

Call for Papers: Preservation of Indigenous West African Cultures and Knowledge

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Preservation of Indigenous West African Cultures and Knowledge through Toponyms, Symbols and Artefacts

Guest edited by Dr. Yaw Owusu-Agyeman

The history, traditions, and cultures of different ethnic groups in West Africa are deeply rooted in naming practices that serve to safeguard the values and heritage of these diverse groups. The colonization of Africa however altered the traditional values and cultures that defined these naming practices. For instance, place-naming in the colonial context represented the racial hierarchical structure and spatial segregation that was created by the colonial authorities. It was a common practice during the colonial era to find streets that were named after the colonial monarchs, colonial administrators, settler farmers and businessmen. Several years after the departure of the colonial authorities, cities, streets, symbols, and other artefacts in West African Countries still bear the vestiges of colonialism while streets that were constructed post-independence bear “western” names. In response to these changes, there have been several conversations and initiatives across West Africa to reposition toponyms, symbols, and artefacts to reflect the culture of groups that were previously colonised. The rationale behind these discussions and initiatives is to push for the decolonization of the names of places, artefacts, and symbols across West Africa. Some of these initiatives have also been prompted by collective memories of colonialism.

The preservation of the African heritage could also be done through the naming of commemorative street, national assets, symbols, and artefacts that represent the traditions and cultures of the diverse groups of people. Additionally, the naming of places and other artefacts involves a complex set of social and political relations as well as cultural values that symbolise the traditions and identity of the diverse groups. While the renaming of places, symbols and artefacts in West Africa could help preserve the cultural values and heritage of the diverse groups, if not managed properly could create divisions among them. Consequently, there have been calls for increased scholarship on the definition of what constitutes the West African identity, heritage, and values without compromising modernity and globalization.

The editor welcomes empirical, review, and conceptual articles (5,000 words maximum) that offer critical insights into the conversations around the preservation of the West African identity and heritage through the (re)naming of places, symbols, and artefacts. Other well-crafted contributions that show the history of toponyms, artefacts, and symbols will also be considered. Researchers from diverse disciplines who are interested in sharing their research findings on how names of places, symbols and artefacts have evolved through pre-colonial and colonial times to the present post-independence period are particularly encouraged to submit abstracts.

In this regard, interested authors are to submit their abstract of 400 to 500 words to reach the editor before October 15, 2022. The editor will also notify all successful authors about the preliminary acceptance of their abstracts by October 30, 2022.

Topics of interest

Abstracts submitted for consideration in this special issue are expected to include but not limited to the following topics:

- Current debates and processes surrounding the change of the names of places, artefacts and symbols perceived to be the “assets” of the colonizers.
- The relevance of traditional toponyms, symbols, and artefacts to the promotion of the cultures and heritage of West African countries.
- Decolonisation of toponyms, symbols, and artefacts in West Africa.
- Modernity and globalisation versus Decolonization and Africanization of toponyms, symbols, and artefacts.
- Preserving indigenous West African knowledge and cultures through place naming, symbols, and artefacts.
- The effect of globalization and technologies on the preservation of West African toponyms, artefacts, and symbols.

Deadline for Submissions: October 15, 2022

For questions about submissions, please contact the guest-editor, Dr. Yaw Owusu-Agyeman at yowusu-agyeman@ug.edu.gh

More about the [Preservation of Indigenous West African Cultures issue](#)