

Ethiopia

Facts and Statistics

Location: Eastern Africa, west of Somalia

Capital: Addis Ababa

Climate: tropical monsoon with wide topographic-induced variation

Population: 82,544,840 (July 2008 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Oromo 32.1%, Amara 30.1%, Tigraway 6.2%, Somalie 5.9%, Guragie 4.3%, Sidama 3.5%, Welaita 2.4%, other 15.4% (1994 census) br/> **Religions:** Christian 60.8% (Orthodox 50.6%, Protestant 10.2%), Muslim 32.8%, traditional 4.6%, other 1.8% (1994 census)

Government: federal republic

Language in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has many indigenous languages (84 according to the Ethnologue, 77 according to the 1994 census), most of them Afro-Asiatic (Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic), plus some that are Nilo-Saharan.

English is the most widely spoken foreign language and is the medium of instruction in secondary schools and universities. Amharic was the language of primary school instruction, but has been replaced in many areas by local languages such as Oromifa and Tigrinya.

After the fall of the Derg regime in 1991, the new constitution of the Federal Demeocratic Republic of Ethiopia granted all ethnic groups the right to develop their languages and to establish mother tongue primary education systems. This is a marked change to the language policies of previous governments in Ethiopia.

Society and Culture

The People

Ethiopia is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country. Religion is a major influence in Ethiopian life. Nearly half the population belongs to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church but there is a also large Muslim population. Others adhere to an ancient form of Judaism.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is proud of its origins. The country embraced Christianity in the 4th century, long before Europe. The feast of the Epiphany ("Timkat") is the largest festival of the year. The Orthodox Church dominates the political, cultural, and social life of the population. It was the official religion of the imperial court and of the establishment until Haile Selassie was deposed in 1974.

Muslims are important in the business community. They tend to live in the eastern, southern, and western lowlands, although there are considerable numbers in Addis Ababa.

The Family

The extended family remains the focus of the social system. It includes relatives on both sides of the family as well as close friends. Quite often the husband's parents will live with the nuclear family when they get older and can no longer care for themselves. When people marry, they join their families, thus ensuring that there will always be a group to turn to in times of need.

Individuals achieve recognition or social standing through their extended family. A family's honor is influenced by the actions of its members. Family needs are put before all other obligations, including business.

Ghana

Facts and Statistics

Location: Western Africa, bordering the Gulf of Guinea, between Cote d'Ivoire and Togo

Capital: Accra

Climate: tropical along coast, becoming cooler inland at higher elevations; tropical in Amazonian jungle lowlands

Population: 23,382,848 (July 2008 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Akan 45.3%, Mole-Dagbon 15.2%, Ewe 11.7%, Ga-Dangme 7.3%, Guan 4%, Gurma 3.6%, Grusi 2.6%, Mande-Busanga 1%, other tribes 1.4%, other 7.8% (2000 census)

Religions: Christian 68.8% (Pentecostal/Charismatic 24.1%, Protestant 18.6%, Catholic 15.1%, other 11%), Muslim 15.9%, traditional 8.5%, other 0.7%, none 6.1% (2000 census)

Government: constitutional democracy

Language in Ghana

Different sources give different figures for the number of languages of Ghana. This is because of different classifications of varieties as either languages or dialects.

As with many ex-colonies in Africa, the official language of Ghana is the colonial language, English. Nine languages have the status of government-sponsored languages: Akan, Dagaare/Wale, Dagbane, Dangme, Ewe, Ga, Gonja, Kasem, Nzema. However, two dialects of Akan, Twi and Fante, although not government-sponsored, are also widely-spoken in Ghana.

Hausa is widely used as a lingua franca by Muslims in Ghana.

Society and Culture

The People

There are over 100 ethnic groups living in Ghana. The largest are Akan, Moshi-Dagbani, Ewe, and Ga. The Ashanti tribe of the Akan are the largest tribe and one of the few societies in West Africa where lineage is traced through the mother and maternal ancestors. Once famous for the luxury and wealth of their rulers, they are now more well known for their craftwork such as hand-carved stools, fertility dolls, and 'kente' cloth. Kente cloth is made cotton and is woven in bright, narrow strips with complex patterns.

The Family

Family is a very strong bond in Ghana and is the primary source of identity, loyalty and responsibility. Family obligations take precedence over pretty much everything else in life. Individuals achieve recognition and social standing through their extended family.

An interesting cultural variation among the Akan, or Ashanti and Fanti people, is that affiliation within the clan is through women. Mothers have a higher status as in their point of view people get their blood from mothers.

It is important for Ghanaians to maintain dignity, honour, and a good reputation. The entire family shares any loss of honour, which makes the culture a collective one. In order to protect this sense of face there is a need to maintain a sense of harmony; people will act with decorum at all times to ensure they do not cause anyone embarrassment.

Hierarchy

Ghanaian society is hierarchical. People are respected because of their age, experience, wealth and/or position. Older people are viewed as wise and are granted respect. In a group one can always see

preferential treatment for the eldest member present. With respect comes responsibility and people expect the most senior person to make decisions that are in the best interest of the group