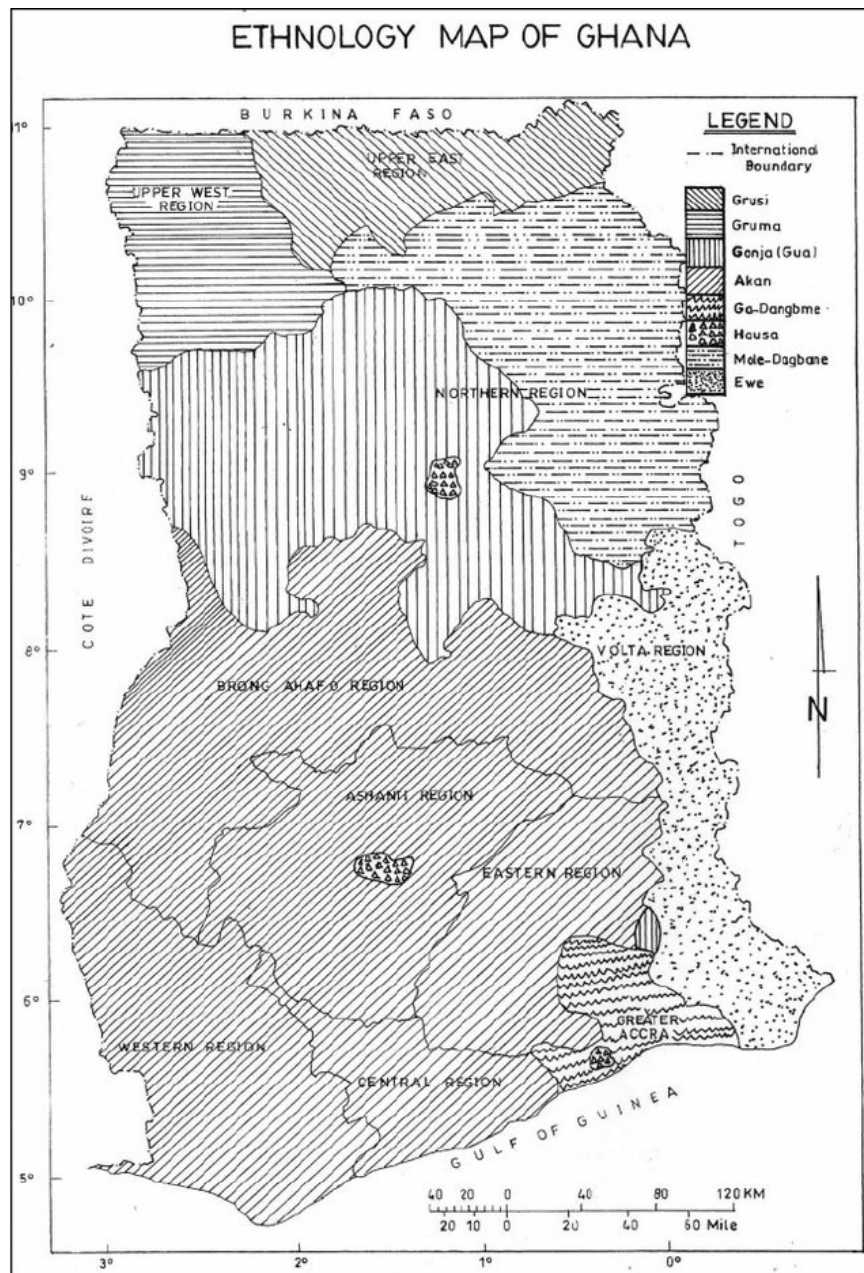


Ghana: Historical Setting

Ethnic Groups and the Emergence of 'States' in Ghana



Map of Ghana Showing Distribution of Ethnic Groups

The region of modern Ghana has been inhabited by nation-states, which were often ethnic based prior to the advent of Islamic and European civilization, and subsequent arrival of Europeans to the region beginning in the fifteenth century. More importantly, for a successful study of the Ghanaian past, because there were no written records from prehistory one must rely on other sources including archaeology, oral traditions, ethnography, linguistic, art history and even the natural sciences.

Three groups of states could be identified in pre-colonial Ghana: states in the northern zone, states in the forest zone and states in the coastal zones. Today, it is estimated that there are about ninety-two separate ethnic groups in Ghana. These groups are often classified into a few large groups, namely, the Guans, the Akan states of Adanse, Bono, Denkyira, Akwamu, Assin, Fante and Asante. The others are the Mole-Dagbani states of Mamprusi, Dagomba, Nanumba and Mossi, the Gonja, the Anlo-Ewe and Ga-Dangme states. The history of the origin and state formation of these groups are steeped in myth and traditions.

The Northern Zone

From the study of oral traditions of the peoples of northern Ghana, prior to the invasion by the Mole-Dagbani states in about the thirteenth century indigenous people inhabited the area. These people were the Vagala, the Sisala, the Tempulensi and the Guan who lived to the west of the White Volta. The other indigenous people were the Kokomba, the Nafeba, the Fulse, the Kasena, the Ninisi, the Nunuma, the Gyimba, the Koma and the Chamba who lived to the east of the Volta River. Apart from the Guan, all the ethnic groups spoke languages that were very much the same. They also belonged to the same culture, making the same kind of things and living in the same kind of way.

The Mole-Dagbani states refers to a group of political states that emerged in the northern savannah lands of the region of modern Ghana and parts of the modern republic of Burkina Faso. Even though these groups today constitute three apparently distinct ethnic groups, their people still identify with each other. It is said by oral tradition that the founding ancestor of all the Mole-Dagbani migrated from northeast of the Lake Chad to the south of the Niger bend, Zamfara, which is modern day Nigeria. A brave warrior called Tohazie led them. They journeyed southwestwards through Medieval Mali to settle first in Pusiga near Bawku, a village in the northeastern part of Ghana. On arrival, they waged wars of expansion against the local tribes and defeated them under the leadership of Gbewa. Succession disputes among decedents of Gbewa led to the founding of Mamprugu (Mamprusi), Nanumba and the Dagomba states in Ghana, and the Mossi state in Burkina Faso. Despite the division, they are related. That is why they are called the Mole-Dagbani peoples. They all regard Mamprugu as their 'parent' kingdom and Gambaga in Mamprugu as their spiritual home.

To the southwest of Mamprugu, Dagbon, and Nanumba emerged the kingdom of Gonja. According to Gonja traditions, Mande warriors and traders from Mali led by Wadh Naba (Nabaga) founded the kingdom perhaps in the second half of the sixteenth century. He was originally sent by his overlord, the chief Mande Kaba, on a punitive expedition against the trading centre of Begho because of a major decline in the gold exports to Mali. These invaders failed to carry out the assignment. Instead, attracted to commercial activities in the area set up a military base at Yagbum around AD 1554. From Yagbum aided by Dyula Muslims in Begho, they launched an attack against the indigenes and imposed their authority on them. By the middle of the seventeenth century, Gonja had reached its peak. It had defeated several chiefdoms including Dagomba and had developed into a centralized state.

The Forest Zone

The Akan, the largest single ethnic grouping in the region of modern Ghana occupy the forest and free savannah lands of Ghana. The Adanse, Akuapem, Akyem, Asante, Assin, Awowin, Bono, Denkyira, Fante, Kwawu, Nzema, Sewhi, Twifu and Wasa are all Akan ethnic groups. They speak a common language called Twi, or dialects of that language. They also share common social and political institutions and practices.

There is still some argument about the origins of the Akan. Some versions of their traditions supported by Thomas E. Bowdich assert that the ancestors of the Akan came from North Africa or the Middle East. Another British diplomat, Joseph Dupuis holds the view that the Akan could be traced to only as far as northern Ghana from where, in his view they were pushed by Muslim warriors. Other held the notion that the Akan originated from the Niger-Chad region. Ghanaian statesman and historian, J. B. Danquah traces the Akan as far as the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia (Iraq or Iran) and thence to the medieval Ghana Empire before their final settlement in modern Ghana. Another version of the traditions state that the Akan had always lived in the present country.

Yet, another Ghanaian, historian and politician, Adu Boahen relying on evidence from geography, oral traditions, linguistic and serology suggested four separate cradles as the origin of the ancestors of the Akan people: the Chad-Benue region, the area between the Lower Volta and the middle Niger, the region between the Comoe and the White Volta and the basin of the Pra and Ofin. He argued that the Akan, like most of the West African Negroes and the Bantu, evolved between the Chad and the Benue from where they entered the Dahomey Gap which is the territory lying between the Lower Volta and the middle Niger. According to him, further population expansion led to the dispersion of the people in groups to places like Iboland, Yorubaland, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, and the region between the Black Volta and the Comoe River. Boahen believes that some from this group moved further south into the forest region and finally settled between the confluence of the Pra and Ofin rivers where they developed into the Akan of today.

The Asante, Denkyira, Adanse, Akwamu and Akyem grew to become the large Akan states. Their emergence as large centralized states took place between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Akan states had to emerge late because of the impenetrable nature of the forest and thick Savanna. The introduction of iron mining and smelting and tool-making skills helped them to them control their environment. By the eighteenth century, the Asante state had become the most dominant state in Ghana.

The Southern Zone

The Ewe and Ga-Adangbe are the two main ethnic groups occupying the southern zone of Ghana. The Ewe inhabits southeastern Ghana and southern parts of the Republic of Togo and Benin. According to the German missionary Diedrich Westermann, the Ewe, Ga-Adangbe, the Yoruba and the Fon of Dahomey once lived together in Ketu, a city-state in modern Republic of Benin. Oral tradition further asserts the Ewe left Ketu in two groups due to constant wars and raids in the area. One group of Ewe moved westward to settle at Adele in Togo as their new home territory. The other group under the leadership of Afotche first migrated to Tado (southeastern Togo),

crossed the Mono River passing through the forest on the banks to found Notsie at the northeast of present day Lome, capital of the Republic of Togo. Oral traditions of the Ewe indicated that it was from Notsie that the various Ewe tribes dispersed to establish a number of states including the Anlo around the early years of the seventeenth century. By the middle of eighteenth century, the Anlo state had become well established.

The Ga and Adangbe people are closely related in that apart from living in close proximity, they also speak closely related dialects. Ga is used to describe the people who live in the coastal plains stretching from Accra to Tema. Historians are not certain about the date of emergence of the Ga into a kingdom. They originally lived in scattered communities but by the beginning of the seventeenth century, they were able to create the powerful kingdom of Accra. The Adangbe occupy the eastern portions of the Accra plains and the foothills of the Akuapem ridge. The Ga oral traditions state that they came from the east, Yorubaland, southern parts of the present-day Nigeria through Seme together with the Adangbe. The Ga story is confirmed by the Adangme. However, scholars like Adu Boahen are skeptical about any external origin of the Ga-Adangme.

The Guan

The Guan are the oldest known people to have inhabited the region of modern Ghana. The Guan are found in different parts of the country. They speak the Guan language. They include the Larteh, Efutu, Awutu, Nchumuru and Gonja. According to their traditions, the Guan had established small independent states in Ghana extending from Winneba, Mouri, Egya, through Akuapim, Afram Plains to Northern Ghana before the arrival of the other ethnic groups into the region of modern Ghana.

Traditional Institutions and Governance in Pre-Colonial Ghana

Like other African countries, politics is not alien to Ghana. Nation-states that were often ethnic based had emerged in the region of modern Ghana prior to the advent of the Europeans into the region. Today, eight major categories of ethnic groups exist: Akan, Ga-Dangme, Ewe, Guan, Gurma, Mole-Dagbon, Grusi, and Mande-Busanga. Each of the prominent ethnic groups had its particular political formation. Broadly, the indigenous political systems varied from societies with centralized political organization to societies which could not develop into states (acephalous societies). Unlike the acephalous societies such as the Guan and the Ga-Adangbe, which appeared to be loosed and could not develop centralized authority system to make laws and enforce them, societies of both the Akan and Mole-Dagbon such as the Asante and Dagomba respectively developed centralized and hierarchical political structures.

The political systems of societies in pre-colonial Ghana, though varied, shared a common similarity – chieftaincy. Chieftaincy has a long history in the country, reaching back perhaps about 4,000 years, when scholars believe communal living, crop farming, and domestication of animals first began. Chieftaincy acted as the socio-political and military unit around which local tribes were organized, and provided the requisite focal point for common action. It had common broad sociological elements in all the ethnic groups but differed according to structural organization and

its significance in the socio-political context within each ethnic group. For instance, while Ewes, Mole-Dagbon and Ga-Adangbes followed the patrilineal family system, the Akan followed matrilineal family system. However, among all these societies, the chief was the head or leader of the government “state” or community and chieftaincy originated from common sources: a person became a chief by virtue of being the leader of the group of first settlers; through conquest or through military gallantry. Persons who became chiefs through any of these avenues automatically transformed their families into royal lineages from which subsequent chiefs were selected. Moreover, the institution of chieftaincy was usually hierarchically patriarchal, with males dominating offices in line with the overall cultural and socio-political demands of the time.

There were different categories of chiefs. For instance, among the Akan, the largest tribe in Ghana, the belief was that state formation and its governance was a shared responsibility. A paramount chief (**omanhene**) headed each Akan state. He was considered as the owner of the traditional area. All divisional chiefs swore oath of allegiance to the paramount chief. Next to the paramount chief are the divisional chiefs. Below the divisional chiefs were the sub-divisional chiefs including headmen and council of elders. However, in the case of Asante, the level of authority stretches up to the Asantehene (**the king of the Asante people**) as the final authority. Among the Ewe, the highest political authority was the paramount stool occupied by the *fiaga* or “big chief.” There were sub-divisional chiefs (*dufi a*) who head areas known as the *du*. The smallest unit of the Ewe community was the clan (*fome*), each with its own head. In all the states in pre-colonial Ghana, the lower-level chiefs received instructions from the higher chiefs in all aspects of administration.

The office of the chief in pre-colonial Ghana was symbolized by a stool (or skin) and a sword. In fact, without a stool or skin there could be no chief in pre-colonial Ghana. Chiefs in northern Ghana sat on skins while their counterparts in the south sat on stools. They were the traditional symbols of authority, legitimizing the rightfully chosen occupant as the king or chief. The Akan stool, carved from an ordinary wood did not remain a mere wooden stool. It represented an important socio-political and spiritual symbol of chiefly authority. The stool was also a traditional image of tribal and ethnic solidarity. It represented the soul of the state whose safety and honour was to be guarded religiously. Perhaps the significance of stools in the political life of the Akan can best be explained by the value of the Golden Stool (Sika Dwa) to the Asante. The stool was cherished as the most sacred possession of the Asante nation which is never allowed to touch the ground. In it the nation’s soul, power, honour and welfare were believed to reside. Swords (*afena*) came second only to stools as crucial items of Akan regalia. Their most important political function is in the enstoolment of a paramount chief (omanhene), when the ruler-elect holds a specific sword while taking his oath of office.



Golden Stool



Elephant Stool



Akrofena Sword

Kingmakers always selected chiefs, yet with different procedures among the various ethnic groups in pre-colonial Ghana. Among the Akan, chiefs were chosen by a select group of kingmakers, made up of representatives of every clan within the stool's jurisdiction. The queen mother from royal lineages or families nominated candidates for chiefs. Ewe chiefs were elected from royal clans. In certain areas where there was more than one royal clan, each clan formed a "gate" and the stool rotated among them. The election of a chief (**mantse**) among the Ga tribe was done through two elections. The first was the election of a nominee by the **council of royals (dzase) who constitute kingmakers of the Ga**. The nominee **was then presented to the military officers of the town, collectively known as the manbii, for approval**. Only the *manbii* had the power to elect or reject a proposed candidate for chief. However, among the main ethnic groups in northern Ghana – the Mole-Dagbon, Grusi, Gurma, and Mande-Busanga – princes contesting the position of chief were required to appear individually before a college of kingmakers to make a claim to the "skin" office of chief. Factors considered by the kingmakers included seniority, character, and popularity of the candidate. Some groups also practiced the Gate System, alternating the selection of the chiefs between competing gates or eligible families of royal lineage.

Within some ethnic groups in Ghana, the traditional power structure further divided authority between a chief and a high priest. For example, among ethnic groups in Northern Region, the earth priest (**tengdana**) was the custodian of the land. The *tengdana* was chosen by divination and consultation of a soothsayer, rather than by a group of kingmakers, because of his spiritual role. Similar examples are found among the Ga-Dangme people of the Greater Accra region and the southeastern part of the Eastern Region. Oral traditions confirm that initially the Ga and the Adangbe did not have chieftaincies and were instead ruled **by priestly heads (wulomei), assisted by hunters**. Chieftaincy was introduced in these tribes through contact with other ethnic groups such as the Akan.

Once installed, a chief perform military, religious, judicial, administrative, legislative, economic and cultural functions. These functions were replicated at the appropriate level of the traditional governance. The chief performed the administrative and legislative functions through the traditional council. As head of the council, the chief presided at its meetings to take decisions affecting the state. The decisions became customary laws. Compared with their counterparts today,

chiefs in pre-colonial Ghana were more involved in their military function. The chief in traditional Ghanaian societies physically led his people in war and became the primary target for the enemy, since his capture meant the surrender of his military forces. Judicial functions were exercised in three jurisdictional tiers: the village chief was subject to a senior or divisional chief, who in turn was subject to a paramount chief. Village courts had original jurisdiction in petty civil and criminal offenses within their geographical limits. Divisional chiefs exercised appellate powers in disputes decided by the village or town courts within their jurisdiction. The paramount chief or king's court was at the apex of the system, with the greatest geographical jurisdiction and appellate powers. In all these, cases were heard in public, elders and heads of families sometimes served as advocates or 'lawyers' and judgment was agreed upon by the chief and the elders and endorsed by the people in court at each occasion. Common punishments available to the chief included, the death penalty, removal from office, disqualification to hold public office, exile, imposition of fines and ostracism.

Although chiefs enjoyed extensive powers they are not autocrats. Chiefs' powers were kept in check by customary laws, including taboos to which they were subject. A council of elders also provided an institutional check on chiefs who sought absolute powers. The chief sought and obtained counsel from his traditional council. In fact, the oath of office that the chief swears during his installation includes a declaration that he will never act contrary to the advice given him by the traditional council. The council drew its membership from mainly of statesmen, divisional heads and those advanced in age. Similarly, chiefs acted as custodians, not personal owners, of the land and community's property. As such, chiefs could dispose of land or community property only with the consent of at least a majority of the council of elders. The grounds for removing a chief from office were many and the process not too difficult. A chief could be destooled for failing to take the advice of the council. If a chief was destooled, the stool, its regalia and paraphernalia were taken from him. In addition, despite the selection of chiefs and other figures of authority from designated families or clans, the interest of the common people was never ignored. The selection of leaders relied essentially on the approval of the people through intensive consultation and examination of the track record of those eligible.

Beyond the traditional council, women (queen mothers) played a critical role in traditional governance in Ghana. **In Dagomba, the chiefs of Kukulogu, Kpatuya and Gundogu are all females. The Gundo-Na (Chief of Gundogu) is the senior amongst them. All the female chiefs in the three towns happen to be the daughters of the overlord of Dagbon (Ya-Na).** In the Akan political hierarchical order, the next most important person after the paramount chief was the queen mother. She was not just a sign of female authority but was usually the mother of the reigning king and also regarded as the mother of the royal lineage. Assessing the significance of the role of the queen mother in the Akan chieftaincy setup Odotei (2006) reveals, she was originally and historically the overall leader of the tribe, but delegated a male member of the royal lineage to be the chief. In fact, when a chief's stool became vacant, the queen mother presided over until a new chief was selected, and in installation of the new chief, she nominated a candidate from among those who were qualified to the elders of the royal family and the kingmakers. She was also an advisor to the chief

on matters of tradition and religion as well as on secular affairs. Equally important was her responsibility for the welfare of women and domestic affairs in her domain. Covering a broad range of social relations including conflict resolution. They resolved cases involving women, domestic affairs, and even issues of everyday life and commerce.

Pre-colonial Ghanaian societies had established procedures for removing a chief. The council of elders were usually responsible for any misbehavior of the chief while the linguist took the blame for every miscommunication or 'bad' word that came from the chief. This notwithstanding, among the Akan for example, provisions were made for the destoolment of the chief for any private or public misbehavior. Breaking a taboo, adultery, selling slaves who were considered as heirloom to the stool and using the oath unreasonably were among the significant reasons or charges that can lead to the destoolment of a chief. When circumstances point to violations on the part of a chief on any of the above, formal allegations were leveled against the chief and he is given enough time to publicly respond to them. Commoner could not bring destoolment charges, but the kingmakers did. In addition, a queen mother did not destool a chief because she was the "mother" of the chief. Therefore, responsibility for the removal of a chief falls to the sub-chiefs.

Chieftaincy institution remains one of the most resilient institutions of Ghana. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana guarantees the institution of chieftaincy together with its traditional councils as established at custom.

Social Organization of Ghana

Ghanaians had their own indigenous social organizations and set of beliefs, custom, practices and behaviours before any external interactions. Generally, the social system of indigenous Ghana includes religion, kinship system, festivals and rites of passage. Despite centuries of association with European Christians and Muslims, Ghanaians have retained much of these cultural heritages

Religion

Modern Ghanaians are predominantly believers in the Christianity and Islamic. However, both religions came to the people of Ghana due to foreign contacts. The traditional Ghanaian believed that the world of full of spirits and had indigenous Ghanaian or African religious heritage. Traditional Ghanaian religion is centred on the existence of one Supreme Being who is the creator of all things. The Supreme Being is referred to by the Akan as Nyankopon, Nyame, or by the Ewe as Mawu and Ga people as Nayomo. Below the Supreme Being were various gods, ancestors and even witchcrafts. The gods are divine beings or spirits of nature. They are believed to have special realm both physical and objects where they live. Shrines are often built at locations near the dwellings of the gods to provide a way for humans to contact. The ancestors are perhaps the most significant spiritual force. Each lineage reveres its important deceased members both individually or collectively. They are believed to exist in afterlife and benefit or punish their descendants, who must pray and sacrifice to them and lead virtuous lives. Witchcraft, magic and sorcery are viewed

as evil spirits. For instance, the witch was believed to be a dangerous person who could cause illness, accidents, cast spells to kill livestock or murder innocent people.

Succession

Traditionally, Ghanaian societies have two types of succession—the matrilineal and patrilineal. Ghanaian custom views children as members of either their mother's or father's lineage (extended family), but not both. Patrilineal custom charges a man's lineage with caring for his widow and children, while matrilineal custom places this burden on the widow's lineage—her father, brothers, and uncles. People whose tribal customs are matrilineal such as the Akan, define their lineages through their female bloodlines only; their mothers and maternal cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and so on are their blood kin; but their fathers and paternal cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and so on are not. Thus, political office and property was inherited through the female line. Under matrilineal lineage norms, a man's children are not his blood kin, and his heir should he die is his sister's son.

People whose tribal customs are patrilineal such as Ga-Adangbe, Ewe, and Mole-Dagbani define blood kinship as flowing through their paternal, but not maternal bloodlines. Under this system, the estate (property) of a dead father goes to his children, who are considered his blood kin.

Family

In Ghana, family is the centre of social life. The idea of a family extends beyond its conjugal members. A lineage or extended family is a far larger web of relationships in which all members have a common ancestor, either male or female. In the matrilineal societies, the family is made up of all the members of the maternal relations. On the other hand, among the patrilineal societies it involves members of the paternal relations. Both the matrilineal and the patrilineal societies recognise both maternal and paternal relations as blood relations. One's relationship with members of one's extended family may be as important as, and in some cases, more important than, one's relationship with one's spouses and children. Historically, lineage is bastions of emotional and financial support. The family also controlled social relationship between the people in the community and provided the means of socializing individuals with one another.

The head of the extended family was the lineage head (*abusuapanyin*) and was the custodian of the family property. He is also considered the link between the family, the gods, the ancestors and the entire community. The *abusuapanyin* is therefore expected to be well behaved, honest, just, very active and responsible. Every marriage should receive the sanction of the lineage-heads of both the man and the woman.

Marriage

Marriage is an important social institution in Ghana. Indeed, an individual was regarded as worthless and incomplete if he remained unmarried and childless. Pre-colonial Ghana society was

a polygamous one. Men were free to marry as many as they could afford to. Marriage in those days was not just a union or affair between two individuals but a contract between members of the two extended families.

Childbirth, Naming and Outdooring Ceremonies

In traditional Ghanaian society, a high premium is placed on child birth. Children are seen as the pride of every married couple. In Ghana, the expectation is that as soon as you are married, at least in the next year, the woman should become pregnant. The society thus turns its anger on couple who after years of marriage are unable to give birth. Ghanaians regarded a marriage that resulted in the birth of children as a successful one. Such marriage could end in divorce. For this reason, the birth of a child was a joyous occasion which was marked by special ceremonies.

Adolescence/Puberty Rites

After the child naming ceremony, puberty rites are the next set of rituals of social status transformation which children undergo in Ghanaian culture. The rites introduced the initiates to adult life. On reaching manhood, a boy's father procured for him his first gun. This was done to show that the boy had reached the age of bearing arms, and was liable to be called upon in time of war. From then the youth was deemed to qualify to pay taxes and other levies. Girls entered adulthood when they reached the age of puberty. On attaining the age of puberty in traditional Ghanaian society, a girl passed through some rites before she was regarded as having attained womanhood. From that time onward, she could marry.

Funerals

Death concludes the life cycle. It is considered a change from a physical life to a spiritual life. It is believed that the dead person leaves the physical world for the spiritual world. Therefore, when person dies, the traditional Ghanaian believes that, he is making a journey to the next world, where he will live as an ancestor. Death is said to be a bridge between the world of human beings and that of the spirits. Therefore, when a person dies, it is believed that he continues to have contact with the living. Therefore, the ceremonies and rituals performed for the dead emphasis the unbroken family relationship between the living and the dead. There were carefully planned ceremonies and rituals for the dead. For example, there are rituals for the burial, funeral, and the living dead. The traditional Ghanaian believes that unless the proper rites are performed the spirit of the dead will not be able to join the spirits of his ancestors. However, if the proper rites are performed, then he would be welcomed.

Festival

Festival among Ghanaians is a special occasion celebrated to mark an important event that has occurred in the past. Though it could differ from one community to the other, they all have political, social, economic, historical, religious and even moral significance for the people who celebrate

them. Some Ghanaian festivals have their origins in ancient times. They began as celebrations of important times of the year such as the beginning of the dry season and the gathering of the harvest before the beginning of the raining season. One of such festivals is the Homowo Festival celebrated by the Ga people to mark victory over hunger. The Bakatue Festival, celebrated by the chiefs and peoples of Elmina is another major Harvest Festival. Other festivals such as Hogbetsotso festival of the Anlo chiefs is celebrated to remember events in the history of a people's lives or key times in the lives of a people's history. Other festivals are celebrated to honour gods, leaders, among others. An example of such festival is the Akwasidae Festival celebrated by the Asante people for ancestral bonds and spiritual renewal.



The Asantehene, Osei Tutu II celebrates Adaekese



Girls performing the Abadza dance during the Hogbetsotso Festival

The Economy

Pre-colonial Ghanaians engaged in a wide variety of economic activities. The economic activities included agriculture, hunting, fishing, woodworking and trade. There were also crafts and other industries such as cloth weaving, pottery, brass works, and the mining and smelting of iron and gold.

Agriculture

Agriculture was the basis of the economy and the basic unit of production was the extended family. Each family constituted itself into a working unit or labor force and acted as an operative economic entity that produced goods and distributed the fruits of labor as its members saw fit, allowing for individual discretion and reward. Within the family, there was specialization of labor and sexual division of occupation. The major farming practice was mixed farming. Farmers cultivated maize, cassava, plantain and banana with cutlass and created mould with hoes to cultivate yam. Fruits such as pineapple, pawpaw, water melons, pears and guavas were grown throughout the country. Vegetables such as okro, onions, garden eggs, tomatoes and pepper were grown especially in the forested and southern of the country. Ghanaians also kept livestock like cattle, goats, sheep, pigs and fowls.

Fishing and Hunting

Fishing was the major economic activity of the people of the coastal towns and villages. At places such as Biriwa, Kromantse, Anomabo, Egyaa, Otuam, Dwamma, Apam, Winneba and Senya Breku fishing was done in the sea and lagoons. In the inland areas dwellers along the banks of rivers like Pra, Ofin, Birem, Volta and Lake Bosomtwe catch fish in these rivers. While men were involved in fish catching the women were responsible for processing, storage and trading. They used indigenously made implements like nets, traps and spears. Ghanaians also supplemented their meat requirements by hunting. They hunted for games included deer, hare, bush pigs, wolves, foxes, and occasionally leopard and elephants. Before the introduction of guns and gunpowders these game were caught by a team of hunters surrounding their game with clubs and beating them to death.

Salt Making

Salt in Ghana was either mined or extracted from lagoon. In communities such as Daboya in northern Ghana where salt was mined, salt-impregnated soil was scraped into containers, mixed with water and boiled until the water evaporated and salt crystals left. Among Fante towns of Elmina, Cape Coast, Winneba and Osu, salt was obtained by evaporation from salt pans and among other coastal villages such as Brenu Akyinmu near Elmina by boiling sea water to produce salt. Obtaining salt from lagoon or seawater was done mainly at the coast. In the production of salt, land around the lagoon was divided into plots, owned by families or individuals. A clay wall of about one to two feet high was built around each plot and several ponds were dug inside the plot. In addition to being a boundary demarcation the clay wall was to prevent fresh water from entering the ponds once the ponds had been filled up with the salty lagoon water. The water in the pond was then left to evaporate. In some of the ponds, the water dried up completely, while in others the salt settled at the bottom leaving clear water on top.

Collection

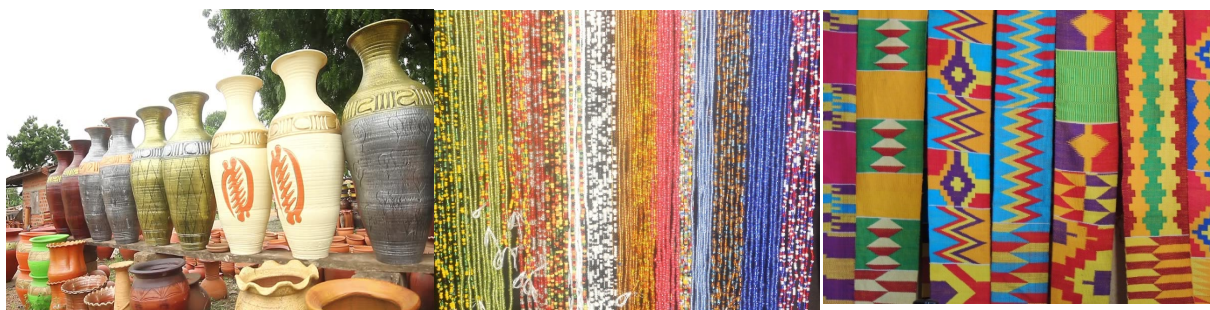
Another economic activity of pre-colonial Ghanaians was collection of wild food and other plants. In the savanna zone of northern Ghana, shea nuts, baobab, tamarind, dawadawa and kola nuts were collected. Shea butter was mainly used for cooking, making pomade, soaps and for medical purposes. The dawadawa was used as food additive to enhance taste and flavour. Tamarind on the other hand was widely used to provide a sweet and tart flavour to savour meat and vegetable dishes and in drinks. The kola nut served as an item of trade. It was exported in large quantities in both the inter-state and long-distance trade. They were exported as far as the Western Sudanese states. Beyond being used as stimulants, they were required for all important occasions and ceremonies such as marriage, naming and mortuary rites.

Mining

Ghana has a long tradition of gold mining and gold smiting. Due to the absence of modern industrial technology for mining gold was obtained by the local people using purely traditional methods and equipment. Gold was usually obtained from alluvial and surface deposits by digging the earth from the river or stream with an iron pick or hoe, washing the earth in a pan, throwing away the non-auriferous deposits and collecting the gold which had settled at the bottom of the pan. In the cases where the gold was located in deeper deposits, the local miner dug a shaft down to the mineral deposit by means of pick and hoes and collected the auriferous deposit and panned it with water.

The Craft Industry

The Ghanaian heartland is artistically rich. These craft industries included metal working, soap making, bead making leather working, cloth industry, pottery, among others. These industries did not only provide employment for majority of Ghanaians but a lot of income and foreign exchange were generated for the people of Ghana. The indigenous iron industry was particularly important for the development of other industries and agriculture. It was even common for traditional rulers to gather together and relocate the most skilled crafts people from the regions to craft villages. Villages specialised in the production of particular crafts to provide royal regalia and paraphernalia, as well as to supply the everyday needs of the traditional rulers and their courts. The Kente was the most celebrated of the entire textile used in Ghana. Designed with traditional symbols conveying meanings, they were dyed in different colours and used by the people to express their profound thoughts.



Pottery

Waist Beads

The Kente Cloth

Trade

Trading was an important economic activity in Ghana. There was intra-state, inter-state and long distance trade. Intra-state trade otherwise called local trade existed within a particular state or society. Here there were the local community marketing places where most of the local foodstuffs, crafts and a few necessities were sold. Regional markets including Akuse, Salaga, Edubiase,

Kumase, Abonse, Afidwaase and Kokote were established for the inter-state trade. Here agricultural, fishing and hunting products, salt, gold, products of craft industries and exotic goods were exchanged. Trade was also carried out between Ghana and her neighbouring peoples. There is strong archaeological and other documented evidence that the peoples in the region of modern Ghana were in contact with the Western Sudan, North Africa, the Middle East and Southern Europe. By the fifteen century a definite trade route linking the coast and forest of Asante with Jenne and other commercial centres in the middle Niger in the Western Sudan was in existence. The forging of the kind was the work of the Mande-speaking people whose trading activities cut across West Africa. Apart from the Western Sudan, the people of Ghana traded with people from North Africa, Ivory Coast and Benin.

Arrival of the Europeans

Early European Contact and the Slave Trade

Towards the second half of the fifteenth century, Portuguese explorers as part of the search for a sea route to the Far East landed in the region of modern Ghana. Joao de Santarem and Pedro Escobar working for the Lisbon merchant, Fernao Gomes were the first Europeans to arrive on the coast of Ghana in 1471. Gomes had been awarded a royal contract by King Afonso V of Portugal to search for alternative route to the Silk Road in exchange for a monopoly of trade with the newly discovered lands. On arrival, the Portuguese found that the coastline was rich with gold nuggets and gold dust. Because of this wealth and the willingness of the local people to exchange their gold for European goods, they named the region 'Cabo d'Oro' (the Gold Coast). Until 1598, Portugal was the only European nation that had a foothold in the region of Ghana. To consolidate the gold in the Gold Coast, in 1482 the Portuguese erected Fort São Jorge da Mina (Fort saint George at Elmina) to be the first permanent structure south of the Sahara built by Europeans. The purpose of the fort was to provide a warehouse for the merchandise, and to provide accommodation and immunity from hostile Africans and European intruders or competitors.

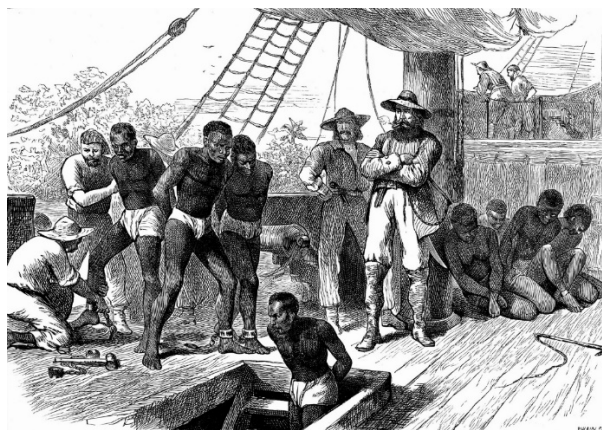
From 1598, the Dutch forced their way into the trade on the Gold Coast as well as the other areas south of the Saharan as far as the Far East. In 1612, after gaining permission of the local rulers through a treaty (the Treaty of Asebu) they built Fort Nassau near Mouri, on the site of an original Dutch trading post that had been burnt down by the Portuguese and others at Komenda and Kormantsi. On August 29, 1637 the Dutch West India Company which had been established to seize the Portuguese colonies in Africa and America took control of Elmina Castle. It took Fort St. Anthony in Axim in 1642. By 1643, the Dutch had almost succeeded in throwing out the Portuguese from the Gold Coast and West Africa. Subsequently, the Portuguese diverted their attention to Central Africa. With the Portuguese exit from West Africa in the early seventeenth century, the Dutch remained the most dominant European nation in the Gold Coast. By this time the Atlantic slave trade, which had gained ascendancy from the 1530's was in its prime.

Other European nationals, notably the English, Danes, French, Swedes and Germans also wanted to trade with the region of West Africa following the destruction of the Portuguese monopoly and the expulsion of the latter from the region. Many of these had established sugar cane plantations

in the West Indies that needed slave labour. In 1650, the King of the Fetu (in the Gold Coast) granted permission to an English sea-captain to build on the cape, and in the same year he also granted the same permission to Henry Caerlof, a Swiss man who had previously worked for the Dutch and who sailed under the Swedish flag. The Swedes were driven away by the Danes in 1657. The Brandenburgers from Germany also arrived in 1682 and built a fort at Princess Town in 1685 but left in 1709 due to poor trade.

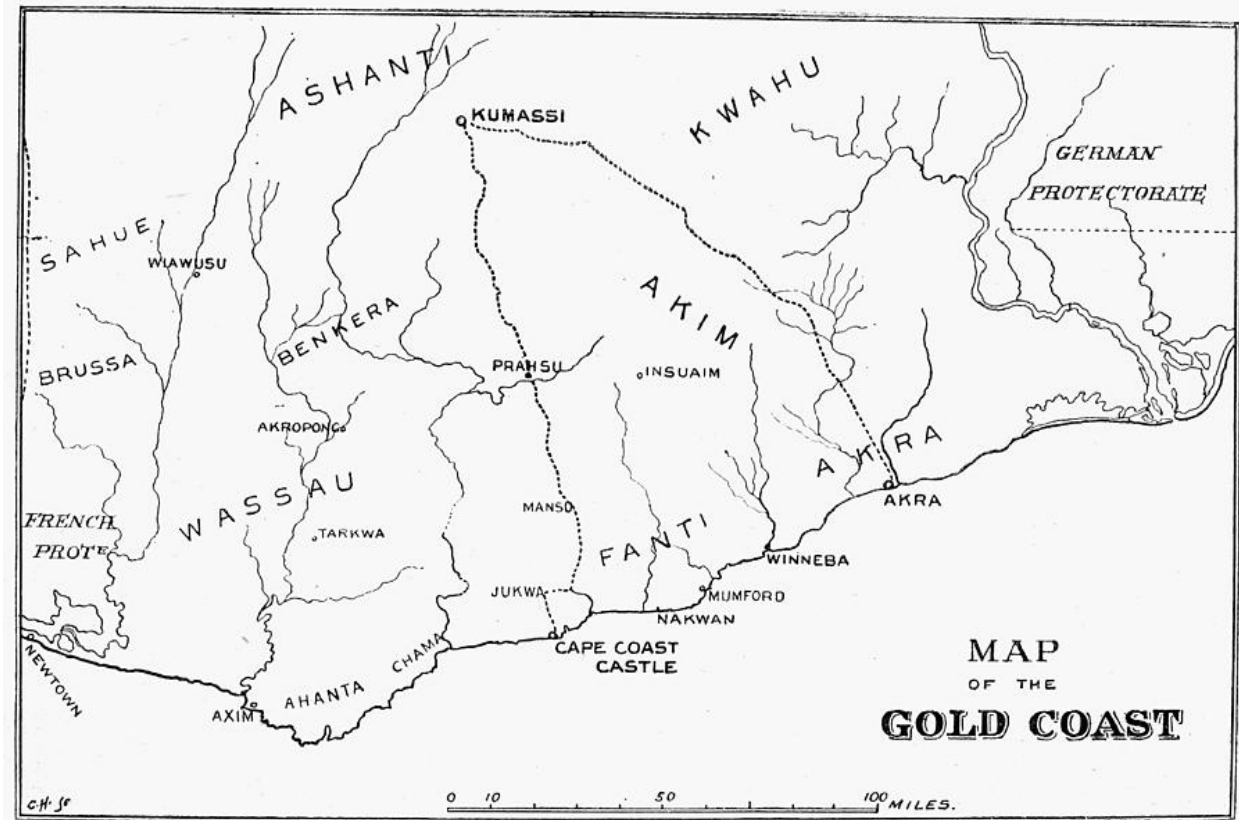
The English (British) were the first among the European powers to challenge the Dutch hegemony in Gold Coast and for that matter in West Africa. From 1662, the British made trade with Gold Coast a more regular affair. By 1673, it had completed the construction of James Fort in Accra. It began the construction of Cape Coast, which it completed in 1663. By the nineteenth century, Britain had emerged as the most powerful European trading nation on the Gold Coast. Both the Dutch and the British formed companies to advance their African ventures and to protect their coastal establishments. The Dutch West India Company operated throughout most of the eighteenth century. The British African Company of Merchants founded in 1750 pursued trading activities and defended British jurisdictions with home country's backing.

As late as the middle of the seventeenth century, major feature of European trade in the Gold Coast was gold not slaves. In fact. Reporting to the Dutch West India Company headquarters in 1659, General Valkenburg said, "The Gold Coast was significant for nothing but gold." However, by the end of the century, gold supply had declined dramatically due to insecurity created by the inland wars and competition between the Dutch and British over trade right in the region. As a result, by the end of the century gold trade was so much in decline that European traders had to look to the Gold Coast for slaves. During the eighteenth century, the Gold Coast exported more slaves than gold. Elmina Castle saw several owners during the course of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, including the Portuguese, Dutch, and English. By the eighteenth century, thirty thousand slaves on their way to the Americas passed through Elmina each year. Philip Curtin, a leading authority in the African slave trade, estimates that roughly 6.3 million slaves were shipped from the Gold Coast alone. The shift is confirmed by a Dutch employee who wrote in 1726 that gold had become so scarce that the Gold Coast should be renamed the 'Slave Coast.' The trade in slaves in the Gold Coast ended in 1833.



The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Establishment of British Colonial Rule in Ghana



The Map of Gold Coast, 1895

When the first Europeans, Portuguese arrived in the late fifteenth century, many inhabitants of the Gold Coast area were striving to consolidate their newly acquired territories and to settle into a secure and permanent environment. By the second half of the seventeenth century, three Akan states – Denkyira, Akyem and Akwamu – had dominated the hinterland of the Gold Coast. Yet, politico-commercial reasons the Asante had risen to dominate nearly the entire area of modern Ghana save the Fante Confederacy of states by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The creation of the Asante Union by the Asantehene, Osei Tutu in 1670 contributed significantly to the rise of the Asante in the next century.

However, the keen competition between the European companies and their desire to control as much of the trade as possible to the exclusion of other competitors, led them to interfere in the affairs of the local chiefs and states. Companies like the Dutch and English ones that were well organised and financially stable involved themselves in local affairs, aiding some states with firearms for use against others. Sometimes they induced the people of an area to support them in their rivalry with those European companies. This sometimes led to wars in which the local people

became involved. At other times, the Europeans particularly, the Dutch and English attacked some state or towns because it refused to act in compliance with their demands.

As time went by, the European companies began to consider the areas in which they traded as their “sphere of influence” or “protected area.” For example, the Danes, whose headquarters were at Christianborg, Osu, considered the people of Accra, Ada, Anlo, Krepi, Akuapem, Krobo and parts of Akyem as under their ‘protection.’ The Dutch also considered Elmina, Komenda, Assin and Axim as their sphere of influence. There was a gradual yet persistent extension of European jurisdiction in the coastal towns. The British governor of Cape Coast Castle tried in the middle of the eighteenth century to impose law and regulations on the local population. It became usual in the coastal towns for cases to be referred to the Europeans in the forts for judgment in the belief that they would be impartial and fair. By this process, British colonial rule was initiated in the Gold Coast.

From the nature of relations that developed over the years between the European companies and the coastal states and people, by early nineteenth century British had become the strongest European trading nation on the coast. A number of southern states in the Gold Coast were considered to be under British ‘protection.’ In all these, British trading forts and settlements on the Gold Coast had been vested in the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, a successor of the Royal African Company of England. British forts in the Gold Coast.

However, between 1821 and 1874 Britain gradually consolidated its rule in the Gold Coast. Determined to break the Asante’s domination, and enforce the abolition of the slave trade the British Government decided to end the rule of British traders in West Africa and to establish direct government control of their forts and castle on the Gold Coast in 1821. On July 3, 1821, the Company was dissolved and its forts and other possessions vested in the Crown. For this, the Governor of Sierra Leone, Sir Charles MacCarthy, was given additional responsibility of administering the British possessions on the Gold Coast. He arrived in Cape Coast on March 28, 1822 to assume government. To play active role in the politics of the land, in 1822, Sir MacCarthy appointed magistrates from among the local European merchants and established a Criminal Court and a petty debt court.

In 1828, the British Government handed over the administration of the territories to a Committee of Merchants selected by the British Government. Captain George Maclean was appointed President of the Committee of Merchants in October 1829 and assumed office on February 19, 1830. Although theoretically restricted to the forts themselves, the powers thus vested in the Committee of Merchants came to be used on a de facto basis in the neighbouring areas. In 1831, Sir George Maclean brokered agreement between Asante on one hand, and the British and their allies (southern neighbours) on the other hand on April 27, 1831. By the treaty, the Asante gave up any claim of control over the coastal states. In the more settled conditions that then prevailed, British justice came to be administered among the inhabitants of the southern states.

In 1843, the British Government decided to resume direct administration of British forts in Gold Coast to regularize the de facto jurisdiction. Accordingly, Commander Henry Worsley Hill was appointed as Lieutenant Governor in 1843 for Gold Coast. Maclean was made Judicial Assessor

and Stipendiary Magistrate. On March 6, 1844, Commander Hill signed an agreement with the Fante rulers at Cape Coast known as Bond of 1844. By this brief document, the chiefs acknowledged the power and jurisdiction that had been de facto exercised by Maclean among the Fante and at the same time empowered the British and their agents to work with the indigenous rulers in dealing with criminal cases. In effect, it signified the first official moves by British to assure herself of control over the Gold Coast. It also laid down the foundation for the official adoption of the British legal system in the coastal states.

In 1850, the Danish King ceded its forts together with various houses and plantations to the British Crown for a payment of £10,000. In the same year, the forts and settlements on the Gold Coast once again severed to be dependencies of the Colony of Sierra Leone. Accordingly, Gold Coast was given its own Governor, Legislative Council and Executive Council. Later in 1853, a Supreme Court was also established for Gold Coast. In 1856 by an Order in Council made under the British Settlements and Foreign Jurisdiction Acts, the areas in the Gold Coast under British protection were given formal recognition, under the name of the protected territories. By this ordinance, the kings of the protectorate lost their right to try civil or criminal matters arising within their territories. The Supreme Court and magistrates could try these matters without the co-operation of any native chief or authority. Where the jurisdiction could only be exercised with the co-operation of a native chief or authority, as in the trial of cases under the Bond of 1844, it remained within the province of the Judicial Assessor.

In 1860, the Dutch agreed to an exchange that would have transferred their territories east of Cape Coast to the British, and the British territories west of Cape Coast to the Dutch. Objections raised by the local population under British protection in the west to transferring their allegiance to the Dutch led to the abandonment of the scheme. It was however revived and carried through by a Convention signed on March 5, 1867. The transfers took place, but gave rise to much unrest and to the formation of the Fante Confederation in an attempt to preserve the unity and security of the coastal tribes. The unrest following the exchange of territory having convinced the Dutch that their position had become untenable, a Convention was signed at the Hague on February 25, 1871, whereby the King of the Netherlands transferred to the British Crown all the rights of sovereignty, jurisdiction and property which he possesses on the Coast of Guinea.

The signing of the treaty of Fomena was perhaps the most significant event that led to the establishment of British colonial rule in Southern Ghana. The war began on January 22, 1873, when the main Asante army crossed the River Pra. It ended, after a determined assault by Sir Garnet Wolseley and an army reinforced by troops from England, with the defeat of the Asante and the drawing up of the Treaty of Fomena on February 13, 1874. By which the Asantehene renounced his claim to Elmina and all other coastal territories. From this date, the Asante never invaded the southern Ghana again.

By a Royal Charter signed on July 24, 1874, under the British Settlements Act Britain converted her forts and settlements in Ghana together with Lagos into a Crown Colony and the states south of the Pra into a Protectorate. The proclamation of the forts and castles and the surrounding settlements as a colony meant that from 1874 they were under the complete control of the British government. By Protectorate the states south of the Pra were only dependent territories, they were

not annexed territories as the colony. In 1901, Asante and Northern territories were made British protectorates after the Asante were defeated in the Yaa Asantewaa War (1900-1901). By the close of the First World War all the territories now comprised in the Republic of Ghana came under the control of the British Crown.

Effects of the British Colonization of Ghana

The British conquest and subsequent colonization of Gold Coast came with major political, social and economic implications. The conquest led to the development of British judicial system in the Gold Coast. Earlier Ghanaians used customary laws and practices to settle disputes at indigenous courts comprising family court, village chief's court, divisional courts and the omanhene's court which served as the final court of appeal. The British however established magistrates and Supreme courts, which used English legal system to settle disputes. An Order in Council made in 1856 for instance made the kings of the protectorate lose their right to try civil or criminal matters arising within their territories. The Supreme Court and magistrates could try these matters without the co-operation of any native chief or authority.

The British conquest of the Gold Coast led to the introduction of British political institutions in country. In the indigenous political system, each ethnic group in the Gold Coast devised its own system of government. There were no written constitutions and procedures for government were established by custom and traditions. However, the establishment of Executive and Legislative Councils followed the British conquest of the Gold Coast. Individual particularly Europeans who owned no kingship or ancestry ties took over government positions and were able to dominate the civil service where they held the key posts.

The British conquest of Ghana led to subduing of some powerful states and kingdoms. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, nearly the entire area of modern Ghana, save the Fante Confederacy of states was under Asante's dominion. However, following the Asante crushing defeat in 1874, her military power became completely paralyzed and most of her vassal states broke away and unilaterally proclaimed their independence. Thus, the great Asante Empire had by 1874 been reduced into its original metropolitan Asante.

The conquest of Ghana led to British official interfering in chieftaincy in the country. The colonial government passed laws that empowered them to interfere in chieftaincy in Ghana. The Chiefs Ordinance of 1904 provided for the confirmation by the Governor as to whether a chief had been either installed or destooled in accordance with customary law. This gave the colonial Governor the final say in matters concerning chieftaincy. Earlier, some Ghanaian chiefs who challenged the whole basis and extent of British power and jurisdiction in Ghana were deposed or exiled. John Aggrey, the king of Cape Coast was for instance arrested and exiled him to Sierra Leone in December 1866. He was not allowed to return until March 1869 and then only as a private citizen. Arresting the Asantehene, Nana Agyemeng Prempeh in 1896 Governor Maxwell also nominated a committee of three Kumasi chiefs to administer affairs of Kumasi according to tradition under the guidance of the British Acting Resident.

British rule led to the creation of commercial agriculture in the Gold Coast. The agricultural activities of Ghanaians before the conquest were subsistence. However, the abolition of the slave

trade in 1833 by the British saw attempts to promote the cultivation of cash crops such as palm, cocoa and rubber. Between 1880 and 1896, for instance Governor Sir William Brandford Griffith imported cocoa pods into the country from Sao Tome. He also established a nursery at Aburi from which seedlings were supplied to the farmers. Under his direction, scientific information on the cultivation of cocoa was published for the guidance of farmers interested in cocoa farming. These developments made Ghana the world's number one producer of cocoa in 1911. Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB) was founded in 1947 to market the product. In 1951, revenue from cocoa was 60 million pounds. The development of commercial agriculture incorporated Ghana into the capitalist economic system.

There was also a revolution in mining during the colonial period. In gold mining for instance, earlier the activity was in the hands of the local people who used the traditional methods of panning and shallow digging. However, during the period of colonization there was scientific mining. Recognising the abundance of gold, diamond, bauxite and manganese in the country many European mining firms including the Swanzy Mines, Aboso Gold Mining Co., Gold Coast (Abontiakoon) Mining Co., the African Gold Coast Co., the Tarkwa Gold Mines Co., and the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation operated in the country. Their activities increased the production of gold in the country. By 1911, gold had taken the second spot on the country's exports list constituting 30 per cent of the nation's exports. Between 1946-1950 gold exports from country rose from 6 million pounds to 9 million pounds.

Again, modern transportation and communication system were introduced. Opening up plantations in the interior depended on adequate means of transport and communication to get the produce to the ports. Towards this goal, the British constructed railways and built roads to make business possible for the timber companies, trading companies and agricultural concession firms in the country. For instance, the opening of mining at Tarkwa and Obuasi led to the construction of railway lines to both areas in 1898 and 1902 respectively. The construction of the Tarkoradi harbour also started in 1921 and opened on April 3, 1928 to promote export and import trade while the West African Airways Corporation became operational in 1947.

Yet, British rule led to the collapse of many local arts and crafts industries in the Gold Coast. The economic ventures undertaken under the colonial authorities were mainly export-oriented to feed industries in Europe. Industrialization was ignored as the country relied on imported products from Europe. For example, in 1751, the British Board of Trade firmly instructed the English residents of the Cape Coast Castle to stop the Fante from cultivating cullion because 'the cultivation of agriculture and the promotion of industry among the people were contrary to the established policy of England. Local industries such as bark cloth and iron working faced a lot of competition from imported manufactured goods. As the local people came to prefer the cheap ready-made imported articles available on the market, the local artisans lost the initiative to produce items that remained unsold.

The British conquest led to the promotion the western culture and civilization in Ghana. Western formal education, medicine, religion, scientific methods into health care delivery, among others were introduced to the Gold Coast. In doing this, the Europeans looked down on all forms of African culture including art, dancing, music, marriage, festival, names and traditional religion.

So doing they promoted a sense of inferiority in the indigenous people who later adopted the same Eurocentric attitude towards their own traditional beliefs and practices. Consequently, the Gold Coasters adopted for instance, Christianity, Europeans way of dressing building, eating habits, names, among others.

The Growth of Nationalism and the End of Colonial Rule

It should neither be assumed that the indigenous people did not challenge the activities of the British nor that nationalism is new in Ghana. Ghanaian nationalism predates colonialism. The effective resistances put up against European colonisation by the Asante people suggests a very strong sense of national identity that was already in place. The Asante king, Nana Prempeh I declined the British offer of protection. He said that his kingdom wished to remain on friendly terms with all white people, and to do business with them, but he saw no reason why the Asante kingdom should ever commit itself to such a policy with the British government. The British had to exile the Asantehene, his family and other sub-chiefs to the Seychelles in 1901 before succeeding in breaking the Asante dominance. Similarly, in collaboration with educated Africans, John Aggrey, the King of Cape Coast challenged the whole basis and extent of British power and jurisdiction in the Gold Coast. In a letter to the Governor only a month after his enstoolment in 1865, he pointed out that Cape Coast 'in the eye of the law is not British territory.' He objected to cases from his court being sent on appeal to the British courts because his court 'existed before Cape Coast Castle itself was erected, and the ground' on which the castle stands was originally taken from my ancestors at an annual rent'. He also protested against the inhabitants of Cape Coast and other places being regarded as British subjects. Furthermore, he sent a delegation to England to appear on his behalf before the Select Committee of 1865. In Accra, three kings led the challenge to English authority in 1866. Cudjoe of James Town, Dowuonah of Christianborg and Takie of Dutch Accra refused to move from their encampment at Ada as ordered by the Governor.

Though these protests clearly demonstrate the nature of the difficulties that the British were facing, these were rather isolated and uncoordinated protests of individual chiefs with the active support of their people. With the growth of educated elites, opposition to colonial rule was coordinated with the formation of nationalist movements.

The Fante Confederation

The Fante Confederation, the earliest manifestation of Gold Coast nationalism was formed in 1868 by Fante chiefs with the support of the educated elites as a response to the increasing realization by the Fante from 1863 of the need to defend themselves against the might of Asante and the incipient political encroachments of British. The British interference was seen, first, in the usurpation of the judicial powers of the Fante kings by the British authorities and attempts in the 1850s to abolish African courts. The response to this was that no criminal or civil case was deemed to be beyond the jurisdiction of the Omanhene and most communities refused to refer their cases, no matter how serious they were, to the British authorities on the coast. They were concerned about getting back their judicial powers from the British. The imposition in the Poll Tax in 1852 without due reference to the people, arrest, removal from the stool, and exile to Sierra Leone, of King

Aggrey by Colonel Conran heightened the desire form the confederacy. The Confederacy succeeded in declaring itself independent of the British in August 1868. In addition, it created its constitution in 1871, a national assembly, confederate army, administrative system, and a national supreme court.

The Aborigines' Rights Protection Society (ARPS)

The Aborigines' Rights Protection Society was formed in 1897 in Cape Coast by the African intelligentsia. During its early years, its president was Jacob W. Sey, while J.P. Brown was the vice president. The central motivation for the formation of APRS was to oppose the drafted Lands Bill of 1894, as amended by colonial governor in 1897. The draft Bill published in 1894 sought to vest all unoccupied lands, forests and minerals in the Crown. Had the Lands Bill been passed, it would have allowed the colonial government to take over public lands in the Gold Coast. Apart from various petitions issued by the APRS, in 1898, the Society sent a delegation to England to meet directly with British officials to discuss problems of colonial rule, especially the Land Bill. The delegation was successful because the Colonial Office later asked the colonial government in the Gold Coast to abandon the Lands Bill, the Hut or Poll Tax and cancelled the Forest Ordinance of 1910. Again, it was through the Society's efforts that a more acceptable legislation, the Concessions Ordinance was introduced in 1900. This was to deal the growing problem of the indiscriminate granting of land concessions to expatriates.

As the Society became more powerful, it became the channel through which African opinion was heard. The Society also succeeded in forging close ties between the chiefs and the elite who presented a unified front in fighting for preservation of the rights and privileges of the people. And through its publication, *The Gold Coast Aborigines*, the Society educated readers on the implication of the various bills and ordinance.

National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA)

The National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) was formed in Accra in March 1920 by Joseph Ephraim Casely-Hayford, a Sekondi lawyer, educated in the Gold Coast and London. The Congress differed from the APRS in two main ways. First, NCBWA was composed of middle class persons and lacked the attachment to the chiefs. Second, the activities of NCBWA and demands went beyond the frontiers of the Gold Coast to the other British West African territories. Patterned in part on the formation of the Indian National Congress, that sought independence from Britain through national self-determination, the Congress was the first regional political movement in West Africa that attempted to reform the Crown Colony system through the combined efforts of the four British West African colonies of the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and the Gambia. The Congress held its first meeting in Accra from 11 to 29 March 1920 with fifty-two delegates from member countries. Eighty-two resolutions calling for major reforms in various areas were passed at the inaugural meeting.

In their respective countries, owing to the pressure mounted by the branches of the Congress on the governments for reforms, the Colonial Administration introduced limited constitutional reforms. The principle of elective representation was for the first time introduced into the 1922 Constitution of Nigeria by Governor Clifford, the 1924 Constitution of Sierra Leone and in Ghana

by Governor Guggisberg in 1925. It became the major attempt to translate into actual practice of pan-Africanism, which sought to unite the African elite to fight for a common cause. The Congress succeeded in getting established the West African Court of Appeal to serve the four Colonies and higher education in the respective member countries. Unfortunately, the death of Casely-Hayford in 1930 brought the movement to its knees.

Gold Coast Youth Conference

By the late 1920s, a number of literary and social clubs, ethnic unions and association had been formed in the main towns of the country: Accra, Cape Coast, Sekondi, Kumase, and Bekwai. The founders and members were mostly elementary school leavers, teachers, catechists, clerical employees of the trading companies and civil servants. These unions had been formed for essential social, educational and entertainment purposes. J.B. Danquah, who had been the Vice-President of West African Students Union (WASU) in London, called for the creation of a national association of youth to study the problems facing the country. With the support of other former WASU members who had also returned home especially J. E. Casely-Hayford, the Youth Conference Movement was started in 1929. The existing societies, clubs and unions met together periodically. J. B. Danquah became the General-Secretary of the Conference in 1930.

The first principal aim of the group was to heal the break between the chiefs and the intelligentsia which had developed in the 1920s and to bring those two groups and the youth together. Second, it sought to inculcate in the youth the essentials of development and to exchange views on such matters affecting the vital interests of the country to ensure rapid development and progress on healthy lines. In addition, it succeeded in reviving and extending the scope of the agitation of the nationalists against the colonial system. The Conference was able to persuade the Asantehene and the Asante Confederacy Council to accept the 1946 Constitution of the Gold Coast that advocated the union of Asante and the Colony into a single legislative council. However, by 1939, the Youth Conference had become a movement of only the highly educated people and the chiefs. The youth had left the movement.

The United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC)

The United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) was the first mass political party to be formed in the Gold Coast to spearhead social agitation for independence. The Convention was formed on the suggestion of George Alfred Grant (Paa Grant), an Nzima timber merchant affected by the preferential treatment being given to his European competitors. After months of preparation, the UGCC was formally inaugurated on August 4, 1947. The executives of the Convention were George Alfred Grant-Founder (President and Financier), J. B. Danquah and Samuel Robert Blay (Vice President) and Awoonor Williams (Treasurer). Other prominent members were Edward Akuffo Addo, Emmanuel Odarkwei Obetsebi Lamptey (Liberty Lamptey), J. W. de Graft Johnson, E.A. William Ofori Atta, Kobina Kessie, Francis A. Williams, Ashie Nikoe, John Ayew, John Tsiboe, and Ako Adjei, being the youngest was appointed Secretary. Later in the year, Kwame Nkrumah as a full-time General Secretary and Principal Organizer of the Convention. The sole purpose of the Convention was ensuring that ‘in the shortest possible time the direction and control of the Government shall be passed into the hands of the people and their chiefs.’

Convention Peoples Party (CPP)

The Convention People's Party (CPP) was formed in Accra on 12 June, 1949 by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah after he had resigned as secretary of the UGCC due to differences with the working Committee. Its main goal was to achieve immediate self-government for the Gold Coast. The formation of the CPP marked a turning point in the fight to achieve independence for the Gold Coast. The CPP opened branches throughout the country. As a mass party, the CPP was able to whip person of varied social statuses in the struggle for independence. The Convention Peoples Party under Kwame Nkrumah won all the popular elections in the Gold Coast before independence in 1957. In fact, after winning the first general election in the Gold Coast in 1951, Kwame Nkrumah as leader of the CPP was appointed Leader of the Government Business in a transitional arrangement. He became the Prime Minister in 1952 and on July 10, 1953, Kwame Nkrumah tabled a motion in the Legislative Assembly on constitutional reform, popularly known as the "Motion of Destiny" in which Nkrumah demanded for the Gold Coast to obtain self-government within the Commonwealth.

On August 3, 1956, Nkrumah tabled a motion for independence within the Commonwealth in the Legislative Assembly that was unanimously accepted. Meeting the requirements for independence, the British Government announced on September 18, 1956 that 'subject to Parliamentary approval Her Majesty's Government intends that independence should come about on 6 March 1957.' The date, March 6, was selected in accordance with local wishes. It is a date of local historical significance, being the 113th anniversary of the signing of the Bond of 1844 from which British jurisdiction generally derives. On April 20, 1956, the Nkrumah Government issued a White Paper containing proposals including among others renaming Gold Coast as "Ghana" granting independence within the Commonwealth. The British Government gave independence to Ghana on March 6, 1957 ending colonial rule in the country.

Ghana's Founding Fathers in the Liberation Struggle

Kwame Nkrumah declared and signed Ghana's Independence Declaration. Yet, Ghanaians acknowledge the contributions made by numerous nationals in the liberation struggle. In fact, on July 10, 1953, in an Independence Motion to the Legislative Assembly, Kwame Nkrumah made a case for the recognition of Ghanaians of varied status who laid the national traditions and opened the path for independence.

Today, Ghanaians have not agreed on the individuals who constitute the founding father(s) of the country. In 2009, the President of Ghana, John Evans Atta Mills declared Kwame Nkrumah's birthday, September 21, as a statutory Founder's Day in Ghana. The President argued that Kwame Nkrumah was the first President of the Republic and for his "selfless leadership still remains a point of reference in our desire to build a better Ghana." However, to recognize the collective efforts of forebears towards Ghana's independence President Akufo-Addo in 2017 proposed August 4 the Founders Day of Ghana. The President proposed August 4 because both the Aborigines Rights Protection Society and the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) were formed on that date.

Despite, the argument, George Alfred Grant and the six most active members of the Working Committee of the UGCC who are collectively referred to as the “Big Six” are highly celebrated by Ghanaians for their role in the liberation struggle. After all, UGCC was the first standard political party to have been formed in the country. The leadership of the UGCC – Dr. J.B. Danquah, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Messrs Edward Akuffo Addo, Emmanuel Odarkwei Obetsebi–Lampsey, William Ofori Atta and Ako Adjei were accorded the title “Big Six” for the role they played in the February 1948 riots in the Gold Coast. The riots followed shooting of three unarmed members of the Gold Coast ex-servicemen’s Union – Sergeant Adjetey, Corporal Attipoe and Private Odartey Lampsey – who were on a peaceful march to the colonial seat of government at Christiansborg Castle Accra, to present a petition to the Governor, Sir Gerald Creasy for unfulfilled wartime promises on February 28, 1949. It became a milestone in struggle for independence in the Gold Coast. The UGCC was blamed and arrested by the colonial government for the disturbances.



George Grant

Alfred George Grant, better known as Paa Grant was the Chairman of the UGCC. The man some call the ‘father’ of Gold Coast politics was born on August 15, 1878, in Beyin, Western Nzema, into an influential merchant family. Between 1914 and 1919, he chartered ships to transport timber to Britain and the USA. He opened his own offices in London, Liverpool and Hamburg between 1920 and 1922, and in the Gold Coast, he expanded operations to Dunkwa, Sekondi and Akim Abuakwa. In 1926, he was appointed to the Legislative Council, representing Sekondi. Paa Grant is noted to have visited by J.B Danquah on the need to form a political party to demand independence. In 1947, on the counsel of Dr Ebenezer Ako Adjei, Paa Grant provided passage money to Kwame Nkrumah to return to the Gold Coast to take up an appointment as the General Secretary of the UGCC. Paa Grant died on October 30, 1956, at the age of 78.



J.B. Danquah

Nana Joseph Kwame Kyeretwie Boakye Danquah (December 21, 1895 –February 4, 1965) was a Ghanaian freedom fighter, Pan-Africanist, Statesman, prolific scholar, historian, poet and journalist. Dr. Danquah played a significant role in pre- and post-colonial Ghana as the founder of United Gold Coast Convention. He was the continental African to receive a doctorate in law from the University of London and also became the first president of the West African Students' Union which was the leading African organization involved in struggle against imperialism in Africa. He helped found the Gold Coast Youth Conference. Danquah became a member of the Legislative Council following the 1951 general elections. The Watson Commission of Inquiry into the 1948 Accra riots described Dr. J.B. Danquah as the “doyen of Gold Coast politicians; the man at the back of nearly all political movements; the man from a famous chiefly family who but for accident of birth might have been a notable chief himself.”



Edward Akufo-Addo

Edward Akufo-Addo (26 June 1906 – 17 July 1979) was a Ghanaian politician and lawyer. He was a member of the “Big Six” leaders of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), and one of the founding fathers of Ghana who engaged in the fight for Ghana’s independence. From 1949 to 1950, he was a member of the Gold Coast Legislative Council and the Coussey Constitutional Committee. Akufo-Addo was a Supreme Court Judge (1962–64). He became the Chief Justice (1966–70) and later President (1970–72) of the Republic of Ghana.



Obetsebi-Lamptey

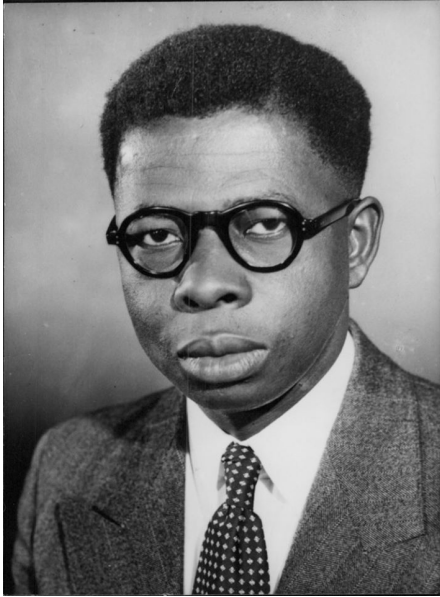
Emmanuel Obetsebi-Lamptey (April 26, 1902 – January 29, 1963) was one of the founders and leaders of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) known as “The Big Six”. After his elementary education, Obetsebi-Lamptey was employed as a shorthand typist by A. J. Ocansey, a prosperous merchant from Ada, a port east of Accra at the mouth of the Volta River. In 1923 Obetsebi-Lamptey passed his civil service examination and became a clerk in the Customs and Excise Department. He worked in Accra until 1930 and in Takoradi until 1934, when he left for

the United Kingdom to study law. He graduated LL.B., and was called to the Bar at the Inner Temple in 1939. By then World War II (1939-45) had begun, and he stayed and worked in England, taking an active part in student politics and in the agitation for colonial freedom. In 1947, he was returned unopposed to the Legislative member for the Accra municipal area. His fiery oratory and fi opposition to the colonial administration won him the title “Liberty Lamptey.”



William Ofori Atta

Nana William Ofori Atta (October 10, 1910 –July 14, 1988), popularly called “Paa Willie”, was a founding member of the United Gold Coast Convention and was one of “The Big Six”. He won one of the Akim Abuakwa seats during the 1951 Gold Coast election. He later became the leader of the United Party. During the second republic (1969-1972), he was Minister for Education and then Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Progress Party government. Ofori Atta stood for president in the 1979 Ghanaian presidential election on the ticket of the United National Convention. He became chair of the Council of State for the Third Republic.



Ebenezer Ako-Adjei

Ebenezer Ako-Adjei (June 17, 1916 – January 14, 2002) was also a founding member of the United Gold Coast Convention and one of the “Big Six.” From June 1937 to December 1938, he was a Second Division Clerk in the Gold Coast Civil Service. However, in December the same year, he resigned from the position to travel to the USA to attend Lincoln University, Pennsylvania. He returned to Ghana as a lawyer and a veteran of the post-war political agitation among Africans in Britain to end colonialism in Africa. When the UGCC was inaugurated, he became one of the leading members and when the Accra branch of the Congress was inaugurated on August 22, 1947 he was elected Secretary. Ako-Adjei recommended Kwame Nkrumah for the position of a full-time general-secretary of the UGCC. When the Ghana Congress Party was formed in 1952, he became its Secretary. A year later, Ako-Adjei joined the Convention Peoples Party.



Kwame Nkrumah

Kwame Nkrumah (September 21, 1909 – April 27, 1972), the first prime minister (1957-1960) and president (1960-1966) of Ghana. In 1935, Nkrumah left for the United States where he attended

Lincoln University (1935-1939) and the University of Pennsylvania (1939-1943). In 1945, arrived in London with the aim of studying Law and completing thesis for a Doctorate but met George Padmore. The two as Co-Political Secretaries helped to organize the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, England. In 1947, Nkrumah returned to the Gold Coast and became general secretary of the newly-founded United Gold Coast Convention. However, in 1949 Nkrumah split with the organization over its political objectives and formed the Convention People's Party (CPP). Dr. Nkrumah declared "positive action" on January 8, 1950. Dr. Nkrumah was arrested on January 21, 1950, tried for inciting an illegal strike and sedition for an article in the Cape Coast Daily Mail and sentenced to three years imprisonment. While in prison, Nkrumah led the CPP to win the February 1951 elections. He was freed to form a government, and he led the colony to independence as Ghana in 1957. In 1963, he and other African leaders formed the Organization of African Unity. In 1966, Nkrumah's government was overthrown by a coup d'état while he was on a trip to Beijing, China. Kwame Nkrumah remains a towering figure in African history.

Summary: Chronology of Key Events in Ghana before Independence

13th century – The Mole-Dagbani (first on the scene), along with the Akan, the Ga and the Ewe, made their appearance in the region of modern Ghana.

1471 – The Portuguese arrived in the Gold Coast as intermediaries, bringing slaves and other goods from Senegal and Benin in order to sell them to the Asante and other local people.

1482 – Elmina Castle in the Gold Coast was built by Portuguese traders. It later became a slave holding castle.

1637 – The Dutch attacked and captured Elmina (in the Gold Coast), which up to that point was the centre of Portuguese activity in West Africa.

1650 – The King of the Fetu (in the Gold Coast) granted permission to an English sea-captain to build on the cape, and in the same year he also granted the same permission to Henry Caerlof, a Swiss man who had previously worked for the Dutch and who sailed under the Swedish flag.

1670 – Asante, a West African chiefdom (later part of the Gold Coast), prospered from trade of cola nuts, gold and slaves.

1697 – Osei Tutu, the Asantehene, created Asante Union.

1701 – 1800 – The Asante kingdom became powerful.

1833 – The slave trade in the Gold Coast ended.

1874 - British proclaim coastal area a crown colony.

Late 1400s - mid-1800s - Millions of West Africans are captured and sent as slaves to the Americas and the Caribbean.

1925 – First legislative council elections in the Gold Coast take place.

1948 – Rioting after British colonial police kill three Gold Coast Second World War veterans during a protest march demanding compensation for their war service.

1948 – The Watson Commission was set up to investigate the causes of the riots and to make appropriate recommendations to avoid the recurrence of such incidents in the Gold Coast.

1949 – The Coussey Constitutional Committee was appointed to draw up a new constitution that would provide for a broad participation by the privilege sections of the population in governing the Gold Coast

February 11, 1951 – The Convention People’s Party, led by Kwame Nkrumah, won the Gold Coast election.

Jun 15, 1954 – The Convention People’s Party, led by Kwame Nkrumah, won the Gold Coast election.

1956 – Gold Coast was renamed Ghana

March 6, 1957 – Ghana became the first black sub-Saharan Africa state given independence by Britain.