The Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
Department of Geography

EMMANUEL ACQUAH

1997 University of Cape Coast BSc
2006 Kwame Nkrumah University of
Science and Technology MSc

“Human-Wildlife Interactions, Nature-Based Tourism and Protected Areas Management: The Case of Mole National Park and the Adjacent communities in Ghana”

Monday, September 23, 2013
8:00 am
David Turpin Building, A144

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Philip Dearden, Department of Geography, UVic (Supervisor)
Dr. Rick Rollins, Department of Geography, UVic (Member)
Dr. Ann Stahl, Department of Anthropology, UVic
(Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Paul F.G. Eagles, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, University of Waterloo

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Stephen Evans, Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology, UVic
**Abstract**

Protected areas are increasingly becoming islands of habitat surrounded by seas of cultivation and development. Mole National Park, Ghana’s premier park, has an emerging nature-based tourism that is not large when compared to park tourism in other African countries. The park attracts many tourists seeking to observe charismatic wildlife such as elephants. However, many of the species that are attractive to tourists who visit the park can create problems for adjacent communities. The overarching focus of this study was on how human-wildlife interactions impact on nature-based tourism in order to inform tourism development in Mole National Park and in nearby communities.

The study was designed to address the following research questions: (1) How do human-wildlife interactions impact on nature-based tourism in Mole National Park and in nearby communities? (2) How do adjacent communities perceive concerns and benefits of living near Mole National Park, and what factors explain the differences in perception of concerns and benefits? And (3) How do park-adjacent communities perceive wildlife impacts, and how are the perceptions of wildlife shaped by culture, involvement in a community conservation area, and community’s distance from the park? A variety of research instruments such key as informant interviews, focus groups, field observations, and surveys were used to gather data from tourists and diverse range of communities that surround Mole National Park.

The study revealed high levels of tourists’ satisfaction on fundamental attractions such as wildlife and the environment. However, managerial deficiencies were noted in terms of infrastructure and services. Park-adjacent communities are not necessarily anti-conservation and perceptions of concerns and benefits varies between communities. Communities involved in tourism and CREMA (a variant of community based natural resources management) influence communities to tolerate wildlife because of the benefits they gain from wildlife or perceive the potential for gaining benefit. Cultural valuation of animals inform how people relate with wildlife. For example, taboo and totemic animals are revered, not killed or eaten and tolerated although the same species may be considered problematic in other communities. Park ranger patrols, keeping livestock in pens, and protecting water bodies were rated as effective mitigation measures of human-wildlife issues.

Properly developed nature-based tourism in and around PAs can serve both conservation and development outcomes. However, the success of PAs as conservation strategy depends to some extent on the support of the nearby communities. Adjacent community perception of concerns and benefits and valuation of wildlife is important in the
conservation process. Therefore efforts should be made to ensure that concerns do not outweigh the benefits of living near PAs and also tourism development in PAs should benefit nearby communities to ensure support for conservation. Tourism in Mole has space for expansion and could be linked with heritage tourism already flourishing in Ghana.

Presentation