

SOCI 223

Traditional Ghanaian Social Institutions

Session 4 – The Worldview
of the Traditional Ghanaian

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Session Overview

- At the end of the session, the student will
- Understand what is meant by worldview
- Know the various components of the worldview of the traditional Ghanaian
- Be able to show how the worldview of the traditional Ghanaian influences his day to day activities
- Be able to explain the relationship between the traditional Ghanaian's world view and his social structure

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Topic One – The worldview
- Topic Two – The components of the worldview
- Topic Three - The relationship between the traditional worldview and the social structure



Reading List

- Abotchie, C. (2011) Structure of Traditional Ghanaian Societies. Hans Publications Ltd. Accra
- Nukunya, G. K. (2002) Tradition and Change. An Introduction to Sociology. Chapters one and two



Topic One

THE WORLDVIEW



What is meant by worldview

- Assimeng (1981) defines worldview as the beliefs and practices which make people respond to situations the way they do
- It is a constant frame of reference in traditional society – this is because the supernatural entities are all seeing and all knowing and therefore serve as a means of social control (rewards and punishments)



Topic two

COMPONENTS OF THE WORLDVIEW



What makes up the traditional worldview

- According to Assimeng (1981), the traditional worldview is made up 2 basic components:
 - First is the belief in the Supreme God, nature gods, ancestors and lesser spirits
 - Second is the notion that the world is made up of the living, the dead and the yet to be born

Topic three

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TRADITIONAL WORLDVIEW AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE



The worldview and politics

- The lineage head or chief is selected based on the worldview of the people.
- Eg. The lineage head is supposed to be the senior most surviving male member of the lineage
- Why? The belief that he is closest to the ancestors due to his age and is thus best suited for the position
- The chief is also selected from the royal family
- The royal family is one that has been endorsed by the ancestors
- During the installation, enskinment and or enstoolment of chiefs, rituals are performed which signifies the beliefs of the people

The worldview and religion

- During festival time, we see the worldview of the traditional Ghanaian at play
- Eg. During the Homowo of the Gas, the Adaye of the Akans, the Damba of the Gur etc. rituals (such as the pouring of libation) are performed which signify the worldview of the people.
- During the pouring of libation, the various supernatural entities which make up the world view are called upon
- Another occasion we see the worldview at play is during the various rites of passage eg outdoorings, puberty, marriage, and mortuary rites
- Rituals are performed during these rites which depict the worldview of the people in the area

The worldview and the economy

- Before the start of the working day, rituals are performed to seek the blessings of the ancestors for a successful working day
- Activities like hunting, farming, trading are preceded by appropriate rituals
- There are also special days set aside for resting and no work is to be done on those days. The belief is that, those days are the resting days of the gods. Therefore, some fishing communities do not go to fish on Tuesdays whereas some farming communities do not go and farm on Fridays

The worldview and the marriage and family

- The worldview also affects marriage practices in terms of who you can marry and whom you cannot marry
- In many traditional societies, rules governing who you can marry exist in order to prevent incest
- Rules of endogamy prohibit people who do not belong to the same clan from getting married
- Rules of exogamy prohibits people who belong to the same clan from getting married

The worldview and education

- The various rites of passage serve as a means for the transmission of culture from the old to the young
- It is instituted by the ancestors for that purpose



The worldview and health

- When a person falls sick in traditional society, diviners are consulted to find out/ determine the cause of the disease or illness
- The diviners consult the gods and ancestors for an explanation as to what caused the illness and what to do to remedy the situation
- Illness in traditional society is believed to originate from two sources namely
 - Germs
 - Disruptions in social relationships