



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Ghana

Ghana – GHA37464 – Akims – Akan –
Languages – Homosexuals – Police – State
protection – South Africa

6 October 2010

1. Are people of the Akims ethnic group in Ghana likely to speak Twi and/or Hausa?

The Akims are part of the broader Akan ethnic group, which includes all Twi-speaking people of Ashanti, Akuapim, Brong-Ahafo, Akim, Wassaw, Sefwi, Denkyira, Kwahu and the Fantes ethnicities.¹ The Akan people, who constitute almost 50 percent of Ghana's population, speak Twi and dialect variations. In addition, as a result of migration from rural to urban areas, "many non-Akans can understand and/or speak Twi".² No information was found on whether Akims people are likely to speak Hausa.

According to a language tuition website, "Twi is...spoken in the southern two-thirds of Ghana".³ The *Encyclopedia of World Cultures* states that "[t]hose who have travelled south, in Ghana, often speak Twi [while] [m]any traders speak Hausa".⁴ Similarly, *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* states that Twi is spoken by people in south-central and south-east Ghana,⁵ while Hausa is a Muslim trade language spoken in northern Ghana.⁶ Nevertheless, a language map of Ghana on the Ethnologue website indicates that Hausa is widely spoken throughout the country.⁷

¹ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, *GHA38303.E – Ghana: Differences, if any, between being "heir to the throne," High Priest, and Chief in Ghana; whether these terms are specific to certain tribes in certain areas, or whether they can be used interchangeably; whether the selection process and reprisals for refusal to accept the position differ*, 16 January – Attachment 1; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2001, *GHA36723.E – Ghana: The royal families of Twobodom (Twobodom) in Brong Ahafo Region. General information on the queen and the king and whether they can stop being queen and king; whether a queen from Twafu can marry a man from the other family; state protection or de facto protection for a queen who has a violent husband*, 19 April – Attachment 2

² DIAC Country Information Service 2010, *Country Information Report No.10/15 – CIS Request No. GHA10083 – Trokosi in Ghana*, (sourced from DFAT advice of 19 March 2010), 23 March – Attachment 3

³ 'Pimsleur Twi Courses' (undated), Speak a Language website <http://www.speakalanguage.com/pimsleur-twi.html> – Accessed 30 September 2010 – Attachment 4

⁴ 'Mamprusi' 1996, *Encyclopedia of World Cultures* – Attachment 5

⁵ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1996, *GHA25608.E – Ghana: Information on the primary language of the Nanumba ethnic group in the Bimbila area, and whether they are Twi speakers*, 11 December – Attachment 6

⁶ Lewis, M. P. (ed.) 2009, 'Hausa: A Language of Nigeria', *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Sixteenth Edition http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=hau – Accessed 29 September 2010 – Attachment 7

⁷ Lewis, M. P. (ed.) 2009, 'Languages of Ghana', *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Sixteenth Edition http://www.ethnologue.com/show_map.asp?name=GH&seq=10 – Accessed 29 September 2010 – Attachment 8

2. Are these languages likely to have different accents according to where a person originates from or has been living?

The various Twi-speaking ethnic groups that constitute the broader Akan people, including the Akims, can be distinguished from one another by their dialect. Aside from dialect, however, all the groups speak the same language and have common cultural practices.⁸ Dialects of ethnic groups under the Akan include “Agona, Akuapem Twi, Akyem [possibly Akims], Asante Twi, Brong, Fante, Kwahu and Wasa”.⁹ A website called The Africa Guide states that “the Akan tribes...speak various dialects of Twi. The language is very rich in proverbs, the use of which is taken to be a sign of wisdom. Euphemisms are very common, especially about events connected with death”.¹⁰

A document of Twi-English translations advises that “[t]here are many divisions of the Twi languages, but they are all mutually intelligible”.¹¹ The *Encyclopedia of World Cultures* also states that “neighboring peoples are likely to speak mutually intelligible variants of a common tongue”.¹² *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* similarly advises that dialects of the Akan language, including Twi dialects, “are largely inherently intelligible”.¹³ In addition, a language tuition website similarly states that the many different dialects of Twi are all mutually intelligible, and “are written by a common script developed by the Bureau of Ghana Languages”.¹⁴ It is possible that these different dialects would each have their own particular accent, although no information was found as to the existence of accents based on place of origin.

Information on Hausa dialects from the University of California website states that “[t]hroughout the areas where Hausa is spoken, it is remarkably uniform in pronunciation, vocabulary, and structure. Indeed, the varieties of Hausa are at least as mutually comprehensible as the varieties of English...Despite the basic uniformity of Hausa wherever it is spoken, one can identify a number of dialect areas”. One of these dialects is Ghanaian Hausa, evidently specific to Hausa speakers from Ghana. The University of California advises that “[o]ne feature typical of Ghanaian Hausa but not of any native varieties in Niger and Nigeria is the use of the sounds “ch” and “j” where

⁸ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2001, *GHA36723.E – Ghana: The royal families of Twobodom (Twobodom) in Brong Ahafo Region. General information on the queen and the king and whether they can stop being queen and king; whether a queen from Twafo can marry a man from the other family; state protection or de facto protection for a queen who has a violent husband*, 19 April – Attachment 2

⁹ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2005, *GHA100109.E – Ghana: The Asona clan, including languages, geographical locations and whether men are forced to marry their uncle’s daughter, age of marriage, reasons for marriage, consequences of refusal and state protection available (2003-2005)*, 27 May – Attachment 9

¹⁰ ‘Ghana: People and Culture’ (undated), The Africa Guide website <http://www.africaguide.com/country/ghana/culture.htm> – Accessed 29 September 2010 – Attachment 10

¹¹ Tyehimba, B. (undated), ‘Ghana Language TWI Translation’, Africa for the Africans website http://www.africafortheafricans.org/index.php?view=article&catid=46%3Aghana-repatriation-tour-oct-2010&id=50%3Aghana-language-twi-translation&format=pdf&option=com_content – Accessed 30 September 2010 – Attachment 11

¹² ‘Mamprusi’ 1996, *Encyclopedia of World Cultures* – Attachment 5

¹³ ‘AKAN: a language of Ghana’ 2000, *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Fourteenth Edition http://www.ethnologue.com/14/show_language.asp?code=TWS – Accessed 5 October 2010 – Attachment 12

¹⁴ ‘Pimsleur Twi Courses’ (undated), Speak a Language website <http://www.speakalanguage.com/pimsleur-twi.html> – Accessed 30 September 2010 – Attachment 4

Nigerien/Nigerian varieties would have “ky” and “gy” respectively, e.g. cau (“chow”) ‘beauty’ (rather than kyau) and jara ‘repair’ (for gyara)”.¹⁵

In addition, another article about the Hausa language and its dialects indicates that the Hausa dialect specific to Ghana is known as ‘Gaananci’. Differences in dialects relate to “pronunciation, vocabulary, gender morphology, and incorporation of loanwords from Arabic, English, French, and other African languages”. Nevertheless, it is stated that “[d]espite the dialect variations, Hausa-speaking people from different regions can understand each other in very much the same way as British-English speakers can understand American-English or Indian-English”.¹⁶

3. Do any ethnic groups in South Africa speak Twi and/or Hausa?

No evidence was found of Hausa or Twi being spoken in South Africa. According to *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, languages spoken in South Africa include Afrikaans, Birwa, Camtho, English, Fanagalo, Gail, Hindi, Khwe, Korana, Nama, Ndebele, Nu, Orlams, Ronga, Seroa, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Swahili, Swati, Tsonga, Tsotsitaal, Tswa, Tswana, Urdu, Venda, Xam, Xegwi, Xhosa, Xiri and Zulu.¹⁷

Ethnologue: Languages of the World only refers to Twi as being spoken by Akan peoples in Ghana.¹⁸ In contrast, Hausa is spoken in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Eritrea, Germany, Ghana, Niger, Sudan, and Togo.¹⁹ The World Translation Center website similarly states that “Hausa is a language spoken by about 39 million speakers. Besides northern Nigeria and Niger, it is also spoken in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR [Central African Republic], Chad, Congo, Eritrea, Ghana, Sudan and Togo”.²⁰

Nevertheless, an Irish language course website states that “[a]n estimated 50 million people speak Hausa, more than any other African language and more than many European languages. It’s also spoken as a minority language in towns and cities from Kaolack in Senegal to Khartoum in the Sudan... Broadcasting in Hausa from the BBC, Voice of America, Radio Moscow and Deutsche Welle, as well as from local Nigerian radio and TV stations, has meant that the language [is] one of the most accessible and thus more easily learned of the African tongues”.²¹

¹⁵ ‘Hausa: Language Variation and Dialects’ (undated), University of California Humanities website <http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/aflang/hausa/Language/dialects.html> – Accessed 30 September 2010 – Attachment 13

¹⁶ Panse, S. 2010, ‘The Hausa Language – Major Language of Nigeria’, Bright Hub website, 19 March <http://www.brighthub.com/education/languages/articles/35697.aspx> – Accessed 30 September 2010 – Attachment 14

¹⁷ Lewis, M. P. (ed.) 2009, ‘Languages of South Africa’, *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Sixteenth Edition http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=ZA – Accessed 5 October 2010 – Attachment 15

¹⁸ ‘AKAN: a language of Ghana’ 2000, *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Fourteenth Edition http://www.ethnologue.com/14/show_language.asp?code=TWS – Accessed 5 October 2010 – Attachment 12

¹⁹ Lewis, M. P. (ed.) 2009, ‘Hausa: A Language of Nigeria’, *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Sixteenth Edition http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=hau – Accessed 29 September 2010 – Attachment 7

²⁰ ‘Professional Hausa Translation Services’ (undated), World Translation Center website http://www.worldtranslationcenter.com/Hausa_Translation.php – Accessed 29 September 2010 – Attachment 16

²¹ ‘Gift of Tongues’ 2007, Nightcourses.com website, 14 February http://www.nightcourses.com/languages/gift_of_tongues.html – Accessed 29 September 2010 – Attachment 17

4. Are police in Ghana likely to assist a homosexual who has been the subject of an assault? Would they investigate the death of a homosexual who died due to injuries received during an assault?

Police in Ghana are unlikely to assist a homosexual victim of assault. Previous Country Advice from September 2010 refers to sources that suggest that gay men in Ghana are subject to assault, and that the police are generally unresponsive to such claims.²² For example, the UK Home Office reported in 2007 that “[g]ay men encounter police harassment in Ghana and it has been reported that those who have sought the assistance of the police have been threatened with imprisonment. In the light of this and section 104 of the Ghanaian Criminal Code, it is unlikely that gay or bisexual men would be able to seek and receive adequate protection from the state authorities”.²³ The US Department of State also reports that homosexuals in Ghana are subject to police harassment and extortion, while imprisoned gay men face physical and sexual abuse.²⁴

A 2004 report in gay online magazine *The Gully* cites a gay Ghanaian man who describes being robbed and beaten, stating that after reporting the attack to the police, they offered to write his statement for him, and threatened to imprison him when he asked them to investigate the robbery and recover the stolen goods. The article notes that homosexuals are targeted by thieves and muggers because “the police won’t do anything about it, and most victims are too ashamed to report it”.²⁵

It is unlikely that the police would investigate the death of a homosexual who died due to injuries received during an assault. A 2007 *BBC News* report quotes Gabby Otchere-Darko, editor of the Ghanaian *Statesman* newspaper, who states that most people in Ghana are reluctant “to take the political risk of advocating tolerance” for homosexuality. It is likely that this includes police officers. Otchere-Darko advises that “[e]ven those who control the media are not willing to be tolerant to views that are sympathetic to homosexuality... We need to accept there are certain things there is no point in policing”. The same article also quotes Richard Quayson, deputy commissioner of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, the country’s leading human rights organisation, as stating that “[i]n the first place, I do not know if I want to promote homosexuality in Ghana... As a human rights organisation, if someone comes forward and says their rights are violated, it is my duty to protect them. As a Ghanaian, I don’t think I can openly go out and promote it in the country”.²⁶

It has been reported that, in general, the Ghanaian Police Service lacks the ability to address violent crime. The US Department of State reported in March 2010 that “[t]he police service was criticized repeatedly for incidents of police brutality, corruption, and negligence. Impunity remained a problem. Delays in prosecuting suspects, rumors of police collaboration with criminals, and a widespread perception of police ineptitude

²² RRT Country Advice 2010, *Country Advice GHA37425*, 29 September – Attachment 18

²³ UK Home Office 2007, *Operational Guidance Note – Ghana*, 26 September – Attachment 19

²⁴ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Ghana*, 11 March, Section 6 – Attachment 20

²⁵ Prince 2004, ‘Gay in Ghana’, *The Gully*, 24 June

http://www.thegully.com/essays/gaymundo/040623_gay_life_ghana.html – Accessed 7 July 2004 – Attachment 21

²⁶ Ryan, O. 2007, ‘Ghana’s secret gay community’, *BBC News*, 14 March

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6445337.stm> – Accessed 5 October 2010 – Attachment 22

contributed to an increase in vigilante violence during the year”.²⁷ Previous Country Advice from November 2007 refers to a journal article on the Ghana Police Service, which similarly notes that “a new challenge to the Ghana Police Service is the rising spectre of vigilantism as a response to police inability to deal with violent crime”.²⁸

In addition, a 2009 blog entry expresses a seemingly widespread lack of confidence in the Ghana Police Service to investigate violent crimes and killings. The article states that “[a]nother subject which is denting the image of government and the Police is the Agbogbloshie murders. Many days have elapsed since the gory incident took place yet nobody has been arrested by the Police. We are aware that those in their hospital beds at the Police Hospital disclosed names of persons who inflicted wounds on them; yet none of them has been apprehended and it does not seem that any of them would ever be”.²⁹

Attachments

1. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, *GHA38303.E – Ghana: Differences, if any, between being “heir to the throne,” High Priest, and Chief in Ghana; whether these terms are specific to certain tribes in certain areas, or whether they can be used interchangeably; whether the selection process and reprisals for refusal to accept the position differ*, 16 January. (REFINFO)
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²⁷ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Ghana*, 11 March, Section 1d – Attachment 20

²⁸ RRT Research & Information 2007, *Research Response GHA32625*, 15 November – Attachment 23; Aning, E.K. 2006 ‘An overview of the Ghana Police Service’, *Journal of Security Sector Management*, Centre for Security Sector Management website, vol.4, no.2, April, p.28 http://www.ssronline.org/jofssm/issues/jofssm_0402_aning.doc?cfid=350054&cftoken=83202945 – Accessed 13 November 2007 – Attachment 24

²⁹ ‘Diminishing confidence in the Ghana Police Service’ 2009, The Accran blog website, 10 September <http://theaccran.blogspot.com/2009/09/diminishing-confidence.html> – Accessed 5 October 2010 – Attachment 25

7. Lewis, M. P. (ed.) 2009, 'Hausa: A Language of Nigeria', *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Sixteenth Edition http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=hau – Accessed 29 September 2010.
8. Lewis, M. P. (ed.) 2009, 'Languages of Ghana', *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Sixteenth Edition http://www.ethnologue.com/show_map.asp?name=GH&seq=10 – Accessed 29 September 2010.
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16. 'Professional Hausa Translation Services' (undated), World Translation Center website http://www.worldtranslationcenter.com/Hausa_Translation.php – Accessed 29 September 2010.
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http://www.ssronline.org/jofssm/issues/jofssm_0402_aning.doc?cfid=350054&cftoken=83202945 – Accessed 13 November 2007.
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