

# **THE ORIGINS AND BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EWE PEOPLE**

Narrated By

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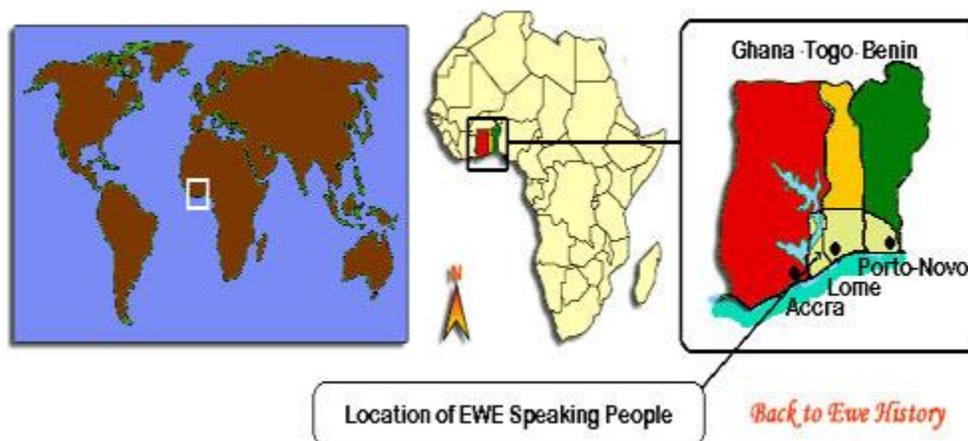
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## Ewe Country Boundaries

The boundaries of the new African nations are those of the old British, Belgian, French, German, and Portuguese colonies. They are essentially artificial in the sense that some of them do not correspond with any well-marked ethnic divisions. Because of this the Ewes, like some other ethnic groups, have remained fragmented under the three different flags, just as they were divided among the three colonial powers after the Berlin Conference of 1844 that partitioned Africa. A portion of the Ewes went to Britain, another to Germany, and a small section in Benin (Dahomey) went to France. After World War I, the League of Nations gave the Germans-occupied areas to Britain and France as mandated territories. Those who were under the British are now the Ghanaian Ewes, those under the French are Togo, and Benin (Dahomey) Ewes, respectively. The Añlɔ Ewes are part of the Ghanaian Ewes group and they form about thirteen percent (13%) of the Ghanaian population (1,615,700 in Ghana (1991)).

The Ewe speaking people of West Africa inhabit the areas between the River Volta in modern Ghana and the River Mono on the western borders of the Ancient Kingdom of Benin (Dahomey) (see Map 1. To be supplied) and extends from the Atlantic coast inland up to about latitude 7 6'N in the east and latitude 7 20' N in the west. Across the southeastern boundary line a related people – the Fon of present day Republic of Benin (formerly Dahomey).



## Ewe Language

According to UNESCO grouping of languages (1985), Ewe is a community language of Africa and its homeland stretches between three West African countries, namely, the Republics of Ghana, Togo, Benin (Dahomey) and to Badagry in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. According to linguists (and also Westermann and Bryan, 1952), the Ewe language (*Ewegbe*) belongs to a member of the Kwa family of sudanic languages. As stated by Greenberg (1970), Kwa languages constitute a sub-family of the Niger-Congo family of the Congo-Kordofanian language family of Africa. There are several dialects (variants) of the Ewe language as spoken in Eweland. The dialectal difference, as in the case of all languages with dialects, are found in one or more of the following, namely speech sounds used, choice between synonyms and forms of words, pitch/tonal variations and mode of expressions. Some of these dialects are mutually intelligible, but only with difficulty. The population of all Ewe speaking people has always been

a subject of debate. Awoonor (1974) writes, "According to various uncoordinated census accounts and estimates, the Ewes may number anywhere between two and five million".

### **Ancient Origins**

There are many different schools of thought about the origin(s) of the Ewe tribe, with a school of thought tracing the origin as far back as an earlier settlement in Adzatomé, a suburb founded by Ham, the second son of Noa in the Bible; Noa being the progenitor of various tribes. It is here that we learnt about the Biblical Story of the building of the tower of Babel to enable the people get close to God, see Him and pray to Him, followed by God's displeasure and the resultant fall of the tower and dispersion of the people into clusters of people speaking various languages instead of the single one that first united them. This story is credited as being the source of a group speaking one language today known as the Ewe language. Where this occurred is placed in Babylon in present Iraq, and various groups left to find new settlements of their own.

### **Settlement in Egypt**

Oral tradition claims the Ewe people were led by an ancestor called 'Gu' under whose leadership they settled at the delta of the river Nile, in present day Egypt. Other ethnic groups also settled in Egypt then, including the Jews forced by draught in their land of Canaan. There were cultural exchanges among the various people, with groups adopting practices of others with whom they lived in close proximity. The acts of circumcision of male children, pouring of libation learnt via the worship of the SUN-GOD, out-dooring of new born babies, widowhood rites, kingship and burial of kings and chiefs with their personal effects some customary practices adopted by the Ewes from the Egyptians and the Jews. They also learnt the composition of long songs from the Jews.

### **Settlement in Sudan**

When it became difficult living in Egypt, just as the Jews left under the leadership of Moses, the Ewes also left under a leader Mi and migrated in a south-westerly direction that brought them into the Sudan where they made settlement for a while close to present day Khartoum. The stay there was short due to drought, famine and slave raids by Arab slave traders who preferred black slaves to their own kind, due to their physique and courage. At the time, there were numerous schools in and around Khartoum and some Ewes took advantage of these schools to become great scholars, merchants and farmers.

### **Settlement in Ethiopia**

The Ewe people decided to leave Sudan, and going southeastwards went into 'Abyssinia', the present day Ethiopia. However, the slave raids continued here and some members were captured and sold and were sent to as far away as India to serve in the courts of their kings and queens.

### **Settlement between Niger Bend and the Middle Reaches of River Senegal**

As the people were unable to repel the superior weapons of the Arabs and Indians, they finally decided to move out of Ethiopia too. This time, they moved southwestwards into the region between the bend of river Niger and the middle reaches of the river Senegal. All these

movements occurred between AD 500 and 1200. Oral tradition has it that they made significant contributions to the rise of the old Ghana Empire, whose capital then was Walata, near Timbuktu. The old Ghana Empire declined and was replaced by the Mali Empire, led by a powerful king: Mari Djata whose state insignia was the Lion which the Ewes call 'Dzata' and by deduction, the name of the Emperor is said to mean in Ewe "Amea **ɔ** Dzata". The Mali Empire lasted until AD 1513, disintegrating after the death of its powerful ruler Mari Djata, and due to internal and external forces, many sub-ethnic and cultural groups departed from the area, rather than stay to serve under the new overlords, the Songhai, who conquered the old Mali Empire. Whilst residing at the Niger Bend they contributed to the emergence of all three Empires of Ghana, Songhai and Mali.

### **Settlements in Nigeria, Dahomey and Togo**

After the break-up of the last of these empires and by following the Niger River south-eastwards, the ancestors of the Ewes moved into the present day Nigeria, at the height of the Oyo Empire, settled briefly at Ile Ife in Yoruba-land (Osun State of Nigeria), but moved on at the fall of the Oyo Empire, and going westward, they entered Dahomey (present-day Republic of Benin). It was in Ile-Ife that they revived and perfected the art of divination (*afa kaka*), which their ancestors abandoned in Mesopotamia. They also settled in Ketu, a Yoruba town in modern day Benin. Ketu is also called Amedzorpe or Mawupe in the accounts. The Yoruba people founded Ketu by the fourteenth century at the latest.

### **Settlements in the Kingdom of Tado**

At Dahomey they split into three groups. The first group settled at the bank of the Mono River and named that place Tado (Tando or A'Tando), which became a powerful kingdom and the historical capital.

### **Settlements in the City State of Notsie**

The second group moved on to settle between the Mono and the Haho Rivers. This settlement became Notsie, in present day Republic of Togo. The third group settled at what then was Adele country where they established the nucleus of what later became the Kingdom of Dahomey, but then called Dogbo-Nyigbo. Some members from this group moved out later to join those already settled at Notsie and in this new settlement, the earlier settlers referred to them as 'Dogboawo' due to their earlier association with the settlement at Dogbo-Nyigbo. Note that Dogbo is a town between Agbome and Tado. The migrants who left Tado followed a path of a hunter by the name Afotse or Ndetsi, or the ancestor Noin or Da, depending on the version told. All migrants were given a portion of Notsie by their hosts to settle on, to be by themselves. Thus there were various settlements of the Ewe people at Notsie, and they were all semi-autonomous with their own leaders. According to some accounts, at its greatest height, the city of Notsie consisted of thirty-six neighborhoods. The Dogbo quarter therefore had its own leader, same as other Ewe groups. The several and separate quarters were all however ruled by one great King of Notsie. Some of these leaders and Kings were: Adela Blebua, Tsamla, Adela Dzawoe, Ekpe, Adelatorble, Agor and Agorkorli. Some of the original seven quarters are: Tegbe, Tako, Ekli, Agbaladome, Anakpe, and Adime; and the deserted spaces are called Wotsegbeme, Soujafeme, Gbedekordzi, the market place and Azakordzi.

We have learnt so far that, according to oral tradition, the present-day Eweland is not the original home of the entire Ewe speaking people. There are several accounts of their migration to the present land from various places such as the Sudan, Nigeria, Republique du Benin (Dahomey), and Republique du Togo (Togoland). As we have read earlier, some students of Ewe history have tried to push this supposed point of departure further back to Bebebe, which is in turn identified with the “Babel” of the Bible. Others have suggested Mesopotamia, Egypt, etc., as the point of origin of the Ewes. Since oral tradition loses historical facts with time, there is no scientific basis for all these claims (not at this time), even though several researchers are looking into these claims.

When it comes to written history, there is however some agreement as research was able to trace our origin up to a point. Manoukian (1952) writes, "All traditions agree that the Ewe speaking people came from somewhere in the north, and although each sub-tribe gives a slightly different version of the story, it seems to be generally accepted that they migrated from a place called Ketu or Amedzofe (not the present one in the Republic of Ghana), somewhere east of the Niger following a conquest, and thereafter settled down in a place called Notsie, usually considered to Jutja, in which is now French Togoland." Fage (1959) says, "the line of migration of the Ewe is remembered as Ketu-Tado-Nuatsi (Notsie)". Akinjogbi (1967), Betho (1949), and some oral historians put the line of migration as Oyo-Ketu-Notsie, or Oyo-Ketu-Tado-Notsie. Whether Oyo or Tado is left out from the line of migration by some groups through forgetfulness or because their stay was very brief and therefore insignificant is not known.

Other accounts also indicate that the Ewe people had lived in Ketu, a Yoruba town in the Republic of Benin. At Ketu there lived other people besides the forefathers of the Ewes. These were Yorubas, the ancestors of the present Aja and Fon and the Ga-Dangme. According to Kodzo-Vordoagu (1994) and Agbodeka (1997), “it is not certain when they began to live there and how long they lived there. It was the gradual westward expansion of the Yoruba that pushed the Ewe and their kin, Aja, from Ketu. Their movement must have started sometime before the end of the sixteenth century. On leaving Ketu the people split into two big divisions. One of these went due south and in turn divided into two. One of these sub-divisions went to found a settlement on the eastern side of River Mono and called it Tado. Later, they crossed the river and penetrated the forests on its banks. They then settled in the town called Notsie (a settlement between the rivers Haho and Mono) which had been founded by the advance second sub-division group of migrants from Ketu around 1500”.

The second big group went to the Adele region in present-day Togo. To this group belonged the people who came to be known as the Aḡḡ, Be and Fon. They later joined their relatives at Notsie. There, they were known collectively as Dogboawo. Their leaders were Amega Wenya and his nephew Sroe (Sri, son of Amega Wenya’s sister Asongoe) who was the son of the King of Tado. Sri had fled from Tado with his father’s stool following a succession dispute with his half-brothers after their father’s death. At this juncture, it will be useful to note that the Dogboawo, as well as the entire Ewe people of West Africa, once lived together at Ketu.

The arrival of the Ewe speaking people in Notsie is placed around (ca. 1500). There is no evidence of how long they were in Notsie. However, depending on what tradition one wants to follow, they either came from Ketu to Notsie or Tado to Notsie. Manoukian (1952) writes,

"According to these traditions, in the three main groups, a northern, a middle and southern group, each of which migrated to and settled in different parts of Togoland, their present home".

At any rate, in all accounts, Notsie was their last stop and center of dispersion. Notsie was also a crucial and significant point in the history of the Ewe people, especially the Anlos. Notsie is to the Ewe speaking people as Egypt is to the Jews. In those days there was general hostility everywhere. It is in this context that two walls were built around Notsie. The first, smaller, known as Agbogbovi, was constructed during the reign of Da, perhaps in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. According to some accounts it was built to cut off the royal enclosure from all but members of the royal clan. Like Ketu, the city of Notsie also had a second 17' X 30' wall to protect its inhabitants from external attack on all settled lands and their farmland. The entire community of Notsie lived within these encircling second walls called Agbogbo. On the advice of Agokorli III, the wall imitated two semi-circles, and facing eastward toward Tado. Notsie was divided into separate quarters inhabited by members of the different migrating groups. Each group lived in a separate area under its own head or chief. Although each of these heads was the judge in matters concerning his own people, a supreme king ruled over all of them. The early kings of Notsie ruled well and the kingdom flourished. The prosperity of the city was recorded by the French traveler Elbee in 1669, when he wrote, "the king of this land is powerful and runs it well; his grand politics are devoted to conflict resolution and fairness; his neighbors hesitate to attack because of his power. It is believed that he can deploy easily five thousand warriors and that the town is as populated and as large as Paris."

### **Development of Centralized Power**

From the time of the arrival of immigrants from Tado, the village of Tegbe was governed by a theocratic power known as Mawouno, the grand priest of the divinity, Mawu. An alliance between these two communities produced Notsie. The future Ewe descendants refer in their traditions to an arrangement that allowed them exclusive right to enthrone the kings of Notsie at Tako. From Tako, the royal lineage established its centre at Dakpodzi, the hill of Da (Gayibor and Aguigah, 2005).

The king of Notsie carried several titles including Anyigbafia, Mawoufia and Homefia. Here, as in Tado, the king held only nominal power: he reigned but did not govern. The manner in which he operated, in which he was confined and the prohibitions that governed his actions were very similar to that of Tado. The investiture of the king followed two stages. After the selection of the king, a procession to the sanctuary of Nayo Friko, the chief goes into seclusion for a number of days during which the town nobles and priests conduct various religious ceremonies.

### **The Reign of King Agokoli of Notsie**

When the Dogbos arrived in Notsie, their host King Adelā Atogble received them well and treated them nicely. Adelatorble, the King later married Mama Asongoe, a former wife of Adza Ashimadi, King of Tado, and mother of Kponoe who later became Sri 1, leader and later the first Awoamefia of the Dogbo group. Asongoe gave birth to a number of girls for Adelatorble, the eldest being Mama Kokui Wala, the mother of Tsatsu Adeladza, second Awoamefia of the Dogbo in their new settlement at Anloga.

After the death of Ago, his successor Ago Akoli became king just before the middle of the seventeenth century. According to all accounts he was an energetic and dynamic leader, and he ended some of the proscriptions that inhibited the exercising of his function as leader. Unfortunately, things were not exactly the same during the new regime. It is undeniable that during his reign conflicts arose. Conflict within the city stemmed from Agokoli's desire to leave his traditional enclosure against the wishes of his councilors. Conflict also arose because of the construction of the monumental walls, which involved the mobilization of large manpower and extremely unpleasant conditions. He sought to impose his will on the people and generally tyrannized them by setting them a number of impossible tasks to perform. He punished those who did not obey him and flaunted all traditions. Because of this the name Agokoli is synonymous with singular violence and tyrannical cruelty. This tradition was first transcribed by German pastors and popularized in French by the version of Pastor Kwakume in 1948. Since then, it has become the irrefutable tradition associated with all Ewe people. Regardless of the veracity of the tale, the reign of Agokoli profoundly marked the period and the deep legacy left in the collective memory of the Ewe as the primary cause of the different migrations from Notsie and the occupation of present-day Eweland.



As a tradition, the Ewe speaking people were adorned mainly because of their skills in the arts of drumming, singing and dancing. They were regularly requested to entertain the King, his visitors and other favorites. As a consequence, the Ewes were allowed to play their drums, sing and dance all through the night without any interference from the authorities. Despite all these attributes of the Ewes, the new king was still very hostile to them and ruled all the immigrants with an iron hand.



For example, he ordered that all elderly people should be killed, but the Dogboawo managed to keep one old man in hiding; his name was Tegli. It was Tegli who advised them to ask the women in all Ewe settlement groups to throw bath and other waste water against the thick wall around Notsie to soften it, making it possible for them later, to break it down by the trust of Togbui Tegli's sword or dagger (Adekpu), in the hands of Togbui Asor, leader of one of the Ewe groups, to whom he entrusted it after libation and the invocation of prayers to all known gods and ancestors. The reason for killing all elderly people was to deprive the immigrants of personnel with wisdom, experience and expert legal advice in times of need (see Proverb #24). The old man 'Tegli' was consulted in times of need. There is an old adage that "wisdom and experience develops with old age". At a point in time, King Ago Akoli also ordered the Ewes to make a rope out of clay. Upon consultation with elder Tegli, the Ewes sent a delegation to King Ago Akoli requesting to see an old rope that was made from clay so that they could imitate it. One of the Anlo's Hogbetsotso songs incorporates these words of wisdom, "*Xoxoawo nue wogbea yeyawo do*". This humble and wise request by the Dogboawo infuriated King Ago Akoli. He wondered where they could have gotten this idea. As happened to the Israelis in Egypt prior to the exodus, the King, Ago Akoli saw the wisdom exemplified in that reply and he became more tyrannical to the Dogboawo. He made the Ewe speaking people execute very dangerous and laborious tasks for his wicked pleasure. At several times, he ordered the Ewes to mix a mud concrete (mortar used to make house) with their bare feet and hands. The mud concrete was previously mixed with broken pieces of bottles, glass, nails, torn, and other hazardous materials. Let us note that glass would have been available to Agorkorli and Company, as the Kingdom of Nupe (Bida) existed in the region and earned fame for its native glass industry (S. F. Nadel; *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*, London,

1969, pp. 274-277). During the mixing process, the Dogboawo would bleed profusely from their feet and hands.

### **“Amemakumaku pe hlorbialawo”, and Founding of Agavedzi, Klikor and Bomigo**

A sad and cunningly vengeful event finally broke the camel’s back. It is popularly referred to as: “*Amea le agbe gake bie hlor*”. The story goes like this. One day, a quarrel broke out between a handful of Dogbo-Nyigboawo and factions of King Ago Akorli (aka King Agorkorli) people. During the scuffle, a Dogbo-man named **Aga** was wounded by a Notsie man called **Dzedua**, a close relation of King Agorkorli. Oral history had it that during the fight, King Agorkoli’s relative, Dzedua severely beat Aga to unconsciousness - almost to death. Around that time, a Dogbo-Nyigbo man had died of natural causes. After the fight was over, some of the Dogboawo hatched out a plan and informed King Agokorli that the severely beaten Aga had died as a result of his injuries and broken bones. A funeral was then arranged for the “dead” person, Aga. King Agorkoli was so infuriated with the fact that his own relative was responsible for this heinous crime and ordered that Dzedua be put to death as a deterrent to others who may take the law into their own hands. This decree was subsequently carried out. After Agorkorli had his relation executed for the 'crime', the Dogbos organized the “final funeral rites of Aga” and too much drinking made some of the "drunkards" boast: "*Miawoe nye Adza pe vivo tso Adzatome, Amemakumaku pe hlorbialawo*". A few days or weeks after Dzedua was executed, some of the Dogbo-Nyigbos were also heard bragging that they have taken vengeance on King Agorkoli. They were heard making the statement “*Amea le agbe gake bie hlor*”. Unfortunately, this information got to King Agorkoli. He was so infuriated that he made life completely unbearable to the Dogboawo. The legendary Togbi Atsu Tsala (see below) and several Dogbo elders were worried about the state of events and wanted the Dogbo elders to go and apologize to King Agorkoli, since they believed that the Dogboawo were on the wrong side of the issue. This advice was however not taken. It is one of the reasons why Togbi Atsu Tsala and several others left Notsie prior to the general exodus.

Meanwhile when Aga was in hiding, Agorkorli's people were threatening to 'smoke him out' but he was a close friend to one Notsie man called Kli (son of Torgbi Ekpe) who advised him to escape and accompanied him till they reached present day Aborlove and Afife, meeting the earlier settlers, the Aborlors there. They subsequently left Aborlove and Aga went to settle at Agavedzi, while Kli settled at and founded Klikor. When Agar heard of Agorkorli's plan to send warriors after him, he moved on to Bomigo and later founded a number of settlements at present day Agave territory.

The direct result of this incidence was Agorkorli's decision to wall his State / Kingdom, and as punishment, using the Dogbos to prepare the mortar (with broken pots and thorns mischievously mixed into it) for the building of the wall.

### **The Exodus of Dogboawo and Others from Notsie (Not a Migration!)**

As King Agokoli’s rule became unbearable, various groups of the population decided to migrate. Because of the king's repressive acts, the Ewes initiated a secret plan to escape. Tatar (1973) writes, "Along with the need for more land and food, malcontents, inspired by the tyrannical rule

of Agokoli (King of Notsie in the late 1600's), they instigated another general movement west and south. The groups that migrated are those that make up the Ewe tribe of today".

The 17' X 30' wall that offered protection to the entire population eventually became a barrier to the Dogboawo in planning their escape. However, they finally carried out their plan through. After several consultations with the oldman Tegli at his hiding place, the Dogboawo came up with a plan. They instructed their women to throw water against one spot of the wall while washing their clothes and dishes. The women executed this plan without knowing the reason. One day when the elders found out that the wall was wet and soft enough, they decided to implement the final stage of their plan. The elders gathered all their people together near the wet wall and started drumming, singing and dancing. There was a lot of jubilation in the Dogbo section of the city from late afternoon throughout into the night. About midnight, while the rest of the people of Notsie went to bed and the *Misego* (*Husago*, meaning tighten your waist) drumming was at its performance peak, the Dogbo elders went and brought Tegli the brain behind the plot from his hiding place. He called a few of the trusted people closer to the wet wall and told them the essence of their gathering. He drew out the "Sword of Liberation" from its sheath, pointed it up, invoked the spirit of the gods and the ancestors and said a short prayer. Then he said, "*O Mawugã Kitikata, GuḂo na mi ne miadogo, azo adzo.*" (Oh great God "Kitikata", open the door for us so that we can walk through it and leave). With these words, Tegli thrust the "Sword of Liberation" into the wet and softened wall and bored a big hole (door pattern) into it. The men pushed and the soft wall fell before them. After Scouts had gone ahead to find suitable lands for settlement, the various groups moved out of Notsie.

The women, the sick, and children were led out first, followed by the elderly, while the energetic youth and middle-aged men stayed behind to continue drumming, singing and dancing. After all the others were gone, the drummers and the few remaining singers and dancers followed them. The last part of the group walked backwards on the exact footsteps of the earlier parties for about two miles so that their footprints might not betray their whereabouts. After King Agokoli discovered that the Dogboawo had escaped, he ordered a search for them and demanded their return back to Notsie. The search party however got confused: tracing the footsteps of the Dogboawo always led them back to the dwelling place of the Dogboawo in Notsie. It was a brilliant and well-executed plan. The sword (Adekpu) used by Tegli to bore the hole is said to be preserved to this day as part of the stool regalia of Togbui Asor, leader of Dogbo groups at Ho, a town in Northern Eweland. It must be pointed out here that the history of the Asorgli of Ho mentions also a leader by name Torgbui Kaklu who led their group out of Notsie.

Upon quitting the city, all the fugitives followed the same direction without a precise destination in mind. The majority of versions cite Game, south of Notsie, as the first point of rest. The rest of the story of the exodus of the Dogboawo from Notsie is told with some variations of details by all Ewes, with particular reference to settlements they founded, later continued migration, wars they fought for territory or just survival among hostile people they met on their way, or at the places they decided to settle at. But the general outcome of the exodus is the dispersion of the Ewes as a people from the first settlement they made as a group at **Tsevie**, in present Togo, from where under different leaders according to lineage, the group split into three – south westwards towards the Volta, northwards toward the mountain range and south-eastwards toward the sea, to frustrate the pursuit of Agokoli and finally to settle in their present homes. The old man Torgbui Tegli was reported to have died at Tsevie and was buried there.

Thus, from Notsie the Ewe traveled together eventually to a town which is now called Tsevie in the Republic of Togoland. It is about twenty kilometers from Lome. The name Tsevie means “let it grow for a while longer”. When the Ewes settled in this area after leaving Notsie, they decided to sow some cowpeas to sustain themselves. As if by fate, their new neighbors started becoming hostile prompting another decision to move. One day the Ewes woke up only to find that wild pigs destroyed the farms. The horror and concern generated by this tragedy led to the battle cry which is now made into a song: “*Ayibo Pee, Hawo Pee!, Ayibo Pee, Hawo Pee! Egble o, Enyo o, OOO!!.*” A free translation of this is, “See how pigs have destroyed the cowpea farm!. Whether good or bad, we don’t care, and we would not despair.” It is worthy to note that the town Tsevie got its name from the plantation episode. The story is that before the cowpeas could fully mature, the insecurity of the place led to agitation among sections of the people for early departure. This was opposed by others who insisted that they should wait, despite all odds, for the crops to mature for harvesting before making the next move. Apparently, the disagreement led to the departure of the main group with the others remaining there to give the name Tsevie to the place.

Here is another historical fact about an Ewe food crop (Agbodeka, 1997). Cassava, the most widely used root crop is named in Ewe as *agbeli*. Literally translated, it means, “There is life.” The story is told of the migration of our ancestors who during their long journey became hungry and had nothing to eat. Fortunately, they came across a root crop, which they suspected could be edible. They uprooted the crop, boiled it and ate, and found it to be tasty and satisfying. Experiencing no harmful effects, they acknowledged the crop as life giving. Cassava has since become a very useful crop in Eweland and its utilization extended beyond simply boiling. Cassava is now processed into other products, which are used in the diet in a great variety of ways.

We have read above that during the migration from Notsie, the people split into three broad groups, which were to populate the northern, central and southern areas of their new home stretching up to the Volta in the West. Oral tradition says the Central and Northern Dogbo groups were led out of Tsevie by leaders who included Akoto, Kodzo De, Amega Lee, Asor and Bisiaku and they led the various branches to settle places like Hohoe, Matse, Peki, Asorgli, Awudome, Ve, Gbi, Kpando, Logba, Alavanyo, Kpalime, Agu, Kpedze, Wodze, and other towns. Amega Lee however left the group and went on his own with some followers/family southwards till he made a settlement close to ‘Ge’ or Accra, which is Legon, still bearing his name. He left later to go in search of the main Dogbo group which had settled at **Anlɔga**.

From the central and northern groups, some Dogboawo went and founded the settlements of Ho, Akovia, Takla, Kpenoe, Hodzo, Klevi, Sokode, Abutia, and Adaklu all in the central part of their new home.

The third group made up of various sections of the Dogboawo moved together southward. The group split at Gafe and further divisions occurred within the sub-groups as the southward movement, coupled with the founding of various settlements, progressed. They include the founders of Be, Togo, Wheta, Anɔ, Klikor, Ave, Fenyi, Afife, Dzodze, Mafi, Agave, Tavie, Tokoe, and Tanyigbe.

### **Establishment of Some Ewe Townships**

It was at Tsevie that the Ewes divided into different groups, one of which the Aᅇᅇ Ewes belong to. During the exodus, Agbana one of Togbi Wenya's children led the advanced party. Before moving out, it was usual for scouts who were powerful hunters to go out first and look out for safe routes. Togbi Tse Tsali Akplormada, a mystic, was one such scout for the Dogbo group, who reportedly cast a sleeping spell on the Notsie people to enable the Ewes to move out undisturbed amidst drumming and dancing, moving backwards to show footsteps entering rather than leaving. His twin brother Atsu Tsala, left the Notsie settlement earlier, went to Awukugua, performed miracles and healed with herbs. Osei Tutu found him there at the court of the Awukuguahene and invited him to Kumasi to help him claim his throne as Asantehene, unify the Asante State, and he conjured out of the sky, a golden Stool that has till this day embodied the soul of the Asante nation. He was called 'Okomfo from Notsie' and corrupted into '*Komfo Anorkye*'. We will have a detailed inside story of this legendary and mystical personality, his lineage and travails in pre-colonial times in later parts of this narrative.

Togbi Tse Tsali Akpormada with other hunters such as Togbi Tsatsu Batemenu (aka Adeladza) were members of the Dogbo scouts from Tsevie who went south eastwards, under their leaders. The present-day Aᅇᅇs traveled from Tsevie as one unit, but later divided into two groups under the leadership of Amega Atsu Madopkui Wenya and his nephew Togbi Sri I (aka Kponoe Adza Ashimadi). Torgbui Atsu Wenya led the main group which went south and moved along the sea shore westwards, founding settlements along the way. After many discoveries and settlements, Wenya's group reached a sandbar and called it "*ke dzi*" which means the top of the sand. It is presently called Kedzi. Subsequently the group crossed the sandbar and Wenya informed his followers, "*mieva do kea ta*" meaning they had reached the 'head' or the tip of the sand. Consequently, the settlement there was named Keta. They later founded other towns including Tegbi and Woe. As they reached what is now called present-day Aᅇᅇgā, Wenya was found to be aging and tiring. When his followers asked him when they were going to leave again, he answered: "*Nye amea meᅇᅇ. Afia deke yiyi megale nunye o.*" (I am exhaustively 'coiled', my limbs are shrunken. I can't go any further). The name of this settlement was also taken after "*Me ᅇᅇ*" and was contracted to "*Aᅇᅇ.*" Being the capital of the whole Aᅇᅇ nation, the adjective "*gā*" meaning big was added and it became **Aᅇᅇgā**, and the people **Aᅇᅇawo**.

Later on, some settlers of Klikor and founders of Wheta also left off from Amega Atsu Wenya's group.

The second group of the Dogbo people was led by Kponoe Ashimadi (aka Sroe I or Sri I). Sri and his followers took the northern route off the Atlantic Coast and settled at present Klikor where Kli found the settlement. Kponoe then continued by canoe via the Keta lagoon to settle at Fiakor, and founded various communities on the northern shore of the great Keta Lagoon, but later moving on to join the uncle Wenya at Aᅇᅇgā and take over his leadership role as King of the Dogbos now Aᅇᅇawo. As we saw earlier, Kponoe's half-brothers Adzofia and Adzoyi co-founded Dzodze and Asem founded Mafi-Kumasi. The following brothers of Torgbui Sri I, also children of King Ashimadi, settled at various places giving rise to some differences in clan names. Descendants of his brother Adu Lo led by his son Adisre and Ege Amegayibor, brother of Sri I, settled at Dzodze. Asuma settled at Penyi. Eti settled at Ave. Kofi Akpo settled at Mafi. Other settlements followed later from additional splits, such as Some. These are all people of Dogbo descent and became part of the southern Ewes.

Meanwhile, other groups also split off from Sri's party and found states of Ave, Fenyi, Dzodze, and Mafi. The founders of Afife also formed part of Sri's party at one time but tarried and found Afife. The remainder of Sri's party went on to find Kodzi from where Sri later on rejoined his uncle Wenya at Aḥlɔgã. The towns or settlements actually founded by Wenya and Sri, their families and immediate circle of followers came to constitute one kingdom - Aḥlɔ with the capital at Aḥlɔgã. Other towns that belong to Aḥlɔ are Anyako, Seva, Kodzi, Alakple, Atiavi, Asadame, Fiakor, Tsiamé, Atito, Atiteti, Atorkor, Whuti, Srogboe, Woe, Tegbi, Keta and Kedzi, to name only a few. In the neighborhood of Aḥlɔ, settlements founded by other members of the Dogbo sub-group who had been part of Wenya and Sri's party at one time or the other also evolved into states like Klikor, Ave, Fenyi, Dzodze, Wheta and Afife. Oral tradition links the founding of Volo, Daffor, Battor, Agave and Tefle with the third group of people from Nɔtsie. Thus the people of Aḥlɔ state and all these other states described above belonged originally to the Dogbo group under Wenya and constituted essentially one people as they entered their new home in what is now southeastern Ghana. Another Dogbo sub-group or its divisions founded Be, Togo, in present-day Republic of Togo.

From available evidence, it would appear that the Aḥlɔ and their neighbors arrived in their present homes sometime around the early part of the seventeenth century. We do not know anything about the original inhabitants of these areas. However, it is believed that either they fled as the Aḥlɔs were coming, or became assimilated into the Aḥlɔ population. Some of the implements and tools used by these earlier inhabitants have survived in the form of *Sofia* or *Sokpewo* – called stones of god. In what is now Aḥlɔ territory there were traces of the former inhabitants at Woe, Atiavi and also at Avenofeme. This final migration saw the Aḥlɔs in their present homes by the early 1700's. Later around 1792, as a result of an agreement that miscarried, the residents of Keta migrated to and found Agbozume, which became the capital of a new state of Some. Two of Togbi Wenya's descendants, Awanyedor and Akaga were co-founders of Agbozume (was established after Keta War of 1790).

The majority left in bulk. A few who could not go with them left in small batches afterwards. A few fled to seek refuge with relatives at Wuga (Zomayi). When they started coming back after sometime because of their landed property, the Aḥlɔ asked help from Kobu Koto (Nana Akoto Kwafɔ, Akwamuhene) to eject the remnants. Blekusu became the dividing line between Aḥlɔ and Some along the coast.

During this and other times, Aḥlɔga provided a court of second instance for Aflao and Wheta who readily identified themselves with Aḥlɔ. She was, therefore, regarded as the big sister and was referred to in matters of common interest. Together, these states constitute greater Aḥlɔ.

In addition to Aḥlɔ Ewes, there is a large number of other Ewe states like Adaklu, Peki, Ho, Tove, Keve, Kpando and Hohoe, to their north of Ghana and Be, Gen, Watsi, etc., in the Republic of Togo.

### **Ewe Unification – May 1956 Plebiscite**

Unlike the political and social organization of the Akan, where matrilineal rule prevails, the Ewe are essentially a patrilineal people. The founder of a community became the chief and was

usually succeeded by his paternal relatives. The largest independent political unit was a chiefdom, the head of which was essentially a ceremonial figure who was assisted by a council of elders. Chiefdoms ranged in population from a few hundred people in one or two villages to several thousands of people in chiefdom with a large number of villages and surrounding countryside. Unlike the Asante among the Akan, no Ewe chiefdom gained hegemonic power over its neighbor.

The rise of Ewe nationalism in both Ghana and Togo was more of a reaction to the May 1956 plebiscite that partitioned Eweland between the Gold Coast and Togo than to any sense of overriding ethnic unity.

Before the First World War, Togoland occupied the area from Lome to the present western boundary of Benin on the east, and north of the current Anlo-Ewe land and Tornu areas. After the First World War, Togoland was divided into two parts. The western Togoland was given to the British to administer with the Gold Coast, while eastern Togoland was given to the French. Just before independence of Ghana, a Plebiscite was held to decide whether western Togoland would like to unite with eastern Togoland or remain with the Gold Coast. The result was that western Togoland decided to remain with the Gold Coast. After independence the south-eastern bulge of the Gold Coast which comprised mostly Eweland which was made up of Anlo-Ewes was added to the Togoland which was a Mandated Territory under the Security Council of the United Nations, to form the present Volta Region of Ghana, with the regional capital city at Ho. So, the Plebiscite united Anlo-Eweland with western Togoland which lies north of Anlo-Ewe land. The partition of Togoland was achieved when the Security Council divided Togoland into east and west Togoland.

The common 'Ewegbe' remains a unifying element to identify the Ewes as one people, but living in different countries as a result of Colonization, the scramble for Africa and the division of the spoils of war by the Colonizing powers after World War One, at the Berlin Conference; and then the plebiscite conducted by the United Nations in 1956, just before the Gold Coast gained Independence on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, 1957 to become Ghana. Thus we now have Ewes, some with close family ties, in Republics of Ghana, Togo and Benin. But as a people, the Ewes are one people, and especially in the Diaspora, far from home, they are each others' keepers and look out for each other. That is one of the reasons why CEANA (Council of Ewe Associations in North America) was formed. This is laudable and must be maintained and nurtured to grow, so that even though politically we belong to different Nationalities, as a people with common origin and language, we can form a strong unified Eweland.

### **National Flag of Ewe People**

An ethnic flag, just like the Ewe Flag is a flag that symbolizes a certain ethnic group. Ethnic flags are often introduced to the ethnic community through the respective cultural or political ethnic movements. In many cases, they have ancient origins, or, at least, they are inspired by symbols rooted in historical and cultural tradition of a people.

They are popular among ethnic minorities and some ethnic majorities, especially in multiethnic countries.

An ethnic flag can be either recognized or not by the central government. Some ethnic flags are banned by the central governments of sovereign states because they also serve as the flags of separatist groups, or groups perceived as such by the prevailing authorities.



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