International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation
ISSN: 2617-0299 (Online); ISSN: 2708-0099 (Print)
DOI: 10.32996/ijllt
Journal Homepage: www.al-kindipublisher.com/index.php/ijllt

IJLLT
AL-KINDI CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Anglophone African Literature Contribution in Environment Preservation

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| ABSTRACT
This article considers the contribution of Anglophone African Literature in Environment preservation through forests and rivers. The sociological, sociolinguistic, anthropological and psychological approaches will be applied. This paper intends to highlight a new perspective how anglophone African authors' writings contribute actively to the formation of the conditions, that is environment preservation and protection conditions through forests' and rivers sacredness beliefs.

| KEYWORDS

"Anglophone African Literature", contribution, and "Environment Preservation", beliefs.

| Résumé
Cet article examine comment la littérature africaine anglophone contribue aux conditions de préservation de 'environnement à travers la préservation des forêts et des fleuves ou rivières. Les approches sociologiques, sociolinguistique, anthropologique et psychologique seront utilisées. Ce travail de recherche met en exergue un regard nouveau comment les écrits des auteurs de la littérature africaine anglophone contribue activement à la formation des conditions, c'est à dire conditions de protection et de préservation de l'environnement à travers les croyances liées au caractère sacré des forêts et rivières.

| Mots Clés

" Littérature africaine anglophone", "Contribution, "Préservation de l'environnement", croyances.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 01 January 2025 **PUBLISHED:** 11 January 2025 **DOI:** 10.32996/ijllt.2025.8.1.5

1. INTRODUCTION
This article considers the contribution of Anglophone African Literature in Environment preservation through forests and rivers beliefs.

This paper intends to foreground how anglophone African authors' writings partake in the formation of the conditions, that is environment preservation and protection conditions through forests 'and rivers sacredness beliefs, as portrayed by Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Buchi Emecheta's *The Slave Girl.*

In this regard, to what extent does forests and rivers sacredness belief enable Anglophone African writers to foster environment preservation?

ADAM Trexler in his article entitled " Mediating Climate Change, Ecocriticism, Science Studies, and The Hungry Tide" from *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* underscores: " In order to approach climate change in fiction, it is necessary to re-examine some of our basic assumptions about what things do the work in novels". As per above, it is obvious that the assessment of fundamental

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theories about what things constitute the work in novels are essential but the interpretation that the critic or the reader gives to the things or to what do the work in novels is also very important, in order to anticipate to some extent the climate change harmful effect on environment through environment preservation. This is the reason why, this paper under consideration is timely.

Dr. Sankararao Mudadla in his article entitled "Sacred Groves" from *Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India*, pinpoints the existence of sacred groves or forests as follows:

> The rig veda, (1700-1100 BCE) an ancient collection of Hindu hymns mentions tree worship, which might be linked to the concept of sacred groves. Generally, sacred groves are small forest patches conserved by local people through religious beliefs, traditional sentiments, and taboos (Ramakrishna 1997) and are repositories of many threatened species; they are popularly called living biological heritage sites as they contain rich diversity. The existence of sacred groves took place all over the world, including in India as well as in Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia and America. (2024: 27)

Here, Dr. Sankararao Mudadla elaborates about an ancient collection of Hindu hymns which dated back 1700-1100 BCE, in which there are information regarding tree worship. He also confirms the existence of sacred forests in all continents.

Erling Berge in his article entitled " Environmental Protection in the Theory of Commons" writes as follows:

> Management can preserve the utility of the good by setting the number of club members to something under the threshold (if overuse is the problem) or over the threshold (if the service level depends on a certain minimum number). But also equity problems between members and non-members to have to be addressed. Positive externalities from preservation of some club good, such as watershed protection presented at the "Trans-nationalizing the commons and the politics of civil society",
> Chiang Mai, Thailand, 11-14 Jully 2003
> and preservation of biodiversity are often considered public goods. Distributional and management challenges arise from discrepancy between costs borne by resource managers and the benefits enjoyed by others ("free riders") (Erling Berge 2003:6-7)

Having this in mind, management can preserve the utility forest good only when it is linked to the threshold of either overuse problem or a certain minimum number. Otherwise, management is weak in forest good preservation. There are also challenges related to distribution and management due to the difference between costs borne by resource managers and profits enjoyed by free riders.

Ramachandra Guha in chapter two entitled "Ecological Sociologist, the Work and Legacy of Radhakamal Mukerjee" from *Speaking with Nature: The Origins of the Indian Environmentalism* points out:

> An autobiography, published after Mukerjee's death and edited by his students, speaks of the powerful influence that nature had on his childhood. The Mukerjees lived in a large house in Murshidabad with a well-tended garden and orchards, whose songs, colours and scents' were an 'integral part' of his growing-up years. In old age, Mukerjee recalled the different moods of nature as he had experienced them in his childhood, benign as well as dangerous, welcoming as well as forbidding. (2024:38)

In light of the above, nature or environment may have a great impact on someone's life. In fact, Mukerjee who lived in large house in Murshidabad with a well-tended garden and orchards, who naturally birds songs, scents, trees and colours were fully part of his life. In his old age, he could recall the different aspects of nature or environment. That is how it could be dangerous when provoked by humans and welcoming when humans are complying with nature or environment friendly practices.

Pramod N. Nayar in the tenth chapter of his book entitled *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory From Structuralism to Ecocriticism* underpins:

> Raymond Williams in his elegantly argued The Country and the City (1973) showed how English literature contributed to specific notions of nature, the countryside, poverty, seasons and the city. Williams was not trying to explore the environmental aspects of the eighteen-century literature. Rather, he was trying to demonstrate how the age worked with particular notions of 'nature' and 'culture'. In a sense, this is the starting point for ecocritical theory. Ecocriticism begins with the assumption that cultural texts construct particular notions of 'nature' which tie into material practices. (2010:242)

With regard to the above, Pramod highlights how Raymond Williams in his book entitled *The Country and the City* (1973), revealed how English literature came up with special notions of nature. He illustrates to what extent Williams was not trying to explore the environmental aspects of the eighteen-century literature. But to indicate how this century is related to specific notions of nature and culture. Pramod reveals that ecocriticism begins with tackling that cultural texts build essential notions of nature which then associate material practices.

Glen A. Love in his article entitled "revaluing nature toward en ecological criticism" from *The Ecocriticism Reader Landmarks in Literary Ecology* makes a point:

> For the rest of human history on the earth, as says ashby, we will have to live with problems of population, resources and pollution. Given the fact that most of us in the profession of English would be offended at not being considered environmentally conscious and ecologically aware, how are we to account for our general failure to apply any sense of this awareness to our daily work? One explanation might be that we care about these issues, but we don't care enough. (1996:227)

Given the above, Glen presents how Ashby asserts that mankind lives with essential issues that need to be addressed such as population, resources and pollution. The last one draws the attention because it endangers the habitat or natural environment of both living beings and mankind. Also. It is pointed out that man's action is the cause of this general failure because he does not care enough about these issues.

Some writers and researchers such as Dr. Sankararao Mudadla, Erling Berge, Ramachandra Guha, Pramod K. Nayar and Glen A. Love wrote about many themes but they did not write and analyse to what extent Anglophone African Literature contributes to environment preservation conditions trough the forests and rivers sacredness beliefs. The contribution of Anglophone African Literature to environment preservation condition, is the fresh insight in this paper under consideration.

II - African Beliefs Contribution in Environment Preservation

Every community has its own beliefs and perception of the world which may affect in one way or another people behaviour towards their fellow community members or environment. Beliefs in African communities constitute the basis of the society because they are like ciment for the building needs. Beliefs occupy an essential place within African communities since, they bring communities members to be united as one. Beliefs in traditional Africa society are for the communities like constitutions are for the nations. In fact, even nowadays there are some villages in Africa where communities members are governed by forefathers or ancestors beliefs in every aspect of their daily life. The paper under consideration will underpin how anglophone African authors 'writings engage in the formation of the conditions, that is environment preservation and protection conditions through forests 'and rivers sacredness beliefs.

The following quote by Pramod K. Nayar regarding how the cultural texts are part of the construction of the conditions, will be helpful for the analysis of this paper under consideration. Pramod K. Nayar makes a point in his book entitled *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory From Structuralism to Ecocriticism* in kind:

> As we have noted on the chapter on New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, Cultural texts are not simply reflections of material and social conditions, they actively construct the conditions. Thus, ecocritism believes that literary, visual and other representations of nature are very much to do with an age's view and treatment of nature. (2010: 242)

With this in mind, cultural text build actively the conditions. What does the reader learn from this? It means that when a writer writes about nature or environment preservation. His or her writings will contribute actively to the formation of this condition, that is environment preservation and protection condition. Thus, writings about a particular subject always have a powerful impact in the construction of the conditions in which the subject is related to. Likewise, when Chinua Achebe and Buchi Emecheta writes about forests and rivers sacredness beliefs, this fosters the respect for forests and rivers which are key elements of nature or environment preservation and protection conditions, as it will be highlighted in the lines below. In doing so, writings nurture not only the ideas of environment respect but environment preservation and protection conditions.

II-1- Forests' sacredness beliefs

Africa has lots of beliefs among which can be pointed out forests' sacredness belief. This belief of forests sacredness which is deep-rooted in the collective mind of African communities, and may contribute to environment preservation conditions. In order to better understand this point, the following lines from *Things Fall Apart* will be illustrious:

> Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children. Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear of failure and of weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, and the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo's fear was greater than these. (1958:10-11)

In view of the foregoing, the first part of the quotation refers to Okonkwo's life which was dominated by fear of failure and weakness. However, this is not the matter of concern of this analysis. In fact, the second part of the above mentioned reference draws the reader attention on the forest sacredness belief. Here, it is mentioned that Okonkwo's fear of failure and weakness was greater than the fear of evil, capricious gods, magic and fear of the forest. Why does the writer of *Things Fall Apart* have to compare Okonkwo's fear greater than the things which were linked to Ibo community spirituality among which can be pointed out the forest. The forest is a matter of concern in this paper under consideration. The Ibo community portrayed by Chinua Achebe, considers the forest being sacred because it is a place of residence of the gods. In this perspective, most of the forests are venerated by the Ibo community members in order to avoid to offend the gods. In doing so, beliefs of the forests' sacredness can contribute in environment preservation conditions.

It is a well known fact that forests have a positive impact upon environment because it generates oxygen through photosynthesis. Forest play great role in reduction of all types of pollution, as a case in point, water, air pollution. It has vital influences on biotic conditions and impacts in a positive way animal and mankind life. It provides Oxygen which is a critical element for existence. This is the reason why, the mankind can live on the earth the only planet which can provide the oxygen to mankind. In other words, when Chinua Achebe depicts in his novels entitled *Things Fall Apart*, the Ibo forests' sacredness belief which is mentioned implicitly by the fear of the forest in the above mentioned citation. He contributes to the environment preservation awareness and conditions.

The Ibo community in particular and African communities in general are well informed from their forefathers beliefs about what does the sacredness refer to. It is known that everything which is related to the sacredness is a matter of life or death in connection with community members behaviours towards it. Chinua Achebe contributes through his writings to a large-scale awareness of the importance of forests preservation conditions. Undoubtedly when the forest is sacred it means that no-one has the right to cut the trees from the forest unnecessarily, unless the elders of the community who are supposed to be close the forefathers or ancestors give the authorisation. This leads to the rational trees cutting and avoids to endanger the place of residence the African gods in general and Ibo Community gods in particular. So, beliefs of forest sacredness enable forests to continue playing their role of guardian of the stable environment for a better existence of mankind.

The forests sacredness beliefs are also perceived in Indian society where forests or sacred groves are considered to be the place of residence of deities or gods. It order to better understand these beliefs, the lines below Dr. Sankararao Mudadla's article entitled "Sacred Groves" from *Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India* are very illustrious:

> Temple Groves: these groves are associated with temples due to their religious importance; generally, they are protected by the government, the temple trust, or village committees. They often contain a wide variety of plants and animals. Examples: Ficus, Neem and Tamarind tree.
> Traditional Sacred Groves: These are the places where the folk deities reside, ie., Potharaju, Yellamma, Polamma, Maridimma in Andhra Pradesh, Sammakka Drama Devathalu in Telangana, Kavus in Kerala, Gumpa Groves in Sikkim, etc. They often contain a rich variety of plant and animal life. (2024: 28)

Based on the information provided, there are also forests sacredness beliefs in India. These beliefs are well embedded in Indians. That is why, temples groves are protected not only by the government but by the temple trust and village committees. The sacred groves or forests are protected by indian because they believe strongly that sacred groves or forests are the places where the deities or gods reside. So, Indians' avoidance of offending the goods prevents them to cut the trees from the sacred groves or forests. This belief or perception of life contributes to the environment preservation conditions. It is well known that fact the sacred groves in India are often protected areas. This contributes in the preservation of the biodiversity through the restriction of harmful human activities to the environment. This is how Hindus's or Indians' beliefs contribute to environment preservation conditions too.

II-2-Rivers 'sacredness beliefs

Rivers present not only a source of life in African communities and but hold a significance place in people life on daily basis. The impact of rivers on African communities members in general and Ibo community in particular is perceived through their beliefs in

rivers goddess. Rivers godess beliefs are essential in African communities and contribute to environment preservation conditions. As a case in point, this is what Buchi Emecheta's *The Slave Girl* furthers in this fashion:

> She is tired, son and her time is very near, "Okwuekwu replied. Meditatively, praying inwardly to Oboshi, the river goddess of their town Ibuza, to help his wife this time. He would have liked a baby girl; what was the use, when all the girls his wife bore him always died after a few hours.
>
> What was he going to do? They had lost so many children at birth, so many that he could not remember the number. He remembered though that their first child had been a girl who died within hours. Then they had a boy, who lived and grew strong, and he named him Owezim, meaning 'I am no longer bitter at my lot' (...). (1977:14)

Taking into account the above, it is obvious that members of the Ibo community portrayed in the above paragraph believe in spirits or goddess of the rivers. When people think that there are rivers goddesses, it means rivers are dwelling places of gods. In doing so, people of this society will develop respectful attitudes towards rivers. For instance, those community members cannot collect waste, transport and dump waste in the rivers. This perception of life will avoid harmful behaviour of polluting the rivers. If the rivers are not polluted, this means seas will neither be polluted nor the oceans because rivers flow to the seas and seas to the oceans. Rivers' sacredness belief will foster the preservation of vital sources of freshwater. Without rivers there is no freshwater for neither human nor animal nor plant needs. Without rivers or waters that rivers supply, the natural and friendly environment of humans, animals, plants and other organisms will no longer exist. So, rivers supply the absolutely necessary freshwater for all forms of lives including human on the earth.

Having this in mind, Anglophone African authors through their writings promote the African rivers sacredness beliefs which advocate environment preservation conditions. In African collective mind, beliefs in gods govern communities members' steps on daily basis. So, the dwelling places of gods such as rivers are as sacred as gods themselves in African opinions and thoughts.

The advocacy of African writers in general and anglophone African writers in particular contributes to environment preservation conditions because community members will perceive rivers like sacred knowing their extremely important role in the existence of any forms of lives and they will adopt environment friendly attitudes. The anglophone African writers' advocacy through their accounts and narratives contribute to reach a great number of people thanks to their novels which are also vehicles of African beliefs on the subject of environment preservation.

An analogy can be made with Christians when they believe that God will punish people who have harmful behaviours towards the earth or environment. This following scripture from the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* are helpful:

> But the nations became wrathful, and your own wrath came, and the appointed time came for the dead to be judged and to reward your slaves the prophets and the holy ones and those fearing your name, the small and the great, and to bring to ruin those ruining the earth. (Revelation11:18)

Considering the above, God's purpose is to bring ruin to those ruining earth, in other words, to destroy those who do not have environment friendly behaviour. It is obvious that God will punish those who have harmful behaviour towards the earth which is a habitat of all kinds of lives including human. Since what God says is in the domain of faith, it means that it is unquestionable for Christians. So, what remains for Christians is to comply with Bible standards connected with environment preservation and protection. This christian faith can encourage environment preservation conditions for all those who believe in the Bible as God's word. Likewise, as analysed above anglophone African writers enable through their writings to raise to some extent environment preservation to kind of religion by involving beliefs in gods or goddesses to influence on community members daily basis behaviour towards environment preservation conditions. In doing so, this fosters any forms of actions which are environment friendly.

CONCLUSION

As conclusion, through anglophone African writers, environment preservation is raised to some extent at the level of religion for African communities members. It is presented as such because it involves faith which fosters environment preservation conditions. In light of the above, this is how Chinua Achebe and Buchi Emecheta participate in the formation of the conditions, that is environment preservation and protection conditions through forests 'and rivers sacredness beliefs. Since, forests and rivers are viewed as being dwelling places of gods and goddesses, no community member will dare to cut unnecessary trees from forests or to dump the waste be it plastic, chemical, solid, or of any kind into rivers. This is how the reader may consider this article in its new perspective when it comes how anglophone African literature to contributing in environment preservation conditions.

Look at this new perspective, thanks to anglophone African writers' work, preservation and protection of natural habitat of any forms of lives become a sacred duty or action and belong to the domain of faith. It is well known fact that the domain of faith is to some extent more efficient. African communities members have to believe only in forests and rivers gods and goddesses then environment preservation will follow smoothly. This is a new perpective that this paper under consideration highlights, with respect to environment preservation conditions. Through Chinua Achebe's and Buchi Emecheta's writings, this advocacy is being made by Anglophone African literature for Environment preservation conditions at large-scale within Africa and even beyond the continent.

Funding: This research received no external funding.
Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.
Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

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