

Linkages between Sustainable Biodiversity and Cultural Values: A Case Study of Ramogi Hill Forest and Its Environment

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Abstract

The study investigates how Luo belief system and a more inclusive ecosystem approach contribute to sustainable biodiversity of Ramogi Hill Forest and its environment. We adopted descriptive survey research design for this study. The target population was 6,490 comprising Luo elders, elites and youth leaders. A sample of 330 was drawn through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. A questionnaire was used to collect data through face to face interviews with informants and was analysed qualitatively. The response rate was 85% which was considered reasonable enough for statistical generalizations. Secondary data was obtained from existing literature, reports and journals based on the study area. The findings of the study show that the Luo people of Ramogi Hill believe that the earth is a self-regulating complex super organism, the ecosystem processes are linked and humans are part of the system and so humans do not exist in isolation. The study demonstrates that the biodiversity in Ramogi Hill and its environs is part of complex historical interactions among bio-physical and social-cultural systems. Protecting these areas, by isolating them, will certainly create resentments and resistance among those who cultivated these forest landscapes for generations. Therefore humanity's collective knowledge of biodiversity and its use and management resides in diversity of culture which helps to strengthen cultural integrity and values.

This advocates for incorporation of indigenous knowledge and livelihoods into conservation policy. Indigenous people should not be treated as passive objects in central state dominated activities related to the use and conservation of natural resources. The study has empirically brought out the need for policymakers to incorporate cultural and religious values and indigenous knowledge in measures to maintain biodiversity and promote sustainable use of natural resources to accelerate socio-economic development.

Keywords: Kenya, Ramogi Hill, biodiversity, sustainability, conservation, preservation, spirituality

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