

Clans and the Concept of Totemism Among the Dagara in the Jirapa Municipality of Ghana

Dominic Alimbey Dery¹, Jonas Tangkpaa², Alexander M. Bedekuru³, Maxwell Tengelzor Ba-an⁴

¹Department of Languages and International Relations, Dean of Graduate Studies, Tamale Technical University, Tamale, Ghana

²Kaleo Senior High Technical School, Wa, Ghana

³MacCoy College of Education, Wa, Ghana

⁴Department of Culture and Development Studies, Millar Institute for Transdisciplinary and Development Studies (MITDS) / Millar Open University (MOU), Bolgatana, Ghana

Email address:

tysondery0@gmail.com (Dominic Alimbey Dery), jonas.tangkpaa@gmail.com (Jonas Tangkpaa),

bedellex2@gmail.com (Alexander M. Bedekuru), baansepaat@yahoo.com (Maxwell Tengelzor Ba-an)

To cite this article:

Dominic Alimbey Dery, Jonas Tangkpaa, Alexander M. Bedekuru, Maxwell Tengelzor Ba-an. Clans and the Concept of Totemism Among the Dagara in the Jirapa Municipality of Ghana. *Social Sciences*. Vol. 12, No. 3, 2023, pp. 126-134. doi: 10.11648/j.ss.20231203.17

Received: May 23, 2023; Accepted: June 14, 2023; Published: June 27, 2023

Abstract: Totemism is an important notion in the lives of people in Africa and the world over. Certain customs and beliefs identify different people across the world; totems play a significant part in Dagaaba beliefs and activities. However, there has not been much research on clans and their totems among the Dagaaba. The research was conducted out in four villages in and around Jirapa. Sigri, Ullo, Sabuli, and Jirapa Municipality, Upper West Region. Purposive sampling was used by the researchers to acquire data. To collect data, unstructured interviews and participatory observation were used. Those interviewed were between the ages of fifty and sixty. The findings showed that the Dagara take their totems seriously because of the crucial role they are supposed to play among the different clans. Totems were revealed to be highly venerated among the tribes in the municipality. In the study of Jirapa's (Dagara) totems, they discovered that the bulk of the totems were animal-based, though flora was also acknowledged. Another discovery in the research was that every clan was formed with the use of a totem, which the elders taught the younger generation about. The study concluded that, modernization and cultural dynamism have impacted their survival in the environment and if care is not taken the younger generation will not have access to totems because indigenous peoples failed to conserve and protect the environment for survival. The study made the recommendation that more research be done to determine the purpose of African indigenous symbols in various ethnic contexts.

Keywords: Clan, Concept, Totemism, Dagaare, Jirapa

1. Introduction

Totemism is an important notion in the lives of people in Africa and the world over. Certain customs and beliefs identify different people across the world; totems play a significant part in Dagaaba beliefs and activities. However, there has not been much research on clans and their totems among the Dagaaba, as explained by Mark, K. K. A. [47] on Dagaare lesiri and Kyemaloo, L. B. [29]. As researchers, our objective was to identify several clans and their totems in four villages in the Jirapa Municipality of Ghana's Upper West Region, and investigate the significance of totems among the various clans.

Totems and customs help people all around the world identify themselves. These traditions do not define them, but rather guide them in their everyday lives. Bodo, A. B. [17] viewed totem as a tasty, harmless, or deadly animal that was rarely feared. Historically, the choice of a reptile, fish, or bird as a totem is based on the notion that it once helped an ancestor survive. People thought that the chosen animal helped the clan's survival in some way. Because of the importance of these totems in our community, their beneficiaries are expected to preserve them. However, the younger generation does not take these animals seriously since they do not understand the meaning of these totems.

Totems are critical parts of oral literature. Most of the

aspects of oral literature have been looked at but that of totemism has not been researched into by most scholars [34]. Oral literature is the transfer of traditional and cultural contents from person to person or generation to generation by word of mouth and memory. Proverbs, folktales, and folklore, including totems, are examples of such resources [5]. A totem is a holy object or symbol that represents a group of people, such as a family, clan, lineage, or tribe [48]. In order to add to the existing oral literature, the researchers opted to study on the idea of totemism, which has gotten little attention from anthropologists.

The phrase totem refers to a natural item, either inanimate or live, with which a group of people identify. Totemism refers to the mystical devotion of groups of people to totems. A totem can be a plant, an animal, or even an inanimate item such as a rock [24]. Members of a shared totem differentiate themselves from one another by using traditional names, totemic symbols as charms, and tattooing the figure of the totem on the walls of their homes, weapons, and even their bodies for easy identification.

Sigmund, F. [36], opines that totemism is widespread in tribal India. Hundreds of totem groupings are named after flora and animals. For instance, they have a goat clan, whose members see the goat as their totem since a goat kidnapped for sacrifice by their ancestors changed into a pig when the theft was uncovered, saving the culprits from punishment.

He went on to say that in Australia, persons with the same totem do not marry. If a person is detected to be having sexual relations with a member of a banned clan, the punishment is death. Similarly, among the Dagaaba, Mandal, D. [48] has a similar viewpoint. Marriage between persons of the same blood is forbidden, according to him. When such unacceptable situation happen, elders of both the man and the woman's side are advised to counsel the couple to put a stop to the relationship. Even if the lady happens to become pregnant she is advised to terminate the pregnancy to serve as deterrent to others. The ancestors of the Dagaaba do not entertain couple of the same blood relation. This has been amplified by a number of scholars relied on by this research.

1.1. Statement of Problem

Among the Dagaaba, different clans revere various totems and this is no different in the Jirapa Municipality. There has been a considerable effort in the study of some aspects of Dagaaba oral literature, of which totems is an aspect, by some Dagaaba writers and scholars as available literature shows. Oral literature is a channel for transmitting historical knowledge. Researchers like Saanchi, J. A. N [35], Dikpetey, T. S. [21] Dikpetey, T. S. [22] Dorzie, G [23] among others have generally looked at various aspects of oral literature of Dagaare, but their works do not directly focus on the area of Dagaaba totems.

There is limited data on Dagaaba totems and their importance in the Jirapa Municipality of the Upper West Region. The research focuses on the concept of totemism among the Dagaaba of Jirapa Municipality in the Upper West Region.

1.2. Research Questions

1. What are the several totems linked with the Dagaaba clans in Jirapa Municipality, Upper West Region?
2. What significance does totemic belief have for Dagaaba clans in Jirapa Municipality, Upper West Region?

1.3. Research Objective of the Study

1. To investigate the numerous totems related with the Dagaaba clans in Jirapa Municipality, Upper West Region.
2. To discover the significance of Dagaaba clans' totemic beliefs in Jirapa Municipality in the Upper West Region.

2. Pertinent Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

For a better understanding of the issue at hand, several notions that have been crucial to the analysis and studies described in this article need to be further elaborated.

Most African groups believe that ancestor spirits can be found in woods and specific trees, caves, wrecked dwellings, and sources of water [42]. It is forbidden for clan members to slaughter animals that serve as the treasured emblem of their family in traditional cultures such as the Ndebele, where totemic is practiced [43].

2.2. The Concept of Totemism

Dagaari has become an important area of language research. There has been a considerable effort in the study of some aspects of Dagaari oral literature, of which totems is an aspect, by some writers and scholars of Dagaari as available literature shows. Oral literature is a channel for transmitting historical knowledge. Researchers like Saanchi, J. A. N [35], Dikpetey, T. S. [21] Dikpetey, T. S. [22] Dorzie, G [23] among others have generally looked at various aspects of oral literature of Dagaare, but their works do not directly focus on the area of Dagaaba totems.

Totems are very important to human beings. Every society uses them in various ways in their daily activities. Many scholars have attempted to give their views on what totems are based on their background and the way they perceive the concept.

Tylor, E. B. [39], described totems as a belief in which each human or group of people of a clan is regarded to have spiritual connection or kinship with a physical being, such as an animal or plant, commonly termed "spirited- being". He noted that a totem is supposed to interact with a certain kin group or individual, serving as a sign of hope and survival.

According to Sigmund, F. [36], a totem is an animal that has a special relationship with the entire clan. He stated that a totem represents the clan's first tribal ancestor as well as its spirit of protection; it gives oracles to its people and, while being otherwise harmful, the totem recognizes and spares its offspring.

Members of the totem are therefore under a sacred

responsibility not to kill or harm their totem in any way, as well as refrain from eating or enjoying its meat. Any transgression of these restrictions is punished or cursed automatically.

He went on to say that the nature of a totem is inherent in all members of the species, not just a particular animal or creature. He stated that festivals are held from time to time, at which time members portray their totems in ceremonial dances. Depending on the clan or tribe, the totem is passed down through the maternal or paternal line. Sigmund is not precise on the totem's ancestry. The Dagaaba totem has paternal heredity. One is an instant family member of that totem the minute he/she is born into the family.

Historically, the choice of a totem animal, reptile, fish, or bird was motivated by a survival instinct. The notion that the chosen animal would help the clan's survival affected their decision. Another feature was that a clan would be modelled after an essential trait of the chosen animal, such as bravery, courage, speed, or knowledge.

The totem is not restricted to a district or a place; members of a common totem might live independently and far apart from one another while being amicable with believers of other totems.

Many Jirapa people are defined by distinct rituals and beliefs that determine their nature. These conventions not only define them, but also leads them in their everyday lives. Without a doubt, the tradition of honouring totems is associated with African communities.

Totems, according to Yabang, C. K. [41], are beliefs linked with animistic religions. Totems are frequently animals or other natural symbols that spiritually symbolize a group of linked individuals, according to him. He holds the belief that totems are very sociable and have good relationship with the entire clan. He also emphasized on animistic religion; all animals, birds or reptiles with common characteristics belonging to a common religion, those that also have different features believe to be another form of religion.

Levi-Strauss, C. [30], on his part viewed totemism to be animism that relate to mystical connection believed to occur between human beings. He added that it is difficult to proof certain myths behind some totems. [19], on his part argued that a totem was an animal, plant, or other natural thing that was ancestrally tied to a tribe, clan, or family group as a tutelary spirit. The term 'Totem' originates from the North American Indian language. It is used to refer to plants and animals that are thought to have a special link with a certain group of people or with individuals in a specific community. The term refers to a bond between a clan or tribe and a type of animal or plant as protectors on the African continent, notably in West Africa.

Braffi, E. K. [19], noted that totems represent first and foremost the clan's tribal ancestors, as well as its tutelary spirit and protector. Members of a totem have a sacred responsibility not to kill their totem and to refrain from consuming its meat. Any breach of these regulations will result in penalty.

The totemic trait is inherent not just in a single annual or

entity, but in all members of the species. Festivals are conducted from time to time in which members of a totem replicate or depict the motions and features of their totems in ceremonial dances. The totem is passed down through either the maternal or paternal ancestry. In the Dagaaba tradition, children inherit their totem from the paternal side, though they will not eat or harm their mother's totem across the whole region.

Mark, K. K. A. [47] cited in Guba, E. and Lincoln, Y. [44], said totemism can be divided into twelve catechism religions. All twelve's can be summarised as follows; the relationship between a totem (animal) and its human relations is one of a sacred. The former was believed to have the powers and ability to protect those who revere it. The people on their part would do everything not to incur the displeasure or anger of this totem since the ramifications could be dire. Reinach's catechism also said the totemic animal can foretell what will happen in the future to its neighbours particularly the clans' heads. In Sabuli, the people are 'Banyenē' (clan name) and their totem is the porcupine. This totem can foretell what will happen in the near future. For example, if an elder will die, the porcupine would display its displeasure on a tree with its spears or arrows. This is to pre-inform the elders of what will happen so as to avoid pressure and surprise.

Concluding with Reinach's twelve catechism, every tribe has same connection to their totem and his conclusion is not different from the Dagaaba.

2.3. Concepts of Names to Totemism

Many scholars have tried to define the name totem in different ways. The reasons are, there are always a lot of positive and negative criticism since each individual perceives it based on the language and culture he/she specializes. That notwithstanding, some scholars have defined the name based on their cultural background and language spoken within that society.

Angbataaye, K. D. [6], posited that a name is a valuable source of information which can indicate animals (donne) reptiles (bonvuuri), birds (nuuli), gender, tribes (bal), religion, nationality (dogbo zie) and place within a tribe and even in a large society.

This explanation will be significant because Dagaaba indicate their Totem with names showing the place where the particular tribe can be located at its geographical area. For instance, if you mention this tribe "Manlɔɔrɛɛ" their totem is dwarf (kɔntɛma). Within the Upper West Region, the tribe is largely situated in Jirapa irrespective of its heterogeneous nature.

3. Methods and Materials

3.1. Study Area

The Dagaaba live in the Upper West Region. They are mostly an agricultural population located in Ghana's north-western region, with Burkina Faso being the nearest neighbour. The major towns where Dagaaba live are; Wa,

Jirapa, Nandom, Kaleo, Ullo, Hamile, Lawra and Daffiama. Dagaare is also spoken in Tuna and its surrounding communities in the Northern Region of Ghana that share boundary with the Upper West Region [18].

The language (Dagaare) is spoken beyond the homeland as being described by [18]. It has spread across many parts of the country in Ghana primarily as a result of education and socialization. These days, Dagaare is spoken in other Regions such as; Bolgatanga, Kumasi, Winneba and Accra. Upper West Region has a population of about six hundred and seventy-seven thousand, seven hundred and sixty-three people in Ghana (2010) Housing and Population Census.

3.2. Research Approach

The data for the study was gathered using a qualitative technique. According to Best, J. W. & Kahn, J. V. [45], qualitative research design involves the use of a variety of instruments to obtain data on a given phenomenon, such as case study, personal experience, interviews, observation, and visual text.

Qualitative research is generally relying on purposive selection of participants who will provide rich data concerning the research topic [26]. The researchers adopted the descriptive survey as the main study design because the nature of the topic requires a detailed description of the concept of totemism and the significance of totems in the Municipality. We proceeded to the four towns within and around the municipality to engage with the participants during data collection in order to acquire meaningful data for the research. We chose qualitative research design because the data was collected through narration by elders. We collected the views and experiences of participants as data for the study.

3.3. Sampling Method and Population

To collect data, the researchers employed the purposive sampling approach. The sampling was done on purpose. Fraenkel, J. R., & Norman, E. W [25], viewed purposive sampling as a technique where researchers use their knowledge of the population to judge whether a particular sample data will be representative and choose those which best meet the purpose of the study. Furthermore, purposive sampling is a strategy in which items are picked depending on the study's goal [32]. The population was selected because the researchers believed they were the knowledge community.

The primary goal of a purposive sample is to provide a sample that may be presumed to be representative of the population. This is frequently achieved by using expert knowledge about the population to pick a sample of components that reflect a cross-section of the population in a non-random manner.

To collect the data, a purposeful selection of senior respondents from four Dagaaba settlements was chosen. The researchers chose respondents between the ages of fifty and sixty because they were deemed to possess the kind of information that the study needed. The history of totems and its importance can best be narrated by old people in our rural

communities. Eighteen elders, both males and females, literate and non-literate comprising of five elders each in two communities and four each in another two communities were randomly picked through the assistance of key informants. In each community, four difference totems were analyzed, their significance to the whole clan. This was done because every community constituted different settlers that have different totems all together.

Owu-Ewie, C. [32], quoting Reinach, T. [46], a population is a collection of persons that share one or more traits and are of interest to the researcher (s). In this study, the target population are people in these communities; Sigri, Sabuli, Ullo and Jirapa Municipality township in the Upper West Region. These communities were selected because the chosen totems were located in those areas irrespective of their distance.

In any study, a variety of data collection method may be used as part of the ethnographic study. According to [9], data collection is a systematic procedure in which the researcher gathers relevant information in order to meet the study purpose and objectives. The data was collected from field work in four Dagaaba communities in Jirapa Municipality, interviews and observations were the tools mainly relied on. Owu-Ewie, C. [32], explained that interviews are purposeful conversations with subjects to obtain information to answer a researcher's question.

3.4. Data Collection Method

The data was gathered through an unstructured interview and participatory observation. Those interviewed ranged in age from fifty to sixty years. The data was analysed using the descriptive approach by the researchers. We have also discussed how these creatures are safeguarded from injury in the work.

Observation

The primary method of gathering data on nonverbal behavior is observation [32]. It is often referred to as field work because it takes place on the field. This observation was an informal instrument used in some communities in the Jirapa Municipality.

During the visit the researchers placed themselves in a way that enabled them to hear and listen to whatever transpired between the elders or those who know much about their totems and their significance to their whole clan. The researchers observed elders who are classified as historians of their clan often describe why a particular reptile or an animal is made to be their totem up to date.

Also, the researchers observed elders narrate the importance of these totems to the whole clan. Goldstein, K. S. [27], said Observation is a method of data collection used by field workers to obtain data by direct observation looking and describing the situation as it is. Goldstein, further added that observation is not limited to use visual aspects of the situation only but it also includes sensual experience such as hearing something and feeling.

Interview

Interviews are purposeful conversations with subjects, to

obtain information to answer questions. Unstructured interviews were used to gather data. This type of interview has predetermined questions before the interview but these questions are not followed rigidly.

According to Hinneh, K. [28], an unstructured interview is a common method for gathering data in qualitative investigations. This instrument, as the name suggests, has no fixed structure. It entails informal interactions with interviewees. The objective of the study is always in mind for researchers who utilize the unstructured approach, but the questions asked and how they are presented to achieve this purpose is left up to the interviewer(s).

Because of the flexibility and freedom inherent in doing an unstructured interview, probing might reveal comprehensive and useful information as well as sensitive material. The device, however, collects a large quantity of qualitative data, making analysis tedious and time consuming. Also, because of the freedom, the interviewers have to pursue different interesting tangents, they could be diverted in the process. The interviewee, on the other hand, has to be 'guided' to prevent aimless 'rambling' [40], while they offered the opportunity to express their opinion, feely and experience in detail.

Participants were interviewed on their experiences and knowledge on traditional beliefs on totems in their clans. Eighteen elders were purposely selected and asked questions on the topic: the concept of totemism in relation to certain species of animals in Jirapa Municipality. The questions asked were in Dagaare and answers given from such questions were the basis for the data collection.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Identification of Clans and Their Totems in Jirapa Township

From the findings of the study, it was clear that, Jirapa is a heterogeneous community. It has many clans as settlers, natives and migrants within the Municipality. All these clans' situated in the Municipality equally have their own clans in their respective communities elsewhere. The people of Jirapa are the natives. They are 'Manlɔɔrɛɛ' per their clan name. The totem is the dwarf (kɔntɔmɔ). All the inhabitants of the clan believe in the existence of the dwarfs within the manlɔɔrɛɛ family. Even though they are dominant in Jirapa Township, we identified other clans with their totems within the Municipality. During the interviews and interaction with the elders in the study, one elder narrated and explained some clans and their totems in the Jirapa Municipality as;

Table 1. Clans and their Totems names in Jirapa.

Clan names	Totem in Dagaare	Gloss
Bimbiglee	Gyuuni	'Vulture'
Kusielee	Zib	'Python'
Gbeedomɛɛ	Zib	'Python'
Bowaaleɛ	ɛbaa	'Crocodile'
Birifuoleɛ	Kpere	'Squirrel'
Sozeleɛ	ɲmaɲa	'Monkey'

Other elders also explained that, though these settlers came to Jirapa with their own totems, they do not contravene or disregard the history behind the choice of dwarfs as a totem in the Municipality. They accept and go by the rules and regulations of the people for the effective and peacefully stay in the Municipality. If the settlers' totem is also known, the natives will not harm it but in a way try to protect it from being killed by others who may see it as treat or meat.

4.1.1. Clans and Their Totems in Sigrɪ

The study findings discovered that, Sigrɪ is a community in the Jirapa Municipality. Most of the inhabitants are predominantly peasant farmers. They farm only for their family consumption. Though it is also heterogeneous, it is sparsely populated as compared to Jirapa Township. The latter is mostly a business town but Sigrɪ is a community purely for farming to feed their families.

The inhabitants are Gbeedomɛɛ (the clan name) and their totem is the python (zib). Every member in the community forbids to do anything that will harm this creature within Sigrɪ vicinity. The totem is welcome by viewers any time it is seen behind the house or when it appears to you. It is portrayed as a sign of blessing when you bump into any of them. The settlers within the Sigrɪ community live in peace. They also forbid the said creature though they came to Sigrɪ with their own totems. They honour them as a sister or a brother when they come across it. When the said totem (zib) comes to the house, the old women treat it the way they do with their daughters when they return from their husband's home. Soup ingredients are given to it including shea -butter and flour for preparation of meals for the children.

An elder in the Sigrɪ community narrated and explained some of the natives and settlers in Sigrɪ with their clan names and totems.

Table 2. Clans and their Totems names in Sigrɪ community.

Clans name	Dagaare	Gloss
Banyenɛɛ	Seene	'Porcupine'
Gbaanɛɛ	Walaa	'Antelope'
Donaaleɛ	zib	'Python'
Kowareɛ	zib	'Python'
Dikpeleɛ	ɲmaɲ	'Monkey'
Kyɛlaareɛ	Kpere	'Rat'

4.1.2. Clans and Their Totems in Sabuli

Respondents in the research region indicated that the residents of Sabuli are Banyen who live in Jirapa Municipality in the Upper West Region. 'Banyenɛɛ' as people called them by their clan name forbid the porcupine (Seene) in Sabuli and its surrounding villages. Sabuli is a known community where the inhabitants are noted as warriors because of their totem. Their totem fought and continues to fight for them in times of difficulties.

Even though Sabuli is also a heterogeneous community the settlers comport and comply with their rules and regulations governing their clan system. An elder among the Sabuli community mentioned that;

".....Modernization and other cultural activities have

created tension for these totems to confine themselves in rocky areas and only come out if there is message to deliver to its members....”(Participant 1, 2022).

The people in Sabuli are mostly farmers though they have other persons who are into other professions such as small scale businesses. They farm to feed their families. During the research, it was observed that though majority of the people are Banyenɛ (the clan name) there are other migrants or settlers in Sabuli and its surrounding villages that are not natives.

An elder among the Sabuli community gave these as some of the clans with their totems:

Table 3. *Clans and Their Totems in Sabuli.*

Clan names	Totem names	Gloss
Dakpaɛɛ	Selaa	‘Hawk’
Namanɛɛ	Gɔŋgɔmbaa	‘Prayer Mantis’
Donaalɛɛ	zib	‘Python’
Zagɛɛ	Naabaa	Chief Bird’
Sozeelɛɛ	ɲmaana	‘Monkey’

4.1.3. Clans and Their Totems in Ul-Kpong

In this study area, it was discovered that, Ul- Kpong is a community which has many communities surrounding it. The people of Ul- Kpong are called Kyelaarɛɛ as their clan name. The name of their totem is the rat (Kperɛ). The people of Ul-Kpong are the Landlords. They are the first settlers in the Ullo Traditional Area. A group of elders explained that;

“...The people of Danteeɛ, are called Danteeɛɛ as their clan name. The Paramount chief lives at Dantee. They regard the cricket as their totem within their environment and beyond....”(Particiant 1, 2, 3, 2022).

They treat the cricket as a special relative within the Ullo communities. The cricket is noted for its hard work. It was because of its effort that led to the survival of their forefather up to date. The Ullo Traditional Area is too heterogeneous. We identified many clans and their totems within its surrounding villages.

The following are some of the clans identified under ‘Ul-Kpong’, a clan name within the Ul- Dantee traditional Area.

Table 4. *Clans and Their Totems in Ul-Kpong.*

Clan names	Totems in Dagaare.	Gloss
Dakpaalɛɛ	Selaa	‘Hawk’
Sozeelɛɛ	ɲmaana	‘Monkey’
Danteeɛɛ	Paanaa	‘Cricket’
Ul- Gozu	Bandaa	‘Lizard’
Tuolaarɛɛ	ɲmanzee	‘Red dove’

According to Awedoba [11], certain animals and natural things are regarded relatives or ancestors of their respective social groups. As a result, killing certain animals considered to be totemic is prohibited. This supported [16] thesis that, despite their impact on African Traditional Religion, foreign faiths have not fully extinguished god worship among Africans. As a result, Awuah-Nyameskye, S [12], claimed that these totemic artifacts typically derive from revelations acquired from the spirit realm through traditional seers. This approach is similar to the sustainable collection of animal

resources used by the tribes of Central and Southern Africa.

4.2. Significance of Totems to the Clans

God has numerous methods of producing miracles for his creatures on Earth, which is why every living thing, including totems, was created for a reason. A totem is a natural object or an animate person, such as an animal or a bird, chosen as the clan's symbol (Mandal, D. [48]. This means that every totem is a natural creature belonging to a particular clan. These creatures were created not because of their beautiful nature but for their wonderful performance of certain natural powers being given to them by almighty God.

The importance of these totems in Jirapa Municipality, Upper West Region, cannot be overstated. The totem assists the tribe in times of illness and provides foresight and warning. When a totem appeared near a dwelling, its appearance was generally interpreted as a message of an emergency or joy that it had come to give to its kin. A clan member may try to highlight his bond with his totem in a variety of ways, for as by wearing himself in the skin of the totem or putting a tattoo of it on himself. In some tribes, members disguise themselves by dancing like their totem.

4.2.1. Totems Bring People Together

Togetherness is the pleasant sensation of being joined in friendship and understanding with other people. It is a feeling of being close to another person emotionally and physically. People with a common totem share things in common. Not only do they share joy amongst themselves, they also assist each other during emergency. They come together as a family to share ideas and sympathize with each other when situation demands. This opinion comes because of the common totem, ancestor or ancestors they share in that community. They perform their marriage rites and funeral rites together. The traditional ceremonies are not performed in isolation and if there is communal labour they come together and join hands to do it.

These clans: Gbeɛdomɛɛ, Donaalɛɛ, Kowerɛɛ share a common totem and though they settle in different communities they do things in common. They share information with each other if the need arises and marriage among themselves is forbidden. This goes to confirm what Mandal, D. [48], said, people with the same blood do not marry because they have a common ancestor and do things in common. The totem of this clan is the python and the people encourage their younger generation to desist from marrying the same blood.

4.2.2. Prescription of Traditional Medicine

Totems are living things created by God to boost and assist mankind to perform many activities. Some of these totems contribute effectively to some clans in search of human needs. Even though they cannot contribute verbally to human kind, some guide and direct you towards certain leaves, roots, fruits or whatsoever that would be of good health to human beings. The people of Jirapa, particularly the township have

their totem as the dwarf. The dwarf clan (Manlɔɔɛɛ) hardly sees their totem ordinarily, but history has it that a clan member who happens to see the dwarf (Kɔntɔmɔ) with his or her eyes is automatically and potentially a traditional doctor in his respective area and people visit him for spiritual protection and healing. It does not mean that all Manlɔɔɛɛ are herbal doctors but if one is lucky to encounter his or her totem (the dwarf), that person is sure to be a potential herbal doctor. The dwarfs are such that if you encounter any one of them for the first time, then you are a lucky person but you would not be able to go home for some months. You will be detained by them for spiritual fortification. They would carry you to their location in a different place and enquire from you how you happen to see them. These creatures (dwarfs) cannot be easily seen by human beings because they have the characteristics of human beings but work like spirit. The interrogations of these creatures take days and months before you would be discharged to go home as a herbalist. As you are undergoing scrutiny they also school you on how to treat various kinds of sicknesses when you get back to your destination.

4.2.3. Pre-Information of an Un-Foreseen Emergency (Early Warning Systems/ High Alert Bells)

An emergency is a serious, sudden unforeseen situation that may cause injury, loss of life or damage to a human being. In most communities, some totems can have the gift of predicting what would negatively or positively happen to their human relations, in the near future, so they design a way of communicating non-verbally to its people.

In some villages, for example in Sabuli, it is said that if an elderly man or woman would pass on, their totem the porcupine 'seene' would give them a signal by demonstrating its displeasure on trees with its arrows. When this happen, any elder who comes across it and can interpret it will read meaning from it but he will not be able to tell when such an unfortunate incident will occur. This happens in Sabuli by the clans 'Banyenɛɛ' and other totems also have their ways of expressing their frustration to their clan members which would be different from Banyenɛɛ clan in the Sabuli area. This exposure is only known to the people of Sabuli alone and its surrounding communities. They have a common totem and share common thoughts. Any time a married woman is pregnant in the above mentioned clan for the first time, the totem pays the entire house a visit. This is to signify a safe delivery.

4.2.4. Session of Certain Natural Happenings

The study revealed some respondents' belief in totems having super natural powers. Totems according to these respondents are creatures like human beings '*but we believe that they possess other super natural powers which we do not have*'. In some communities where there are shrines for totems, people consult them for their needs, believing that they would perform wonders and things sometimes happen in their favour. The researchers found out that Sigri is one community where they have such a shrine called 'Buyeli'. Any time there is drought, an

elderly woman prepares 'wormo' local cakes and sings sorrowful songs before the shrine, expressing their worries of how their children are dying of thirst. They do it with the hope that since these totems were the first creatures to save their forefathers, they would be in a better position to plead with the Supreme Being to listen to their grievances. If the women really go there with sincerity, before they reach home, clouds will gather and it will rain on that same day. The totem for Sigri people is the python and they are called Gbeedomɛɛ. It does not mean that the pythons are powerful than the Supreme Being but the women and the entire village have trust and belief in them as intermediaries to the Supreme Being.

4.2.5. Expansion of Business

The study also revealed that members of a specific social group cherish totems because of the mystical or ceremonial link that exists between them. Most people within the Jirapa Municipality rely on their totems to perform super natural powers. The Manlɔɔɛɛ clan is not an exception. They have so much trust in their totem in so far as expansion of their businesses is concerned. They have the belief that every successful man or woman's success within the Manlɔɔɛɛ coverage was due to the efforts of their totem. The following crops and animal rearing can progress successfully if you have trust in your totem within the Manlɔɔɛɛ clan;

Table 5. Clans and Their Totems in Manlɔɔɛɛ.

Dagaare	Gloss
Noori guoluu	'the rearing of fowls'.
Boore guoluu	'rearing of goats'.
Nii guoluu	'cattle rearing'.
Sensɔɔ koɔbo	'cultivation of tiger nut'.
Peere guoluu	'sheep rearing'.
Senkaa koɔbo	'cultivation of groundnut'.
Kamaana koɔbo	'cultivation of maize'.
Beɛɛ koɔbo	'cultivation of beans'.

In the above mentioned activities within the Manlɔɔɛɛ clan, our respondents alluded to the fact that people produced enough for commercial purposes based on the belief in their totems. Farmers believe they get good yields due to the support given by their totem within Manlɔɔɛɛ coverage. Farmers, who have the belief, trust and confidence in their totem progress with their business as years pass by though they sometimes encounter financial challenges and losses. Most importantly, people who are in dire need of children seek the intervention of their totem to have children.

5. Key Findings

The identification and documentation of totems that the people of Jirapa and the other surrounding communities where the research was carried out, frequently believed in was discovered. The majority of the totems were animal-based, although flora was also acknowledged. This suggests that more animal species than plant species that they believed in and are protected by culture within the ethnic group.

The study shows that every clan has a totem. Any married woman brought into the family is told to forbid or not harm the totem in their clan. Though the woman must have come with her totem from her father's home, she is told to forbid the two creatures. The married man is equally forced not to harm or eat his wife's totem for a peaceful co-existence.

Another key findings in the study was that every clan came into being with the assistance of a totem of which the elders told the younger generation. But because of modernization and cultural dynamism, the younger generation have failed to show reverence to these creatures. Totemism among the Dagaaba is hereditary. When a child is newly born into the family, he or she becomes an automatic member of the ancestral hereditary in the family.

Another finding is, people of a common ancestral blood do not marry. It is a big taboo and forbidden for a man and a lady of a common blood to have sex. When it is known by elders, punishment is prescribed to the affected people. Even if a brother and a sister are caught in sexual intercourse they are mocked at to discourage them.

6. Conclusions

Every clan among the Dagaaba has a totem that distinguishes them from others. Based on the study's findings, the following conclusions may be drawn: totemism is the entire depiction of symbols to each clan in Dagaaba culture. Totems are very important to people because of the belief that it is as a result of the former's efforts that most clans came into existence. Despite the effort of these creatures, modernization and cultural dynamism has affected their stay in the environment and if care is not taken in the near future, the younger generation would only have pictures of their totems but they would not have access to them because we failed to conserve and protect the environment for survival. Totems also aid Dagaaba to trace and know their clan and lineage members. Finally, the use of Totems for cross-border identification and solidarity among the Dagara/Dagaaba of northern Ghana, Burkina, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire is also worth mentioning.

7. Recommendations

Though modernization, Christianity, and formal education have all emerged as formidable foes of old belief systems. The importance of totemism cannot be overemphasized. For instance, the bond of unity among members of the same totemic belief and how this belief goes a long way in preserving and conserving certain rare animal species are the positives. According to the study, there is a significant need to uncover the role of African indigenous symbols in various ethnic groups in their respective settings. The general public must be made aware of these emblems. This can be achieved by establishing programs at higher education institutions that focus on the transmission of indigenous knowledge systems.

References

- [1] Anoliefo, G. O., O. S. Isikhuemhen and N. R. Ochije, (2003). Environmental implications of the erosion of cultural taboo practices in awka-south local government area of Anambra state, Nigeria. In *Journal of Agricultural & Environmental Ethics*. 16: 281-296.
- [2] Appiah Opoku, S., (2006). Indigenous knowledge and environmental management in Africa: Evidence from Ghana. *Africa's development in the twenty first century: pertinent socio-economic*.
- [3] Chemhuru, M. and D. Masaka, (2010). Taboos as sources of shona people's environmental ethics. In *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 12 (7): 121-133.
- [4] Hyland, A. D. C. and S. Ikumenne, (2005). Place, tradition and memory: Tangible aspects of the intangible heritage in the cultural landscapes of Zimbabwe: A case study of the matobo hills paper presented at the forum unesco university and heritage 10th international seminar. *Cultural Landscapes in the 21st Century.* Newcastle upon Tyne.: 11-16.
- [5] Agyekum, K. (2013). *Introduction to literature*. Accra: Adwinsa Publication.
- [6] Angbataaye, K. D. (2014). Peremere ane Gyunia Haee Karembiiri Gane – Unpublished.
- [7] Benard. H. R. (2002). *Qualitative and quantitative approach*. Walnut Creek: 3rd Alta Mira Press.
- [8] Biegar, R. J., & Gerlach, J. G. (1996). *Educational research: A practical Approach*. New York: Delmar Publication.
- [9] Burns, N., & Grove, S. K. (2005). *Understanding nursing research conduct, critique and utilization*. (5th ed). London: WB Saunders.
- [10] Awedora, A. K. (2002), Culture and Development in African with Special reference to Ghana. Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Lagon, Accra.
- [11] Awedoba (eds.). Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, Governance and Development. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, pp. 213-230.
- [12] Awuah-Nyamekye, S. (2012c). Totemism, 'Akyeneboa' and Plant Ethics. *PAN: Philosophy Activism Nature*, 9: 5-10.
- [13] Bonye, Z. S. (2008), Harnessing Synergies: The Role of Traditional Institutions in Natural Resource Management in the Tallensi / Nabdam District, Upper East Region. Master thesis.
- [14] Millar, D. (2004a), Shrines and Groves: Bio-cultural Diversity and Potential Environment.
- [15] Millar, D. (2004b), Traditional African World Views from a Cosmopolitan Perspective.
- [16] Owusu, B. (2006). Chieftaincy and Traditional Taboo: An Empirical Approach. In: I. K. Odotei, and K. A.
- [17] Bodomo, A. B. (1989). *A Study of dialect variation in Dagaare*. M. A project, Department of linguistics, University of Ghana.
- [18] Bodomo, A. B. (1997). *The structure of Dagaare* Stanford: CSL I Publication.

- [19] Braffi, E. K. (1992). *Totemism and Nton'*. Kumasi: University Press.
- [20] Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Researcher design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approached* (3rd ed.) London Thousand Oaks, Sage publication.
- [21] Dikpetey, T. S. (2012). *The Aesthetics of Kɔntɔmbɔɔr (Birifor Festival) song'*. M. phil. Thesis. Unpublished. University of Education, Winneba.
- [22] Dikpetey, T. S. (2013). The literary devices in Kɔntɔmbɔɔr (Birifor Festival) Songs. *Journal of African Cultures and Languages*. 02.01.121-131.
- [23] Dorzie, G. (2013). The structure, style and uses of Dagaaba proverbs. *Journal of African Cultures and Languages*. 02.01: 114-120.
- [24] Ferraira, J. V. (1965). *Totemism in India*. India: Oxford University Press.
- [25] Fraenkel, J. R., & Norman, E. W. (2000). *How to design and evaluate research in educational* (4th ed) Saint Francisco: MCGraw-Hill Companies.
- [26] Gay, L. K., & Airsian, P. (2000). *Educational research. Competence for Analyzing and application*. Chicago: Irwin Press.
- [27] Goldstein, K. S. (1964). *A Guide for field workers in folklore*. Hatboro: Folklore Association.
- [28] Hinneh, K. (2012). *Qualitative Research*. Accra New Town: Emmpong press.
- [29] Kyemaloo, L. B. (1995). *Dagaaba Tenkoɔyele ane ba Eron*. Unpublished.
- [30] Levi-Strauss, C. (1963). *Totemism*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- [31] Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis; An expanded Sourcebook*. 2nd Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.
- [32] Owu-Ewie, C. (2017). *Introduction to traditional and action research*. Osu. Dataedge multimedia.
- [33] Patton. M. C. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluative method*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication. Publication PVT. Ltd.
- [34] Puotege, J. (2009). *Dagaaba Saakonnoo ne ba Yipɔge* – unpublished.
- [35] Saanchi, J. A. N. (1992). *The Dagaaba Dirge: The study of its structure and style'*. M. Phil. Thesis. University of Ghana, Legon.
- [36] Sigmund, F. (1919). *Totem and Taboo*. London: Stanford Library.
- [37] Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The Ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt and Winston.
- [38] Tuckman, B. W. (1999). *Conducting educational research*. (5th ed) United States: Wadsworth Group.
- [39] Tylor, E. B. (1999). Remarks on Totemism with especial reference to some modern theories concerning it. *Journal of the Royal anthropological institute*. Vol. XXIII. PP. 138-148.
- [40] Wragg, T. (2002). Interviewing. In M. Coleman & A. R. J. Briggs (Eds), *Research methods in educational leadership and management* (pp. 143-158). London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- [41] Yabang, C. K. (1984). *Banɔɔyele* (Oral literature) Unpublished.
- [42] Wilson E. O. (1989). Conservation: the next hundred years. In: Western D. & Pearl M. (Eds.) *Conservation for the twenty-FirstCentury*. Oxford University press, New York/Oxford, pp. 37.
- [43] Freud, S. (1915). Drives and Their Fates. Translated by G. Frankland. In *The Unconscious* (2005). London: Penguin Modern Classics, p. 13.
- [44] Guba, E. and Lincoln, Y. (1994), "Competing paradigms in qualitative research", *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications, London, pp. 105-17.
- [45] Best, J. W. & Kahn, J. V. (2006). *Research in education*. Boston: Pearson Education Inc.
- [46] Reinach, T. (1900). La musique des sphères. *Revue des études grecques*, 13 (55), 432-449.
- [47] Mark, K. K. A. (2017). *Dagaare Lesiri* (some aspects of Dagaare) Winneba: Kamarali Publication.
- [48] Mandal, D. (1998). *Social Structure and Cultural Change in the Saharia Tribe*. New Delhi: M. D.