will scar each one of us. If we mine things from the ground, it will wound [scar] each one of us. We suffer today because of the excavation of these strange things the ancestors spoke of centuries ago.

Proverbs, songs, poems in indigenous rule

- ▶ Indigenous governance has no written “rules”
- ▶ Governance was sustained through proverbs/poems/songs and cultural practices that kept the information, including information about protection
- ▶ The Suspended in Space song is a “law” of protection on the environment

Climate change is not just a change in weather

- “Mind” climate change is the loss of knowledge and wisdom from the DNA.
- It makes a person lost. This loss of knowledge causes a change in his or her entire being.
- It causes youth migration: An inability to stay in your own culture...is due to mind climate change.
- This is a cultural disconnection, so we need to reconnect.
- Repair may be slow, slower than a “surgery” because it cannot be fixed surgically.

Action Research: Ghana's 2020 Law on Land Registration

- We had conversations with chiefs and leaders across Savannah Region about changing land tenure arrangements
- Began their interviews with reviewing two traditional songs

Findings:

- Tremendous loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and increasing inability of chiefs to manage “take”
- Fulanis and other new ethnic groups moving into the area—how to govern resource use?

To do govern resources, and undertake development that will be sustained by **the people themselves** in regions of the Global South, we must begin from:

- what people have,
- what they know
- how they can sustain themselves from their own resources.

Sustainable Development begins with what people know and have

**OUR RESILIENCE
RESOURCES:**



Revitalize ancestral knowledge so they can speak to our present time

**For us, education an inheritance.
And it comes our ancestors to the present.**



- For us, education is an inheritance. And it comes from our ancestors to the present. It is not a certificate that can be transferred as a signed document. It is a certificate in your head that guides you how to live in your society, what my elders and parents teach me.

**When we lose our cultural and linguistic heritage,
we lose ourselves and our community esteem.**

K12 School Education

- The British established formal (and Eurocentric) schools in southern Ghana (Accra, Cape Coast) where they settled. In northern Ghana, they did not establish schools until 1957: they did it as they were leaving. The schools provide Eurocentric education: science, culture, languages, philosophies, history and no education about our African indigenous traditions and philosophies that stabilize the indigenous people in their environments.
 - *If traditional education does not make sense to kids--Elders will not be able pass their wisdom and knowledge to future generations because kids won't sit with them.*



"I have travelled across the length and breadth of Africa and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage and therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient **education system**, her culture, for if the Africans think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their selfesteem, their native culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation".

4-2-1835

@realinomoses

Lord Macaulay's Address to the
British Parliament on 2nd Feb 1835

Absent indigenous education

*(because they only learn about Europe and the West)
young people look for Western jobs (not many in
northern Ghana), or decide to migrate to Europe to
join the cultures they learned of in school.*



Rashid Iddrisu with esteemed Gonja elder, Jakalia Doli

We honor the wisdom of our elders and help them pass along language and knowledge traditions to future generations

WIACT's Projects

Resilience resource:

Revitalize ancestral knowledge and help it speak to the present age

The Vision: reconnect young people with their ancestral identities so they can prosper

To institute Indigenous Education in Savannah Region's K-12 grades



Language documentation

K'Sa Awule
The earth belongs to us
[Gonja Traditional Song/Poem]

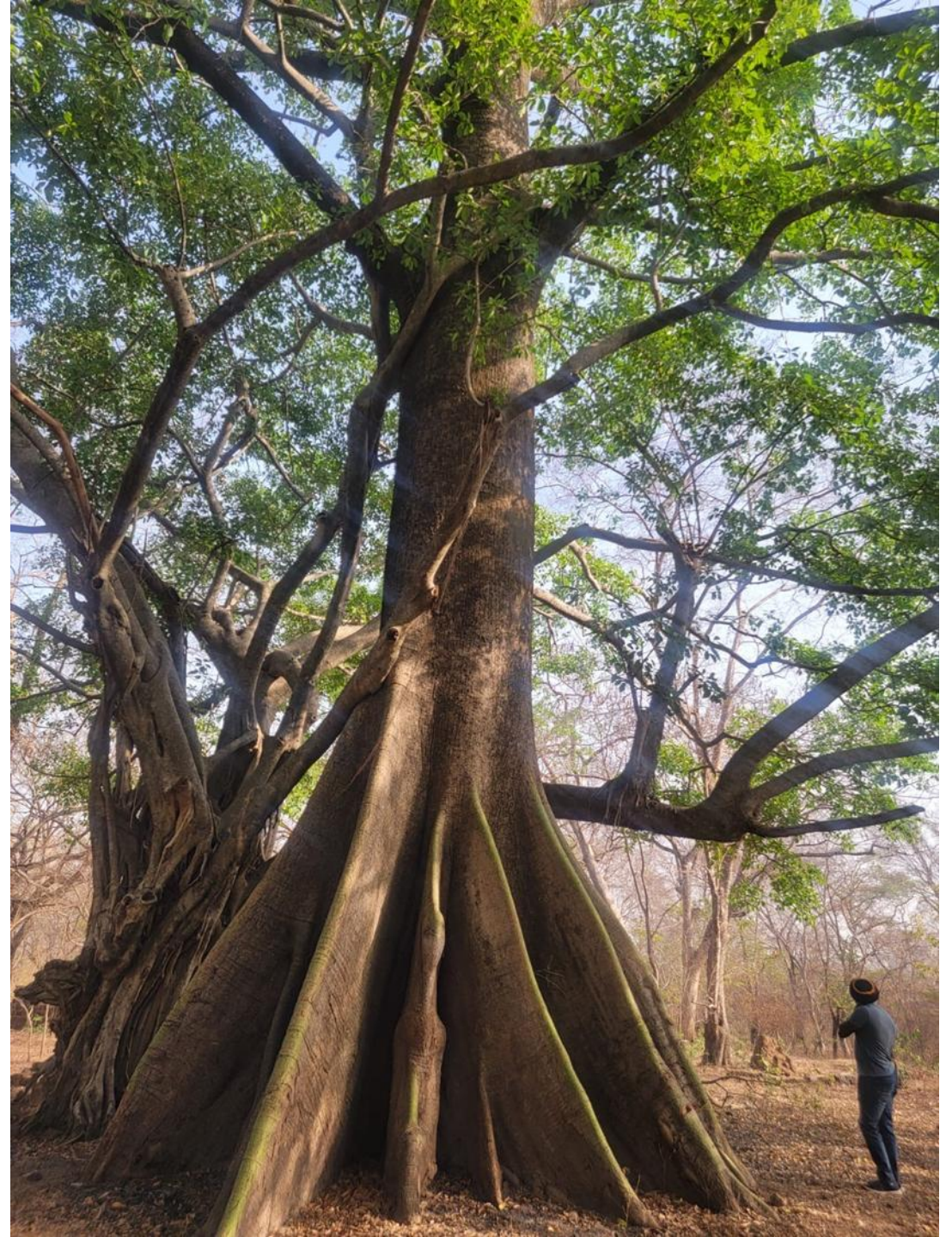
Songs and Proverbs



K'ji akpa nane bi
Grandchildren of the Land
Gonja traditional song

Native Tree Nursery







KPONGRI D/A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL



WIACT

Native Tree Nursery

A Reforestation project

To assure future generations can

Know our ancestral trees







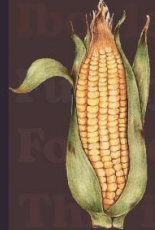
Fo ape n de

Mee wurfo k'ninto abuwu fo k'nishito nta lanε fo be a ler kpa,
ashi anye nane nyin ne anye nane che a na be atuwbi so.



This is your home

Introducing you to the wisdom of your birthplace
through the voices of your forefathers and foremothers.



Ibol la kenj

ni ra baagli bora him lii wεε,
lii di I nna balaa nii Inaahana banj la ni



Fu tenj le nya

Wu bille naa ajie lo funyi. Yi ajanfu lo fun nye,
yi fu mankpaan mine ni fun sankpa mine bilfu jie



“International development” has struggled to bring ideas for development into local communities:

- ▶ ***But actually, our elders already have ideas...*** and they are encoded in proverbs, songs, poems, language, handed down from ancestors. Our currency in the world is our culture and traditions. When we study it, it will open opportunities. We have traditional culture *and people who practice it.*
- ▶ ***The Global North can support this kind of development.***

A project to rebuild the Gonja traditional palace at NYAne

- ▶ This palace was destroyed during the colonial period in northern Ghana.
- ▶ The Paramount Chief hosted yearly celebrations, trading, and conflict resolution/governance events at this palace
- ▶ It also represented the power that was preventing natural resource abuse, so when the palace was destroyed, the ability to prevent abuse of natural resources was severely compromised



Ghana is known for monuments that commemorate the horrors of the slave trade

But WIACT will begin to change the narrative...

- ▶ by moving on from the terrible things that happened...
- ▶ to sharing the rich resources of African traditional culture, embedded in our languages and our systems of local governance by our chiefs

The entrance gate to the new Palace will say:

Door of Return....

To Home and Freedom

Gracia S



www.cehdaghana.org
g



www.wiaactghana.org
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