

# SOCI 223

## Traditional Ghanaian Social Institutions

Session 3 – The land, the people and  
their possible origins

Lecturer: Dr. Rosemond Hiadzi, Sociology  
Contact Information: rhiadzi@ug.edu.gh



# UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

College of Education

**School of Continuing and Distance Education**

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# Session Overview

- At the end of the session, the student will
- Gain insight into some geographical features of Ghana
- Understand how the geographical location of a people influences their culture and life
- Get to know about the possible origins of some of the major ethnic groups in Ghana
- Be able to identify the two schools of thought surrounding the possible origins of the Ghanaian



# Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Topic One – The land
- Topic Two – The possible origins of the Ghanaian
- Topic Three - The migrationist school
- Topic Four – The anti - migrationist school

# Reading List

- Abotchie, C. (2011) Structure of Traditional Ghanaian Societies. Hans Publications Ltd. Accra
- Nukunya, G. K. (2002) Tradition and Change. An Introduction to Sociology. Chapters one and two
- [www.ghanadistricts.com/home](http://www.ghanadistricts.com/home)- The land and its People

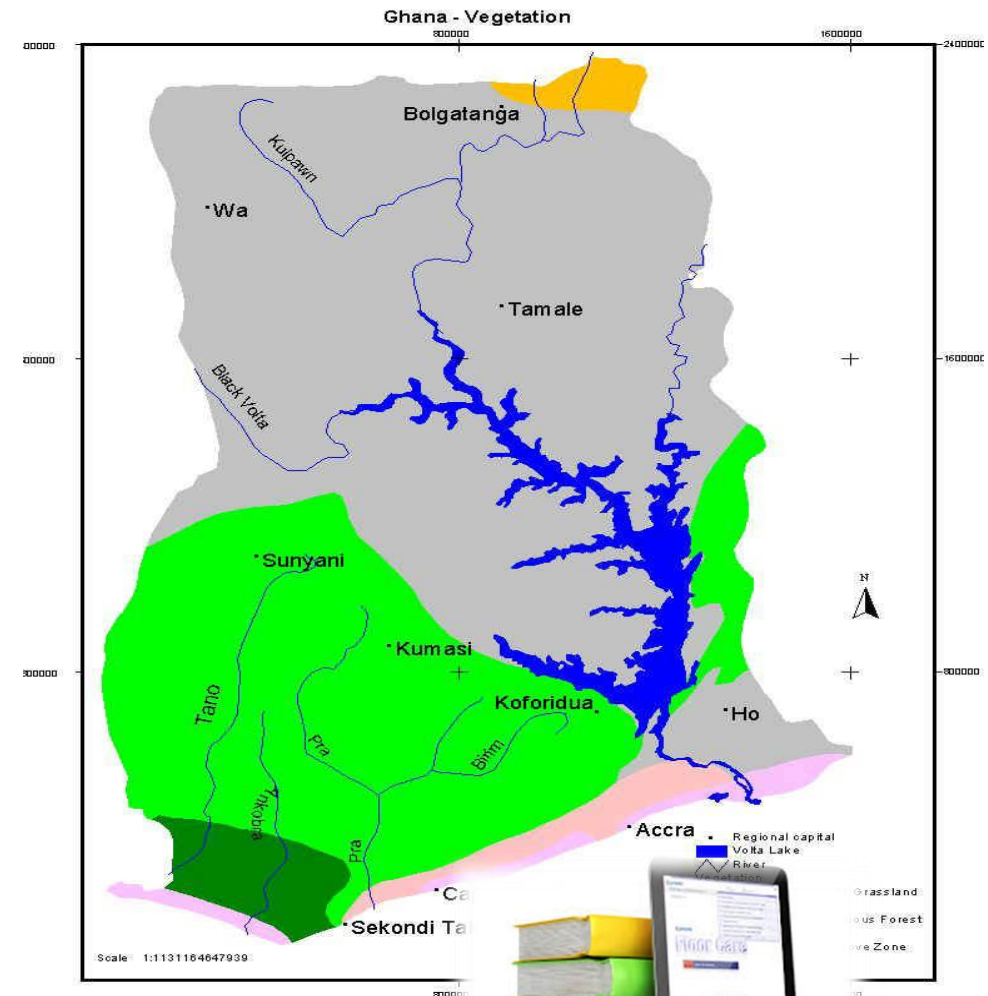
Topic One

# THE LAND



# The land

- Ghana can be divided into four geographical zones namely
- Southern Ghana
- Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions
- Northern and Upper Regions
- Volta Region



Slide 6



Topic Two

# THE POSSIBLE ORIGINS OF THE GHANAIAIAN



# Where do Ghanaians come from?

- Several myths surround the possible origins of the Ghanaian
- Some of these have been passed on orally from generation to generation and some aspects have been documented
- Due to the oral transmission of these stories, there are variants and the written documents have tried as much as possible to capture all aspects of the stories
- Often times, the stories regarding the origin of a particular group of people find expression in their festivals.
- Festivals are therefore periods during which the people recount their history surrounding how they came to settle in their present geographical area



# Where do Ghanaians come from?

- There are two schools of thought regarding the possible origin of the Ghanaian:-
  - The migrationist school
  - The anti-migrationist school

Topic Three

# THE MIGRATIONIST SCHOOL



# The migrationist school

- Proponents – J.B. Danquah and Eva Meyerowitz
- They believe that the Akans, Gas and Ewes must have come from as far East as the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia (present day Iran, Iraq) thence to the medieval Ghana empire before their final settlement in modern Ghana
- The evidence they have to support this claim include
  1. The practice of matrilineage among the Akans is said have originated from Mesopotamia
  2. The outdooring/naming ceremony of a newly born being performed on the 8<sup>th</sup> day after birth
  3. The manner of wearing the traditional cloth

Topic Four

# THE ANTI - MIGRATIONIST SCHOOL



# The anti-migrationist school

- Proponents – Ward, Tait, Mauny and Irwin
- The people of Ghana, like other West Africans, originated from within the continent specifically, the Chad-Benue basin
- From there, they moved to the Dahomey gap (between Rivers Volta and Mono) and then further dispersed to their present day settlements of Ghana, Togo, Benin, Ivory Coast, Nigeria etc.
- The evidence they have to support this claim include
  1. Botany
  2. Cranial structure
  3. Linguistics
  4. Serology

# The anti-migrationist school

- **Botany**

- This is based on evidence from food remains and other archaeological findings pointing to the kinds of plants the people consumed.
- The evidence shows the consumption of certain foods common to the people of the sub region such as cassava, yam and vegetables
  - **Cranial structure**
- Archeological findings show similarities in the shape of the head or skull of West Africans as compared to those from East Africa

# The anti-migrationist school

## – Linguistics

- There exists similarities in both the roots of words and the pronunciations of these words by people in the West African sub region in general and Ghanaians in particular.
- For example, the word onion is referred to as 'sabala' in Ewe and 'sabolai' in Ga

## – Serology

- This refers to the study of blood samples.
- The evidence shows the existence of the sickle cell trait across the region
- This trait is transmitted from parents to their offspring; thus it shows that the people of the sub region might have had a common ancestor who possessed this trait

# Other beliefs regarding the origin of the Ghanaian

- The Guans believe that, they did not migrate from anywhere. They believe they are the original inhabitants of the country or the aborigines
- The Gur (the group of Northern ethnic tribes) also believe that they migrated from Northeast Africa and moved southward under the leadership of their leader, the 'Red hunter'.