

Christmas traditions from around the world

Ghana

The Christmas festival was unknown in Ghana until the mid-19th century when the German, Swiss and British missionaries arrived.

Homes and churches in Ghana are decorated with flowers and palm branches beginning with the first Advent—four weeks before Christmas.

Christmas coincides with the main cocoa season, so good production calls for more celebration. Many families buy cows, sheep and goats to be slaughtered for Christmas day; good wine is stocked. The streets and highways are filled with those who have gone to the city to work, now traveling home to their villages for Christmas.

On Christmas Eve the church bells ring and the people go to the church to see the Christmas Tree—an evergreen or a palm. Hymns are sung; children present the maternity story.

Early in the morning on Christmas Day, young people and elderly people representing the shepherds and the angels, sing in the streets and receive gifts.

Christmas Day brings church services, then the Christmas dinner consisting of rice, yams, stew, bean or okra soup. Gifts are distributed, friendships sealed. The children receive presents from Santa Claus, who comes not from the North Pole but from the jungle.

Ethiopia

Christmas has been celebrated in Ethiopia from the earliest times. The Coptic Church observes Christmas on January 7th.

Many churches in Ethiopia are centuries old, hewn from rock. They are usually square, with a surrounding courtyard. The altar is frequently adorned with marble or gold; the ark is covered with precious stones.

On Christmas thousands of Christians make pilgrimages to Lalibela, known as the "Jerusalem of Ethiopia". Because the weather is moderate, the hillsides are covered with people praying and chanting, waiting for Christmas dawn.

In the morning a procession goes

from the church to a nearby hilltop where the service is held. The multitudes are given bread and a beverage that has been blessed by the priests.

After the worship service the day is spent in dance, sport and feasting.



In Spain the Three Kings parade through town accompanied by many children.



In a mountain village in Peru, people wear masks and costumes on the Day of the Kings.

THE VIRGIN MARY HAD A BABY BOY

The Virgin Mary had a baby boy,
The Virgin Mary had a baby boy,
The Virgin Mary had a baby boy,
And they said His name was Jesus.
He come from the glory,
He come from the glorious kingdom!
Oh, yes, believer!
He come from the glory,
He come from the glorious kingdom

—Negro spiritual

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

Go tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.

When I was a seeker,
I sought both night and day,
I asked the Lord to help me,
And He showed me the way.

He made me a watchmen
Upon a city wall,
And if I am a Christian,
I am the least of all.

Go tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere;
Go tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.

—Negro spiritual

WASN'T THAT A MIGHTY DAY

Wasn't that a mighty day
When Jesus Christ was born?
Star shone in the East,
Star shone in the East,
Star shone in the East,
When Jesus Christ was born!

—Negro spiritual

Look there at the star!
I, among the least,
Will arise and take
A journey to the East.
But what shall I bring
As a present for the King?
What shall I bring to the Manger?

I will bring a song,
A song that I will sing,
A song for the King
In the Manger.

Watch out for my flocks,
Do not let them stray.
I am going on a journey
Far, far away.
But what shall I bring
As a present for the Child?
What shall I bring to the Manger?

I will bring a lamb,
Gentle, meek, and mild,
A lamb for the Child
In the Manger.

I'm just a shepherd boy,
Very poor I am—
But I know there is
A King in Bethlehem.
What shall I bring
As a present just for Him?
What shall I bring to the Manger?

I will bring my heart
And give my heart to Him.
I will give my heart
To the Manger.

—Langston Hughes



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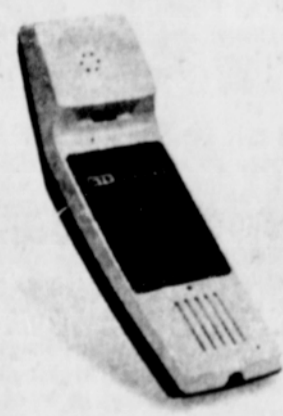
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