

SECTION

7

CONTINUITY
AND CHANGE
IN GHANAIAAN
RELIGIOUS
PRACTICES



AGE OF ENCOUNTER AND EXCHANGES UP TO THE 20TH CENTURY

Religion and Religious Change

Introduction

In this section, we shall be discussing the nature and features of indigenous religious systems in Ghana. We shall also look at the role of religious leaders in pre-colonial Ghana. This section will reveal to us the importance of our indigenous religion, which existed before the introduction of new and foreign religions. Following this, we shall look at the introduction of the two major new religions – Islam and Christianity – to Ghana. We will find out what is common or different about these two religions. Finally, we shall assess the impact these two foreign religions and their activities had on Ghana.

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

- Discuss the indigenous Ghanaian religious beliefs and practices.
- Trace the advent and influences of Islam and Christianity in Ghana

Key Ideas:

- **Animism:** The belief that all animals, plants, rocks, natural creatures possess a spiritual essence or consciousness.
- **Griots:** They are traditional storytellers, poets, oral historians and musicians.
- **Religion:** a system of beliefs and practices that involve faith, moral guidance, spirituals and worship.
- **Missionary:** a person sent on a religious mission, particularly to promote his or her faith in foreign countries.

THE NATURE AND FEATURES OF INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS SYSTEM IN GHANA

The indigenous religious system was a complex and diverse system that varied among different ethnic groups. Here are some of the features of the indigenous religious system in pre-colonial Ghana:

1. **Belief in a Supreme Being:** The indigenous people acknowledged the existence of an omnipotent Supreme Being, recognised as the creator and sustainer of the universe. This Supreme Being was known by different names across various ethnic groups: the Akan called him *Nyame*, the Ewe knew him as *Mawu*, and the Ga

referred to him as *Nyonmo*. To the Gonja, God is called *Eboore* and in Mamprusi, He is called *Nwuni*. The Tallensi also refer to Him as *Nayiwum*. Though considered remote from daily human affairs, this Supreme Being was viewed as the ultimate source of life, morality and spiritual authority.

2. **Ancestral Worship:** Ancestral veneration formed a cornerstone of indigenous religious practices. The ancestors were believed to exist in the spiritual realm as intermediaries between the living and the Supreme Being. They were considered guardians of moral order and family traditions. People maintained connections with their ancestors through libations, sacrifices and regular rituals. These practices included pouring drinks, offering food and conducting ceremonies during festivals. The ancestors were consulted for guidance, protection and blessings.
3. **Deities and Spirits:** The religious system incorporated numerous deities and spirits, each associated with specific natural phenomena or human activities. These included:
 - Nature deities (*abosom*) associated with rivers, mountains and forests
 - Personal guardian spirits
 - Community protective deities
 - Agricultural deities responsible for fertility and harvest

These spirits were believed to influence daily life and required regular propitiation through offerings and rituals.

4. **Animistic Beliefs:** The indigenous religion was fundamentally animistic, recognising spiritual forces in natural phenomena. This worldview held that spirits inhabited natural objects, animals and plants. Everything in nature was considered to possess a spiritual essence that demanded respect and appropriate ritual acknowledgement. This belief system promoted environmental conservation and respectful interaction with nature.
5. **Rituals and Ceremonies:** Religious practices were expressed through elaborate rituals and ceremonies that served multiple purposes:
 - Marking important life transitions (birth, puberty, marriage, death)
 - Celebrating agricultural cycles
 - Purification and cleansing
 - Maintaining harmony between the physical and spiritual worlds
 - Seeking divine intervention during crises
6. **Divination and Spiritual Healing:** Spiritual practitioners played crucial roles as intermediaries between the physical and spiritual realms. These included:
 - Diviners who interpreted spiritual messages
 - Traditional healers who combined spiritual and herbal remedies
 - Priests and priestesses who conducted rituals
 - Spirit mediums who facilitated communication with the spiritual world

7. **Sacred Spaces:** Certain locations held special spiritual significance. These spaces were protected and accessed according to strict ritual protocols. They served the following functions:
 - Sacred groves served as spiritual sanctuaries
 - Shrines housed community deities
 - Specific trees, rivers and mountains were considered sacred
 - Traditional palaces contained royal ancestral shrines
8. **Community Participation:** Religious practices were communal affairs that strengthened social bonds. Festivals, rituals and ceremonies involved entire communities.
9. **Integration with Daily Life:** Religion permeated every aspect of traditional life:
 - Political leadership had spiritual dimensions
 - Economic activities included spiritual considerations
 - Social relationships were governed by religious principles
 - Educational processes incorporated spiritual teachings
 - Healthcare combined physical and spiritual healing

Traditional Belief Systems

Figure 7.1 shows some traditional belief systems in pre-colonial Ghana



Fig. 7.1: Traditional belief systems in pre-colonial Ghana

1. **The Supreme Being:** All ethnic groups in Ghana believe in the existence of the Supreme Being or High God. The belief in the Supreme Being was central to the religious thought of the ancient Ghanaians. This was the case long before the introduction of Islam and Christianity as foreign religions in Ghana. The belief that God exists does not need any proof or demonstration to the Ghanaian. Everyone had direct access to God. He is the creator of the universe and everything in it. He is the source of all powers. God is not the object of any organised worship with a priesthood, a temple, a shrine or a congregation. Believers could talk to Him without having to worship Him through any priests and priestesses or intermediaries. Those who sought to talk to Him could talk to the wind as God lives far away in the sky. This was their belief system. The belief of pre-colonial Ghanaians was demonstrated in their everyday expressions. For instance, the expression, “We shall meet tomorrow if God wills” is “Mawu ne for me” in Ewe, “*Nyankopon ye adom a, ŋkyena ye be hyia*” in Akan “Nawunititi bew” in Mampruli and “*Yinne boti beere*” in Gurune. Ghanaians also expressed their belief in the Supreme Being in the names they give to their children. Among the Akan, names such as Nyamekye (God’s gift), Nyameyie (God is good). The Ewe give names such as *Mawunya* (God knows), *Mawunyo* (God is good) to their children while the Ga also give names such as *nyɔmɔnhi* (God is good). The Dagomba used “Wunpini” (the gift of God) to show their belief in God while the *Ninkaresi* used “*Nsorwineh*” (God is my father) to depict their belief in Him.

2. **Gods:** The pre-colonial Ghanaians also believed in gods. They were also called divinities. The gods were believed to be closer to the Supreme Being and derived their power and authority from Him. They usually operated within shrines, around which developed organisations which involved priests, congregations and followership. The gods served as links between the Creator and human beings. The gods lived in or are associated with nature objects such as rivers, lagoons, forests, rocks and the seas. Others were big trees, huge rocks, thick groves, caves or holes or lakes. In some parts of Ghana, votaries served a wooden image or mound of mud daubed with the blood of animals, which was kept in a temple. It was not these objects that were worshipped by the followers even though the objects were associated with the gods. The gods were not considered ultimate in terms of their powers. The gods were controlled by the Supreme Being and derived their powers from Him. This is shown in the conditional tone of the prayers and claims of their priests. The gods could only succeed in their activities if the Almighty found favour with them and approved of their methods. The potency of their powers depended to a large extent on correct methods, procedures and conditions of performance. The gods were worshipped, and they communicated with the people through priests and priestesses and their assistants. To be successful, the priest and the followers had to exhibit ritual purity. The Akan called the priests as *abrafo* while the Ewe called them *Trɔnua*. Some priests claimed that they were selected directly by their god when they became possessed while the people were on a hunting expedition or when the community was performing the periodic rites for the god. There were specialist gods such as the *Nyigbla* of Anlo, *Tano* of the Akan and *Nai* or *Onyeni* of the Ga. Pre-colonial Ghanaians approached the gods to grant them good health, fertility, prosperity and protection from misfortune, harm or injury which they

believed were caused by evil spirits such as witchcraft. The Ewe referred to the gods as *Trɔwo* while the Akan call them *Abosom*. The Earth was also an object of worship among the Akan, the Krobo and the Tallensi. The belief in these gods made pre-colonial Ghanaians to preserve some forests as groves for the gods. Pre-colonial Ghanaians tried to keep water bodies clean and unpolluted because of their reverence for the gods. This was the time when the environment and water bodies were pristine. Can we say the same for our forest and water bodies today?

3. **The ancestors:** Have you heard of religious saints before/ Do you believe in them? Pre-colonial Ghanaians also believed in their ancestors. They were like their saints. In Ghanaian traditional religion, the belief is that death is not the end of human beings. Ghanaians believed that there is a world beyond this physical world where all their ancestors lived a life similar to a life on earth. Ghanaians believed that when death occurs, it was only the physical body that was affected. The soul of the person went to the land of spirits to join other departed souls. This conception was implicit in the funeral rites of Ghanaians. Because of their belief in ancestors, Ghanaians buried the dead with gold dust, gold ornaments and precious beads. They also used receptacles, bedding, clothing, and other necessities, which would be needed in their new homeland, also called *Tsiefe* in Ewe and *Asamando* in Akan.

Though everyone on his or her death would go to the spirit world, not every dead person was considered an ancestor. Ancestors were those who lived a good and exemplary life; died honourably or died a natural death; died in advanced age and were survived by children. That meant that people who died through accidents, drowning, leprosy, lunacy, suicide, etc., were not accorded elaborate burial rites.

4. **Life after death:** Pre-colonial Ghanaians were highly spiritual. They were mindful of the implications of their actions on Earth. This was because they believed that there was a spiritual world beyond the physical world where their soul or *Kra* (Akan) or *Luwɔ* (Ewe) went to. To them, a good life in this physical world would be rewarded with long life and happiness in the next world. Those who indulged in reckless lifestyles such as murder, killings, adultery, etc. were condemned. As a result of this belief, pre-colonial Ghanaians tried to live simple lifestyles close to nature. They took proper care of the environment and avoided acts that would pose a danger to their soul.
5. **Witchcraft and Magic:** Witchcraft is a supernatural force which generates fear but is not accorded the same level of respect and honour that is accorded ancestral spirits. Witchcraft and magic also formed part of the belief system of the pre-colonial Ghanaians. Witches were people, male or female, who were believed to possess inherent supernatural powers which they used (knowingly or unknowingly) to harm others or to benefit themselves. Witchcraft may be inherited or acquired. It was not vested in a descent group since that may weaken or destroy the group. It was often the parent who did not provide the line of descent that was believed to transmit it to the child. Among the patrilineal Tallensi, it was transmitted through the *soog*, or uterine kinship. A witch did not perform any rites, make sacrifices or recite any spells or incantations, according to Evans-Pritchard's conception of witchcraft.

Magic is the manipulation of physical objects to effect supernatural ends. Magicians were consultants whose services were open to those who needed them. Their services may have included intervention in causing harm to a rival or even having him or her killed or protection against accidents.

6. **Divination:** Divination is another important belief about the supernatural. Divination is based on the notion that by the proper manipulation of certain special objects, it is possible to foretell the future, discover the unknown or interpret events. A good example of divination is the *Afa* of the Anlo, which closely relates to the Ifa system of the Yoruba of Nigeria. *Afa* is dedicated to unravelling the mysteries of both the earthly and spiritual worlds. The cult members may be divided into two: *bokowo* (who are expected to have knowledge of the divination techniques) and the *bokoviwo* (ordinary members). Various kinds of divination procedures are found in all Ghanaian societies. These range from very simple ones to extremely complex ones.

Activity 7.1

1. Draw a simple family tree to represent the connection between your ancestors, the living and the unborn.
2. With your understanding of the relationship between the ancestors, the living and the unborn, create a more elaborate diagram illustrating the cyclical relationship between ancestors, the living and the unborn in indigenous Ghanaian religions. Use arrows to show the flow of guidance, blessings and offerings between these groups.
3. Investigate and depict a specific cultural practice from the indigenous Ghanaian religion that demonstrates the veneration of ancestors. You could do this by a simple sketch of an ancestral shrine or a brief explanation of a ritual performed to honour the ancestors.
4. Ask griots in your community about the nature and features of Indigenous religious systems.

Use the following prompt questions in your interaction with the griot (storyteller, entertainer and performer).

- What did they say about the creation of the world and human beings?
- What type of gods did the people serve or worship?
- How did they demonstrate their belief in the Creator and other gods?
- How did they communicate with the gods?
- What did the people believe in?
- How did the people demonstrate their belief systems?
- Which sacrifices did they make as part of their religious beliefs?
- How did religious beliefs influence the everyday life of the people?

- What was their belief about the spiritual world and the soul?
 - How did they live with their ancestors?
5. We learnt about how pre-colonial Ghanaians were closer to nature. In a small group, discuss the concept of 'animism' in Indigenous Ghanaian religious practices.
 6. You and your friends should discuss the relationship between the ancestors, the living and the unborn. Consider these guiding questions.
 - How did the living people demonstrate their belief in the ancestors?
 - How is the concept of the extended family system explained by the pre-colonial Ghanaians?
 - What is the relationship between the ancestors, the living and the unborn in a matter of land ownership?
 - What roles did the ancestors play in the social gatherings of the living?
 - What is the role of the ancestors and the living in matters of fertility?
 7. In a small group, prepare an oral, written or multimedia presentation on the concepts of God (Supreme Being) and gods or deities in indigenous religious beliefs and practices. Select the mode of your presentation based on your capacity or resources available to you.
 8. The extended family was critical in the religious practices of the pre-colonial Ghanaians. Analyse the role of the family in the religious practices of indigenous Ghanaian communities.
 9. In small groups, develop a poster to explain the general belief systems of people who lived in pre-colonial Ghana.
 10. Based on the knowledge you have gained from the belief systems of the pre-colonial Ghanaians, describe some of the belief systems of indigenous Ghanaian religion.

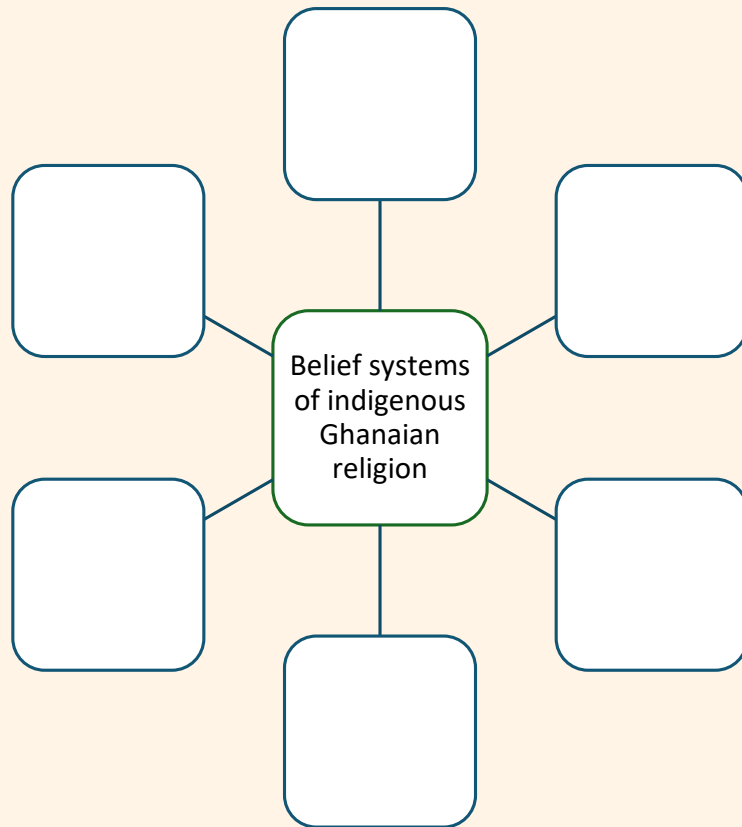


Fig. 7.2: Belief systems of indigenous Ghanaian religion

11. Nature worship (also known as animism) was an important feature of the religious systems of the pre-colonial Ghanaians. How did indigenous Ghanaian religion view the relationship between humans and nature?
12. Discuss the role of the environment in indigenous religious practices. Explain how geographical features (rivers, mountains), natural phenomena (storms, seasons) and plants and animals might have influenced the beliefs and practices of indigenous Ghanaians.
13. Write a two-stanza poem on the ingenuity of indigenous Ghanaian religious practices and belief systems.

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN PRE-COLONIAL GHANA

In pre-colonial Ghana, religious leaders held significant roles and had great influence within the society. Here are some of their roles:

1. **They were spiritual guides:** In pre-colonial Ghana, religious leaders acted as spiritual guides to the people. They were the representatives of the gods and the ancestors. They upheld societal morality and practices. They were like the moral compass of society. They guided the people in sacrifices and communion with the gods and the ancestors. They also provided religious advice and guidance to the people, especially in times of emergencies such as wars, famine, droughts or outbreaks of diseases.
2. **They acted as custodians of religious knowledge:** Religious leaders in the pre-colonial period also acted as custodians of religious knowledge. They were the store of religious knowledge in their societies. They upheld religious knowledge and its practices in the trust of the public. They were the experts and the consultants in religious practices and knowledge of the people. Accordingly, everyone, including the chief, consulted them on religious issues. Among the Asante, the office of the *Nsumankwaahene* was the custodian of religious knowledge. The occupant is consulted by the Asantehene on religious matters.
3. **They acted as diviners and oracles:** Religious leaders in the pre-colonial times acted as diviners and oracles. As diviners, they interacted with the gods and revealed hidden issues to the people including the chiefs. They revealed the destinies of people. In times of war and emergencies, they consulted the gods and the ancestors and disclose the mind of the gods and the ancestors to the people or the rulers. Both men and women served as diviners.
4. **Religious leaders also played the role of mediation and conflict resolution.** In pre-colonial Ghana, religious leaders mediated between the gods and the people. They helped to resolve conflicts between the people and the gods or the ancestors. They sometimes resolved conflicts between chiefs and their elders.
5. **Religious leaders acted as moral and ethical guides.** As moral and ethical guides, they upheld societal morality and customs. They ensured obedience and respect for taboos and customary practices. They meted out punishment to breakers and offenders of these taboos and practices. They were the moral compass in society. They spoke against immoral practices and cautioned the public about the consequences of disobedience of the gods or and the ancestors.
6. **Religious leaders also acted as political advisors.** As political advisors, their view which they received from the gods, or the ancestors was sought in the nomination and installation of new chiefs. The process of installing a new chief was not complete without the religious leader performing certain special rites as part of the installation.

The Role of Women In Ghana's Indigenous Religious Practices

In Ghana's indigenous religious practices, women played significant roles and held important positions within the community. Here are some of the roles women traditionally played:

1. **Priestesses:** Women played active roles in the religious practices of the pre-colonial Ghanaians. They acted as priestesses. As priestesses, they were the intermediaries between the living and the gods. They took care of the shrines and consulted the gods on behalf of the community and the people. In times of sacrifices and rituals, especially on behalf of the community, these priestesses were active players. The *Akonnedi* Shrine of Lartey was, for instance, led by a female priestess. In modern times, the Shrine is led by Nana *Oparebea*. Among the Ewe and the Ga, priestesses were revered and accorded importance and pride of place. They were highly spiritual people who revealed the minds of the gods and the ancestors.
2. **Diviners:** Women also played the role of diviners. They were consulted to foretell the future of events, communities, people or families. They revealed the destinies of children. In the past, when people were embarking on long journeys, they sometimes consulted these diviners some of whom were women. Among the Ewe for instance, women priestesses also called '*Amegashi*' were consulted in the event of the death of an individual. They revealed the cause of death. They also invoked the spirit of ghosts.
3. **Guardians of ancestral traditions:** Women were good at preserving the ancestral traditions of their societies. They were the guardians of these ancestral traditions. As the principal agents of socialisation in the home, women instilled ancestral values, norms, taboos and practices in their children and families. They lived exemplary lives by not breaking these traditions. They observed traditions that forbade them from crossing rivers or water bodies during their menstrual periods. They also observed traditions that prevented them from harvesting firewood in sacred groves. They passed on the ancestral traditions to their children and ensured the continuity of these traditions.
4. **Caretakers of sacred space:** Women were not just priestesses and diviners. They took care of sacred spaces. Although the care of most sacred spaces was preserved by men, some women, especially experienced and adult females, were also made to take care of some sacred spaces in pre-colonial Ghana.

Activity 7.2

- Look at the pictures of the following religious figures and write descriptions of their roles in the table 7.1 and 7.2.



Figure 7.3: An image of an indigenous priest



Figure 7.4: An image of an indigenous priestess



Figure 7.5: An image of Rev Philip Quaque

- Table 7.1:** Religious leaders and the description of their roles

Religious Leader	Description of role

- Table 7.2:** Role played by women in the pictures depicted

Picture	Role played by women

- As a young student who is interested in learning about the history of religious leaders, write a dialogue between you and a community elder. Your dialogue should discuss the importance of religious leaders in pre-colonial Ghana. Include in the dialogue details about specific rituals or practices and the role of women in them. Consider the following as guides:

- What specific rituals were performed by religious leaders?
 - What roles did religious leaders play in the installation of new chiefs?
 - How did the religious leaders intercede on behalf of their societies?
 - What roles did the religious leaders play in protecting the rulers?
 - What was the role of the religious leaders in times of war?
 - What role did women play in religious practices in pre-colonial Ghana?
 - What specific roles did religious leaders play during social gatherings such as festivals, funerals, etc?
 - What roles were played by religious leaders in times of droughts, bumper harvests or outbreaks of diseases?
3. Although religious leaders were common in all parts of pre-colonial Ghana, differences existed among the various areas in terms of these religious leaders. Investigate and report on the different types of religious leadership in various ethnic groups of pre-colonial Ghana. Use the internet or a library to source your information.
 4. Use the graphic organiser below to analyse the role of religious leaders in pre-colonial Ghana.

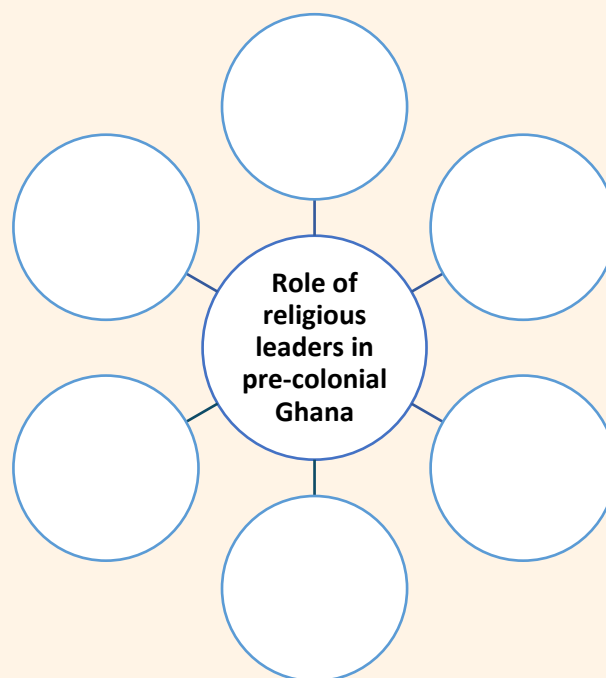


Fig. 7.6: Role of religious leaders in pre-colonial Ghana

5. Work in a small group with your friends to investigate and report on the role of women in Ghana's indigenous religious practices. Write the findings of the investigation in your exercise book.
6. What contributions did women make to their communities through their roles in religious practice?

THE BEGINNINGS OF ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN GHANA

Islam

Islam was introduced to Ghana through trade and commerce. It was first introduced to Ghana by *Mande Dyula* Muslims who moved downwards from the Western Sudan into the Volta Basin and the Gold Coast. Most of the *Dyula* people were Muslim merchants, who also planted Islam alongside their trading mainly in gold dust and kola nut during the 14th and 15th centuries. Others were also Muslim Clerics who engaged in various spiritual activities, including divination, for spiritual protection against enemies and other spiritual powers. There were also professional travellers whose keen interest was to explore beyond the frontiers of their local environment.

Muslim agents from the Sahel-Sudan region who moved down south into Northern Ghana had exceptional skills in trading and this made the Muslims economically and politically powerful in states like Gonja, Wa and Dagomba. Some of the Muslims moved further south upon the invitation of the rulers of Bono and Asante. For instance, in Asante, the penetration of Muslim traders into Asante in general and Kumasi in particular probably began in the reign of Osei Kwame (1777-1801) who is said to have been a convert at heart. This reached its peak during the reign of Osei Bonsu which was recorded by European visitors (Bowdich and Dupuis) that about 1000 Muslims living there under the leadership of the scholar Muhammad al-Ghamba. Some of these Muslims were wielding considerable influence at the Asantehene's court. One aspect of Islamic culture that spread among the Asante was the use of amulets made by the Muslims. These embellished the war-dresses of the Asante who believed that they guaranteed protection from bullets.

The Muslim travellers and merchants did not only go south to trade gold metals and kola nuts, but they also carried Islamic ideas back from the Niger Delta to Bono and later Asante. The expertise of the Muslims made them contribute not only to the establishment of towns but were also political advisers in states like Gonja, Dagomba, Wala, Banda and Mamprusi.

Christianity

Christianity arrived in Ghana with the arrival of European explorers and missionaries. Some of the earliest missionary groups were:

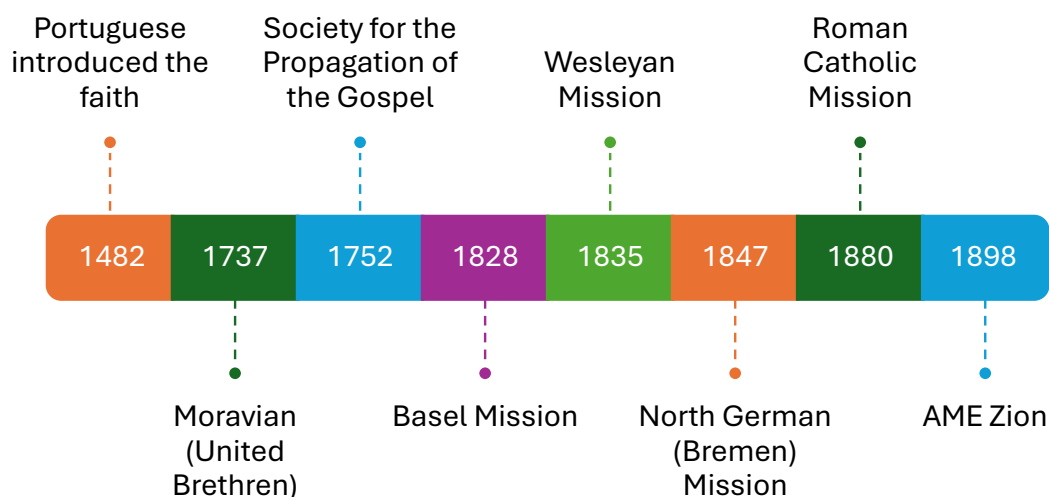


Fig. 7.7: A chronological timeline of European missionary groups' arrival in Ghana

Portuguese introduce Christianity (1482)

The Portuguese were the first to introduce Christianity into Ghana in 1482 at the Elmina Caste, Elmina. The desire to implant Christianity in the country was made in 1503, when the Portuguese Chaplain of the Elmina Castle converted the King of Fetu and his retinue to Christianity. The Portuguese also built a church, the first of its kind, in Christiansborg.

Moravian (United Brethren) Mission (1737)

The Portuguese were followed in the eighteenth century by the Moravian (United Brethren) Mission, which worked in Elmina and Christiansborg from 1737 to 1773. In 1737 the Moravian United Brethren Mission sent out two missionaries, Chretien Protten and Henrich Huckuff. Protten was, in fact, born in 1715 in Christiansborg to a Danish father and a Ghanaian mother and was educated first in the Castle School in Accra and then in Denmark from 1727 to 1737 before being sent out to Ghana. Protten worked first in Elmina and then, periodically, in Christiansborg till his death in 1769. He did not win many converts to his cause.

Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (1752)

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, now known as the Anglican Church or Church of England Mission, sent out the first Chaplain, Rev. Thomas Thompson, who arrived at Cape Coast in 1752. This was done in response to the demand made by the Royal African Company trading on the coast of Ghana. Rev. Thomas Thompson, seeing the need to rely on local clergy because of his poor health, sent three boys to England for evangelical training. All the boys except Philip Quaicoe returned to Ghana as an ordained Reverend. Rev. Philip Quaicoe established a school in 1766 at Cape Coast where most of the nineteenth-century intelligentsias received their first cycle education.

Basel Mission (Presbyterian Church) 1828

Upon the request of the Danish Governor Major Richelieu, the Basel Missionary Society of Switzerland sent four missionaries for service in Accra. They arrived in Accra in 1828, and all of the four missionaries died within three years. Later, another three missionaries arrived in 1832. By July 1832, two had died, leaving only Andreas Riis. Andreas Riis left Christiansborg to open a new station at Akropong in 1835. After some time, Andreas Riis returned home and came back with two pastors, Rev. George Thompson and Rev. Windham. He also brought twenty-four (24) West Indians who came to help the church in Aburi and Akropong.

Wesleyan Mission (Methodist Church) 1835

The Wesleyan Mission came into the country through the initiative of William de Graft, a product of Philip Quaiocoe's school in Cape Coast. In 1831, William De Graft formed the Society for Promoting Scripture Knowledge (SPSK). The Society passionately appealed to individuals and organisations to come to their aid because basic literature, such as the Holy Bible, was insufficient.

Subsequently, De Graft ordered Bibles from England through the well-known Bristol Methodist, Captain Potter. He had an audience with De Graft's group. He made an offer on his return to Britain that he was prepared to pay for the passage of a Methodist Missionary to Ghana should the Wesleyan Mission decide to send one since he had been encouraged to do so by Maclean.

With the increasing desire to see the Mission's presence in Ghana, the Wesleyan Mission appointed the first missionary, Rev. Joseph Dunwell. Dunwell arrived in the country around 1834. He, however, died six (6) months after his arrival due to illness. In 1838, the Wesleyan Mission appointed another missionary. Thomas Birch Freeman. Encouraged by Captain Maclean, the then Governor, Freeman visited Kumasi and subsequently opened a mission in Kumasi in 1841. Rev. Thomas Freeman was replaced as the superintendent of the Methodist Church by Rev. William West in 1860. This was after the home committee of the church found him of financial impropriety. By 1860, the Methodist Church had been firmly established in the country.

Northern German (Bremen) Mission 1847

The Wesleyan Missionary Society was followed in 1847 by the North German Missionary Society, popularly known as the Bremen Mission. This society concentrated its efforts in the Ewe areas, opening stations at Peki in 1847, Keta in 1853, Waya in 1856 and Ho in 1857. By 1893, it had established six outposts.

Roman Catholic Mission 1880

Another mission to enter, or rather re-enter, Ghana was the Roman Catholic Mission, which started operating at Elmina in 1880. Thirty years later, in 1910, the Roman Catholic "White" Fathers' Mission began work in Navrongo in Northern Ghana.

African Methodist Episcopal Zion 1898

In 1898, another missionary society, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMH) based in Philadelphia (USA), began missionary work at Cape Coast and Keta. The work of the church did not expand very much. ‘The branch at Cape Coast began to flourish only after 1903. Further centres were built at Twifo in 1906, Winneba and Accra in 1908 and Kumasi in 1912. As far as the Keta mission was concerned, the policy that was followed was to consolidate the Church’s position there before attempting any expansion farther afield. It was only in 1908 that the Church expanded to a number of towns further east, to Fenyi and Agavedzi where schools were opened. In 1917 the Church extended its work to Agbozume at the invitation of the local chief, Fia Adamah II.

Activity 7.3

1. Describe how trading activities in pre-colonial Ghana served as a catalyst for the introduction of Islam.
2. In an individual research task, create a project to who first introduced the two religions of Islam and Christianity to Ghana. Explain also the initial reactions of Ghanaians to these new religions. Use the table below to record your findings

Table 7.3: Period of introduction of Islam and Christianity, people who introduced them and reactions of pre-colonial Ghanaians

Key questions	Christianity	Islam
When did it first arrive in Ghana?		
Who introduced it?		
What were the initial reactions of Ghanaians to the religion?		

3. How did Islam and Christianity spread in Ghana and what role did trade and commerce play in the introduction of these religions? In which parts of Ghana did the religions flourish?
4. In small groups, role-play the introduction of Islam into Ghana. Think about the following things as you write your scripts:
 - What people/ characters will you need to embody?
 - What activities will your characters engage in and why?
 - How will the characters who believe in Islam encourage others to follow their religion?
 - Why would the converts want to be converted?

5. Explain how Islam and Christianity impacted the cultural and social practices of Ghanaians.
6. Analyse the impact of Islam and Christianity on the political and social structures of Ghana. You may use the table below to guide your analysis

Table 7.4: Impact of Islam and Christianity on the social and political structure of Ghana

Religion	Impact on Political Structure	Impact on Social Structure
Islam		
Christianity		

THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES AMONG INDIGENOUS GHANAIAN RELIGION, ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

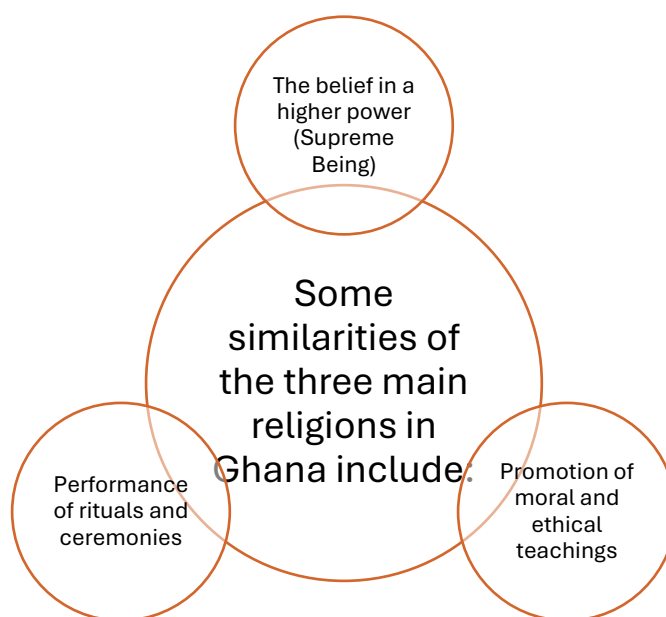


Fig. 7.8: Similarities among indigenous Ghanaian religion, Islam and Christianity

The belief in a higher power and Supreme Being

The three (3) religion in Ghana belief in the existence of a higher power and Supreme Being. The followers of these religions have different names for the Supreme Being. In indigenous Ghanaian religion, the Akan called the Supreme Being “*Onyankopon*”, the Ewe called him “*Mawu*” and the Ga called him “*Nyomo*”, etc. Muslims called Him “*Allah*” while Christians called Him “*God*”.

Promotion of moral and ethical teachings

All the religions promote moral and ethical teachings through living an exemplary life worth emulation by others.

Performance of rituals and ceremonies

They all use certain objects to perform rituals and ceremonies. For instance, Christians used candles, incense, 'holy' oil, animal, etc. Muslims used tasbeeh, talismans, amulets, and charms and indigenous Ghanaian religion used animals, special bark of trees, herbs and leaves for performing rituals and ceremonies.

Differences between indigenous Ghanaian religion, Islam and Christianity include:

Table 7.5: Differences between indigenous Ghanaian religion, Islam and Christianity

	Indigenous	Islam	Christianity
Name of Deity	Multiple deities and spirits	Allah	God
Founder	Unknown	Prophet Mohammed (PBUH)	Jesus Christ
Sacred Text/ Symbols	Adinkra symbols, beads, cowries, talismans, fly-whisk	Qur'an	Christian Bible
Leadership	Priests/priestesses	Ulama, Imam	Priests, ministers, pastors, catechists
Basic Beliefs and Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of amulets and charms • Belief in ancestors • Belief in life after death • Belief in nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salvation by following the Five Pillars and living a just life; prayer; almsgiving; charity; fasting; pilgrimage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief in the Trinity • Jesus Christ is the Son of God • Salvation through confession, baptism. • Communion

Activity 7.4

1. Identify at least two similarities and two differences among religious sects in Ghana and explain how these can be used to promote unity.
2. Evaluate the role of religious leaders and institutions in promoting inter-faith dialogue and national development and propose strategies for enhancing their impact.

3. Now that you know of the major religions in Ghana, create a database chart that shows the major religions in Ghana. Populate your chart with the following data:
 - Estimated followers (use data from the current PHC)
 - Name of Deity
 - Founder
 - Holy Books and Symbols
 - Leadership
 - Some key missionaries and pioneers
 - Basic beliefs
 - Some common rituals, practices and celebrations
4. Now, you and your elbow partners should go ahead to have brief discussions of the holy books of the religions. Do they have similarities? What are the main differences?
5. How do the three religions view the concept of God or a higher power and what role do ceremonies play in each religion?
6. Imagine you are a missionary travelling to Ghana in the late 15th century. How might you explain a core Christian belief, such as the concept of heaven, to someone who practices Indigenous Ghanaian Religion?

IMPACT OF MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN GHANA

The impact of missionary activities, both Christian and Islamic, on Ghana has been significant and far-reaching. These missionaries have played a crucial role in shaping the social, cultural, educational, religious and economic landscape of the country.

Social impact of Missionary activities in Ghana

1. **Setting up of churches/mosques:** The missionaries established churches and mosques which became significant centres of worship in Ghana. Christian missionaries built churches along the coast and gradually moved inland, establishing both large cathedrals in major towns and smaller churches in villages. These churches were not just places of worship but also served as centres for community gatherings and religious education. Notable examples included the Catholic Cathedral in Cape Coast, Wesley Methodist Cathedral in Accra, and several Presbyterian churches in the eastern region.



Fig. 7.9: Old Presbyterian Church building, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana. 1880

Meanwhile, Islamic traders and clerics established mosques primarily in northern Ghana and in Muslim communities within major trading centres. Early mosques were often built in the traditional Sudanese architectural style, characterised by mud and timber construction. Significant examples included the historic Larabanga Mosque in the Northern Region and the central mosques in major towns.



Fig. 7.10: Photo of Larabanga Mosque taken in December 2014

2. **Setting up of educational facilities:** The greatest service of the missions was the setting up of educational facilities in Ghana. The missions were the pioneers of both first and second-cycle schools in the country. In 1910, while the government had only four (4) elementary schools, the Christian missions together owned one hundred and forty-one (141) first-cycle schools and two (2) Teacher Training Colleges. The Wesleyan Mission established the Wesley High School in 1876, later revived and renamed Mfantipim Secondary School in 1905, Wesley Girls High School in 1884, and the Aburi Kemp Girls Institution established by the Missionary David Kemp

to train teachers and catechists in 1918, which later was transferred to Kumasi and renamed Wesley College in 1923. The Anglican Mission founded the Church of England Grammar School (Adisadel College) in Cape Coast in 1910, and in 1946, they established St. Monica's Girls' Secondary School at Ashanti-Mampong. The Presbyterian Secondary School was founded by the Basel Mission in 1938 at Krobo-Odumase. To train African priests and teachers, the Roman Catholics opened at Elmina, a little seminary, in 1924. In 1929, it was transferred to Amisano and in 1930 the Roman Catholic Teacher Training College for boys was opened there. The Church also established in 1936, the St. Augustine's College in Cape Coast. In 1946, the Sisters of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus opened the Holy Child College in Cape Coast. Other Catholic schools were St. John's Secondary School at Sekondi, Opoku Ware Secondary School in Kumasi and Bishop College in Kpandu, all in the year 1952. Also, with the Muslim Missions, the Ahmadiyyah Muslim Mission founded T.I Ahmadiyya Secondary School at Kumasi in 1950.

3. **Establishment of medical facilities:** In the health care delivery, the missions made some strides. The teaching of basic hygiene both in schools and in communities also formed part of ways through which the missionaries contributed to health to the needs of the people. By this, the people were taught basic principles in environmental cleanliness to prevent the outbreak of epidemics. Another feature of missionary involvement in providing medical facilities was the sinking of wells to provide good drinking water for the people. For instance, the Basel Missionary led by Rev. Suss dug a well at Akropong in the 1850s, which, up to this time, provides potable water for the town. Others were also dug by Missionaries at Aburi.
4. **Literacy works:** The missions further developed and encouraged literacy by reducing a number of local languages into writing. For instance, Zimmermann translated the four (4) Gospels into Ga in 1855 and the Ga Grammar and Dictionary in 1858. By 1866, he had completed the Ga translation of the Bible. Rev. Christaller also translated the entire Bible into Twi in 1871. Christaller again produced the Twi Grammar Book and Dictionary and a collection of proverbs. These works by Rev. Christaller achieved three things: they raised the Twi language to a literary level and provided the basis of all later work in the language; they gave the first real insight into Akan Religious, Social and Moral ideas and welded the expression of Akan Christian worship to the native tongue.
5. **Western architecture:** another social service provided by the missionaries was the introduction of Western architecture in place of the traditional windowless round mud houses roofed with grass. The Missionary, Rev. Andreas Riis, used stone and timber to build rectangular houses with wide windows. Thus, for the first time, some houses in the country were built with stone or bricks and roofed with iron sheets introduced by the missionaries.
6. **Isolation of Christians from their traditional culture:** Ghanaians were made to look down upon their own traditional values and customs. Rites of passage like marriage, naming ceremonies, puberty and funeral celebrations were designed to conform to European Christian taste, thus Ghanaians were de-Africanised.

7. **Condemnation of African culture:** Not only did the missionaries ban the study of Ghanaian culture in their schools but conscientised the people to believe that everything African was bad. The condemnation of African culture, African art, dancing, music, marriage, and even names were all condemned as pagan, barbaric or evil. The missionaries thus generated a sense of inferiority among Africans and certainly retarded African cultural and spiritual development. Partly in reaction to this attitude, a number of separatists or syncretic churches known as *sumsumsor*, run by Africans themselves, began to appear from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, and they have multiplied into this century. (Some of these churches are African Faith Tabernacle, Twelve Apostles' Faith, and the Lord is Their Temple).
8. **Inter-marriages:** Missionary activities promoted inter-marriages among European missionaries, Islamic clerics, Ghanaian missionaries and new converts.
9. **Over-emphasis on 'grammar' and liberal schools:** most of the missionaries concentrated on training people for clerical and paperwork. Therefore, the curriculum used by mission schools was based on Bible Knowledge and the 3Rs that is Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.
10. **Neglect of Technical and Vocational Education:** With the exception of the Basel groups, all the missionaries paid little or no attention to technical and industrial training in their education system, and so they produced people fit only for clerical and administrative work who tended to look down on all manual labour as undignified, an attitude that persists even now.
11. **Establishment of sub-urban towns:** The Basel Mission created new settlements known as 'Salems' to protect their converts. In the Bremen now known as E. P. Church communities, such settlements were known as 'Kpodzi.' They had their own schools, settlements, and even cemeteries for their converts. Their well-laid streets were imitated in the non-Christian sectors of towns and villages, resulting in improved sanitation.
12. **Adoption of Christian and Islamic names:** New converts and pupils enrolled in mission schools were given Christian and Muslim names. These include John, Nicholas, Elizabeth, Nancy, Muhammed, Ibrahim, Uthman, Ali, Priscilla, Matthew and Peter.

Economic impact of Missionary activities in Ghana

1. **Introduction of new crops:** the Christian Missions introduced new crops into Ghana such as oranges, mango trees, bananas, beans, groundnuts, coffee, tobacco, cotton, sugar cane, breadfruit trees and cocoa.
2. **Establishment of experimental farms:** The missions established experimental farms to promote agriculture. For instance, the Basel Mission in Akropong established a botanical garden in which they planted oranges, mango trees (which were introduced into Ghana by the West Indians), local vegetables and bananas, beans, groundnuts as well as coffee, tobacco, cotton, sugar cane and breadfruit trees. They distributed seedlings of these plants to the local farmers. The founder of

the Akropong garden was the missionary Joseph Mohr, and his garden, *Owura Mo Turom*, which is still in use, became famous throughout Ghana. The Basel Mission also introduced cocoa into Ghana in 1857 and experimented with this crop on their farms at Akropong; seedlings were supplied to farmers in Aburi, Mampong and Odumase. However, their attempts were thwarted in the 1860s and early 1870s as a result mainly of the Asante invasions, and the cocoa industry did not revive until the late 1870s. The Wesleyans also established plantations at Dominase, Abura Dunkwa, and a fairly successful one was founded by Freeman at Beulah near Cape Coast, in which he experimented with cotton, coffee, olive trees, cinnamon, black pepper, mango and ginger. Local farmers were also encouraged to establish similar plantations.

3. **Establishment of trading companies:** To encourage exports and also to import goods which would promote modernisation, the Basel Mission founded the Basel Mission Trading Company in 1859 (the precursor of the modern UTC). This company, whose pioneer was Hermann Ludwig Rottmann, refused to sell guns, gunpowder and spirits and its main exports were palm oil and palm kernel oil. From 1857, the Bremen Mission also actively cooperated with the Bremen firm F. & M. Victor and Sons, whose trading activities undoubtedly contributed towards the development of Keta as a trading centre.
4. **Advancement in craft industries:** The Basel Mission paid particular attention to technical and industrial training and set up industrial institutions and workshops to train carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, shoemakers, builders, bookbinders, chariot makers, and locksmiths. Among the apprentices of one of the missionary shoemakers was Tetteh Quashie who was later sent to school by his master. After school, Quashie learnt the trade of goldsmith and found employment, like many of the mission-trained craftsmen, in Fernando Po (now Bioko in Equatorial Guinea), from where he was to smuggle cocoa seeds into Ghana in 1879.
5. **Promotion of legitimate trade:** encouraged the production of commodities for export or for sale locally; it was one of the West Indian colonists who first made groundnut oil in Akuapem, while the Rev. Simon Suss was the first to manufacture palm kernel oil in 1861 and to suggest its export. This suggestion was taken up and it saved Ghanaian palm oil farmers when the discovery of mineral oil began to displace palm oil in the world market. Cotton was also first collected and planted in Ghana by the Basel missionaries. They gave every encouragement to its cultivation which became established, especially in the 1860s, in the Volta region, Christiansborg and Cape Coast

All in all, the missions did more good than harm. Most of us today owe our education and written languages to these selfless and indefatigable missionary pioneers, and they certainly played a decisive role in the smooth, if rather slow, transition from slave to cash crop and monetary economy.

Role Religion Plays In Everyday Life

Religion plays a significant role in everyday life in Ghana, influencing various aspects of society, including culture, education, politics and social interactions. Here are some examples of how religion is manifested in Ghanaian daily life:

1. **Moral and ethical guidance:** The teachings of religion provide a moral framework that guides individuals in making good decisions and living a virtuous life.
2. **Social cohesion and community support:** It fosters a sense of belonging among people in a community or country, for example, worship services, study groups and community events.
3. **Influence on education:** Many educational institutions are affiliated with religious organisations, providing moral and ethical education based on good character development and social responsibility.
4. **Political influence:** Religious leaders often hold significant moral authority and can influence political discussions and decisions through their teachings and public statements.
5. **Healing and spiritual practices:** Many Ghanaians combine religious beliefs with traditional healing practices by seeking spiritual guidance in addition to medical treatment.

Activity 7.5

1. In Ghana, many schools and hospitals have been established by the missionaries. Analyse the original intent of religious missionaries in the establishment of facilities such as hospitals and schools.
2. This time, explain the basic reasons why religious missionaries built hospitals and schools in Ghana, focusing on their primary goals and motivations.

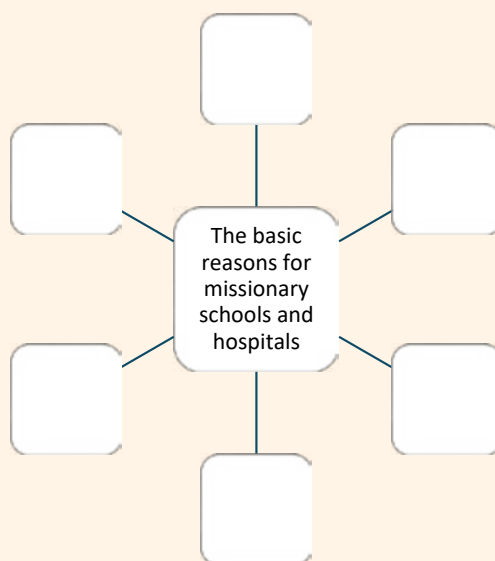


Fig. 7.11: The basic reasons for missionary schools and hospitals

3. Evaluate the long-term impact of hospital and school facilities on Ghanaian society, considering both positive and negative consequences and assess how they shaped the country’s development.
4. Create a chart on secondary schools established by missionary groups in Ghana. Use the chart below to list the names and locations of at least five secondary schools established by missionaries in Ghana, including their founding years.

Table 7.6: Mission schools, location, founding year and initial purpose

Name of school	Place or Location	Founding year	Mission that established school	Initial purpose or focus

5. With your knowledge about missionary activities in Ghana, state at least three changes that missionary activities introduced to Ghana.
6. Describe two positive and two negative impacts of missionary activities on Ghanaian society.

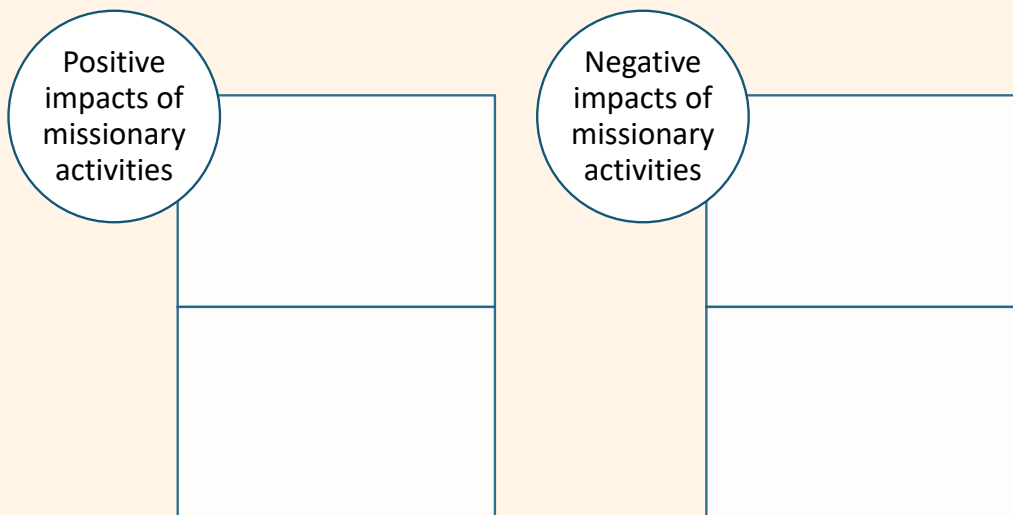


Fig. 7.12: Positive and negative impacts of missionary activities

7. Imagine you are a Ghanaian chief during the arrival of missionaries. How might you approach the introduction of a new religion, such as Christianity, while maintaining your people’s traditional beliefs?

Review questions

1. Pre-colonial Ghanaians believed in the existence of ancestors as part of the extended family system. However, they believed that not everyone who dies qualifies as an ancestor. In the mind map below, show at least three factors that can disqualify a dead person from being an ancestor.

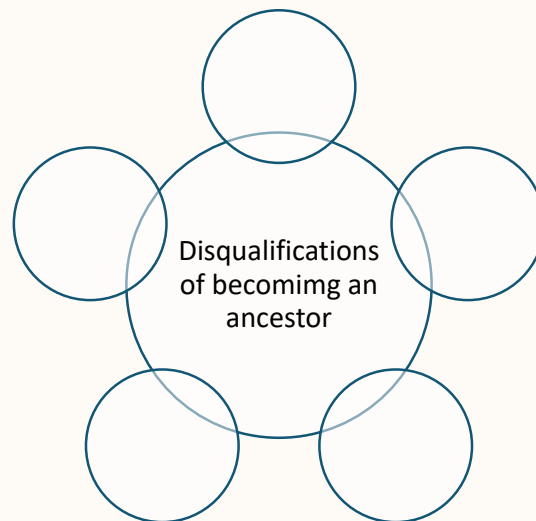


Fig. 7.13: Disqualifications of becoming an ancestor

2. Discuss at least three evidence of the existence of the barter system in contemporary Ghana
3. With the aid of the infographic below, demonstrate at least three roles of religious leaders in the promotion of peace in contemporary Ghana.

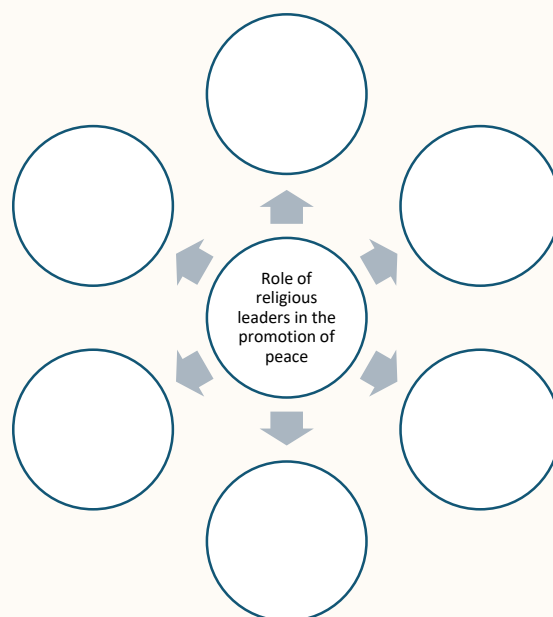


Fig. 7.14: Role of religious leaders in the promotion of peace in modern Ghana

4. Classify the following under the three main religions in Ghana
Mosque, crucifix, amulets, talismans, shrines, basilica, Quran, Tasba, Bible, cowrie shells, chalice, Ten Commandments, Oaths, creeds, Ayatul kursi

Table: 7.7: Classification based on religion

Christianity	Islam	Indigenous Ghanaian religion

5. Complete the table below by indicating the names of the missions that established the schools in the table.

Table 7.8: Schools and the missions that established them

Name of School	Mission
St Augustine College	
Presbyterian Boys' Secondary School, Legon	
Archbishop Porter Girls Secondary School	
Mfantsipim School	
Zion College, Anloga	
T.I. AMASS, Kumasi	
St Charles Minor Seminary Senior High School	
Adisadel College	
Bishop Herman College	
Wesley Girls High School	

Answers to review questions

1.

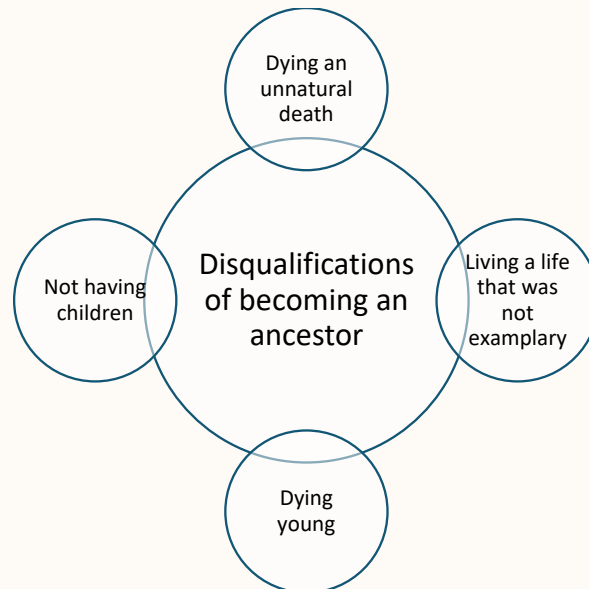


Fig. 7.15: Disqualifications from becoming an ancestor

2. Evidence of Barter system in modern Ghana

- i. Some rural communities exchanging salted or roasted fish for food from crop farmers
- ii. People giving out gold or vehicles in exchange for land
- iii. Gold-for-oil policy of the Government of Ghana.

3.

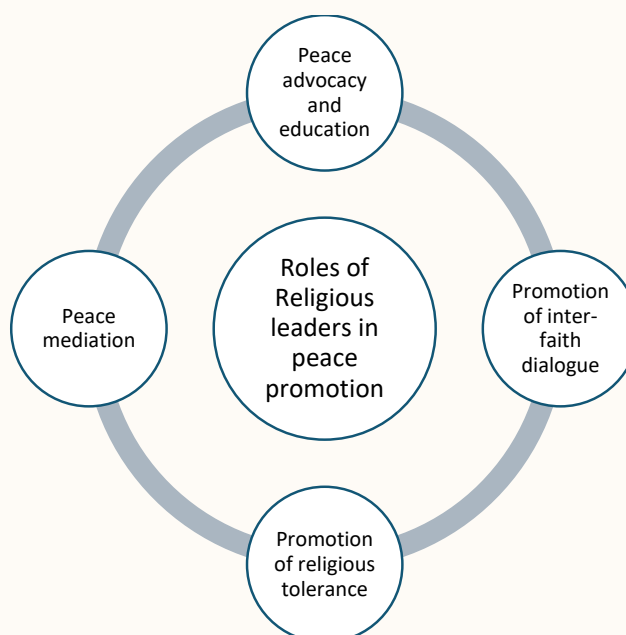


Fig. 7.16: Roles of religious leaders in the promotion of peace

4.

Table: 7.9: Classification based on religion

Christianity	Islam	Indigenous Ghanaian religion
crucifix	Mosque	amulets
Bible	Amulets	Talismans
Ten Commandments	Talismans	Shrines
chalice	Quran	Cowrie shells
basilica	Tasba	Oaths
creeds	Creeds	
	Ayatul kursi	

5.

Table 7.10: Schools and the mission that established them

Name of School	Mission
St Augustine College	Roman Catholic Mission
Presbyterian Boys' Secondary School, Legon	Basel Mission
Archbishop Porter Girls Secondary School	Roman Catholic Mission
Mfantsipim School	Methodist Mission
Zion College, Anloga	AME Zion Mission
T.I AMASS, Kumasi	Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission
St Charles Minor Seminary Senior High School	Roman Catholic Mission
Adisadel College	Anglican Mission
Bishop Herman College	Roman Catholic Mission
Wesley Girls High School	Methodist Mission

Extended Reading

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Glossary

WORDS

Indigenous religious system:

MEANING

is a spiritual practice and belief system, which is native to a particular culture or ethnic group.

Religion:

It is a system of beliefs and practices that involve faith, moral guidance, spirituals and worship.

Social importance:

something that is important/significant to the society, especially a particular action or event by an individual or group of individuals.

Sustenance:

This is a food or drink that a person, animal or plant needs to remain alive

Trade networks:

a system of routes and connections that facilitate the exchange of goods, ideas and people between different regions or countries.

Tradecraft:

This refers to the skills, techniques and methods used by professionals in a specific trade or occupation.

Vegetation zone:

It is characterised by its unique plant life due to environmental conditions such as climate, soil and altitude.

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