Expeditionary Culture Field Guide

GHANA

THE AIR UNIVERSITY

U.S. AIR FORCE

U.S. AIR FORCES AFRICA

About this Guide

This guide is designed to prepare you to deploy to culturally complex environments and achieve mission objectives. The fundamental information contained within will help you understand the cultural dimension of your assigned location and gain skills necessary for success.

The guide consists of 2 parts:

Part 1: Introduces "Culture General," the foundational knowledge you need to operate effectively in any global environment.

Part 2: Presents "Culture Specific" Ghana, focusing on unique cultural features of Ghanaian society and is designed to complement other pre-deployment training. It applies culture-general concepts to help increase your knowledge of your assigned deployment location.

For further information, visit the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) website at http://culture.af.mil/ or contact AFCLC's Region Team at AFCLC.Region@us.af.mil.

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PART 1 – CULTURE GENERAL

What is Culture?

Fundamental to all aspects of human existence, culture shapes the way humans view life and functions as a tool we use to adapt to our social and physical environments. A culture is the sum of all of the beliefs, values, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning for a society. All human beings have culture, and individuals within a culture share a general set of beliefs and values.

Members of a culture also usually assign the same meanings to the symbols in that culture. A symbol is when one thing – an image, word, object, idea, or story – represents another thing. For example, the American flag is a physical and visual symbol of a core American value – freedom. At the same time, the story of George Washington admitting to having chopped down a cherry tree is also symbolic, representing the importance Americans place on personal honesty and leadership integrity.

Force Multiplier

The military services have learned through experience the importance of understanding other cultures. Unlike the 20th-century bipolar world order that dominated US strategy for nearly half a century, today the US military is operating in what we classify as asymmetric or irregular conflict zones where the notion of cross-cultural interactions is on the leading edge of our engagement strategies.

We have come to view the people themselves, rather than the political system or physical environment, as the decisive feature in conflict areas. Our primary objective hinges on influencing constructive change through peaceful means where possible. We achieve this endeavor by encouraging local

nationals to focus on developing stable political, social, and economic institutions that reflect their cultural beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, understanding the basic concepts of culture serves as a force multiplier. Achieving an awareness and respect of a society's values and beliefs enables deploying forces to build relationships with people from other cultures, positively influence their actions, and ultimately achieve mission success.

Cultural Domains

Culture is not just represented by the beliefs we carry internally, but also by our behaviors and by the systems members of a culture create to organize their lives. These systems, such as political or educational institutions, help us to live in a manner that is appropriate to our culture and encourages us to perpetuate that culture into the future.

We can organize these behaviors and systems into categories – what the Air Force refers to as "cultural domains" – in order to better understand the primary values and characteristics of a society. A cross-culturally competent military member can use these domains – which include kinship, language and communication, and social and political systems among others (see chart on next page) – as tools for understanding and adapting to any culture. For example, by understanding the ways different cultures define family or kinship, a deployed military member can more effectively interact with members of that culture.

Social Behaviors Across Cultures

While humankind shares basic behaviors, various groups enact or even group those behaviors differently across cultural boundaries. For example, all societies obtain food for survival, although agrarian societies generally produce their own food for limited consumption using very basic techniques.

Conversely, industrialized nations have more sophisticated

market economies, producing foodstuffs for universal consumption. Likewise, all cultures value history and tradition, although they represent these concepts through a variety of unique forms of symbolism. While the dominant world religions share the belief in one God, their worship practices vary with their traditional historical development. Similarly, in many kin-based cultures where familial bonds are foundational to social identity, it is customary for family or friends to serve as godparents, while for other societies this practice is nearly non-existent.

Worldview

One of our basic human behaviors is the tendency to classify others as similar or different according to our cultural standard.

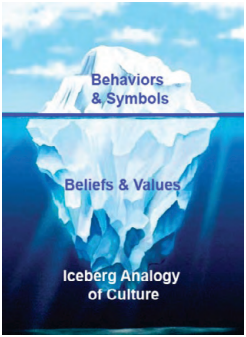
As depicted in the chart below, we can apply the 12 cultural domains to help us compare similarities and differences across cultures. We evaluate others' behavior to determine if they are "people like me" or "people not like me." Consequently, we assume that individuals falling into the "like me" category share our perspectives and values.

This collective perspective forms our worldview– how we see the world and understand our place in it. Your worldview functions as a lens through which you see and understand the world. It helps you to interpret your experiences and the values and behaviors of other people that you encounter. Consider your worldview as a way of framing behavior, providing an accountability standard for our actions and a logical explanation of why we individually or collectively act in a certain manner.

Cultural Belief System

An important component of a worldview is our belief system. A community's belief system sets its universal standards of what is good and bad, defines right and wrong behavior, and assigns a value of meaningful or meaningless. Our beliefs form the fundamental values we hold to be true – regardless of whether there is physical evidence to support these ideas. Beliefs are a central facet of human culture. They are shared views about world order and how the universe was physically and socially constructed.

While all people have beliefs, their specific components tend to vary depending upon respective world views. What people classify as good or bad, right or wrong depends on our deeply-held beliefs we started developing early in life that have help shape our characters. Likewise, these values are ingrained in our personalities and shape our behavior patterns and our self-identities. Because cultural beliefs are intensely held, they are difficult, though not impossible, to change.



Core Beliefs

Core beliefs shape and influence certain behaviors and also serve to rationalize those behaviors. Therefore, knowledge of individual or group beliefs can be useful in comprehending or making sense of their activities. We will use the iceberg model for classifying culture to illustrate two levels of meaning, as depicted. Beliefs and values, portrayed by the

deeper and greater level of the submerged iceberg, are seldom visible, but are indicated / hinted at / referenced by our behaviors and symbols (top level). It is important to recognize, though, that the parts of culture that are not visible (under the waterline) are informing and shaping what is being made visible (above the waterline).

In many cases, different worldviews may present behaviors that are contrary to our own beliefs, particularly in many regions where US forces deploy. Your ability to suspend judgment in order to understand another perspective is essential to establishing relationships with your host-nation counterparts. The ability to withhold your opinion and strive to understand a culture from a member of that culture's perspective is known as cultural relativism. It often involves taking an alternate perspective when interpreting others' behaviors and is critical to your ability to achieve mission success.

As you travel throughout the African Continent, you will encounter cultural patterns of meaning that are common among most African countries. What follows is a general description of 12 cultural domains which are used to frame those commonalities.

CULTURAL DOMAINS

1. History and Myth

History and myth are related concepts. History is a record of the past that is based on verifiable facts and events. Myth can act as a type of historical record, although it is usually a story which members of a culture use to explain community origins or important events that are not verifiable or which occurred prior to written language.

Africa has a history that spans the entire existence of humankind. In ancient times prior to the emergence of written languages, history and wisdom were preserved across generations and

ethnic boundaries through oral folk legends or myths. Most early human evolution began as hunting and gathering cultures in East and South Africa, with countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa renowned for their early human sites. In the last several millennia, the development of agriculture and pastoralism (animal herding) replaced hunting and gathering lifestyles (Photo: *Kutubiyya Mosque* courtesy of CultureGrams, ProQuest, 2013).

Ancient civilizations evolved in all corners of Africa, inspired in part by peoples from the Middle East bringing trade, beliefs, customs, language, and on occasion, colonization. Far from being isolated empires, the African civilizations were intimately connected by commerce and marriage throughout various regions of the continent, and when confronted by outsiders, managed to adapt to their influences. Eventually, Arab traders introduced Islam to Africa and also instituted the Trans-Saharan African slave trade that lasted from the 7th to 19th Centuries.

The “golden age” of European exploration, which lasted from the 18th to mid-20th century, prompted the wholesale exploitation of Africans resources – first human assets through slavery, followed by natural resources such as minerals, precious gems and metals, and wildlife, thereby diminishing most of what was traditional and African.

The introduction of the European Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade altered the slave trade through both the sheer number of Africans enslaved and through the cementing of a racist ideology of Black inferiority to legitimize the institution of slavery. Slavery decimated the African continent for over 400 years through the forced relocation of an estimated 25 to 30 million Africans worldwide. This figure does not include those Africans who died aboard ships or during capture. While abolition of the slave trade dissolved the institution of slavery, it did not end the European

presence on the African continent nor did it drastically alter their attitudes towards Africans.

Starting in the mid-19th century, European colonialism served to redefine African ethnic relations on a large scale; however, as African societies began to resist colonial rule and seek their independence, widespread ethnic conflict and genocide occurred. Sustained westernization and globalization continue to shape the continent through poverty, disease, and social reform. A history still to be recorded, Africa's future identity faces many challenges in critical areas such as environmental change, ethnic strife, women's health and security, and education.

2. Political and Social Relations

Political relations are the ways in which members of a community organize leadership, power, and authority. Social relations are all of the ways in which individuals are linked to others in their community. Traditional African political organizations in the form of bands, tribes, and chiefdoms have existed for several millennia and continue to influence contemporary African governments. Uncommon in modern society, bands are limited to hunting and gathering economies, such as the !Kung of the southern African Kalahari Desert and foragers of central African forests.

Tribes are still represented today across the African political landscape, although the use of the word "tribe" is sometimes misinterpreted due to its western notion of "primitiveness" and oftentimes substituted with the term "ethnic group." Lacking centralized authority, tribes are organized around segmented descent groups or in some cases age groups.

Everyday governance is discharged through councils of respected elders and sanctioned through ritual and other means. East African pastoralist groups such as the Maasai,

along with some West African tribes and the Berbers in North Africa, represent this type of organization.

Chiefdoms or kingdoms are ruled by kings or queens from a royal clan and generally incorporate millions of subjects. Kingdoms such as the Zulu or Swazi in southern Africa developed through conquest, while others like Ghana's Ashante developed through an association of related traditional states. However, colonialism eventually diluted the power and reach of these empires, whose leaders were often retained as indirect rulers or figureheads.

Today, all three of these political organizations still exist, although in the confines of modern African nation-states created by colonial powers who had little regard or understanding of African cultures. This juxtaposition of modernity with tradition has caused severe conflict throughout the continent.

Challenged to construct their respective "national" identities, regional leaders attempt to do so by diluting the traditionally cohesive power of ancestry. These national ruling elites, who derive their power from wealth and commerce rather than tribal affiliation, feel threatened by loyalty to these traditional organizations, labeling their rule as "tribalism."

This "class versus descent" scrimmage for power has resulted in conflicts across the continent and a dramatic divergence of interests. As a means to overcome these and other issues on the continent, a 53-nation federation, the African Union (AU), was formed in 2002. AU's charter is to promote "greater unity and solidarity between African countries and peoples" by building partnerships in all segments of "civil society."

3. Religion and Spirituality

Religion is a cultural belief system that provides meaning to members of a community. Religious and spiritual beliefs help preserve the social order by defining proper behavior. They also create social unity by defining shared identity, offer

individuals peace of mind, and explain the causes of events in a society. Prior to the arrival of Islam and Christianity, the African continent consisted of orally transmitted indigenous religious practices. As in many societies, African indigenous beliefs influenced diet, subsistence patterns, family structures, marriage practices, and healing and burial processes. In essence, Africans constructed their worldview through their indigenous religions.

Today, the African continent is primarily either Muslim or Christian. Other faiths such as Judaism and Hinduism exist as pockets in different regions of the continent, primarily in urban areas. The historical trajectories of Islamic and Christian expansion in Africa offer intriguing commonalities in how Africans across the continent initially reacted to the introduction of each of those religions. For example, it is common throughout the continent to find a blending of many elements of indigenous religious practices with local Islam and Christianity (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia).

Consequently, many African native religions share similarities with religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in their understanding of God as the creator and ruler of all life, although He is considered untouchable by humans.

However, unlike Christianity and Islam, many African indigenous religions believe that God is not directly involved in people's lives. To them there is a spirit world populated with former good and bad human beings. The good spirits intercede with God on behalf of their living families to whom they then relay God's will through dreams and acquired possessions. The bad spirits work to bring misfortune through sickness,

death, or natural disasters to those who behave inappropriately.

Many indigenous African religions revere "nature" spirits living in the sky, water, and forests. These impersonal spirits help protect people from harm and provide them with life's essential ingredients such as water, sun, and wildlife. This belief system is commonly referred to as animism.

Just as spirits mediate relations between God and humans, religious specialists act as mediators between spirits and humans to provide protection from harm.

4. Family and Kinship

The domain of family and kinship refers to groups of people related through blood ties, marriage, or through strong emotional bonds that influence them to treat each other like family members (often called "fictive kin").The traditional African family with respect to marriage, family structure, and descent is a much different arrangement than is found in most American families. Likewise, there are several components of the traditional African family that are common to all African cultures.

First, perhaps the most difficult feature to reconcile to Americans is that of polygyny – the practice of a husband having more than one wife. A benefit of this arrangement is that it promotes societal alliances through marriage, procreation, and family wealth through female labor.

Second, due to polygyny, the family in most African cultures has historically consisted of an expanded set of kin or relatives that extends well beyond the American notion of a nuclear family. This arrangement created a family environment where children considered all siblings as "brothers and sisters" and all of the wives/mothers as "mother."

Third, the extended African family traces descent through either the male or female side of the family, a practice which differs considerably from the American family. Patrilineal descent (through the male side of the family) is the more common approach and usually features polygyny. The matrilineal (through the female bloodline) marriage pattern is more uncommon and almost always features monogamy – it is rare to encounter a wife having more than one husband.

Lastly, it is common for two or more blood lines (lineages) to share a common ancestor and collectively form a clan, which is the largest social unit. Clans do not have formal leaders or organizational structures. Membership is transferred from father to child and cuts across ethnic and social boundaries.

The dramatic social changes in Africa during and after colonialism in the last 4 decades have obviously affected the traditional family, and variations on these 3 features can be found across the continent.

5. Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological/reproductive differences between males and females, while gender is a more flexible concept that refers to a culture's categorizing of masculine and feminine behaviors, symbols, and social roles. Gender roles in Africa follow no single model nor is there a generalized concept of sex and common standard of sexual behavior.

Prehistorically, gender role differentiation in Africa's hunting and gathering cultures was based on a division of labor featuring different, yet complementary, sets of responsibilities for males and females, adults and children. Females gathered over half the caloric needs from natural vegetation, while also reproducing and raising offspring. Males were primarily hunters but also assisted with gathering.

These gender patterns continued as agricultural practices advanced.

Females shared in farming while continuing to provide for the family's subsistence, and males produced the cash crops. Pastoralists like the Maasai of Kenya traditionally have featured males involved in cattle-raising and females in food production.

The 19th-century European colonial period introduced a cash economy into Africa, with female labor used to produce the cash crops. By inserting male authority over females, colonial administrators disrupted the distinct yet complementary male/female relationship that had been traditionally African.

More recently, western influence across the continent has dramatically altered the traditional gender roles. Educational and professional opportunities for females, along with increased family migrations to urban areas, have radically altered traditional male and female gender roles.

Likewise, the number of singles parents and even child- or other relative-led families has increased with the predominance of HIV/AIDS-related deaths and warfare, further altering traditional gender responsibilities. Additionally, ethnic conflicts involving abuse of women are prevalent in many unstable countries, and while the rubric of traditional African gender generally remains, the forces of change are gradually ripping it away.

6. Language and Communication

Language is a system for sharing information symbolically, whereby words are used to represent ideas. Communication is defined as the cultural practice of sharing meaning in interaction, both verbally and non-verbally. America is predominantly a monolingual society, where traditionally, fluency in a second language has been considered a luxury rather than a necessity. Conversely, national survival for many societies in Africa required them throughout their existence to adopt multilingual

practices, if for no other reason than to preserve their native heritage.

You may find it challenging to comprehend the scope of Africa's linguistic diversity. There are over 2,000 African languages (many spoken-only) from 6 major language families, and perhaps 100 of these languages are used to communicate among the more dominant ethnic groups such as Berber, Swahili, Yoruba, and others.

Official languages of African nation-states are few, yet the linguistic diversity expressed across the continent (Nigeria has 250 languages) has prompted an awareness of the value of Africa's linguistic traditions. While most areas of the continent speak the adopted language of their colonial past – such as French and Portuguese in West Africa, French and Arabic in Morocco, and English in Kenya and South Africa – the majority of people also speak one or more traditional "indigenous" languages of their and other ethnic groups. As African independence spread throughout the continent, ethnic groups continued to depend on their indigenous identifiers, such as language, to celebrate their "release" from colonial rule and to preserve a sense of indigenous identity.

While communication styles tend to vary by ethnic or social groups, Africans generally are friendly and outgoing people although they tend to communicate with reserve to avoid confrontation. As in most kin-based societies, Africans believe that saving face or protecting one's honor and dignity are of utmost importance; therefore, they avoid public criticism and controversial topics at all costs – even to the extent of withholding their honest opinion or modifying the truth.

Africans admire and even expect extended greetings and small talk, and to attempt to rush or avoid social graces is considered disrespectful. Similarly, Africans avoid direct eye contact when communicating with new acquaintances and people of status,

particularly elders. They also are fond of non-verbal gestures, and it is common throughout African societies for members of the same gender to hold hands or touch while conversing.

7. Learning and Knowledge

All cultures require that the older generation transmit important information to the younger generation. This information can be strictly factual (for example, how to fulfill subsistence and health requirements) and culturally traditional (the beliefs, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning to the community). This knowledge transfer may occur through structured, formalized systems such as schools or through informal learning by watching adults or peers.

The contemporary African educational system hardly resembles the traditional pre-colonial structure, whereby community elders were primarily responsible for preparing youth for adulthood. Their instruction included fundamentals of ethnic ritual and ceremony, along with customary protocol for their distinctive gender roles. A rite-of-passage commemorating their successful journey from childhood to adulthood served as a form of graduation.

European colonialism brought a more structured, formal educational system that catered to a small group of African elite who demonstrated potential to administer expanding colonial territories. Following independence, many African nations adopted the European system because they believed it would prepare them to be more competitive in intra-continental and global marketplaces, thereby enhancing their quality of life.

However, progress in developing and maintaining reliable educational institutions has been slow for a variety of reasons. Since most Africans live in rural environments, they continue to rely heavily on child labor for family survival, resulting in decreased school enrollments or early withdrawals. Likewise, widespread HIV/AIDS epidemics, ethnic conflict, teacher and resource deficits, and inaccessibility to remote rural areas also hamper progress. According to 2005 statistics, only half of the

continent's children were enrolled in primary school, leaving over 40 million African children without any schooling at all.

8. Time and Space

In every society, people occupy space and time in ways that are not directly linked to physical survival. In low-context western cultures, people tend to be preoccupied with strict time management, devoting less effort to relationship-building. Conversely, most African cultures are traditionally high-context societies, whereby people center their activities on socializing and establishing close associations, having little regard for the passage-of-time.

Only after establishing trust and honor will your typical African counterpart agreeably proceed with business. In his worldview, time is a precious commodity used to establish relationships and form alliances. Any attempt to accelerate the tempo at the expense of social pleasantries will likely result in deadlock.

To an African, close physical proximity between individuals encourages cooperative trust, and for centuries they have viewed human linkage as a core element to survival. This closeness is best represented in a traditional African village where strong kinship connections are evidenced by a display of close interpersonal relations among family members.

While conventional African concepts of time and space remain intact, throughout the continent western influence and globalization have stepped up the pace of African living, mostly in urban areas. Consequently, rural-to-urban migrations have reshaped traditional social and subsistence patterns.

9. Aesthetics and Recreation

Every culture has its own forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles of imagination, beauty, skill and style. Prior to 19th-century European colonization of Africa,

recreation served a vital subsistence role, whereby adolescents and adults alike participated in intellectually stimulating leisurely activities that concurrently served to develop essential hunting and pastoral skills.

Games of chance and skill were important to early childhood development, providing social outlets within and outside their community. Featuring wrestling, jumping and running; traditional African sport was steeped in religious ritual.

Along with colonialism came the introduction to Africa of western sports such as soccer, cricket, rugby and track and field. This emphasis on western sport continued to thrive with African independence and globalization, as seen in sporting events such as the Olympics and the World Cup.

Leaders such as Nelson Mandela skillfully employed sport to promote a unified South African nation. Importing the predominantly "white" game of rugby, Mandela used it to fuse a racially divided country following his election in 1992. This event is the theme of the motion picture "Invictus," exemplifying how sport can serve to create national identities and overcome ethnic division. His efforts have inspired many other African nations to follow suit.

Likewise, East African countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia have produced the world's dominant male and female distance runners, and South Africa, Cameroon and Nigeria emerged as strong contenders in the 2010 World Cup. African nations are now competing in leagues such as the International Basketball Association (FIBA) World Championships, and there is also a

growing number of African basketball players on US college campuses and in the National Basketball Association (NBA).

10. Sustenance and Health

Societies have different methods of transforming natural resources into food. These methods can shape residence patterns, family structures and economics. Theories of disease and healing practices exist in all cultures and serve as adaptive responses to disease and illness.

Despite having only 11% of the global population, Africa is a victim of many of the world's debilitating health disorders. According to the World Health Organization, 60% of the global HIV/AIDS cases and 90% of malarial diseases occur in Africa.

These and other medical conditions are attributed primarily to viral infection and widespread poverty caused by extreme climatic conditions and civil unrest, coupled with inadequate preventative measures. While extensive drought generates widespread famine, civil disturbances generate millions of displaced persons. Likewise, with only 58% of the Sub-Saharan African population having access to safe drinking water, water-born bacterial diseases such as cholera and schistosomiasis are common.

Many people in Africa lack access to western medicine, and as a result depend on traditional health practices to combat disease. In addition, some traditional beliefs run counter to western medical practice and perhaps discourage individuals from utilizing those services even when they are available. This problem is further intensified by lack of federal regulatory healthcare management.

While modern healthcare procedures are more common in urban areas, many rural people rely on traditional practitioners who use a variety of plants and herbs to treat patients. Similarly, many families have their own secret remedies. While in some cases traditional medicine proves effective with fewer side effects than modern drugs, traditional practices do not adequately treat many of the more serious conditions.

On a positive note, western influence has stimulated some progress in combating Africa's health crisis. More resources are devoted to achieving basic human security by assessing disease symptoms early and with scientific accuracy.

11. Economics and Resources

This domain refers to beliefs regarding appropriate ways for a society to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. Traditionally having an agrarian-based economy, Africa today remains predominantly agricultural, featuring less industrialization than most other parts of the world. Post-colonial adversities such as civil war, disease, poverty, and unstable dictatorships posed unusual hardship on several young African nations; however, Africa currently stands at the cross-roads of economic development with many nations becoming some of fastest growing regions in the world.

Colonialism institutionalized the exploitation of Africa's mineral resources, resulting in today's oil industry dominating the economic market in several coastal regions. A surge in global oil prices; a growing African middle class; and reduction in civil wars, foreign aid, and inflation collectively promise a more positive outlook for the future.

Countries such as Botswana, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and South Africa are economically the wealthiest on the continent, with regions such as East Africa showing signs of economic stability. Despite the economic upswing, much of sub-Saharan

Africa's future economic prosperity is held hostage by devastating diseases such as AIDS, particularly in areas of southern Africa, and the growing effects of climate change and man-made environmental degradation throughout the subcontinent.

12. Technology and Material

Societies use technology to transform their physical world, and culture heavily influences the development and use of technology. Africa lags far behind most of the world in manufacturing capacity and output. Even the more economically-developed nations such as South Africa are competitively weak when compared to non-African industrialized nations. During the 1970s and 1980s, Africa experienced some growth in raw exports although this increase did little to boost long-term manufacturing capacity.

Today, Africa is experiencing an actual decline in manufacturing capacity due primarily to a lull in the global economy, along with other indigenous issues such as environmental stress, poor physical and organizational infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled personnel. Likewise, African manufacturing capacity is no match against global powers such as China and significant Southeast Asian markets.

International aid from both governmental and non-governmental organizations has helped African nations establish preliminary economic footholds. For example, many of them have dedicated industrial developmental zones to attract foreign investment and increase export-related manufacturing capacity, although Africa is far removed from having a significant role in the global marketplace in the foreseeable future.

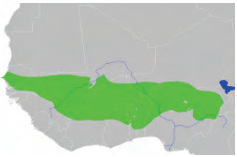
Now that we have introduced general concepts that characterize African society at large, we will now focus on specific features of Ghanaian society.

PART 2 – CULTURE SPECIFIC

1. HISTORY AND MYTH

Historical Overview

The history of Ghana is a story of trade and conflict among diverse groups. Historically, migrants from the Central African region, Islamic traders and clerics from the Western Sudan, and European traders were all drawn to Ghana because of its natural resources and strategic location. The Western Sudan is a historic geographical region not related to the existing country of Sudan which included the grassland belt south of the Sahara Desert and stretching from the Senegambia eastward past Northern Nigeria (pictured).



Early Ghana

Archaeological evidence suggests the earliest settlements date back to about 10,000 BC. Agriculture and animal husbandry existed in the region, and by 2000 BC, these early inhabitants had established larger villages and kept domesticated animals such as cattle and guinea fowl. After the introduction of Iron Age technology between the 1st- and 2nd-century AD, trades such as gold mining began to emerge. By 1000 AD inhabitants had begun to move from rural villages to dense population centers, with some inland settlements exceeding 2,000 people. This urbanization was inspired partially by opportunities to trade with West African empires.

Western Sudan Empires: The earliest empire of the Western Sudan was Ancient Ghana which took shape between 300 and 700 AD, reached the height of its power in the late 10th century, and then gradually declined over the next few hundred years. Ancient Ghana was succeeded by Ancient Mali, which covered much of the same territory during the 13th to 15th centuries. Ancient Mali eventually yielded to the Songhai (also spelled Songhay) Empire, which ruled much of the West

African interior until 1591 when a Moroccan army sacked several major Songhai cities.

Trans-Saharan Trade Routes: The empires of the Western Sudan owed much of their success to the roughly concurrent rise of Islamic caliphates (rulerships) throughout the Middle East and North Africa. As these Islamic caliphates grew, they needed large amounts of gold to finance expansionary wars and to serve as a uniform currency. Since the empires of the Western Sudan were located between trans-Saharan trade routes to the north and lucrative gold fields to the south, they were well-positioned to provide the gold. They also provided slaves: according to some estimates, 9.3 million slaves were transported east across the Sahara between the 8th and 18th centuries. In exchange for gold, slaves, and other goods, North African Muslim traders provided goods from the Mediterranean region and Arabia along with mined Saharan rock salt which was in short supply in West Africa.

Islam: The greatest contribution of Islamic traders was probably Islam itself, which spread quickly along trade routes due both to intrinsic appeal and to political advantages (pictured: Larabanga Mosque, courtesy of Wikimedia). By outwardly adopting Islamic practices, West African rulers gained credibility in the eyes of powerful North African rulers. In addition, Islam provided a convenient means of unifying diverse ethnic and religious groups, and Islam would ultimately filter through the empires of the Western Sudan into what is now northern Ghana (see *Religion and Spirituality*).

Migration and Political Development: Besides the exchange of commodities, the trans-Saharan trade routes affected patterns of migration and political development in the region. As early as the 13th century, the Akan people began migrating to sparsely populated forests in what is now southern Ghana in order to access lucrative gold fields. Around the same time, the Mole-Dagbani people of the Lake Chad region migrated to the North and founded the Mamprusi Kingdom, which later gave rise to the Dagomba, Nanumba, and Mossi kingdoms. At the

beginning of the 16th century, migrants from Ancient Mali came to the North and founded the Gonja Kingdom, and by 1600, most ethnic groups had settled in the regions which they occupy to this day (see *Political and Social Relations*).

The Arrival of the Europeans

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to establish a permanent presence on the "Gold Coast" (currently southern Ghana on the Gulf of Guinea) where they built Elmina Castle (pictured, courtesy of Wikimedia) in 1482 as a trading center. Although Portuguese trade along the Gold Coast probably reached its high point as early as 1530, no competitors emerged until the Dutch arrived in the late 16th century. After almost 50 years of periodic conflict, the last of the Portuguese coastal forts fell to the Dutch in 1642. Although several European countries built settlements along the Gold Coast over the next few decades, only Britain and Denmark would remain for more than a few years. While the Danes largely kept to themselves, the British attacked the Dutch in 1665 and captured several coastal forts and laid the groundwork for British trading supremacy in the region.

The Slave Trade

Although the slave trade existed in Africa prior to the arrival of Europeans, it was on a much smaller scale and primarily supplied by prisoners-of-war from local conflicts. European expansion into the Americas created an insatiable demand for cheap labor which transformed the slave trade. African, American, and European slave traders gathered as many Africans as possible using any means available. This tragic commerce resulted in the forceful transport of 11-12 million Africans to the Americas during the entire era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

End of the Slave Trade: Two key factors contributed to the decline of the slave trade. First, a growing awareness of the evils of the slave trade led many Europeans and Americans to demand reform. Second, the industrial revolution reduced the need for cheap labor as machines replaced people. Denmark

became the first major power to abolish the slave trade in 1803, followed shortly by Britain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the US. While banning the slave trade did little to stop it initially, the ban did prompt the Europeans and the Americas to abolish slavery by the end of the 19th century.

Clashes with the Asante

The Asante, an Akan sub-group (see *Political and Social Relations*), grew powerful during the 18th century by trading slaves captured through raids and warfare for guns. The Fante, another Akan sub-group living along the coast, responded to the rise of the Asante by expanding their power over smaller neighboring states (pictured: Asante king, courtesy of Wikimedia).

The Asante and the Fante avoided major conflict during the 18th century because neither of them wanted to disrupt a profitable arrangement in which the Fante served as brokers for trade between the Asante and the Europeans. However, by the 19th century the Asante sought direct access to coastal trade and launched a series of invasions into Fante territories.

The Asante invasions brought trade to a standstill and caused the British to lend their support to the Fante in hopes of restoring competitive coastal trade and eliminating what remained of the slave trade. Since the merchant companies which controlled British trade in the region were unable to defend the Fante on their own, the British government placed British settlements in the Gold Coast under the control of Charles MacCarthy, governor of Sierra Leone. MacCarthy encouraged the Fante to rebel against the Asante, leading to repeated military clashes in the mid-1820s.

In the late 1820s, the British settlements reverted to the control of the merchant companies, which appointed Captain George Maclean of the Royal African Corps as administrator. Maclean negotiated an 1831 peace treaty, underscoring his 14-year tenure with a tripling of trade and fewer confrontations with the Asante. Maclean's successor codified and extended his policies by negotiating the Bond of 1844 with the Fante and

other coastal allies. This agreement put serious crimes within allied states under British jurisdiction, creating an unofficial protectorate and laying the groundwork for formal colonization.

The Gold Coast Colony

The Asante grew increasingly concerned as British power expanded in the Gold Coast, especially when the British purchased Elmina Castle – the last remaining Dutch settlement – in 1872. Since the Asante largely relied upon their Dutch allies for access to coastal trade, they were worried that British domination would weaken them. Consequently, the Asante invaded the coast in 1873, prompting a British counter-invasion which resulted in the burning of Kumasi, the traditional Asante capital. In the wake of their defeat, the Asante were forced to renounce all claims to coastal territories, and the British transformed their informal protectorate into the Gold Coast Colony in order to strengthen their control over the region.

Although Asante power declined following the formation of the Gold Coast Colony, periodic clashes continued for the remainder of the 19th century. At the same time, the British grew increasingly concerned that France and Germany, which also controlled colonies in West Africa, might try to extend their influence into Asante territory. Consequently, Britain sent a military expedition to impose protection on the Asante in 1896. In 1902, after a final rebellion by the Asante, Britain unilaterally annexed all Asante territory to the Gold Coast Colony.

Development: British rule brought significant improvements to the Gold Coast's infrastructure and public services, including a postal system, telecommunications networks, a railroad, and over 6,000 miles of roads. The British also created a board to facilitate the sale of cocoa, which had been introduced to the colony by Accra native Tetteh Quarshie in 1879. Perhaps most importantly, the British created the most advanced educational system in West Africa (see *Learning and Knowledge*).

Growing Nationalism

The combination of investments in education and continuing colonial rule resulted in the creation of a highly educated class

of Ghanaian elites, although they had few opportunities for political involvement. Consequently, many of them began to form political groups near the end of the 19th century in order to seek a more representative and responsive colonial government. In reaction, and encouraged by a variety of African-owned newspapers, the British government instituted a series of political reforms in 1925 and 1946 which increased the proportion of popularly elected Africans serving in the colonial Legislative Assembly.

However, these reforms proved inadequate in the years following World War II. After years of fighting alongside Allied forces and absorbing their democratic ideals during the war, 65,000 Gold Coast Africans returned home to unemployment in a colony still firmly under the control of a foreign power.

Independence

Founded in 1947 by a group of educated elites, the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) was the earliest political party to call for self-government "in the shortest possible time." The UGCC criticized the colonial government for failing to alleviate inflation, instability, and unemployment in the Gold Coast Colony. Kwame Nkrumah (pictured), the first Secretary General of the UGCC, broke with his party in 1949 to found the Convention People's Party (CPP), which drew its support from the working people and advocated self-government "immediately."

In 1950 the CPP began a campaign to encourage strikes and nonviolent resistance, which led to Nkrumah's arrest. However, in the face of Nkrumah's popularity, as demonstrated by a referendum in his favor, the colonial governor released him from jail and appointed him to a position equivalent to Prime Minister within the colonial Legislative Assembly. On March 6, 1957, the British government formally granted independence to the Gold Coast Colony. Nkrumah became the first Prime Minister and named the new country after Ancient Ghana.

The Nkrumah Era

Nkrumah's complicated tenure was characterized by infrastructure development, economic mismanagement, and

paranoid authoritarianism. As Ghana was the first nation in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence, Nkrumah was deeply devoted to using the new nation as an inspiration for socialist, anti-colonial independence movements across the continent. This vision led him to undertake many ambitious projects which improved the lives of everyday Ghanaians such as education reform, the construction of Akosombo Dam (pictured), and the creation of a deep-water harbor at Tema. However, the same vision also led Nkrumah to spend vast sums of public funds on projects at home and on Pan-African political activities across the continent, leading to dwindling foreign currency reserves and massive foreign debt.

Nkrumah displayed an authoritarian streak from his earliest days in office. He compelled the CPP to use its large majority in the first National Assembly to eliminate most restrictions on amending the constitution. This change was followed by two pieces of legislation. The first was the Deportation Act of 1957, allowing the Prime Minister to exile people whose presence in Ghana was deemed to be against the public interest. The second was the Preventive Detection Act of 1958, allowing the Prime Minister to imprison people for up to 5 years without trial. These laws resulted in the exile of most of Nkrumah's political opponents. Ultimately, these sorts of power abuses motivated the National Liberation Council (NLC), an opposition group headed by army officers, to stage a successful coup on February 24, 1966 while Nkrumah was in China.

Transition

Once in power, the NLC quickly began to prepare Ghana for a return to democratic government by inviting political exiles to return, releasing political detainees, and restoring relative freedom of speech and press. Despite this reversal of many of Nkrumah's most controversial policies, Ghana still faced serious economic problems and persistent ethnic and regional divisions (see *Political and Social Relations*).

Kofi Busia: Kofi Busia and the Progress Party (PP) took power following elections in August 1969. Busia made some

impressive progress in infrastructure development, including several new clinics and hospitals and improved access to electricity. He is best known for his economic austerity plan which involved eliminating free higher education and devaluing Ghana's currency, the cedi. The latter policy ultimately motivated Lt Col Ignatius Acheampong and the National Redemption Council (NRC) to stage a military coup in 1972.

NRC: The NRC immediately reversed Busia's economic policies by revaluing the cedi, nationalizing large foreign companies, and unilaterally restructuring many of Ghana's debts. Compounded by drought and rising oil prices, these changes resulted in a disastrous annual inflation rate of 130%. When Ghanaians expressed their discontent, the NRC responded by breaking up protests, banning some newspapers, and closing universities. Although the NRC made some feeble attempts at democratic reform during the latter part of the 1970s, they were unable to avoid the fate of their predecessors. On June 4, 1979, Flt Lt Jerry John Rawlings and a small group of military officers seized power in yet another military coup.

The Rawlings Era

Rawlings (pictured) and his officers, collectively known as the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), declared their intention to purge the country of corruption prior to establishing a new democratic government. Consequently, the AFRC dismissed many civil servants, forced tax evaders to pay their debts, and executed former heads of state, including Acheampong, before scheduling elections.

Hilla Limann: Hilla Limann, a former diplomat belonging to the People's National Party (PNP), won the 1979 election. Although the AFRC transferred power to Limann, a group of AFRC members known as the "June 4 Movement" closely monitored the new administration. Unfortunately for Limann, his first year in office ended with an inflation rate of 70% and a budget deficit equal to 30% of gross national product. On December 31, 1981, Rawlings staged another coup to remove the Limann government and install a Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), with himself as chairman.

PNDC: By the time the PNDC took power, the economy had deteriorated even further: economic output had declined for 7 consecutive years, the inflation rate was over 200%, and exports had fallen dramatically. In an attempt to reverse this decline, the PNDC worked with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to design an Economic Recovery Program. The results were positive: by 1987 inflation had dropped to 20% and Ghana had seen 4 straight years of economic growth. In addition, the PNDC's competent handling of the economy attracted greater levels of foreign aid.

Despite economic success, the PNDC's tenure was plagued by strikes, attempted coups, and alleged plots to assassinate Rawlings. Various groups including the Ghana Bar Association, the Trade Union Congress, and the National Union of Ghanaian Students strongly opposed the PNDC. In response, the PNDC created District Assemblies to give the people a greater role in politics. Although some Ghanaians were satisfied by this policy, many dismissed the District Assemblies as a poorly disguised ploy to keep the PNDC in power. By the end of 1990, Rawlings was forced to announce a return to democratic government.

Modern Ghana

Rawlings resigned from the military to run as the presidential candidate of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), which took 189 of 200 seats in what observers described as largely fair elections in 1992. Rawlings had a relatively successful first term marked by further economic growth and renewed respect for civil liberties. Rawlings then defeated John Kufuor of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in the 1996 elections.

After serving the maximum two terms, Rawlings was superceded by John Kufuor in 2000. The peaceful transfer of power between two Presidents sharing neither a party nor an ideology marked a turning point for Ghana. The same feat was repeated in 2008 when NDC candidate John Evans Atta Mills (pictured) defeated and peacefully replaced NPP candidate Nana Akufo-Addo. Serving until his death in 2012, Mills was succeeded by his NDC Vice President John Dramani Mahama.

Ghanaian Folklore

In ancient times, African legends and myths were passed along as oral traditions used to preserve history and wisdom across generations, teach moral lessons, and entertain. Even in contemporary times, many African societies continue to perpetuate these oral customs through fables, songs, and proverbs. Folklore serves as a crossroads between the present and ancient past whereby the narrator can use themes of old as a framework for creating his own literature.

A common characteristic of Ghanaian folklore is the interactive nature of storytelling. At the story's beginning, the narrator recites a few common phrases which will provoke a response from the audience. In this manner, the listeners participate in the performance by singing their responses as though they were characters in the narration.

One popular legend in Ghana centers on a character known as Anansi the Spider who typically depicts an infamous trickster who the audience enjoys detesting. Anansi displays cunning and ingenuity in solving problems that relate to his various passions. Other tales include Mami Wata, the mermaid/fertility spirit of the ocean; the three-headed Spirit of the River Densu; the 99 Spirits of Nungua; and Numo Borketey Lawe, the famous warrior of Numgua.

American artist Laurel True depicted these themes in a mosaic mural "Spirits and Folklore of Ghana" which was awarded "Best Mural" in 2004 in the International Category by Precita Eyes Mural Center in San Francisco CA. This mural is the third in a series of five community mosaic projects she has facilitated in Ghana. Laurel's projects are part of an educational non-profit partnership which brings artists from different cultures to Ghana to promote multicultural collaborations.

2. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

Official Name
Republic of Ghana

Political Borders
Cote d'Ivoire: 415 mi
Burkina Faso: 341 mi
Togo: 545 mi
Coastline: 335 mi

Capital
Accra

Demographics
Ghana's population of 26.3 million is growing about 2.18% per year. About 38% of the population is under the age of 14, and another 54% lives in urban areas. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS infection among adults aged 15-49 is a relatively low 1.47% (see *Sustenance and Health*). With roughly 177 people per square mile, Ghana has a population density slightly less than that of Illinois.

Flag
The flag has three horizontal stripes of red, yellow, and green with a large black star centered in the yellow stripe. Red represents the blood spilled for independence, yellow represents gold and mineral wealth, and green represents lush forests and natural wealth. The black star represents unity among Africans in the struggle against colonialism.

Geography
Ghana is located slightly north of the equator in West Africa and borders Burkina Faso to the north, Cote d'Ivoire to the west, and Togo to the east. Ghana divides broadly into three geographic zones. The coastal zone to the extreme south is characterized by sandy shoreline and scrub-covered plains which extend up to 100 miles inland from the Gulf of Guinea. The forest zone, which produces most of Ghana's cocoa, gold and timber, lies directly

north of the coast and consists of hilly rainforests interwoven with streams and rivers. The northern zone is covered mostly by savanna and grassy plains. Lake Volta, the world's largest man-made lake, extends vertically across these zones in the eastern part of Ghana. With over half of its territory less than 500 feet above sea level, Ghana is primarily a low-lying country. Nevertheless, mountain ranges rise on both sides of Lake Volta. Of note, the Akuapem-Togo range to the east includes Mount Afadjato, Ghana's highest peak at over 2,900 feet.

Climate

Consistent with its location just north of the equator, Ghana has a tropical climate. Daytime temperatures hover within a few degrees of 85°F throughout the year, although the arid North generally gets hotter during the day and cooler at night than the humid South. The South is wetter, with some parts of the forested Southwest seeing as much as 80 inches of rainfall per year. Although there are two rainy seasons in the South, lasting from April to June and October to November, there is only one rainy season in the North, lasting from August to September. From late November until March, Ghana also experiences Harmattan winds, which bring a fine, reddish dust south from the Sahara.

Natural Hazards

Although Ghana has plenty of surface water, many parts of the country suffer from water shortages because supplies are not evenly distributed. In addition, poor wastewater treatment practices have led to water pollution and left much of Ghana's water supply undrinkable. These problems are compounded by recurrent droughts which have seriously disrupted agriculture in northern Ghana in recent years.

Government

Ghana is a constitutional democracy which is divided into 10 regions and 138 administrative districts. After gaining its independence from the United Kingdom in 1957, Ghana went through a series of military and civilian governments before adopting its current constitution in 1992. There are presently 8

political parties operating in Ghana, although the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) are the most prominent.

Ghana has a plural legal system in which "formal" sources of law such as the constitution, parliamentary legislation, and common law exist alongside customary law, which consists of the established norms and practices of Ghana's various ethnic groups. Criminal cases tend to be tried based on formal law while civil cases are usually decided based on customary law.

Executive Branch

The President, currently John Dramani Mahama (pictured), is chief-of-state, head-of-government, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The President and the Vice President, currently Kwesi Amissah-Arthur, are elected to 4-year terms on a single ticket by popular vote, and the President is limited to 2 terms. Although the President nominates candidates for the Council of Ministers, those candidates must be approved by Parliament. The President also appoints the 25 members of the Council of State, an advisory body required by the constitution. While the constitution recognizes the authority of chiefs in local affairs, traditional leaders such as the Asante king (see *History & Myth*) are key advisors to the elected leaders.

Legislative Branch

Ghana has a one-chamber Parliament in which 230 members are elected to 4-year terms by popular vote.

Judicial Branch

Ghana's legal system is based on British common law and includes both inferior courts and Superior Courts of Judicature. Inferior courts are created by an act of Parliament and include circuit courts, magistrate courts, and juvenile courts. Superior Courts of Judicature are established in the 1992 constitution and include the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, the High Court, and the Regional Tribunals. The Supreme Court, which is the

highest court in the land, is composed of justices who are nominated by the President and confirmed by Parliament.

Political Climate

Since its return to constitutional government in 1992 (see *History and Myth*), Ghana has enjoyed effective democratic government and a strong civil society. The credibility of the new constitution has been strongly reinforced by fair elections and peaceful transfers of power between the NDC and the NPP in both 2000 and 2008. With an over 80% turnout in the most recent elections, Ghanaians appear to be actively supportive of democratic government. Ghana also has a wide range of powerful public interest groups.

Defense

The Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) consists of nearly 9,000 active-duty members divided among an army, navy, and air force, although historically the army has had the lead role. The GAF's mission is to maintain internal security, defend against external threats, and participate in international peacekeeping missions. Having a small military relative to population size, Ghana has one of the smallest defense budgets (0.% of GDP in 2009) although some of the highest expenditures-per-soldier ($17,000) in West Africa. However, defense spending has risen in recent years as military leaders seek to provide more light vehicles and better personal equipment.

The GAF operates almost exclusively through multilateral arrangements with the African Union (AU) and the standby force of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Nearly all external security operations are conducted with the AU which promotes unity and seeks solutions to shared social, economic, and political challenges across West Africa. Around 38% of the GAF is currently assigned to UN peacekeeping missions across Africa, although the GAF also conducts a few unilateral operations which generally relate to internal security and the prevention of spillover conflict from Togo and Cote d'Ivoire. In addition, the GAF trains extensively with the militaries of China, India, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK, and the US.

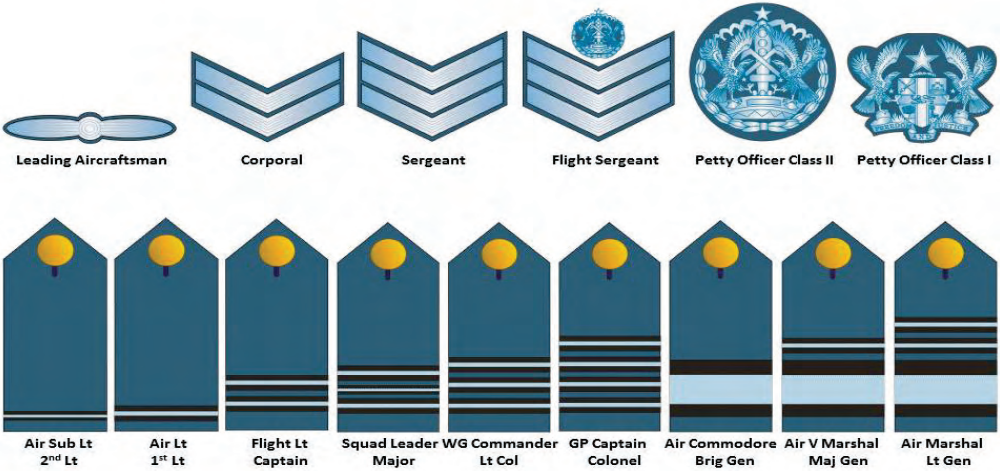
Military Culture: In light of Ghana's recent history, which includes 25 years of military rule during the first 35 years of independence, Ghana's civilian leaders have faced a difficult challenge in keeping the GAF well-trained and well-equipped while still ensuring that it remains subordinate to civilian commanders. They have largely been successful by improving pay and service conditions and requiring the retirement or promotion of senior officers every four years. In addition, an expansion of professional development has helped to promote a military culture which accepts the idea of civilian control over the military. According to President Mills, a clear public appeal for democracy has also helped to subdue military ambitions.

Army: The army's 5,800 active-duty forces are stationed throughout Ghana at 8 different bases, including Burma Camp, which is the GAF headquarters in Accra. Because the primary duty of the army is to maintain internal security, it often cooperates with the police and other civilian agencies to enforce curfews, disrupt drug-trafficking routes, and mitigate ethnic and religious violence. The army is viewed internationally as a capable and professional force, particularly with regard to its extensive peacekeeping operations.

Navy: The navy's 2,100 active-duty troops are mostly deployed to protect fisheries, patrol drug trafficking routes, and provide logistical support to the army during peacekeeping missions. The current fleet, which consists of 10 patrol craft and 5 fast attack craft, is poised to expand by an additional 10 in order to protect Ghana's recently discovered offshore oil reserves (see *Economics and Resources*).

Air Force: The air force's 1,000 troops are used primarily for transport and helicopter operations, although there is an effort underway to expand its operations into intelligence, counter-piracy, and search and rescue. Although the air force is also nominally responsible for combat operations, it has yet to be deployed in that capacity. The fleet, which consists of 18 transport or utility craft and 6 Chinese-made K-8G Karakorum light attack craft, is primarily based at Kotoka Airport in Accra.

Ghanaian Air Force Rank Insignia



Security Issues

Crime: Petty crimes such as pick-pocketing and purse-snatching are common in Ghana and primarily occur in crowded public venues such as markets, bus stations, parks, and beaches. More serious crimes such as mugging and drive-by theft are less common and usually limited to Accra and other major cities. Scams involving credit card fraud, shady business proposals, and suspicious requests for charitable donations are also common and are sometimes attempted through e-mail. Although less likely to affect the short-term visitor to Ghana, organized crime is also on the rise: the UN has recognized both Ghana and Nigeria as key hubs for Europe-bound shipments of Asian heroin and South American cocaine.

Border Security: Tensions in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire and Togo are a security risk for Ghana because of the potential for refugees and spillover conflict. Cote d'Ivoire, which has fought 2 civil wars in the past 10 years, is probably the bigger risk. The Ghanaian government has managed to contain the Ivorian border through a combination of increased security and skillful diplomacy with both sides of the conflict.

Togo, which has seen internal violence stemming from the perceived political marginalization of the Ewe ethnic group, is probably a lesser risk. Although 15,000 Togolese refugees fled to Ghana in 2005 following a disputed presidential election, over half had returned by late 2006. In addition, the economies of Ghana and Togo are deeply interdependent, providing both countries a strong incentive to limit violence along the border.

Ethnic Tensions: In recent years Ghana has seen several disputes between ethnic groups in the Northern Region, the Upper East Region, and parts of the South. Although the worst of these disputes occurred during the early 2000s, many of them have never been fully resolved and continue to result in occasional disturbances, often prompting the authorities to impose curfews or other security measures.

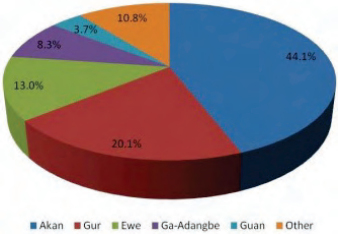
Diplomatic Relations

Ghana is highly active in multilateral organizations at the regional, continental, and international levels. Former President John Kufuor served as chairman of ECOWAS from 2003 until 2005 and served as chairman of the AU during 2007. Internationally, Ghana is a member of the United Nations (UN) and a major supplier of peacekeeping troops. In addition, Ghanaian Kofi Annan served as Secretary General of the UN from 1997 through 2006.

US-Ghana Relations: Ghana has strong bilateral relations with the US, which declared Ghana a democratic "success story" after the peaceful transfer of power to John Kufuor in 2000. Close diplomatic relations between the US and Ghana are underscored by cultural, economic, and military ties. Many Ghanaians come to the US each year for higher education, and over 130 Americans are currently serving with the Peace Corps in Ghana – the first country to accept Peace Corps volunteers. The US is one of Ghana's major trading partners, and there is even a branch of the US Chamber of Commerce located in Accra. The US Armed Forces collaborate closely with the GAF through training exercises and military aid, and the US Agency for International Development provided Ghana with $98.9 million in 2014 in order to improve education, healthcare, and local government.

Ethnic Relations

The borders of present-day Ghana were not drawn with the intention of preserving ethnic groups intact. Consequently, Ghana's ethnic landscape is both crowded and complex. The 5 major ethnic groups in Ghana – Akan, Gur, Ewe, Ga-Adangbe, and Guan – jointly divide into over 100 distinct sub-groups, with as many languages and customs to match. Although there are some ethnic tensions, there is relatively little inter-ethnic violence in Ghana. A few recent inter-ethnic conflicts primarily concerned access to limited resources. Inter-ethnic marriage is common, and modern Ghanaians often descend from multiple ethnic groups.



Akan: The Akan comprise the largest ethnic group in Ghana and have traditionally controlled all territory south and west of the Black Volta River. The Akan formed one of the few traditional matrilineal (descent traced through the mother) societies in Africa (see *Family and Kinship*). Many but not all Akan have retained their traditional matrilineal customs. Although it is not clear exactly how or when the Akan came to Ghana, the general consensus is that they migrated from the Sahel (a semiarid region extending across the width of north-central Africa dividing the Sudanese and the Sahara Desert) and were well established in the gold trade of present-day central Ghana by the 14th century. The Akan comprise 10 sub-groups, the most important of which are the Asante, based in Kumasi, and the Fante, based along the central coast. Although all Akan sub-groups share similar languages, cultures, and systems of authority, they do not behave as a single political unit (see *History and Myth*).

Gur (Mole-Dagbane): Most ethnic groups north of the Black Volta River are Gur-speaking peoples, the largest subset of which is the Mole-Dagbane. There are 8 sub-groups within the Mole-Dagbane, and most of them organize into small, independent communities. The two exceptions to this rule are the Dagomba and Mamprusi, both of which have formed strong, centralized states.

Ewe: The Ewe migrated to their current home in southeastern Ghana and southern Togo from present-day Nigeria and Benin around the 15th century. Although there are nominally 8 Ewe sub-groups, the Ewe are highly decentralized into about 130 independent chieftaincies. Traditionally, most Ewe have been farmers with small herds of livestock, although fishing has also been an important trade for coastal Ewe. Unlike the Akan, lineage within Ewe families is determined almost exclusively by the father (known as a patrilineal system – see *Family and Kinship*).

Ga-Adangbe: The Ga-Adangbe are largely confined to the coastal plains between Accra and Tema, where they settled after emigrating from present-day Nigeria in the 14th century. There are 4 sub-groups within the Ga-Adangbe, the largest of which is the Adangbe. The Ga-Adangbe are primarily urban dwellers, with over 70% of them living in Accra. In recent years, the Ga language has lost significant appeal to Asante Twi, the major native language spoken in Accra.

Guan: The Guan are thought to have migrated from what is now Burkina Faso near the beginning of the 11th century and subsequently dispersed throughout what is now Ghana. This wide diffusion of the Guan, together with their tendency to assimilate many aspects of other ethnic identities, has prompted both scholars and modern Ghanaians alike to regard the Guan as Ghana's original native population. The Gonja people, who live in Ghana's North, comprise the largest Guan sub-group with about 1/4 of the Guan population.

Social Relations

The importance of the extended family within Ghana's social structure (see *Family and Kinship*) reflects traditional Ghanaian beliefs that group needs take precedence over individual needs. Similarly, relationships are the most valuable human resource. Relationships in Ghana, along with the obligations and privileges which they entail, have undergone a shift in recent years due to the rise of Christianity, the availability of Western-style education, and the expansion of the money economy.

These forces freed many Ghanaians from their reliance upon the extended family and introduced a new and different value system. Relationships within the traditional system are based on inherited traits such as lineage, status, and ancestral beliefs. Within the modern system, relationships are based upon freely chosen affiliations such as educational or professional associations, although the modern value system continues to display influences of the traditional value system.

Status Indicators

Seniority: Elders are shown tremendous respect because Ghanaians believe that those who reach old age embody the wisdom necessary to live in harmony with nature and ancestral spirits (see "Traditional Beliefs" in *Religion and Spirituality*). Younger generations greet elders with the utmost care and ceremony, sometimes even adding the equivalent of the word "please" to the front of every sentence. Also, they may bow, curtsy, or salute when an elder enters a room. Respect for seniority is not limited to elders: older siblings or friends also receive respect based on their age.

Lineage: Lineage is important because chiefs, who symbolize traditional authority, are generally selected from a lineage thought to have founded the community or ethnic group. However, chiefs neither come to power by simple hereditary succession nor rule as autocrats. Rather, they are chosen and supervised by an advisory council of elders, a system which underscores the tremendous respect accorded to elders.

Gender: Although there are both patrilineal and matrilineal ethnic groups in Ghana (see *Family and Kinship*), power and authority rest with men in most ethnic groups. However, modern values have encouraged a shift in this dynamic, particularly within urban settings (see *Sex and Gender*).

Character: Ghanaians have a strong sense of mutual responsibility – they typically are not tolerant of individuals who do not pull their own weight. Consequently, Ghanaians admire individuals who display integrity and a strong work ethic, qualities which are highly beneficial to large extended families.

Education: Since the introduction of Western-style education and the expansion of the money economy during the colonial era (see *History and Myth*), highly educated people who work in professions such as administration, education, law, medicine, or politics have come to enjoy notable social status.

3. RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Religion and Spirituality Overview

Ghana is officially a secular state where religious freedom is guaranteed in the constitution, and religious tolerance is common among the three major faiths: Christianity, Islam, and traditional religion. Approximately 71% of the population is Christian while 18% is Muslim. About 5% profess indigenous religious beliefs, and 6% profess other or no religious belief. Most Ghanaians are spiritually devout, some quite publicly. Christian and Islamic holy days are recognized as public holidays, and traditional religious events such as harvest festivals also attract large crowds. All of Ghana's religions have seen change and growth in recent years, especially among younger Ghanaians (Photo: Ghanaian Cardinal of the Catholic Church Peter Turkson).

There is no significant link between religion and ethnicity, and Christians and Muslims are found in all ethnic groups. However, there is a link between religion and geography, as most Muslims live in the North or in large cities, while most followers of indigenous beliefs live in rural areas. The government does not provide financial support to religious organizations, although lessons in religion and morality are part of the public education curriculum. Additionally, the government actively promotes interfaith understanding. At government functions, Christian, Muslim, and indigenous prayers may be recited.

Traditional Beliefs

Regardless of their proclaimed faith, many Ghanaians incorporate aspects of indigenous religion into their beliefs and practices. Similarly, a traditional religious worldview infuses daily life, shapes personal relationships, and affects people’s view of the world around them. Although there is variation in traditional religious beliefs and practices among Ghana’s ethnic and

linguistic groups, the following description of the Akan worldview is generally applicable to other groups as well.

Life has neither a beginning (birth) nor an end (death): both unborn descendants and deceased ancestors are as much a part of the family as the living. After an exemplary life on earth, ancestors exist as very powerful spirits who are concerned about and can influence the affairs of the living.

For the Akan, a Supreme God known as ***Onyame*** or ***Nyame*** created the world and is the source of all things, good and bad. The world itself has two components that are separate but connected: the world of the living and the world of the spirits. In addition to ***Onyame,*** the spirit world is inhabited by ***abosom***, lesser gods and spirits associated with particular places or geographic features such as boulders, rivers, or forests. Both ***abosom*** and the spirits of deceased ancestors are agents of ***Onyame***. They can bless the living with children or a good harvest, but they can also punish wrong-doers with a poor harvest, disease, or death.

Traditionally, the ***abosom*** were addressed and worshipped in religious shrines or "fetish houses" across Ghana. Although many Ghanaians today view them as backwards and outmoded, shrines provide a way for Ghanaians to retain a "traditional" identity in a time of irregular modernization and, no less significantly, to receive affordable healthcare services.

Religious specialists such as chiefs, priests or priestesses, and custodians of shrines are responsible for maintaining the connections between the living and spirit worlds by performing various practices. One such practice is libation, which involves a prayer offering accompanied by the pouring of drink. It is considered appropriate for visitors to shrines to bring a gift of schnapps or some other alcoholic beverage for the priest or priestess to use in libation ceremonies. A similar yet distinct religious practice is to place food on the ground as an offering to ancestors.

Traditional religious practices have flourished in recent years as adherents establish new indigenous shrines and adapt old ones to the changing spiritual landscape of modern Ghana.

Spirit-Possession Rituals

Since the pre-colonial period, Asante priests and priestesses have allowed themselves to be "possessed" so that the spirits can communicate with the community through them. Rulers often called upon possessed priests to solve conflicts or mediate disputes. During spirit-possession rituals, participants play instruments, dance, and sing, often with a call-and-response pattern, within the inner sanctuary of the shrine. The priest or priestess who will act as the spirit medium then rises and begins to whirl when the presence of the spirit is felt internally. Water is often poured into the ears of the spirit medium in order to "cool" the intensity of the spirits, and the spirit medium often changes into the clothing preferred by the possessing spirit. White chalk powder is then placed over the face and body of the spirit medium, who greets the assembled cult members on behalf of the spirit and delivers the spirit's message.

Witchcraft

Belief in witchcraft is widespread throughout Ghana, although there are subtle differences across groups. Among the Akan groups, for example, it is believed that one can be bewitched only by maternal kin (see *Family and Kinship*). Among some northern groups, witchcraft can be used to bewitch both kin and non-kin. Generally, two categories of witchcraft are recognized: "beneficent" witchcraft, which is used to provide others with protection or to promote success for oneself and loved ones, and "maleficent" witchcraft, which is used to harm another person.

Because the "good" witch is seldom encountered, Ghanaians usually invoke witchcraft to explain misfortunes such as

unemployment, infertility, disease, and death, although wealthier Ghanaians are often assumed to have reached their success through witchcraft as well. Women accused of witchcraft have little legal recourse and are likely to face violence if they attempt to remain in their communities. They are sometimes banished from their villages and often group together in "outcasts' settlements" or "witches' camps" under the protection of local authorities.

Since the late 1990s, there has been a concerted government effort to curb witchcraft-related violence and alleviate the plight of suspected witches. Despite government intervention, contemporary culture continues to perpetuate traditional beliefs about witchcraft. For example, Akan lyrics in high-life and hip-life music (see *Aesthetics and Recreation*) invoke witchcraft to explain infertility, alcoholism, marital and financial problems, divorce, child sickness, death, or other misfortune. Similarly, gospel songs often refer to cunning, deceitful witches and offer strategies to overcome their powers, such as belief in the Christian God, membership in a spiritual church, or prayer and fasting.

Healers

For most Ghanaians, physical ailments and illnesses are believed to have both spiritual and biological causes. Consequently, a person with specialized spiritual training is needed to provide a connection to the spiritual world. Known as ***juju*** or cult priests in West Africa, these traditional religious practitioners often supplement the natural herbs and remedies used to treat physical ailments with spirit-possession rituals (see "Spirit-Possession Rituals" above) or talismans made of animal bone or skin, which are thought to protect against evil spirits.

Other Ghanaians, whether Muslim or not, may turn to unorthodox Islamic practitioners when faced with sickness or other misfortunes such as marital or financial problems. Known as ***malams***, these Muslim healers also supplement herbal medicines for physical ailments with supernatural practices such as creating a talisman that contains quotes from the Qur'an,

using a sand tray for divination, or writing Qur'anic text on a blackboard, then wiping off the chalk and mixing it with water for the patient to drink.

Christianity

Christianity in modern Ghana is incredibly diverse – there are about 3,000 different Christian sects in the country. The Catholic Church has about 5 million members, while the Church of the Pentecost is the largest Protestant church in Ghana with about one million members.

Christianity in Ghana traces its roots back to the Portuguese traders (see *History and Myth*) who held the first Catholic mass in the Gold Coast at Elmina Castle in 1482. Neither the Portuguese nor the other Europeans who followed them showed much interest in converting the native population until 1828, when Swiss Presbyterians founded a mission. British Methodists joined them in the 1830s, followed by German Presbyterians in the 1850s, French Catholics in the 1880s, and Americans from the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 1896. From the outset, these mission churches promoted the view that traditional religious beliefs and practices were outmoded "superstitions" which must simply be discarded.

Later Christian churches started to blend basic Christian beliefs with the music, rhythms, and rituals of traditional African culture. For example, the Church of the Lord, Aladura, which was originally adapted from the Faith Tabernacle Church of Philadelphia by the Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria, arrived in Ghana in the 1920s and began to spread faith healing through the laying on of hands. Other indigenous Christian churches, often called "spiritual churches," adapted the rituals of traditional priests and proclaimed prophets who foretold the future, healed the sick, and made protection amulets. Services in these churches include African-style drumming and street processions.

Pentecostalism

In recent decades, many Ghanaians have rejected both mission churches and indigenous African churches, instead turning to local Pentecostal churches which rely solely on the Bible and reject any religious practices that involve the manipulation of objects.

Pentecostal churches condemn traditional religious beliefs and practices as satanic temptation, although they do not dismiss traditional gods and spirits as superstitions. Instead, Pentecostals acknowledge the existence of traditional powers, often referring to them as “demons” who align squarely within Christian theology. Many Pentecostal churches hold faith healing sessions which include prophecies and speaking in tongues in order to rid their members of these “demons.”

Islam

Islam in Ghana traces its roots to Muslim traders who migrated to the region during the 15th century (see *History and Myth*). These traders traveled with Muslim clerics who attracted converts among northern Ghana’s rulers, merchants, and town dwellers by using their literary skills and knowledge of the Qur’an (the Islamic holy book) to tell fortunes and make protective charms and amulets. By the 18th century, Islam had spread to Kumasi, the Asante capital, and during the 19th century, many Muslims escaped violence in Nigeria by moving to Ghana. Today many Fulani (herders who came from Nigeria), Mamprusi and Dagomba sub-groups, and some Asante are Muslims. Although Muslims reside sparsely throughout Ghana, their main concentration is in the northern part of the country and in ***zongos***, or “strangers’ quarters,” in larger cities.

Most Muslims in Ghana belong to the Sunni sect, which is the largest Islamic branch. Smaller numbers align with the Tijaniyya Sufi Brotherhood, a less orthodox form of Islam that places importance on mysticism and has been represented in the area since the beginning of the 19th century. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, originally Pakistani, but now part of an international network, has many converts in southern Ghana although

considered heretical by other Muslims. (Picture: The mosque in Larabanga, one of the oldest in West Africa.)

There are also smaller Shi'a subgroups, some of which have strong bonds to Iran and Syria. Since the 1970s, West African Muslims have developed a stronger relationship with Arabs who belong to the Wahabi and Muslim Brotherhood traditions of Saudi Arabia. These Ghanaians follow an activist approach to Islam in which social responsibility and community engagement are moral imperatives for "born-again" Muslims. This approach has led to the construction of schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure which aids the provision of social services.

In recent years there has been a resurgence of Islamic identity among younger people that is different from the fundamentalist movements seen in other countries. This resurgence of interest in Islam in the North has been compared to the rise of Pentecostal churches in the South. Both practices encourage intense moral engagement as a means of exercising influence without appealing to the traditional Ghanaian power structure. Traditional authority is dominated by elders and inaccessible to those who have yet to achieve economic independence and start a family. Both movements emphasize the connections between salvation (Christian) and morality (Muslim) and the individuals' choices during the course of their lives. Similarly, both acknowledge the power of traditional Ghanaian beliefs and rituals and aim to lead converts not by ignoring them but by emphasizing God's power over them.

Although some Muslims have complained of political and social exclusion within Ghana, President Mills' administration has appointed several Muslim ministers, and all major political parties actively campaign in Muslim communities. There is a national chief Imam who is recognized by the state as the spokesperson for the Islamic community, and the state supports several secular Arabic/English schools (see *Learning and Knowledge*).

4. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Overview

Ghana has experienced significant social change in recent years as a result of continued migration from rural to urban areas, expanded access to education, changes in the role of women outside of the home, and the growth of new and diverse religious denominations. Although Ghana's traditional structures of family and kinship have not been immune to these social changes, they remain an important source of social stability and security for most Ghanaians.

Family and Residence

Rural Settlements: Traditional rural settlements in Ghana consist of multiple compounds, each of which houses several generations of a single extended family and contains a number of buildings made of mud or brick and occasionally decorated with painted symbols. The buildings which contain living areas, sleeping rooms, a kitchen, a bathroom, and an antechamber used for entertaining visitors are arranged around an inner courtyard. The village chief's compound is typically at the center of a settlement.

Urban Settlements: Many Ghanaians who migrate to the city adapt these rural housing patterns to an urban environment. Although most urban households contain only one nuclear family, members of the same lineage often settle close to one another. The composition of these urban households can change as family members migrate to and from cities.

Lineage and Housing Patterns: The details of these housing patterns vary across ethnic groups, reflecting the differences between the two ways in which Ghanaians trace their kinship: through the relatives of the mother ("matrilineal" descent) or through those of the father ("patrilineal" descent).

For example, among some Akan groups, a woman shares quarters with her young children and her married daughters and their children in one compound, while her husband lives in

his mother's or maternal uncle's compound, where his sisters and their children also live. This arrangement is a consequence of Akan social arrangements, in which both sons and daughters are considered members of their mother's ***abusua***, or clan, which also includes the mother's mother, brothers, sisters, and sisters' children.

Conversely, sons and unmarried daughters in patrilineal groups are considered members of their father's clan, which also includes the father's parents and wife. Patrilineal social arrangements also translate into a wide variety of housing patterns. Among the Ga, for example, spouses live with their own lineages in separate residences: the husband lives in the compound of his father's lineage, while the wife lives in the compound of her mother's lineage along with female relatives from many different fathers' lineages.

Authority: In both matrilineal and patrilineal groups, the male is family head. He is financially responsible for all members of the household and has final decision-making authority in all family matters. In addition, men have traditionally held most leadership positions in all of Ghana's ethnic groups.

Inheritance: In matrilineal groups, women are only entitled to inherit property from their mother's uncles, and consequently widows cannot inherit any of their deceased husbands' property. In patrilineal groups, women generally inherit even less because property passes from father to son. Since the Ghanaian legal system respects and enforces these customary arrangements, women continue to face difficulties in asserting their property rights (see *Sex and Gender*).

Marriage

Across ethnic groups in Ghana, marriage was traditionally an arrangement between the elders of two families intended to secure political, social, or economic benefits. The bride price in the form of money, animals, or other items was presented by the groom's family to the bride's family to help to solidify these alliances. Today most young people are free to choose their

own partners, although they usually acquire permission from their parents before marrying. Nevertheless, marriage is still very much a union between two families and remains the most important social institution in Ghana.

Traditional: Prior to the introduction of Christianity, both Muslim and non-Muslim men often had more than one wife, a practice known as polygyny. This practice demonstrated a man's wealth and status, and chiefs sometimes had a dozen wives. (Photo: Chief Abankwa of Obomeng in the late 19th century.) There was also a traditional preference for marriage between cousins, and widows were expected to marry a brother of their deceased husband.

Modern: Ghanaians can choose to marry in accordance with customary law or by religious decree through the Marriage of Mohammedans Ordinance (for Islamic marriages), or the Marriage Ordinance (for Christian marriages). Customary marriage is the most popular among all Ghanaians because it is the least expensive. Polygyny is still allowed under both customary law and the Marriage of Mohammedans Ordinance, but it is much less common today. Both the influence of Christianity and the increasing need for geographic flexibility for educational and employment opportunities have contributed greatly to its decline. The preference for marriage between cousins has also waned, although a preference for marriage within one's ethnic group remains. Western-style wedding ceremonies held in Christian churches are now common.

Customary: Ghanaians who marry in a church or under Islamic law usually also have a customary ceremony. Customary ceremonies involve several stages, including an extended engagement period. Gifts presented at various points during the ceremony finalize the marriage and create reciprocal rights and obligations between the members of the two families.

Children

Childbearing is a social obligation in Ghana because children ensure the continuation of a lineage. Childless couples are considered abnormal, and the inability to bear children is grounds for divorce. Pregnant women are considered beautiful but fragile and vulnerable to witches (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Infants remain wrapped in a shawl and strapped to the back of their mother at all times (pictured). Children are expected to display respect and obedience towards all adults and to start performing household chores at a young age. This obligation only grows as children get older, and even if they move away they are still expected to send money home.

Outdooring: Following birth, children are typically kept indoors and isolated for the first seven days of their life. On the eighth day, the child is taken outdoors and presented to the community for a naming ceremony, a process known as "outdooring." Food and drink is provided to guests, libations are poured as offerings to gods and ancestors (see *Religion and Spirituality*), and the father or another elder announces the child's name. Among Muslims, this ceremony is often led by the local ***malam*** or healer (see *Religion and Spirituality*).

Names: Ghanaian children often are given names which indicate their birth order, reflect the circumstances of their birth, or honor a respected family member. In addition, many Ghanaians are named for the day of the week on which they were born. For example, the first name of former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan indicates that he was born on a Friday.

Death and Funerals

For Ghanaians, death is not an end, but rather a transition to the spiritual world (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Consequently, it is extremely important that the deceased person be

appropriately prepared for the transition and that mourners honor and respect the deceased as an ancestor who can protect or punish descendants.

Although funerals in Ghana do involve grief and a sense of loss, they also involve joy and merriment. Funerals are long, lavish affairs which display a family's wealth and unity. Since modern Ghanaians increasingly live far from their families, it has become common to store the body in a refrigerated morgue for several weeks in order to give family members time to make travel arrangements to attend the funeral.

Fantasy Coffins

A small industry in specialized coffins has sprung up in recent years among the Ga people who are concentrated along Ghana's coast in the Accra suburb of Teshie. "Fantasy" coffins are brightly colored wooden designs made into shapes that represent important themes in the life of the deceased. For example, a taxi driver has been buried in a wooden Mercedes, a seamstress in a giant sewing machine, and a tobacconist in a giant cigarette!

Funerals usually begin on a Friday evening commencing with a wake. Having been bathed and dressed in special clothes, the body lays in state in a room decorated with lace or ***kente*** cloth (see *Aesthetics and Recreation*). On Saturday morning, the coffin and personal effects are moved for burial, which is followed by song, dance, and drink. Hundreds of mourners, dressed in traditional black and red, present the deceased family with gifts, which are announced over a loudspeaker. If the family is Christian, a church service may be held on the next day.

On the Monday following the funeral, the expenses and gifts associated with the funeral are calculated and the difference, whether profit or loss, is shared among family members. Despite the fact that all family members are expected to help pay for funerals, it is common for the extravagant festivities to thrust families into debt.

5. SEX AND GENDER

Overview

Despite improvements in recent years, gender inequality persists in Ghana: women are still regarded as dependent upon men, and many women continue to fall victim to gender-based violence. Through a combination of legal reform, new government programs, and intervention by non-governmental organizations (NGOs); the status of women, especially in urban areas, gradually has begun to improve.

Gender Roles and Work

Women make up about half of the total workforce in Ghana, primarily engaging in agriculture (51%), wholesale trade (27%), manufacturing (14%), and community social services (7%). In addition, just over 20% of women perform unpaid agricultural labor on a family farm, over twice the rate for men. Although relatively few women hold high-level positions in business or government, those who do are generally regarded as equal to their male colleagues.

The primary duties of women are to raise children and perform household chores (see *Family and Kinship*). Many women also work outside the home, especially as small-scale traders. Although men usually provide the startup capital for these ventures and allow women to control any income, women provide all of the labor and are expected to bear the expense of feeding the entire family.

Ethnic Variations: The relationship between gender and work varies across ethnic groups. Akan women play a crucial role in agriculture: men clear land and till soil, while women plant, nurture, and harvest crops. While Northern and Ewe women focus primarily on agriculture, Ga and Dangme women focus much more on trade than agriculture. Of note, Ga women control a significant share of Ghana's domestic fish trade.

Gender and Politics

Although the Gold Coast Colony became the first jurisdiction in Africa to hold elections under universal suffrage in 1951, there remains a significant gender imbalance at all levels of government in Ghana: women comprise only 10.8% of Parliament, 1.4% of ministers, and 8.7% of district chief executives. More recently women have started filling several top positions, such as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Speaker of Parliament, Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN), Minister of Education, and Minister of Trade and Industry.

Gender and the Law

Ghana's legal system tends to be heavily biased against women with regard to civil matters such as divorce and inheritance, which are generally decided in accordance with customary law (see *Political and Social Relations*).

Since customary law does not recognize the existence of communal property, spouses who divorce are entitled only to what they acquired through their own effort during the course of the marriage. One of the most basic principles of Ghanaian family life is that wives are dependent upon their husbands and must work for their benefit. Consequently, divorce often leaves wives with little claim to assets acquired through their own effort, and even less of a claim to those acquired through their husbands' effort.

The situation is similar with regard to inheritance. Most land in Ghana is owned under customary law (see *Economics and Resources*), which assigns land ownership to a lineage rather than an individual. Moreover, land continues to belong to the lineage even if an individual substantially improves upon it by, for example, planting a field or building a house. Consequently,

a widow may have little claim to remain in her own home if it is built upon land belonging to the lineage of her deceased husband, even if she built that home through her own effort.

Although the formal statute governing inheritance in Ghana is much fairer to women than in some other African societies, it does not apply to assets owned under customary law. Consequently, women are often prevented from inheriting assets such as land which are most important to retaining their livelihood.

Trokosi

The Ewe of the Volta Region in southeastern Ghana practice a custom known as ***trokosi*** in which families volunteer a child, usually a young girl, as a servant to the local fetish chief (see *Religion and Spirituality*). ***Trokosi***, which literally means "slave/wife of the deity," received much international attention in the 1990s and was banned in 1998. Despite prohibition, the practice continued, although through the work of government agencies and NGOs, it has since been curbed substantially. It is estimated that only a few hundred victims are still held against their will today, which is well below the thousands just a few years ago. Freed ***trokosi*** victims receive support, education, and job training from the government in order to facilitate reintegration with their communities.

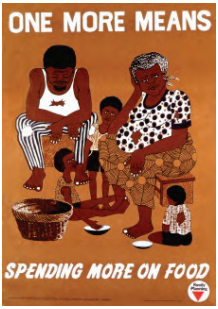
Gender-Based Violence

Violence against women is a major problem in Ghana. A recent study found that 72% of Ghanaians reported that violence against women was prevalent in their communities, with 1/4 of men admitting to physically abusing their partners regularly. In addition, over 1/4 of school-aged girls reported being sexually abused or pressured to become involved in sexual relationships with school teachers. This high level of abuse is particularly alarming because women in abusive relationships are 50% more likely to contract HIV than women not involved with violent men.

In recent years Ghana has made steady progress in combating violence against women. Key milestones include prohibitions on gender discrimination and female genital mutilation (FGM), the Domestic Violence Act of 2007, and the creation of the Domestic Violence Victims Unit (DOVVSU), a component of the Ghana Police Service which fights domestic violence and child abuse. The government also established the first Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs as a cabinet position.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is the process of deliberately modifying the female sex organ in order to decrease a woman's ability to experience sexual pleasure. This practice traditionally was thought to preserve a woman's fidelity and increase chances that her children would be obedient and free of disabilities. Recent studies estimate that 5-12% of Ghanaian women have undergone FGM, with particularly high concentrations in the country's North. Although Ghana became the first African country to outlaw FGM in 1994, only a few perpetrators have been arrested or convicted since the ban came into effect.



Sex and Procreation

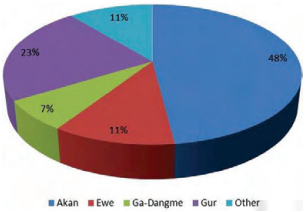
Although public displays of affection are rare, Ghana is a sexually liberated country in which dating is commonplace both in and out of wedlock. Childbearing is seen more as a social obligation than a choice (see *Family and Kinship*), and the average Ghanaian woman gives birth to 4.06 children. Although Ghana's 1.47% HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is relatively low among African countries, it is still approximately twice the world average.

Homosexuality

Ghanaians generally consider homosexuality as an immoral lifestyle choice imported from the West. Sexual relationships between people of the same sex are rare and well-hidden, a situation encouraged by judicial precedents which effectively make homosexuality illegal.

6. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Language Overview



There are over 100 languages and dialects spoken in Ghana, and nearly all of them belong to either the Kwa or the Gur branch of the Niger-Congo language family. Nearly every Ghanaian learns one of these indigenous languages as his or her mother tongue. Non-indigenous languages such as English, French, and Hausa are primarily used for communication between Ghanaians from different ethno-linguistic backgrounds. English is used as Ghana's official language in order to avoid officially favoring one ethno-linguistic group above the others. The government also sponsors 10 indigenous languages through the Bureau of Ghana Languages (BGL), which publishes materials only in those languages from its headquarters in Accra and a branch office in Tamale.

Kwa Languages

About 76% of Ghanaians speak a Kwa language, the most widely spoken of which are Akan, Ewe, and Ga-Dangme. The Kwa languages are primarily spoken south of the Volta River.

Akan: Akan is the most widely spoken language in Ghana, used by 48% of Ghanaians. Although there are 12 different Akan dialects, the 3 most important are Asante Twi, Akuapem Twi, and Fante. Most dialects of Akan are mutually intelligible, although speakers from the North and the South sometimes find it difficult to understand one another. Akan has been increasingly used as a language of commerce, even in Ghana's North.

Ewe: About 14% of Ghanaians speak Ewe, which is primarily confined to the east of Lake Volta in both Ghana and Togo. There is considerable variation among Ewe dialects, and speakers of different dialects often find it quite difficult to understand one another.

Ga-Dangme: Ga and Dangme are closely related languages jointly spoken by about 7% of Ghanaians. Dangme speakers, who live primarily in the coastal plains to the east of Accra, are slightly more numerous having about 4% of the population. Ga speakers, who are the original inhabitants of the city of Accra, are increasingly outnumbered by speakers of other Ghanaian languages, particularly Asante Twi.

Gur Languages

About 23% of Ghanaians speak a Gur language, of which the most widely spoken include Dagaare, Dagbani, Gurma, and Grusi. Dagaare, along with its close relative Frafra, is spoken near the northwestern border with Burkina Faso by about 8% of Ghanaians. Dagbani is spoken by the Dagomba people of the region surrounding Tamale, who account for 4% of Ghanaians. Gurma, a language group which includes Konkomba, Bimoba, and Ntcham, is spoken by 3% of the population in northeastern Ghana. Grusi, a language group which includes Kasem, Sisaala, and Paasaal, is spoken by 2% of the population near the central northern border with Burkina Faso.

Proverbs

Proverbs are common expressions in Ghana. They use elements of metaphor, allusion, and euphemism to impart wisdom about a wide range of topics such as God, family, and life's stages. The following ***ebe***, or proverbs, come from the Akan language.

Onyame ti se Odasani nka nsuo nnto da.
"If God had been a human then there would have been no rains." Significance: God provides for all human necessities.

Nsa baako nkura adesoa.
"One hand cannot lift a heavy load." Significance: There is strength in numbers.

Aware nye nsafufu na woaka ahwe.
"Marriage is not like palm wine to be tasted." Significance: Marriage is a lifelong commitment.

English

English is Ghana's official language used for business, government, national radio and television broadcasts, and post-primary education (see *Learning and Knowledge*). Menus, newspapers, official forms, and signs are nearly always written in English. Despite this strong presence, very few Ghanaians grow up speaking English. Competency in English varies widely, and visitors hear everything from pidgin English spoken on the streets to perfect formal English spoken in professional contexts.

Hausa

Originally from northern Nigeria, the Hausa language is popular throughout West Africa as a *lingua franca* (bridge language) for people from different ethno-linguistic backgrounds. Hausa has found a niche in Ghana among traders, migrant communities, and security forces, particularly in the North. Hausa is also strongly associated with the Islamic community (see *Religion and Spirituality*).

Communication Style

Ghanaians are friendly and sociable people who place a high value on personal relationships. They are forthright in their efforts to be outgoing, sometimes even directly telling a stranger "I like you" or "I want to take you as my friend." Similarly, due to the importance of personal relationships, Ghanaians are often much more passive about negative emotions and avoid confrontations, particularly in public. The strongest indicator that a Ghanaian is upset is a change in attitude, particularly a decline in enthusiasm.

Greetings

Greetings are a prerequisite to any kind of verbal interaction in Ghana, representing not just basic politeness but also an important affirmation of respect and shared humanity. Consequently, Ghanaians consider it a serious insult to rush, skip, or fail to return a greeting. It is generally the responsibility of the person who approaches another to initiate a greeting, and Ghanaians often spend a significant amount of time greeting one another before conducting business. Due to the many ethno-

linguistic traditions in Ghana, greetings vary widely. Usually, they include a handshake (see *Time and Space*) and a verbal salutation in a Ghanaian language (see "Useful Words and Phrases").

Forms of Address

Ghanaians generally address new acquaintances with a formal title followed by a surname. General titles such as *Mr.* or *Mrs.* are used if the new acquaintance does not have a more specific title such as *Director* or *Officer*. When addressing a respected elder or person of royal descent, Ghanaians place the left hand behind their back and bow slightly. Ghanaians generally address friends and intimates using first names, which are sometimes preceded by "titles." For example, children address nearly any adult who is friends with the family as "Uncle" or "Auntie." Similarly, adults often refer to one another as "Brother" or "Sister" if they are close in age. Another informal title is "Charly," which is used to mean "my friend."

Conversational Topics

Safe: Most non-controversial, general interest topics are suitable for conversation. When speaking with a foreign national, Ghanaians tend to be particularly interested in learning about the person's family, occupation, and place of origin, as well as the nature and expected duration of his stay in Ghana.

Handle with Care: Since political views are sometimes taken personally in Ghana, politics should generally not be discussed with new acquaintances and only sparingly with friends. If the subject does come up, foreign nationals are advised to offer observations and questions rather than opinions. Religion can also be a sensitive topic. Because Ghanaians tend to be devout, they may be quite eager to discuss religion (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Nevertheless, it would not be appropriate for an atheist or agnostic to openly state his or her views. In this sort of situation, it is usually best to be vague and diplomatic, perhaps noting a family religious heritage instead of describing personal religious views.

Gestures

Approval and Disapproval: Although a single click of the tongue may indicate the word "yes" in Ghana, repeated clicks of the tongue indicate disapproval, which can also be communicated by sucking the teeth. In order to encourage another person to reconsider, one can tap his left palm against the back of his right hand, a gesture which means, "I beg you."

Summoning and Dismissing: One can summon another person by extending the right arm with the palm down and then quickly closing the fingers, perhaps preceding it with a loud clap if the other person is in the distance. If the other person is not looking, one can also attract his or her attention by hissing. Conversely, one can dismiss another person by flicking the back of the hand towards the person.

Traveling: Although the abundance of taxi drivers eager to offer their services usually makes hailing a cab unnecessary, a person can summon a vehicle by waving the entire right arm in an up-and-down motion. Alternatively, he can point skyward in the desired direction of travel in order to attract drivers already headed that way. Drivers who have stopped to pick up a passenger may extend a flat hand with the palm down and then quickly turn it over, a gesture which can indicate any question but is often used to mean, "Where are you going?" If traveling to Nkrumah Circle, the main transit hub in Accra, a person can respond by pointing towards the ground and making small circles with the index finger.

Obscenities: The Ghanaian equivalent of extending the middle finger is to point at another person with the thumb or to bite the thumb and then flick it towards another person. Ghanaians often accentuate the rudeness of this gesture by adding the phrase "*Wo maame!*" ("Your mother!").

Language Training Resources

Please view the Air Force Culture and Language Center website at http://culture.af.mil/resources/index.aspx for language training resources.

Useful Translations

English	Twi (Akan Dialect)
Vowels: a as in add, **æ** as in man, **e** as in ate, **I** as in hip, **ɛ** as in get, **i** as in eat, **o** as in old, **ʊ** as in good, **ɔ** as in all, **u** as in food	
Good morning	*Mema wo akye* **or** *Maakye*
Good afternoon	*Mema wo aha* **or** *Maaha*
Good evening	*Mema wo adwo* **or** *Maadwo*
Response to above greetings	*Yaa*
We shall meet again	*Yɛbɛhyia biom*
How are you?	*Wo ho te sen?*
Response to “How are you?”	*Me ho ye*
What is your name?	*Yɛfrɛ wo sɛn?* **or** *Wo din de sɛn?*
My name is ___	*Yɛfrɛ me ___* **or** *Me din de ___*
Where do you come from?	*Wo fire he?*
I come from ___	*Me firi ___*
Yes	*Aane*
No	*Daabi*
Please	*Mepa wo kyɛw (mepaakyɛ)*
Thank you	*Meda wo ase (medaase)*
Excuse me	*Mepa wo kyɛ*
How much is it?	*Eyɛ sɛn?* **or** *Eyɛ ahe?*
Can you please help me?	*Mepa wo kyɛw (mepaakyɛw), wobɛtumi aboa me?*
Can you repeat, please?	*Mepa wo kyɛw (mepaakyɛw), Wobɛtumi aka no bio?*
Can you please speak more slowly?	*Mepa wo kyɛw (mepaakyɛw), wobɛtumi aka no brɛoo?*
I do not understand	*Mente asee*
I do not know	*Mennim*
Can you show me where the ___ is?	*Wobɛtumi akyerɛ me baabi a ___ no wɔ?*
Turn right	*Fa nifa*
Turn left	*Fa benkum*
Go straight	*Kɔ wanim te*
Do you speak English?	*Wote brɔfo?*
I am hungry	*Ekɔm de me*
I am thirsty	*Nsukɔm de m*

7. LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

Literacy

- Total population over age 15 who can read and write: 76.6%
- Male: 82%
- Female: 71.4% (2015 census)

Traditional Education

Traditional education in Ghana prepared young people for adulthood by using proverbs, songs, and stories to foster an understanding of social roles and behavior expectations (see *History and Myth* and *Aesthetics and Recreation*). This training was complemented by practical lessons which provided young people with particular skills: women learned childrearing while men learned hunting, farming, and long-distance trading.

All young people also received intensive but informal ethical training from family or community elders, often in conjunction with traditional puberty rites. Generally, traditional education was intended not only to ensure the smooth functioning of society but also to emphasize the strong connection between religion and everyday conduct (see *Religion and Spirituality*).

Introduction of Formal Education

Castle Schools: Formal education was first introduced to the Gold Coast in 1529, when the king of Portugal ordered the creation of a small school at Elmina Castle (pictured). The British, Danish, and Dutch later established schools at their own coastal forts (see *History and Myth*) The primary purpose of these castle schools was to prepare the mixed-race children of European traders and African women for employment with the trading companies by teaching them reading, writing, and Christian religion. The castle schools also educated the children of local chiefs and prominent African merchants.

Mission Schools: Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries began to establish mission schools in 1835 in order to spread Christianity among the Africans of the Gold Coast. However, the resistance of the Asante, who were suspicious that Western-style education would undermine their social values, prevented mission schools from expanding beyond the coastal region. By 1881 more than 139 mission schools served around 5,000 students in the Gold Coast. Since these schools focused exclusively on primary education, students had to travel abroad for higher education.

Colonial Education Policy: Although the British ultimately failed in their early attempts to finance education with a poll tax, in the mid-1870s they began to provide grants to mission schools, eventually requiring schools to meet certain standards in order to qualify for aid. Following World War I the British introduced further reforms intended to improve teacher training, extend equal educational opportunity to girls, expand access to vocational training, and increase the number of secondary schools. The British hoped that these reforms would prepare a generation of Gold Coast Africans to replace Europeans in the colonial administration. One of the crowning achievements in this effort was the inauguration in 1927 of Achimota School (pictured), an elite secondary school in Accra which has educated many Ghanaian leaders.

Education after Independence

In 1951 as the Gold Coast Colony neared independence, the Convention People's Party (CPP) (see *History and Myth*) promised to institute free and compulsory education if given a majority in the Legislative Assembly. The subsequent CPP victory ignited a massive expansion of the pre-university education system – the number of secondary school students in Ghana jumped from 4,000 in 1951 to 48,000 in 1966 and 734,811 in 1985. Centralization accompanied this expansion: the Education Act of 1961 gave the Ministry of Education full responsibility for pre-university education.

Education in Modern Ghana

Since the mid-1980s Ghana's education system has seen a series of changes intended to align education more closely with the country's socio-economic needs. The earliest changes from this period, implemented in 1987, slashed the number of years required to complete pre-university education and called for an expansion of technical and vocational offerings. The most recent changes, implemented in 2007, emphasize the need to develop critical thinking skills in Ghana's students by training teachers to rely more on student participation in problem-solving exercises than on memorization and rote recitation.

Basic Education: Basic education in Ghana begins at age 4 and lasts 11 years: 2 years of kindergarten, 6 years of primary school, and 3 years of junior high school. The government covers the entire cost of basic education, which is compulsory beginning in primary school. Basic education is intended to help students achieve literacy by developing numeration and problem-solving skills and explore their interests and abilities. Students study both English and a local Ghanaian language, with English becoming the language of instruction after the first few years of primary school. The curriculum also includes basic principles of citizenship and practical lessons in athletics, art, and music. The junior high school curriculum also includes vocational skills and information and communication technology (ICT) lessons.

Secondary Education: Students who progress to secondary education spend 3 more years studying in a senior high school, vocational institute, or as an apprentice. All secondary school students study a core curriculum of English, mathematics, integrated science, social studies, and ICT in addition to specializing in arts and sciences, agriculture, technical or vocational skills such as business, construction, engineering, and hospitality. Although secondary education is not free, the government endeavors to make it affordable through cost-sharing programs.

Tertiary Education: Tertiary education involves specialized training at institutions such as universities, teacher training colleges, and polytechnics. The length of tertiary education varies by program, from 3 years for teacher training to 6 or 7 years for medical, dental, or surgical training. A typical bachelor's degree takes 4 years to complete.

Adult Education and Literacy Programs

Civic: The largest grassroots effort to increase adult literacy is the Peoples' Education Association (PEA), a volunteer group established in 1949 with the backing of churches and non-governmental organizations. The teachers, graduates, students, and other interested persons who comprise the PEA seek both to increase literacy and to teach functional skills.

Government: The government created the Department of Extra-Mural Studies, now called the Institute of Continuing and Distance Education, as part of the University of Ghana in 1948. The Institute provides both formal and non-formal adult education programs through a network of branches which extends throughout Ghana, in addition to arranging a variety of lectures and workshops which are open to the public.

Islamic Schools

Northern Ghana has a strong tradition of Islam (see *Religion and Spirituality*) and a weak tradition of formal education. Consequently, much education in the North is provided by four types of Islamic schools: **Traditional Qur'anic schools** focus on memorization of the Qur'an and usually complement rather than replace the government curriculum. **Arabic schools** teach an Arabic-language curriculum which emphasizes religious subjects but also includes some secular subjects. **Arabic English schools** are privately-run and teach religious subjects and the Arabic language in addition to the government curriculum. **Islamic Educational Unit (IEU) schools** also teach religion, Arabic, and the public school curriculum but are administered by the government.

8. TIME AND SPACE

Overview

Ghanaians are generally friendly and sociable people – both hugs and handshakes are common and enthusiastic, and friends and family often take precedence to work and productivity.

Personal Space

Although Ghanaians maintain about the same amount of personal space as Americans during a conversation, they may occasionally stand a bit closer to new acquaintances than is typical in the US.

Touching: Ghanaians rarely touch people with whom they are having a conversation, especially within professional contexts. However, very close friends may touch one another in order to emphasize a particular point.

Eye Contact: Direct eye contact during conversations is rare in Ghana because it can be perceived as a rude gesture, especially when a younger person or inferior makes eye contact with an elder or superior.

Handshakes

Greetings are an essential part of nearly every social interaction in Ghana, and in most ethnic groups they begin with a handshake. Ghanaians traditionally shake hands by establishing a firm, standard grip, then sliding their hands back along each other's middle finger, and finally snapping their own thumb and middle finger. Ghanaians may also shake hands by alternating between a standard grip and a grip in which each clutches the base of the other's thumb. When shaking hands with a group, Ghanaians will always begin with the person to their right so that their palm, and not the back of their hand, faces each successive person.

Left Hand Taboo

As is common in parts of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, Ghanaians have a strong taboo against using the left hand for anything other than personal hygiene. Giving or receiving an item with the left hand is considered a serious insult, and eating, drinking, or gesturing with the left hand is considered rude. When Ghanaians absolutely must use their left hand, they support it with their right hand and offer an apology.

Photography

Foreign nationals should exercise caution when taking photographs in Ghana. In some cases, individuals have had their cameras confiscated for taking unauthorized pictures of military sites, government buildings, Kotoka International Airport, Independence Arch, or police and military officers. In addition, Ghanaians consider it rude to take photographs without the permission of the subject, and doing so can earn a foreign national responses ranging from mild annoyance to violent retaliation.

Time and Work

The work week in Ghana extends Monday through Friday with office hours from 8:00am-5:00pm, although small shops and retailers often operate during evening hours and on weekends. Bank branches are generally open Monday through Friday from 8:30am-4:00pm and Saturday from 9:00am-2:00pm.

Punctuality and Deadlines: Although Ghana's workers are generally skilled, polite, and well-dressed, they are not known for their punctuality. Ghanaians often arrive late for work and sometimes skip work altogether in order to run personal errands during the day. Deadlines are flexible and frequently extended, and supervisors are quick to praise employees who meet even the most basic deadline expectations. Meetings rarely begin on time and are often forgotten, cancelled, or interrupted. Foreign nationals are advised to confirm appointments several times by phone in order to ensure that all participants know the correct time and place.

9. AESTHETICS AND RECREATION

Overview

Ghanaians blend traditional and contemporary culture by incorporating expressive media such as artwork, literature, music, theater, and dress into a variety of games and festivals. Although this blend differs across regions and ethnic groups, all Ghanaians value aesthetics and recreation as functional and symbolic expressions of identity.

Dress

Ghanaians place a high premium on cleanliness and proper dress, which are considered to be indicative of social standing, age, educational attainment, and marital status.

Men: Although men wear suits in professional contexts, they wear casual, Western-style clothing at most other times. Men often wear traditional clothing symbolizing their regions or ethnic groups when participating in ceremonies. The most common is a robe woven from brightly colored strips of ***kente*** cloth worn throughout Ghana but particularly popular among the Asante, Fante, and Ewe. ***Agbada***, a colorful version of the flowing gowns worn by Muslim scholars, are also worn nationwide. Northern men often wear ***smocks***, or long tunics sewn from wide strips of rough cotton cloth, while southern men don ***ntoma***, or long, colorful cloths resembling a toga.

Women: Women generally wear a ***lapa***, a boldly colored and patterned cloth worn as a full-length skirt with a blouse and matching headscarf. New mothers use an additional piece of matching cloth to carry their children on their backs. Women who work in professional contexts often wear more modern styles such as the fashionable "***kaba*** and slit," which refers to a blouse and skirt. Common to all women is a fondness for jewelry, which is seen as highly symbolic.

Sports and Games

Soccer: Soccer is both the national sport of Ghana and the country's most popular sport. The Ghanaian national team, the "Gold Stars," made their first World Cup appearance in 2006 and then returned in 2010 to upset the US team in the elimination stage. The most popular club teams in Ghana are Accra's Hearts of Oak and Kumasi's Asante Kotoko, and many Ghanaians also follow the English Premier League. Many young Ghanaians enjoy playing "gutter-gutter," a form of soccer adapted for city streets.

Other Sports: Ga men are known for their skill at boxing, the second most popular sport in Ghana. Other popular sports include table tennis, field hockey, volleyball, and track and field.

Board Games: Board games are a popular pastime in Ghana, and it is common to see adults playing games on wooden benches in the shade. The most popular game is ***oware***, a variant of mancala which is played with 48 marbles on a wooden board containing 6 pairs of shallow pits (pictured). Other popular games include ***draughts***, sometimes referred to as "African Checkers," and ***spar***, a card game in which players try to play the highest-value card which matches the suit played by the dealer.

Music

Traditional Music: Although traditional music varies across regions and ethnic groups, most genres involve drum rhythms accompanied by dance. Some of the most popular traditional genres are Akan ***Adowa*** and Ewe ***Borborbor***. Traditional Ghanaian instruments include bells, cattle bells, clappers, flutes, gongs, gourds, horns, ***prempensua*** (thumb pianos), rattles, trumpets, and xylophones.

Gospel Music: Gospel music is popular in Ghana and constitutes a principal component of Christian worship (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Celebrations such as weddings, funerals, and baby-naming ceremonies are often accompanied by gospel music (see *Family and Kinship*).

High-Life: Ghana is the birthplace of ***high-life***, a popular form of dance music which has spread into many regions of Africa. A blend of jazz, soul, and other Western styles; high-life is characterized by a unique mix of drums, flutes, guitars, horns, and xylophones. High-life lyrics are sung in a variety of languages, including Akan, Ga, and English, and often reflect common beliefs and values (see *Religion and Spirituality*). With over 100 Ghanaian bands currently playing in this style, high-life remains the most popular type of music in Ghana.

Other Popular Music: During the 1990s, Ghanaian artists created a new genre known as ***hip-life*** by fusing high-life with Western hip-hop and reggae. Hip-life is hugely popular among young people in Ghana, and female hip-life performers enjoy particular success. Reggae from Jamaica has also attracted a devoted following since the 1980s by emphasizing themes which resonate strongly with listeners in Ghana, particularly proponents of African liberation, the power of urban youth, and the positive aspects of African culture.

Dance

Traditional Dance: The most popular form of traditional dance is ***adowa***, an Asante routine characterized by fluid and graceful walking motions set to the rhythm of gongs and drums. The Asante are also known for ***kete***, a dance in which skilled performers move their torsos, arms, and feet at different rhythms against a backdrop of varied drumbeats. ***Kete*** was especially popular among Asante royals, who housed dancers and musicians at the royal court. Also popular is ***jongo***, a dance performed at celebrations to flutes and drums.

Modern Dance: One of the most common forms of modern dance is also called high-life, which relies heavily on African versions of the foxtrot, waltz, and quick step. Also popular is ***kpanlogo***, a blend of high-life, traditional, and other popular dances which originated in the 1960s. A highly physical dance, ***kpanlogo*** involves thrusts and twists of the hips and shoulders.

Theater

Drama takes two main forms in Ghana: institutional drama and "concert party." Institutional drama, which arose as Western-style performances, began to absorb elements of traditional Ghanaian storytelling and vernacular Ghanaian languages. Concert party, also called comic opera, arose during the 1920s as a form of travelling theater inspired by traditional Ghanaian drama, American films, Latin music, and African-American theater. Especially popular in rural areas, concert party uses humor to convey moral messages about modern social issues.

Literature

The oldest and most traditional form of literature in Ghana is oral literature, consisting of poetry, proverbs, songs, and oral narratives used to critique society and convey life's lessons to new generations (see *History and Myth* and *Learning and Knowledge*). One popular form of oral literature is ***toli***, a genre of humorous and self-deprecating stories which dramatize minor personality flaws.

A relatively newer format is written literature, which was introduced to Ghana by trans-Saharan and European traders. Although some literature has been published in Ghanaian languages, Ghana has a richer tradition of English-language publishing. Two of the most famous Ghanaian authors are J.E. Casely-Hayford (pictured), known for his 1911 novel *Ethiopia Unbound*, and Ayi Kwei Armah, known for a series of novels starting in 1968 with *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born.* Two renowned female authors are Efua Sutherland and Ama Atta Aidoo.

Arts and Crafts

Ghanaians value art for its ability to serve both symbolic and practical purposes such as representing religious faith, indicating status, facilitating social arrangements, and fulfilling functional tasks.

Textiles: Ghana's best known handicrafts are ***kente*** and ***adrinka***, versatile cloths printed with intricate patterns and designs which capture historical, religious, or social themes. For example, the ***abusua ye dom*** pattern represents the

importance of family, and designs containing moons or stars signify love and loyalty.

Other Handicrafts: Ghana is also known for sculptures, especially stools, which traditionally represented a chief's power, and fertility dolls, traditionally used during rites-of-passage such a transition to adulthood and marriage. Ghana also has excellent goldsmiths who craft jewelry, crowns, and ornaments for international markets. The Asante are particularly skilled metalworkers due to their early contact with Islamic traders and artists. Pottery is also common in Ghana, with women and men generally making pots for domestic and ceremonial use. Ghanaians also produce a variety of baskets which they use as handbags or to carry food.

Public Holidays

- January 1: New Year's Day
- March 6: Independence Day
- March – April: Good Friday
- March – April: Easter Monday
- May 1: May Day
- May 25: Africa Unity Day
- July 1: Republic Day
- September 21: Founder's Day
- December 2: Farmers' Day
- December 25: Christmas Day
- December 26: Boxing Day
- *Variable*: Eid al-Fitr
- *Variable:* Eid al-Adha

Festivals

Although festivals vary across regions and ethnic groups, most Ghanaians celebrate several festivals each year. For example, Southerners might be found at ***Bakatue***, a regatta at Elmina celebrating the start of the fishing season, while Northerners might be found at ***Bugum***, a celebration of fire. Additional festivals include ***Adae Kesee***, a celebration of Asante heritage, ***Aboakyer***, a deer hunting competition held in Winneba, and ***Agumatsa***, a celebration of the Volta Region's Wli waterfalls.

10. SUSTENANCE AND HEALTH

Dining Customs

When dining at home, Ghanaians separate into groups of men, boys, and females, with each group eating from a common bowl and the eldest male getting the best cut of meat. Ghanaians wash their hands before and after meals and typically eat using their right hand without utensils (the left hand is considered unsanitary, see *Time and Space*), forming staple foods into a ball and then dipping the ball into a stew or sauce.

Being very hospitable, Ghanaians often make extra food in anticipation of having unexpected visitors. Ghanaian eating schedules vary by occupation and income, although farmers tend to snack on fruits and tubers during the day and then eat a single large meal in the evening. City-dwellers may eat several meals-per-day if they can afford to do so.

Traditional Diet

Because staple crops are less expensive than animal protein, the traditional Ghanaian diet is low in protein and rich in carbohydrates. Most meals pair a bland, high-calorie staple food with a flavorful stew or sauce.

Staples: The two types of staples in Ghana are **cereals** such as maize, millet, sorghum, rice, and wheat; and **starches** such as cassava, cocoyam, and yam (all are edible starchy tuberous roots). Although most Ghanaians eat a combination of starches and cereals, forest-dwelling central Ghanaians generally rely on cocoyam and cassava. Most Ghanaians also eat plantains, starchy fruits similar to bananas.

Stews and Sauces: Most Ghanaian stews and sauces use hot peppers for flavor and spice. Other popular ingredients include eggplant, peanut, okra (pictured above), tomato, and palm oil. Ghanaians also add meat, chicken, or fish to their stews and sauces if they can afford to do so. Although the most popular meats are beef, goat, guinea fowl, and mutton; forest-dwelling

Ghanaians sometimes use other protein sources such as snails or "grasscutters," which are similar to porcupines and considered a delicacy.

Popular Dishes: Preparations of staple foods which are particularly popular among Ghanaians include ***fufu***, a type of dough made from cassava and plantain or cocoyam, ***kenkey***, a type of dumpling made from fermented cornmeal, and ***tuo zaafi*** (also known as "TZ"), a thick porridge made from corn or millet.

These and other staple foods are usually paired with stews or sauces to form complete meals. Some of the most popular are ***red-red***, fried plantain with bean stew, ***waakye***, spiced rice and beans, ***mpotompoto***, mashed yam with palm oil and fish, ***kelewele***, spiced fried plantain, and ***jollof*** (pictured), rice cooked in a meat and vegetable stew.

Beverages

Popular Beverages: Some of the most popular drinks in Ghana are cola beverages such as Refresh, which is made with fruit juice, and Supermalt. Although beer is common in the North, where brands like Pito Beer are popular, palm wine is more popular in the South.

Beverage Customs: Beverages have important ritual uses in Ghana for both greetings and religious ceremonies (see *Religion and Spirituality*). Alcohol consumption is generally considered a social activity off-limits to women and children.

Restaurants

Although Ghanaians consume a majority of their meals in the home, the country's growing tourist industry has encouraged the growth of restaurants, especially in larger towns and along the coast. These restaurants specialize in a variety of cuisines, including Chinese, Indian, and various European dishes, and generally cater to wealthier Ghanaians and tourists. Less affluent Ghanaians usually eat out at "chop houses," which are café-style restaurants specializing in local food at modest prices, or at street stalls, which feature dishes such as meat kebabs, fried plantains, and smoked fish.

Health

Health Challenges: Ghana's most significant health challenge is controlling communicable but preventable diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis. Malaria is the leading cause of mortality in Ghana, accounting for 0.6% of all hospital deaths in 2012. Although HIV is less prevalent in Ghana than in many other African countries, the virus still infected 1.47% of adults age 15-49 in 2014 – about twice the world average (See *Political and Social Relations*). The average adult life expectancy is 63.8 for men and 68.7 for women, which is higher than many African countries although not among the highest.

Communicable diseases disproportionately affect the poor, who often live in crowded environments which lack clean water and adequate sanitation. The poor are also more likely to be malnourished and more susceptible to infections. Non-communicable diseases such as cancer, hypertension, and diabetes are also on the rise as Ghanaians increasingly adopt sedentary lifestyles and diets high in sugar, fat, and salt.

Traditional Practices: In pre-colonial Ghana ***juju***, or fetish priests, treated the sick and wounded. Traditional treatment involved both a supernatural component, such as sacrifice intended to please dead ancestors, and a natural component, such as herbal medicine. In the North, Muslim ***malams*** have traditionally provided medical care through the use of charms and amulets (see *Religion and Spirituality*). The government still recognizes traditional medicine as a legitimate and affordable partner to the Western-style healthcare system.

Modern Healthcare System: Ghana currently has over 3,000 healthcare facilities, ranging from local clinics to regional- and district-level hospitals. Although many of these facilities are operated privately by businesses or mission churches, many are also administered by the Ghana Health Service. In 2003 the government created the National Health Insurance Scheme, which requires Ghanaians to pay an annual premium for medical insurance that covers treatment for most common diseases in Ghana.

11. ECONOMICS AND RESOURCES

Economic Overview

Despite having abundant natural resources and one of the best education systems in West Africa, Ghana has suffered from economic mismanagement since independence in 1957 (see *History and Myth*). Although the economy has enjoyed sustained growth in recent years due to diverse inflows of foreign capital, Ghana still faces the challenge of creating an infrastructure and regulatory framework capable of nurturing growth domestically.

Services

Services recently surpassed agriculture to become Ghana's largest economic sector, accounting for 51.6% of GDP. The fastest growing sub-sectors are finance, insurance, real estate, and business services. Similarly, tourism is Ghana's largest source for foreign exchange income. According to Ghana's Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, growth in Ghana's service sector indicates a broader structural shift away from agriculture.

Agriculture

Agriculture, which includes crops, livestock, fishing, and timber, accounts for 20.7% of GDP and 44.7% of formal employment. Ghana is the world's second largest producer of cocoa, which accounted for 28.5% of export earnings in 2014. Ghana also produces coconuts, shea nuts, and coffee for export markets and a variety of staple crops for domestic consumption (see *Sustenance and Health*). In recent years Ghana has begun to produce non-traditional crops such as cashews, peppers, and pineapples with the help of development aid.

Land Tenure: Ghanaians view land as the communal property of all past, present, and future members of a lineage or chieftaincy. Similarly, they prefer land distributions which promote equality and security for the entire community to those which focus solely on economic efficiency. About 78% of land in

Ghana is owned by lineages or chieftaincies, which assign the land to their members under freehold tenure. The remaining land (22%) is managed by the government. This land distribution has created economic problems for Ghana as conflicting claims and the lack of an effective regulatory framework have created uncertainty about land use rights.

Industry

Industry, which includes construction, manufacturing, mining, and utilities, accounts for 27.7% of GDP. Ghana's most significant industrial product is petroleum, which accounted for 26% of export earnings in 2014. Other industrial products include gold, bauxite (aluminum ore), cement, diamonds, manganese, processed foods, and small commercial ships.

Oil: Ghana's energy exports are expected to surge in coming years as up to 1.8 billion barrels of oil are extracted from the off-shore Jubilee oilfield, which was discovered in 2007 and inaugurated in 2010. The size of the find at Jubilee will likely spur further off-shore oil exploration and reorient Ghanaian industry towards the energy sub-sector.

Money and Banking

Currency: The currency of Ghana is the Ghana cedi (GH₵), which is subdivided into 100 Ghana pesewas (Gp). The cedi is issued in 5 banknotes (GH₵1, 5, 10, 20, 50) and 6 coins (1, 5, 10, 20, 50Gp, GH₵1). The cedi was seriously devalued in 2007 as a result of high inflation throughout the 1990s and 2000s, prompting the government to redenominate the cedi by declaring that GH₵10,000 in the old currency would be worth GH₵1 in the new currency. The value of the cedi has recently declined resulting in the value of $1 equating to GH₵3.73.

Cash: Although international bank cards are a convenient way to access cash in most major cities, they are often useless in rural areas. In addition, credit card fraud is common in Ghana

and can even occur at well-known hotels. Consequently, foreign nationals should avoid paying directly with credit cards and carry some of their money in traveler's checks or US dollars. Although traveler's checks are more secure, cash is easier to exchange and often gets better rates. Ghana's largest commercial banks – Ghana Commercial Bank, Barclay's Bank, and Standard Chartered Bank – generally offer better exchange rates than independent currency exchanges.

Foreign Trade

Ghana's imports, which totaled $13.42 billion in 2015, primarily consist of petroleum, food, raw materials, machinery, and equipment purchased from China, Nigeria, Netherlands, Cote d'Ivoire, the US, and India. Ghana's exports, which totaled $10.75 billion in 2015, mainly consist of oil, gold, cocoa, timber, diamonds, bauxite, and tuna sold to China, France, the Netherlands, India, South Africa, and Italy. Ghana's largest source of foreign exchange is the money sent home by Ghanaians working abroad.

Foreign Aid

In 2014 Ghana accessed Official Development Assistance (ODA) worth $1.2 billion. The UK, US, Canada, France, Denmark, Japan, and Germany were the largest single-party donors contributing a total of roughly $600 million. International Development Association, African Development Fund, and Global fund contributed roughly $500 million.

Standards of Wealth

Ghanaians generally prefer to spend money today rather than save it for the future. Consequently, they traditionally have spent surplus income on high-status consumer goods such as beads, ceremonial golden trinkets, expensive cloth garments, and household ornaments. In recent years, Western goods such as clothing, perfume, and luxury cars have gained prominence. Meat and alcohol are also symbols of wealth and status in Ghana.

12. TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL

Overview

Ghana has a reliable transportation system, a free press, and open communications networks which allow easy movement of people, goods, and information. In recent years, the government has focused on expanding these infrastructures and making them more robust.

Transportation

Vehicles: Vehicle ownership has grown over the past decade and now stands at 44 vehicles for every 1,000 Ghanaians. Although the number of traffic collisions has declined, they remain a major problem in Ghana, with 29.6 deaths per 100,000 vehicles in 2008, over twice the US rate. The Ministry of Transportation estimates that traffic collisions cost Ghana about $165 million per year. Officials have attributed the high number of traffic collisions to drivers ignoring road signs or operating under the influence of alcohol.

Roadways: At the end of 2009 Ghana had about 68,050 miles of roads, including 8,567 miles of highways. Economic expansion, population growth, and trade redirected from war-torn Cote d'Ivoire have placed increasing strain on Ghana's road network in recent years, prompting the Ministry of Transportation to repave 1,200 miles of roads and rehabilitate the country's 3 major highways: Accra-Kumasi, Accra-Cape Coast, and Accra-Aflao.

Railways: Ghana's 588 miles of railways are managed by the Ghana Railway Company (GRC), a state-owned company within the Ghana Ministry of Transport. The main line connects the southwestern port of Sekondi-Takoradi with Kumasi and Accra, with branch lines extending to Prestea, Awaso, Kade, Tema, and Shai Hills. Ghana's railways are primarily used for hauling industrial and agricultural exports to Ghana's ports.

Ports and Waterways: Ghana's major ports are Tema, which has historically handled imports, and Takoradi, which has generally controlled exports. Many of Ghana's landlocked neighbors have redirected their exports through Tema since the outbreak of civil war in Cote d'Ivoire in 2002. The government is currently developing new ports on Lake Volta in order to capitalize on Ghana's 700 miles of navigable inland waterways.

Airways: Ghana has 11 airports and airstrips, 7 of which have paved runways. Although the only international airport is Kotoka International Airport in Accra, regional airports serve Kumasi, Tamale, Sunyani, and Takoradi. Although Ghana once had a national airline (pictured) run as a public-private partnership, it went out of business in 2010 and left Ghana reliant upon foreign airlines including British Airways, Emirates, Kenya Airways, KLM Royal Dutch, Middle East Airlines, and Swiftair.

Energy

The state-owned Volta River Authority is responsible for power generation in Ghana, while the Electricity Company of Ghana, also state-owned, is responsible for distribution. Over half of Ghana's electricity is produced at Akosombo Hydropower Station, with most of the remainder coming from the Kpong Hydropower Plant and thermal plants run by the Takoradi Power Company and the Takoradi International Company.

At nearly 72%, Ghana's electrification rate is more than double that of sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, although only 50% of rural Ghanaians have access to electricity. In recent years infrastructure investment has failed to keep pace with surging electricity demand, leading to distribution problems which are especially pronounced in heavily populated areas. The World Bank invested over $210 million in the Ghana Energy Development and Access Project as a method of addressing these problems.

Media

Radio: State-owned Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) runs two national radio stations: Radio 1, which broadcasts across the country in English and 6 Ghanaian languages, and Radio 2, which broadcasts to the Accra area in English. The GBC also runs 10 regional radio stations which emphasize local languages and programming. Ghanaian radio also includes private radio stations and international programming.

Television: The GBC operates Ghana TV (GTV), which airs news and entertainment programs. Other broadcast channels include Viasat 1 and TV 3, which are privately run, and Metro TV, which is run by a public-private partnership. Paid satellite service is also available from MultiChoice, a South African firm.

Print Media: Both private newspapers such as the *Daily Guide* and *The Ghanaian Chronicle* and the state-run newspapers *Daily Graphic* and *Ghanaian Times* enjoy wide readership. Other popular newspapers include *The Mail*, *The Mirror*, *The Independent*, *Ghana Palaver*, and the *Sunday Herald*.

Telecommunications

Telephones: Although there were only about 2.6 telephones per 1,000 Ghanaians in 1994, by 2014 Ghana had about 260,000 landline subscriptions and 30.4 million mobile subscriptions for a population of 26.3 million. The main telephone service providers are Kasapa, Millicom, Scancom, and Vodafone Ghana, the last of which was operated by the government under the name Ghana Telecom until 2009.

Internet: Although the percentage of Ghanaians using the Internet climbed from 0.15% in 2000 to 8.5% in 2010, there were only 5 million internet users in 2014 for a population of 26.3 million. Consequently, most Ghanaians still access the Internet through shared office connections or Internet cafés. Broadband service is increasing and now accounts for over half of Internet subscriptions. Ghana ranks among the top 10 African countries for high-speed upload and download capabilities.

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