Indigenous Epistemic Foundation, Socio-Cultural and Educational Significance of Dzawuwu Festival Among the Agave-Afedome People

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ABSTRACT. The socio-economic significance of cultural festivals cannot be underestimated. This study explored the indigenous epistemic foundations and socio-cultural and educational significance of the Dzawuwu Festival among the Agave-Afedome people of Ghana. The study was guided by qualitative ethnographic approach, informed by indigenous and interpretive research perspectives. Criterion purposive sampling was used to select five participants: an elder, a youth, a traditional leader, a community committee member and an educationist. Data were collected mainly through interviews and analysed thematically. The findings revealed that the Dzawuwu Festival serves as an important cultural institution for preserving cultural identity,

transmitting indigenous knowledge and strengthening social relationships. The festival also provides opportunities for elders to teach younger generations about community history, traditions, values and cultural practices. However, modernisation and changing religious commitments hinder young people's engagement with traditional knowledge. The study recommends a collaboration between the Ghana Tourism Authority, traditional leaders, festival organisers and community members to promote the festival, preserve its cultural heritage and support community development.
KEYWORDS: Dzawuwu Festival; Agave-Afedome people; Indigenous knowledge; Cultural heritage; Social cohesion; Ethnography; Intergenerational learning.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional festivals form an integral part to African societies. Festivals help communities preserve their history, culture, and indigenous knowledge. Across the African continent, festivals function as important cultural institutions through which communities maintain their identity, interpret their history, and strengthen social relationships (Ward, 2023). In Ghana, traditional festivals continue to play significant socio-cultural and educational roles by promoting social cohesion, preserving cultural heritage, and facilitating the intergenerational transmission of indigenous knowledge and values (Heto & Mino, 2023; Safo-Ankama et al., 2023).

Among the Ewe-speaking people of southern Ghana, festivals remain central to communal life and cultural continuity. One such festival is the Dzawuwu Festival celebrated by the people of Agave-Afedome in the South Tongu District of the Volta Region. Oral tradition traces the origin of the festival to the migration of the Agave people from Notsie and their eventual settlement in their present homeland (Meyer, 2019; Geurts, 2021). The festival commemorates this historical experience while expressing gratitude to the ancestors and deities believed to have guided and protected the people during their migration and settlement. Over the years, the festival has evolved into an important cultural institution through which the people preserve their historical memory, affirm their identity, and sustain their indigenous worldview.

The Dzawuwu Festival is deeply embedded in the indigenous epistemic traditions of the Agave-Afedome people. Lentz and Wiggins (2017) observe that the festival teaches people about their history, beliefs, and values through its rituals, stories, songs, proverbs, and symbols. It also helps community members learn about leadership, moral conduct, and their relationships with

others and the spiritual world. These cultural practices represent indigenous ways of knowing that have been developed, preserved, and transmitted within the community across generations. Consequently, the festival serves as an important epistemic space through which indigenous knowledge is produced, validated, and transmitted, thereby contributing to the preservation of cultural memory and community identity.

Moreover, the Dzawuwu Festival strengthens kinship relations, promotes social cohesion, reinforces shared values, and fosters a collective sense of belonging among community members (Adom, 2016). The annual gathering of chiefs, elders, youth, and community members creates opportunities for social interaction, cultural performance, and the celebration of a common heritage. Through these activities, the festival contributes to social integration and the continuity of culturally defined norms and traditions.

The educational significance of the Dzawuwu Festival is equally noteworthy as an indigenous site of learning. It provides opportunities for the transmission of historical knowledge, cultural practices, ethical values, and communal responsibilities to younger generations. Community members learn important knowledge and skills through participation and observation, complementing what they acquire through formal education. Storytelling and interactions with elders help younger generations understand, appreciate, and preserve their cultural heritage. The festival therefore functions as an informal educational institution that promotes cultural literacy, identity formation, and the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems.

Despite the significance of the Dzawuwu Festival, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to it, particularly regarding its indigenous epistemic foundations and its socio-cultural and educational significance among the Agave-Afedome people. This gap in the literature is important because local festivals constitute valuable repositories of indigenous knowledge, historical memory, and cultural identity. For this reason, this festival has remained underrepresented in academic scholarship. These developments raise important questions about the ability of such cultural institutions to preserve their epistemic value and socio-cultural relevance in changing contexts.

Against this background, this study examines the indigenous epistemic foundation, socio-cultural significance, and educational importance of the Dzawuwu Festival among the Agave-Afedome people. The study seeks to contribute to scholarship on indigenous knowledge systems by demonstrating how the festival continues to function as a source of knowledge production, cultural continuity, and community-based learning in contemporary Ghanaian society.

Research Questions

i. How does the Dzawuwu Festival contribute to the preservation of cultural identity and the promotion of social cohesion among the Agave-Afedome people?
ii. What educational significance does the Dzawuwu Festival hold as an indigenous learning space for members of the Agave-Afedome community?
iii. How have modernization and religious influences affected the indigenous epistemic functions of the Dzawuwu Festival?

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

HISTORICAL ORIGINS AND RITUAL PRACTICES OF THE DZAWUWU FESTIVAL

The Dzawuwu Festival is deeply rooted in the historical experiences and collective memory of the Agave people, one of the major subdivisions of the Ewe ethnic group in southeastern Ghana. Like other Ewe communities, the Agave trace their ancestral origins to Notsie, in present-day Togo, which holds a central place in Ewe migration traditions. Oral accounts associate the dispersal of the Ewe from Notsie with the oppressive rule of King Agorkoli, whose reign is remembered for imposing severe restrictions and demanding burdensome tasks from his subjects (Adotey, 2018; Manoukian, 2017). The departure from Notsie represents a significant event in Ewe historical consciousness, symbolising the struggle for freedom, survival and self-determination.

Following their escape from Notsie, the migrants separated into different groups and established settlements across present-day Ghana and Togo. The Agave formed part of the southern migration stream and eventually settled in areas around the lower Volta basin. Oral traditions indicate that, after several stages of migration, they established Agave-Afedome as an important settlement and ancestral centre of the Agave state (Afeadie, 2018). The community continues to draw on these migration narratives to explain its origins, affirm its cultural identity and maintain its connection with ancestral lands and traditions. The memories of displacement, collective struggle and settlement have been preserved through oral history and cultural practices. The Dzawuwu Festival provides an important setting in which these historical experiences are remembered, interpreted and transmitted to younger generations, thereby connecting the community's past with its present cultural identity.

ORIGINS OF THE FESTIVAL

The origins of the Dzawuwu Festival are closely linked to Agave oral traditions concerning divine protection during the migration from Notsie.

Oral accounts shared by community elders indicate that the festival was established following the settlement of the Agave people at Agave-Afedome to honour the deities believed to have guided and protected them throughout their journey (Kongo, personal communication, September 1, 2022). Among these deities, Adzemu holds a significant position in Agave spiritual traditions. Community narratives recount that during the migration, the travellers encountered rivers and other natural obstacles that threatened their safe passage. In these accounts, Adzemu appeared in the form of a cow and assisted the migrants in crossing safely. This narrative provides a cultural explanation for the symbolic importance of the cow in Agave traditions, particularly its association with divine intervention, guidance and protection.

The establishment of the Dzawuwu Festival provided a means of expressing gratitude to the spiritual forces believed to have contributed to the successful migration and settlement of the Agave people. The festival also created an avenue for maintaining relationships with ancestral spirits and traditional deities across generations. Subsequently, it developed into an annual cultural occasion through which community members express gratitude, seek spiritual protection and reaffirm their collective identity. Although contemporary understandings and practices associated with the festival may differ, its historical significance remains grounded in migration memories and the community's belief in the role of divine guidance in their survival. Through these traditions, the Dzawuwu Festival continues to connect Agave historical consciousness, spiritual beliefs and cultural identity.

RITUALS AND CELEBRATIONS

The celebration of the Dzawuwu Festival follows a sequence of rituals that bring together spiritual observance, traditional practices and community participation. Preparations begin towards the end of November with the performance of Dzavoetsotso, a ritual involving the sprinkling of powdered millet mixed with sacred sand obtained from the principal shrine. This ritual marks the formal beginning of the festival period and introduces temporary restrictions on drumming, excessive noise-making and certain social activities (Zemu, personal communication, September 1, 2022).

Within Agave spiritual traditions, the period of silence is understood as a sacred interval during which the deities deliberate on matters concerning the welfare of the community. The restrictions demonstrate respect for the spiritual forces believed to protect the people. Preparations also include sacrifices and purification rites at important shrines to prepare the sacred spaces and the community for the forthcoming celebrations.

The main festivities begin after the restrictions are lifted, usually in January. Priests, priestesses and other ritual specialists conduct ceremonies at the

seven principal shrines of the Agave state. Offerings and libations are presented to the deities and ancestors, accompanied by prayers for peace, prosperity and protection in the coming year.

A major ritual is the sacrifice of a ram at the principal shrine of Adzemu, which reflects the deity's enduring significance in Agave religious life (Fumey, personal communication, September 4, 2022). Drumming, dancing and processions accompany the ceremonies, bringing together spiritual observance and public celebration. Traditional priestesses, particularly those associated with the Yeve cult, perform specialised rites as part of the ceremonial programme. These practices extend beyond religious worship by affirming cultural continuity and strengthening communal bonds through shared participation.

The festival culminates in gatherings involving chiefs, elders, priests and other community members. These gatherings provide opportunities for thanksgiving, social interaction and the reaffirmation of traditional authority. Historical narratives about the migration from Notsie and the establishment of Agave settlements are also recounted, allowing younger generations to learn about their community's origins and ancestral experiences. The Dzawuwu Festival therefore serves as a cultural institution through which historical knowledge, spiritual beliefs and communal identity are transmitted across generations. As the festival connects present-day celebrations with ancestral experiences, it maintains links between the past and present while reinforcing the cultural foundations of Agave society.

SOCIO-CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DZAWUWU FESTIVAL

The Dzawuwu Festival occupies a central position in the cultural life of the Agave people. Although primarily rooted in indigenous religious traditions, its significance extends beyond ritual observance. The festival serves as a medium through which religious beliefs are expressed, social relationships are strengthened, economic activities are stimulated (Heto & Mino, 2023), and traditional authority is reaffirmed (Adom, 2016). Its continued celebration demonstrates the enduring relevance of cultural institutions in preserving collective memory and fostering community cohesion in a rapidly changing social environment.

RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

The religious importance of the Dzawuwu Festival derives from its role as a formal occasion for honouring ancestral spirits and traditional deities. Within Agave cosmology, the ancestors and gods are regarded as active participants in human affairs, capable of influencing health, prosperity, fertility, and protection (Meyer, 2019). The festival therefore provides an opportunity for

the community to express gratitude for blessings received and to seek divine favour for the future (Geurts, 2021).

Central to the celebration are rituals involving libation, sacrifice, prayer, and offerings at the principal shrines of the Agave state. These practices reinforce the belief that harmonious relationships must be maintained between the living, the ancestors, and the spiritual world. According to local tradition, the deities who protected the Agave people during their migration from Notsie continue to safeguard the community, making annual acts of thanksgiving an important aspect of religious life (Kongo, personal communication, September 1, 2022).

The festival also contributes to the preservation of indigenous religious knowledge. Through participation in ritual activities, younger generations are exposed to traditional beliefs, sacred symbols, and customary practices that might otherwise decline under the influence of modernization and religious change. In this regard, the Dzawuwu Festival functions as a vehicle for transmitting religious heritage across generations.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Beyond its spiritual dimensions, the Dzawuwu Festival performs important social functions within Agave society. One of its most visible contributions is the promotion of social cohesion (Lentz and Wiggins, 2017). The celebration attracts community members living in different parts of Ghana and abroad, creating an occasion for reunion and renewed interaction among families, friends, and kinship groups. In communities where migration has become increasingly common, such gatherings play a vital role in maintaining social bonds.

The festival also serves as a medium for preserving and transmitting historical knowledge (Adom, 2016). During the celebrations, elders recount narratives concerning the migration from Notsie, the establishment of Agave settlements, and the achievements of past generations. These narratives reinforce a shared sense of identity and ensure that younger members of the community remain connected to their cultural roots. Similar observations have been made in studies of African festivals, where ritual performances often function as mechanisms for preserving collective memory and cultural continuity (Ofori-Darkwah, 2020).

Another important social function of the festival is its capacity to facilitate reconciliation and dispute resolution. The return of family members and community leaders during the celebrations creates opportunities for addressing misunderstandings, settling family disagreements, and restoring social harmony. The festival therefore provides a setting not only for celebration but also for strengthening interpersonal relationships and

reinforcing communal solidarity. Furthermore, the event offers a platform for the public display of cultural heritage through traditional music, dance, oral performances, and ceremonial activities. Such expressions contribute to a sense of pride in Agave identity and encourage the preservation of customs that distinguish the community from neighbouring groups.

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

The Dzawuwu Festival contributes to the local economy by generating increased commercial activity during the period of celebration. The influx of visitors creates demand for food, transportation, accommodation, clothing, and other goods and services (Kwakye-Opong, 2014). Local traders, food vendors, and artisans often experience a rise in sales as residents and visitors participate in festival-related activities.

The economic benefits extend beyond direct commercial transactions. Many migrants who return home during the festival make financial contributions to family members, community projects, and traditional institutions (Darko, 2024). These contributions provide additional resources that support local development initiatives and communal welfare. In some instances, fundraising activities organized alongside the festival have been used to support infrastructure projects and social development programmes within the community.

The festival also creates opportunities for the promotion of indigenous crafts and cultural products. Traditional attire, local foods, and cultural artefacts often gain visibility during the celebrations, providing income-generating opportunities for community members (Afriyie, 2020). Although the Dzawuwu Festival has not yet developed into a major tourism event comparable to some national festivals in Ghana, it possesses considerable potential for cultural tourism and heritage promotion. The economic significance of the festival therefore lies not only in immediate financial gains but also in its ability to mobilize resources and encourage investment in community development.

POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

The Dzawuwu Festival also serves important political functions within the Agave traditional area. Traditional festivals in many African societies provide occasions for the reaffirmation of authority and the strengthening of relationships between leaders and their subjects. The Dzawuwu Festival performs a similar role by bringing together chiefs, elders, priests, and community members within a shared ceremonial space.

The participation of traditional authorities in the festival reinforces the legitimacy of indigenous governance structures (Agyemang, & Gyambiby,

2026). Ritual activities performed by chiefs and religious leaders symbolize continuity with ancestral traditions and demonstrate their responsibility for safeguarding the welfare of the community (Adom, 2016). Public appearances by traditional leaders during the festival provide opportunities to communicate communal concerns, encourage cooperation, and promote unity among the various Agave divisions.

The festival has also become a point of interaction between traditional institutions and the modern state. Political office holders, government officials, and other public figures are frequently invited to attend festival activities, particularly durbars (Adom, 2016). Such engagements provide community leaders with opportunities to present development needs and advocate for government support. At the same time, public officials use the occasion to interact with constituents and communicate policy initiatives (Setsie, personal communication, September 4, 2022). In addition, the festival serves as a platform for collective mobilization.

Community members can discuss shared challenges, identify development priorities, and strengthen cooperation toward common goals. Through these processes, the festival contributes to local governance and community development while maintaining its cultural and ceremonial character. Therefore, the religious, social, economic, and political dimensions of the Dzawuwu Festival illustrate its broader significance within Agave society. The festival is an institution through which spiritual values are maintained, social relationships are renewed, economic opportunities are created, and traditional authority is sustained. Its continued observance highlights the capacity of indigenous cultural practices to adapt to changing circumstances while remaining central to community identity and collective life.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE DZAWUWU FESTIVAL

Like many indigenous festivals across Africa, the Dzawuwu Festival has experienced both continuity and transformation over time. While its central rituals, religious symbolism, and ceremonial procedures have largely been preserved, changes in religious affiliation, social values, and patterns of participation have altered certain aspects of its celebration. These developments illustrate the dynamic nature of culture, demonstrating how communities negotiate the tension between tradition and modernity while striving to maintain a sense of historical continuity.

Heto and Mino (2023) highlight concerns about the continuity of indigenous knowledge systems, which may help explain concerns about declining youth involvement in traditional cultural practices such as the Dzawuwu Festival. In contrast, Navei (2023) found that youth participation in cultural activities in

contemporary Tumu was influenced by the cultural activism of an admired local figure. These findings suggest that young people's involvement in cultural practices may depend on the social influences and opportunities available within their communities. This implies that sustaining youth participation in the Dzawuwu Festival requires creating meaningful opportunities for young people to learn, participate in and take responsibility for cultural transmission.

Oral testimonies collected during this study indicate that earlier generations participated actively in virtually every aspect of the festival, including ritual preparations, communal gatherings, and ceremonial performances. In recent decades, however, participation among the youth has diminished considerably (Setsie, personal communication, September 4, 2022). Several factors account for this trend. Increased migration for education and employment has reduced the number of young people residing permanently within the Agave traditional area. As a result, many are unable to return home during the festival period. More importantly, changing religious beliefs have influenced perceptions of indigenous cultural practices. Some young people regard traditional rituals as incompatible with their religious convictions and therefore choose not to participate in festival activities.

A study revealed that some youths perceive aspects of the celebration as outdated and less relevant to contemporary life (Navei, 2023). Ritual requirements associated with the festival, particularly those involving sacred observances and traditional codes of conduct, were identified as factors that discourage participation among sections of the younger generation (Agba, personal communication, September 4, 2022). Consequently, while the festival continues to attract large numbers of people, its active participants are increasingly concentrated among elders, traditional leaders, and adherents of indigenous religious traditions.

INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY AND MODERNITY

The spread of Christianity and broader processes of modernization have significantly influenced attitudes toward the Dzawuwu Festival. Christianity has become one of the dominant religious traditions within the Agave area, resulting in the emergence of alternative interpretations of indigenous cultural practices. Some Christians view certain rituals associated with the festival as inconsistent with their faith and therefore distance themselves from direct involvement in ceremonial activities (Keteve, personal communication, September 4, 2022). This development reflects wider patterns observed throughout Africa, where traditional festivals have often had to coexist with new religious identities. Rather than leading to the complete abandonment of indigenous traditions, however, Christianity has

contributed to a process of selective participation. Many Christians continue to attend public events associated with the festival, particularly durbars and cultural displays, while avoiding activities perceived as religious rituals.

Modernization has also influenced the observance of customs that were once strictly enforced. Community members noted that restrictions imposed during the festival period, including the ban on drumming and noisemaking, are no longer observed uniformly across all Agave settlements. In the past, compliance with such regulations was widespread, reflecting the authority of traditional institutions and the collective acceptance of customary norms. Today, however, changing lifestyles, urban influences, and the growth of alternative belief systems have weakened adherence in some communities (Zemu, personal communication, September 15, 2022). These developments do not necessarily indicate the decline of the festival itself. Instead, they demonstrate how cultural traditions are continually reshaped by changing social realities. The Dzawuwu Festival has adapted to these transformations while retaining its significance as a marker of Agave identity and heritage.

INTRODUCTION OF THE GRAND DURBAR

Another notable change in the history of the festival was the introduction of the grand durbar during the 1970s. According to community accounts, the original form of the festival centred primarily on ritual activities and a traditional gathering held at Agave-Afedome. Over time, however, community leaders recognized the need to broaden participation and create a platform that could accommodate both traditional and contemporary interests (Setsie, personal communication, September 4, 2022).

The introduction of the grand durbar represented a significant innovation in the celebration. Unlike the traditional gathering, which focused largely on religious and ceremonial activities, the grand durbar created space for cultural performances, public interaction, and engagement with political leaders. Chiefs, elders, government officials, and members of the wider Agave community could meet within a common forum to discuss issues affecting local development and communal welfare.

The grand durbar also enhanced the visibility of the festival beyond the traditional religious sphere. Cultural displays, traditional music, dance performances, and public addresses became important features of the occasion. The event attracted people who might otherwise have remained distant from the religious dimensions of the festival, including Christians and younger members of the community. Consequently, the introduction of the grand durbar contributed to the broader social and political relevance of the festival while complementing its existing ritual functions.

ELEMENTS THAT HAVE REMAINED UNCHANGED

Despite these changes, several core elements of the Dzawuwu Festival have remained remarkably stable. The most enduring aspect is the festival's spiritual foundation. The annual offering of sacrifices, libations, and prayers to ancestral spirits and traditional deities continues to form the heart of the celebration. These rituals remain essential because they are believed to sustain the relationship between the community and the spiritual forces that protect it (Ametepey, personal communication, September 1, 2022).

The timing of the festival has also remained largely unchanged. The placement of the ban and the commencement of the celebrations continue to follow the traditional Agave calendar established by earlier generations. This continuity reflects the sacred significance attached to specific ritual dates and reinforces the connection between contemporary celebrations and ancestral practices.

Equally important is the preservation of ceremonial visits to the principal shrines of the Agave state. Priests and priestesses continue to perform ritual obligations at these sacred sites, maintaining a tradition that has been transmitted across generations. The preparation and distribution of dzawoe, which community members regard as a symbol of blessing and protection, also remain integral to the festival's observance (Kongo, personal communication, September 1, 2022).

Furthermore, the festival continues to serve as a medium for remembering the migration from Notsie and the founding of Agave settlements. Historical narratives associated with these events remain central to the celebration and are repeatedly transmitted through oral traditions, ritual performances, and communal gatherings. Through this process, the festival sustains a sense of continuity between past and present.

The history of the Dzawuwu Festival therefore reveals a pattern of adaptation rather than abandonment. While participation patterns, social attitudes, and public activities have changed over time, the core rituals, historical memories, and spiritual foundations of the festival remain intact. This coexistence of continuity and change helps explain the resilience of the festival and its enduring relevance within contemporary Agave society.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative ethnographic approach informed by indigenous and interpretive research perspectives. The approach was considered appropriate because it facilitates an in-depth exploration of the meanings, values, knowledge systems, and lived experiences embedded within cultural practices. The study examined the festival as an indigenous

knowledge institution rather than merely a ceremonial event. Ethnographic orientation enabled the researchers to understand the festival from the perspectives of community members. This helps in understanding how the Dzawuwu Festival contributes to cultural continuity, social cohesion, and indigenous learning.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Criterion purposive sampling was used to select five participants who had relevant knowledge and experience of the Dzawuwu Festival among the Agave-Afedome people. The participants included one elder, one youth, one traditional leader, one community committee member and one educationist. The selection was based on predetermined criteria, including familiarity with the festival, knowledge of Agave-Afedome cultural traditions, and the ability to explain the festival's cultural, educational and social significance.

An elderly member of the community was selected for possessing knowledge of community history and ancestral traditions, while the youth provided insight into the experiences and perceptions of younger generations. The traditional leader was included because of their understanding of customary practices and cultural responsibilities. The community committee member offered knowledge of festival planning, organisation and community participation, while the educationist provided an educational perspective on indigenous knowledge and intergenerational learning. Selecting participants from these five roles also enabled the study to consider different perspectives on the contribution of the Dzawuwu Festival to cultural identity, heritage preservation and social cohesion, as well as the effects of modernisation and religious influences.

INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Interviews were mainly used to collect data from the participants. The interviews offered insights into how the festival preserves indigenous knowledge and strengthens community unity. The interview questions were designed in accordance with the research questions. Therefore, the interview questions revolved around the contribution of Dzawuwu Festival to cultural identity, preservation and social cohesion among the Agave-Afedome people, educational significance, effect of Modernisation and Religious influences on the indigenous epistemic functions of the festival. These sources were particularly useful for understanding local interpretations of history, spirituality, morality, social relations, and community values.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data obtained from interviews were subjected to qualitative thematic analysis. Data were carefully examined, organized, and interpreted according

to themes relevant to the objectives of the study. Attention was given to themes relating to indigenous knowledge systems, cultural identity, social cohesion, indigenous learning processes, educational significance, and the effects of modernization and religious change on the festival.

Evidence from interviews was triangulated with scholarly sources to identify areas of convergence and divergence. This process enabled the researcher to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of how the Dzawuwu Festival functions as an indigenous epistemic space, a socio-cultural institution, and a community-based educational platform. This integration enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings and reduced potential biases inherent in individual sources (Gill et al., 2018; Langtree, 2019).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

CONTRIBUTION OF DZAWUWU FESTIVAL TO CULTURAL IDENTITY, PRESERVATION AND SOCIAL COHESION AMONG THE AGAVE-AFEDOME PEOPLE

The findings revealed that the Dzawuwu Festival serves as an important cultural institution through which the Agave-Afedome people preserve their cultural identity, transmit indigenous knowledge, and strengthen social relationships. Participants consistently emphasized the festival's role in maintaining connections with their history, ancestors, and cultural traditions. The festival was therefore perceived as a vital mechanism for sustaining the cultural life of the community.

Dzawuwu festival as a source of cultural identity

The Dzawuwu Festival provides an important opportunity for the Agave-Afedome people to express their cultural identity and maintain their connection with their history. Through annual celebrations, community members remember their ancestors, share traditional practices, and reaffirm the values that define their community. The festival also brings together different generations, allowing elderly people to pass cultural knowledge and historical memories on to younger people. The following quotation illustrates how the festival contributes to the community's sense of identity. An elder shared the following perspective:

"The Dzawuwu Festival reminds us of who we are as Agave people. When we gather to celebrate, we remember our history, our ancestors and the traditions that distinguish us from other communities."

The statement suggests that the Dzawuwu Festival plays an important role in affirming and preserving the cultural identity of the Agave-Afedome people. The participant's emphasis on history, ancestors, and traditions shows that

the festival allows community members to reconnect with their collective past. Adotey and Ntewusu's (2024) agree that festivals among Ewe communities contribute to the maintenance of ethnic identity and historical consciousness. This implies that cultural identity is expressed through participation in rituals, traditional performances, storytelling, and communal gatherings that commemorate the origins and historical experiences of the people.

The findings further suggest that the festival serves as a symbol of Agave heritage. As the festival brings community members together each year, it's celebration reinforces their shared history and sense of belonging. It also distinguishes the Agave-Afedome people from other communities. This suggests that cultural identity is not only inherited from previous generations but also maintained and strengthened through participation in shared cultural practices. This finding supports Lentz's (2001) argument that cultural festivals provide public spaces where local identities are expressed, negotiated, and reinforced. The Dzawuwu Festival therefore serves as an important cultural resource through which the Agave-Afedome people preserve their heritage and strengthen their collective identity.

Dzawuwu festival as a means of preserving cultural heritage

The Dzawuwu Festival plays an important role in preserving the cultural heritage of the Agave-Afedome people. The celebration creates opportunities for elders, traditional leaders, and other cultural custodians to pass their knowledge and practices to younger generations. Through traditional ceremonies, storytelling, music, dance, and communal activities, young people learn about the customs, beliefs, values, and responsibilities that have been maintained by their ancestors. The festival therefore provides a platform for sustaining indigenous knowledge and ensuring that important cultural practices are not forgotten. A traditional leader shared the following insight:

"The festival gives us the opportunity to teach our children about the customs and practices we inherited from our forefathers. If the younger generation does not learn these traditions, some of our cultural knowledge may gradually disappear."

This quotation highlights the significance of the festival as a means of preserving cultural heritage and transmitting indigenous knowledge. The participant's concern about the possible loss of cultural knowledge shows that the continuity of tradition depends on the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next. The findings indicate that the Dzawuwu Festival enables younger community members to learn about traditional customs, values, beliefs, and responsibilities through direct interaction with elders and cultural custodians.

The study further revealed that cultural preservation takes place through storytelling, ritual performances, traditional music, dance, and participation in communal activities. These practices allow younger generations to acquire knowledge that may not be available through formal educational institutions. The festival therefore functions as a living repository of indigenous knowledge, keeping cultural practices relevant through active participation and intergenerational learning. The findings support Heto and Mino's (2023) assertion that indigenous institutions remain important spaces for transmitting African indigenous knowledge. However, the findings also suggest that cultural preservation requires continued commitment from community members (Safo-Ankama et al., 2023). The survival of traditional knowledge depends on younger generations' willingness to participate in cultural activities, learn from their elders, and appreciate the value of their heritage. The Dzawuwu Festival thus contributes to cultural continuity by connecting ancestral knowledge with the experiences and responsibilities of younger generations.

Dzawuwu festival as a mechanism for social cohesion

The findings revealed that the Dzawuwu Festival serves as an important avenue for strengthening social relationships and fostering a sense of belonging among members of the Agave-Afedome community. Participants emphasized that the festival creates opportunities for communal interaction, reunion, and the renewal of social bonds that reinforce unity and collective identity. A community committee representative offered the following thought:

"During Dzawuwu, people come together, greet one another and share in the celebration. Even those who have been away from home return, and this helps us renew our relationships and remember that we belong to one community."

The participant's response demonstrates the important role of the festival in fostering social cohesion within the Agave-Afedome community. The findings indicate that the festival creates opportunities for interaction among families, clans, and community members who may have been separated by migration, employment, or other social circumstances. Heto and Mino (2023) observe that indigenous cultural institutions strengthen community cohesion by fostering a shared sense of belonging and cultural identity. The annual gathering enables individuals to reconnect with relatives, friends, and community networks, thereby strengthening social bonds.

The return of community members from different parts of the country and beyond was identified as a particularly important feature of the festival. Such reunions help reinforce family relationships and strengthen communal solidarity. Mpuangnan and Ntombela (2024) found that community members

can influence their cultural identity, social unity, and ability to address challenges. This suggests that the festival serves as a platform for promoting unity, cooperation, and a shared sense of responsibility among community members. These findings support Lentz's (2001) position that festivals contribute to social integration by creating spaces for collective cultural participation. Within the Agave-Afedome context, the Dzawuwu Festival performs a similar function by bringing people together around common cultural values and experiences.

Dzawuwu festival and intergenerational learning

The findings suggest that the Dzawuwu Festival serves as an important platform for intergenerational learning, where knowledge, values, and cultural practices are transmitted from older to younger generations. Participants highlighted the festival's role in creating opportunities for young people to interact with elders, observe cultural performances, and gain a deeper understanding of their heritage through lived experience. A young participant shared the following insight:

“The festival helps young people understand the traditions of our community. When we watch the elders perform cultural activities and explain their meaning, we learn things that we may not learn in the classroom.

This finding points to the educational significance of the Dzawuwu Festival as an indigenous learning space. The participant's statement suggests that important forms of cultural knowledge are acquired through observation, participation, and interaction with elders. The finding o aligns with Heto and Mino's (2023) who observe that indigenous knowledge is commonly transmitted through participation, observation, and engagement with community elders. This suggests that the festival provides a practical environment in which younger generations learn about local history, cultural practices, social values, leadership traditions, and communal responsibilities.

The study further revealed that learning during the festival occurs through experiential processes rather than formal instruction. Young people acquire knowledge by observing rituals, listening to oral narratives, participating in cultural activities, and engaging in discussions with elders. Such learning contributes to the development of cultural awareness and strengthens the transmission of indigenous knowledge across generations. Beyond its celebratory function, the festival serves as a community-based educational space where knowledge is embedded in cultural practice and social interaction. This supports Ward's (2023) argument that learning within indigenous and community settings often occurs through participation in shared cultural experiences, enabling learners to acquire knowledge, values, and identity in culturally meaningful ways. Furthermore, Lentz and Wiggins

(2017) contend that traditional festivals provide important spaces for the preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge by bringing generations together in collective cultural activities. The findings therefore support the view that traditional festivals function as important educational spaces that complement formal educational systems while ensuring the continuity of indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage across generations.

Challenges affecting the cultural and social contributions of the festival

The findings revealed that although the Dzawuwu Festival continues to play an important cultural and social role within the Agave-Afedome community, it faces challenges associated with changing social values and generational interests. Participants noted concerns about sustaining youth engagement and ensuring that younger generations remain connected to the cultural knowledge and traditions embodied in the festival. The following quotation presents the views of educationists:

“The festival remains important to us, although some young people are more interested in entertainment than learning about the history and meaning of the traditions. We need to find ways of making the festival relevant to the younger generation.”

This statement introduces an important dimension of the findings by highlighting the challenges facing the festival in contemporary society. Although participants generally acknowledged the importance of the festival, concerns were expressed regarding changing patterns of participation among younger generations. The findings suggest that increased exposure to modern forms of entertainment, urban lifestyles, formal education, and external cultural influences may affect the level of interest in traditional knowledge and cultural practices.

However, the findings do not suggest that the festival is losing its relevance. Rather, they indicate the need for cultural institutions to adapt to contemporary realities while maintaining their core values and traditions. The participant's recommendation points to the importance of developing innovative approaches that encourage meaningful youth participation without compromising the cultural integrity of the festival. These findings are consistent with Lentz and Wiggins' (2017) argument that festivals are dynamic institutions that evolve in response to changing social, political, and cultural circumstances. Similarly, Heto and Mino (2023) contend that indigenous knowledge systems remain resilient because communities continually negotiate and adapt cultural practices to contemporary conditions.

EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DZAWUWU FESTIVAL AS AN INDIGENOUS LEARNING SPACE

The findings show that the Dzawuwu Festival provides an opportunity for elders to teach young people about the history, culture, traditions and values of the Agave-Afedome community. Young people learn by listening to elders' stories, observing cultural activities and taking part in the festival. This shows that learning does not happen only in schools but also within the community, where people share their knowledge and experiences with younger generations. One elder had the following to say:

"The Dzawuwu Festival teaches our children about the history of our people and the customs we inherited from our ancestors. We teach them our values, respect for older people and the importance of keeping our traditions alive.

The elder's response presents the Dzawuwu Festival as an informal learning space where cultural knowledge is passed from older to younger generations. Through storytelling, oral explanations and personal experiences, elders help young people understand their cultural history, traditions and values. This suggests that education takes place at both formal schools and also through interactions within the community. Heto and Mino (2023) support this view by showing the continued relevance of indigenous knowledge in community life, even as migration and globalisation bring changes to traditional practices. Learning about culture through festivals is also evident in Owusu-Frempong's (2005) study of the Adae festival, which highlights the role of festivals in cultural education and communication between generations. Similarly, Boamah (2019) discusses the educational value of the Odwira and Ohum festivals in passing traditional knowledge to younger people. These studies reinforce the view that festivals provide opportunities for cultural learning. However, participation does not always mean that young people understand the meaning of the activities they observe. Some may attend mainly for entertainment without learning about the history and values behind the celebrations. The educational value of the Dzawuwu Festival therefore depends on active knowledge-sharing, where elders explain cultural practices, encourage questions and involve young people in meaningful activities.

Additionally, The Dzawuwu Festival is an opportunity for the community to protect and pass on its culture to younger generations. Traditional leaders and other community members have a responsibility to teach young people about their history, values, customs and traditions. While the elders focus on how older people teach younger people, the traditional leader highlights that the whole community, including its traditional institutions, must work together to

preserve its cultural heritage. A traditional leader shared the following perspective:

“The younger generation can learn from the elders and traditional authorities about the meaning of our cultural practices. The festival reminds us that we have a responsibility to protect our heritage and pass it on to future generations.”

The findings suggest that festivals provide important opportunities for transmitting cultural knowledge through ceremonies, performances and community participation. This is consistent with Boamah (2019) who highlights how the Odwira and Ohum festivals help preserve traditional knowledge and promote cultural awareness. The preservation of cultural heritage, however, should not be left to traditional authorities alone. Elders, families, women, performers and young people also contribute valuable knowledge and experiences. Kwakye-Opong (2014) illustrates this educational role through the clothing, colours and symbols used during the Homowo festival, which communicate cultural meanings, social roles and community values. Similarly, Darko (2024) shows how dance, movement and songs can promote social cohesion and communicate expectations about social behaviour. These examples suggest that the Dzawuwu Festival could strengthen cultural education by encouraging traditional leaders and other knowledgeable community members to explain festival activities and share their experiences with younger generations. Providing opportunities for young people to ask questions and participate actively would help preserve cultural heritage while allowing them to contribute to its continued development.

Moreover, The Dzawuwu Festival provides a practical learning space where community members develop important social skills and values. During festival preparations and celebrations, children observe how people cooperate, share ideas and support one another. Through their participation, young people learn teamwork, respect, discipline and peaceful coexistence. These experiences show that the festival serves not only as a cultural celebration but also as a means of teaching values that young people can apply in their homes, schools and wider communities. A community committee member shared the following perspective:

“People learn many things by taking part in the Dzawuwu Festival. They learn discipline, unity, cooperation and respect for other people’

The community member’s response shows that the Dzawuwu Festival provides opportunities for children to learn through participation, observation and interaction with others. As the young people help with preparations and observing cultural activities, they learn how community

members cooperate and fulfil shared responsibilities. Tumu (2026) highlights a similar educational role in the Kakube festival, where drumming, singing and dancing help transmit cultural history, values and collective identity. These activities suggest that cultural performances can serve as learning resources beyond the formal classroom. Die (2011) also emphasises the contribution of indigenous cultural knowledge to the education and socialisation of young people, demonstrating the importance of community-based learning. However, taking part in cultural activities does not necessarily mean that children understand their deeper meanings. Darko (2024) shows that dance, movement and songs can promote social cohesion and communicate expectations about social behaviour, although their educational value depends on how participants understand and engage with these practices. The Dzawuwu Festival could therefore strengthen children's learning if elders and other knowledgeable community members explain the purpose of cultural activities and encourage children to reflect on the values of cooperation, respect and shared responsibility. Such guidance would help young people connect their festival experiences with their everyday lives.

Furthermore, the Dzawuwu Festival helps young people understand their cultural identity, history and traditions. Through explanations from elders, they learn about the meaning of cultural practices that may not be taught in school. However, some young people attend the festival mainly for entertainment without understanding its cultural significance. The young participant therefore suggests that elders should involve young people more actively by explaining traditions, answering their questions and allowing them to participate in cultural activities. The following statement reflects the views of a youth participant:

“The festival helps young people understand where they come from. Some of us learn things about our culture that we do not discuss regularly at school.”

The youth’s response highlights the role of the Dzawuwu Festival in helping young people understand their cultural identity, history and origins. The participant explains that learning from elders provides knowledge about traditions that may receive limited attention in formal schooling. Heto and Mino (2023) discuss the continued relevance of indigenous knowledge in Ghana, providing a useful basis for understanding how cultural traditions can remain meaningful amid social change. The importance of cultural expression is also evident in Matczynski’s (2022) study of Homowo and Ga musical heritage, which examines how music, sound and performance contribute to the expression of cultural identity. Similarly, Quan-Baffour (2025) explores the role of Akan folksongs in communicating cultural origins, identity and unity among young people. These studies support the view that cultural practices can help younger generations develop a sense of belonging.

However, attending a festival for entertainment does not necessarily mean that young people lack interest in their heritage, as social enjoyment and cultural learning can occur together. The challenge is to ensure that young people understand the meaning behind the activities in which they participate. The Dzawuwu Festival could address this need by encouraging elders to explain cultural symbols, share historical accounts and create opportunities for questions and active participation. Such an approach would enable young people to contribute to preserving and developing their cultural heritage rather than simply receiving knowledge from older generations.

In addition, the Dzawuwu Festival can contribute to preserving the cultural heritage of the Agave-Afedome community when elders explain the meaning and significance of its traditions to younger generations. Cultural learning could be strengthened through storytelling, group discussions, audio recordings and practical activities that encourage young people to engage with their heritage. These approaches would create opportunities for direct interaction with elders and other knowledgeable community members, helping young people understand their cultural practices and develop a stronger commitment to preserving them for future generations. Educationists offered the following insight:

"The Dzawuwu Festival can help preserve our cultural knowledge, especially when elders explain the meaning of the traditions to younger people. However, some young adults live away from the community or have other interests, so they may not participate fully. We need to make cultural learning more engaging by using storytelling, discussions, recordings and activities that allow young people to learn directly from knowledgeable community members."

The participant's response highlights the need to preserve the cultural knowledge of the Agave-Afedome community by creating meaningful learning opportunities for younger generations. Although the Dzawuwu Festival provides a space for cultural transmission, migration, education and changing interests may limit some young people's participation. Communities can address these challenges by finding new ways to share cultural knowledge while maintaining its traditional meaning. Boamah (2019) discusses the preservation of cultural and educational knowledge associated with the Odwira and Ohum festivals, highlighting the importance of making cultural heritage accessible to younger generations. In the case of Dzawuwu, storytelling, group discussions and culturally appropriate recordings could complement learning during festival celebrations. However, recordings should not replace direct interaction with elders, whose explanations help young people understand the meaning of cultural practices. Limited participation should also be considered in relation to young people's

circumstances rather than automatically interpreted as a rejection of tradition. Agyemang and Gyambiby (2026) emphasise the importance of preserving indigenous knowledge held by older adults in Ghana, reinforcing the need to share such knowledge across generations. The Agave-Afedome community could therefore organise cultural learning activities throughout the year and involve young people in planning them. Such efforts would help sustain their connection with their heritage while allowing cultural knowledge to remain relevant to future generations.

EFFECT OF MODERNISATION AND RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES ON THE INDIGENOUS EPISTEMIC FUNCTIONS OF THE DZAWUWU FESTIVAL

The elders were concerned that modern entertainment, social media and church activities may be taking some young people's attention away from learning about their cultural heritage. The elder therefore believes that elders should continue explaining cultural traditions to younger generations to ensure that the community's indigenous knowledge is preserved for the future. An elder shared the following thoughts:

"Today, many children are more interested in modern entertainment, social media and foreign religion like church activities. Some still participate in the festival, but they may not understand the meaning of the practices. I believe we need to continue teaching them our traditions so that our knowledge does not disappear."

The participant raises concerns about how indigenous knowledge is passed on to younger generations as society changes. The participant believes that modern entertainment, social media and foreign religious commitments might reduce opportunities for young people to learn directly from elders. Heto and Mino (2023), however, show that indigenous knowledge in Ghana remains relevant despite social and cultural changes. This suggests that modernisation does not necessarily lead to the loss of traditional knowledge. Digital media, for example, could help record elders' stories and share cultural knowledge with young people. Die (2011) also highlights the educational value of local cultural knowledge and its contribution to the learning and socialisation of young people. Similarly, Agyemang and Gyambiby (2026) examine ways of preserving indigenous knowledge held by older adults in Ghana, emphasising the need to make such knowledge available to future generations. These studies support the importance of preserving cultural knowledge while adapting to changing circumstances. In the case of the Dzawuwu Festival, elders could work with families, schools and young people to explain the history and meaning of festival practices. Such efforts would help younger generations understand their cultural heritage while creating opportunities to share this knowledge through relevant forms of learning.

Additionally, the Dzawuwu Festival preserves the history, beliefs and values of the Agave-Afedome community. The traditional leader believes that leaders have a responsibility to explain the meaning of the festival and help younger generations understand their cultural heritage. However, some religious groups may disagree with certain traditional ceremonies because these practices conflict with their religious beliefs. The leader argues that people's religious choices should be respected while ensuring that cultural knowledge is not lost. In other words, people can learn about and understand their cultural traditions without necessarily practising every ceremony or following the same religion. A traditional leader shared the following perspective:

"The Dzawuwu Festival carries the history, beliefs and values of our people. We must respect people's religious choices, but we should also ensure that our children understand the cultural meaning of the festival.

The participant highlights the need to balance cultural preservation with respect for religious diversity. The participant explains that some members of Christian communities may question traditional ceremonies because they conflict with their religious beliefs. Afriyie (2020), in a study of the Odwira Festival among the Akuapem people, examines tensions between traditional spiritual obligations and Christian conversion. A similar concern is raised by Boapeah et al. (2025), who explore the relationship between cultural practices and traditional worship in Ghana. These studies help explain why community members may attach different meanings to the same festival activities. However, religious differences do not necessarily mean that indigenous knowledge must be abandoned. Heto and Mino (2023) show that traditional knowledge and institutions in Ghana remain relevant amid social change, migration and globalisation. This suggests that communities can preserve their cultural heritage while accommodating different beliefs. In the case of the Dzawuwu Festival, traditional leaders could explain the history, symbols and social significance of festival practices while respecting individual religious choices. This approach would allow young people to understand their cultural heritage without requiring everyone to participate in ceremonies that conflict with their beliefs.

Moreover, modernisation has changed how people participate in the Dzawuwu Festival. Some young people may focus more on taking photographs, using social media and enjoying the celebrations than learning about the festival's history and cultural significance. The participant believes that technology can also help preserve cultural knowledge by recording elders' stories and sharing them with people who live far from the community. One community committee member shared the following insight:

"The festival has changed over the years. We can use technology to record the stories of our elders and share them with people who live outside the

community. What matters is that we do not lose the knowledge that gives the festival its meaning."

The community member's response presents modernisation as both a challenge and an opportunity for preserving the indigenous knowledge associated with the Dzawuwu Festival. The participant is concerned that social media and entertainment may draw young people's attention away from the history and cultural meanings of festival activities. However, modern technology does not necessarily threaten indigenous knowledge. Heto and Mino (2023) highlight the continued relevance of indigenous knowledge in Ghana despite social changes, suggesting that communities can adapt while maintaining their cultural heritage. The participant's suggestion to record elders' stories also raises the possibility of using technology to preserve oral histories and share them with people living outside Agave-Afedome. Agyemang and Gyambiby (2026) examine strategies for preserving indigenous knowledge held by older adults in Ghana, emphasising the importance of making this knowledge accessible to future generations. Die (2011) also highlights the educational value of local cultural knowledge in the learning and socialisation of young people. These studies suggest that digital recordings and social media could complement traditional methods of teaching about the Dzawuwu Festival. However, technology should support rather than replace direct interaction with elders and other knowledgeable community members. The community should also determine which cultural knowledge may be recorded and shared, respecting customary restrictions and the rights of those who hold it. In this way, modern technology could help preserve the festival's educational significance while maintaining the cultural values that give it meaning.

Furthermore, the participants indicate that young people have different reasons for participating in the Dzawuwu Festival. Some attend to socialise with friends, enjoy the music and celebrate with other community members. Others choose not to participate in certain festival activities because their religious beliefs or church teachings discourage them from taking part in traditional ceremonies. This shows that religious influences can affect how young people engage with their cultural heritage. A youth respondent shared the following perspective:

"Some young people attend the Dzawuwu Festival because they want to meet friends, enjoy the music and celebrate with the community. Others do not participate because their churches teach them to avoid certain traditional practices.'

The data show that young people relate to the Dzawuwu Festival in different ways. Some see it as an opportunity to socialise and celebrate, while others avoid certain activities because of their religious beliefs. Quan-Baffour (2018)

discusses tensions surrounding the use of Ghanaian cultural expressions, such as drumming, dancing and folksongs, in Christian worship. This helps explain why some young people may find it difficult to balance their religious commitments with participation in traditional festivals. However, Niedźwiedź (2023) shows that religion and culture do not always exist in opposition, as some Ghanaian Catholic practices incorporate local cultural expressions. This suggests that religious identity does not necessarily require the rejection of indigenous cultural heritage. Die (2011) also highlights the educational value of indigenous knowledge in helping young people understand their cultural identity and community. In the context of Dzawuwu, elders and traditional leaders could explain the festival's history, symbols and social significance to younger generations. Such education should respect the religious convictions of young people and should not require them to participate in ceremonies that conflict with their beliefs. Learning about a cultural practice does not mean that one must accept or participate in every aspect of it. This distinction provides an opportunity to preserve cultural knowledge while respecting religious diversity within the Agave-Afedome community.

In addition, the Dzawuwu Festival can continue to preserve the cultural identity and traditions of the Agave-Afedome people, even as society changes. The participant recognises that young adults may have different religious beliefs and opinions about traditional ceremonies. The findings also emphasises that participation should be a personal choice rather than an obligation. This suggests that the festival can remain relevant by educating younger generations about its history, values and cultural significance while respecting their individual beliefs. The main message is that preserving cultural heritage does not require forcing everyone to participate in every traditional practice. The following excerpt captures the views of an educationist:

"I believe the Dzawuwu Festival can remain important even as our lives and beliefs change. Some young adults have different views about traditional ceremonies. We should not force anyone to participate against their beliefs."

The young adult's response suggests that the continued relevance of the Dzawuwu Festival depends on how the Agave-Afedome community responds to changing social conditions and religious beliefs. The participant recognises the importance of preserving cultural heritage without forcing young people to follow every traditional practice. This position is consistent with Heto and Mino (2023), who discuss the continuity of Indigenous knowledge alongside other knowledge systems. Their work draws attention to the possibility of preserving cultural knowledge while allowing it to develop in response to social change. Similarly, Niedźwiedź (2023) examines the interaction between Catholicism and Ghanaian cultural practices, illustrating how religious and

cultural identities can coexist and influence one another. Adasi et al. (2026) further explore how Indigenous priestesses in Ghana sustain spiritual traditions while negotiating the influences of modernity and Christianity. These studies offer a useful basis for understanding cultural adaptation, although they do not provide direct evidence of how the Agave-Afedome people negotiate these issues during the Dzawuwu Festival. The participant's suggestion points to the value of community-led discussions, storytelling and cultural activities through which younger generations can learn about the festival's history and significance. Elders and traditional leaders have an important role in this process, particularly in explaining the meanings of traditional practices and identifying knowledge that should remain restricted. However, preserving the festival should not mean that all practices must remain unchanged. The community needs to consider which traditions remain meaningful, which may require adaptation and how cultural knowledge can be passed on without disregarding individual convictions. This approach would support the continuity of the Dzawuwu Festival while recognising the diversity of beliefs within the community.

Recommendation

i. The Agave-Afedome people, particularly elders, traditional leaders and families should also document oral histories and traditional knowledge, with the consent of knowledge holders, while protecting sacred or restricted information.
ii. The Ghana Tourism Authority should collaborate with Agave-Afedome traditional leaders, festival organisers and community members to promote the Dzawuwu Festival as an important expression of the community's cultural heritage.
iii. Traditional leaders and festival organisers could establish youth cultural groups to involve young people in storytelling, traditional music, dance, oral history projects and festival planning.
iv. Researchers could also compare the Dzawuwu Festival with other festivals among Ewe communities in Ghana to identify shared cultural practices and local differences.

CONCLUSION

The Dzawuwu Festival plays an important role in preserving the cultural identity, indigenous knowledge and social relationships of the Agave-Afedome people. Through storytelling, traditional ceremonies, music, dance and communal activities, elders and other cultural custodians pass knowledge, values and customs to younger generations. The festival also provides an informal learning space where young people develop an

understanding of their history and cultural heritage through observation, participation and interaction with older community members.

Furthermore, the annual celebration brings together families and community members, including those living away from their ancestral homes, thereby strengthening social cohesion and a sense of belonging. However, modernisation, changing youth interests and religious diversity can influence how younger generations understand and participate in festival activities. Some turn to focus on entertainment, while others avoid certain ceremonies which involve rituals because of their modern religious beliefs. These changes highlight the need for the Agave-Afedome community to sustain the festival's cultural and educational value while respecting individual choices.

Elders, traditional leaders, families and young people can support this process through storytelling, community discussions and appropriate digital recordings of cultural knowledge. Such efforts should protect sacred traditions, encourage meaningful youth participation and respect religious differences. The continued relevance of the Dzawuwu Festival depends on the community's ability to preserve its cultural heritage while adapting to changing social conditions and ensuring that indigenous knowledge remains accessible to future generations.

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