

Education for all

Under the government's 'Vision 2020' development plans, the educational target is 'free compulsory and universal basic education for children of school-going age by the year 2020', but there is a long way to go before it can meet this goal. Under adjustment, the government introduced school fees, which – coupled with the costs of school books and uniforms – have prevented many families from sending children to school. The school enrolment rate of 44 per cent has actually fallen below the 1970 level of 52 per cent.

Cultural reasons also prevent balanced school enrolment and attainment. While 49 per cent of boys attend school, the rate is only 38 per cent of girls, a huge disparity. Adult literacy rates stand at 64 per cent for men and 42 per cent for women, and there are extreme regional differentials: in northern Ghana, women's literacy is estimated at less than 5 per cent.

Nevertheless, Ghanaians do place great value on education and are willing to make great sacrifices to ensure that they and their children benefit from the schooling available. Students and university teachers also

✓ *Joshua Abagna runs the government-sponsored adult literacy and numeracy classes in Zuo village. Since 1997, there have been classes specifically for women.*



WORKING TO PAY FOR SCHOOL: FADILA'S STORY

Fadila al Hassan, aged 15, is a junior secondary pupil in Tamale. Fadila's father is able to pay her school fees, the equivalent of US\$3.20 a term (the average minimum wage in Ghana is less than US\$32 a month). But school uniforms and books are expensive, so Fadila hawks 'ice water' at the bus station and on the main road. Fadila buys the plastic bags of iced water from a wholesaler and can make about 80 cents if she works for a whole day. She works every day after school, all weekend, and during the school holidays.



play an important role in national political life, voicing opposition to the government when others have not dared to speak out.

The years of economic decline took their toll on the education system; shortages of books, equipment, and teachers remain endemic. School buildings are in disrepair and often lack even basic furniture, and teacher salaries are low: pupil-teachers, the backbone of the primary system, earn the equivalent of US\$44 a month. Teachers therefore not only suffer low morale but must inevitably find other ways of earning an income, which reduce the time they can spend teaching and preparing lessons. Where parents can afford it, sending their children to one of the many private preparatory schools has become a priority. But the majority of children study in overcrowded and poorly equipped state schools.

Restructuring: a curriculum for development?

After being affected by economic adjustment, the next change to hit the education system was sweeping school reform. The old 17-year system of education, which emphasised the attainment of a narrow range of passes in academic subjects at O- and A-levels, was replaced with a 12-year system based on the US model. The new system emphasised a more wide-ranging education and included vocational studies at the junior secondary level. This shift in emphasis provoked a huge debate in Ghana about appropriate schooling: supporters of the changes said that the old system was outmoded and not suited to the country's real needs. It bred a small elite and a large number of drop-outs with no suitable training for any kind of work, whereas what Ghana needed was vocational training for economic

development. Opponents said that the new system would breed a nation of artisans and that Ghana should not settle for that – what Ghana really needed was an expanded academic system.

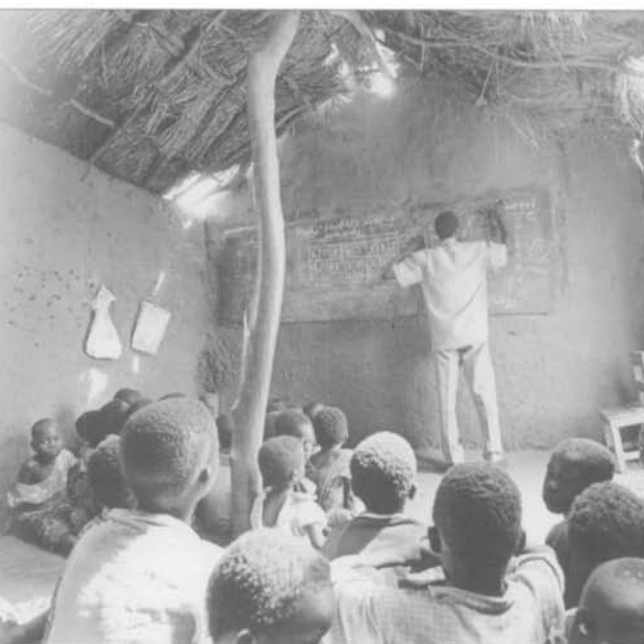
Ghana has ended up with a combination of both approaches, but suffers from underfunding in all sectors. The creation of new junior and senior secondary schools outpaces the resources available for buildings, equipment, teachers, and books, and yet, the provision is still insufficient for Ghana's rapidly expanding young population. At the tertiary level, a new university was created in the north, and enrolment was expanded at the other four. Degree courses have also been extended to four years to maintain standards, but extreme overcrowding and strong pressure on university resources have been the result. As an adjustment measure, tuition and boarding fees have been introduced. For many students, paying the newly imposed university fees was already a struggle, and poor school-leavers were particularly discouraged from applying.

But in 1998, the government proposed a sharp increase. The national student's union protested against this idea, and in 1999, there were protests on campuses around the country. The largest protest took place in Accra and ended in violent clashes between students and police. The government then held talks with student leaders and parents and suggested the creation of a C3 billion fund for needy students as a way out of the impasse. Student leaders argued that this sum was inadequate but the government maintained that most university students come from relatively well-off families. However, the students also warned that, in practice, the special assistance would not be distributed according to need. Some students have started paying the new fees, and three universities continue as normal. This has given the government room for manoeuvre,

BOWKU, A RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bowku is a typical village in northern Ghana. It has a six-classroom primary school built by the community. Three of the rooms are thatched. The other three are covered with zinc roofing sheets provided by the government. There are few chairs or other equipment; the blackboard is made from torch battery fluid spread on the wall. Some children take their own stools to school.

Bowku school has two teachers, educated to middle school level, who teach the six classes in the school. The teachers estimate the enrolment rate to be less than 40 per cent. Both teachers live in the village and are able to assist the younger pupils in their own language. Since wages are low, both the teachers supplement their income with farming.



FATAIYA'S PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Fataiya Issifu is 15 and has been profoundly deaf since the age of 8 following a fever. There was no provision for her special educational needs in her home area. Six years ago, her mother heard about Savelugu School for the Deaf which provides education from nursery to junior secondary levels. The school is open to all, and tuition and lodging are paid for by the government. Since joining the school, Fataiya has learned to sign as well as to read and write. She studies the full range of junior school subjects and hopes to gain admission to one of the two secondary schools for the deaf in Ghana to learn tailoring.

Fataiya signs, 'I am very happy here and the school has benefited me a lot. I will try for a place at secondary school next. With training from there I will be able to get a good husband to marry!'



but the University of Ghana campus at Legon remains closed due to the student unrest.

The ongoing dispute is a dilemma for Ghana. Poorer students will inevitably be excluded from degree-level study as fees increase. Fati Yakubu, the stockbroker who tells her story on p25, would not have got to where she is without free education. At the same time, because of constraints imposed by structural adjustment, there is simply not enough money available to educate Ghanaians to a good standard. Ghana's decision-makers must make difficult choices about the distribution of funding between the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors. Some argue that since higher education accounts for about a third of the total education budget but is only enjoyed by a few thousand students a year, subsidy cuts are most equitably made there. But this focus on benefits to individuals forgets the important role that these few, well educated Ghanaians can play in the country's future development. Indeed, anything but an increase in the quality and quantity of education at all levels in Ghana is to mortgage the future of the next generation.

Education for all?

Despite the lack of resources, there is some provision for adult and special-needs education in Ghana.

The Non-Formal Education Division of the Ghana Education Service runs innovative programmes to encourage adult literacy in local languages, in conjunction with radio and television support. The new Radio Savannah FM station in the north, for example, receives 50 per cent of its funding from this Division. Its broadcasts try to encourage literacy while educating learners on development issues from health and water to civil rights. This programme aims to fulfil another ambitious aspect of Vision 2020: to eradicate adult illiteracy in Ghana.

Living off the land

Agriculture is the most important economic sector in Ghana. Over half the population are employed in farming, and agricultural products make up 45 per cent of national income (GDP).



In this area, if you want to farm, you must apply to the land committee.

Ploughing is usually done by men; women must ask for or hire their services.



Systems of land tenure and access

Many agricultural problems are tied up with systems of tenure and access. Land-related law and actual practice diverge, often to the disadvantage of people who live in poverty. The state owns some land, notably vast forest and nature reserves, but most land in Ghana is vested in clans, and traditional authorities have a strong influence over land matters. In accordance with tradition, a person's access to land is largely determined by patterns of inheritance. Some people may buy and sell land according to government land law, but this mostly applies to urban land for building and agricultural land for cash-cropping.

In the rural areas of northern Ghana, land is seldom bought and sold. Those who do not control farming land must 'beg' for it. Landholders are unlikely to permit long-term access to a particular plot, discouraging land improvements and tree-planting. Women, who do not inherit land, are placed at a particular disadvantage. It also affects young male farmers and immigrants, but while local young men will eventually get permanent access through division of lineage land to which they are entitled, immigrants find it hard to get land of their own.

In the south, there is a greater market in land. But here, some clan heads have used their positions to sell land for their own gain, and disputes over titles to land are endemic. It is easier for people to get ownership rights to land through purchase, but this is beyond the reach of the poor. Immigrant farmers often enter a sharecropping scheme. There

are two common forms. Under *abunu*, the landowner and the operator share proceeds of the sale of the crop equally. This system is more often used for annual crops. Under *abusa*, the operator receives a third of the proceeds but as the scheme covers tree crops which have a long gestation, the operator takes the entire profits from the first five seasons in order to recoup the start-up costs. Through either scheme, immigrant farmers may eventually save enough money to buy land.

In Akan societies, women can inherit land, but the system is predominantly matrilineal: a woman inherits from her maternal uncles. A woman will work on and improve land belonging to her husband's family, but if he dies, the land will be inherited by his sister's children. The new Law of Intestate Succession seeks to address these problems by assuring that where there is no will, wives and children are made the beneficiaries of an estate. However, it is generally only the well-informed and relatively wealthy who know about and can make use of this legislation. For most widows, their future depends on the kind of relationship they have built up with their in-laws over the years. If the woman is regarded as a 'good wife' to her husband's family – implying that she has shared with them and helped them – one of the sisters' sons will offer to marry the widow and care for her children. On the other hand, if the relationship is bad, the widow will be treated badly by her in-laws during *kunadie*, the forty-day mourning period, and after this period she is likely to leave the house or be turned out from it, to return to her parents' home.

The story of rice

The 1970s saw a boom in large-scale rice production. Credit was available as part of a German-Ghanaian development programme, and the wealthy, who were able to offer collateral for the loans and to exert an influence on loan allocations, saw it as an opportunity to make money. But in order to justify the capital investment in producing rice, growers need the assurance of long-term land tenure. Some farmers persuaded chiefs to give them permanent access in return for a financial reward; others were able to use their knowledge of the state land registration system to register their purchases legally. Rural dwellers, who regarded the land as theirs, felt dispossessed in this process. Rice-burning was one form of protest.

While some entrepreneurs made large profits from rice, other farmers had problems marketing their rice because no new system had been set up to cope with the vast expansion in production. But the loans still had to be repaid, so those who were unable to sell their rice got into severe financial trouble.

Rice cultivation is currently very profitable. Marketing remains in the hands of private entrepreneurs who have developed efficient domestic marketing. The sector is dominated by large-scale growers, but more recently, government agricultural programmes have helped small numbers of peasant farmers to cultivate rice using up-to-date techniques.

Land and environment

Ghana is facing serious environmental problems. Severe deforestation in the tropical rainforest zone as a result of commercial and illegal logging has resulted in the destruction of large areas of these forests. Government control measures are in place, but much of the biodiversity is already destroyed, and the long-term environmental impact can only be guessed at. At the same time, desertification is affecting the northern zone. This

problem crosses national borders: one of its causes is the reduction of tree cover in Burkina Faso. But poverty in northern Ghana has also caused people to over-exploit the land and cut down the trees. Rural women often cut firewood or make charcoal to sell in small towns or to buyers from the large cities, just to make ends meet.

When a woman is hungry she says, 'Roast something for the children that they may eat.'

Ghanaian proverb

Along the coast, sea encroachment has become a major problem as a result of illegal sand winning which destroys the structures of sand dunes, making them vulnerable to erosion. Both fishing villages and roads along the coast are threatened.

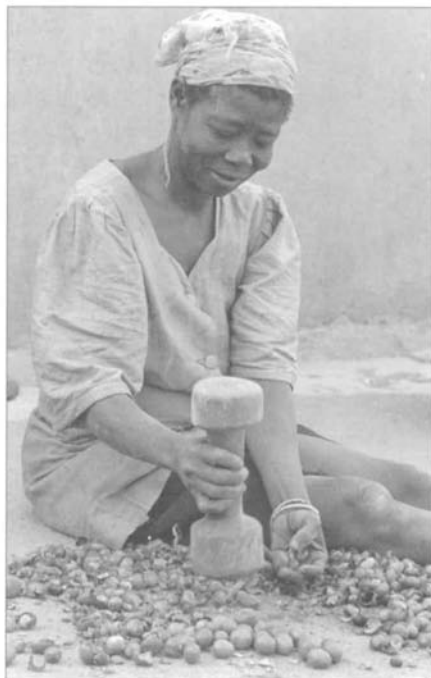
In the mining areas, water poisoning is a major problem. At Obuasi, high levels of arsenic associated with the gold industry have been detected in drinking water sources.

Food crops

Food staples grown in Ghana include yam, cassava, plantain, rice, maize, millet, guinea corn, beans, and groundnuts. Common vegetables include tomatoes, onions, okra, pepper, garden eggs, and types of spinach. Some foods are also gathered from the wild including shea nuts, vegetables, and mushrooms. As you move northwards, rainfall is lower and falls in a single rainy season, and soils are less rich. Here, root crops are cultivated but pulses and cereals begin to dominate the cuisine.

The extension services run by the Ministry of Agriculture offer technical advice and access to inputs to farmers who grow food crops, although more support has been given to cocoa farmers because of the crop's export value. Because both extension and credit services have been

➤ *Abaa Ayariga is making shea nut butter. First she cracks the nuts, and, after frying the kernels, grinds them into a thick brown paste. Water is added, and the mixture beaten and formed into balls, which are heated. As the balls cool, the oil separates and rises to the top. It is skimmed off and left in a cool place until it sets into butter. Shea butter is an important commodity in northern Ghana: it is used in cooking, for medicinal purposes, and skin protection.*



biased towards male and larger-scale farmers, women and the poorest farmers have benefited less from technical improvements available.

Most food crops are grown by small-scale farmers as individuals or on household farms. Some crops, such as vegetables and pulses, are particularly associated with women's production, whereas cereals and root crops are often grown by men or on household farms. Most food processing is undertaken by women – a huge task involving demanding physical labour, water-fetching, and firewood collection.



▲ Yams for sale.

What's in a yam?

The yam is a staple food in much of Ghana. Some varieties are among the few crops grown in Ghana which are indigenous to West Africa. Not only crucial to the diet, the yam is also central to the division of labour and the agricultural and ritual calendars in rural communities.

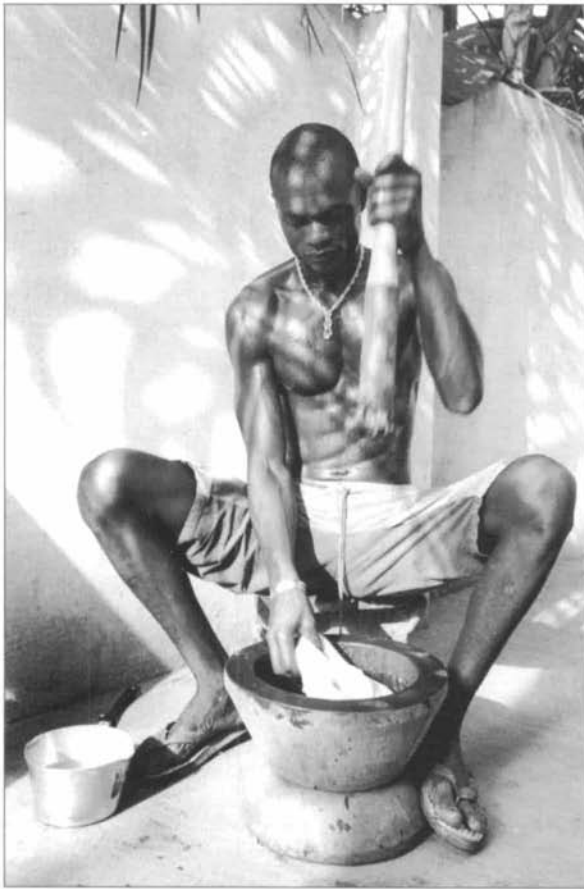
Yam cultivation is not mechanised: when the early rains begin, men raise mounds with short-handled hoes and plant a segment of yam tuber in each. Yams need to be weeded, and both men and women perform this task during the six to seven-month growing season. In the spaces between the mounds, women grow soup ingredients such as pepper or okra, making good use of the labour that men invested in tilling the soil for the mounds. The soup ingredient plants take nutrition from different depths of the soil, so they do not compete with the yams for nutrients. At the same time, they provide some shade for the sprouting yams.

During the harvest, men lift the tubers, and women headload them to the storage area. Yams are often stored above the ground in purpose-built racks, *aputuo*, made from branches

and ropes. *Aputuo* can preserve yams for a season, preventing rotting and unwanted germination.

Although the harvest is underway, no one may eat the new yam until after the yam festival. In Nsonsomea, a Brong village, the traditional priest and elders decide when the festival should begin. They are under pressure – it is the 'hunger season', and people are anxious to start eating the new crop! Everyone is relieved when the time of the festivities is announced.

On the eve of the celebrations, the traditional priest dances throughout the night and foretells what is in store for the village during the year, both good and bad. To prevent the bad he tells people to 'sweep' it out of the town. On the first morning of the festival, the Nsonsomea residents make an early start. Women and children clean the village. They say that



▲ Unusually, this cook is pounding and turning the *fufu* on his own.

RECIPE FOR LIGHT SOUP AND FUFU

Boil chopped beef or goat meat in a small amount of water, adding one chopped onion, a clove of garlic, and ginger and salt to taste. After four minutes, add more water, tomato paste, and red pepper to taste. After a further ten minutes add one stock cube. Continue boiling until foaming disappears and the meat is well cooked.

Serve with *fufu* made by pounding cooked plantain and yam or cassava until it is a smooth, starchy paste. Alternatively, *fufu* can be made from *fufu* powder available in specialist supermarkets or from instant potato powder, by adding extra dried starch (*farina*).

they have 'swept the sickness out of the town' and symbolically block the paths leading to the settlement with branches to prevent its return. Shrines to local deities and ancestors are then brought out and washed. New yams are cooked and mashed with red oil. The traditional priest visits all the shrines, sprinkling the yam on the shrines. Sacrifices are made. At last people can begin to eat the new yam and really enjoy the week-long celebrations.

Yam is versatile. It can be boiled, fried, and roasted, but most often it is made into *fufu*. *Fufu* can be prepared from cassava, cocoyam, or plantain and is often made from a combination of cassava and one of the others. Women are usually responsible for *fufu* preparation for the evening family meal. After lighting a charcoal or wood cooking fire, women first prepare soup. There are various delicious flavours; the most popular are groundnut, palm nut, and light soup. Soups are made with meat or fish when available, but a tasty alternative is giant mushroom soup. Freshwater snail soup is an acquired taste. As the soup boils, a charcoal stove must be constantly fanned to maintain the temperature. The tubers are then peeled, sliced and boiled, and reserved for pounding.

Fufu is pounded with a huge pestle and mortar. It usually takes the energy of two to pound, one standing and powering the pestle downwards in rhythmic thumps with full bodily force, and one sitting at the mortar, turning the *fufu* between strokes of the pestle, and introducing more cooked tuber, expertly avoiding crushed hands. This is the time when young men participate, taking control of the pestle as the woman 'drives' the *fufu* in the mortar.

Fufu is served in earthenware bowls with soup. Eaten with the right hand, the *fufu* is rounded into small balls, dipped in the soup, and swallowed without chewing. Eating is a sociable occasion. Friends and family often share the same bowl of food, and visitors are invited to eat with their hosts. Some food is always reserved in the house in case there are visitors later in the evening.

LUCIA'S STORY: TAKING CARE OF THE EXTENDED FAMILY

Lucia Pupunaa lives at Sambo and is in her late forties. She has five children and is widowed. As custom demands in the Sambo area, Lucia has married her deceased husband's younger brother. As he is blind and has found it difficult to provide food for her and the children, Lucia must meet most of their needs. In addition, Lucia's sister, also a widow, looks to Lucia for help for herself and her children. Lucia's oldest son has migrated south, and his wife is also dependent on Lucia.

Lucia uses a variety of income-generating strategies to make ends meet and to spread the risks. Together with her sister and the children, she works a rice, millet, and bean farm. Lucia also brews local millet beer for sale with the help of her daughter-in-law, while her sister makes and retails charcoal to contribute. Finally, the family rear animals and the women collect shea nuts for sale.

Lucia belongs to a women's group which is assisted



by a local development charity called SOFIDEP. Through the group, Lucia has been able to obtain loans to build up a rice parboiling business. The small profits have helped her to buy food and to afford school fees for her two youngest children. She is able to get by, but she has not been able to pay school fees for all her children, to afford health-care fees, or other things she regards as 'extras'. Lucia says, 'There is nothing better than to cater for your children.'

Yams may be central to rural social life but yam-dependent diets can lead to malnutrition. Whereas cereals contain essential proteins and other nutrients, yams are a relatively poor food. In Ghana, public health promotions of varied diets have reduced the incidence of malnutrition associated with yam diets.

Food security

Areas of northern Ghana have suffered chronic food insecurity, caused by a combination of environmental and historical factors. The effects of unpredictable rainfall and soil erosion and infertility are exacerbated by unsustainable land-use practices, including deforestation and inorganic farming. Because population density is high, land is scarce, but at the same time there is a shortage of men's and young people's labour due to migration. There are few alternative opportunities to earn an income because of the region's underdevelopment, and poverty prevents both agricultural investment and food purchases when there are shortages.

Small-scale farmers, who make up most of the northern population, experience a 'hunger period' before the new harvest, yet maximum energy is required for farming at this time. Men are responsible for providing cereals for the women of the house to cook for the main meal; women provide the other ingredients and the other meals. When the household cereal runs out, women become the food providers of last resort.

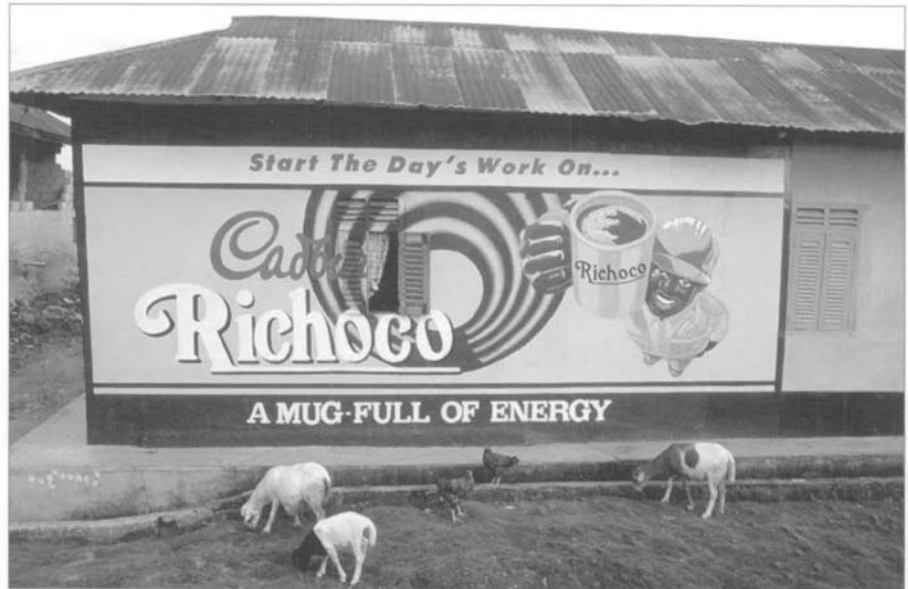
Cash crops for export

Most small-scale farmers also grow crops for sale. Ghana's principal export crops are cocoa, coffee, palm oil, cultivated in the south, and rice, cultivated all over Ghana. New, non-traditional exports include pineapples, cashew, cotton, and shea nuts (shea butter is used in manufacturing cosmetics). The small-scale sector produces the bulk of Ghana's export crops, and employs about 55 per cent of the work force.

> A cheerful message, but world prices for cocoa may continue to decline.

COCOA'S UPS AND DOWNS

Asamoah Serebour has a 6-acre cocoa farm. The drop in cocoa prices and lack of availability of inputs in the early 1980s hit him hard. He welcomes the recent increase in producer prices but finds that prices have not risen as fast as living costs. Asamoah has recently joined a co-operative in his village which is part of Kuapa Kokoo ('best farmer'). Kuapa is one of the new buying companies. Kuapa is able to buy cocoa at higher prices than the state-owned Marketing Board because it exports to 'fair trade' chocolate manufacturers in Europe. Profits are distributed among farmers.



Cocoa, mainstay of the Ghanaian economy

Cocoa has been Ghana's major export for most of this century. Government services and the country's development have largely been paid for through taxes on this sector. In the 1960s, Ghana was the world's largest cocoa producer with an average annual output of 450,000 tonnes, but with a decline in world cocoa prices and the continuing need for the government to tax production, prices paid to farmers fell. As a result of the foreign exchange crisis in the late 1970s, imported inputs such as pesticides became unavailable. Production dropped to a low of 159,000 tonnes in 1983/4, a drought year when forest fires also took their toll on cocoa output. Following an increase in prices paid to farmers under structural adjustment, by 1995 production had recovered to near 1960s levels.

Before adjustment, the state-owned Cocoa Marketing Board controlled all aspects of production, prices, and extension services. Limited liberalisation then allowed private traders to buy cocoa from farmers at competitive prices; the Board itself was 'streamlined', and thousands of its employees were made redundant.

The contribution of cocoa to export earnings has declined from 53 per cent in 1983 to 34 per cent in 1998. But it remains a huge share, and Ghana's dependence on this single crop continues.

Cotton, an up-and-coming cash crop

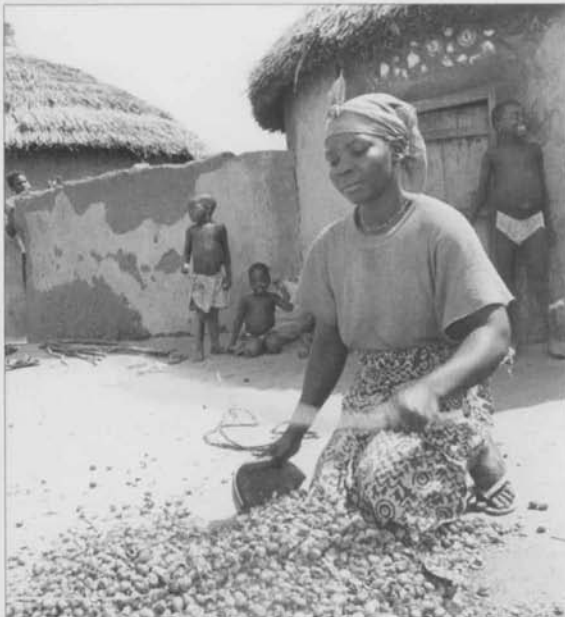
Cotton production is booming in the north of Ghana. Previously a small sector under the auspices of the national Cotton Development Board, liberalisation has led to the proliferation of private cotton companies. They provide inputs on credit to small-scale growers and buy the crop at the end of the season. One result of this expansion is an increase in women's participation: whereas the former Board biased its extension services towards men, the new cotton companies are commercially oriented and, finding that some of their highest producers are women, they are keen to promote women's production. Traditions have restricted women's access to credit, ploughing, and farm labour, but cotton companies provide assistance with these. Women have also found land access a problem, but because land becomes more fertile after cotton is grown, men are often willing to lend them land for a year's cotton production.

However, cotton expansion also brings environmental problems: in the long term, the crop decreases soil fertility, and fertilisers and pesticides can contaminate water sources.

Most cotton farmers do not get rich but use the proceeds to get by. Some even have to divert some of the inputs such as fertiliser and pesticides to food crops to ensure that enough is produced. Like cocoa, the sector is vulnerable to fluctuations in world prices.

FAMILY AND FARMING: ASIETU'S STORY

Asietu Zibilum lives in northern Ghana and has six children. She works on a farm operated by her husband and his brother. Using grain produced on



their farm, she takes turns with her brother-in-law's wives to cook for the members of the household in the evening. Asietu must provide the 'soup ingredients' for this meal and the food for her children's other meals.

To meet her responsibilities, Asietu cultivates a wide range of crops including okra, leafy vegetables, groundnuts, and black-eyed beans for the family's consumption and for sale to buy essentials. Three years ago, Asietu also began growing cotton. The credit scheme has enabled Asietu to afford inputs which it would have been impossible to purchase up-front. It has also allowed her to get bullock ploughing done on time, even though ploughing for women has a low priority in her village.

Asietu has used profits from cotton to buy food for herself and her children during the 'hunger season', which she thinks has got worse in recent years. Asietu says that women have increasingly had to provide for the family during the hunger season, but sees a glimmer of hope for the future: 'We are suffering these days. But if a man brings food in and his wife provides food, together they can solve any problem.'

Minerals, manufacturing, and industry



▲ The 15th Asantehene, the late Otumfuo Nana Opoku Ware II, in full regalia. Otumfuo, a surveyor and barrister before becoming king, died in February 1999 at the age of 89. The new Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, was enstooled in April 1999.

Gold has been of central economic and symbolic significance in West Africa for centuries. Control of the gold trade was the basis for a powerful kingdom which at one time dominated most of what is present-day Ghana: the Ashanti not only traded in gold but used it to make elaborate chiefly regalia, from rings to headbands and staves, as well as more ordinary jewellery. The golden stool was regarded as the soul of the Ashanti nation. Gold artefacts are found in museums in Ghana and around the world, but they are still in regular use in Ashanti life, and not just confined to chiefs and festivals. Even gold trading inspired the creation of beautiful objects. Elaborate bronze weights, crafted in the form of animals or symbols, were used to measure gold dust. They are still made for collectors today.

Gold remains central to the Ghanaian economy, although diamonds, manganese and bauxite are also mined. From a 15 per cent share of export earnings in the mid-1980s, gold now accounts for the largest proportion of Ghana's export earnings, at 40 per cent. This reflects an increase in production from 300,000 to 1,700,000 ounces between 1986 and 1995 which went hand-in-hand with the reorganisation of the sector as a result of adjustment measures and new legislation on concessions.

The largest producer is the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation (AGC), which has often been regarded as a great African success story: since its privatisation it has been largely managed by Ghanaians and was one of the first indigenous companies to be listed on international stock markets. But AGC is 32 per cent owned by the UK conglomerate Lonmin (formerly known as Lonrho), 20 per cent by the Ghana government, with most of the remainder controlled by international financial institutions (indicating that much of the profit is expatriated), and in 1999 fluctuations in the price of gold and gold derivatives left AGC open to take-over bids.

Large-scale gold extraction is highly mechanised, offering little employment. It has also been blamed for environmental degradation and contamination of drinking water in mining areas. Large companies are accused of riding roughshod over people's rights to land in the areas they explore and mine. Gold reserves have been exploited in the south of the country, but new finds in the north also have potential.



The miners dig pits and shafts between 2m and 15m in depth. The gold-bearing mud is washed, and mercury used to extract the gold and shape it into 'bush gold', which is then smelted over a makeshift furnace.

THE NEW GOLD RUSH IN THE NANGODI AREA

Gold rushes have historically caused all sorts of upheavals, and the Nangodi area in the Upper East Region is no exception. An area deep-mined for gold in the 1940s, the current gold rush focuses on the surface level. Young men from all over Ghana and West Africa have flooded in to make their fortune, and local women are also participating in the dig. Many of the Ghanaians coming to the area were made redundant under structural adjustment.

The rush has brought more money to the village economy. Those who sell produce and goods in the local market benefit, and there are opportunities for making money by providing services to the miners such as fetching water. But the rush also brings problems. Increased market prices affect local food security. The miners themselves face dangers as they dig pits without proper supports, and some of the mercury used in processing inevitably escapes into local water supplies. Miners have been accused of indiscriminately digging up land, even land under cultivation, without seeking permission, causing vast environmental damage as well as conflict. Other social problems are caused by the sudden influx of young men; on occasion, the army has had to be called in to maintain law and order.

Ghana's diamond sector is smaller and has a history of corruption and struggling for survival. Production is mainly industrial grade. Adjustment ended the state's control over large-scale extraction but the private businesses now involved have not been able to restore production to even a quarter of 1970s levels. Ghana is also one of the world's largest manganese exporters; the potential for bauxite extraction is not fully realised.

Small-scale mineral extraction

Small-scale extraction of gold and diamonds are fast-growing mining sectors. Estimates state that a quarter of Ghana's diamond production is undertaken by individual miners.

Since small-scale gold mining was legalised in Ghana in 1989, many of those made redundant as a result of adjustment have looked to gold digging to make a living. The PAMSCAD programme has even assisted individual miners to improve the safety aspects of their work. Recently, small-scale gold extraction has started in the north of Ghana and is beginning to reverse the north-south trend in migration.

Manufacturing

The large-scale manufacturing sector in Ghana is relatively undeveloped; it includes textiles, drinks, food, plastics, vehicle assembly, and aluminium processing. Much of it is owned and

▼ A wooden Akuaba doll. Traditionally believed to induce fertility in women, they are now produced for the tourist market.



managed by the Lebanese community, but multinational companies such as Unilever and Valco also run factories. Various state-owned enterprises also used to be involved in manufacturing, so since liberalisation opened up the market to foreign competition in the 1980s, large numbers of factories have been closed, leading to huge job losses. In the future, taking part in the global economy will depend on Ghana's ability to provide an educated workforce.

Small-scale production and the importance of the informal sector

Production is dominated by small-scale producers, often operating in the 'informal' sector, which provides much more employment than formally regulated large-scale extraction and production. Small-scale manufacturing has grown as opportunities in the formal sector have reduced during structural adjustment. It is estimated that numbers in formal employment in the government and private sectors halved from 464,000 in 1985 to 230,000 in 1990. The small-scale informal sector now holds the key to survival of a large proportion of the population, especially women.

Problems in this sector include a chronic shortage of credit and lack of opportunities to receive training in new techniques, except through the apprenticeship system. Credit is rarely available in the formal banking system, and informal savings and loans organisations have little capital to offer. There is some government help: for instance, the National Board for Small-Scale Industries provides credit and wide-ranging training. NGOs such as the national Intermediate Technology Transfer Unit also offer assistance, but these services still cannot meet demand.

Traditionally, skills are acquired through family membership, fostering, or adoption into a skilled family or apprenticeship. Vocational education is also supposed to be provided in government institutions and in junior schools, but because they are short of equipment, students are unable to learn practical skills. With the increase in the size of this sector, there is a rising demand for vocational training, and the voluntary sector is trying to meet part of this demand.

One such voluntary organisation is the Ghana Young Artisans' Movement. It trains young people in vocational skills to enable them to start their own enterprises because formal-sector jobs are in such short supply. The project also aims to stem the drift of the youth to casual employment in the cities. Opportunities for vocational education in the north of Ghana are particularly poor. As the principal, Fatau Ibrahim says, 'The north is like a different continent in Ghana. There are many opportunities which don't come to the north'. Based in Tamale, the project seeks to redress this imbalance.

THE EXPERIENCE OF REDEPLOYMENT: MALEK'S STORY

Malek Benson has experienced the harsh effects of restructuring at first hand: at the age of 32, Malek is an apprentice wood carver in Foase village. Previously a worker with the Ministry of Agriculture, he was 'redeployed' during structural adjustment, an euphemism for redundancy. He received no compensation. Malek decided that he would acquire carver's skills in order to become self-employed: 'I prefer this job because you always get work to do. With government work, they can strike you off at any time.'

THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN A TRADE: YAHAYA'S STORY

Yahaya Alhassan is 22. His father has died and Yahaya helps look after his mother and his seven younger brothers and sisters. Yahaya used to hawk second-hand clothes, but he found that this work did not pay much and profits were irregular. 'I was only able to sell during the first week of the month, after workers had received their salaries.'



Yahaya now learns carpentry with the Ghana Young Artisans' Movement. A practical *and* theoretical education and tools are provided, unlike in a traditional apprenticeship, and fees are lower and spread over a period (the equivalent of US\$40, payable in instalments over three years). The project also assists the young people to start their own businesses.

'When I finish the course I plan to set up my own workshop with the help of the Movement so I can provide for my family. I want to pass on my skills to my brothers. Only one of them has any education. I even dream of building a house one day.'

Valco, electricity, and the Akosombo dam

The Akosombo dam was built on the Volta River to produce hydro-electricity for Ghana. Cost considerations led the government to look for a commercial partner who would buy a large proportion of the electricity. An aluminium company was thought to be ideal, both because aluminium smelting requires large quantities of electricity and because it would make use of Ghana's bauxite deposits.

The USA, a major co-financier of the project, insisted that American companies were selected to build, own, and run the smelter – so Valco, owned by Kaiser, a US-based multinational, got the contract. The Akosombo dam was completed in 1964.

Because of the flooding caused by the dam, 80,000 people had to be resettled. The authorities took a well-meaning welfarist approach, but villagers were dispossessed of their own land without measures being taken to acquire more for them elsewhere. New agricultural co-operatives and mechanisation schemes had been provided to replace traditional ownership patterns and methods, but they proved inappropriate and failed. New settlements had been built, but settlers were expected to move into half-built and unsuitable new homes with facilities that they could not sustain on lowered incomes.

Meanwhile, Valco had signed up to benefit from the cheapest electricity in the world, for 50 years and without being subject to normal taxation. The company's vast profits went to the

USA, and the Ghanaian economy benefited little. Valco stated that due to the costs of developing the bauxite industry and transport infrastructure, it would import aluminium for ten years. Thirty-five years later, Valco is yet to source bauxite locally.

Recent underperformance of the hydro-electricity project due to low water levels in the Akosombo dam has led to power rationing in the cities but has had little impact on Valco. However, the Ghana government was able to renegotiate the contract with Valco in 1988, and it now pays a higher electricity charge.

Urban Ghana

About 36 per cent of Ghanaians live in urban areas, and this proportion is growing rapidly: estimates suggest that half of the total population will be urbanised by 2015. The largest city is Accra with a population of almost 2 million; other cities include Kumasi, Tamale, and Sekondi-Takoradi and Tema on the coast. Development seems to move at a faster pace in the cities: better infrastructure and telecommunications foster business growth and contribute to an atmosphere of opportunity and progress. As a result, migrants make up a significant proportion of urban populations. Most of them end up working in the informal sector and living in poor, overcrowded conditions or even on the streets. People may choose migration as a temporary or permanent strategy.

Nima

Nima is the largest and one of the oldest *zongo* areas of Accra. *Zongo* means 'camping place of a caravan' in Hausa, a language spoken mainly in northern Nigeria and Niger, but understood across West Africa. Most

BASHIRU AND AISHA

Bashiru El-Umar and Aisha Sambo met and married in Nima; they have one child, Hakeem. Bashiru is from northern Ghana; Aisha comes from Nigeria. Aisha sells aluminium cookware from home while Bashiru 'helps a friend' to supply government contracts. They have recently faced setbacks. Aisha sells her goods on credit and is owed a lot of money, so the business is at a standstill. Bashiru put his savings into a pyramid savings scheme which collapsed. They hope life will improve. As Bashiru says, 'God's time is the best'.

Bashiru and Aisha consider themselves lucky that they are able to rent two small rooms. They live in a typical compound house. There is no toilet, so you must queue at one of the five Nima toilet blocks. There is also no bath-room, so the tenants have constructed a makeshift cubicle in the street for bathing. Nima is so overcrowded that children are often sent to sleep in friends' rooms or in taxis or lorries (where they double as watchmen).



Educational facilities are reasonable in Nima, though: Hakeem attends a day nursery.

Nima is a noisy place, and people tend to be aggressive, but Bashiru and Aisha also like its vibrancy. Residents celebrate festivals from all the cultural traditions. Cinemas and football teams are popular. There are also strong self-help associations for men and women which maintain links with members who have migrated abroad.



13 View of the main taxi park in Tamale, the main city of the Northern Region.

Nima inhabitants are 'northerners', Hausa-speaking Muslims from Ghana and from other West African countries. Working in the informal economy is the norm for most of Nima's residents.

14 One of the fish markets at Elmina.



Nima has been the largest 'slum' area of Accra. It is still overcrowded and lacks adequate sanitation, but there have been many improvements under a World Bank urban development programme. According to a recent survey, none of the poorest 10 per cent of Ghanaians live in Accra today. Still, people in cities may face unique problems unknown to most in rural areas, including social isolation: in times of crisis, they cannot depend on those around them for help.

City markets and trading

Market trading in Ghana tends to be dominated by women. Women usually have little formal education, and this is a sector where the illiterate can participate. There is relatively little profit in market work, but women are trading out of



necessity. They carry the increased burden of providing for the family as costs of living are rising and husbands' contributions are declining because of low wages or unemployment.

Markets are taxed and serviced by local councils. In many areas, these services are poor, and there is no consultation on market organisation with market traders. From the traders' point of view, trading associations are of much greater importance.

Because sellers of one good in a market tend to operate together in one place and markets are cramped, customers must walk long distances in the market and often require portering. In Accra and Kumasi, most portering is undertaken by *kaaya yo*. *Kaaya yo* tend to be migrant women from the north who move south on a temporary basis to earn money. They may do this work for a variety of reasons: women from some northern ethnic groups tend to become *kaaya yo* workers in the period after marriage before they have rooms built for them in their husbands' houses. These women often carry small children on their backs as they work with the aim of acquiring household utensils and clothes for married life. Others become *kaaya yo* because they have fled early or forced marriages or circumcision.

Kaaya yo tend to work and sleep in groups. They rent one room among themselves to sleep and store their belongings in. But they are vulnerable to exploitation and arbitrary persecution by the authorities. In Accra, *kaaya yo* earn an average of 80 cents a day.

Nana Akwa Akyanaa II, queenmother of cloth traders, retails and wholesales cloth in Kumasi Central Market, where women dominate in almost all areas of trade. There are strong women's market associations

KOJO'S STORY

Kojo Brenya shines shoes for a living in Accra and sleeps on the street at night. At the age of 15, illiterate and unable to speak English, he made the 350-mile trip from his home village to earn enough money to pay for an apprenticeship in tailoring and a sewing machine. He was unable to get money from his parents because they divorced, leaving his mother destitute and his father refusing to assist. Working every day from 6:30am to 5pm for three years, he has been able to buy the machine and earn almost enough money to start training. He has also been able to buy some clothes for his mother.



Kojo first came to Accra with a man who helps children to migrate. This man, who started out as a shoe-shiner himself, offers transport costs and a loan to get started at about 50 per cent interest. On first arriving in Accra, Kojo slept inside a classroom and paid the school watchman a small sum each week for this 'privilege'. To save this money, he moved onto the street after three months. As a new person ignorant of Accra ways, Kojo had his money stolen. Since then, he has saved successfully through an informal bank. On Sunday, the busiest day, he can earn up to US\$3.

'GO SOMEWHERE ELSE'

If a place is not good for you
Go somewhere else
Ayé, ayé
If you don't find fortune here
Go somewhere else
In life you don't know where your luck lies
Even if you are rotting somewhere today
Some day things will improve
If you aren't happy here
Go somewhere else.

Noble Adu Kwasi, Highlife musician



headed by elected 'queenmothers'. The yam queenmother is the most senior. Nana Akwa Akyanaa II is the queenmother of the cloth traders: as well as settling disputes among them, Nana organises assistance for members in times of need, for example during illness.

Nana says that women dominate market trading in Kumasi out of necessity. Trading is something they can do to provide for the needs of their children which men do not cater for. 'Men cannot bear to sit from morning to evening and trade. Women are more forceful than men. Women must get up early and steel themselves to come to the market to get something to feed the children.'

Although some women are able to make huge profits, most are just getting by. In the cloth trade, as in many others, the main constraint is lack of access to capital. Most sellers cannot buy direct from the cloth factories, but must buy on credit from middlewomen. Inevitably this means that profits are lower for the retailers. An additional burden is inflation which makes it extremely difficult to try to save up capital to expand the business.

Clothing, festivals, and the visual arts

Abena Akyamaa, daughter of the queenmother of cloth traders in Kumasi central market, and some of her wares.



Ghanaians place great emphasis on elegant clothing, even in everyday life. This is reflected in spending patterns: large proportions of incomes are spent on dress. Most locally-made outfits fit perfectly because they are made-to-measure – by armies of well-trained seamstresses and tailors. Clients buy lengths of cloth in the market, often on extended credit. Cloth is valued according to its type and origin: bright cottons are popular; damask tie-dyed cloth and cloth printed using the wax method are valued over cottons printed in the ordinary and less long-lasting way. Even within these cloth types, a distinct pecking-order is discernible. For example, wax cloth made in Holland is generally prized above that made in England, which is in turn regarded more highly than wax cloth from Nigeria or Ghana. Prices reflect these valuations, and what you are able to afford reflects on your status. Cotton print designs are named and range from old favourites still in print to new patterns which reflect current events or express the allegiance of the wearer. Ghana's fortieth anniversary saw sales of a new 'Ghana 40 Years' design, and a pattern featuring giant mobile phones has recently become fashionable. During elections, designs are commissioned for political parties.

Clients take their cloth to the measuring session where they select the latest styles from the seamstress's album. This can become a lively discussion. Some styles are sewn in ways that make clever and economical use of the fabric, so that they can be unpicked and made into new fashions later on.

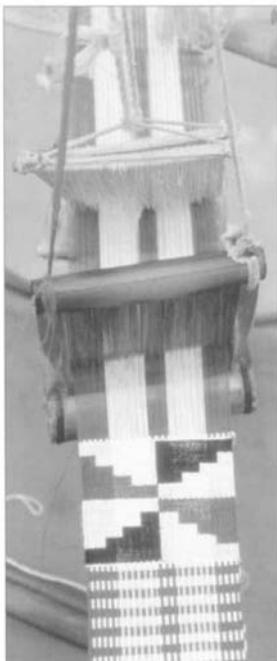
For everyday wear, most Ghanaians have to rely on second-hand clothes imported from Europe or north America, which are cheaper. In Akan, stalls selling these clothes are known as 'broni uawa' or 'dead white men'. In keeping with the Ghanaian insistence on neat and elegant dress, stallholders tend to wash, starch, and iron their wares so that they are presented to customers in pristine condition.





▲ Kente weaving is considered men's work. About 24 strips are needed to make a full-length cloth.

▼ The motif in this strip symbolises resistance against foreign military domination.



There are relatively few stores selling new off-the-peg clothes in Ghana. Locally-made ready-to-wear clothes – apart from children's school uniforms – are mostly couture. Ghana's designer fashion industry is thriving and renowned throughout West Africa, and primetime TV shows featuring the Accra catwalks make very popular viewing for men and women alike.

Occasion and traditional dress

The importance of everyday clothing is related to the central position that costume plays on occasions of religious or traditional importance. Then, dress is not only magnificent but has even more to say about the wealth and status of the wearer and the nature of the occasion.

Kente cloth is a traditional attire in Akan and Ewe communities. Woven in narrow strips about 10cm wide which are then sewn together, dyes, colours, and designs vary from region to region but tend to be very striking. There are two rival claims about the origin of the cloth. One holds that kente comes from the Ewe village of Kpetoe and that its name derives from the Ewe words *ke* and *te*, 'open' and 'closed', referring to the back and forth movement of the shuttle on the weaver's loom. The other claim is that *kente* was first made in Bonwire in the Ashanti region.

Designs are named: they include *kyere tie* ('catch a leopard'), *fodua* ('Colubus monkey's tail'), and *adwense-asa* ('my skills are exhausted') in Akan. Some designs are reserved for particular individuals, such as the Ashanti king. *Kente* cloth has gained international appeal and has been used by top international fashion designers. Through the influence of pan-Africanism, it has also been used widely in the African American community in the US – some of whom trace their roots to the area that is now Ghana – for symbolic items such as graduation gowns. In Ghana, *kente* is worn at festivals and ceremonies.

In the north of Ghana, cotton cloth is also produced from narrow strips sewn together, predominantly in blue and white. This cloth is used to make smocks. While basic smocks are common everyday wear in the north as well as in youth culture in all the cities of Ghana, huge elaborately woven smocks, worn in layers, are the costume for northern chiefs on ritual and festive occasions.

Colours are very significant in occasion dress. For Akans, all those attending a funeral wear black and red, or plain black cloth. While women have fashionable styles sewn for them in these colours, men wear unsewn cloth in a toga style. At outdoor ceremonies for new-born children, Akans wear royal blue and white cloth.

The festival scene

Festivals are integral to the life of Ghanaian communities. They are occasions for prayer, music, dance, and song, for eating, drinking, and socialising, and even for making money. Festivals are always changing – just as they seem to replay the past they accommodate the new.

There is a huge variety of ancient festivals celebrating the traditional new year according to local calendars, celebrating the harvest, ensuring prosperity, renewing associations with the ancestors and deities, honouring chiefs, or commemorating past events.

The festival of Oguaa Fetu Afahye is the most important on the Fante calendar. It takes place annually on the first Saturday of September in Cape Coast (Oguaa). Asafo companies, the military units found in most Akan societies traditionally responsible for the defence of their town, dressed in full regalia, lead processions through the streets. It is an occasion for the Asafo and the people to renew pledges of loyalty to their chief.

The Kundum festival is celebrated by the Nzima and Ahanta on the west coast of Ghana. This celebration helps to renew the community through opening a space to expose social problems experienced during the year. Participants are allowed to ridicule their superiors and insult their neighbours. These ‘victims’ must listen to lengthy complaints against them without responding.

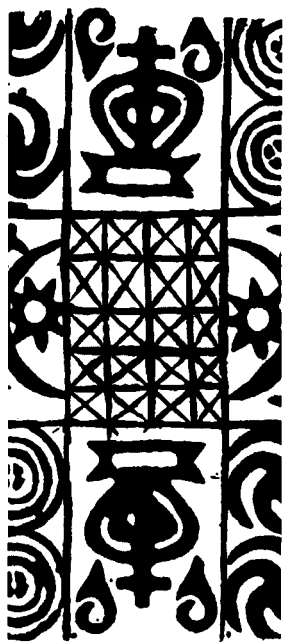
The Ga Homowo or ‘hoot at hunger’ festival in Greater Accra is held each year in August or September; it commemorates the hardships experienced during the Ga migration to the area some 600 years ago. The aim of the celebration is to mock the spectre of famine, in the hope that the humiliation will lead to a time of plenty.



▲ An entire month of preparations leads up to Afahye and culminates in bonfires, processions, speeches, and ritual ceremonies; one of the purposes is to secure a good season for Cape Coast fishermen.



► A procession during the Homowo harvest festival.



△ A piece of fabric using traditional Adinkra symbols.

There are also 'modern' festivals, some of them associated with world religions, such as Christmas or Eid-Il-Fitr. Christmas in Akan is *buronya*, or 'the whiteman has got his festival'. Others are secular and of recent creation. National Farmers' Day, for example, is held on the first Friday in December; it is a national holiday, and prize-giving, celebrations, and dance are held in every district of Ghana. The biannual Pan-African Festival of Arts and Culture, PANAFEST, is held to promote the values of pan-Africanism as well as tourism.

Art

The art scene in Ghana is dynamic and varied. Art and craft makers were producing in their localities and for wealthier patrons, such as chiefs, well before formal education was widespread. The idioms through which they worked included the adinkra symbol system, and utilitarian and ritual objects formed the dominant media. The introduction of art education in the twentieth century has led to the birth of professional fine art. Fine artists have drawn on an array of traditional and Western influences, media, and techniques to express their individual ideas. But they have also been called upon to use their work for more overt political purposes: to celebrate aspects of local culture which had been downgraded under colonialism, and to create new national symbols which would promote national allegiance and unity among ethnic groups.

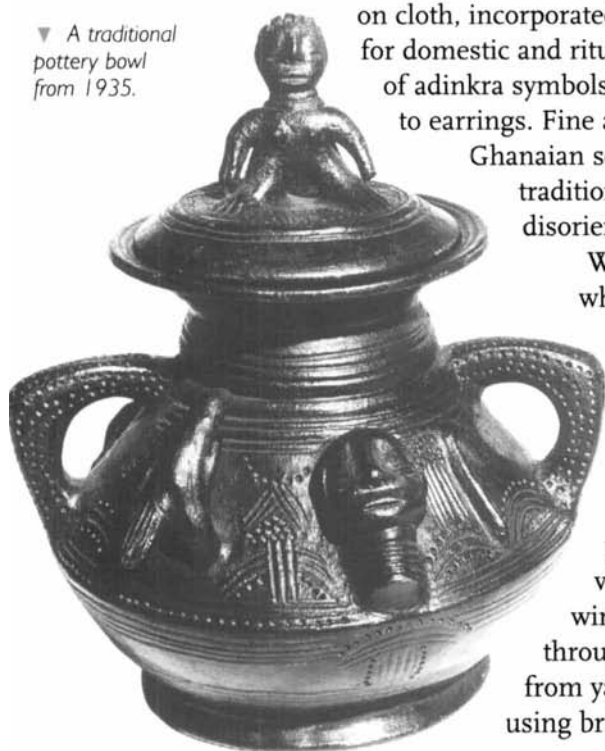
There are almost 100 adinkra symbols which refer to Akan proverbs. They continue to be cast as brass weights used to weigh gold dust, printed on cloth, incorporated in exterior house decoration, and carved on stools for domestic and ritual use. Tourism has led to new departures in the use of adinkra symbols, and they can be found on everything from t-shirts to earrings. Fine artists have also made use of them: El Anatsui, a

Ghanaian sculptor, has used a fusion of Akan and other traditional symbolism to speak of the insecurity and disorientation of life in contemporary Africa.

Wooden akuaba dolls are another ancient art form which is continued. They were originally carried by women in the south of Ghana to promote their fertility. Also carved for the tourist market, they have inspired artists such as the ceramicist Kwame Amoah who has created a series of Akuaba pots.

Street art is a very accessible and popular art form. Commercially oriented, its patrons are local proprietors of barbershops, night clubs, commercial vehicles, chop-bars (local restaurants), and beer or wine bars. Billboards advertise the commercial activity through depicting hairstyles, women pounding a fufu dish from yams, or patrons drinking palm wine from calabashes, using bright acrylic paints.

▽ A traditional pottery bowl from 1935.



Culture, tradition, and change

Traditional political organisation

Chieftaincy is a strong institution in Ghana which takes a variety of forms. In many areas of Ghana, there are female as well as male chiefs but male chiefs are in the majority and there are no female paramount chiefs. Chieftaincy adapts to and shapes politics and culture in Ghana. Although chiefs still perform traditional roles at all levels, for example in settling disputes and in social organisation, they also contribute to public policy making. Paramount chiefs sit in Regional Houses of Chiefs and are represented in the National House of Chiefs which advises the government on chieftaincy, land, and other issues. A national debate is currently taking place on the appointment of women chiefs to these chambers.

Other groups used to have an alternative system of political organisation without secular political leaders. Under colonialism, chiefs were imposed on some of these societies to assist with British rule. Today, many of these groups argue that they are given low status and little development funding because they do not have paramount chiefs and are not represented in the Houses of Chiefs. They have begun to demand paramount chiefs of their own.

10 Chief Nana Otu Pabi IV and his assistant Bismark Sakyi, wearing traditional dress, at the chief's compound in Mampong-Akwapim.



NANA KYAREWAA AMPONSEM II, ASHANTI CHIEF AND QUEENMOTHER

Nana Kyarewaa Amponsem II is an Ashanti 'queen-mother' of Kyerekrom, near Kumasi. The title *Nana* denotes a chief; it is inherited from grandmother to granddaughter through the female line. As well as being regarded as a chief, Nana is an official wife of the Ashanti king.

Because Nana is an Ashanti chief, she was installed into office on a stool. As tradition demands, her stool will be blackened on her death and placed in her sacred stool room with the stools of previous Kyerekrom queenmothers.

Nana shares her chiefly duties with her brother who is chief of the same town. 'He has a greater role in general town matters whereas my



responsibilities lie with women's issues,' Nana explains. 'My duties have changed since my enstoolment in 1968. I still organise the women of her town and settle disputes between them, but I no longer officiate at girls' nubility rites which have died out in my area, partly because of the influence of the church. However, girls continue to come to me for advice. I have seen many new problems facing young women in Kyerekrom, including the rise in the abortion rate.'

'My status has also changed,' Nana continues. 'In the past, people would serve me but now people are too busy and treat me more like an ordinary person. At the same time, I am now consulted on matters of national policy affecting women. The First Lady of Ghana is a frequent visitor at queenmothers' meetings where women's issues are discussed.'

Changing religion

Ghana is a very spiritual country. Belief in God is almost universal. Islamic, Christian, and traditional worship are all found but it is common for many people to practise an eclectic mix of religions in order to achieve pragmatic goals, and religious tolerance is the norm. In Langbensi in northern Ghana, for example, farmers join in Islamic prayers for a good harvest at the start of the season. But a prolonged drought can lead them to consult traditional rain-makers as well in an attempt to save their crops.

Celebrations of events like marriage or funerals often combine elements of world religions and local traditions. Within traditional religion, there is a belief in a supreme God but the world is considered to be populated with a complex array of lesser spirits. These spiritual cosmologies remain largely undocumented, are very dynamic, and vary between and within ethnic groups. Traditional religious practice focuses on those spirits who are regarded as close to mankind and believed to have an everyday influence on human affairs. Practice includes ancestor worship, personal shrine worship, and cults of shrines associated with nature spirits. In order to understand the actions and wishes of the spirit world, which may be manifest in misfortune or other events, diviners are consulted. Belief in occult powers such as witchcraft and evil medicine is also widespread throughout rural and urban areas.

AKAN FUNERAL RITES



▲ A recent fad in Ghana: wealthy people can have any kind of coffin made – for example, a cow might be chosen for a cattle owner, an

eagle for a chief, or even a fallopian tube for a gynaecologist. These unique coffins have also proven popular in the USA.

Akan funerals often incorporate a Christian ceremony but also follow traditional ideas about the long journey of the soul to the world of spirits (*asaman*). A funeral (*ayie*) attracts hundreds of mourners. Because of its spiritual significance, as many members as possible of the deceased person's lineage attend. Where hospital mortuaries are available, burial may not take place until several months after the person has died, to allow relatives to travel from abroad. These days, many families make videos of funerals so that those unable to attend can watch the proceedings later.

The body is usually laid in state on a Friday evening and a wake is kept. All mourners wear black and red cloth. As they arrive, they wail their grief, asking the dead person to convey personal messages to individual ancestors in the spirit world. The burial is performed on the next day. The dead person is given food and drink, and sacrifices are made to help them in the journey to the spirit world. Graveside prayers ask the dead person to prevent illness in the community, increase women's fertility, and ensure that the funeral expenses are recouped, expressing the dependence of the living on the ancestors. A church Thanksgiving service is held on Sunday.

After 40 days of mourning, relatives meet to perform further rites and to discuss inheritance matters. If the death is a chief's, this is the time when a successor is appointed. The final funeral celebrations are made one year after the death at the 'great funeral', which again attracts hundreds of participants.

Funerals are very costly, and all mourners are expected to make financial contributions before they leave. It is not unusual for relatives to make a profit in the end. Books are kept for future reference, and those in the community who do not contribute may not be helped if they have a death in the family at a later date.



One of the oldest mosques in Ghana at Larabanga.

Islam

Islam is the longest established world religion in Ghana. Various sects are represented, including Tijaani (from Senegal), Ahmadiyya (from India), and al-Suna. There are Muslims all over Ghana, but Islam is concentrated in parts of northern Ghana and in the *zongo* areas of the big cities where northerners have settled. The national Chief Imam is recognised by the state as a spokesperson for the Islamic community.

Mustapha Ali, Tamale-based watch repairer and malam, uses a sand tray for divining purposes, along with a series of Islamic texts and a wooden board on which he writes with a special ink.

In northern Ghana, many chiefs converted to Islam, and Muslims came to hold politically powerful positions within the traditional state structures. Early Muslim clerics brought writing skills and documented the early history of these states in Hausa, using Arabic script.



In recent times, Islamic organisations have also sponsored various development projects and schools. Primary schools teaching in English and Arabic are quite common in northern Ghana.

In cases of misfortune, people – whether they are Muslims or not – may resort to unorthodox Islamic practitioners, *malams*, for assistance. *Malams* use magical scripture-based and other techniques. Many people regard them as particularly potent in cases of sickness, so a person who normally practises traditional religion may resort to Islamic practice in the case of ill health. *Malams* are popular but do not pursue a high profile unlike their Christian counterparts.

Christian churches

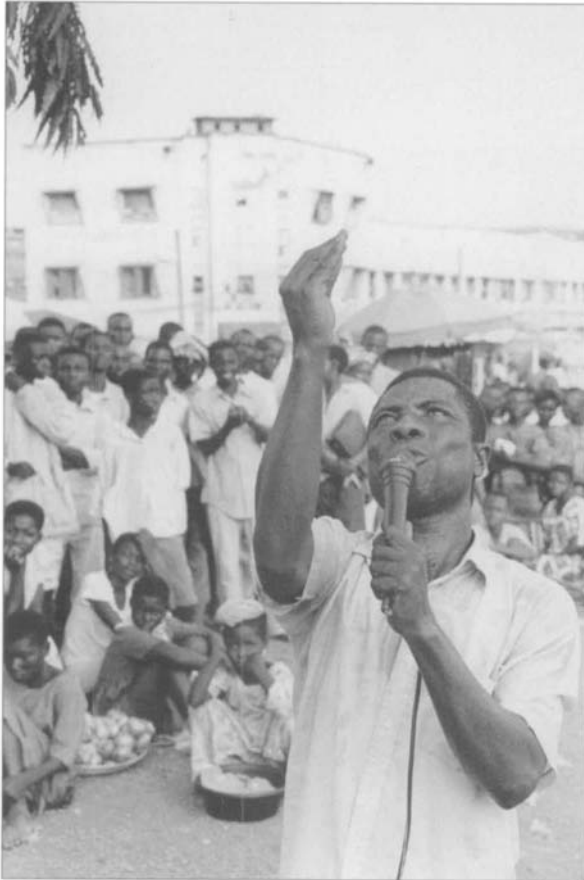
Christianity became established in the south of Ghana in the 19th century. The church has developed relatively recently in the northern region where it has a lesser presence.

There is a great variety of denominations. The Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, known as 'orthodox' churches, are long-established and operate a wide range of development projects. Acting together as members of the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Bishops' Conference respectively, the elite leadership form an important and often critical pressure group within Ghanaian politics.

In recent years, locally-founded spiritual, or miracle, churches have proliferated as people search for alternative solutions to problems in the tough economic climate. They believe that change is only possible through faith. Women form about 90 per cent of the congregations, perhaps because they bear the brunt of poverty. Hardships are often regarded as demons which must be cast out, and spiritual healing sessions are particularly popular. These churches are sometimes known as 'mushroom churches' because of the rate at which they multiply and because some of them are quite short-lived, set up by self-proclaimed prophets who wish to make a quick buck.

Other spiritual churches have become established as national organisations and also implement development projects. Rather than preaching the 'faith gospel' of other charismatic churches, they tend to emphasise the achievement of development through discipline and enterprise, like the Protestant churches. The Central Gospel Church, for example, is committed to educational development and is building the country's first private university. The close of Sunday morning service at its huge principal church sees thousands of worshippers, immaculately dressed in the latest Accra fashions, streaming out from the cool interior into the brightness and dust, fortified by sparkling gospel music and injunctions to work hard.

✓ *An evangelical gathering in Kumasi central market. The reverend and his assistants use loudspeakers to reach their huge audience.*



Changing kinship structures

All ethnic groups in Ghana share the concept of the clan or lineage, which includes all individuals who see themselves as descendants of a common ancestor. Descent can be traced through the male (patrilineal), female (matrilineal), or both lines. Clan leaders have traditionally looked after the

Wisdom is like a baobab tree, a single person's hand cannot embrace it.

Ewe proverb

∨ Skills, values, and traditions are handed down through the generations.

well-being and spiritual welfare of the group. In clans with royal status, members are eligible to compete for chiefships held by the group.

In Ghana, there is a basic difference between the tradition of the Akan and the other ethnic groups. Most groups are patrilineal. In practice, this means that you belong to your father's clan, can compete for leadership within that clan, and inherit through the male line. But according to Akan ideology, a child gets blood from its mother whereas the contribution of the father is the child's spirit, *ntoro*. Because of this, an Akan person is considered to belong to and perform duties and responsibilities within their mother's clan (*obusua*) and can compete for leadership within that group. Traditionally, this has meant that a man's goods were not inherited by his own children, since they are in his wife's clan, but by his sister's children. There is evidence that inheritance is becoming more patrilineal over time, however. As social identity is now associated with education and employment as much as with clan membership, men wish to assist with the education and careers of their own children and make use of wills under modern legislation to ensure that they are inherited by their children.



Violence and conflict in Ghana

At the everyday level, Ghana is a remarkably peaceful and crime-free society without significant ethnic or religious tensions. Accra is one of the few large cities in Africa where personal safety is assured in almost any area at any time of the day or night, for the resident and visitor alike. Ghana has often been sought as a haven by those fleeing conflict, and there is currently a large population of Liberian and Togolese refugees.

But there is some violence and conflict in Ghana, associated with ethnic differences, religion, land, politics, and gender.

The 1994–95 guinea fowl war in the Northern Region

A long history of intermittent ethnic tension and conflict in the north of the country culminated in the 1994 guinea fowl war, so-called because it was sparked off by a dispute in a market over the price of a fowl. Thousands of people were killed and at least 100,000 were made refugees as a result. Houses and crops were burned and looted, and schools, clinics, and wells destroyed. Peace-keeping and reconstruction cost the country dear.

Like many conflicts, the causes of the war were multiple. The fighting occurred between ethnic groups led by chiefs on the one hand and acephalous groups without secular leaders on the other. But at the root of the struggle was the region's underdevelopment and poverty. The acephalous groups perceived that the little development funding available was mainly targeted at the chiefly groups, and they were also convinced that their land rights were not recognised because they did not have chiefs. Apart from such feelings of resentment, there was also a religious dimension to the conflict. Many of the chiefly groups identify with, even if they do not practise, Islam, whereas Christian liberation theology has attracted many of the acephalous groups.

Peace initiatives

The Ghana armed forces are valued internationally for their contribution to both UN and West African peace-keeping initiatives and played an important role in restoring peace in the Northern Region during the guinea fowl war. Yet peace-keeping was not enough to reconcile the estranged communities and to rebuild co-operation for reconstruction and development. Government attempts at reconciliation met with little success.

A breakthrough came with the signing of a peace accord between the warring factions in 1996, which resulted from a process initiated by a consortium of local and international aid organisations working in northern Ghana. This consortium brought in non-government peace experts from Kenya, the Nairobi Peace Initiative, which worked with representatives of all the warring factions to reach an agreement. As part of this process, a new organisation, the Northern Region Youth and Development Association, was established. Made up of representatives from all the ethnic groups in the Northern Region, its aim is to solve ethnic disputes before they become violent and to achieve balanced development for the whole region. It has already diffused tensions in the region in many instances.

Other conflicts

Chieftaincy-related problems are not confined to northern Ghana. In the Ashanti kingdom alone, there are over 100 outstanding chieftaincy disputes. There have also been recent religion-based outbursts of violence, notably the conflicts between different Islamic sects in Kumasi.

Political violence relating to national government has been sporadic in Ghana. Although there have been many military coups, there has been relatively little accompanying violence. 1981 did see some violence, however, with several political murders and attacks on market women (who were allegedly overcharging consumers). In the early years of the PNDC regime, many political prisoners were taken. More recently, violence broke out during a protest against the government's planned introduction of VAT in 1995. Troops have also fired on student protests against government policy at the University of Ghana.

Violence against women

Violence against women in Ghana takes many forms. Wife-beating is a common and socially sanctioned form of violence against women in many areas, linked to women's lower social status in Ghanaian societies. Some women continue to see the practice as evidence of their partners' love.

Female genital mutilation is another form of institutionalised violence against women. It is practised for many reasons, but it is primarily a way of controlling women's sexuality and thus a form of oppression. Because of social pressures in its favour, surviving the process without flinching has been a source of pride for circumcised girls. However, social change has made it less shameful for girls not to be circumcised.

Female circumcision is practised in some northern Ghanaian societies, carried out by traditional practitioners using unsterilised instruments. Health effects range from short-term debilitation to long-term reproductive health problems and even death. Because it is officially illegal, female circumcision has gone underground. It is thought to be on the decline, but some cases still come to light if a girl has to be hospitalised.

Betrothal of girl babies, common in some rural areas, may be considered another form of gender violence. Since these girls must wed as soon as they come of age, their education is often ended prematurely.

Physical and psychological violence against women is also perpetrated in the continued incidence of witchcraft accusations, mainly aimed at older women and sometimes accompanied by violence. Here, women become the scapegoats for society's problems. Witchcraft accusations can also be interpreted as an attempt to limit women's economic successes and attached social prestige. Occasionally, men are also accused.



OUTCASTS' SETTLEMENTS

Outcasts' settlements provide a traditional 'solution' to the problem of violence against women accused of witchcraft. There are several 'witches' camps' in the rural areas of Ghana, under the protection of traditional authorities. Local beliefs state that witches can be cured; if cured, they may then be sent to these camps, largely for their own protection. If they went back to their villages, they would be subjected to violence.

In some cases, women prosper at these places. At Gambaga town, for example, the outcasts' quarters are next to a thriving market. Some of the women have been able to make money through this market and have become so successful that their husbands have come to join them from their villages.

Facing the future: into the new millennium



△ The mud-built men's rooms of a traditional compound contrast with the new central mosque being constructed in Tamale.

Where do the people of Ghana go from here?

For all the promises that structural adjustment will eventually bring a better life for all, only a few have benefited so far. With remarkable resilience, the majority of Ghanaians continue to bear the brunt of the austerity programme. Where service fees and high costs of farming inputs cannot be borne, health, education, and improved productivity must be forgone and so chances for a better life diminish. Sustained economic growth in the 1980s did little to improve the lives of the poor.

Will current reduced economic growth work any differently?

To give adjustment any chance of success, a stable and accountable government is required. Ghana's historical record since independence shows that economic stress can easily produce political instability. In turn, political instability gives rise to yet further economic woes – a vicious circle. How far do the current economic problems present a risk to political stability?

In Ghanaian politics today there is more than a glimmer of hope. The transition to a stable, democratic, and accountable political process has been embarked upon. However, democracy is still in its infancy; authoritarian elements form part of the political process. Corruption has not been laid low, and there is still much work to do in empowering and educating ordinary Ghanaians about the democratic process and civil rights. For in the end, it is only if the electorate demand good governance and respect for human rights that politicians will be obliged to provide it. The work of the National Council for Civic Education, which has outreach staff in every district, is making a start in this direction.

Another cause for hope is the new Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice. It has been given free rein to investigate delays in the legal system and other human rights issues, including prison conditions and outcasts' settlements. Some of its proposals have been acted on by the government.

△ If it is to prosper, Ghana must become less dependent on a single crop, and freedom and justice must become a reality with tangible benefits for the poor.



Democracy continues to develop, and the nation has put down yet more democratic roots: a new tier of local democracy was established in 1998 when elections were held for Unit Committees at the local community level. However, these do not yet have powers to raise revenues or allocate official budgets.

According to the new Constitution, Ghana's president may only hold office for two terms, so President Rawlings must step down in 2000. He has already named his successor, and his choice split the party for a time. All eyes are now on how the transition will take place. Yet a discussion of the details of Rawlings' succession would have seemed remarkable only ten years ago. At that time, the debate would have been about *whether* Rawlings and the PNDC would ever give up power, a familiar discussion about one-party states in the African context. The debate about *who* is to take over from Rawlings, then, is another positive sign for the future of democracy in Ghana.

There can be no development without peace at the local level. Local tensions, fights, and killings have done so much to retard progress in northern Ghana over the years, but there are more glimmers of hope for

peace following the bloody conflict of 1994–95. Since they are local, local consensus and action is needed to end these conflicts. Following the war, community organisations have been set up for peace-building and development for the whole region, and these new forms of community action have had great success in quelling conflicts. Something good has come out of something bad. The foundation has been laid for further development in the Northern Region.

To address the local needs of ordinary Ghanaians, local planning is required, so the drive towards decentralisation in government departments is another positive sign. But at the moment it is far from achieving its goal: in all but a few cases, the influence of central government policy on the local situation remains strong. And huge development disparities continue, between the north and south, and between the urban and rural areas. There is a long way to go. Progress in setting up development projects which are planned in co-operation with local people is still largely confined to the non-government sector.

With growing peace, stability, democracy, and accountability, Ghana faces the future with hope. But the greatest fight is yet to be won: the everyday struggle against grinding poverty.

∇ Ensuring that development reaches poorer areas will be one of the main challenges for the new government elected in 2000. Nima's inadequate sewerage system overflowed in 1995, leading to loss of life and destruction of property.

