

POLITICAL HISTORY

Pre-colonial

With the arrival of the Europeans from the latter part of the fifteenth century they began to exert some form of influence (minimal at first) particularly along the coast in areas where they had their forts and castles. The Bond of 1844 between some Fante chiefs and the British which though did not cede political authority to the British was used to interfere in the administration of these coastal areas.

The Europeans have also been involved in battles with the people (either on the side of one ethnic group against the other or singly against an ethnic group) in their attempts to exert some influence over the people. These were largely to protect their economic interests. In 1826 the British aided the Ga and their southern neighbors against the Asante in the Battle of Akantamansu which saw the defeat of the Asante. They were not always successful in these wars. The British lost the battle of Nsamankow (1826) against the Asante in which the leader of the British troops, Sir Charles McCarthy was killed.

The people around the European forts came to identify themselves with these European nations and saw themselves as such; for example Dutch Accra, British Accra and Danish Accra. The Europeans exercised influence over these communities which fought amongst themselves on the sides of these European nations anytime they were involved in wars. For example in 1776 when the Dutch and Danes were fighting over land in the Dangme area the Ga i.e. Ga Mashie and Osu fought against each other on the sides of the European powers and only stopped on the order of their oracle, Lakpan.

It is important to note that the indigenous people did at some points resist this European dominance and at some time took over the European establishments. Asameni an Akwamu trader took over the Christiansborg Castle in 1693 and controlled it for about a year before giving it back to the Danish after he was paid 50 marks of gold. The keys to the fort are among Akwamu chieftaincy regalia.

Colonial

Official British position on administration on the Gold Coast changed from the 1870s. Before 1870 official British policy was against colonizing the country. However this had changed by 1874 primarily because of the industrial revolution which necessitated the acquisition of new territories for raw materials for the industries and as markets for the finished products. In 1874, the British formally declared the southern part a British colony. In 1901, Asante and Northern territories were made British protectorates after the Asante were defeated in the Yaa Asantewaa War (1900-1901) led in battle by the legendary female warrior Yaa Asantewaa, the queenmother of Ejisu.

Colonial rule saw the formal administration of the Gold Coast by the British. The system of indirect rule was introduced. This was basically the system of administration whereby the traditional rulers of the people were allowed to rule their people under the direction and control of the British officials. In this system, chiefs played a pivotal role in the British administration of the colony.

Under this system, the chieftaincy institution was transformed for the political convenience of the colonial authorities without regard to the norms and usages of the people. Chiefs were created in areas where they did not exist e.g. among the Frafra; others like the Asantehene Prempeh I were deposed and sent into exile; whilst some were elevated and imbued with powers which traditionally they did not possess. Furthermore, through a series of legislative ordinances – Native Jurisdiction Ordinance (1883),

Chief's Ordinance (1904), Native Administration Ordinance (1927, and Native Administration Treasuries Ordinance (1939) – the colonial authorities usurped the powers of the chiefs. The colonial authority became the final arbiter on matters of chieftaincy and the chiefs' roles were defined by these various legislations. In this regard, not only did the basis of a chief's authority shift from the indigenous people whom he served to the colonial authorities who ironically did not fall within the ambit of the chief's customary jurisdiction. The chief now served not his peoples' interests but that of the colonial authorities.

In effect, contrary to European accounts that Ghanaians were engaged in fratricidal conflicts and under tyrannical rule, colonial rule rather created autocrats out of traditional leaders as the colonial authorities gave them powers which traditionally they did not possess.

In assessing the impact of colonial rule on the country it is important to do this against the background of the proclaimed reasons for colonizing the nation which was the "civilizing mission" of the heathen and primitive peoples. Any critical evaluation of colonial rule would show that this was nothing but as one French colonial secretary stated primarily an enterprise seeking the individual interests of the Europeans. Though some infrastructural developments took place i.e. roads, harbor, schools etc. these were mainly geared towards serving the interests of the colonialists. The roads were linked to the sources of the raw materials and the harbors whilst education focused primarily on literacy and numeracy. One wonders if they were genuinely interested in the development of the country why so little investment in education and the development of a solid industrial base?

Responses to colonial rule came from all segments of society. Chiefs resisted the usurpation of their power. One such vocal resistance against this arbitrary foreign domination was that of King Aggrey of Cape Coast. His protestations to the colonial governor against the usurpation of his traditional authority eventually resulted in his deportation to Sierra Leone.

Apart from the traditional leaders and the educated elite, ordinary people including farmers also played a role in the nationalist struggle. The cocoa hold-ups of 1930s led by Tetteh Ansa meant to break the monopoly of the Great Combines, Compagnie Francaise de l'Afrique Occidentale (CFAO), Societe Commercial de l'Ouest Africain (SCOA) and Unilever was one such action of defiance against some colonial policies.

Earlier nationalist agitations also include the formation of the Fante Confederation in 1868 to the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (ARPS) in 1897 which is described as the most important mass protest movement in the land. It challenged obnoxious government policies such as the Lands Act of 1897, which it succeeded in preventing from being passed into law.

These agitations intensified after World War II. Post-World War II saw the formation of political parties like the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) which not only demanded self-determination but total independence, the former independence as soon as possible and the latter independence now.

This radical change in posture could be attributed to their past experiences i.e. the realization that colonial rule was meant to serve the interests of the colonialists and the changed world situation among which were the Pan-African movements and congresses and their impact on the new generation such as

Kwame Nkrumah. World War II experiences also exposed them particularly the war veterans to the weaknesses of the Europeans and made them recognize their own strength.

It is worth noting the role of the pan-African ideals being propounded by Marcus Garvey, W.E.B Du Bois and others on the nationalist leaders such as Casely Hayford after World War I. Casely Hayford's National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), the West African Students' Union (WASU) which were very instrumental in the nationalist struggle had pan-African ideals. The latter particularly served as a training ground for the younger generation of the nationalist leaders who returned home highly sensitized and politicized.

In 1947, the UGCC was formed by J.B. Danquah, Paa Grant and others. Kwame Nkrumah was invited to be its General Secretary in 1948. He broke away and together with K.A. Gbedemah and Kojo Botsio formed the CPP in 1949. Whilst he advocated for "self-government now", the UGCC called for "self-government in the shortest possible time".

February 28, 1948 marked a watershed in the history of the country and the high mark of the nationalist struggle leading eventually to the granting of independence on March 6, 1957. This was the shooting and killing of three war veterans, Sergeant Adjetey, Lance Corporal Attipoe and Private Odattey-Lampety who were among a group of veterans on a march to the castle to present a petition containing their grievances to the governor. This sparked off riots and looting throughout the country. Subsequent investigations and recommendations led to the 1951 Constitution and elections in 1951 following which Nkrumah was made Leader of Government Business.

Elections were held in 1954 which was won by the CPP. This basically granted internal self-government. Independence was however delayed till 1957 by the Togoland question and the formation of the National Liberation Movement. These raised the issues of whether trans-Volta Togoland was to join the Gold Coast and whether Ghana should become a federal or unitary state at independence. These were resolved by the 1956 elections which were won by the CPP and the 1956 plebiscite in which the British Togoland decided to join the independent state. On March 6, 1957 the Gold Coast became the first nation south of the Sahara to regain its independence. Declaring the independence of Ghana Nkrumah said "Ghana our beloved country is free forever! ... The independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent", an indication of the impact of the pan-African movement on the nationalists.

Post-colonial

Post-independence political history of Ghana has been characterized by democratic elections, coups and counter coups. Ghana since independence has had five civilian administrations and four military regimes.

Nkrumah's CPP government was overthrown in a military-cum-police junta, the National Liberation Council in 1966. Reasons assigned for the coup included human rights abuses economic mismanagement and neglect of the army. This regime was headed by Gen. J.A Ankrah and later Gen. A. A Afrifa. It handed power to an elected civilian government in 1969. The Progress Party (PP) government of Kofi Abrefa Busia stayed in power for barely three years when it was overthrown in another military coup led by Col. Kutu Acheampong. The National Redemption Council (NRC) metamorphosed into

Supreme Military Council I and later Supreme Military Council II after Acheampong was overthrown in a palace coup led by Lt. Gen. Akuffo.

The SMC II regime was also overthrown in another coup in 1979 which brought into power the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) led by Ft. Lt. J.J. Rawlings. It also handed power to a civilian administration, the People's National Party (PNP) in 1971. However, in 1981 Ft. Lt. Rawlings staged another coup and overthrew the civilian government and ushered in the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). This regime under pressure from both internal and external sources organized democratic elections in 1992 that brought in the Fourth Republic. The National Democratic Congress led by Rawlings won the elections and the 1996 elections. In 2000 it lost to the major opposition party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) led by J.A. Kufuor who won another term in 2004.

The country is set for another election in 2008 which promises to be a keen one with the revival of Kwame Nkrumah's CPP as a third force.

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Pre-colonial

The indigenous economy was based on agriculture, trade and industry. The agricultural activities involved in were the cultivation of food crops, animal rearing and fishing depending on the geographical location and its physical endowments. As earlier indicated, archaeological excavations in several parts of the country show the domestication of wild plants and animals. Crops such as cowpeas, animals like goats and sheep were grown and reared respectively.

There was a booming trade between the peoples of the Gold Coast and their neighbors. There was intra-state, inter-state and long distance trade. The people traded in cola, cloth, salt, gold and other commodities.

A vibrant industry also existed. These included gold mining, salt mining, wood carving, pottery, cloth weaving and iron making. Ornamented vessels and implements for war and agriculture were manufactured in these industries.

The arrival of the Europeans in 1471 shifted trade to the coast. Goods traded in included gold, cloth, beads and metalware.

The fifteenth century saw the introduction of the trans-Atlantic slave trade following the "discovery" of the Americas and need for labor to cultivate the lands and work in the mines. The Gold Coast played a major role in the trade. Its importance in the trade is seen in the very large number of the European forts and castles that dot her coastline. Out of the forty-six forts built along the west coast of Africa, thirty-two are Ghana. Cape Coast Castle and Elmina Castles are listed as UNESCO heritage sites, and the Christiansborg (Osu) Castle is the seat of government.

It must be noted there already existed a market for slaves on the Gold Coast who were exchanged for other products. The change in certain fundamental social, economic and political changes in the hinterland, for instance the need for labor to clear the forests for the expanding population brought about the need for slaves. They were also used as laborers in the gold mines and as carriers in the internal and external trade.

The Gold Coast was a latecomer in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and actually actively got involved at the beginning of the eighteenth century and at the peak of the trade supplied about ten percent of the total number of slaves transported across the Atlantic.

Not only was the slave not chattel but there was social and economic mobility with slaves rising to the ultimate leadership positions as chiefs, priests etc. For example Kodjo, a slave of the English company in the 18th century rose to become chief of Jamestown comprising Sempe, Akanmadze and Alata.

Colonial

The abolition of the slave trade in 1833 by the British saw attempts to introduce the “legitimate” i.e. trade in agricultural products mainly palm and latter cocoa and minerals particularly gold under colonial rule. In 1874 gold mines were opened in Wassa and Asante and between 1946-1950 gold exports rose from 6 million pounds to 9 million pounds.

In 1878 Tetteh Quarshie brought cocoa from Fernando Po, a crop for which until recently Ghana became the world’s leading exporter. Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB) was founded in 1947 to market the product. In 1951 revenue from cocoa was 60 million pounds.

It is worth noting that economic ventures undertaken under the colonial authorities were mainly export-oriented to feed industries in Europe. Industrialization was ignored as the country relied on imported products from Europe.

Post-colonial

Post-independence governments have undertaken various policies – socialist oriented under Nkrumah and the early PNDC government; capitalist under the PP government; Western i.e. IMF and World Bank prescribed policies such as PAMSCAD.

Economic development have been targeted at rapid economic growth and redirecting the economy form externally exploited patterns of growth either through state-led or private enterprise depending on the ideological orientation of the government in power.

These have not been very successful in lifting the country from the economic doldrums. In some cases they have only worsened the plight of the people which have been capitalized upon by military adventurists to seize power for example the overthrow of the PP government following the devaluation of the currency and retrenchment exercises.

SOCIAL HISTORY

A. HEALTH

Pre-colonial

In the field of medicine, records indicate the existence indigenous pharmacopoeiastraditional herbalists effectively catered for health needs of their people. A medical practitioner in Bowdich’s entourage in an interview with Osei Tutu’s *ahenkwa* pointed how an unknown native herbalist catered for 15,000 Kumasi citizens and some 750,000 members of metropolitan Asante.

The world view of the Ghanaian does not assign only physical causes to ailments but also spiritual causes. As such apart from the use of herbs, the people also consult traditional priests for their health needs.

Colonial

The arrival of the Europeans saw the introduction of “orthodox” medicines and the construction of hospitals like Korle Bu Teaching Hospital which now mostly cater for the health needs of the people.

Post-colonial

There are presently attempts to “modernize” traditional medicines. KNUST now has a course in traditional medicines whilst the Centre for Research into Plant Medicine at Mampong-Akwapim is also into research in plant medicines.

People still resort to the use of herbs and priests. Some also consult *mallams* and pastors for their health needs.

B. EDUCATION

Pre-colonial

Before the arrival of the Europeans education was mostly informal where information was passed on from father to son, mother to daughter etc. A somewhat formal education took place during initiation rites e.g. chieftaincy and rites of passage e.g. dipo. Court historians were also taught the history of the village and feats of the leaders which they recounted on important occasions.

Another form of education i.e. skills acquisition was through apprenticeship where children were handed over to masters in their chosen professions where they understudied the master for a period.

Information about the people was also embedded in songs, dances, proverbs, the arts and crafts such as chieftaincy regalia like staffs and umbrella tops.

Colonial

The Europeans brought with them schools. These were established in the forts and castles. However, it was largely the churches that established most of the schools. These primarily focused on literacy and numeracy without any attempt to develop the analytical skills of the people.

In 1948 following pressure from the nationalists the Gold Coast University College (University of Ghana; which celebrates its sixtieth anniversary this year) was established.

Post-colonial

Post-independence governments have instituted reforms to address the precarious manpower needs of the country. The CPP government expanded these infrastructures and also introduced fee free education in some areas.

The curriculum has also been revised over the years. In 1986 the PNDC government introduced the three-year Junior Secondary School (JSS) and three-year Senior Secondary School (SSS). The NPP

government has just replaced it with the three-year Junior High School (JHS) and four-year Senior High School (SHS).

C. RELIGION

Pre-colonial

Ghanaians were traditionalist in their religious orientation. They were extremely religious with religious beliefs and sanctions constituting the very foundation of the society. They acknowledged various deities besides the Supreme God, *Mawu*, *Nyame*, *Nyongmo*, the creator of the mankind and the universe. These deities inhabit natural objects such as mountains, trees, rivers etc. serve as mediators between *Mawu* and mankind.

Islam too has been in Ghana since the fifteenth century when some Muslims of Malian origin settled at Begho in the present day Brong Ahafo region. From there it was introduced into the Northern parts of the country, first to Gonjaland in 1585, its first convert being Mawura, then to Dagbon under Naa Zagini by Mohammed Al-Kashinawi from Hausaland. Muslims who formed the educated class in Asante in the eighteenth and nineteenth century served in various positions particularly as scribes, traders and medicinemen to several Asantehene notably Nana Osei Kwame and Nana Kwaku Dua. This group popularly referred to as Asantekramo still play an important role in the Asantehene's palace.

Colonial

Christianity really took root during the colonial period through the activities of the various missionary societies namely the Moravian, Wesleyan and Basel missionaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Notable among these were Philip Kwaku, Andreas Riis, Joseph Dunwell and Thomas Birch Freeman.

The mission of the European missionaries to Ghana and Africa for that matter was one of civilizing and redeeming the "heathen" Africans. The initial reception of the indigenous people to this was negative, understandably so as they did not consider themselves as heathens, and neither were their customs barbaric, backward, uncivilized or any other derogatory term associated with it. They rather perceived this western culture as impinging on their traditional ways of life. This however over time gradually changed as people were converted to Christianity and also adopted the same Eurocentric attitude towards traditional beliefs and practices. This ambivalence towards Christianity is evident in the speeches of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah who just after independence paid glowing tribute to the work of Christian missionaries who had lost their lives trying to spread the gospel in the country. He was later to castigate them for deceit and exploitation of the African people.[\[11\]](#)

These notwithstanding, Christian missions have made some significant contributions to the development of the country. They were at the forefront in the fight for the abolition of the slave trade and slavery thereby bringing freedom to many. This had an effect on the peace and stability enjoyed by the country as many wars at the time were motivated by the desire to capture people for the slave trade. Consequently, trade boomed as people could move about freely to engage in other productive ventures. In education, western formal education was introduced. The Bible and dictionary was also translated into the local languages, the work of Zimmerman and Christaller worthy of note. The Christian missionaries introduced new crops and improved methods of farming in so doing increasing food production. The health needs of the people were also catered for with the establishment of health

facilities. These combined with the Christian virtues of pietism, purposefulness and hard work improved the quality of life of the people. Social mobility became easier as people through hard work could easily acquire wealth for themselves leading to new urbanized elite.

Islam came to the south precisely Fanteland in the nineteenth century through the work of Muslim soldiers recruited by Captain Glover to fight in the Sagrenti War in the 1870s. Benjamin Sam, a Methodist catechist converted to Islam was very instrumental in its spread in Fanteland. The arrival of the Ahmadiyyas in 1921 in Saltpond introduced a new dimension to the spread of Islam with the establishment of schools.

Post-colonial

Most Ghanaians now subscribe to the Christian faith and others Islam. Some still adhere to traditional religion though they are in the minority. Traditional religion has undergone some transformation with the introduction in the early nineties of Osofo Okomfo Damuah's Afrikania Mission which sought to formalise traditional worship.

Source: Prof. Irene K. Odotei, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.