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Indigenous Knowledge and Maritime Fishing in West Africa: The Case of Ghana

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ABSTRACT Colonial rule in Africa privileged Western Knowledge Systems (WKS), discredited Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and provided the context for the fashioning of 'scientific knowledge' about Africa. The exigencies of the colonial political economy determined priorities in the creation of scientific knowledge about the African environment; hence reports abounded on mining, forestry, and farming. Fishing was a latecomer in colonial economic considerations, and this neglect was inherited by post-colonial African governments. This paper examines the vibrant maritime fishing industry that developed along the West African coast, in spite of the absence of initial colonial support, and the production of a veritable 'citizen science', where fishing was concerned. The fishing industry has come under close international and national regulation in the last decade or two with recommendations to diversify from the fisheries sector and to promote fish farming as an alternative to freshwater and marine fisheries. This paper explores the transferability of indigenous knowledge to this new sphere and highlights the need to privilege the concerns and needs of fishing communities, as fishing is more a way of life than just a livelihood. It advocates aligning community, national and international interests and concerns in developmental agendas.