Linking Cultural Landscaping Values to Lake Protection: A Paper at the Living Lakes Conference
Lake Trasimeno, Italy
By
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The general objective of the study:

• to discuss and analyze traditional cultural practices leading to sustainable environmental management and conservation of L. Victoria
• it analyzed the socio-cultural conservation norms and taboos as well as the potential consequences of the violations of these norms
• the cultural tools or arrangements for conserving natural resources are discussed
• past and present cultural practices, knowledge and socio-cultural institutions involved in conserving natural resources are reviewed.
• the role and place of gender, ethnicity, religion, government policies and institutions in enhancing or inhibiting cultural practices of conserving natural resources are discussed

Methodology of the Study

• Deskwork involving the review of literature on Lake Victoria basin and its people.
• Field visits and personal interviews as well as discussions with the cultural mentors of the various communities in the region in order to acquire data to supplement information from the readings;
• Visiting and listing historical and cultural conservation sites in order to gain additional information through recording for case studies, etc.
• Organization of local and regional cultural workshops and seminars on cultural issues to discuss various cultural issues on the conservation of natural resources and effective management of the sources of the Lake Victoria region.
Ethnic Communities around Lake Victoria

- The inhabitants had diverse cultural practices, although they came from a common historical background.

- They had to contend with difficult common climatic and weather conditions such as the vagaries of weather, environmental changes and so on. In encountering these conditions, they adopted similar ways as they learnt from one another.

- By 12th-13th C Lake Victoria basin was well settled by different ethnic communities

- Each ethnic group retained its own individual cultural ways of managing the environment and conserving natural resources.

- They developed cultural policies in terms taboos related to natural resource conservation and cultural practices for sustainable development.

- Established cultural sites, and shrines for conservation purposes
Traditional Management Systems and Administration

Kings: Kingdoms of Buganda and Busoga (Uganda) provide the law to exploit natural resources.

- All the land and natural resources within the kingdom was for the king.
- The land tenure system was very different and complicated. Buganda had *mailo* land system where it belonged to Kabaka;
- Wahaya of Kagere region had *Nyarubanja* pattern.
- While the Luos land parcel were distributed by Elders to family members according to women married in that home.

Chiefdoms: Sukuma, Ukerewe and even the Luos forced regulations to manage the environment.

- The Chiefs, Elders or the Cultural Leaders declared hunting, fishing and farming seasons.
- They had to make sure their subject get enough food throughout the year and no wastage.
- The regulation forced allowed animals and fish to have peaceful period to multiply.
Rabondo Rock is a roosting area for cormorants, terns and ducks.
• **Belief in Totems**: Baganda, Sukuma, Kerewe, Busoga, Suba etc. declared some animals to be sacred and were not to be killed. Most of the animals were found to be very useful to man and environment in some ways.
Hamerkop (*Scopus umbretta*) a cultural bird to some communities.
• **Cultural Beliefs**: Forests, wetlands, lakes, islands, hills, animals, were regarded as sacred and were used for religious rites.
• Shrines were established for religious purposes.
• Certain big trees or natural caves, islands, large rocks where people could hide during calamities were declared sacred for conservation purposes.

• **Cultural Sites**: Myths and legends surrounding the sites. Simbi, Bujagali, Kitmikaye, Atego etc.
• Water springs believed to have mystical power to heal were protected
• The forests around them remained untouched over the years and used for sacrifices
Culture and Fishing Technology