

SECTION

4

**SOCIO-CULTURAL
AND POLITICAL
ORGANISATION
OF STATES AND
KINGDOMS IN PRE-
COLONIAL GHANA**



STATES AND KINGDOMS IN PRE-COLONIAL TIMES

Emergence of Complex States

Introduction

Welcome to section 4 of this material. In this section, we will explore relevant historical sources in the environment to reconstruct the unique socio-cultural, political, and scientific systems of selected indigenous Ghanaian states and kingdoms and compare with contemporary Ghanaian society. Our focus is to analyse how these systems contributed to the growth and development of pre-colonial Ghanaian states and kingdoms.

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Analyse the socio-cultural organisation of the major kingdoms in Pre-Colonial Ghana.
- Examine the political organisation of states and kingdoms in Pre-colonial Ghana.

Key Ideas

- **Family** is a social unit consisting of individuals related by blood, marriage, or adoption, often living together and providing emotional, economic and social support to each other.
- **Kinship** is the connections and relationships between family members and relatives.
- **Inheritance** is the process by which property, titles, debts, rights and obligations are passed from a dead or living person to another person who is alive.
- **Patrilineal** is a family system in which ancestry and inheritance are traced through the father's line.
- **Matrilineal** is a family system in which ancestry and inheritance are traced through the mother's line.
- **Naming Ceremony** is a significant rite of passage marking the formal introduction of a newborn into the community.
- **Puberty Rites** are significant cultural practices that mark the transition from childhood to adulthood.
- **Music genres** refer to the categories or styles of music based on their sounds, rhythms, instrumentation, and cultural context.
- **Centralised states** are states that had identifiable or distinct states or governments.
- **Non-centralised States** are states with no identifiable or distinct states or government. They may be called stateless, non-centralised or non-state societies.

FAMILY STRUCTURE, KINSHIP AND INHERITANCE SYSTEM IN PRE-COLONIAL GHANA

In pre-colonial Ghana, family was the heart of social life. But what did “family” really mean back then? It was much more than just parents and their children. Pre-colonial Ghanaian societies, including the Gonja, Ewe, Ga-Adangme, Mole-Dagbani, and Akan, were primarily organised around extended families. Family in pre-colonial Ghana referred to a larger network of relatives beyond just the immediate nuclear family of parents and children. This network included various kinship ties and encompassed multiple generations to include parents and their children, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, great-grandparents, great-aunts and uncles, second cousins and other more distant relatives.

The extended family structure in pre-colonial Ghana was either Matrilineal or Patrilineal.



Figure 4.1: Group Portrait of Ghanaian Extended Family

Matrilineal Societies

In matrilineal societies, the family included everyone related through the mother. Think about all your aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents on your mother’s side. They were all considered your immediate family. Name all your relatives on your mother’s side. Imagine if they were all living close to you and were part of your daily life! In these societies, property and inheritance were often passed down through the maternal line. This means that children would inherit from their mother’s family.

Activity 4.1

Discuss with your elbow partner how the matrilineal system affected the roles and relationships within the family.

Patrilineal Societies

On the other hand, in patrilineal societies, the family was made up of everyone related through the father. This included all the relatives on your father's side.

In patrilineal societies, inheritance and property were usually passed down through the father's line. Sons would inherit from their fathers.

Now think about it, how might this influence the way families lived and worked together?

Different ethnic groups in Ghana had their own unique ways of organising their families. Some focused on maternal relatives, while others focused on paternal ones.

The diagram below shows the type of family structure practised among different ethnic groups in Ghana.

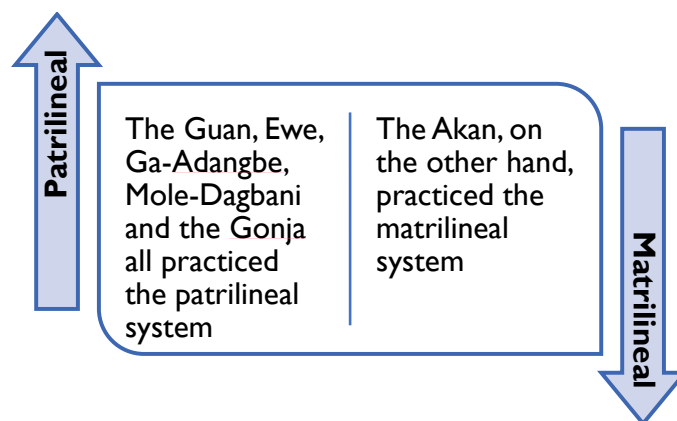


Figure 4.2: Type of family structure practised among different ethnic groups in Ghana

Activity 4.2

Sketch a family tree from your father's side. How many people would be part of your family if you lived in a patrilineal society?

Activity 4.3

Watch the documentary on Akan Matrilineal inheritance and complete the following tasks:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeaNpfze7D0&pp=ygUhUHJLLWNvbG9uaWFsIGluaGVyaXRhbmNlIGluIEdoYW5h>

1. While watching the documentary, fill in this observation guide:
 - a. Key Features of the System:
 - List three main characteristics
 - Note how property was transferred
 - Identify key family members involved
 - b. Social Structure:
 - Role of the mother's lineage
 - Position of children in inheritance
 - Rights and responsibilities of fathers
 - c. Interesting Points:
 - Note any surprising facts
 - Write down examples given
 - Record any challenges mentioned
2. After watching the documentary, answer these questions:
 - a. How did the matrilineal system work in practice?
 - b. What were its advantages and disadvantages?
 - c. Why was this system important to Akan society?
 - d. How did it affect family relationships?
 - e. What aspects of this system can you observe in modern Akan communities?

Activity 4.4:

1. Compare patrilineal and matrilineal systems as practised in pre-colonial Ghana. What were the benefits and challenges of each? Present your answer in the table below:

Compare		Contrast		Benefits		
	Matrilineal system of inheritance	Patrilineal system of inheritance	Matrilineal System	Patrilineal System	Matrilineal System	Patrilineal System
1.						
2.						
3.						
Challenges:						

2. Using the internet, library or by conducting interviews in your community, compare and contrast the kinship systems of different ethnic groups (eg. Akan, Mole Dagbani, Gonja, Ewe). Present your feedback in a written report in class.

Hints: You may consider some of the following general points:

- Form of inheritance
- Role of women in decision-making, ownership of property and inheritance
- The role of men in property ownership, decision making and inheritance

3. Imagine you are living in a patrilineal society. Write a diary entry about a day in your life, focusing on the skills and responsibilities you have learned from your father.

Hints: You may consider the following points as guides:

- Leadership
- Gender roles
- Decision making
- Arts and Crafts
- Inheritance decisions

rites of passages I (naming ceremonies in pre-colonial Ghana)

In pre-colonial Ghana, the birth of a child brought great joy and marked the success of a marriage. Ethnic groups, such as the Akan, Mole-Dagbani, Ewe, Ga-Adangme, Guan and Gonja each practised distinct naming ceremonies that reflected their cultural values.

For the first seven days after birth, the baby remained indoors. During this period, the Akan referred to the baby as ‘Ohoho’, whilst the Ewe called it ‘Amedzro’ - both terms meaning ‘visitor’ or ‘stranger’. This practice stemmed from the belief that the newborn was still connected to the spirit world.

The initial rituals began with a ceremonial bath for the baby, followed by an elderly woman burying the umbilical cord and placenta. The formal naming ceremony occurred on the eighth day, marking the child’s entry into the community. Among the Akan, for instance, both families gathered as an elder from the paternal family conducted the ceremony. They poured libation to thank the Creator and seek the ancestors’ blessings and protection.

A significant ritual involved the elder dipping his finger in water and alcohol while saying “wo se nsu a, nsu” and “wo se nsa a, nsa” (if you say water, then it must be water; if you say alcohol, then it must be alcohol). This ritual emphasised the importance of truthfulness in the child’s life.

These ceremonies served multiple purposes: they united families, welcomed the child into society, preserved cultural heritage, taught moral values, and provided an occasion for community celebration. If a child died before the eighth day, there was no formal mourning, as the baby was still considered a visitor from the spirit world.

Activity 4.5

1. With 2 or 3 of your friends, discuss the common elements found across different ethnic groups’ naming ceremonies. What might these similarities tell us about Ghanaian cultural values?
2. Debate: “Traditional naming ceremonies remain relevant in modern Ghana.” Present arguments for and against this statement.

Arguments FOR	Arguments AGAINST

Activity 4.6

Create a comparison chart showing specific cultural practices and symbolic items used by the following ethnic groups:

	Akan	Mole-Dagbani	Ewe	Ga
Timing of ceremony				
Key rituals				
Important symbols used				
Special items needed				
Role of elders				

Activity 4.7

Write a short story or create a role-play depicting a traditional naming ceremony from any of the ethnic groups discussed. Include the key elements and cultural significance of the rituals performed.

Activity 4.8

1. Select one ethnic group and:
 - a. Research how their naming ceremonies have evolved over time
 - b. Interview an elder (if possible) about their experience of naming ceremonies
 - c. Present your findings to the class

Activity 4.9

1. Watch the naming ceremony videos of the Dagomba, Akan, Ewe and Ga ethnic groups to complete the tasks below: [*Scan or click the link below to watch the videos on naming ceremonies*]



<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1APJNNpMTFT-q3Y9E-475oOTES-pym0SU>

2. Fill in chart:

What to Look For	Write Your Observations
Main rituals performed	
Items used in the ceremony	
Role of family members	

3. After watching the videos, answer these questions:

- a. What was similar across all the ceremonies?
- b. What was different about each ceremony?
- c. Which cultural values did you notice being taught?

Activity 4.10

Recall the names of your classmates. Sample at least five traditional names out of the lot and find out the meaning of each sampled name. You may ask the students whose names you have selected to tell you the meaning of their names.

Extended Activities

1.
 - a. Create a poster that highlights the significance of naming ceremonies in Ghanaian culture.
 - b. Include information on different ethnic groups, traditional rituals, and the meanings behind names.
 - c. Present your poster to the class and explain its content. Those of you who have access to the internet may post your poster presentation on your social media handles and encourage people to like it.
2.
 - a. Use digital tools (e.g., PowerPoint, Canva) to create a storyboard of a naming ceremony.
 - b. Include images, text, and audio to illustrate the sequence of events and explain their significance.
 - c. Present your digital storyboard to the class.
3.
 - a. With the aid of the internet, library resources or an interview with an elder in your community, research the roles of men and women in naming ceremonies across different Ghanaian ethnic groups.
 - b. Create a presentation highlighting these roles and discussing how they contribute to the ceremony.
 - c. Suggest ways to ensure gender equality in contemporary naming ceremonies.

4.
 - a. Imagine you are planning a naming ceremony for a new baby in your community.
 - b. Write a script detailing the rituals, songs, dances, and attire you would include.
 - c. Explain the significance of each element in your ceremony.
5. Hold an interview with a member of your community or a teacher in the school on how naming ceremonies were performed in the pre-colonial era. Write a report on the interview session and present your findings in class.

Use the interview guide below:

- How were babies considered prior to naming them?
 - When was the event performed?
 - Who performed the event?
 - Where was the event performed?
 - What items were used in the performance of the event?
 - How was the event performed?
 - What was said in the course of performing the event?
 - Which people witnessed the event?
 - What informed the type of name given to the baby?
 - What is the significance of the event?
6.
 - a. In groups, assign roles such as parents, elders, officiants, and community members.
 - b. Perform a mock naming ceremony, incorporating traditional elements from various Ghanaian ethnic groups.
 - c. Reflect on the experience and discuss the importance of each role in the ceremony in class.

rites of passages II (puberty rites in pre-colonial Ghana)

Adolescence and Puberty Rites in Traditional Ghana

In traditional Ghanaian society, the transition from childhood to adulthood was marked by important ceremonies and customs. These rites prepared young people for their adult responsibilities whilst teaching them cultural values.

For young men among the Akan, receiving their first gun from their father marked their entry into manhood. This symbolised their readiness to defend their community and take part in adult duties like paying taxes and maintaining sacred paths. They could also join adult societies.

The transition for young women was more elaborate. The Krobo people's 'Dipo' custom serves as a prominent example. Girls approaching puberty were sent to selected elderly women for training that lasted twelve months. During this period, these young women, known as 'dipoyi', learned vital life skills including housekeeping, motherhood preparation, and various crafts such as spinning, weaving and basketry.

A significant part of the ceremony took place at the sacred tekpete rock, where the priestess guided each trainee through specific rituals. The girls sat on the rock three times, with each act accompanied by the declaration of their transition into Krobo womanhood. This ritual also served as a test of chastity - if a girl could not rise after the third sitting, it indicated pregnancy.

The Krobo treated violations of *dipo* customs seriously. If a trainee was found pregnant, both she and her household underwent purification rites. Afterwards, the girl would be sent away from Kroboland. In earlier times, the man responsible would face slavery as punishment.

Successful completion of training was marked by ceremonial cuts on the head, waist and abdomen. The final ceremony, called 'yifomi' (hair-washing), was followed by public celebrations where the newly initiated women received gifts and congratulations from the community.

This tradition held great significance in Krobo society. It ensured girls became capable housewives and mothers, introduced them to adult responsibilities, promoted moral conduct, and provided vocational skills for economic independence. The ceremonies also served as community celebrations and provided opportunities for potential suitors to express interest in marriage.

Different ethnic groups had similar customs under various names - the Akan called it 'bragoro' or 'brapue', while the Ewe knew it as 'gbortoworwor'. Each version shared the common goal of preparing young people for adult life while preserving cultural values and community standards.

These traditions demonstrate how pre-colonial Ghanaian societies used structured rites of passage to maintain social order, teach life skills, and mark important life transitions. Though many aspects have changed with time, the core values of preparing young people for adult responsibilities remain relevant in modern Ghanaian society.

Activity 4.11 Visual Analysis

- Working in pairs, examine the following traditional puberty rite images and discuss.

Image A



Image taken from: <https://kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2012/11/krobo-people-ghanas-famous-beads.html>

Image B



Image found at: <https://www.artefactmagazine.com/2018/03/01/james-barnor-ghanas-first-photojournalist/>

Image C



Image found at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ronnyreportage/8088070514/in/photostream>

- Present your answer in the table below:

	Image A	Image B
What items do you notice being used in the ceremonies?		
How does the dress code reflect cultural values?		
What does the body language of participants tell us?		

Activity 4.12

1. With the experiences you have acquired in the way Dipo rites are performed, debate on the motion, “Dipo rites are still relevant and so must be continued.”
2. In groups, role-play the role of the queen mother or a young woman undergoing the rites. Act out a scene from the seclusion period or the community celebration, highlighting key teachings and rituals.

Activity 4.13

Use the chart below to compare puberty rites across two ethnic groups:

Aspects	Krobo (Dipo)	Another Group
Age		
Duration		
Skills taught		
Ceremonies		

Activity 4.14

Write a short story from the perspective of a young woman undergoing the puberty rites. The story should describe her thoughts, feelings, and experiences during the seclusion and celebration.

Extended Activities

1. With your readings so far, explore the cultural and spiritual significance of specific rituals and practices that are performed in your community. Summarise it in an analytical paragraph.
2.
 - a. You and your classmates should form small mixed groups to research specific practices associated with puberty rites and present your findings to the larger class.
 - b. Based on the group’s research, discuss how puberty rites shaped the identities of young people in pre-colonial Ghana.

MARRIAGE RITES IN PRE-COLONIAL GHANA

Marriage in pre-colonial Ghana was far more than a union between a man and a woman. It was a carefully structured institution that bound families together and maintained social order. When a young man identified a potential bride, he could not simply approach her directly. Instead, he had to inform his parents.

The first crucial step was the family investigation. The man's family would quietly look into the background of the prospective bride's family. They checked for hereditary illnesses like epilepsy, lunacy or leprosy. They also investigated the family's reputation - were there any thieves or troublemakers? Just as importantly, they observed the young woman herself. Was she hardworking? Did she show respect to elders? The woman's family conducted similar investigations into the man's background.

Only when both families were satisfied would the formal process begin with the 'knocking ceremony'. The man's family would present drinks to the woman's family as a formal notification of interest. The acceptance of these drinks indicated that the prospective son-in-law and his family had passed the initial assessment.

The next stage brought together representatives from both extended families to discuss the marriage requirements. They would agree on the amount to be paid for the bride price, specify what drinks should be provided, and detail other valuable items needed, including a trunk filled with clothes and personal items for the bride.

The marriage ceremony itself was a community affair. The man paid the agreed bride price and presented special gifts, including money to the bride's mother for raising her daughter well. A specific payment called 'akonta sekan' was made to the bride's brother before he would symbolically allow his sister to leave the family home.

Experienced married couples would offer advice to the newly married couple about marriage life. The day would include feasting, dancing and celebration. In the evening, elderly women from the bride's family would escort her to her new home, carrying lamps. If it was the bride's first marriage, these women would return at dawn to verify her virginity.

Figure 4.3 below summarises the processes involved in contracting marriage in pre-colonial Ghana.

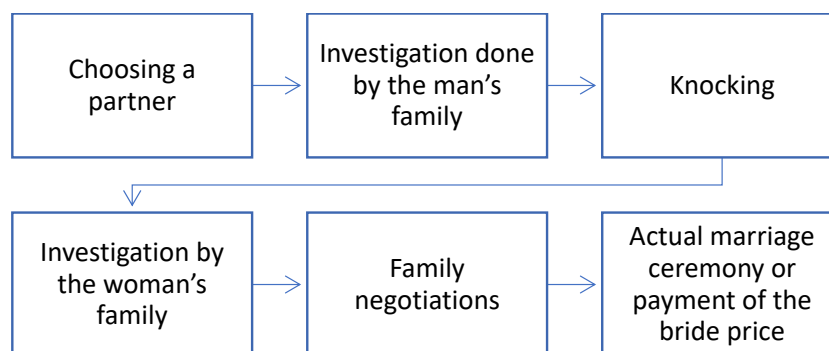


Fig. 4.3: Processes involved in contracting marriage in pre-colonial Ghana

The significance of these elaborate procedures was far-reaching. Marriage united not just individuals but entire families and communities. The payment of bride price helped stabilise marriages since its return would signal divorce. The institution encouraged moral behaviour, particularly among young women, as pregnancy outside marriage brought shame to the family. Marriage also enhanced social status - unmarried adults were often considered irresponsible and denied certain social privileges. Perhaps most importantly, traditional marriage legitimised children born into the union and gave them clear rights of inheritance and clan membership.

Activity 4.15 Marriage Items Analysis

1. In your exercise book, create a three-column table showing ethnic groups, items used in marriage, and their meanings.
2. Research and fill in details for at least three major ethnic groups.

Ethnic Group	Important Items	Symbolic Meaning
Guan		
Ewe		
Ga		

3. Share your findings with your partner, comparing similarities and differences.
4. Write a brief summary explaining why these items were important in traditional marriage.

Activity 4.16 Role Play “The Knocking Ceremony Experience”

1. Put yourselves into groups of 8-10.
2. Assign the following roles among yourselves:
 - Groom’s family representatives (3 people)
 - Bride’s family elders (3 people)
 - The bride and groom
 - Family spokespersons (2 people)
3. Using the items available in class, act out a traditional knocking ceremony.
4. Show clearly the stages of:
 - Initial greetings
 - Stating the purpose of visit
 - Family negotiations
 - Acceptance or rejection
5. After the role play, explain to the class what each action symbolised.

Activity 4.17 Reflective Writing

1. Write a well-organised paragraph on “The Most Critical Stage of Traditional Marriage”: Your write-up must:
 - a. State which marriage stage you think was most important
 - b. Give three clear reasons for your choice
 - c. Explain how this stage helped create stable marriages
 - d. Use specific examples from what you have learned

Activity 4.18 Learning from Our Elders

1. Interview an elder in your family or community about the following:
 - a. Marriage customs they remember from their youth
 - b. How these customs have changed
 - c. Which traditions they think should continue
4. Present your findings to the class in one of these ways:
 - A five-minute oral presentation
 - A two-page written report
 - A poster with pictures and explanations

Activity 4.19

1. Study carefully the following Ghanaian proverbs about marriage and answer the questions that follow:

<p>01</p> <p>Marriage is not like palm wine to be tasted</p>	<p>02</p> <p>Make enquiries before you marry</p>	<p>03</p> <p>When a woman enters into marriage she takes her mother with her</p>	<p>04</p> <p>Marriage is like a groundnut: you have to crack them to see what is inside</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

- a. Write down what you think each proverb means
- b. Explain how each proverb reflected marriage values
- c. Connect each proverb to a specific marriage custom
- d. Discuss how these teachings shaped marriage preparations

5. Study the excerpt of traditional marriage negotiations in Ghana below and answer the questions that follow:

Primary Source Excerpt: From a Marriage Ceremony at Aburi-Akuapem, February 2015 Recorded dialogue between two traditional spokespersons (Ɔkyeame)	
<i>Source: Owurasah, G. (2015). Language of customary marriage among Akans [Master's thesis, University of Ghana]. http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh</i>	
Akan language	English Translation
<i>Groom's family: Yema mo akye oo, Yema mo adikan oo!</i>	'Good morning to you all!'
<i>Bride's family: Yaa aberaw, Yaa Agya, Yaa Anua etc.</i>	'Various response to greetings.'
<i>Ɔkyeame Ɔɔɔ: Yema mo mo akye bio. Ɔkyeame, mobegyɛ ato mu sɛ moakye. Let me call a spade a spade, mpanyinfo sɛ moakye!</i>	'You are welcome once again but you will admit that you are late. The elders say, you are late.'
<i>Ɔkyeame S.K.: Momma yenna Awurade ase efise kyerɛw no sɛ ade nyinaa mu no yemmfa nnaase mma Awurade. Sɛ yekɔɔɔɔ na yeansɔre bio a, anka bɔhyɛ no yɛ bɔhyɛ hunu. Eno nti sɛ motenaa ase twɛn yɛn na mmere tiaa yɛn kakra a, na eyɛ ne yiye mu ntia.</i>	'Let's thank God because the word of God says we should be thankful to God for everything. The promise would have been in vain if we had not woken up from our sleep. So it is all good that we kept you waiting for some time.'
<i>Ɔkyeame Ɔɔɔ: Eyɛ nokware. Eyɛ, esiane ɔɔɔ nti yɛdɛ akye mo.</i>	'That's alright; we have forgiven you out of love'..
<i>Ɔkyeame S.K.: ...Yɛate sɛ nhwiren fɛfɛ bi wɔ ha. Na esiane ehua papa a etu ntiyɛpɛ sɛ yɛbetu saa nhwiren no kɔ yɛn fie.</i>	'We have heard there is a beautiful flower here. So we want to uproot that flower to our home because of its good fragrance.'
<i>Ɔkyeame S.K.: Ennɛ sɛ yeaba sɛ yɛnɛ mo beka anuonyam asem a ɛtɛ sɛɛ a, ɛnhyehyɛɛ mu no, yɛsɛ akye ma. Eno nti no, akye ma a yɛdɛ bae ni.</i>	'If we have come here today with such glorious news, we present our 'good morning' to you as agreed upon.'
<i>Ɔkyeame Ɔɔɔ: Wokɔ obi fi, na sɛ woankyɛa na wobisa no asem a, ade ayɛ wo! Enti wɔsɛ wɔma abusuafo akye. Wɔma mo akye oo!</i>	'Because one must greet upon entering someone's house, they are saying "good morning" to the family members.'
<i>Ɔkyeame Ɔɔɔ: Wokɔ obi fi, na sɛ woankyɛa na wobisa no asem a, ade ayɛ wo! Enti wɔsɛ wɔma abusuafo akye. Wɔma mo akye oo!</i>	'Because one must greet upon entering someone's house, they are saying "good morning" to the family members.'
<i>Ɔkyeame S.K.: Yɛn nyinaa nim senea abawɔɔ tee; eduru baabi a na sebe akoraa no agya ne nan agu ne maame so. Ɖɛɔ da nso a, na, woadwunsɔ agu no so. Dwunsɔ nso deɛ, yɛn nyinaa nim sɛ etete ntama. Enti yekita yɛn nsa mu Dutch wax papapaa, nea yɛdɛ ma ɛna no nie.</i>	'We all know how parenthood is; sometimes the child eases himself on the mother. At other times too, he urinates on her. As we all know, urine destroys clothes. So we have with us Dutch wax as our present to the mother.'

Akan language	English Translation
<i>Ɔkyeame S.K.: ...Ɔtwe dua ye tia nanso eno ara na ɔde pra ne ho.</i>	<i>'The antelope has a short tail but it is the same it uses to drive away flies.'</i>
<i>Ɔkyeame Ɔɔɔ: ...Ɔwoo anini Gladys, mo, Nyame nhyira wo.</i>	<i>'Gladys who has brought forth males, well done. God bless you.'</i>
<i>Ɔkyeame Ɔɔɔ: ...Ɔbea tenten gramo a ne ho ye fe!</i>	<i>A stout lady who is beautiful.'</i>
<i>Ɔkyeame S. K.: Enne yi dee, sekan ntumi nno keseɛ, enti yekita bulldozer ankasa. Wei dee, akonta bulldozer.</i>	<i>'These days the cutlass cannot weed much. So what we have here is a bulldozer for our brothers-in-law.'</i>

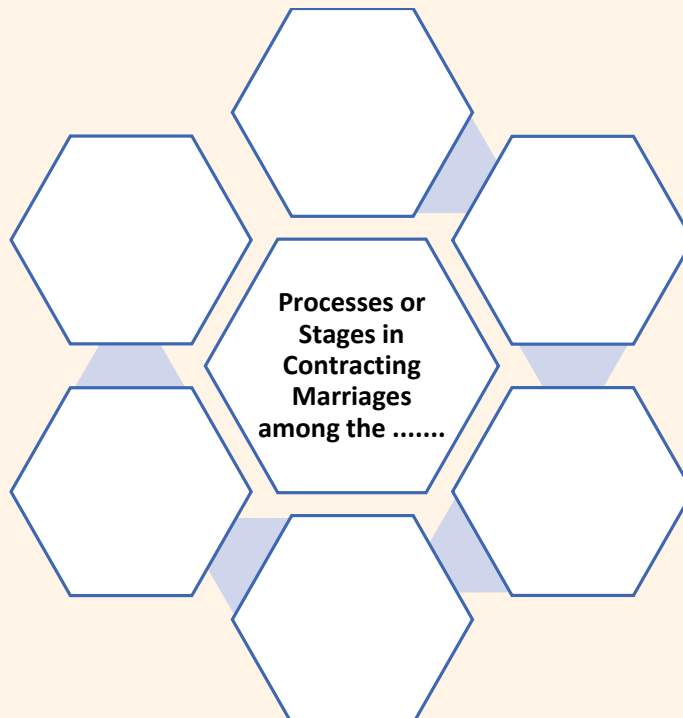
6. Study the traditional appellation used during marriage negotiations and answer the questions that follow:
From Spokesperson Ɔɔɔ: "Yɛahu nhwiren fɛfɛfɛ bi wɔ fie ha..." (We have seen a beautiful flower in this house...).
- What metaphor is used here?
 - Why did the speaker choose this particular comparison?
 - How does this language show respect to the bride's family?
7. Examine the praise: "*Ɔbea tenten gramo a ne ho ye fe!*" (*A stout lady who is beautiful*).
- Explain the cultural significance of this description
 - How does it reflect traditional beauty standards?
 - Why was such praise important in the negotiations?
8. Analyse the statement: "*Ɔwoo anini Gladys, mo, Nyame nhyira wo*" (*Gladys who has brought forth males, well done. God bless you*).
- What does this praise reveal about:
- Gender roles in Ghanaian traditional society
 - Family values
 - Status of mothers
9. Evaluate change and continuity in pre-colonial Ghanaian marriage ceremonies.
- Identify one traditional element and one modern element in the negotiations.
 - How does the mention of "bulldozer" instead of "cutlass" show changes in marriage customs?
 - Which aspects of these marriage negotiations remain similar to pre-colonial practices?

Extended Activities

1. Based on your knowledge of marriage practices and rituals or by consulting your parents, create a chart that shows the major ethnic groups and some items that they used in contracting marriage.

Ethnic Group	Some items used in contracting marriages
Mole-Dagbani	
Gonja	
Ga-Adangme	
Ewe	
Akan	
Guan	

2.
 - a. Based on the understanding you have so far about how marriages were contracted in pre-colonial Ghana, select one major ethnic group in pre-colonial and show the various stages involved in contracting marriage by them.



- b. Which stage do you consider the most critical and important in contracting marriage? and why?

3. Now that you are confident in your knowledge of how marriage is contracted in the various ethnic groups, write an expository essay explaining how marriage was contracted in any major ethnic group in pre-colonial Ghana. Consider the following stages
- The period of searching for the partner
 - Proposal stage;
 - Involvement of the two families;
 - Bride price payment;
 - Engagement event;
 - Exchange of vows;
 - Marriage proper;
 - Feasting and merry-making.

rites of passages IV (funeral rites in pre-colonial Ghana)

In pre-colonial Ghana, funerals represented more than just ceremonies to bury the dead. They marked the profound journey of transition from the physical world to the ancestral realm, where the deceased would join those who had gone before. These ceremonies varied significantly across ethnic groups, yet they shared common elements that reflected deep cultural beliefs and social structures. Figure 4.4 below shows some common elements of funeral rites among the various ethnic groups in Ghana.

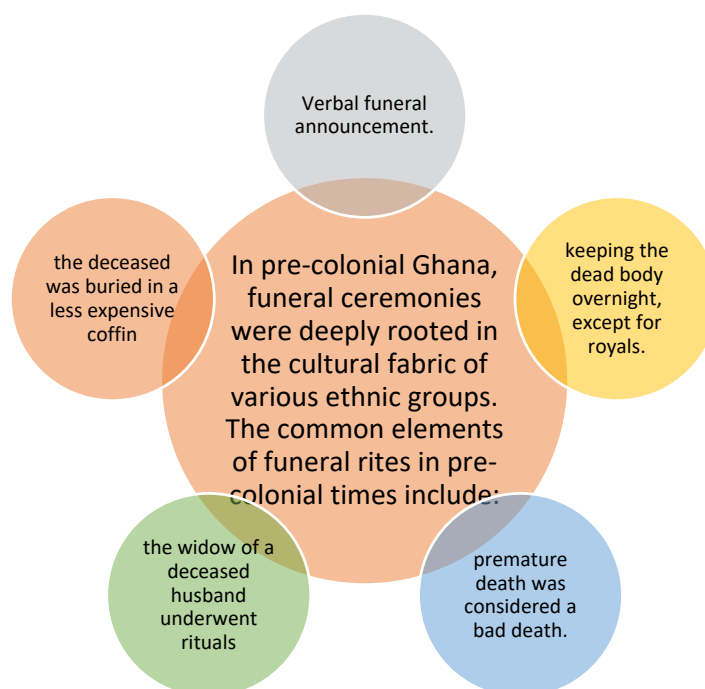


Fig. 4.4: Common elements of funeral rites among the various ethnic groups in Ghana

The Announcement of Death

When death occurred, tradition demanded careful handling of the news. Instead of direct announcements, especially for chiefs and kings, families used euphemistic expressions. For example, among the Akan, expressions such as “Nana kɔ akura” (Nana has gone to the village) or “Odupon kese atutu” (A mighty tree has fallen) softened the impact of the news. This practice reflected the society’s sophisticated approach to handling sensitive matters and showed respect for both the deceased and the community’s emotional well-being. Usually, the family of the deceased informed the chiefs and friends with the presentation of drinks about the death of their family member.

Types and Organisation of Funerals

The nature of funeral celebrations varied according to several factors. Adults received more elaborate ceremonies than children, while chiefs and kings had the most extensive celebrations spanning several days. Those who died through unnatural means - such as accidents, suicide, or murder - received simpler rites.

Both maternal and paternal extended families shared funeral responsibilities. For married individuals, the surviving spouse and children provided the coffin and burial clothes. The extended family took full responsibility when unmarried persons died. This system of shared responsibility demonstrated the communal nature of traditional society and ensured that everyone received a dignified burial regardless of their circumstances.

The Wake and Burial Ceremonies

The Akan practice of wake-keeping held particular significance. The body was laid in state - while family members paid their final respects. People brought gifts like handkerchiefs, rings (petia), and money to help the deceased’s journey to the ancestral world. Many gave messages for delivery to departed relatives, showing the strong belief in continued communication between the living and the dead.

Post-Burial Observances

After burial, several important ceremonies marked the deceased’s gradual transition. The final funeral rite was observed. During this occasion, gifts were made to the bereaved family to assist them finance the cost of the funeral. The gifts were in the form of money known by the Akan as “nsawa”. On the third day, typically Monday, families gathered to settle financial matters and appoint successors. The fortieth day held special significance, as people believed the spirit remained near for forty days before finally joining the ancestors. One year later, the family opened the deceased’s trunk and distributed belongings according to custom or the person’s will.

Spiritual and Social Significance of Funerals

Funeral rites in pre-colonial Ghana served multiple purposes. They ensured the deceased's safe passage to the ancestral world and prevented their spirit from haunting the family. Through libation and sacrifices, they maintained connections with their ancestors. The ceremonies also taught moral lessons. Funeral rites served as a warning to those who lived unworthy lives that they would not receive honourable burials.

The ceremonies strengthened community bonds through shared responsibilities and collective mourning. They reinforced beliefs in life after death and the importance of proper preparation for one's own eventual journey. Through funerals, pre-colonial Ghanaian society expressed its deepest values about life, death, and the connections between the physical and spiritual worlds.

For chiefs and kings, these ceremonies took on additional significance. Their funerals involved elaborate state protocols, with neighbouring chiefs attending in specific ceremonial dress—black or adinkra cloth with red turbans, specially made smocks, etc. These occasions reinforced political alliances and demonstrated the interconnectedness of traditional leadership structures.

The institution of periodic remembrance ceremonies—at eight days, fifteen days, forty days, eighty days, and annually—ensured that connections with the departed remained strong. The yearly meal (aferehyia-aduane) honoured all ancestors. It maintained the link between past and present generations that characterised traditional Ghanaian society.

Some Key Stages of Funeral Rites Common to Most Ethnic Groups in Pre-colonial Ghana

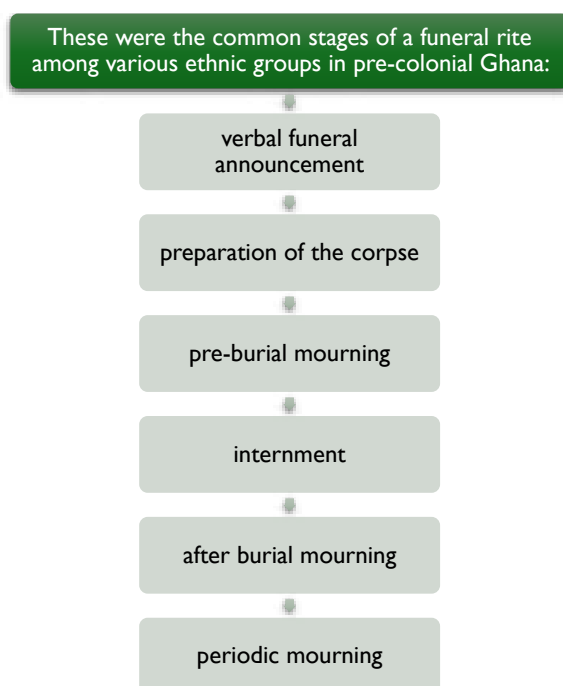


Fig. 4.5: Stages of Funeral Rites Common to Most Ethnic Groups in Pre-colonial Ghana

Activity 4.20

1. In groups, discuss the activities and practices of funeral rites in pre-colonial Ghana. Your feedback should be based on your ethnic group.

	Practice	Activities associated with this practice
1.	Verbal Funeral Announcement	
2.	Keeping the dead body overnight, except for royals (Pre-burial practices)	
3.	Pre-Burial Mourning	
4.	Burial practices	
5.	Celebration of one week after the burial	
6.	40th-day celebration	
7.	Final funeral rites	
8.	One year anniversary	

2. Write on the symbolic actions or rituals as part of the funeral ceremony on the following deaths:
 - a. A child
 - b. Spouse
 - c. Unmarried man/woman
 - d. Chiefs/Kings/Queens

Activity 4.21

1. In groups, research how dead bodies were preserved in pre-colonial Ghana. Present your feedback in class.
2. In groups, discuss the significance of funeral rites to the pre-colonial Ghanaian.

TRADITIONAL GHANAIAN GAMES THROUGH TIME

Traditional games formed an essential part of Ghana's cultural heritage. They served not just as entertainment but as tools for teaching important life skills and social values. These games were passed down from parents to children through generations. There were a variety of games across the different societies of pre-colonial Ghana. These games helped build strong community bonds and relationships. In every village and town, children gathered to play these games. They learned values that would shape their adult lives.

The most common traditional games included Oware/Adidada, Sako, Adugbo, Ampe, Pilolo, Chaskele, Tumatu, Antoakyire and Ate. Each game had its own rules and special ways of playing. They taught different skills and carried special cultural meanings. Some games were played by boys, others by girls, while many brought both together. These games marked important stages in children's growth.

Oware stood out as an important strategy board game. It taught players how to think carefully and plan ahead. Players moved seeds or stones around a wooden board with twelve holes. Each move required careful thought and understanding. The game helped children learn basic mathematics through counting and distribution. It also taught them patience and strategic thinking. Adults often played Oware too, showing its appeal across age groups.



Fig. 4.6: Playing the Oware Board Game

Ampe gained popularity especially among young girls. Players had to jump and clap while making specific foot movements. The game turned simple movements into complex patterns. It helped develop body coordination and strength. Through Ampe, girls learned rhythm and timing. They formed strong friendships during these games. The songs and chants that accompanied Ampe added to its cultural value. Players learned both competition and cooperation while having fun.



Fig. 4.7: Playing Ampe

Pilolo created excitement as a hiding and seeking game. One person hid objects while others searched for them. Players had to remember where to look and move quickly. This game taught observation skills and memory. It brought children from different homes together in friendly competition. Through Pilolo, community bonds grew stronger. Children learned fairness and honesty as important values.



Fig. 4.8: Looking for hidden objects in the Pilolo game

Chaskele combined physical skill with careful planning. Players used a ball and sticks in this exciting game. The rules required them to hit, catch and throw with accuracy. Many children played together, forming teams for better competition. The game improved hand-eye coordination through constant practice. It taught children how to work together towards a common goal. Players learned about fair play and team spirit. Through Chaskele, children developed strong friendships and trust.



Fig. 4.9: Chaskele game

Tumatu tested both skill and musical ability. Players moved small stones or seeds between their hands. They followed rhythmic patterns while singing traditional songs. The movements needed careful timing and practice. Children often gathered in circles to watch this game. Those watching learned by observing the older players. The songs carried cultural messages and stories. Through Tumatu, children learned their history and traditions. The game brought joy while teaching important coordination skills.



Fig. 4.10: Ghanaian young men playing Tumatu

Antoakyire also known as *Annhwɛ w'ekyir* was played by both boys and girls. Players squatted, sat, or knelt down in a circular formation. They stretched to hold their hands to open up the circle so that there would be enough space between every two players. A duster or a piece of cloth was placed at the centre of the circle. The leader began to set the music in context as he/she called for the other players to respond and clap to the rhythm of the song. The leader then picked up the duster or the piece of cloth and moved round behind the players as they continued to sing and clap. Here, the leader was supposed to drop the cloth behind any of the players. This was done in a careful

manner so as to avoid being seen by the players. Players were not expected to look back to observe where the cloth was placed. Anyone who found the duster behind him/her quickly picked it up and ran after the leader. If he/she overtook the leader, the leader was considered to have lost the battle and so took back the cloth and continued the game, whilst the other player took his/her position. On the hand, if the leader was not overtaken, he/she still took up the position of the leader in the game. The game continued in this manner till the children became tired.

Importance of Traditional Games

These traditional games still hold meaning in today's world. Modern entertainment often overshadows them in cities and towns. Yet they carry wisdom from our ancestors. They shaped how children grew and learned in pre-colonial Ghana. The games taught values that built strong communities. They showed how play could teach important life lessons. Many adults today remember these games with fondness. They represent a rich heritage of learning through play.

Activity 4.22: Game Recreation and Analysis

1. In small groups, set up the following traditional game stations in your school:
 - Oware board game
 - Ampe playing area
 - Pilolo hiding spots
 - Chaskele
 - Tumatu
2. Each group should:
 - a. Learn and play one game for 15 minutes
 - b. Record the rules and skills needed
 - c. Rotate to another station
 - d. Compare the different games
 - e. Share what values each game taught

Activity 4.23: Oral History Project (1 week) “Learning from Community Elders”

1. Interview an elder about traditional games:
 - a. What games did they play as children?
 - b. How were the games organised?
 - c. What songs or rhymes accompanied the games?
 - d. What lessons did they learn from these games?

2. Present your findings in one of the following ways:
- Short presentation
 - Written report
 - Demonstration of a game

Activity 4.24: Game Design Challenge “Creating Modern Versions”

Working in small groups:

- a. Choose one traditional game
- b. Update it for today’s children
- c. Keep the core values and skills
- d. Test your game with classmates
- e. Explain how it preserves tradition

Activity 4.25

Watch documentaries on different Ghanaian traditional games and complete the questions in the table below:

Note: Scan the QR code or click the link to have access to the documentaries.



<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1w-AnmsySA3Xng1D8JeVnF48il5X4kXs5>

Game	Brief History of the game	Materials used in the game	People who play it	Skills ingrained in the game	Benefits of playing the game
What lessons have you learnt from these games?					

Activity 4.26

1. With your experience in Ghanaian traditional games, use the internet and library resources to research traditional games in any one of the following ethnic groups.
 - a. Guan
 - b. Mole-Dagbani
 - c. Ga-Adangme
 - d. Ewe
 - e. Gonja
2. With the aid of the documentaries you watched earlier, show how traditional Ghanaian games serve as a way to teach skills such as strategy, counting and problem solving.
3. Explore how games can be used as a historical source to understand past Ghanaian societies.

PRE-COLONIAL GHANAIAN DANCES AND SONGS

Traditional music and dance stood at the heart of Ghanaian cultural expression. Each ethnic group created unique forms that reflected their values and ways of life. These art forms passed from one generation to the next.

Music Forms

Folk Music: Folk music served everyday life in traditional communities. People performed it at festivals, funerals and social gatherings. Musicians used instruments like the kora, banjos and hand drums. The songs followed a call-and-response pattern. Singers told stories about love, life and moral lessons in their local languages.

Praise Songs: Praise songs held special importance in traditional society. People performed them to honour chiefs, gods and respected individuals. Drummers accompanied the singers, creating rhythms that matched the words. These songs celebrated achievements and showed respect to elders. They helped maintain social order and preserve history.

Drum Music: Drum music played a vital role in communication. Different drums spoke different messages. The talking drum, atumpan and fontomfrom each had their own voice. The Mpintin drums of Denkyira, for example, told stories of past glory: “Kotoko som Amponsem” recalled how the mighty Asante once served under Denkyira’s king.

Horn Music: Horn music, called *Ntahara* by the Akan, carried sacred meaning. Chiefs used horns to announce their presence. Musicians played them during religious ceremonies and important events. The Abuakwa horn music remembered brave Queen

Dokuaa, singing “Dokua obaa basia a oko oprem ano” (Dokua, the valiant woman who fought before the cannon).

Traditional Dance Forms

The **Adowa dance** of the Asante showed grace and royal dignity. Dancers moved their hands in gentle, flowing motions. Their feet created complex rhythms on the earth. Chiefs and ordinary people performed Adowa at funerals and festivals. The dance required skill and careful training.

Among the Ewe, **Agbadza** remained a popular social dance. Dancers moved their shoulders in a special rolling motion. They bent forward slightly while stepping to the drum rhythms. Women and men performed together, showing community unity. The dance began as a war dance but became an entertainment form.

Kete dance belonged to Asante royalty. Only chiefs could request its performance. The dancers moved in slow, majestic steps. Special drummers played the Kete drum ensemble. This dance showed the power and dignity of traditional leadership.

Other dance forms are shown in the table below:

Dance	Group That Performs
Agahu	Ewe
Apatampa	Fante
Kpalongo	Ga
Borborbor	Ewe
Bamaaya	Dagomba
Damba	Dagomba

Traditional Instruments

Atumpan: The Atumpan talking drums came in pairs. The master drummer used them to send messages across villages. These drums could mimic the tones of human speech. They announced important news and ceremonies.



Fig. 4.11: Atumpan drum

The **Fontomfrom** served as the royal drum. Its deep, booming sound called people to gather. Chiefs used it for important announcements. The drum stood taller than a man and needed special skill to play.



Fig. 4.12: The Fontomfrom drum

In northern Ghana, the **gyil** (xylophone) created beautiful melodies. The Dagaare made it from special hardwood. Gourd resonators hung beneath the wooden keys. Players used rubber-tipped sticks to strike the keys. The instrument needed two players for traditional music.



Fig. 4.13: The Gyl

Activity 4.27 – Video Analysis:

Click on this link:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1w7q3mYf0SEFEL0eYcBcPTWuL3ZRORA8b>

Watch a performance of a Ghanaian dance by a group of people. Based on what you have seen in the video, answer the following questions:

What is the name of the dance	Which ethnic group is noted for it?	Which musical instruments are used?	What is the role of gender in the performance of the dance?	Which occasions require the use of this dance?	Description of the costumes used
Describe the level of community participation in this dance.					

Activity 4.28

- Based on your reading so far, match these traditional dances to the ethnic group that performs them:

Dance	Ethnic Group
Kete	Ewe
Damba	Asante
Agbadza	Fante
Bamaaya	Asante
Apatampa	Dagomba
Adowa	Dagomba

- With your experience in Ghanaian dances and songs, explore the different purposes of these traditional Ghanaian dances and songs.

S/N	Dance/Song	Purpose
1	Adowa	
2	Damba	
4	Folk music	
5	Agbadza	
6	Kete	
7	Bamaaya	
8	Borborbor	
9	Kinachunn	
10	Horn Music	

Activity 4.29

- With the aid of the internet or your family members including the elders, trace the etymology and history of the following dance forms:

S/N	Dance Form	Etymology	History Behind it
1	Apatampa		
2	Bamaaya		
3	Kete		
4	Agbadza		

- Create and play a traditional dance matching game.
 - First, write the names of eight traditional dances on white cards. Next, write their matching ethnic groups on different coloured cards.
 - Place all your cards face down on your desk in neat rows. Make sure dances and ethnic groups are well mixed.
 - Play the matching game by turning over two cards at a time. Try to match each dance with the correct ethnic group. When you find a match, keep those cards and explain the connection to your partner.
 - Share your learning by telling the class about two dances you matched. Explain which ethnic group performs them and what you know about each dance.

3.
 - a. In groups, perform any traditional song or dance of any ethnic group found in one of the following zones:
 - Savannah zone;
 - Forest zone;
 - Coastal zone.
 - b. Record your group's performance in an audio or audio-visual format or perform for your class.

THE ROLE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES IN PRE-COLONIAL GHANA

In pre-colonial Ghana, daily life revolved around rich cultural traditions that shaped how communities lived and developed. At the heart of the society's life were practices that brought people together and taught important lessons about their heritage.

When a baby was born, the whole community would gather to welcome the new life. The naming ceremony was not just about giving the child a name - it was about accepting them into the community. Families would share food and drinks while elders blessed the child and taught parents about raising them with good values.

As children grew into teenagers, they went through special ceremonies that prepared them for adult life. Young girls learned from older women about taking care of a home and family. Boys spent time with male elders learning skills like farming, hunting or trading. These teachings were not just about practical skills - they helped young people understand their place in society.

Community life had clear rules that everyone followed. If people had disagreements, they did not just fight - they went to the chief or elders who would listen to both sides and help find a fair solution. This system helped keep peace in the community. There were also special days when people could not farm or fish. While these might seem like simple rules, they actually helped protect nature by giving the land and rivers time to recover.

Festivals brought entire communities together to celebrate their culture. During these times, people shared stories about their history, performed traditional dances, and taught young ones about their heritage. These were not just celebrations—they were important ways of passing down knowledge from one generation to the next.

The way communities cared for their dead showed great respect for those who had passed on. Funeral ceremonies were not just about mourning - they were celebrations of the person's life and their journey to join the ancestors. These practices helped families cope with loss while strengthening community bonds.

These cultural practices did more than just guide daily life - they helped communities stay strong and united. They ensured important knowledge and values were not lost. Through these traditions, pre-colonial Ghanaian societies maintained their identity and passed their wisdom to future generations.

Figure below shows other ways that socio-cultural practices affected the development of pre-colonial Ghanaian societies.

Socio-cultural practices played a significant role in shaping the development of pre-colonial Ghanaian societies. Some of these significance include:

1. fostering a sense of belonging and cooperation.
2. preservation of cultural heritage.
3. serving as a basis for communal identity and shared values.
4. serving as a way of identifying individuals.
5. marking the transition from childhood to adulthood.
6. emphasising unity and continuity of lineage.
7. honouring the deceased and ensuring their smooth transition into the afterlife.

Fig. 4.14: Ways that socio-cultural practices affected the development of pre-colonial Ghanaian societies

Activity 4.30

1. With the help of the internet or library sources or your reading materials, create a web diagram in which you should organise information on how socio-cultural practices sustained livelihood in pre-colonial Ghana.
2. Use the table below to discuss the role of the identified socio-cultural practices in promoting social cohesion and cultural identity.

Socio-Cultural Practice	Promotion of social cohesion	Promotion of cultural identity
Family structure		
Rites of passage		
Chieftaincy		
Festivals		
Dance and songs		

3. Based on your readings so far, state at least three ways that socio-cultural practices in pre-colonial Ghana are significant.

Activity 4.31

Study the source below and answer the questions that follow:

Source: Excerpt from a traditional Asante royal praise song

Anti, A. A., The Ancient Asante King, Volta Bridge Publishing Co, Accra 1974

Obirempon! Obirempon! Hena na one wose

[Oh King! Oh King! Who is like you?]

Hena na one wose, wo tumi mu

[Who is as powerful as you!]

Obirempon, woye Otumfoo

[Oh King! You are powerful; all powerful]

Ahene nyinaa hye wo de

[All other Kings are under your feet]

Wiase nyinaa ye wo de

[The whole world belongs to you]

Obi nsen wo wo tumi ne sika mu

[No one surpasses you in power and wealth]

1. Identify three (3) key themes in the praise song
2. Explain how repetition emphasises power
3. What does this song reveal about:
 - a. Asante kingship
 - b. Political hierarchy
 - c. Power relations
 - d. Wealth in pre-colonial Ghana
4. Write a short paragraph explaining:
 - a. Why praise songs were important
 - b. How such songs reinforced authority
5. Create your own praise song following the source structure to celebrate a modern Ghanaian leader or institution.

Activity 4.32

Create a museum exhibit of artefacts that explains socio-cultural practices and their interconnectedness in shaping pre-colonial Ghanaian society.

Hint: Consider the following suggestions in the creation of the museum:

- Traditional clothing and textiles such as smocks and Kente, Adinkra cloth, royal regalia
- Music and dance instruments such as Kpalongo, Kete, Agbadza drums
- Spiritual and religious artefacts such as pictures of ancestral shrines, cowrie shells
- Household and cooking items such as clay cooking pots
- Oral tradition instruments such as drums and flute

CHANGES AND CONTINUITIES IN SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES OF GHANAIS

Ghanaian society has kept many of its traditional practices alive despite modern influences. While some practices have changed over time, many core traditions continue to shape daily life in both rural and urban communities. Many elders and traditional leaders work hard to preserve these customs, even as they accept some modern adaptations.

The table below shows some continuities and changes in Ghanaian socio-cultural practices.

Table 4.1: Continuity and change in Ghanaian socio-cultural practices

Socio-cultural Practice	Continuities	Changes
Naming Ceremonies	<p>Naming ceremonies remain vital in Ghanaian communities. Most ethnic groups still give their children meaningful names that connect to their culture. The Akan practice of naming children after the day of birth continues strongly - boys and girls still receive names like Kwame, Kwesi, Ama, and Akua based on their birth days. The presence of family elders at naming ceremonies remains important, as they help choose names that reflect family history and circumstances of birth. The pouring of libation to seek spiritual blessings for newborns continues in many communities.</p>	<p>Traditional naming ceremonies have also changed in some aspects in both urban and rural areas. In cities, many families now hold naming ceremonies in churches and mosques rather than family houses. The time for naming has also shifted - while traditionally, babies were named on the eighth day without exception, modern families sometimes adjust this timing to weekends to accommodate work schedules and travelling relatives.</p> <p>Some families now combine traditional naming with Christian baptism or Muslim practices. In many communities, the traditional practice of dropping water and alcohol on the baby's tongue has been reduced. Instead of the traditional early morning ceremony, many families now hold elaborate afternoon events with printed invitations, catered food, and professional photographers.</p>
Puberty Rites	<p>Communities still value puberty rites as a way to teach young people about adult responsibilities. The Krobo maintain the <i>dipo</i> ceremony to prepare young women for adulthood. During these rites, older women still teach girls about marriage, childbearing, and proper behaviour. The Akan <i>bragoro</i> ceremony continues to mark girls' transition to womanhood. These rites help preserve moral values and cultural identity among young people.</p>	<p>Puberty rites have also undergone substantial changes. The <i>dipo</i> ceremony of the Krobo, which traditionally lasted several weeks or months, now often takes place over a single weekend. Education has played a major role in this change, as girls cannot leave school for extended periods. The traditional practice of bare-chested girls has been modified, with participants now wearing clothes during most of the ceremony.</p> <p>In many Akan communities, the <i>bragoro</i> ceremony has shortened considerably. Some families now perform a simplified version of the rites. The practice of keeping girls in a special room for days has reduced. Urban communities often omit some traditional elements while maintaining the core aspects of counselling and celebrating the transition to womanhood.</p>

Socio-cultural Practice	Continuities	Changes
Traditional Marriage	<p>Marriage customs remain strong across Ghana. The knocking ceremony continues as the first step, where the man’s family formally asks for permission to marry. Communities still require bride price payments to validate marriages. Family elders continue to play key roles in marriage negotiations and ceremonies. The practice of seeking family consent before marriage remains important in most communities.</p> <p>The presentation of drinks and gifts to the bride’s family continues as a crucial part of marriage rites. Many families still conduct background checks into potential in-laws. The blessing of marriages by family elders remains an essential practice that people respect and maintain.</p>	<p>Marriage ceremonies have also incorporated many new elements. The traditional knocking ceremony now often includes elaborate gift-giving beyond the customary drinks. Many families now present written lists of required items for the bride price. The practice of marriage investigations has changed - instead of extended family inquiries, some families now hire professional investigators or rely on social media to learn about potential in-laws.</p> <p>Wedding ceremonies increasingly combine traditional and modern elements. Many couples now hold both traditional and European/church weddings. The practice of carrying the bride’s belongings to her new home in a procession has largely given way to modern transportation arrangements. Some communities have reduced the duration of traditional marriage rites from several days to a single day.</p>
Funeral Practices	<p>Many core funeral practices remain unchanged. Communities still observe specific periods of mourning based on the deceased’s status and role. The practice of family meetings to plan funerals remains strong. People still wear traditional mourning clothes—red and black for the Akan and black and brown for many Ewe communities.</p> <p>The custom of showing respect through funeral donations continues. Extended family members still contribute to funeral expenses. Communities maintain the practice of final funeral rites to properly send off the dead. The belief in properly honouring the dead through elaborate ceremonies remains strong across ethnic groups.</p>	<p>Traditional funeral practices in Ghana have also seen notable changes, particularly in how families announce and conduct ceremonies. The role of traditional drummers, who once moved through communities announcing deaths, has greatly reduced in towns and cities. Instead, families now use radio stations, television channels and newspapers to announce funerals. The introduction of mortuaries has changed how communities handle the deceased. Families can now keep bodies for longer periods to prepare elaborate ceremonies. This change has affected the traditional practice of burying the dead within a few days. While traditional drummers still perform at funerals, families must now hire them for agreed fees. Many families also engage modern music groups to play different genres including hiplife, gospel and reggae. These groups use large sound systems alongside traditional instruments.</p>

Socio-cultural Practice	Continuities	Changes
Funeral Practices		<p>The choice of coffins has become a significant status symbol. Families who use simple, inexpensive coffins often face judgement from their communities. Among the Akan, people consider elaborate coffins a sign of wealth and respect for the dead. A new practice has emerged where families order coffins designed to reflect the deceased's occupation or interests. For instance, a cocoa farmer might be buried in a coffin shaped like a cocoa pod.</p> <p>Professional video coverage has become a crucial part of modern funerals. Families hire videographers to record every aspect of the funeral rites, from collecting the body at the mortuary to the final family meetings. These professionals use special effects to create dramatic funeral documentaries. Families send these recordings to relatives abroad who cannot attend and keep copies to remember the ceremony.</p> <p>The use of funeral hearses has also dominated funerals today. Wealthy families now hire expensive, decorated hearses to transport coffins to the cemetery. The type of hearse used has become another way to demonstrate family status and wealth. Some families even hire multiple hearses to form a procession to the burial ground.</p> <p>Traditional practices affecting widows have changed significantly. Communities have abandoned many customs that were considered harmful to widows. The practice of making widows sleep near their dead husbands or forcing them to shave their heads has largely stopped. Widows no longer must wear black clothes for a full year after their husband's death. Among the Akan, widows can now return to normal activities shortly after the burial and are not required to marry their late husband's relative.</p>

Socio-cultural Practice	Continuities	Changes
<p>Music and Dance</p>	<p>Traditional music continues to mark important occasions in community life. Talking drums still announce important events and communicate messages in many areas. Communities maintain specific dances for various ceremonies - Adowa for Akan funerals, Agbadza for Ewe social occasions, and Bamaya for Dagomba celebrations.</p> <p>Master drummers continue to train new generations in traditional rhythms and songs. Dance groups still perform traditional dances at festivals and ceremonies. Communities preserve special songs for different occasions like marriage, naming ceremonies, and festivals.</p>	<p>However, some elements of traditional music and dance forms have adapted to modern contexts. Traditional instruments now often appear alongside modern ones. The talking drum, which once served primarily for communication and ceremonies, now features in popular music. Professional drumming groups have emerged, charging fees for performances at events.</p> <p>Dance forms have evolved too. Traditional dances now appear on stage rather than solely in their original ceremonial contexts. Young people have created new dance styles that blend traditional movements with modern steps. Dance groups now rehearse and perform choreographed versions of traditional dances, different from their spontaneous ceremonial origins.</p>
<p>Traditional Games</p>	<p>Many communities still play <i>oware</i>, especially among older people who teach younger ones. Children in rural areas continue to enjoy traditional games during full moon nights. Some communities maintain traditional <i>ampe</i> and <i>oware</i> contests, especially during festivals. Storytelling continues in many homes and during cultural events, with Ananse stories teaching moral lessons to children.</p> <p>The practice of riddles and proverbs in teaching wisdom remains strong, especially among elders. Cultural groups continue to organise traditional games during festivals to keep these practices alive.</p>	<p>However, some aspects of traditional games have experienced significant changes. The evening storytelling sessions (Ananse stories) have reduced as television and social media compete for attention. Games like <i>oware</i>, which children once played regularly, now often appear as mobile phone apps.</p> <p>Some communities have adapted traditional games for tourism and cultural festivals. The indoor games that once occupied children during moonlit nights have largely given way to video games and television.</p>

Activity 4.33

Work with a partner to create a visual presentation comparing traditional and modern practices.

1. Choose two aspects of Ghanaian culture (e.g., naming ceremonies, marriage rites)
2. Interview two elders about how these practices were conducted in the past
3. Create a poster showing:
 - Traditional practice on one side
 - Modern practice on the other
 - Key elements that have stayed the same in the middle
4. Present your findings to the class in a 5-minute presentation

Activity 4.34 Historical Investigation

1. Use the 5W1H method (*What, When, Where, Who, Why, How*) to investigate changes in ONE cultural practice:
 - a. What has changed?
 - b. When did these changes begin?
 - c. Where are these changes most visible?
 - d. Who initiated these changes?
 - e. Why did these changes occur?
 - f. How have these changes affected the community?
2. Present your findings as either:
 - A written report
 - An oral presentation
 - A documentary-style video
 - A series of interviews

Activity 4.35 Documentary Analysis

Watch a documentary about Ghanaian cultural practices and perform the tasks below: *Note: Click on the link to access the documentary:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgBa86CcfFk>

1. Take notes on:
 - a. Traditional elements shown
 - b. Modern adaptations observed
 - c. Reasons given for changes

2. Write a reflection addressing:
 - a. Which changes surprised you most?
 - b. Which traditions seem most important to preserve?
 - c. How might these practices look in 50 years?

Activity 4.36

Study carefully the historical sources below (Sources A, B and C) and answer the questions that follow:

Source A: Traditional Funeral Announcement

Extract from interview with Nana Kwame Mensah, 78-year-old traditional drummer from Kumasi (2023)

“In my youth, when someone died, we drummers would move through the town at dawn. Our special rhythm told people not just that someone had died, but who had died and how. Everyone understood these drum messages. Today, most young people cannot understand drum language. Now they use radio and television to announce funerals. Something important has been lost.”

Source B: Modern Funeral Advertisement

Newspaper advertisement, Daily Graphic, June 2022

“The Addo and Mensah families announce the funeral of their beloved father, grandfather and uncle, Mr. Joseph Kwesi Addo (retired teacher). Wake keeping at Christ the King Parish Hall on Friday. Funeral service at Holy Spirit Cathedral followed by burial at Osu Cemetery. Final funeral rites at the Royal Palace Gardens with live band performance. All sympathisers cordially invited. For details contact: 024-XXX-XXXX or watch GTV at 7pm for full arrangements.”

Source C: Traditional Marriage Practices

Extract from research thesis “Changes in Marriage Practices Among the Kasena in Nogsenia Traditional Area of Navrongo” by Mavis Ayi, University of Education, Winneba (2023)

...In the view of one elder, the change he sees has to do with using money to quantify bride wealth has a negative social implication on our culture. He opined:

“All the items used in the contraction of marriage has its meaning and nothing can replace these, for example the cock that would have been presented and the dog to seal the marriage the money can it serve that purpose?, the guinea fowls that will be shared to all the women in the extended family to cook for all household in that compound to share in the joy of the bride parents and pray for children to come in abundance into their new home can the money perform that spiritual function?. These are the changes that are actually worrying me, collecting money simply means their paying for my daughter and that is a complete damage to my daughter’s destiny.”

1. Compare the traditional and modern methods of funeral announcement described in Sources A and B
 - a. What elements have changed? What elements have stayed the same?
 - b. Which method do you think is more effective in today's Ghana? Why?
2. Assess the reliability of each source using the table below:

	Source A	Source B	Source C
Who created the source?			
When was the source created?			
What perspective does the source represent?			
How useful is the source for understanding cultural changes?			

3. Using Source C:
 - a. Explain the elder's concerns about modern marriage practices
 - b. Discuss the significance of traditional marriage items in Kasena culture
 - c. Analyse how monetisation affects the spiritual and social aspects of marriage rites
 - d. Consider whether traditional practices can be preserved while adapting to modern life
4. Using all three sources and your own knowledge, evaluate how modernisation affects the meaning and value of traditional practices in Ghana. To what extent can societies maintain cultural significance while adapting to modern changes?

Activity 4.37: Group Discussion and Debate

1. Debate the topic: "Is globalisation helping or harming Ghanaian cultural practices?"
 - Group 1: Research positive effects of globalisation on traditional practices
 - Group 2: Research negative effects of globalisation on traditional practices
 - Group 3: Research how communities preserve traditions despite globalisation
 - Group 4: Research how communities blend traditional and modern practices
2. Each group presents their findings in a class debate on whether changes in cultural practices are necessary for survival or threatening cultural identity

POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN PRE-COLONIAL GHANA

Before British colonial rule, Ghana consisted of various states and kingdoms with distinct political systems. A political system refers to how a state or society organises its governance. It includes the structures and processes through which authority flows and how public policies take effect. These systems shape how communities develop socially, economically and culturally.

Types of Political Systems in Pre-colonial Ghana

In pre-colonial times, Ghanaians lived under three distinct political systems:

1. Centralised systems
2. Non-centralised systems
3. Theocratic systems

Let us examine the centralised system in detail, as it was prevalent among many major ethnic groups.

The Centralised Political System

In a centralised system, political power rested with one central authority. This authority made policies and decisions that affected all levels of society. States like Asante, Fante, Akyem, Denkyira, and Akwamu practised this system. In the northern regions, the Mole-Dagbani states of Mamprusi, Dagomba and Nanumba also used centralised governance.

The Akan Political Organisation

The Akan, forming 45-50% of Ghana's population, developed a sophisticated centralised political system. They occupy eight regions: Central, Western, Western-North, Eastern, Ashanti, Bono-East, Bono and Ahafo. Their political system had these key features:

1. The Omanhene served as the paramount chief and political head. He gained his position through hereditary succession and ruled using the stool and sword as symbols of authority.
2. The Queen Mother held significant power as head of the royal family. She nominated candidates for the stool and advised on important state matters.
3. The Council of Elders guided the king. This council included divisional chiefs and army commanders who had to approve major decisions.
4. Divisional Chiefs (Ohene) headed divisions formed by groups of communities. They served on the paramountcy's advisory body.
5. Community Chiefs (Odikro) maintained law and order in individual communities and acted as intermediaries with ancestors.
6. The Abusuapanyin led family units and represented them on community councils.

The Asante Political System – A case study

The Asante developed a unique variation of the Akan system:

1. The Asantehene ruled Asanteman (the Asante state) from Kumasi. Though powerful, the position was not autocratic - various checks prevented abuse of power. He governed Asanteman, which comprised several states. The Asantehene was considered *primus inter pares* (first among equals) among the Amanhene. Under him were the Amanhene from states including Juaso, Juaben, Kumawu, Kokofu, Ejisu, Bekwai and Mampong.
2. The Asanteman Council served as the kingdom's highest advisory body. It included the Asantehene, Asantehemaa, and paramount chiefs from various states.
3. The Queen Mother (Asantehemaa) nominated succession candidates and settled disputes involving women.
4. The Amanhene (paramount chiefs) exercised legislative, executive and judicial powers in their territories.
5. The Divisional Chiefs (Ohene) administered divisions made up of several communities. Key positions included, Krontihene, Kyidomhene, Benkumhene, Nifahene, etc.
6. The Linguist (Okyeame) played a vital role as spokesman between the chief and people. Unlike other positions, this office was not hereditary. The staff symbolised their authority.
7. The Odikro: Each community had an Odikro who led the community council; maintained local law and order; connected people with their ancestors; and resolved minor disputes

The Mole-Dagbani Political System

The Mole-Dagbani, making up about 16% of Ghana's population, lived primarily in the Northern Region. They developed their own version of centralised rule with these distinctive features:

1. Supreme Rulers led each state. The Mamprusi ruler held the title "Nayiri" while the Dagomba leader was called "Ya-Na". The skin served as their symbol of authority.
2. A Council of Elders including the Tarana, Wudana, Kpanarana, and Nazo advised the supreme ruler. This council helped maintain checks and balances in governance.
3. Five Divisional Chiefs administered different regions of the state, each supported by sub-chiefs and community headmen.
4. The paramount chief served as the final court of appeal, combining both natural and supernatural methods in dispensing justice.
5. The Tindana acted as land custodian and wielded significant religious influence. They led annual festivals and helped install paramount chiefs.
6. The system followed patrilineal inheritance, where sons or brothers succeeded to the throne.

Activity 4.38

Create a comparison chart showing similarities and differences between the Akan and Mole-Dagbani political systems in terms of the following. Use the table below as a guide to create your chart:

	Akan	Mole-Dagbani
Leadership titles		
Advisory bodies		
Symbols of authority		
Methods of succession		
Role of religious figures		

Activity 4.39

- Based on your readings, discuss the specific roles that the Abusuapanyin play in the political structure of the Akan. Create awareness on social media using the hashtag#, the role of “Abusuapanyin” in the political structure of the Akan. Tag your friends, classmates and teacher.
- Read this scenario and answer the questions that follow:
The year is 1800. A dispute has arisen between two communities over farming land. How would this be resolved under: a) The Akan system b) The Mole-Dagbani system
 - Which officials would be involved?
 - What steps would they take?
 - How might the final decision be enforced?
- Based on your experience in this lesson, you and some other friends (including girls/boys, where possible) should participate in a role-play activity that simulates a pre-colonial royal court with different roles. The roles may include king, council of elders, queen mother, subject, etc.

Extended Activities

- Interview elders in your community about:
 - Traditional political structures that still exist
 - How they have changed over time
 - Their current relevance

2. Debate the topic: “Pre-colonial political systems were more democratic than they are often given credit for.” Prepare arguments for and against this statement using evidence from sources you can find in the library or the internet.
3. Imagine you lived in the pre-colonial era. Write about a day in the life of any one of the following political offices:
 - a. An Omanhene settling disputes
 - b. A Queen Mother selecting a successor
 - c. A Tindana performing their duties

Non-Centralised Political Systems In Pre-Colonial Ghana

In the Savannah zone (Northern zone) of Ghana, states such as Vagala, the Sisala, the Talensi, Konkomba, Koma, Tampulensi, Chamba, etc. were not organised into centralised political states during the pre-colonial period. These societies were aptly described as “stateless” because they had no central government to make laws and enforce them. Instead, the administrative system was in the hands of an individual called the ‘Tindana’ who exercised considerable authority over all the land. The diagram below depicts how power was distributed in a non-centralised political system in pre-colonial Ghana.

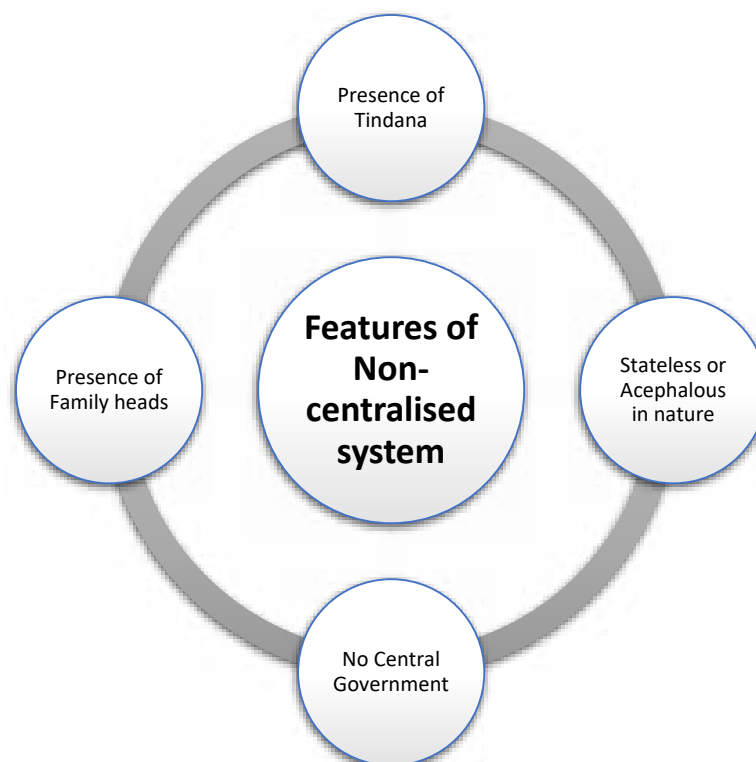


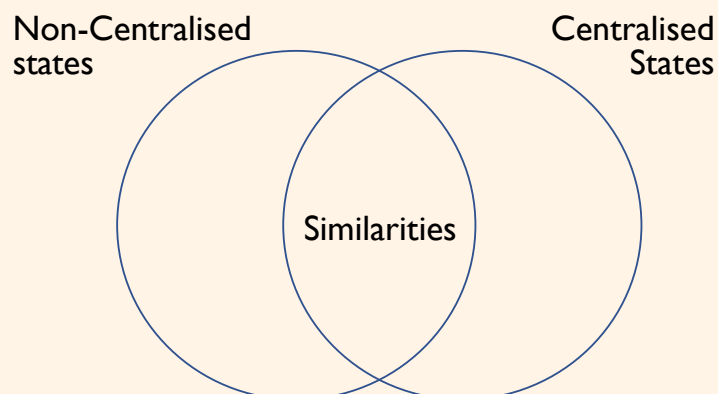
Fig. 4.15: Features of the non-centralised political system

Activity 4.40

1. In pairs, annotate the map of Northern Ghana and show where non-centralised states were located. Present your feedback in class by pasting it neatly on the wall.

**Non-Centralised states**

2. In groups of five (5), discuss the political structure of the indigenous people of Northern Ghana. Post your feedback on social media by tagging your friends, classmates and teachers.
3. Using the diagram below, compare and contrast the centralised and non-political systems in pre-colonial Ghana. Note: Label the key components of these systems.



Activity 4.41

1. Below is a historical account describing the non-centralised political system of the Tallensi in Ghana. Identify the key features of non-centralised political system of Tallensi.

The Tendaana (Tindana) of Baari, a section of the indigenous Tallensi, was essentially a religious personage who was also responsible for law and order. He exploited the superstitious beliefs of the people and the awe in which they held him owing to his rituals, to maintain peace within the settlement and between the settlement and the neighbouring settlements. However, the Tendaana had no extra-ritual machinery for the enforcement of his pronouncements. In other words, in a 'tendaanadom' the mechanism for social control consisted of moral arbitration and what the people could do to help maintain peace.

2. Analyse the short excerpt from a historical account describing a non-centralised political system in Ghana.

Many of the indigenous inhabitants of Northern Ghana such as the Vagala, the Sisala, the Guan and the Tallensi were not organised into political states during pre-colonial era. They had no centralised administration to enact laws and enforce them. Such powers were entrusted in the hands of the head of each family. Also, there was the office of 'Tendaana' who wielded enormous power and authority over these stateless societies.

- a. What was the implication of the non-centralised system for governance and justice delivery?
- b. Explain how the role of elders helped maintain order in a non-centralised society.

Theocratic Political Systems In Pre-Colonial Ghana

Under the theocratic political system, the people were ruled by priests and priestesses. This means that political power in such a system was in the hands of the priestly class. In Ghana, the people who practised this political system were the Guan and the Ga-Adangme.

The Guan speakers had no centralised states. A Guan village was made up of independent clans each under its own head. The rulers in these Guan communities were traditional priests and priestesses. They did not only control the shrines but also wielded immense political power. They were regarded as Priest-Kings. Mamfe was ruled by the priest of Topve; Abiriw by the priest of Bosompra, while the priest of the god Kyemku had charge of Obosomase. The Guan were later ruled by both a chief and a priest due to the influence of other Ghanaian states like the Akan. However, the sacred office of a priest was separated from that of a chief. For example, *Dente Bosomfo* exercised immense

political power than the king of Krakye (Krakye Wura). Presently, in the Guan states, all political power rests with the chief, who is assisted by a council of elders.

Also, the Ga-Adangme political system was another example of a theocracy. This was because they did not originally have kings. They were governed solely by the *Wulomei* or the chief priest. Each Ga-Adangme town had two groups of gods. These were gods brought in from the east and indigenous gods of the lagoons and rocks. It is said that chiefs in Ga-Adangme originated as war leaders and that the office of the chief was closely linked with the Akan contact and influence. But even when the secular authority was separated from religious authority, the traditional priests continued to wield great influence in Ga-Adangme society.

Features of Theocratic Political Systems in Pre-Colonial Ghana

1. Theocratic states had no centralised states;
2. The rulers were priests and priestesses of the local gods;
3. The Priest-Kings were much respected men;
4. The Priest-Kings settled all disputes and their decisions were binding;
5. The Priest-Kings were respected as the effective political officers in the land;
6. The Priest-Kings powers were backed by force based on ritual and moral sanctions.

The Role of Religious Leaders (Priests/ Priestesses, Priest-Kings) in the Political Systems of Pre-Colonial Ghana

In Guan communities, the religious leaders were feared, honoured and respected not only because they catered for the spiritual well-being of the people, but also because they were effective political officers in the land.

Again, in Ga-Adangme society, the priest-kings governed the people. For instance, the *Wulomei* of Lakpa, the chief god of La, used to govern the people of La. Also, in Krobo in Dangbeland, priestly officials known as *dzemeli* were in charge of public order. They saw to it that rituals were not violated.

Activity 4.42

1. In groups, annotate the map of Ghana and identify some states or groups that practised the theocratic political system in the pre-colonial era. Present your work in class.



2. Complete the table below.

Political structure	Political Structures of Theocratic States in the Pre-colonial era	Political Structures of Theocratic States Today
Nature of leadership		
The role of priests		
Organisation of the state		
Political decision making		
Role of state gods and ancestors		
System of law		

3. Based on your readings so far, discuss the role of the Wulomei in the theocratic system of the Ga-Adangme

Review questions

1. How did the matrilineal and patrilineal systems of inheritance affect the roles and responsibilities within pre-colonial Ghanaian families? Compare and contrast the impact of these systems on family dynamics.
2. Analyse the socio-cultural and spiritual significance of the family in pre-colonial Ghanaian societies. How did these aspects shape the community and individual identities?
3. How did European contact and colonisation influence the traditional family structures and inheritance practices in Ghana?
4. Discuss the roles of maternal uncles in matrilineal societies and fathers in patrilineal societies in the upbringing and education of children. How did these roles shape family relationships and social structures?
5. Reflect on the importance of rituals and traditions in maintaining social and spiritual order within pre-colonial Ghanaian families. Provide examples from the document.
6. With the readings you have done on marriages and the observations you have made around you, discuss at least three ways by which the organisation of marriages differ from pre-colonial times.
7. With your experiences in contemporary Ghanaian music, state at least three types of music genres in Ghana today.
8. With your knowledge of centralised systems of government and the administration of the modern state of Ghana, bring out any three differences and similarities between the centralised states of the past and the modern state of Ghana.

Answers to review questions

1. In matrilineal societies, inheritance and property were passed through the maternal line, leading to children inheriting from their mother's family. This system often empowered women and maternal relatives, such as uncles, who played crucial roles in child upbringing and family decision-making. For example, an Akan man would be responsible for his sister's children. This created strong bonds among maternal relatives and ensured that property remained within the maternal lineage.
2. In patrilineal societies, inheritance and property were passed through the paternal line, resulting in sons inheriting from their fathers. This reinforced male authority and responsibility within the family, as seen among the Guan, Ewe, Ga-Adangme, Mole-Dagbani, and Gonja. The father's lineage was crucial for family identity and social status, and family roles were structured around paternal lineage. For instance, a Mole-Dagbani farmer's cattle would be inherited by his sons, ensuring the continuation of the family's farming tradition.
3. **Socio-Cultural Significance:** Families provided essential support, determined social identity, and were responsible for teaching cultural values and skills. Marriages created alliances, and families played key roles in conflict resolution. For example, being part of a respected clan could mean higher social standing and leadership opportunities.
4. **Spiritual Significance:** Families worshipped ancestors, believing they provided protection and guidance. Spiritual roles were often inherited, and rituals marked significant life events. For instance, naming ceremonies included prayers and offerings for a child's well-being. This reinforced spiritual beliefs and ensured continuity of spiritual practices, contributing to community cohesion and individual identities.
5. European colonisation introduced the concept of the nuclear family, which influenced traditional extended family structures. Urbanisation and formal employment led individuals to establish households separate from their extended families. Traditional inheritance practices, such as the Akan matrilineal system, were challenged by modern laws like PNDC Law 111, which emphasised nuclear family rights. For example, under PNDC Law 111, an Akan man's property would be inherited by his wife and children, altering the traditional system where his sister's children would inherit.
6. In matrilineal societies, maternal uncles (mother's brothers) played crucial roles in upbringing and mentoring children. For example, among the Akan, uncles were responsible for their sister's children's welfare, often taking on father-like roles. This created strong maternal family bonds and ensured that children were closely tied to their mother's lineage.

In patrilineal societies, fathers were the primary authority figures and were responsible for teaching their sons family trades and cultural values. For instance, a Mole-Dagbani father's role in passing down farming skills to his sons ensured the continuation of family traditions and reinforced paternal lineage importance. These roles shaped family relationships by emphasizing either maternal or paternal connections, influencing social structures and inheritance patterns.

7. Rituals and traditions were vital in maintaining social and spiritual order by marking significant life events and reinforcing cultural beliefs. For instance, the Homowo festival among the Ga people celebrated the end of famine and the start of the harvest season, promoting communal gratitude and hope for prosperity. Marriage ceremonies involved rituals like pouring libations to honour ancestors, symbolising the unification of families. These practices ensured continuity of cultural heritage, strengthened community bonds, and provided a sense of identity and belonging.
8. The selection of fiancée/fiancé is not done by the individuals concerned. Women are now free to propose marriage to male suitors.
 - a. There is an increasing emphasis on the use of wedding rings as a status symbol
 - b. The church/mosque/court has assumed more roles in marriages of today
 - c. The family, especially the extended family, is losing its pre-eminent role in marriages to the church/mosque/court/social groups
 - d. New rituals such as bridal showers, singles night and a sprinkling of water are now introduced as part of the marriage rituals
 - e. New items such as the Bible, Laptops, and cars have been introduced as part of the bride price
 - f. The purpose of marriage has been broadened to include issues such as visa acquisition
7. Genres of Ghanaian music include:
 - Highlife
 - Afrobeats
 - Hiplife
 - Gospel
 - Afropop
 - Reggae
 - Reggae-Dancehall
 - Dancehall
8. Similarities between the Centralised States and the Modern State of Ghana
 - Both have the office of Head of State
 - Both have the composition of the Council of State
 - Both have ways of administering justice

- Both made laws for the people
- Both raised revenue for development

Differences

- The Head of State in the modern State is popularly elected, but the Head of State in the Centralised State is selected through hereditary succession
- The Head of State in the modern State has a fixed tenure of four years in office (she or he may serve a maximum of two terms, but the Head of State in the Centralised system has unlimited tenure until death or destoolment/deskinment)
- The modern state relies on the coercive forces of the state -Armed Forces, police etc. to enforce laws while the Centralised states relied on customs, taboos and Asafo groups to enforce law and order.
- The modern state relies on the court system to administer justice while the Centralised State relied on natural and supernatural methods in the administration of justice

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