

Analytical essays examples

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



I. Politics of Nature and Culture

West et al. (251-277) emphasized on the importance of protected areas, in that those serve the interests of environmental conservation efforts, particularly those that are deemed fragile and vulnerable to known threats to the environment. Indeed, protected areas are notable for their supposed isolation, given the purpose of preserving all that thrives within the environments those occupy. In that case, one must take a look at the situation of the people who are living within protected areas, particularly established communities that existed prior to their designation for protection. For West et al. (251-277), people who thrive within protected areas are disadvantaged because of their displacement from their original homelands, for instance. The isolation of protected areas from its surroundings inevitably force the redrawing of established boundaries, sometimes without due consideration to the welfare of people in terms of what they deem as their homeland. There is an understanding that communities are very concerned with their homelands, in that those serve as areas where their nature and culture has since thrived. The creation of protected areas, which are new spaces different from those designated by communities as homelands, entail various changes to the lives of the people living therein (West et al. 251-277).

It is crucial to note that the following intangible values are reintroduced and transformed by protected areas to communities: recreational, therapeutic, spiritual, cultural, identity, peace, existence, artistic, educational, aesthetic, and scientific research and monitoring (West et al. 251-277). Moreover, another important point to consider is the fact that the very concept behind

protected areas is one that is created by globalization. Protected areas are universally defined as those that require special protection from environmental risks that would erode the flora and fauna and the environmental characteristics of those designated as such. West et al. (251-277) states that a “ natural state” has to be protected from environmental erosion through a legally-observed measure enabling its designation as a protected area. The fact that globalization entails the erosion of natural states is a threat that justifies the establishment of protected areas, notwithstanding the fact that such leads to the creation of new spaces that may prove unfamiliar to communities therein (West et al., 251-277).

Another endeavor to provide a further understanding on protected areas is tackled by Richard and Ratsirarson (12-20) in their study on the Beza Mahafaly Special Reserve, located in Madagascar. Richard and Ratsirarson (12-20) noted that the Beza Mahafaly is a success story, in that it involved key factors that has provided assurance to the communities living therein. In the Beza Mahafaly, administrators focused on the following conclusions in working with the communities: significance of trust and relationship-building, the delicate nature of community-based collaborations, sustenance and diversity of financial inputs, fair distribution of costs and benefits through viable mechanisms and confronting uncertainty through improvisation, opportunism and village-based environmental monitoring (Richard & Ratsirarson 12-20).

Each and every one of the following conclusions all emphasize on the strong importance of building a system of trust among communities affected because of the establishment of protected areas. After all, established

protected areas have inevitably touched on an aspect very sensitive to communities that have existed in the same vicinity prior to those: nature and culture. The designation of homelands by communities come with manifestations of their political and cultural practices pertaining to the nature they have been used to growing up in. Thus, the boundary-changing effects of protected area designation is something that should definitely be consulted with communities so that peace and order can ensure through securing their trust and avoiding their unwanted displacement (Richard & Ratsirarson 12-20).

II. Cultivating Identities through Nature

Ethnicity has long been held as a dominant ethnotheory that helps construct the identity of peoples. Peoples subscribing to ethnicity in the construction of their identity all refer to their respective “ common origins” that enable them to share “ biological or cultural” traits and claim those as inherent to them, often manifested through the following concepts: “ blood or descentlanguage, religion, or a specific kind of history” (Astuti 464-465). Yet, Rita Astuti (464-465) emphasized that there are alternative ethnotheories other than ethnicity and such must be a matter of investigation in ethnology. Astuti (464-465), in that regard, has her own contribution to the ongoing endeavor of learning alternative ethnotheories in the form of her study on the Vezo people of Madagascar.

Unlike most peoples, the Vezo people of Madagascar do not define themselves by virtue of ethnicity. The Vezo people, maintaining that “ they are not what they are because they were born to be so,” subscribe to an ethnotheory constructed based on “ what they dofrom activities that people

perform in the present rather than from a common or distinct origin they acquired at some point in the past" (Astuti 465). Interestingly, unlike peoples subscribing to ethnicity, the Vezo people do not identify themselves with the past. Even though the Vezo people recognize that they have a common history, they do not identify themselves with it. Rather, the Vezo people identify themselves based on what they do in the present (Astuti 465). In that regard, Astuti (477) regarded Vezo-ness, in her own words, as a transformative ethnotheory describing " an identity that unfolds through time, rather than being fixed in time." From there, Astuti (477) creates a sharp distinction between ethnic peoples - those subscribing to ethnicity, and other possible forms of ethnotheories, her case being that of Vezo-ness. An important learning that can be derived from Vezo-ness, as discussed by Astuti (477-478) is that ethnicity regards the present as " a menace to the continuity of" the identity of ethnic peoples. The past, for ethnic peoples, hold great significance to the construction of their identity to the extent that they do all they could to preserve all ethnic concepts distinctive to them. Ethnic peoples lament whenever their ethnic concepts undergo modification away from that defined by their " common origins" (Astuti 464-465), which is possible through influences brought forth by the present. Given that ethnic peoples see the present as " a replica of a permanent and unchanging past," they regard it as " just a pretext to enact what one was" (Astuti 478). In other words, ethnic peoples view the present as either a threat to, or a representation of their ethnicity.

Silence is ethnographically interpreted as a sign of unfamiliarity and ambiguity for the Apache (Basso). It is important to note that the

ethnography of communication is not limited to interpreting and analyzing verbal ways of communicating with one another, as it should also “ specify those conditions under which the members of the society regularly decide to refrain from verbal behavior altogether” (Basso). In other words, non-verbal ways of communicating with one another, particularly those that relate to silence, also stands to have great importance in the ethnography of communication, in which case the case of the Apache is an important point of emphasis (Basso). Thus, the Apache, whose silence is misleadingly attributed to their “ lack of personal warmth,” become silent due to the following instances – interacting with strangers, courting, children reuniting with parents, performing actions involving anger and sadness and conducting ceremonials for curing (Basso).

Expounding on the foregoing instances, called “ lexemes” due to their cultural distinction to the Apache, provides a better understanding of the meaning of silence for them, with due consideration of the fact that those refute prior understandings found in the existing literature, given that traditional “ ethnographers and linguists have paid little attention to cultural interpretations given to silence or, equally important, to the types of social contexts in which it regularly occurs” (Basso). Silence, first and foremost, is practiced by the Apache in the event they encounter people who they do not know very well. Strangers, in the context of the foregoing, are treated by the Apache with silence subject to two lexemes – meeting people for the first time (nda dowaa’ iltseeda) and courting (liigolaa) (Basso).

When meeting strangers, the Apache are not compelled to talk to them, not even in the event they work at the same place, until the appropriate time

comes for them to eventually converse with one another. In the case of the stranger being an “Anglo” – understandably pertaining to white Americans, the Apache practice their silence on the premise that they do not want to be given “orders or instructions” or “make friends in a hurry.” Such pertains to the level of intimacy the Apache emphasize on their social relationships, which they believe must be given “caution, careful judgment, and plenty of time” (Basso). Courtship is another realm where the Apache practice silence, given that they can be either very shy or self-conscious when it comes to facing their love interests. Indeed, the Apache think that “it’s hard to talk with your sweetheart at first,” since “she doesn’t know you and won’t know what to say,” and vice-versa (Basso).

The Apache also use silence when their children come home from a long absence (cogose nakaii). The exposure of children to places outside Apache camps, which are relatively backward under present standard, can lead them to become critical of their homeland once they go home, with their long absence inevitably providing them with comparative perspectives. With children being “distant and unfamiliar,” the Apache choose to use silence to the extent that they start communicating with one another again (Basso).

Unpredictability of emotions also places silence into a critical position of importance for the Apache, specifically in instances where they get “cussed out” (sitditee) and go “with people who are sad” (nde dobitgozooda bigaa). The Apache, given those two lexemes, choose not to make things worse by speaking, which is why they prefer to keep silent as a matter of course (Basso).

Finally, the Apache also find silence as an important non-verbal form of

communication whenever they are “ with someone for whom they sing” (nde bidadistaaha bigaa), which is a lexeme pertaining to a situation where they conduct “ curing ceremonies” for the sick. Again, extreme caution prompts the Apache to be silent when they participate in ceremonies for curing the sick, in that patients are perceived to have “ been changed by power into something different from their normal selves” (Basso). Such means that the Apache do not wish to disrupt the process of healing in curing ceremonies by going against silence, hence the reason why they prefer not to utter anything during such instances. Speech, with regard to the foregoing, is therefore considered as both disrespectful and hazardous (Basso).

Summarily speaking, it is of great importance to note that non-verbal forms of communication, particularly silence, are subject to cultural interpretations in the same manner as speech, which is admittedly easier to interpret and analyze. Presumptions about silence as a manifestation of unfriendliness and lack of warmth, as the existing literature has point out of the Apache, are unfounded and thus deserving of closer focus in future studies, as what Basso has endeavored. Yet, the Apache constitute just a single case that takes on a rather esoteric arena of ethnography of communication - silence, although the work of Basso could serve as an effective framework for future studies that may take on other cases or explore silence on a theoretical level.

The tany and tontolo'ianiana frameworks of environmental landscapes duly characterize environmental landscapes in the Mananara region of the island nation of Madagascar. One must take note of the crucial differences between tany and tontolo'ianiana in terms of the way both classify land - the former

refers to “ sensibility,” in the sense that it gives greater regard to ancestral and spiritual traditions, while the former pertains to “ sense,” as it emphasizes on written rules – domestically and globally, that are typically universalized. “ Knowledge, meanings, morals, consciousness, and practice” are all distinguished under tany and tontolo’ianiana (Osterhoudt 296-299). The importance of designating environmental landscapes in the Mananara region according to the tany and tontolo’ianiana frameworks lies on the fact that land use in the area has since changed, particularly when the French sought to change agricultural practices in the area to enable the production of cash crops. Yet, the tontolo’ianiana framework the French sought to propagate in the Mananara region went down in vain, since the local landowners, adhering to the tany framework, have continuously committed themselves to maintaining both cash and subsistence crops through strategies for diverse cultivation (Osterhoudt 295). Yet, it is important to note that people not only within the Mananara region, but also in the entire Madagascar, at present do not entirely reject the tany framework for land use, since they prove themselves to be “ self-conscious agents” trying their best to address “ the contingencies of the present with reference to the past” (Osterhoudt 295).

Given the foregoing, it is important to note that in the Mananara region, farmers do not have a black-and-white stance with regard to choosing between the tany and tontolo’ianiana frameworks in land use, given that “ the region values the cultivation of diverse material and social strategies (Osterhoudt 295). To facilitate the foregoing, farmers in the Mananara region employ negotiation as a strategy to consider whether it is proper to choose

between tany and tontolo'ianiana or even use both for land use, since they give high regard to diversified agricultural practices. Yet, one must take into consideration the fact that such a move paves way for " a landscape crowded with overlapping materials and meanings," which means to say that the mixed use of perspectives from the tany and tontolo'ianiana frameworks would lead to a holistic approach to land use that would not lead one to abandon the views of another (Osterhoudt 295-296).

The overlapping of the perspectives of the tany and tontolo'ianiana frameworks entails people in the Mananara region and outsiders alike to have choices in their approaches to dealing with land use. With that, it is therefore unfounded to assert that having to choose between the tany and tontolo'ianiana frameworks would paralyze progress in land use in the Mananara region. One must keep in mind that the ethnological approach of people in Madagascar when it comes to change in their environment is one brought forth by self-consciousness, where strong human agency enables them to become open-minded about the present opportunities given to them, without any hindrances to any efforts to refer to their past (Osterhoudt 295). In terms of production, though, the tontolo'ianiana framework provides for maximized certainty over outputs relating to land use. Nonetheless, away from collectivized and universalized views ensconced within the tontolo'ianiana framework, the tany framework provides people in the Mananara region viewpoints on land use that regard individual-centered factors such as ancestral ties and the so-called " tsiny" local spirits (Osterhoudt 287-299).

Therefore, it is important to note that the shift from the mundane nature of

the tany framework to the exceptionality of the tontolo'ianiana framework shows that people in the Mananara region, particularly farmers, have transitioned from the particular-individual to the universal-community. Needless to say, Osterhoudt (296-299) emphasized that farmers in the Mananara region have learned to practice cultural detachment (sense-driven consciousness of tontolo'ianiana) in dealing with land use, without completely abandoning their cultural attachments arising from their sensible-driven consciousness under the tany framework. Rationalization in the tontolo'ianiana framework, arising from the focus on development, would somewhat supplement the decision-making of farmers in the Mananara region on land use, as they remain individually subscribed to the emotiveness of the tany framework (Osterhoudt 296-299).

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