
Akan Indigenous Entrepreneurship: A Model of Sustainability and Resilience

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ABSTRACT

The Akan are a cluster of ethnic groups in West Africa (Arthur, 2017; Adu Boahen 1966, 1977). They are indigenous entrepreneurs (Ozainne et al, 2014). Akan Indigenous Entrepreneurs (AIE) continues to thrive in Ghana's modern economy demonstrating sustainability and resilience. What lessons of sustainability and resilience can entrepreneurs learn from AIE? The study identified small to medium sized AIE operating in the modern Ghanaian economy. All participants had an educational level of secondary school or lower. Participants were interviewed concerning their social background, indigenous education, business operations and practices. The study also interviewed Akan indigenous knowledge keepers from the Royal House of Ashanti. Manuscripts of early European researchers were also sourced. The study found themes of sustainability and resilience in both AIE training and operations. Examples include immersive education in family businesses, environmentally friendly pest control, zero debt financial instruments, diversification strategies, product knowledge, flexible labour strategies and community value systems that dismiss competitive advantage. AIE offers alternative approaches that are affordable, stable, flexible, community centered, environmentally friendly, diversified, non-combative, low risk and therefore sustainable, resilient, and agile, even protective against multinational threats and economic instabilities. AIE philosophy offers a balanced approach towards overall efficiency in comparison to the 'educated' approach, which is singular, competitive, profit focussed, vulnerable to economic instabilities and therefore not sustainable. By implication AIE offers alternate solutions for sustainable and resilient business growth.

Keywords: Akan, Asante, indigenous, entrepreneurs, sustainability, resilience

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the investigation, covering the context of the investigation, statement of the problem, scope, objectives, and significance of the study. The title of the research paper is "Akan indigenous entrepreneurship: a model of sustainability and resilience".

Context of the Investigation

The Akan of West Africa straddle across the countries of Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire. By location they occupy southern Ghana and the southeastern section of Cote D'Ivoire. The Akan consist of various ethnic groups including *Asante, Fantse, Akuapem, Akyem, Okwawu, Bono, Wassa, Agona, Assin, Denkyira, Adansi, Nsima, Ahanta, Aowin, Sefwi and Baoule*. By land mass they occupy approximately 45% of Ghana. Common to this group of people are a 40-day calendar (*adaduanan*), common religious beliefs, marriage institutions, naming ceremonies, matrilineal inheritance, and clan systems as well as a common language across most of the ethnic groups. The earliest formation of the Akan is believed to go back to AD1300. From a feminist perspective, the Akan are particularly interesting as one of the few matrilineal populations in the world.

This research focuses on the Asantes as the ethnic group that holds the purest form of Akan culture. The Asante kingdom existed as a sovereign kingdom outside of the British Gold Coast for approximately 100 years. During this period of Asante war with the British Empire, other Akan groups were under British rule. Ghana gained independence approximately 50 years after the capture and exile of the *Asantehene* (Asante King) Osei Tutu I. Due to the limited years the Asante were under British rule, most of their culture remained intact and can be used to gain insights into Akan perspective of resilience and sustainability. According to the royal historians interviewed at Manshyia Palace "When you speak of Akan you are mostly referring to the Asantes. Today if you are talking about the purity of Akan culture, it is the Asantes who are recognised as having the precolonial culture".

Statement of the Problem

The world of business internationally is changing at a fast pace. The impact of war, climate change, technology, migration, pandemics, inflation, waste management, dwindling resources and many other factors are constant shocks that business owners large and small must deal with. Businesses must have built in ability to anticipate and manage these shocks to survive and thrive. In other words, businesses must be resilient and sustainable. The

Akan are entrepreneurial by nature and hold vast libraries of indigenous knowledge that has allowed the kingdom to survive through much turmoil over the centuries. Within the volatility of the Ghanaian economy, Akan indigenous entrepreneurs continue to thrive making substantial contributions to the economy. What is the source of their resilience and sustainability and what contributions can Akan indigenous entrepreneurs make to the theory of resilience and sustainability?

Scope of the Investigation

The study is limited to the country of Ghana. Participants are indigenous entrepreneurs from the Akan tribe of which the Asantes belong. The entrepreneurs operate in farming, construction, fashion design, soap manufacturing and indigenous medicine.

Objectives of the Investigation

The economic objective is to identify the key elements of Akan indigenous resilience and sustainability. The theoretical objective is to add Akan perspectives to the current theory on resilience and sustainability.

Significance of the Study

The study will contribute towards the current body of knowledge on sustainability, resilience, Akan IK, and entrepreneurship.

Literature review

The purpose of this literature review is not to delve into the details of resilience and sustainability since definitions on these concept areas are very context specific. Rather, it is to explore the key characteristics of the concepts and use it to identify sustainability and resilience in Akan Indigenous Entrepreneurship.

Dictionary.com provides three definitions covering the physical, personal, and economic resilience:

1. Physical: The power or ability of a material to return to its original form or position after being bent, compressed, or stretched
2. Personal: The ability of a person to adjust to or recover readily from illness, adversity, or major life changes
3. Economic: The ability of a system or organization to respond to or recover readily from a crisis or disruptive process

The Cambridge English Dictionary [8] defines resilience as the quality of being able to return quickly to a previous good condition after problems. First recorded in 1635–45, the word originates from the Latin root word *resilire* which means “to spring back,”. The word has

gone through many iterations over the centuries and have been applied to different fields of study. In the field of education, the UNESCO preferred definition is “the ability to plan and prepare for, absorb, withstand, recover from and adapt to adverse events and disruptions”. The New Zealand Government offers a comprehensive definition of resilience developed for the National Disaster Resilience Strategy | *Rautaki ā-Motu Manawaroa Aituā* as “the ability to anticipate and resist the effects of a disruptive event, minimise adverse impacts, respond effectively post-event, maintain or recover functionality, and adapt in a way that allows for learning and thriving”.

The varied definitions of resilience of current theory are context specific and broadly fall within two categories, the equilibrium category, and the revolutionary category. In the equilibrium category individuals or systems return to their previous state of equilibrium after a shock. In the evolutionary category, individuals or systems bounce back but move beyond their original state of equilibrium to a more improved state. Currently there are no definitions that contextually cover Akan resilience.

According to Dictionary.com the word sustainability originates from two words “sustain + ability”. It is therefore defined as “the ability to be sustained, supported, upheld, or confirmed”. In Environmental Science it is “the quality of not being harmful to the environment or depleting natural resources, and thereby supporting long-term ecological balance”. The Oxford English Dictionary defines sustainability as “capable of being maintained or continued at a certain rate or level”. The New Zealand Government expands further to sustainability being “the ability for something to be maintained at a certain rate or level over time”. From an economic context, the United Nations (1987) offers a definition for sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” [quoted in 16].

Roostaie (2019), considers resilience at different levels but none that relates directly to different knowledge systems. The definition that aligns to indigenous knowledge to a degree is ‘the ability to prepare for and adapt to changing conditions and withstand and recover rapidly from disruptions, including deliberate attacks, accidents, or naturally occurring threats or incidents’. Although Roostaie (2019) are looking contextually at the natural disasters that are plaguing the United States, the reference in the definition to ‘deliberate’ attacks is relevant for indigenous knowledge, which has been under deliberate attack by western knowledge systems for centuries.

For sustainability, Roostaie also considers several levels of definitions. Those relevant to this research are Leach et al. as “the capability of maintaining over indefinite periods

of time specified qualities of human well-being, social equity, and environmental integrity”, and by Lew et al. who describe the main goals of sustainable development as “protecting and maintaining natural and cultural resources for the future and mitigating change”. Lew et al. quoted in Roostaie (2019), include ‘cultural resources’ in the definition. Odrowaz-Coates (2021) also considered varying definitions of sustainability in the context of gender, covering areas such as cultural diversity, ethnicity, social justice, and education, all of which have a direct impact on indigenous women. She cites Leach (2016) as one of the most comprehensive volumes on women and sustainability especially in developing countries, concluding that women must have a primary role in determining the sustainability agenda.

In Ghana, Gbedemah (2023) investigates the sustainability of coastal erosion methods. He considers modern methods that have been implemented by the government and the negative impacts it has had on the livelihoods and quality of life of the coastal people of southern Ghana concluding that the soft indigenous methods such as beach nourishment or sand dunes should be used as they are easy to adapt for sustainability. Benabderrazik (2022) highlight two major shocks of climate and market that tomato farmers in Ghana are facing and considers strategies to develop both resilience and sustainability within the tomato farming business. Methods such as crop rotation, intercropping, supplementary fertilization, water tanks, or water retention ditches have been adopted to combat climate change. For market shocks, the author suggests solidarity mechanism involving stakeholders from the tomato value chain and beyond.

Roostaie (2019), also considers the synergies between the two concepts as follows:

1. Sustainability and resilience are considered synonyms and used almost interchangeably
2. The concept of resilience is considered a component of sustainability
3. The concept of sustainability is considered a component of resilience
4. The two concepts are regarded as separate yet complementary conceptual objectives

In indigenous knowledge systems sustainability and resilience can be seen as synonymous. Indigenous knowledge, although weakened by many centuries of attacks by western knowledge is making a robust return. The international world is taking an interest in indigenous knowledge as it offers many solutions to the problems of the world today. Thus, the resilience and sustainability of such knowledge is coming to the fore. In this research the resilience of the entrepreneurs was apparent in their ability to bounce back from major shocks to their businesses and move on to success. The in-built resilient

systems of community, finance and values was also very apparent. At the same time the literature highlights the sustainability of knowledge and methods of transfer over centuries demonstrating sustainability. There is no indication that either concept is more important than the other but that both are equally imbedded in the Akan knowledge systems. Hence a system that has longevity, preservation for future generations and able to adapt to the demands of an ever-changing environment.

Short summary of Asante Kingdom

The following account is based primarily on interviews at Manshyia Palace and Agona with Knowledge Keepers of the Royal House of Asante. The exploration of Akan sustainability and resilience will be directed through the lens of Asante history and culture. The history and culture can provide context and insights into the Akan entrepreneurs’ ability to thrive in Ghana’s modern economy, their sustainability and resilience. The Asantes preserve their history through complex oral systems. According to Arthur (2017), knowledge is also transferred in codes through various artforms. These interviews are therefore taken as accurate accounts of Asante history.

The Asante kingdom is possibly the most prominent and well known of the Akan ethnic groups. The meaning of the name Asante (*esa-nti-fo*) is ‘those who came together because of war’. The kingdom was formed around 1695 during the reign of King Osei Tutu I, to fight the *Denkyira* kingdom who were then ruling over the Asante people. The *Denkyira* are also Akan and at the time, were the most powerful of the Akan kingdoms. The Asantes then existed in smaller groups under the leadership of different chiefs. They united because of war to free themselves from servitude to the *Denkyira* kingdom. The Asante clans that formed the Asante kingdom under Osei Tutu I to defeat *Denkyira* included Mampong, *Nsuta*, *Kumawu*, *Dwaben*, *Edweso*, *Offinso*, *Agona*, *Kumase*, *Kokofu*, *Essemeja* and *Bekwai*. Osei Tutu I was the chief of *Kumase* and became the first Asantehene of the newly formed Asante Kingdom. In the centuries following its formation, the Asantes continued to expand their territory under successive kings. To understand the history of the Asantes is to understand the resilience and sustainability of the Akan people.

The Asante confederacy that defeated *Denkyira* kingdom continued its growth to become a formidable force several centuries later against the might of the British Empire. For almost 100 years the Asante confederacy withstood the British colonial power to maintain their independence outside of the Gold Coast. After 100 years of war with the Asantes, the British finally agreed to a truce and invited the then Asantehene (Osei Prempeh 1) for peace talks at Cape Coast Castle. On arrival the British captured the King

and his officials who had come in good faith. This resulted in a 30-year term in exile. After many years of trying to exert British rule over the Asantes without much success, the king was returned to his people and to his throne. The Asante confederacy throne is believed by the Asantes to be a sacred throne and no ordinary person can be allowed to sit on the throne.

The confederacy has not just been successful in war. The Asantes have also come together to fight poverty and illiteracy. After the Yaa Asantewaa (Queen Mother of Edweso) wars with the British, much wealth had been lost and the Asante confederacy turned its attention to fighting poverty, the new enemy. Cocoa was becoming a major cash crop in the world and the Asantes being expert farmers turned their attention from war to farming. Such was their success in cocoa production that it brought much wealth to the Asante region. Kumase was rebuilt with beautiful buildings and so was many major towns in the Asante kingdom.

With all the economic success that the Asantes achieved, the leaders realised that illiteracy was a major problem for the kingdom. The confederacy turned its attention to tackling the challenge of education for the people. Today the Asante kingdom has an educational system ranging from kindergarten to university offering post graduate training. The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumase, offers the best quality education in the world, a remarkable achievement for the Asante kingdom.

Today there are new wars for the Asante confederacy to fight. Covid 19 has devastated the world economy and brought pressure on the livelihoods of ordinary Ghanaians including Asantes. There are also major environmental issues such as climate change which is impacting rain fall and temperature fluctuations. The Asantes are majority farmers and therefore climate is important to their livelihood. Ghana also has a major problem with plastic waste management and illegal mining. Although plastic has its advantages, the Asantes have hitherto been only used to biodegradable materials and do not know how to manage plastic waste. Kumase and Asante towns and cities are experiencing plastic waste problems. Will the Asante confederacy declare war against these major environmental problems that threaten to destroy the land and health of the people? Will the Asante confederacy take up the fight against climate change and the environment to protect the livelihoods of its people? The resilience of the kingdom suggests that the Asantes will take up the environmental war with success.

This brief history demonstrates sustainability and resilience as foundational principles of Asante kingdom. Since the

1600s, the unification of the kingdom moved the Asante from servitude to an independent kingdom maintaining its culture, to economic success, to educational transformation, to international renown. Further consideration that gives insight into the resilience and sustainability of the Asante people are their social values. The work ethic of the Asante provides insights into the foundation of their resilience. From childhood, the Asante child is trained that laziness is a disgrace and hard work is an honour. Laziness in a person can lead to divorce in marriage and therefore parents and communities are diligent in training their youth to be hardworking. Traditionally, in Asante every man was a warrior. All men were trained in warfare and were required to fight when needed. The women also had their parts in the war machine. Anyone who refused to fight was disgraced by the community.

The adaptations required by the Asante kingdom to overcome the major shocks of 100 years of war, exile of the king, colonisation, economy, education, and culture has not been made without sacrifice. Even the positive shocks such as formal education, Christianity and democracy has had some negative impacts on Akan society. Erosion and loss of traditional values, breakdown of communities and the marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems and systems of education and training are apparent today. Democracy has marginalised Akan knowledge in favour of western knowledge, it is not generally taught in schools and generations are losing the knowledge of the ancestors. Today much of this knowledge is limited to the royal households. In recent years, the “bounce back” is gaining momentum. The service industry has taken over farming as the largest sector of employment in Ghana. The tourist industry is growing and there is increased interest in Asante culture. The royal historians indicated an increase in the number of international delegations to Manshyia Palace including students and researchers, noting that the academic world is interested in the indigenous knowledge of the Asante and Akan collectively. Asante culture is undergoing a revival, and the misinterpretation of the past is being corrected by these historians.

Methodology

Akan knowledge systems are transferred from generation to generation primarily through oral traditions. Knowledge is transferred through many modes including informal conversations, storytelling, proverbs, prose, music, fashion and textiles, traditional symbols such as adinkra, arts and crafts, festivals, and rites of passage. Akan indigenous education is primarily immersive, where students learn through participation in real activities with parents, family, and community members. In line with the oral traditions of the Akan, the method of research was selected to align with the participants best mode of communication. For this reason, the use of qualitative interviews was selected

as the best research method.

Each participant was interviewed in the Akan language of Twi. Permission was requested to record each interview so that it could be transcribed into English. Since the researcher speaks Twi fluently, it facilitated both the communication with the participants and the transcription. The transcription was supported by the context of the interview. Each interview lasted for approximately 2 hours. When a question was asked, a story was told to answer the question. This is a typical practice in oral traditions. Information is transmitted amid these stories. Extending the time for each interview ensured questions were answered fully.

The interview questions were divided into two sections. The first sections provided for short questions about the participants social, economic, and religious background. The second section of the interview was more detailed and focussed on the participants as entrepreneurs. Questions explored their education and training, entrepreneurial journey, farming practices, financial capital, business operations, challenges, successes, and the future. Visits were made to the farms, accompanied by the farmers which provided further insights into farming practices and sampling of products. This research paper is based on a subsection of a larger study covering various industries.

For further understanding and context of Akan history, ontology and epistemology, interviews were conducted with royal historians of the Royal House of Asante at Manshyia Palace and Agona. Interviews were conducted with Osei Bonsu Safo-Kantanka, Kojo Arthur at Manshyia Palace and Osei Kwadwo at Agona. These interviews were unstructured. As topics of interest were introduced into the conversations, the royal historians took control of the discussion. The researcher would intervene occasionally to seek further clarification or redirect the conversation to an area of interest. Although unintended, at one point a focus group was formed with two historians combining their knowledge to inform the context of a particular historic event.

RESULTS

A process of thematic analysis was applied to the data. Data was transcribed from Twi to English using Microsoft Teams, two computers and headphones. Computer one would play the interview in Twi and the researcher would verbally translate into English, recording and transcribing in Microsoft Teams. The transcription was downloaded, saved, and cleaned. The process worked well and was relatively fast. The transcribed data needed significant cleaning due to pronunciations of Akan words that were not recognizable by Microsoft Teams. However, the re-

reading of the narrative and corrections also deepened impressions. Using Excel, the transcriptions were placed side by side and through careful comparative re-reading of each interview, the major common themes were identified.

Resilience

According to UNESCO, “resilience is the ability to plan and prepare for, absorb, withstand, recover from and adapt to adverse events and disruptions”. The research identified themes that support the resilience of the Akan entrepreneurs.

Training of the entrepreneurs

- Each of the entrepreneurs described their childhood as being rough, tough, and challenging. They all worked to support their middle or secondary education as their families could not afford the school fees. They worked after school and during school holidays to support the family business. Whether it was the farm, the firewood business, the soap manufacturing business, petty trading, or the indigenous medicine business. One entrepreneur also worked outside of the family business during his secondary school holidays to earn money to support his education. In Ghana, public schools close at two o'clock to ensure children in rural areas who may have to travel longer distances to school are able to get home before dark. It also means that children are available in the afternoons to assist their parents at home and at work.
- The training of the indigenous entrepreneurs followed a noticeably consistent pattern:
 - At an early age, primary through early secondary school, the student work under the close supervision of their parents or relatives.
 - In the early years of secondary school, the student is given work to do on their own under the close supervision of parents.
 - As competencies are mastered the student is given full responsibility to run part of the business and provide account to the parent. It is this accountability that the parent uses to monitor whether the student is doing the work as they have been trained or not.
 - After passing the accountability test, the student can be left to run the business. At this stage they have earned the trust and respect of the parents and are allowed to develop their own strategies to bring improvements to the business. The students were in their late teens and early twenties at this stage.
 - Some of the improvements that the entrepreneurs brought to their family business included:

- Improved customer service that led to business expansion
- Extension of work hours to capture a market segment.
- Extending credit services to regular customers
- Diversifying products to lower risk
- Supporting the value chain to develop supplies.
- Community engagement through mentorship, job creation and financial support

Skills

- Key skills demonstrated by the entrepreneurs that support their resilience:
 - Customer Service – demonstrated well developed customer service that supported business growth.
 - Financial management – strongly risk averse, preferring organic growth and debt avoidance.
 - Business management – holistic understanding of the business, its environment, and strategies for success
 - Creativity – Finding new ways to bring improvements to the business.
 - Adaptable – Good problem solving and the ability to make changes to support business continuity.
 - Balanced ambition – ambition at all costs was not a primary focus.
 - Competitive disadvantage – competitiveness was not a primary focus.
 - Multilingual skills – All the entrepreneurs spoke at least two languages.
 - Accountability – to self, to family and to the community

Values

- Key value systems held by the entrepreneurs that support their resilience:
 - hard work essential for success
 - discipline to maintain best practice.
 - patience to grow organically without or with minimal borrowing.
 - courage to push forward after a shock.
 - humility to take advice.
 - wisdom to know when to make changes to the business.
 - community centeredness rather than profit focussed.
 - Knowledge transfer and creation for the next generation
 - Sustainable mindset that considers practices that preserve resources for future generations.

Transitions to a better position

- The Akan generally value education whether it is formal or indigenous. Since laziness is shameful and socially unacceptable, Akan youth apply themselves

to learning and Akan parents ensure that their youth are well prepared for life. Each of the entrepreneurs had youthful dreams of completing their formal education either to secondary or tertiary level. However, financial constraints meant that only one was able to access tertiary education, that is teacher training college. Subsequently another entrepreneur, the publisher, successfully completed a university degree. Despite the initial formal educational challenges, each entrepreneur chose alternative pathways to success. With the practical business experience, they had received, they identified opportunities for improving existing family businesses, created new opportunities, diverted into new businesses, or trained for new business skills. The entrepreneurs adapted their skills, made the best of available opportunities to achieve new dreams:

- The farming students remained in the farming industry.
- The indigenous medicine student remained in indigenous medicine.
- Two petty trading students went into publishing and fashion design.
- The firewood and construction products merchandise student went into construction industry.
- The soap manufacturing student remained in the soap industry.

Each entrepreneur has subsequently faced a major shock to their business. These have included direct destruction of supplier chains by multinational companies, major price increases on import of raw materials as well as reduction in market price of goods, disruption of essential resources such as water and electricity, destruction of premises by fire and of course the impact of COVID 19 on all the business. Despite these major shocks, all the businesses continue as going concerns.

Based on the results of the research, Akan resilience can be defined as “the physical, mental and spiritual ability to withstand tough training, develop new skills, adapt to community value systems with the vision to identify new opportunities and the courage to pursue them”.

Sustainability

Identified within the research are major approaches that have contributed to the sustainability of Akan Indigenous Entrepreneurs:

- Knowledge Transfer: the entrepreneurs utilize the best of past knowledge passed to them by parents, grandparents, and their communities.
- Knowledge Creation: All the entrepreneurs indicated creating new knowledge and adding to existing body of knowledge to meet the challenges of today and the future.

- Fiscal responsibility: All the entrepreneurs practice fiscal responsibility, starting small in line with the capacity to manage without a need to borrow financial capital to ensure debt is not passed to future generations.
- Diversification: All the entrepreneurs use diversification of products and services to reduce risk of business failure.
- Community centeredness: All the entrepreneurs are primarily centered on serving the community and not profit centered.
- Community value systems: All the entrepreneurs operate on value systems that dismiss the concept of competitive advantage. For example, the publisher was asked why he does not expand his business into a certain section of the school curriculum. His response was that another publisher, who is a friend, is already publishing for that section and he does not want to dilute his business.
- Flexible labour strategies: All the entrepreneurs use flexible labour practices that control costs.
- Pest Control: All the farmers use environmentally friendly pest control, either minimal or no pesticides.

The listed approaches offer stability, affordability, flexibility and lowers risk. It even offers protection against multinational threats and economic instabilities thus maintaining the business over time within systems that preserve resources for future generations.

What has contributed to the sustainability of these small medium sized indigenous enterprises? The Akan unity that has held the confederacy together is more than at the national level, it is also at the community level and the family level. It can be argued that because of this it also straddles to the business level. In western knowledge systems an entrepreneur and a business are by law two separate entities, in Akan they are perceived as one entity. The value of the entrepreneur is aligned to the values of the business. To be respected in the community, the values of the entrepreneur should also be aligned to the values of the community. The Akan indigenous education is not just about the attainment of skills, it is critically about the attainment of community values. It is this circular relationship that ensures the sustainability and resilience of the Akan culture. When applied in business, it supports the sustainability and resilience of the business. The business is supported not just by the individual but also by the community. When the business is in trouble, the family and community rallies to support. Based on the research Akan sustainability can be defined as “the ability to maintain focus on the unity and holistic wellbeing of the community”.

The brief history of Asante revealed characteristics that are aligned with the characteristics of the entrepreneurs. The courage of the Asantes to take on the might of the

British Empire is aligned with small medium enterprises protecting their territory against multinationals. The unity of the Asante confederacy can be compared to the community centeredness of the entrepreneurs. The skill of the Asante in warfare, farming, and art, moving from small beginnings to world renown can be seen in the creativity of the entrepreneurs. The courage and adaptability of the Asante to successfully tackle major challenges can also be seen in the entrepreneurs who have all faced shocks to their businesses but have moved on to business success. “When you speak of Akan you are mostly referring to the Asantes. So today if you are talking about the purity of Akan culture, it is the Asantes who are recognised as having the precolonial culture”.

The Akan exercise enormous amounts of patience, almost to a fault before acting. “Be patient” is a common every day saying. The community centeredness of the Akan mean that individuals will seldom act alone to meet a challenge. This means that external threats may cause damage before the community acts. This can be seen in the current environmental damage being caused by illegal mining and plastic waste. However, this should not be completely assessed as a weakness. If history is anything to go by, it should be viewed as planning and preparation to obliterate the threat and protect the community.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Akan indigenous entrepreneurship covers most industry sectors and exists both in the informal and formal economic sectors. Indigenous entrepreneurs trained by family and community members contribute largely to Ghana’s GDP. The training of such entrepreneurs is cheap, practical and results in tremendous business skills as well as sustainable Akan community values. These entrepreneurs are committed to their communities and to the training of future entrepreneurs. Value based and skills based, they provide sustainable and resilient options to formal education which is too often lacking in practical skills and community values. Students trained in this system of education are ready for employment in their early twenties, setting up small businesses with the capacity to grow beyond that and create employment for others. A major attraction is the ability to build such businesses with minimal financial capital, amounts which most families can afford, or the entrepreneur can save through a few years of work.

The government has been slow in recognising the value of such education, focussing rather on formal education. The current government has put enormous amount of investment in offering free secondary education to all children. Although this is admirable, it is questionable in terms of meeting the country’s economic development

needs. Those who are being educated formally come out of secondary school with minimal practical skills and are certainly not employable. Even after university with all that financial investment by the government, the graduate is only fit to be an employee and not an employer. An added problem is that such students are leaving the country in large numbers to pursue careers in other countries. Although the government is supporting practical skills training, they are not supporting the training with the community values. The government is focussing on profitability and not community centeredness. Parents should be supported to be part of their children's practical entrepreneurial training, offering both practice and community values. The government should then support these young entrepreneurs with a small amount of start-up capital. Akan Indigenous Entrepreneurship is practical, skill focused, and value based. It offers more than just the skills needed to perform business functions; it is situated within a set of values. It is the combination of the two that supports the resilience and sustainability of Akan indigenous entrepreneurship.

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