

RELIGION STUDIES, PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE, AND
VISION FROM THE SOUTH: A CASE STUDY ON AFRICA

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Many authors today state that the etymology of religion lies with the Latin word *religare*, which means "to tie, to bind" (Hans, 1959; Asamoah-Gyadu, 1998). This seems to be favored on the assumption that it helps explain the power which the term has. Earlier writers like Cicero connected the term with *relegere*, which means "to read over again" (perhaps to emphasize the ritualistic nature of religions). Some scholars, however, argue that religion doesn't really exist - according to them, there is really only culture (Margaret, 1937).

Making a connection between religion and development suffers all these complicated definitions of the subject of religion added to the fact that sustainable development comes along with its own baggage of nebulosity.

Charting its course we make a contribution to the agenda for this conference with a lot of difficulty. For us in Africa, we are more comfortable with **spirituality** than with religion. Spirituality increases scope and broadens the issues that religions struggle to come to terms with. Growing up as an African child we were taught to live spirituality, practice spirituality and profess spirituality rather than religion. Hence we take the position that in the African context, the term religion was referring to a manifestation of African spirituality rather than to a religion in its true sense, whatever that true sense might be.

In our write-up, the first part starts with the spread of religions in Ghana (hence Ghana is the focus of analysis). The second part looks at religious studies and the sustainability factor; we generalize the debate to cover the African continent. The third part is dedicated to work done 'knowing systems' in Africa generally as part of an earlier publication. The concluding sub-chapter is dedicated to annotated empirical work done by Centre for Cosmology and Indigenous Knowledge (CECIK), and University for Development Studies (UDS) in Ghana. This work has implications/ challenges for higher education.

We propose a '**new type of African scholar**' – scholarship that combines indigenous knowledge with external knowledge at a collegial level is needed. One way to achieve this in our view is to address the need for doing more and perfecting research and learning from an endogenous development perspective. We also suggested that broad spectrum higher education reform is required that starts from the community, through the classroom to the laboratory; incorporating culture and spirituality of the African to attain sustainable development - as in endogenous development.