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EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, GHANA

GHANA

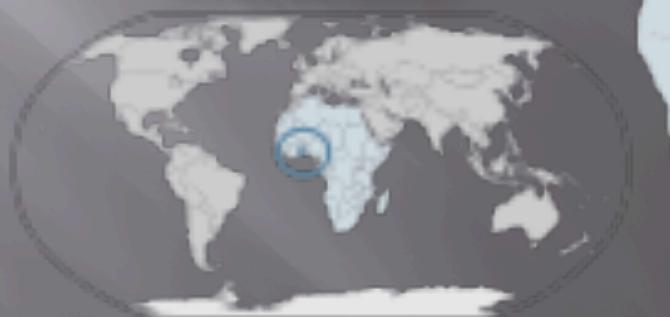
-A BRIEF HISTORY

- ❑ THE FIRST PLACE THAT EUROPEANS HAD CONTACT WITH IN SUBSAHARAN AFRICA IS ELMINA IN PRESENT DAY GHANA IN **1471**.
- ❑ AN EDIFICE THAT REMINDS US OF THAT HISTORY IS THE ELMINA CASTLE BUILT BY THE PORTUGUESE IN **1482**.

PORTUGAL

ELMINA
1471

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ELMINA CASTLE BUILT 1482



WHO OCCUPIED GHANA AT TIME OF FIRST EUROPEAN CONTACT

- ❑ THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN ETHNIC DEMOGRAPHY SINCE THAT TIME- THERE WERE AND ARE OVER 50 ETHNIC GROUPS DEPENDING ON THE CLASSIFICATION.

- ❑ ANCIENT AKAN KINGDOMS WERE PREDOMINANTATE
 - THE MOST POWERFUL BEING THE ASHANTI KINGDOM



THE FIRST DAY OF THE YAM CUSTOM.

ECONOMY OF PRECOLONIAL GHANA

- ❑ GOLD – EARNED THE NAME GOLD COAST
- ❑ SPICES
- ❑ IVORY
- ❑ SLAVES

ECONOMY OF PRECOLONIAL GHANA

TRADING PARTNERS

- ENGLISH
- PORTUGESE
- DANES
- DUTCH
- SWEDES

COLONIZATION AND INDEPENDENCE



POST INDEPENDENCE

- DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE WAS INTRODUCED (1957)
- COUP D'ÉTAT AFTER COUP D'ÉTAT
- 1966- 1992 WAS DOMINATED BY MILITARY RULE WITH JUST FIVE YEARS OF CIVILIAN RULE
- 1992- TILL PRESENT – DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE WITH A FOUR YEAR TERM OF OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT

PRESENT ECONOMY

WELL ENDOWED WITH NATURAL RESOURCES

- GOLD
- COCOA second largest producer of cocoa in the world
- TIMBER
- DIAMOND
- BAUXITE
- MANGANESE
- ELECTRICITY
- OIL

- TOURISM
- REMITTANCES FROM GHANAIANS LIVING ABROAD

THE POPULATION IS CURRENTLY ABOUT 25 MILLION

GHANA



Elmina

Yamoransa

GHANA- CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION STYLES

- ❑ Official language, English partly because of the country's colonial association with Great Britain and partly because **there are so many ethnic languages** that no single one could effectively serve as the official language. English is used in school, business, and government.
- ❑ Learned in school
- ❑ It is common for Ghanaians to use proverbs instead of speaking directly- it is considered as enlightenment and a sign of wisdom.

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION STYLES (including non-verbal communication)

Greetings:

- Greetings are important in Ghanaian society. It is a sign of respect and concern for another person. To fail to greet is considered an insult. Time is always made for greeting and it is not seen as an interference or waste of time.
- Regardless of the gestures or words used in greeting, the act of greeting another person is extremely important. To ignore a greeting or to fail to greet someone is a serious insult to most Ghanaians.

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION STYLES

(including non-verbal communication)

Gesture:

- To beckon someone, you would raise the palm of your hand toward them, and then fold the fingers down in a scratching motion. To people from the USA, this may be seen as a wave, but to Ghanaians, this means “come here”.

- A hissing sound is used to get someone's attention. **This should only be used in certain situations, otherwise it may be considered rude.** For example, if you are eating at a restaurant and you want to get the server's attention, you may hiss at them. Someone also may hiss at you on the street to get your attention, such as a street vendor who wants to sell you something.
- The kissing sound is often used to mean "**watch out**". For example, if you are walking on a crowded sidewalk and a bicyclist is approaching from behind and there is not much room, you may be warned by the biker to "watch out" by a kissing sound.

RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

- ❑ Ghanaians are very spiritual and religion plays an important part in their lives. They are also very tolerant of religions and religious practices that are different from their own.

There is very little religious discrimination.

The missionary influence in Ghana is huge – every conceivable church (both mainstream and evangelical) is represented by their schools, clinics, and hospitals, as well as their usual religious activities. The focus on moral character which religion offers contributes to the country's stability.

TRADITIONAL WORSHIPERS

- Believe in a Supreme Being who has vested power into both animate and inanimate objects
- Out of respect for the Supreme Being, who cannot be approached directly, the population of Ghanaians who believe in traditional religion, often communicate with him through intermediaries. Intermediaries can include animate or inanimate objects, as well as ancestor spirits. It is especially common for people to seek guidance through their ancestors.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES IN GHANA

- ❑ Christians look forward to Easter, Christmas, and Boxing Day (the day after Christmas-when gifts are given).
- ❑ Muslim look forward to the three-day feast called *Eid-al-Fitr* at the end of Ramadan and *Eid-al-Adha*, the Feast of the Sacrifice. (Exact dates of Muslim holidays are based on the lunar calendar and therefore are not the same every year.)

ALL THESE SIGNIFICANT CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM EVENTS ARE NATIONAL HOLIDAYS!!

- CHRISTIANS 60%
- MUSLIMS 20%
- TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS 18%
- OTHER 2%

- **Comments from American AFS students hosted in Ghana:**
- *“Almost everyone is religious and at times his or her religious zeal became overwhelming.”*
- *“....if you're with a Christian family, expect to spend a lot of time at Church on Sunday (and sometimes Wednesday too).”*
- *“Religion is a big part of Ghanaian life, so be prepared to find it everywhere.”*
- *“They are extremely religious. They pray aloud a lot and sing and dance in church.””*
- *“Religion also plays a huge part in Ghanaian life. It is not just another early Sunday morning, but rather an everyday thing.””*

SYMBOLISM/COLOR CHOICES

- Color choice for clothing -
 - White for Celebration and Child birth (motherhood)
 - Black, Red and Dark Brown for Funerals
 - Other colors fit in for other occasions.
- Symbols Representing
 - Clans
 - Authority/Royalty
 - Birth Right and Status
 - Events
 - Association etc

PUNCTUALITY & TIME

- ❑ Ghanaians are generally aware that punctuality and timeliness is an issue. Sometimes they even poke fun at themselves or other fellow Ghanaians in regards to the lack of awareness of time.
- ❑ Ghanaians are known to be late to meetings, up to 2 or more hours late is common. People usually just wait.

- The country has started a television advertising campaign to encourage timeliness, but as in many developing countries, many people don't have televisions.
- The issue of timeliness doesn't necessarily improve in business situations, but in the larger cities, you will usually see much more punctuality and awareness of time versus smaller towns and villages.
- The major bus lines, however, are generally on time.

- ▣ To help understand this issue of tardiness it helps to know some reasons why people are late. Living without the means of modern conveniences (dishwashers, washer and driers, piped water, cars, etc) makes it much more difficult to plan one's day. For example, one may get up and wash the family's clothes by hand before doing anything else. Or the meeting may be far away and since most Ghanaians don't have vehicles, they have to rely on public transportation to get places and public transportation is very unreliable.

PUNCTUALITY & TIME

- **Comment from USA AFS student hosted in Ghana** “Ghanaians are very relaxed about time. Punctuality is non-existent. We would show up to social gatherings two hours later than planned and be the first ones there.”
- Ghanaians generally take life at a relaxed pace, viewing time as a series of events rather than a matter of hours or minutes.
- For Ghanaians people are considered to be more important than schedules.
- In Ghana time is always made for greeting and it is not seen as an interference or waste of time.

“Impatience cannot ignite a fire” (Ghanaian proverb)

PERSONAL SPACE AND TOUCHING

- In general, the appropriate amount of personal space when speaking is about an arm's length.
- It is common see men standing or walking together holding hands. This is a sign of friendship. Not too often do you see women or men and women doing the same.
- If you are seen walking with someone of the same gender, you may be considered to be their good friend.
- If a man is seen walking with a woman on a regular basis, he will most likely be considered to be dating that woman.
- It is generally inappropriate for men and women to show too much physical affection in public. The same goes for good friends and family members of different genders.
- Between friends and family members of the same gender, there is a bit more touching during conversations.
- While Ghanaians are very friendly, too much outward physical expression may be considered embarrassing, inappropriate, and/or disrespectful.

USE OF THE CORRECT HAND:

- Giving and receiving items is done only with the **right hand**. If one must use the left hand, an apology must be rendered before the left hand is used. The left hand is considered as dirty and its use is considered disrespectful.
- Using your right hand to shake, touch, eat food with, or handle money (or anything else) is a must. Using the left hand for these things is considered **rude** and dirty.
- Holding the hand in a fist with the thumb to the sky, then pressing the thumb to the forefinger is an extremely rude gesture.
- Pointing at people tends to be considered rude. Instead, many people purse their lips in the direction of the person to which they are referring.

EYE CONTACT

- ❑ Direct eye contact is generally acceptable between members of the same age, gender, and social class. However, overly direct eye contact may be viewed as rude and possibly a threat.
- ❑ When speaking with an elder or superior, it is best to avoid direct eye contact.
- ❑ Children don't generally look elders in the eye, and very few people are allowed to (or are expected to) look a village chief or respected elder in the eye when speaking to them.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- Life expectancy: 56 (male); 57 (female).
- Infant mortality rate: 59 per 1,000 births
- Because of a high rate of infant mortality, a child is not considered a member of society until he or she is 8 days old. It is common for the father to name the baby.
- Herbal medicine is an integral option for health care
- It is not unusual for patients to go to prayer camps to be healed, especially if the Western-style medical practitioner does not seem to be able to provide remedy
- There are not enough medical doctors in Ghana to treat everyone (about 1:16,000 people).

FAT AS A COMPLIMENT

- To say someone has put on weight could be generally seen as a compliment.

Gender Issues

- ❑ In the larger cities such at Accra, Takoradi/ Seendi, and Kumasi, women's roles are becoming more like their counterparts in the Western world. Many own businesses, speak up in public, etc.
- ❑ Traditionally, a woman's role has been seen as submissive towards men. They are expected to stay home with the children, gather firewood, fetch water, cook dinner and clean. The traditional role is seen more in the rural areas.
- ❑ Roles tend to be changing and it is becoming more accepted everywhere for women to take on stronger roles.

- Westerners or foreigners in general can act as themselves and are not usually bound by the expectations the locals place on themselves.
- Women should avoid wearing clothes that are too revealing or tight fitting. Wearing skimpy clothing will non-verbally tell men that you may be promiscuous and will most likely solicit unwanted attention.

PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

- Racial diversity is minimal in Ghana. More than ninety-nine (99.8) percent of the people in Ghana are Black African. It is common for Ghanaian children to chant “*obroni*”, “*obroni*” when they see a white person.
- This refers to a White Person or a Westerner. It does not initially mean ones skin color but the likelihood that the one in referral is from a very far place. It also connotes Western culture. African Americans may be referred to as ‘obroni’ by the fact of their accent or the way they carry themselves would be different from the locals.

DRESS CODES- BUSINESS AND CASUAL

- Ghanaians generally like to dress well. They are proud people and enjoy looking good.
- **For Men-** The most acceptable clothing options are nice pants, a collared shirt, an African print shirt or robe. In some situations a tie may be needed. Some foreigners are seen wearing shorts, but you don't see many locals wearing them. Shorts are generally viewed as something school children sport. It is seen more as casual wear.
- **For Women-** Conservative dresses, skirts, robes or pants and blouses are acceptable. Avoid clothes that are too revealing or tight fitting. Short skirts and thin strapped tops should be avoided.

Titles and Business Cards

- It is very common to address people by “Sir” or “Madame” if you do or do not know them. If you do know the person, it’s also accepted to call them Mister (plus their first or last name) or Madame (plus first or last name). If they are a peer you can usually call them by first name, but if they are older, then using Mister or Madame plus their name is respectful.
- Calling someone by the title of their profession is also acceptable. For example, the driver of a bus can be called “driver”.
- There is no set protocol with the giving and receiving of business cards, but it is always advisable to give and receive cards with the **right** hand.

Negotiations

- Decisions tend to come from the top down and will most likely take awhile to be reached. Expect to bargain for just about everything. Bargaining is a way of life, a way of interaction, and very expected. It is best to “exercise patience” when trying to buy things because negotiating turns in to a necessary part of almost all transactions, especially those in the market.

LAW AND ORDER

- The legal drinking age is 18 and while drinking and smoking certainly occur, the behavior is not widely accepted and being drunk in public will most likely be frowned upon.
- Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

- ▣ **Adult literacy rate in Ghana:** 63% (male); 46% (female)

THANK YOU

