

SECTION

6

ECONOMIC  
ACTIVITIES IN PRE-  
COLONIAL GHANA



# STATES AND KINGDOMS IN PRE-COLONIAL TIMES

## Pre-colonial Economy and Economic Activities

### Introduction

This section has a direct link with the previous section. In the previous session, you were taken through the history of arts and technology. It is important to note that the arts and technological history of Ghana that we have studied have a link with pre-colonial Ghanaian industries. Industries such as pottery, goldsmithing, leatherwork, bead making among others also portrayed the artistic and technological prowess of pre-colonial Ghanaians. Some major agricultural activities that we will discuss under this section are hunting and gathering, farming, fishing and domestication of animals. For trade, we will examine the forms and nature of trading in pre-colonial Ghana in an attempt to come out with how precolonial Ghanaians made a livelihood. Here, you are expected to demonstrate an understanding of how these economic activities contributed to the growth and development of states and kingdoms in pre-colonial Ghana.

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

- Investigate the existence and the development of pre-colonial Ghanaian industries
- Examine agricultural activities in pre-colonial Ghana.
- Investigate the nature of trade and the development of trading activities in pre-colonial Ghana

### Key Ideas

- **Economy** is a system by which goods and services are produced, sold and bought in a country or region.
- **Economic activity** is about putting together resources to produce specific goods.
- **Craft** is an activity involving skill in making things by hand.
- **Craft work** which is usually done by hand shows the artistic skills of people.
- **Craftsman** is a person who is skilled in a particular craft.
- **Exchange economy** is a type of economy where goods and services are traded between individuals or groups without money. It requires direct trade instead of using currency.
- **Economic landscape** refers to the overall structure and dynamic of an economy, including the various factors that influence economic activities and growth.
- **Trade route** is a path or route used for the exchange of goods and services between different places, the path could be over land, water or air and connect towns, cities or continents thereby facilitating trade.

- **Barter** is the direct exchange of goods and services between people without the use of money.
- **Currency** refers to a system of money that is in general use within a particular country or economic region.
- **Hunting** is the act of people pursuing and catching animals or games for food, skins, trade etc.
- **Agriculture** is the practice of soil cultivation, crop production, and animal rearing for foods, jobs, shelter etc.
- **Agricultural activity:** They are the tasks and jobs people do to grow food and raise animals.
- **Shorelines:** They are areas where land meets the ocean, sea or other large bodies of water.
- **Empowerment:** It is the process of gaining the strength, confidence and ability to make choices and take control of one's life.

## CRAFT WORK: PRODUCING ARTEFACTS FROM THE PRE-COLONIAL GHANAIAN INDUSTRIES

This lesson is a practical lesson where you are required to use relevant raw materials in your environment/communities to create or produce artefacts from any of the pre-colonial industries.

You are to refer to the methods of producing artefacts in each of the pre-colonial Ghanaian industries discussed under Arts and Technology in Pre-colonial Ghana. In this section, you are expected to produce different artefacts such as wooden objects, pottery items, soaps, beads, leather products, pieces of jewellery, etc.

### Activity 6.1

1.
  - a. Based on the lesson in art and technological industries in pre-colonial Ghana, you should now choose one craft to focus on. This may be *pottery, wooden artefacts, soap making, bead making, or leatherwork, cloth weaving, etc.*
  - b. After selecting your chosen craft, contact someone who has knowledge in the craft to assist you in undertaking the craft work by yourself if you are not already good at doing it.
  - c. Detail the materials and the processes involved in undertaking the craft.
  - d. Take pictures and short videos of your artwork and post it on social media if you have a handle.

- e. You and your classmates should arrange with your teacher to exhibit your craftworks at a common place in the school where students from other departments can come over to look at your works. Ensure to label your work appropriately and provide any artistic inspiration if any.
2. Based on the craftwork you have undertaken, complete the following table with the relevant piece of information.

**Table 6.1:** Techniques, challenges and reflections in craftwork

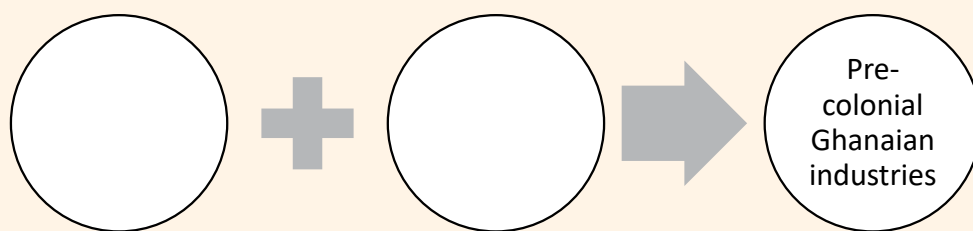
Techniques used in undertaking the craft	
Challenges you overcame	
Your personal reflections on the processes	

3. Provide sketches of your work, materials you used and the justifications for your choice of designs. Provide the details in the table below.

**Table 6.2:** Details on sketches, materials and justification of design choices

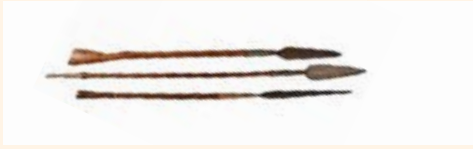



Sketches of the work	Materials used	Justifications of the design choice

4. We have observed that many industries existed in pre-colonial Ghana. Indicate at least two different industries that existed in pre-colonial Ghana. Use the infographic below to present your response.



**Fig. 6.1:** Two examples of industries that existed in pre-colonial Ghana

5. Match the following pictures of pre-colonial Ghanaian artefacts with the industry that produced them (pottery, blacksmithing, goldsmithing).

Artefact	Industry that produced it
 <p data-bbox="384 443 715 477"><b>Fig. 6.2:</b> An image of a spear</p>	Goldsmithing
 <p data-bbox="384 734 707 768"><b>Fig. 6.3:</b> An image of an axe</p>	Pottery
 <p data-bbox="384 1041 802 1075"><b>Fig. 6.4:</b> An image of indigenous pot</p>	Wood Carving
 <p data-bbox="384 1339 826 1373"><b>Fig. 6.5:</b> An image of indigenous knife</p>	Blacksmithing

6. Choose one specific type of artefact from pre-colonial Ghana (e.g. a simple bead necklace). Using only materials readily available in your environment (leaves, sticks, pebbles), create a replica of that artefact. After completing your task, complete the table below.

**Table 6.3:** Steps and challenges involved in undertaking a replica artefact

Steps you used in undertaking the artefact	Challenges you faced
Experiences you have gained	

## THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF PRE-COLONIAL GHANAIAN INDUSTRIES

Pre-colonial Ghana was home to a variety of industries that played a vital role in the socio-economic development of the society. These industries contributed significantly to the growth of Ghanaian society by providing employment opportunities, generating revenue and fostering trade relations with other states. From textiles to metalworking, these industries were a testament to the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the Ghanaian people. Understanding the importance of these industries is crucial in appreciating the contributions of pre-colonial Ghana to the development of West Africa. Table 6.4 below shows some socio-economic significance of pre-colonial Ghanaian industries:

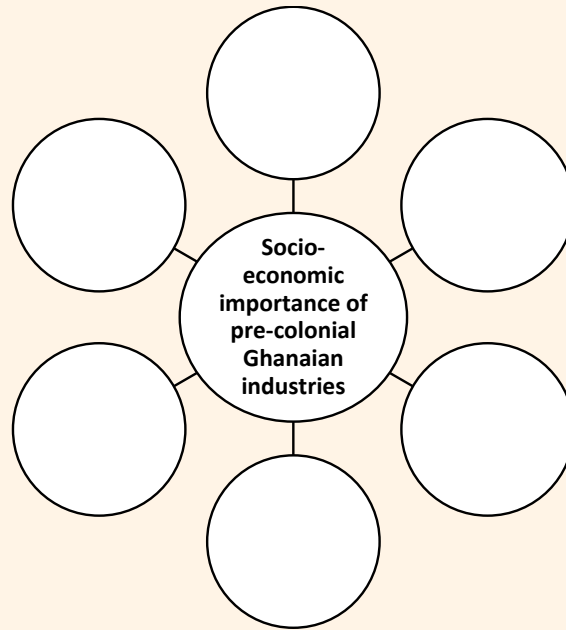
**Table 6.4:** Some socio-economic significance of pre-colonial Ghanaian industries:

<b>Sustenance</b>	Sustenance in pre-colonial Ghana was supported by various industries beyond farming. The salt-making industry along the coastal regions was particularly crucial as it produced both dried and processed salt that was distributed throughout the forest and savannah regions. Canoe builders contributed to sustenance by creating vessels that enabled fishing communities to access deeper waters for better catches. Pottery makers produced essential storage vessels that helped preserve food and water, while their cooking utensils were fundamental to food preparation. The metalworking industry produced tools that were essential for food processing and preparation, including knives, cooking pots, and other utensils.
<b>Economic growth</b>	Pre-colonial Ghanaian industries also promoted economic growth. Various regions developed specialised production centres. Each of these specialised centres became renowned for specific crafts and goods. The exchange of manufactured goods created a dynamic economy where communities could trade their surplus products for other valuable resources. This system of specialisation and trade fostered economic independence while simultaneously promoting inter-regional commerce.
<b>Trade networks</b>	The industries of pre-colonial Ghana fostered trade networks with neighbouring states. They promoted cultural exchange and diplomatic relations. For example, Otublohum (Dutch Accra) was noted for the production of canoes. Areas like Nkoranza, Techiman (Takyiman) were noted for the production of textiles and the Gonja was also noted for the production of beautiful pottery and metal goods. These wide range of products were exchanged at local (village) markets or carried them to regional markets such as Akuse, Abonse, Abrambo (north of Fetu), Salaga, Buipe, Wa, Kumasi, Techiman etc.
<b>Infrastructure development</b>	The wealth generated from industries such as gold mining contributed to the growth of urban centres and the development of infrastructure. Towns such as Begho, Obuasi, Tarkwa, Techiman (Takyiman), etc developed as a result of wealth generated from gold mining.

<b>Cultural preservation</b>	Cultural preservation was inherently linked to these industrial activities. The textile industries, in particular, maintained distinct cultural identities through their products. The Fugu textiles of Northern Ghana and the Kente weaving traditions of the Akan and Eweland were not just commercial products; they were expressions of cultural heritage passed down through generations. These crafting techniques and production methods reflected local traditions and values, with industrial centres often becoming sites of cultural significance that continue to influence modern Ghana.
<b>Employment opportunities</b>	Employment opportunities were abundant and diverse within these industries. The gold industry alone created a complex chain of employment, from mining activities to crafting and trading finished products. Skilled artisans found work in textile weaving, pottery making, metalworking, and canoe building, while supporting roles provided employment for many others. These industries also created valuable opportunities for apprenticeship, ensuring the preservation and transmission of crucial skills across generations.
<b>Community development</b>	Community development was profoundly influenced by industrial activities. Production centres evolved into social hubs where communities gathered and flourished. Villages known for specific crafts grew into vibrant commercial centres, attracting settlers and promoting urbanisation. Bonwire, for instance, became renowned as the heart of Kente production, while Obuasi emerged as a significant gold mining centre. The collective nature of industrial work strengthened social bonds and created cohesive communities.
<b>Power and influence</b>	Power and influence were natural outcomes of industrial success. States rich in gold, such as Denkyira, Akyem-Abuakwa, and Asante, gained significant political influence. Their industrial wealth funded military expansions and provided strategic advantages through the control of trade routes. Industrial centres became seats of political power, where economic success translated into political authority and regional influence.
<b>Resilience and ingenuity</b>	The resilience and ingenuity of pre-colonial craftspeople were evident in their ability to maximise local resources and adapt production methods to environmental conditions. They developed innovative manufacturing techniques and created durable goods from available materials, demonstrating sustainable practices that were ahead of their time. Their indigenous knowledge informed production methods that were both efficient and sustainable.

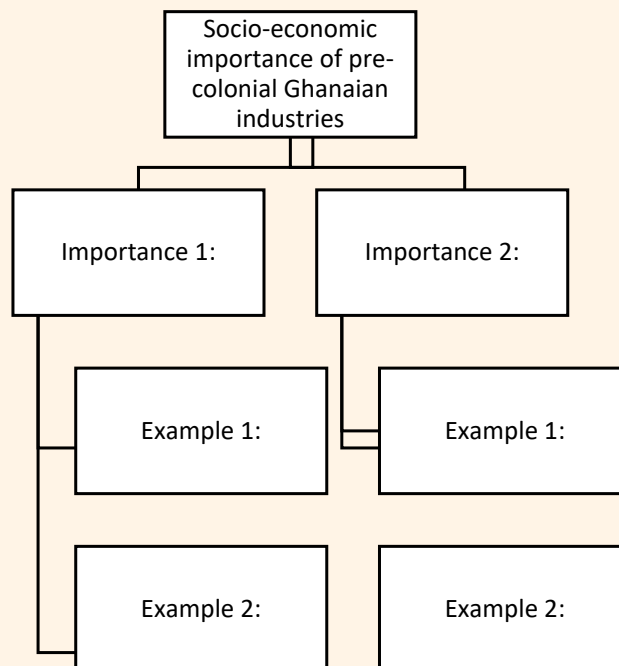
## Activity 6.2

1. Based on the lesson on pre-colonial Ghanaian industries, you should use the infographic below to show how these industries sustained livelihood in the pre-colonial era.



**Fig. 6.6:** Socio-economic importance of pre-colonial Ghanaian industries

2. Use the chart below to analyse the socio-economic importance of pre-colonial Ghanaian industries with specific examples.



**Fig. 6.7:** Socio-economic importance of pre-colonial Ghanaian industries with examples



3. Based on the knowledge of craft you have gained so far in this lesson, write a historical paper on how Indigenous Ghanaian industries helped to sustain livelihoods in the Pre-Colonial Era.
4. In another historical paper, discuss how pre-colonial Ghanaian industries affected women. Use the following as guides:
  - The industries provided women with job opportunities.
  - They provided women with sources of income.
  - They made women experts in various craft works.
  - They conferred status symbol on women. Women became respected and valued.
  - They made women to preserve the cultural heritage of their societies.

## HUNTING IN PRE-COLONIAL GHANA

Pre-colonial Ghanaians were economically active and productive. They engaged in many economic activities to their benefit. Agriculture was the main activity of the people in pre-colonial Ghana. Some of the main agricultural activities in pre-colonial Ghana were:

- Hunting
- Gathering
- Fishing
- Farming
- Domestication of animals

### Hunting

In pre-colonial Ghana, hunting was one of the important economic activities. Hunting was done mainly in the forest, savannah and parts of the coastal zone. This was because animals were abundant in these zones. Men mostly conducted hunting. The hunting profession was male-dominated because of the hazards associated with it. The abundance of game called for people to hunt in the bushes for animals such as wild buffalo, wild dogs, grass cutters, rats, antelopes, etc. Hunters also targeted some animals because of the harm and destruction they caused to human beings and properties. These animals included elephants, wild cats, tigers, civet cats and wild dogs. Elephants and tigers were of economic and commercial importance to the pre-colonial Ghanaians. The teeth/tusks and tails of elephants were highly prized and valued. Tiger skins were also valued.

During the Stone Age period, the hunters invented special wooden handles with stone head tools for hunting. Some hunters also used clubs. Hunting was improved when hunters used more effective and efficient weapons such as spears and arrows for

hunting. Hunting was of economic importance to the pre-colonial Ghanaians because hunted animals were exchanged in the barter trade. It also contributed to food security by providing sustainable sources of animal protein to the people. Hunting also boosted the leather industry in the three vegetation zones in pre-colonial Ghana. We know the importance of this industry because the symbol of authority of the Yaa-Naa, Nayiri and chiefs in the Northern Zone of Ghana is the skin. But how did the rulers obtain these special skins?

### Methods of hunting in pre-colonial Ghana

- a. **Trapping:** One method of hunting in the pre-colonial period was trapping. Hunters trapped animals using cage traps and concealed holes. Have you ever done this before? Children like to trap small games such as grass cutters and rats. Pit traps were used to hunt animals in the pre-colonial era. In this method, the hunter dug a pit on the animal's discovered path and covered it with leaves. An animal accidentally fell into the dug pit, after which the hunter went to kill and carry it away.
- b. **Use of Weapons:** Hunters later made use of weapons such as spears, bows, arrows, and clubs for hunting. Hunters used clubs to strike the animal dead from its blind side.
- c. **Use of dogs:** Dogs were very important to hunters. The dog was called the hunter's companion. The dog helped the hunter to spring games and warned him of an impending danger.
- d. **Strangulation of animals:** Some animals were also strangled by the hunters.
- e. **Smoking method:** This was one method hunters used to hunt animals. The method involved hunters creating smoke to suffocate the animals in their hideouts in holes. As the animal got suffocated, it came out, and the hunter, with his companion, pursued it or hit it to get killed. This method was suitable for hunting small games such as rats and grass cutters.
- f. **Cutting animals with cutlasses:** Hunters also used cutlasses for hunting. The cutlasses were manufactured by pre-colonial blacksmiths from iron metals. Hunters used the cutlasses to cut the animal open. Often, the hunter struck the animal with the cutlass when the animal was not looking in the hunter's direction.

#### Activity 6.3

1. Now that you are aware of the vegetation zones where hunting was done in pre-colonial Ghana, locate each of the vegetation zones on this map. Still, on the map, locate the kind of agricultural activities and the corresponding produce that was obtained from there.



**Fig. 6.8:** Vegetation zone and the kind of agricultural activities and the corresponding produce that were obtained from there

2. Match the following hunting tools with their corresponding descriptions:

Hunting tools	Description
Clubs	Usually made of wood, it has broadheads or expandable tips, a nock and a point for hunting of games
Arrows	It has parts such as a riser, limbs, string and arrow reset that provide great force and accuracy as a hunting tool.
Spears	They are traditional tools usually made of stones or wood that were used for hunting before the invention of more refined tools.
Bows	It has parts such as a shaft, spearhead and binding and was among the first tools created by the pre-colonial Ghanaians for the purposes of thrusting or throwing to kill or incapacitate animals from a distance.

3. Hunting was not merely an economic activity. It provided cultural and spiritual significance to the pre-colonial Ghanaians. With the support of your school library, teachers or the internet, describe the cultural and spiritual significance of hunting to the pre-colonial Ghanaians
4. We have looked at some agricultural activities that the pre-colonial Ghanaians carried out. Turn to your elbow partner to mention to each other the various agricultural activities that the pre-colonial Ghanaians undertook.
5. We learnt that three vegetational zones – Coastal, Savannah and Forest – existed in pre-colonial Ghana. With this understanding, you and three of your classmates should now create a chart to describe the vegetational zones in pre-colonial Ghana. For each of these zones, show the kind of agricultural activities that were practised.
6. Based on your discussions so far, your group should identify specific hunting methods and how hunting practices might have changed depending on the season or availability of prey.

Consider the following as guides

- Some animals have gone extinct because of climate change
  - Other animals have become endangered species which are illegal to hunt
  - Hunting is no longer widespread
  - Animals such as grasscutters and rabbits are hard to come by nowadays because of changes in the vegetation
7. Now, go ahead and discuss how hunting methods or targeted animals might have differed across various vegetational zones of pre-colonial Ghana. How do you think hunting might have impacted pre-colonial Ghanaian societies and people?
  8. Create a poster that explains the role of hunting in pre-colonial Ghana. Make sure you include the following aspects:
    - a. the animals hunted
    - b. the tools used for hunting
    - c. the role hunting played in society and the economy
  9. Based on your understanding of the techniques used for hunting in the pre-colonial period in Ghana, what do you consider as the advantages and disadvantages of hunting techniques used?

## COLLECTION OF WILD CROPS IN PRE-COLONIAL GHANA

### Collecting or gathering wild crops

Gathering and picking crops was an agricultural activity that took place in pre-colonial Ghana. The gathering was based on the collection of wild foods and plants that grew in the rich vegetation. In the various geographical zones, wild crops were picked as food. The chart below shows some of the wild crops that were picked from the various vegetational zones:

Savannah Zone	Forest Zone	Coastal Zone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shea butter</li> <li>• Baobab</li> <li>• Tamarind</li> <li>• Dawadawa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kola Nut</li> <li>• Oil Palm</li> <li>• Coconut</li> <li>• Cotton</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oil Palm</li> <li>• Coconut</li> </ul>

Fig. 6.9: Vegetational zones and crops produced

### Activity 6.4

1. Based on your knowledge of the vegetation zones and the crops produced in each zone, make a chart of the zones and the corresponding crops produced in each zone.
2. With the aid of the pre-made chart below, prepare a list of six wild crops (kola nuts, coconut, etc.) and their corresponding vegetational zones (e.g. forest, coastal, etc.).

Crop Name	Vegetational Zone	Description

Fig. 6.10: Vegetation zones, description and crops produced

3. How do you think the availability of crops might have varied depending on the season in each vegetation zone? Provide detailed information on the importance of these wild crops to pre-colonial Ghanaians

4. Based on your understanding of wild crops, provide the cultural significance of Kola nuts, Palm nuts and Shea nuts.

**Table 6.5:** Cultural significance of Kola nuts, Palm nut and Shea nut.

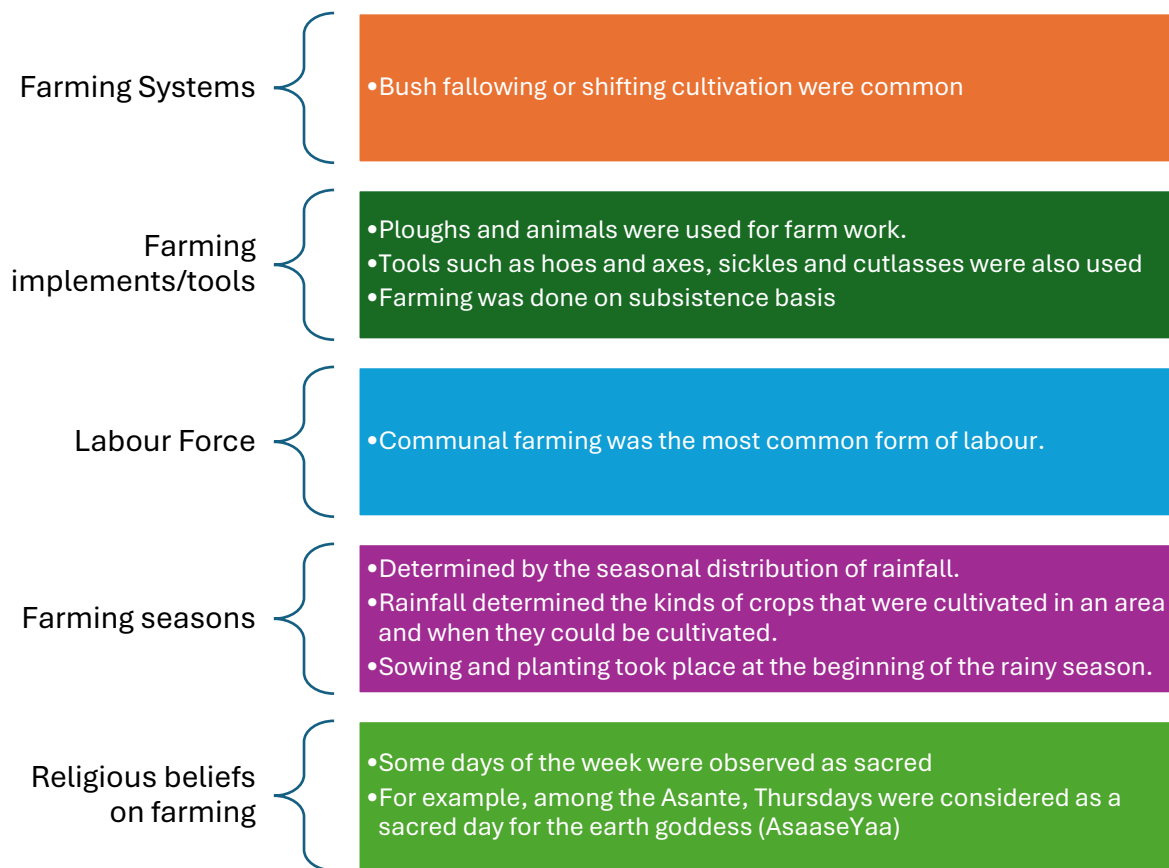
Kola nut	Shea nut	Palm nut

5. How could knowledge of wild crop gathering in pre-colonial Ghana inform modern sustainable farming practices?
6. What were the limitations and challenges of relying on wild crop gathering for food security in pre-colonial Ghana and how did this impact societal development?

## FARMING IN PRE-COLONIAL GHANA

Farming or crop cultivation was a dominant economic activity across all the geographical zones in pre-colonial Ghana. In the Savannah Zone, for example, the major crops that were grown included grain or cereal such as maize, millet, rice and guinea corn and food crops such as yam, tobacco, groundnuts, sweet potato, etc. In the Coastal Zone, crops and vegetables such as cassava, maize, tomatoes and rice were also cultivated. In the Forest Zone, the abundance of rainfall resulted in the cultivation of crops such as rice, plantain, tobacco, okro, onion, maize, yam and cassava.

The key characteristics of farming across the three main geographical zones were seen in the following areas:



**Fig. 6.11:** Key characteristics of farming across the three main vegetation zones in pre-colonial Ghana.

### Activity 6.5

1. Create a list of farming tools used in the pre-colonial era in Ghana.
2. Use the table below to compare farming practices in the three vegetational ones in pre-colonial Ghana.

**Table 6.6:** Comparison of farming practices in the three vegetational ones in pre-colonial Ghana.

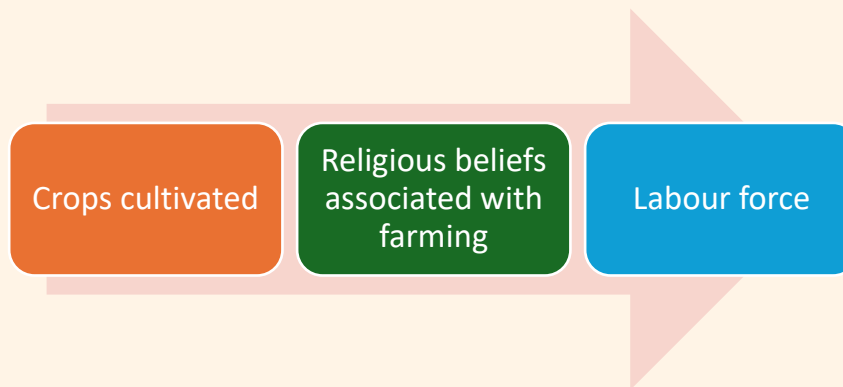
Coastal Zone	Savannah Zone	Forest Zone

3. You and your elbow partners should use the chart below to discuss how each of the characteristics of farming in pre-colonial Ghana worked. Annotate around the chart with your notes.



**Fig. 6.12:** Characteristics of farming in pre-colonial Ghana.

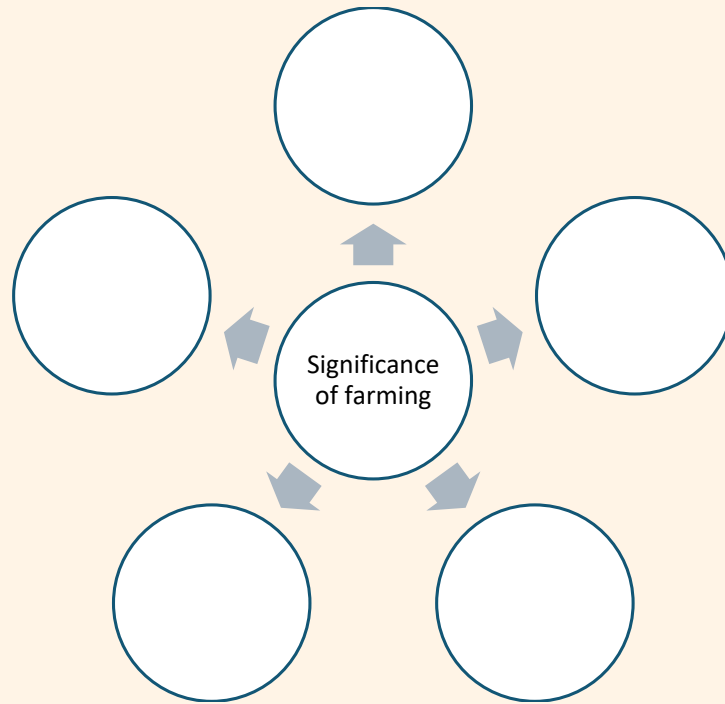
- Using the chart as a guide, select one aspect of farming and discuss its strengths and limitations. Annotate the diagram with your notes.



**Fig. 6.13:** Some aspects of pre-colonial farming in Ghana

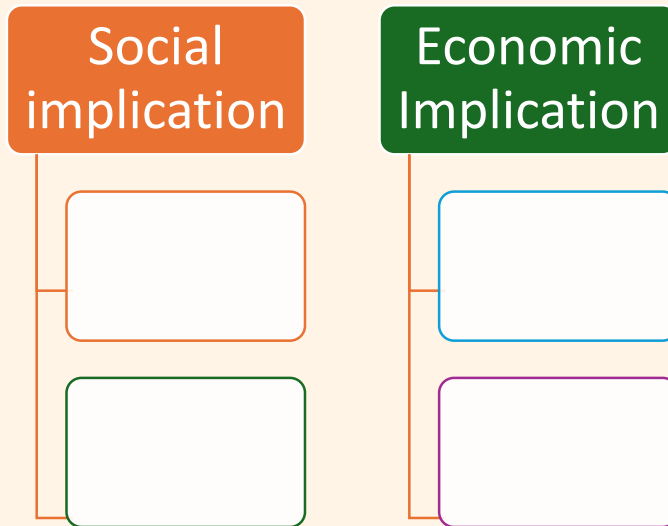
- With reference to what we have learnt so far, highlight at least four impacts of religious beliefs on farming practices in pre-colonial Ghana
- Farming has proven to be an important part of the lives of pre-colonial Ghanaians. With this appreciation of farming, provide at least five economic significance of farming in pre-colonial Ghana. Share this with the rest of the class.





**Fig. 6.14:** Significance of farming in pre-colonial Ghana

7. How do you think geographical features of pre-colonial Ghana influenced the development of farming practices?
8. What do you consider to be the social and economic implications of farming in pre-colonial Ghana?



**Fig. 6.15:** Social and economic implications of farming in pre-colonial Ghana

9. How do you think pre-colonial Ghanaian farming practices reflected the society's cultural and traditional values?

## FISHING IN PRE-COLONIAL GHANA

Fishing was an important economic activity, especially for the coastal dwellers in pre-colonial Ghana. Apart from those at the coast, fishing was also practised by those who settled along riverbanks. Active fishing was carried out in Fante Coastal towns such as *Anomabo, Biriwa, Egyaa, Kormantse, Otuam, Senya Bereku, Winneba, Apam*, etc. Among the Ga settlers, fishing was done alongside farming. In the inland areas (forest zone) fishing was done in rivers such as *Birim, Bosomtwe, Ofin, Pra, Afram, Tano* and the *Volta Lake*.

Tools and equipment used for fishing included small coast nets, buckets/pans/calabashes, knives, sticks, bait, poles, spears, canoes/boats, iron hooks, harpoons, woven nets, fishing baskets, hooks and lines, and traps.

The points below highlight the use of these fishing equipment:

1. **Use of Hook and Line:** Hooks were made from materials like wood, bone, or metals. Lines were made from natural fibers; they varied in length and thickness depending on the type of fish targeted. Hooks were used with fishing lines to catch fish; fishermen placed bait on the tip of the hook to bait fish. In most cases, earthworms were placed on the hook to bait fish.
2. **Use of Pole and Hook:** Fishing with a pole was a traditional method that involves several key components and techniques. The pole was built from sticks, palm fronds or bamboos, the poles (rod) provided advantage for casting the hook and retrieving fish caught. The hooks were used in catching fish with bait at the tip of the hook.
3. **Use of Harpoons:** This was made from a stick with a spear-like metal tightly tied to the tip of the stick. Harpoons were pointed spear-like tools used for striking fish, particularly in deeper waters or during fishing in rivers. It was mostly used for catching large fish
4. **Use of Spears:** Fishermen used sharpened sticks or iron-tipped spears to catch fish, particularly in shallow waters. This method required skills and precision and often involved careful stalking of the fish.
5. **Use of Cutlasses:** The cutlass played a significant role in fishing practices, particularly among coastal communities and fishermen who fished in lakes, rivers and lagoons. Cutlasses were used to clear aquatic vegetation to access fishing areas. They were also used in building traditional fishing tools and traps.
6. **Use of Traps:** These were built from reeds or bamboo and placed in the water to catch fish as they swam in. Specially woven baskets, often woven from local materials, were also used as traps for catching fish and collecting other aquatic resources.
7. **Damming:** Here, fishermen constructed barriers in rivers or streams to direct fish into a confined area for easier capture. Damming was an important practice, which exemplified indigenous ingenuity of local communities in adapting to their environment to ensure food security.

8. **Use of Nets:** Nets were used to catch fish close to the shore. Fishermen would throw the net in a circular motion to trap fish within. Another method of using nets to catch fish was for two people to pull the net through the water to encircle the fish. The nets allowed fishermen to catch larger quantities of fish than the use of hook and line. The making and maintenance of nets was a skilled craft handed down from one generation to the other.

## Methods of preserving fish in pre-colonial Ghana

In pre-colonial Ghana, preserving fish was essential for ensuring food security and enabling trade. Various traditional methods were employed to extend the shelf life of fish. Here are the primary methods of fish preservation used during that period:

1. **Sun drying:** The fish were cleaned, and then laid out in the sun to remove moisture. This helped prevent the fish from spoiling. The process involved the removal of fish intestines. The fish was later cleaned and salted. The fish was then placed on a clean mat or raised stands. The fish was thus exposed to direct sunlight for drying.
2. **Smoking:** Fish were smoked over an open flame or dedicated smokehouses, infusing them with flavour while at the same time preventing the growth of bacteria on the fish. Different types of wood were used to undertake the smoking process.
3. **Salting preservation:** In this method of preservation, fish were coated with salt. This drew out moisture and created an inhospitable environment for spoilage causing bacteria. Salted fish could be stored for extended periods, and this helped fishmongers travel over long routes to trade their fish without fearing that the fish would spoil.
4. **Fermented fish:** Fish was intentionally salted and allowed to ferment. Fermented fish was an important part of indigenous cooking practice.

### Activity 6.6

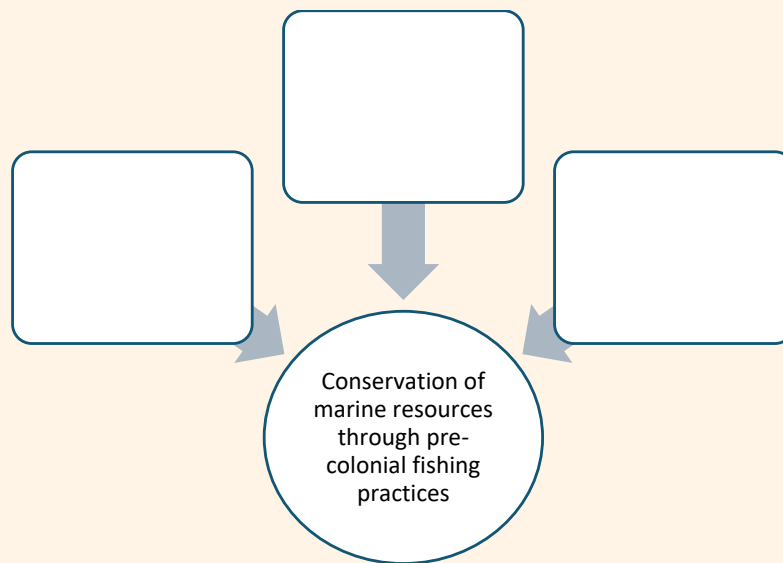
1. Investigate and create a list of fishing tools and equipment used in pre-colonial Ghana. Match each tool with its corresponding fishing technique.
2. Based on the knowledge you have acquired about the socio-cultural and economic importance of fishing in pre-colonial Ghana, use the infographic below to demonstrate the socio-cultural and economic importance of fishing in the pre-colonial period in Ghana.



**Fig. 6.16:** Socio-cultural and economic importance of fishing in pre-colonial Ghana.

1. Fishing is not just a livelihood in Ghana; it also provides us with food, and hence, we must work to sustain it. With this understanding, design a sustainable fishing plan for a modern Ghanaian fishing community, incorporating lessons learned from pre-colonial Ghanaian fishing practices.
2. With your class and your teacher, embark on a field trip to a fishing community to observe the sources and methods of fishing. If that is not possible, then with the support of your teacher, watch a virtual field trip on sources and methods of fishing in current Ghana.
3. Now that you have observed the sources and methods of fishing in Ghana, describe in detail any aspect of fishing in Ghana. This may be the types of nets used, types of fish caught, means of transport, etc.
4. Discuss the impact of modernisation on fishing practices in Ghana. Look also at comparing fishing practices across different areas.
5. Design research questions related to fishing. Your questions should focus on the economic, social or environmental implications of contemporary fishing practices.
6. Some special places were noted for fishing in pre-colonial Ghana. Identify at least two of such fishing places or towns in Ghana and indicate the tools and methods used for fishing at such towns and places.
7. What role do you think fishing has played in the economy of pre-colonial Ghana?
8. Why do you think some areas in pre-colonial Ghana were more suited for fishing than other areas?

9. How can knowledge of pre-colonial Ghanaian fishing practices help conserve marine resources in Ghana today? Present your answer in the chart below:



**Fig. 6.17:** Conservation of marine resources through pre-colonial fishing practices

## DOMESTICATION OF ANIMALS IN PRE-COLONIAL GHANA

### Animal Husbandry/ Livestock Rearing/ Domestication

Animal husbandry contributed greatly to the development of pre-colonial economy. Among the animals reared were cattle, pigs, goats and sheep. Others were horses, asses, dogs and poultry. Horses and asses were reared in tsetse fly-free areas in the Savannah Zone. They served as means of transport rather than beasts of burden. It is believed that cattle reached Ghana from the cities of Western Sudan and Hausaland. Cattle were reared largely in the Savannah Zone. Poultry, sheep, goats and pigs were commonly found in the Forest and Coastal Zones.

#### Methods of Livestock Rearing

In pre-colonial Ghana, livestock rearing was an essential aspect of agricultural practices and community life. The methods employed varied depending on the animals, environmental conditions and cultural practices. Here are some key methods of livestock rearing:

**Free range system:** This system was a predominant method used in pre-colonial Ghana. With this, animals such as fowls, guinea fowls, ducks, goats and sheep were

allowed to roam freely, feeding on natural vegetation in the community. The animals came back to roost in simple structures. The advantage of this method was that the farmer did not buy any feed since he or she relied on natural resources in the environment to feed his or her animals.

**Extensive:** here, animals were allowed to roam freely in designated areas. The animals utilised natural vegetation for foraging. Farmers who reared cattle moved their herds to different grazing areas based on the change of seasons and availability of water and feed. There was also controlled pasturing of animals. Here, animals were confined to specific areas but moved regularly to prevent overgrazing. In addition to grazing, animals were provided with supplementary feed during the dry seasons or when pastures were. Farmers also supported the animal feeds with leftovers such as cassava, yam and plantain peels.

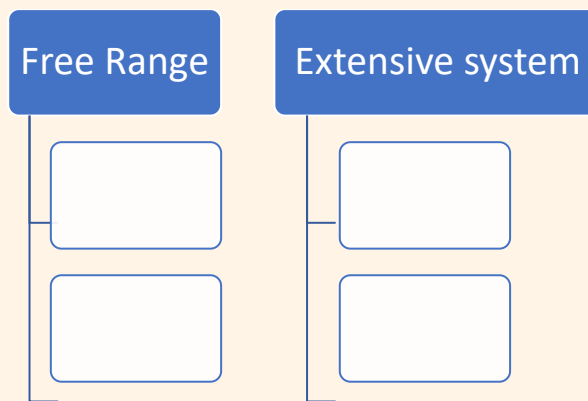
### Socio-economic importance of livestock rearing

The rearing of livestock held much economic value in Ghana, contributing to various livelihoods. These were the key aspects of its economic importance.

- **Source of income to the farmer:** farmers earned income through the sale of animals, meat and eggs. Regional and national markets facilitated the trade of livestock, enhancing economic opportunities.
- **Job creation:** livestock rearing helped to provide direct employment opportunities in farming, processing and trade.
- **Food security:** livestock rearing contributed to the provision of protein in the local diets, thereby improving nutrition and health.
- **Cultural significance:** livestock were important in traditional ceremonies. Most of our indigenous religious rituals required the offering or killing of animals to appease or thank the gods. They also served as food in festivals and other rituals.
- **Crop fertilisation:** The manure of the animals was also used as manure to enrich soil fertility. This helped in promoting sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Wealth indicators:** the rearing or ownership of livestock indicated traditional measure of wealth and status in the community. It also served as a means of accumulating wealth for a family.

#### Activity 6.7

1. With the aid of the chart below, show two differences between free-range systems and extensive systems of domestication of animals.



**Fig. 6.18:** Differences between free range and extensive systems of domestication of animals

2. Show in the chart below how animals might be raised in the free range and the extensive systems.

Free Range	
Extensive System	

**Fig. 6.19:** How animals might be raised in the Free range and the Extensive systems.

3. Use the chart below to explain the meaning of free-range systems and indicate the positive and negative aspects of the system.

**Table 6.7:** Free-range, ‘pros’ and ‘cons’

Free Range (What is it)	‘Pros’	‘Cons’

4. Livestock rearing in pre-colonial Ghana was not free from challenges. Study the sources below (A and B) carefully to analyse the impact of diseases and pests on livestock rearing in pre-colonial Ghana.

**Source A**

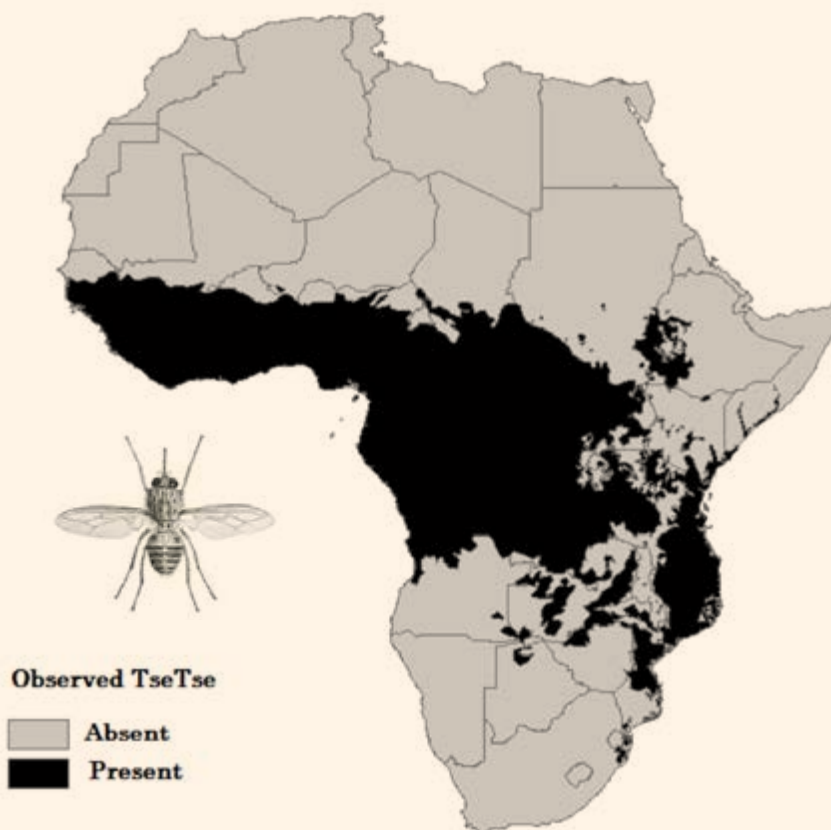
Excerpt from: Green, E. (n.d.). Production systems in pre-colonial Africa. In *The history of African development*. African Economic History Network. [www.aehnetwork.org/textbook/](http://www.aehnetwork.org/textbook/)

“...diseases and pests, restricted what animals could be kept and what crops could be grown. Sleeping sickness (trypanosomiasis) and rinderpest effectively prevented livestock rearing in many places, and swarms of locusts could devastate crops. Animal diseases could wipe out herds, so stock loss was a constant threat to the growth of pastoral and agropastoral societies. The forest harboured mosquitoes and tsetse flies, especially along the rivers and streams...

Although the tsetse fly carried trypanosomiasis that was fatal for humans, it was its effect on livestock that more profoundly impacted the precolonial economies. Tsetse flies also carried the animal trypanosomiasis parasite (also known as nagana) that is fatal to cattle and horses. The presence of tsetse flies prevented the development of pastoral or agro-pastoral systems in the forest zones. With no cattle, ploughs – one of the most important labour-saving technologies in the pre-industrial age – could be introduced. It also impeded long-distance trade human porters had to be used to carry goods. This is one of the reasons why trans-Saharan trade for the West African economies as it was the only tsetse free transport route and camels could be used as carriers.”

**Source B:**

*Alsan, M. (2012). The effect of the tsetse fly on African development [Unpublished manuscript]. Harvard University.*



**Figure 6.20:** Tsetse distribution



- According to Source A, what were the two main diseases that affected livestock rearing in pre-colonial Africa?
  - Using Source B, describe the distribution pattern of tsetse flies in relation to Ghana's geographical location and the wider West African sub-region.
  - How does Source B support the claims made in Source A about the impact of tsetse flies on livestock rearing?
  - Using both sources, explain two ways in which the presence of tsetse flies affected economic development in pre-colonial Ghana.
  - To what extent do these sources help us understand the challenges of livestock rearing in pre-colonial Ghana? Consider the strengths and limitations of both sources.
  - Based on both sources, suggest reasons why certain areas of pre-colonial Ghana might have been more successful in livestock rearing than others.
5. How did the climate and geographical features of Ghana influence the types of livestock raised?
  6. Based on what you have learnt so far, why do you think livestock rearing was an important part of pre-colonial Ghanaian society?

## HOW AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES HELPED TO SUSTAIN LIVELIHOOD IN PRE-COLONIAL GHANA

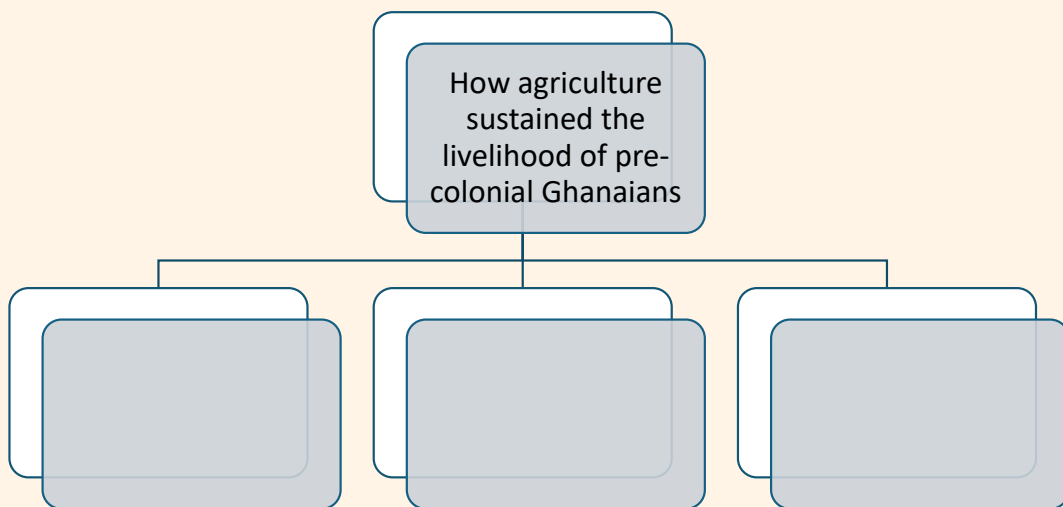
Agricultural activities played a crucial role in sustaining livelihoods in pre-colonial Ghana. Here are some key points highlighting their significance:

1. **Served as a source of income and employment:** Agriculture created jobs, not just in farming but also in related sectors like processing and trade. Agriculture provided employment for a large portion of the population, reducing unemployment rates.
2. **Provided food items:** Most communities practised subsistence farming, producing enough food to meet the needs of their household. A variety of crops, including yams, cassava, and maize, ensured food availability throughout the year.
3. **Food Security:** The indigenous people were knowledgeable in the storage of farm products. Effective storage methods helped preserve food, in so doing reducing the risk of famine. They built special raised huts meant for the storage of items such as yam maize and other farm products. Again, some farmers resorted to storing items such as yam and cassava in specially dug holes that were later covered for storage.

4. **Cash Crops:** Crops like cocoa, palm oil, and kola nuts were cultivated for trade, thus generating income for the farmer. The cultivation of cash crops brought in enormous income, which helped elevate the farmer's status.
5. **Community Cohesion:** Farming was often a communal activity, fostering social ties and cooperation among community members. In some societies, people helped each other by taking turns to weed, plant and harvest crops.
6. **Trade and Economic Exchange:** Surplus production led to the establishment of local markets, facilitating trade and economic interactions. Agricultural products were traded with other regions, fostering economic ties and cultural exchanges.
7. **Nutritional Benefits:** The cultivation of various crops contributed to a balanced and nutritious diet, improving overall health.
8. **Sustainable Practices:** Traditional agricultural methods promoted sustainable land use and biodiversity conservation. Knowledge of indigenous crops and farming practices contributed to effective resource management.

### Activity 6.8

1. With the aid of the chart below, explain how agricultural activities sustained the livelihood of pre-colonial Ghanaians.



**Fig. 6.21:** How agriculture sustained the livelihood of pre-colonial Ghanaians

## The role of women in pre-colonial agricultural activities in Ghana

Women played a vital role in the agricultural practices of pre-colonial Ghana. Hence contributing significantly to agricultural production, processing and preservation of food. Here are some key aspects of their involvement:

### Agricultural production

- **Crop cultivation:** Women were mainly responsible for growing staple crops such as yams, cassava, millet and maize. They also helped in the upkeep of their husbands' farms
- **Vegetable gardening:** Many women-maintained home gardens near their houses. They cultivated vegetables and herbs for consumption by the family.

### Food processing and preparation

- **Post-harvest activities:** Here, women were engaged in processing harvested crops. They removed the husk from corn, ground grains and prepared food for the family.
- **Preservation techniques:** Women used traditional methods to preserve food, which helped ensure the availability of agricultural products during lean seasons.

### Economic contributions

- **Trading activities:** Women sold surplus produce such as maize, tomatoes, pepper, millet, and yam in local markets, which helped generate income for their households. They were engaged in barter trade, exchanging agricultural products for other goods and services.

### Knowledge and skill sharing

- **Cultural transmission:** Women passed down their rich knowledge of agricultural practices to younger generations. This helped in ensuring skill development and preservation of farming practices. They often adapted farming techniques to improve yields and cope with environmental challenges.

### Community and social roles

- **Collaborative farming:** Women frequently worked together in communal farming activities. This helped in fostering social bonds and community support.
- **Role in festivals:** They played a crucial role in agricultural festivals and rituals, celebrating harvests and promoting cultural identity.

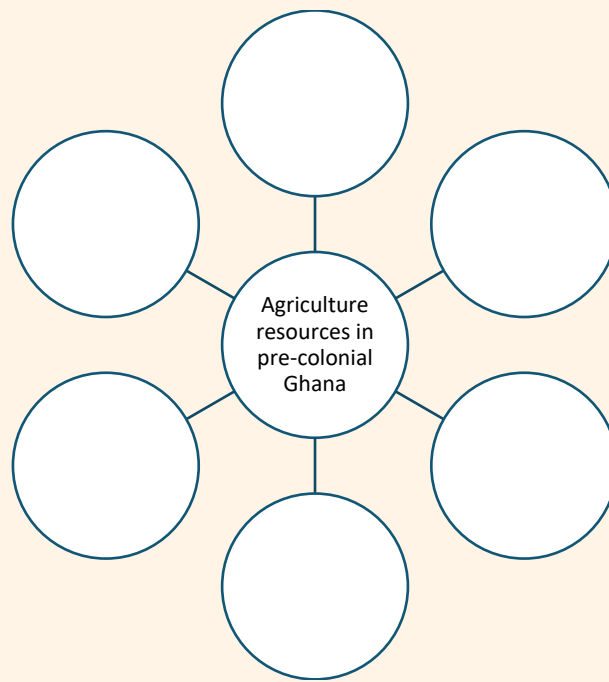
### Activity 6.9

1. Based on all that you have learnt so far about the role of women in agriculture, why do you think women's work in agriculture was important for the survival of pre-colonial Ghanaian societies?
2. How might women's contributions to agriculture have influenced their social status within pre-colonial Ghanaian communities?
3. In groups, debate for or against the motion that: "Women were the backbone of agriculture activities in pre-colonial Ghana"
4. Listen to a presentation by a Resource Person that your teacher has brought to the class. Based on the presentation, discuss how different agricultural activities (*Hunting, Collection of Wild Crops, Farming, Livestock Rearing and Fishing*) helped to sustain livelihood in Pre-Colonial Ghana.



**Fig. 6.22:** How different agricultural activities helped to sustain livelihood in Pre-Colonial Ghana.

5. Agriculture provided the pre-colonial Ghanaians with food. But besides food, what other resources did agriculture provide for people in pre-colonial Ghana?



**Fig. 6.23:** Agriculture resources in pre-colonial Ghana

## THE FORMS AND NATURE OF THE EXCHANGE ECONOMY THAT EXISTED IN PRE-COLONIAL GHANA

The two major forms of trade that existed in the pre-colonial era were Domestic Trade and Long-Distance Trade. Some major trading centres in pre-colonial Ghana were:

- a. Begho
- b. Salaga
- c. Kumasi

Long distance trade was facilitated by several key trading centres. This played a critical role in the exchange of goods across vast distances. Here are some of the most significant trading centres in the long-distance trade:

- a. Kano
- b. Walata
- c. Timbuktu
- d. Gao
- e. Djenne
- f. Agadez

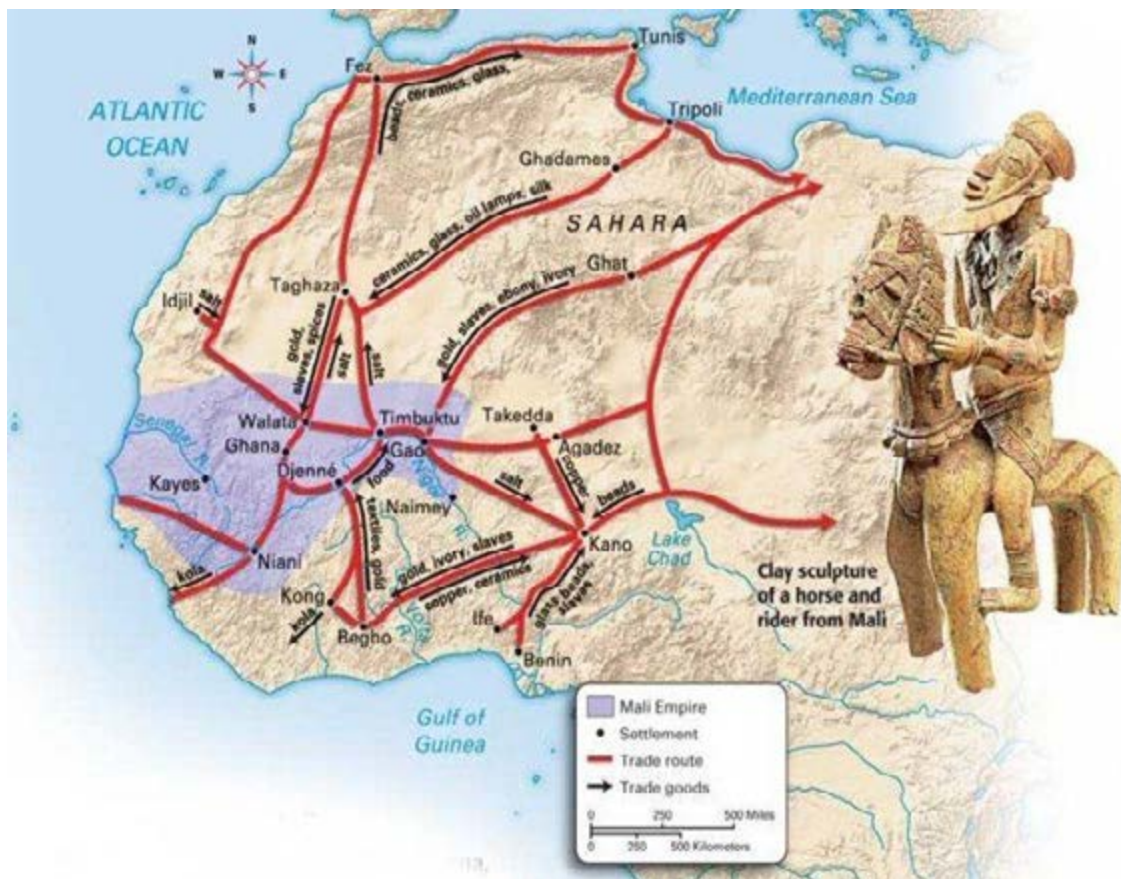


Fig. 6.24: A map of the long-distance trade route from Begho

## Forms of Exchange Economy in Pre-Colonial Ghana

Pre-colonial Ghana had a diverse and dynamic exchange economy characterised by various forms of trade and barter systems. Here are the primary forms of exchange that existed:

### Barter System

- **Direct exchange of commodities:** In this instance, goods and services were traded directly without the use of currency. For example, a farmer might exchange crops for tools with a blacksmith. In some instances, a cloth weaver might exchange his woven clothes with a farmer for him to help either plant, weed or harvest his crops.
- **Value assessment of goods exchanged:** Participants evaluated the comparative worth of goods to guarantee a fair exchange commodities. Shared cultural norms and practices guided participants in determining acceptable value and fair exchanges. These measures were put in place to prevent participants from being cheated in the course of exchanging their commodities.

## Trade Networks

- **There were regional trade routes:** Established routes facilitated trade among different ethnic groups and regions, allowing for the exchange of local goods. The various ethnic groups specialised in manufacturing a commodity or farm products. Thus, goods were exchanged for products that that the community lacked or were not able to produce. For example, those in the coastal communities exchanged salt for carved wooden items from the forest communities.
- **Long-Distance trade routes:** Traders travelled long distances to access goods from other regions, including textiles, metals, and spices. Ghana participated in trans-Saharan trade, exchanging gold, ivory, and slaves for salt, textiles, and other goods from North Africa.

## Marketplaces

- **Local Markets:** Regularly held markets in towns and villages where individuals could buy and sell various goods, fostering local economies. In most communities there were specially designated days for trading activities. The designated days enabled traders to display their goods from one market to the other. Big market centres drew in traders from various places, increasing the variety of goods available.

## Currency Use

- **Cowrie Shells:** In some areas, cowrie shells were used as a form of currency, facilitating trade and providing a standardised medium of exchange. The value of goods was often measured in terms of cowries simplifying the assessment of trade exchanged.
- **Metal Objects:** Certain metal objects, like gold dust, were also used as currency, particularly in trade with external partners.



Fig. 6.25: An image of cowries

## THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PRE-COLONIAL GHANAIAN TRADING ACTIVITIES

Women played a vital role in the economic activities of Pre-colonial Ghana, contributing significantly to both household and community prosperity. Their involvement covered several sectors, reflecting their importance in the economic landscape. Here are the key contributions of women:

1. **Retail trade (trading in local markets):** Women were actively involved in local and regional trade. They sold commodities such as agricultural produce, textiles, and handmade crafts in market centres. They often used barter systems to exchange goods, establishing networks that enhanced community trade.
2. **Financial management:** Women often saved from their trade profits to invest in their businesses or support family needs. They supported men in managing household finances and resources. Their financial status helped them respect their views in decision-making. Thus, they influenced both family welfare and community economies.
3. **Control over specific commodities:** Women were skilled in the production of certain commodities, such as basket making, beads making, ceramics, weaving and textiles. These were prominent economic activities among Ghanaian women during the pre-colonial period. Thus, they largely contributed to both local needs and trade. Women were active participants in economic activities due to the belief that there was dignity in labour.
4. **Social networks and alliances:** Women organised social gatherings and markets that fostered community bonding and economic collaboration. They also established economic networks as they traded. They established connections with other women traders, enhancing trade opportunities and sharing knowledge.
5. **Empowerment of Women:** Engaging in trade allowed women to acquire valuable skills in negotiation, management, and production. Women who actively participated in trade gained economic independence, which enhanced their social status and decision-making power in their various communities.
6. **Agricultural production:** Women were primarily responsible for growing staple crops such as millet, maize, and yams. Furthermore, some women were involved in the rearing of livestock such as fowl, goats and sheep. Thus, these activities of women helped in ensuring food security for their families and communities.
7. **Post-Harvest Activities:** They participated in processing food, such as removing husk from maize, transporting farm products, grinding grains and preparing crops for storage. These activities were essential for the sustenance of the community.
8. **Cultural preservation:** Women played a key role in producing cultural artefacts and textiles that preserved local traditions and identities. They passed down their rich knowledge and skills through generations, ensuring the continuity of cultural practices.



9. **Role in household economy:** Women managed domestic tasks, which allowed men to participate in other economic activities, such as hunting or long-distance trade. Hence, by caring for children and educating them, women ensured the next generation's participation in economic activities.

### Activity 6.10

1. Use the map below to indicate the major trading centres that existed in the Pre-colonial era.



**Fig. 6.26:** The major trading centres that existed in the Pre-colonial era.

2. To demonstrate your understanding of pre-colonial trade routes in Ghana, you should prepare flowcharts showing routes in the southern and northern parts of the country.
3. The pictures exhibited below show some trade items that existed in pre-colonial Ghana. With this background in mind, show the vegetational zones from where the items were obtained. Represent your responses in the table below:



**Fig. 6.27:** Pottery works



**Fig. 6.28:** An image of indigenous beads



**Fig. 6.29:** Gold ore

**Table 6.8:** Items of trade and their vegetation zones

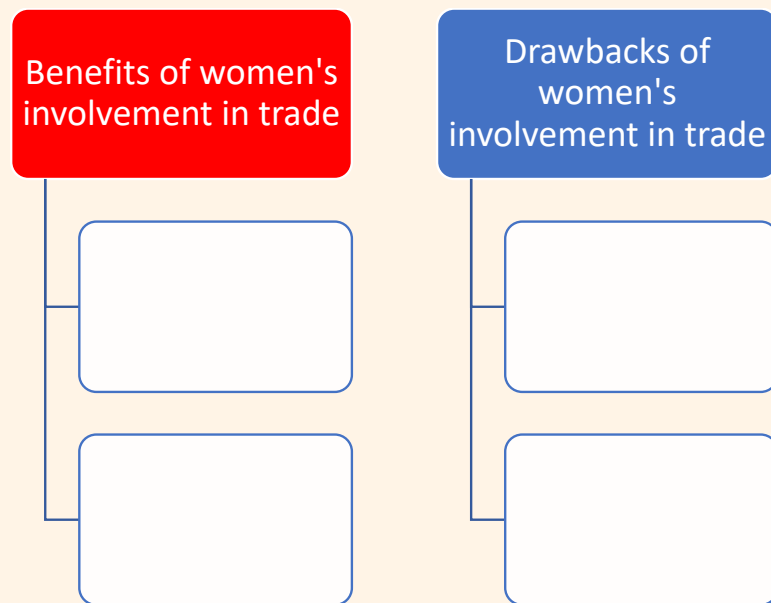
Item of trade	Vegetation zone where it was obtained

1. Create a poster that depicts the role women played in the pre-colonial trade in Ghana.
2. With the help of the Internet or a Resource Person, investigate the forms and nature of the exchange economy that existed in Pre-Colonial Ghana, including internal and external (long-distance) trade.
3. Identify items of trade from the different vegetational zones that existed in Pre-Colonial Ghana. Present your responses in the infographic below.

Coastal zone	Forest Zone	Savannah Zone
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

**Fig. 6.30:** Items of trade from the different vegetational zones that existed in Pre-Colonial Ghana

1. How did the above items contribute to our understanding of trade and trade items in the pre-colonial era in Ghana?
2. You and your elbow partners should now discuss how long-distance trade was conducted, including the trade routes and the means of transporting goods. You may visit the school library or make use of internet sources in your discussion.
3. Analyse the trade routes and transportation methods used in the pre-colonial era
  - What was the nature of the trade routes?
  - Where were the trade entrepôts?
  - What was the nature of the routes in the rainy season?
  - What were the safety levels of the routes?
  - How did the traders cool off?
  - How did the traders transport their items?
4. In groups, role-play an example of long-distance trade between different ethnic groups.
5. Discuss with your elbow partner the benefits and drawbacks of women engaging in trade.



**Fig. 6.31:** Benefits and drawbacks of women's involvement in trade in the pre-colonial period in Ghana

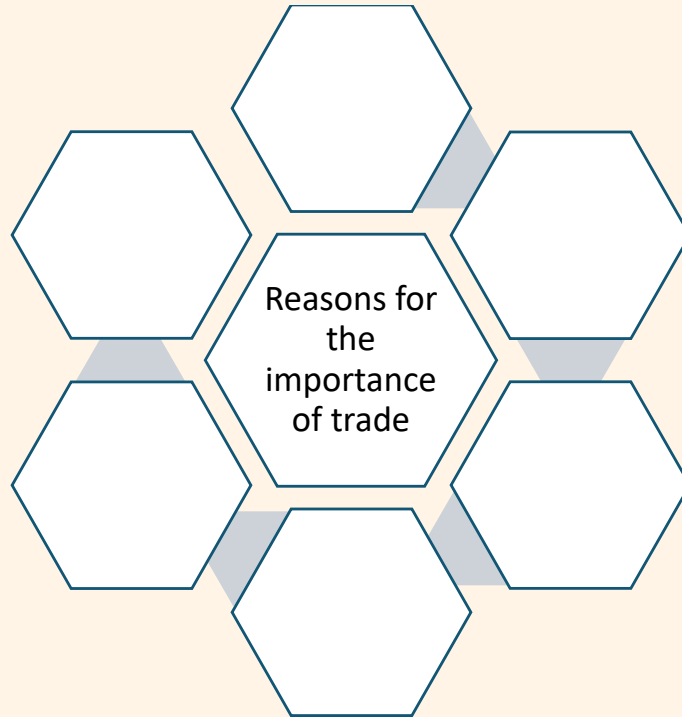
## SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF PRE-COLONIAL TRADING ACTIVITIES IN GHANA

Socio-economic activities in Pre-colonial Ghana provided numerous benefits to both individuals and communities, contributing to their overall well-being and development. Here are some essential points highlighting their importance:

1. **Economic development:** Trading activities in pre-colonial Ghana generated wealth for individuals and communities. This led to economic growth of various communities across the length and breadth of Ghana. Trading activities facilitated the distribution of resources and goods across different regions, promoting a diverse economy. Furthermore, successful traders accumulated wealth, which could be used to start a new business or help with family and communal needs.
2. **Cultural exchange:** The trade routes enabled cultural exchanges between various ethnic groups, enriching socio-cultural practices and traditions. Thus, the trading centres became a melting pot for varying cultural artefacts and skills. The movement of people led to the spread of ideas, which contributed to the dissemination of knowledge, skills and innovations. Trading allowed communities to access a variety of goods not locally produced, including textiles, metal products, and food items.
3. **Creation of social networks:** Trading activities fostered relationships among communities, creating social bonds and networks that were crucial for collaboration.
4. **Empowerment of women:** Women's active participation in trade provided them with economic independence and enhanced their status in society. Indigenous women often worked together in groups, supporting one another in their trading activities. The empowerment of women did not only strengthen their economic position but also contributed to the general development of their communities.
5. **Urbanisation:** The development of trading centres led to the growth of cities and towns. The establishment of markets and trading centres led to urbanisation, attracting people and fostering the development of towns.
6. **Political influence:** Trade contributed to the rise of powerful states and kingdoms, influencing political structures and governance. Trade relationships often led to the establishment of alliances and diplomatic ties between different groups.
7. **Agricultural advancement:** Trading needs stimulated advancements in agricultural practices; this led to increased production and food security. Furthermore, exposure to various markets encouraged the growth of various crops; thereby making agriculture more adaptable to economic demands.
8. **Preservation of traditions:** Since trade involved cultural artefacts and traditional crafts, it played a role in preserving cultural identity. Successful trading activities fostered a sense of pride and identity among communities.
9. **Market establishment:** The growth of trading activities led to the establishment of markets, which became centres of commerce and social interaction. The establishment of market centres in an area helped in the growth of a town or community. The taxes collected from the market centres helped improve the infrastructure in the various towns.

### Activity 6.11

1. What, in your view, made trade important in pre-colonial Ghana? Present your responses in this mind map. Make sure that you explain your answers.



**Fig. 6.32:** Reasons for the importance of trade

2. Compare and contrast the importance of trade for different social classes in pre-colonial Ghana (e.g. rulers, farmers, artisans).
3. Analyse potential long-term impacts of pre-colonial trade on the development of Ghanaian kingdoms and states. Consider economic, political and social aspects.

# Review questions

1. With the aid of the mind map below, indicate at least four indigenous Ghanaian industries that thrived in the pre-colonial period.



**Fig. 6.33:** Pre-colonial indigenous Ghanaian industries

2. Classify the following crops under the vegetation zones that produced them:  
*Maize, millet, guinea corn, sorghum, yam, rice, cocoyam, plantain, sugarcane, banana, pineapples*

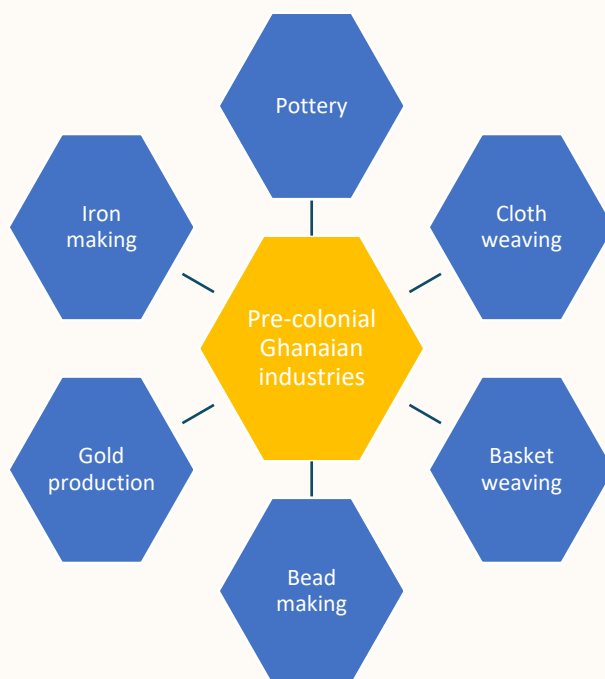
**Table 6.9:** Indigenous Ghanaian crops and their vegetation zones

Crop	Vegetation zone

3. In pairs, discuss the importance of fish in the diet of pre-colonial Ghanaians
4. Highlight at least three benefits of the barter systems as part of the exchange economy of pre-colonial Ghanaians.

# Answers to review questions

1.



**Fig. 6.34:** Pre-colonial Ghanaian industries

2.

**Table 6.10:** Indigenous Ghanaian crops and their vegetation zones

<b>Crop</b>	<b>Vegetation zone</b>
Maize	Forest, Coastal and Savannah Zones
Millet	Savannah, Coastal zones
Guinea corn	Coastal, Savannah
Sorghum	Savannah
Yam	Savannah, Forest, Coastal
Rice	Coastal, Forest, Savannah
Cocoyam	Forest, Coastal Belt
Plantain	Forest, Coastal Belt
Sugarcane	Coastal belt
Banana	Forest
pineapples	Forest

### 3.

- Food
- Nutrition
- Weight management

### 4.

#### Benefits of Barter system

- It makes goods and commodities available to people who needed them
- It did not require the use of currency, which some people might not have



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## Glossary

### WORDS

### MEANING

<b>Agricultural activity:</b>	They are the tasks and jobs people do to grow food and raise animals.
<b>Economic activity:</b>	It refers to the actions that people and businesses take to produce, distribute and consume goods and services.
<b>Barter:</b>	This is the direct exchange of goods and services between people without the use of money.
<b>Craft:</b>	is an activity involving skill in making things by hand.
<b>Craft work:</b>	which is usually done by hand shows the artistic skills of people.
<b>Craftsman:</b>	is a person who is skilled in a particular craft.
<b>Currency:</b>	It refers to a system of money that is in general use within a particular country or economic region.
<b>Economic activity:</b>	is about putting together resources to produce specific goods.
<b>Economy:</b>	is a system by which goods and services are produced, sold and bought in a country or region.
<b>Exchange economy:</b>	This a type of economy where goods and services are traded between individuals or groups without money. It requires direct trade instead of using currency.
<b>Economic landscape:</b>	It refers to the overall structure and dynamic of an economy, including the various factors that influence economic activities and growth.
<b>Hunting</b>	is the act of people pursuing and catching animals or games for food, skins, trade etc.

<b>Agriculture</b>	is the practice of soil cultivation, crop production, and animal rearing for foods, jobs, shelter etc.
<b>Shorelines:</b>	They are areas where land meets the ocean, sea or other large bodies of water.
<b>Empowerment:</b>	It is the process of gaining the strength, confidence and ability to make choices and take control of one's life.
<b>Trade route:</b>	It is a path or route used for the exchange of goods and services between different places, the path could be over land, water or air and connect towns, cities or continents thereby facilitating trade.

## Acknowledgements



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