

<http://www.richardhodges.com/ladzekpo/Intro.html>

The Ewe are one of Ghana's five main ethnic groups (United States Jan. 2002) and reside mainly in the southeast region of the country (*Ethnologue* July 2002) but also inhabit the southern half of Togo (Ewe Culture 2002). According to an article by professor D.E.K. Amenumey, the Ewe people originally came from Ketu, a Yoruba area in modern day Benin, but were eventually forced to migrate eastward as a result of Yoruba expansion (ibid.). However, another source claims that the original Ewe homeland is Oyo in western Nigeria (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1989, 625), and yet another source suggests that the Ewe originally migrated from Kotu or Amedzowe east of the Niger (Dance Drummer 2001). Two accounts suggest that the Ewe migrated into Ghana in the fifteenth century (ibid.; Ghanaweb n.d.).

According to *Ethnologue*, in 1991 the population of Ewe in Ghana was 1,615,700 or 13% of the population (July 2002). In Togo, the Ewe population of 861,900 accounts for 20% of the population (*Ethnologue* July 2002). In both Ghana and Togo, the Ewe speak four dialects that are Anglo, Awuna, Hudu and Kotafoa (ibid.) which belong to the Kwa group of Sudanic languages (Dance Drummer 2001).

According to *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the Ewe's two main occupations are farming and sea fishing, while they also engage in spinning, weaving, pottery making, black-smithing as well as trading (1989, 625). Maize and yams are their staple food (ibid.). Ewe religion is centred on Mawa, the creator god, along with several lesser gods; however, many Ewe have become Christians in modern times (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1989, 625).

References to the following Ewe rituals were found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate: a Blekete ritual that involves teenage priestesses; a divine dance that is performed by a priestess of Yeve; a divine drummer of Yeve who performs the God of Thunder; and teen girls engaging in a puberty rite (Ladzekpo 1995b).

The Anlo-Ewe, also known as Anglo-Ewe, are Ewe who speak the Anlo dialect (Ghanaweb 2002). The following account of their rituals and traditions are described by C.K. Ladzekpo, director of the African Music Program at the University of Berkeley:

Communal enculturation of every Anlo-Ewe starts from infancy and comes to climax with ceremonies and rites ushering the youth into adulthood. The enculturation process begins at the dawn of the seventh day of birth with rites and ceremonies known as *ame-hehe-de-go*. *Ame-hehe-de-go* literary means "outdooing" a person. The major activities of *ame-hehe-de-go* include, the formal naming of a baby, introducing the baby to community and community accepting a collective guardianship.

Rite of *amedzodzo* or reincarnation is the next major communal activity of the enculturation process. In Anlo-Ewe belief, every new-born child is a partial rebirth of an old ancestral soul in a new body. Through intense divinations, soon after birth, the ancestral soul making a new beginning is identified along with other vital information that would guide in achieving a long and happy life.

Puberty rites known as *nugbeto* is the communal forum in which the Anlo-Ewe female acquires the knowledge of the social responsibilities of this critical biological transition. Very respected female members of the community are the officiating elders. Their wisdom, life experience, self-esteem and self-confidence provide good role models for the young adults. The traditions of occupational groups are other vital elements of the social culture. These groups are devoted to the development of the skill and resources to sustain the occupational activities of the Anlo-Ewe. Major occupational activities include hunting, farming, fishing, and manufacturing of a traditional cloth called *kente* (1995a).