

## A Cultural &amp; Historical Tour of Ghana - Part 3 - Traditions &amp; Culture

Dear Friends,

This is part 3 of the series that I began in April and May which were both about my hometown, in Ghana. I would like to share some of the traditions and cultural observances of my people (the Akans of Ghana) and how they impact the daily life of people in our communities. Needless to say, technology and cross-cultural influences have largely affected the observing of some traditions in the big towns and cities. In the big towns and cities, they have tended to become more and more cosmopolitan. Yet even in such places, natives of traditional areas (who now live in the big towns and cities), are able to locate their people and other natives to make arrangements and meet regularly so they don't lose their uniqueness. Below are some of the traditions being rediscovered and being strengthened.

### Family Traditions: Marriage

Unlike the *western/European* practices when it comes to marriage, we endeavor to involve family members in the *marrying* of our children. Our adult children are allowed to *date*. But before they can marry, they are expected to *seek* or ask for the *consent* of their parents *before* committing or pledging to marry their partners.

This is very much unlike what you (Europe and the United States) are familiar with, where a young man meets a young woman, they date, and he proposes with a ring - what is generally known as engagement - in the absence of parents, followed by a wedding ceremony.

In traditional Ghanaian families; parents & family of the couple come together on a date mutually agreed upon and the heads of the woman's family become the *marriage officer*, after the appropriate dowry has been given and accepted. It is a very *detailed* ceremony after which the *family head pronounces* that they are *man and wife from that day forward* and will go to their marriage home to *live together*. The society, will from that day consider them *legally married*.

If the couple chooses to, they may bring their marriage under the ordinance, after this family marriage. I wish to state, however, that many modern marriages even after the family has pronounced them as married, would want to do the universally accepted system called *wedding* before they go to live together as man and wife.

### Family Traditions: Naming

This is another ceremony conducted by the heads of the families which gathered and brought their *son and daughter* together in marriage. When a baby is born to the couple, the father of the child will inform his father (the baby's Grandfather), who will then call together their entire family to participate in the naming of the new child. It is the privilege of the husband to *name* (christen) his child and he does that in consultation with his father, with the consent of his wife, the baby's mother. It is also allowed when the husband and wife agree, that the wife can take the opportunity, if offered by the husband, to bring a name from her family and give it to the child.

When the gathering is ready, the father of the child will invite the male grandparent to receive the proposed name. The baby's father will use two liquids (water and alcohol) to symbolically represent the child being exhorted to know the difference between *truth and falsehood!!*

The child will be given the name to represent which day he/she was born. We have traditional names for the days of the week. For example, a Monday male-born is called *Kojo*, while a Monday female-born, will be *Adwoa*.

We will continue with this, and hopefully conclude with death, burial, and widowhood.

Blessings,  
Pastor Ben Wilson