

## **THE EWES OF VOLTA REGION OF GHANA.**

The Ewe nation also known as the The Volta Region of Ghana are the people residing along the eastern and southeastern part of the republic of Ghana. The Ewe land was once colonized by the Germans and after the defeat of Germans in World War I, Ewe homeland was divided between the British and the French. Some part remained with Republic of Togo and the Ewe land became known as the Trans Volta Togoland of Ghana. The Volta Region lies along the bank of river Volta. The name was officially changed during Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's regime to **The VOLTA REGION**. Till today the Ewes speak the same language as their neighbors in Togo land and the Republic of Benin. Most Ewes can trace their ancestry to their original villages in Togo land and Benin.

### **Culture:**

The Ewes are essentially a patrilineal people; the founder of a community was the established **Chief or King**, and was then usually succeeded by his paternal relatives. Extended families are the most important units of Ewe social life. Ewe has never supported a hierarchical concentration of power within a large state.

Traditionally, chiefs sit on a black stool-real stool with customary rites. A white stool is reserved for 'honorary or ceremonial ' chiefs. These are auspicious individuals who have been made a 'chiefs or kings' as recognition for their contribution to a village. Certain rituals cannot be performed by an honorary chief, and must be attended by the true chief.

There are a number of guidelines regarding the behavior of chiefs. They are expected to keep their heads covered in public, and are not to be seen drinking. The people see the chief as the communicator between the everyday world and the world of the ancestors. The chief must always keep a clear mind. Traditionally, chiefs are also not to see the face of a corpse. They may take part in the funeral, however, once the corpse is buried or inside the coffin. They are not to have any contact with the corpse.

The pouring of libations is an important ritual within Ewe society. Generally libation is poured at a durbar by the linguist who performs the most of the roles of the chief. Libations are poured three times, in honor of ancestors, life, and the God of creation.

### **Clothing:**

The Ewes like their neighboring Akan tribes wear Kente cloth as their traditional cloth. The style of wearing Kente is similar to the **style of Akans**. The Ewe has a long history of weaving 'Kente' cloth, especially in Agotime- Kpetoe near Ho-the capital city of Volta Region of Ghana.

### **Dance Music:**

The Ewes have an intricate collection of dances, which vary between geographical regions location and other factors. One such dance is the Adevu (Ade - hunting, Vu - dance). This is a professional dance that celebrates the hunter. They are meant both to make animals easier to

hunt and to give animals a ritual 'funeral' in order to prevent the animal's spirit from returning and harming or hunting the hunter later in life.

***Agbadza:***

Is traditionally a war dance but is now used in social and recreational situations to celebrate peace. War dances are sometimes used as military training exercises, with signals from the lead drum ordering the warriors to move ahead, to the right, go down, etc. These dances also helped in preparing the warriors for battle and upon their return from fighting they would act out their deeds in battle through their movements in the dance.

***Atsiagbekor:***

Is a contemporary version of the Ewe war dance Atamga (Great (ga) Oath (atam) in reference to the oaths taken by people before proceeding into battle. The movements of this present-day version are mostly in platoon formation and are not only used to display battle tactics, but also to energize and invigorate the soldiers. Today, Atsiagbekor is performed for entertainment at social gatherings and at cultural presentations.

***Atsia dance:***

This is performed mostly by women, is a series of stylistic movements dictated to dancers by the lead drummer. Each dance movement has its own prescribed rhythmic pattern, which is synchronized with the lead drum. 'Atsia' in the Ewe language means style or display.

***Borbobor:***

The Ewe-speaking people in the central and northern parts of the Volta Region of Ghana cultivate the **Borbobor** dance. **Borbobor** (originally 'Akpese') might have originated in the Kpando area, and is said to have been created by the late Mr. Francis Kojo Nuadro. He is thought to have been an ex-police officer who returned to Kpando and organized a group in the middle to late 1940's. The dance has its roots in the 'Highlife' popular music of Ghana and other West African countries. Borbobor gained national recognition in the 1950's and 1960's because of its use at political rallies and the novelty of its dance formations and movements. It is generally performed at funerals and other social occasions. This is a social dance with a great deal of room for free expression. In general, the men sing and dance in the center while the women dance in a ring around them. There are 'slow' and 'fast' versions of Borbobor; the fast Borbobor is believed to come from the Kpando area and the slow version from Hohoe. The slow one is called Akpese and the fast one is termed to be Borbobor. Lolobi-Kumasi is known for doing a particular fast version of the slow version.

***Gabada dance:***

Was originally juju and not a social dance. Its original use was as part of a ritual used by men for seducing women. The dance was done after the juju had worked.

### **Agahu:**

Is both the name of a dance and of one of the many secular music associations (clubs) of the Ewe people of Ghana, Togo, and Dahomey. (Gadzok, Takada, and Atsiagbeko are other such clubs). Each club has its own distinctive drumming and dancing, as well as its own repertoire of songs. A popular social dance of West Africa, Agahu was created by the Egun speaking people from the town of Ketonu in what is now Benin. From there it spread to the Badagry area of Nigeria where migrant Ewe fishermen heard, adapted, and eventually took it to Ghana. In dancing the Agahu, two circles are formed; the men stay stationary with their arms out and then bend with a knee forward for the women to sit on. They progress around the circle until they arrive at their original partner.

### **Gota**

### **Dance:**

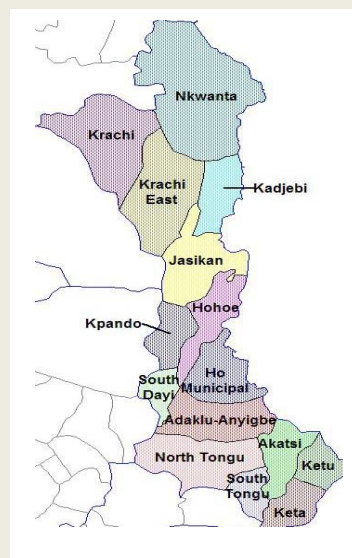
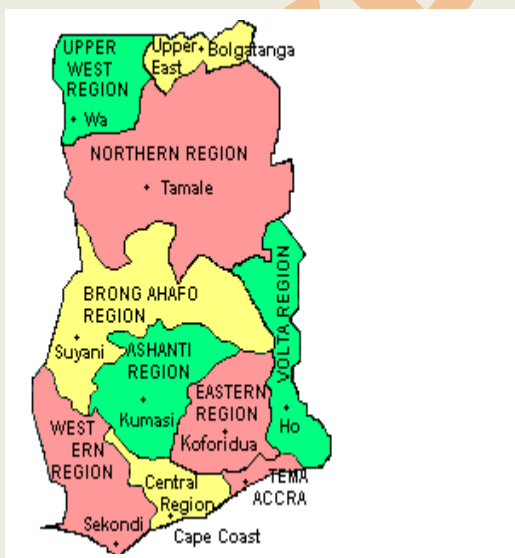
Gota uses the mystical calabash drum of Benin, West Africa. It was originally called "drum of the dead" and was played only at funerals. It is now performed for social entertainment. The most exciting parts of Gota are the synchronized stops of the drummers and dancers.

### **Trowu:**

Is ancestral drum music that is played to invite ancestors to special sacred occasions at a shrine. For religious purposes, a priest or priestess would be present. There are fast and slow rhythms that can be called by the religious leader in order to facilitate communication with the spirit world. The bell rhythm is played on a boat-shaped bell in the north, but the southern region uses a double bell. The three drums must have distinct pitch levels in order to lock in.

### **Sowu:**

Is one of the seven different styles of drumming that belong to the cult of Yewe, adapted for stage. Yewe is the God of Thunder and lightning among the Ewe speaking people of Ghana, Togo, and Benin. Yewe is a very exclusive cult and its music is one of the most developed forms of sacred music in Ewe land.



## **Togbe\_Deitse\_VII**