

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Ewe (Anlo and Fon), Ewe, Niger-Congo

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): ewe

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): 8° 00'N and 1° 10'E, in Togo and Ghana

1.4 Brief history: The Ewe, 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 which partitioned Africa. A portion went to Britain, another to Germany, and a small section in Benin went to France. After World War I, the Germans-occupied areas were given to Britain and France as mandated territories by the League of Nations. Those who were under the British are now the Ghanaian Ewe, those under the French are Togo, and Benin Ewe, respectively. And the Anlo Ewe are part of the Ghanaian group. (Ladzekpo)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: The Ewe have been influenced much by European contact. The following features are some of the effects:

- Monotheism (their god is called Mawu)
- Their borders with other tribes are the borders set during the Berlin Conference of 1844
- Due to European induced separation, two distinct tribes of Ewe, the Anlo and the Fon, formed

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): "Geologically, the features of this tract are entirely different to those of the Gold Coast. The latter, as has been already stated, is hilly, the coast-line showing numerous small hills; and the country inland rising by successive steps in ranges of hills, which culminate in the well-known Adansi Hills, and the Kwao range more to the east. It is covered with dense and impenetrable forest, and the lagoon system extends over but small areas, such as from the Volta River to the westward towards Ningo. To the east of the Volta, however, that is, from the commencement of the Slave Coast, the lagoon system is almost continuous, and, generally speaking, the whole littoral consists of a ridge of sand, varying in breadth from a few yards to two or three miles, shutting off from the sea the broad stretches of shallow water that are termed lagoons." (Ellis 105)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: "The population of all Ewe speaking people has always been a subject of debate. Awoonor (1974:12) writes, "According to various uncoordinated census accounts and estimates, the Ewe may number anywhere between two and five million" (Ladzekpo). However, modern estimates are about 2,000,000 Ewe speaking peoples in Togo and Ghana, and another 1 million abroad, giving a total of 3 million.

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): The Ewe eat small scale grains that were grown in the Ghanaian lowlands. Rice, low amounts of wheat, and native wild rices were common. (Ellis 22) "Most Ewe are farmers, corn (maize) and yams being their staple foods" (Britannica).

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Palm-oil, fats from animals

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: The Ewe used spears, swords, bows, slings, and sometimes firearms traded from Europeans (Ellis 124).

2.4 Food storage: There is no information about food storage. However, it is assumed that food was grown continuously annually, and that the Ewe stored food for no more than a month.

2.5 Sexual division of production: The man is definitely seen as dominant. From all sources observed, there seems to be equal division of labor between the genders, but however, it should be noted that most work is done by slaves, and not freed people. "Women play a major role in the markets as do many West African women. They are wholesalers as well as retailers, and they hold a near monopoly over trade in many coastal ports. They deal in a wide variety of items, many of which are produced by men such as a woven cloth called *keta*" (Shoup).

2.6 Land tenure: "Since by Dahomi law no individual save the king can possess property of any kind except by pure tolerance, the land of the kingdom as a whole is the property of the king, who allows his subjects to cultivate or otherwise use portions for themselves. "When a man has received a grant of land from the king, he can cultivate it and make use of its products, secure from the interference of any third party; but he holds the land only during the king's pleasure, and the latter can at any moment revoke his former grant, and give the same piece of land to another. The king, in short, yields only the usufruct of the land; but the right to oust the man in occupation is, like the right to plunder, only rarely exercised. Waste land which has not been granted to any one by the king may be cultivated by any one; but a man who takes advantage of this privilege runs the risk of having the land, which he has made fruitful by his labour, granted by the king to some other person, without his having the right even to take for himself the standing crops. Amongst the other tribes, the land of the tribe belongs to the tribe collectively, and is attached to the stool of the king" (Ellis).

2.7 Ceramics: "The Ewe used small earthen pots for everyday use. However, they also had large decorative pots that were used in religious ceremonies." (Ellis 98)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: The Ewe have a peculiar custom of sharing punishments and payments: "Members of a family have a right to be fed and clothed by the family head, and the latter has in his turn a right to pawn, and in some cases to sell, them. The family collectively is responsible for all crimes and injuries to person or property committed by any one of its members, and each member is assessible for a share of the compensation to be paid. On the other hand, each member of the family receives a share of the compensation paid to it for any crime or injury committed against the person or property of any one of its members. Compensation is always demanded from the family instead of from the individual wrong-doer, and is paid to the family instead of to the individual wronged. In respect to this custom of collective responsibility and indemnification, the Ewe family resembles the old Welsh "kindred": the practice in Wales, however, has generally been regarded as being connected with the tenure of the family lands, whilst, amongst the Ewe-speaking peoples there is no private property in land, which all belongs to the tribe." (Ellis)

2.9 Food taboos: There are no documented food taboos according to any of the sources.

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): N/A

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): N/A

4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f): "As on the Gold Coast, a young girl advertises her arrival at the age of puberty by visiting her relatives and friends, attired in her best cloths, and bedecked with the family jewelry; after which, should she not already be betrothed, a suitor soon declares himself." (Ellis 34)
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): As reproduction is heavily encouraged in Ewe society, females will generally give their first birth soon after their marriage.
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): "A male typically has three or four wives, all of whom have a responsibility to bear him children." (Ellis 99) Based on this information, family sizes for one man can range from 6-7 to 15-20 depending on how many wives a man has and how many children those wives give him.
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): N/A
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): The age of first marriage for males and females are both similar. They get married when they first hit puberty. This tends to be anywhere from age 14-18.
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: There are no numbers given from the sources, but it is said that divorce or "separation" was common. (Ellis) Due to this, we can assume that there is a significant proportion of marriages ending in divorce.
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: "If the proposal be acceptable the family is informed of the offer, and the two rum-jugs are returned empty to the suitor as a sign that it is accepted. He then sends two more full flasks, with two heads of cowries and two pieces of cotton cloth for the girl; after which he enters into negotiations with the parents as to the price he will be required to pay for her. The gift of cowries and cotton cloth constitutes betrothal, after which the suitor can claim compensation for any liberties that other men may take with his *fiancée*; on the other hand, the suitor, during the period between the betrothal and the marriage, and which, if he be poor and the girl's price high, may be long, is expected to perform all the religious duties that may be incumbent on her." (Ellis)
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: "The eldest brother is the head of the family, and his heir is the brother next in age to himself; if he has no brother, his heir is the eldest son of his eldest sister." (Ellis 204)
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Parent (mother) nurses for two years and the child lives in parents' household until age of marriage, at which time they (if female) will move in with their husband's family. (Shoup)
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: No homosexuality recorded in any of the sources
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? No
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: While a man can choose to allow his wife to have relations with other men, forced sex is heavily outlawed in Ewe society and brings severe consequences involving death. Thus, its occurrence is rare.
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): Members outside of family.
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? A female "cannot be forced into a union that is absolutely repugnant to her." (Ellis 199) Also, adultery can only be committed with a married woman. A female has relations with a man of the tribe, it is not a crime, but it will severely diminish her worth when she is to be married.
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: None
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? Husband's family
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: N/A
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades: No
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): None
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
- 4.24 Joking relationships? Older men who possess no wives are sometimes ridiculed
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: Inheritance is patrilineal, but kinship and membership in families are defined by the relationship to females of the family
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules: A person cannot marry another person in the same "family". It is punishable by law. (Ellis)
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? "Marriage is usually celebrated on a Sunday, the bridegroom sends a messenger with rum to the parents of the bride soon after daybreak, and asks for his wife. The parents affect reluctance, and delay the messenger with various excuses till about noon, when the bridegroom dispatches a second messenger on the same errand. This messenger also fails, and it is not until the arrival of a third one, who comes about sunset, that the parents overcome their hesitation. The bride, scented with civet (*atiki*), and her skin given a reddish hue with a preparation of the bark of a tree called *to*, is then escorted by her family to the house of the bridegroom, where a feast has been prepared. The feasting continues till about midnight, when the 1 bridegroom retires to his bedroom and sits on his couch. The bride is then brought in to him by four matrons, who place her hands in those of her husband, saying— "This is your wife—we give her to you. Take her. If she pleases you and behaves well, treat her kindly. If she behaves ill, correct her." They then drink rum with the young couple and retire. Should the girl prove to be a virgin the bridegroom soon reappears amongst the revellers with the " tokens of virginity" on the cloth that covered the couch, and exhibits them to his friends; while on the part of the bride, a young girl who has been purposely left concealed when the matrons retired, so as to prevent the possibility of false accusation on the part of the husband, bears to her friends the under cloth which all native women wear passed through the girdle of beads. Should the girl prove to have been unchaste, the husband has the right to send her back to her parents, and recover from them both the money he paid for her and the value of all presents he has made. The next morning, supposing all to have gone well, the husband sends presents to

the parents of the bride, and the latter, after a week's cohabitation with him, returns to her old home. Seven days later she cooks food and sends it to her husband, who next morning sends a present in return, and in the evening the wife returns to the husband and permanently takes up her abode with him. This postponement of regular cohabitation with the husband after the marriage has been consummated, is also found amongst the Turcomans and other peoples, and is perhaps a survival in a disintegrated shape of the form of marriage by capture. The final return to the husband is celebrated by a feast given on the day following it." (Ellis 156)

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? "This, which is the proper or birth-name, is called *nyi*, in contradistinction to the *nyi-sese*, or "strong names," that are adopted in later life. The choice of the *nyi* is governed by certain rules. Usually it is the *nyi* of the ancestor whom the Bukono alleges to have sent the child into the world, but Atsu is the name given to the first-born of twin-brothers, Tse to the second, and Dosu to a male child born after twins; while children who have been sent by their great-grandmothers are called Degen-no. If a man adopts the worship and divination of Ife before the births of his children, the first boy is called Amoso and the first girl Alugba; the second boy JVlocho, and the second girl Alugba-we. In Dahomi, the *nyi* is not retained long by male children, being usually dropped when the boy reaches manhood, after which he takes his name from the position he holds, changing it as he changes his position." (Ellis 154)

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Either

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Parents of the child arrange marriage

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: N/A

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: These deaths usually involve breaking the law against a high ranking or rich family. In these cases, the punishment can be death.

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Theft, adultery, trespassing

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): The Ewe have many relationships with neighboring societies ranging from trading to arranged marriages to war raids for slaving (Ewe, Shoup).

4.18 Cannibalism? Cannibalism is outlawed. (Shoup)

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: N/A

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): The Ewe climate is constant throughout the year.

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): "As on the Gold Coast, the government of a tribe is in the hands of the chiefs and the king, to whom the former owe allegiance as their suzerain lord. It is that of an aristocracy, for the king is controlled by the chiefs, -and can make neither peace nor war, nor enter into an)' engagements or negotiations which affect the interests of the tribe, without their consent, and such matters are always deliberated upon by the king and chiefs in council. The populace have no voice in the government at all. The king usually deals only with the chiefs of districts, each of whom is, as it were, a petty king in his own domain; for the sub-chiefs and head-men of his district owe direct allegiance to him. These district chiefs have their own local courts for the investigation and settlement of disputes and the punishment of crime; but any person who may be dissatisfied with the decision arrived at by a local court, has the right of appeal to the court of the king. The chiefs of minor towns, and the head-men of villages, in the district, similarly exercise jurisdiction in minor matters in their own spheres, subject to the right of appeal to the court" (Ellis 159).

5.4 Post marital residence: "The next morning, supposing all to have gone well, the husband sends presents to the parents of the bride, and the latter, after a week's cohabitation with him, returns to her old home. Seven days later she cooks food and sends it to her husband, who next morning sends a present in return, and in the evening the wife returns to the husband and permanently takes up her abode with him. This postponement of regular cohabitation with the husband after the marriage has been consummated, is also found amongst the Turcomans and other peoples, and is perhaps a survival in a disintegrated shape of the form of marriage by capture. The final return to the husband is celebrated by a feast given on the day following it." (Ellis 157)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): All lands are considered to belong to the King. The people share the land and pay the king his portion for using his land.

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): N/A

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: N/A

5.8 Village and house organization: "In a space used as a drill-ground there had been raised a bank, not of earth, but of bundles of very thorny bushes, about 400 metres long, six broad, and two high. Forty paces beyond, and parallel with this heap, rose the framework of a house of the same length, but about five metres broad and high. The two slopes of the roof were covered with a thick bed of the same thorns. Fifteen metres beyond this curious house was a row of huts. The whole represented a fortified town, the assault of which would have cost heavy loss" (Ellis 193).

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): N/A

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Both

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: Villages are composed of multiple clans, and its leader is usually the head of the most powerful/wealthy/influential clan. All clans owe allegiance to a king. Within clans, there are many lineages. In each lineage, there is a male head. While the position of power is always occupied by a male, the son of the male's sister becomes the next male head, instead of the male's own son. (Ellis and Shoup)

5.12 Trade: "This trade consisted of the importation of European goods, wines, spirits, tobacco, gunpowder, and muskets, and the exportation of slaves. There was at that time little, if any, legitimate export trade, and it was as a slave emporium that Whydah was celebrated. This trade had existed for some considerable time at this point, and it was on account of the facility with which cargoes of

slaves were here obtained, that this part of West Africa was termed the Slave Coast; just as the Gold and Grain Coasts were named after their chief products, gold, and the malaghetta pepper, or Grains of Paradise” (Ellis 292).

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Yes, more powerful/wealthy/higher ranking families received special treatment with the law. Also, there is a prominent slave class.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: N/A, presumably a large amount of time

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): “Priests frequently carry a long stick, peculiar to the craft, terminating in a fork, to which one or two shreds of calico are attached. They are restricted in diet according to the god they serve, some being forbidden to eat mutton, others fowls, &c. Most of them live upon the fees paid by worshippers and the offerings made at the temples; but many who do not realize enough by their profession follow other avocations as well. They learn a number of medicinal receipts, and are proficient in the knowledge of poisons and their antidotes, which is a secret of the craft, and they derive a considerable income from this source.” (Ellis 146)

6.2 Stimulants: “In regard to possession, the priests seem to be fully aware of the fact that an empty stomach is productive of hallucinations and mental aberrations; hence persons who wish to consult the gods are enjoined to fast, while drugs are sometimes administered as well.” (Ellis 150)

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

-Birth: “As on the Gold Coast the woman, as soon as she finds herself pregnant, offers sacrifice to the gods, more especially to the protecting *noli* of the family; and as soon as the child is born, both mother and infant are taken charge of by a priestess, who offers sacrifice to Legba, to prevent his interfering with or doing harm to them. The mother and child are considered unclean, and it is not until forty days have elapsed that the former may return to her usual avocation, though she is usually purified with lustral water seven days after the birth.” (Ellis 153)

-Death: “The corpse is washed, attired in the best cloths, bedecked with ornaments and placed in a chair, before which a small table with food and drink is set out, while another piece of cloth is placed beside it as a change of raiment for Dead-laud. The deceased is implored to eat, and portions of food are put to his lips. During this part of the ceremony the relatives must fast and not wash. They indulge largely, however, in intoxicants, and dance and sing in honour of the deceased, amid the beating of drums and the firing of guns.” (Ellis 157)

6.4 Other rituals: Drum dancing, Marriage rituals, Priests and Priestesses oversee a number of other rituals

6.5 Myths (Creation): “Before the Bremen missionaries reached West Africa in the 19th century, the Anlo-Ewe knew God and called him "Mawu". When they invoke his presence, they elaborate on the name: "O Mawuga Sogbolisa, Kitikata adanu wo to amesi wo asi wo afo." This means the Great God who created hand and foot. But they have worshipped him through their traditional intermediary deities. Some of them are: Yewe, Eda, Nana, Mamiwota, Afa, etc. Before medical science was known in West Africa, the priests of these deities healed our patients.” (Ladzekpo)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): “The other festivals held in honour of Danh-gbi were not secret, and the populace could take part in them. There were three held every year, when oxen, sheep, fowls, &c. were sacrificed, and the day was passed in dancing, singing, feasting, and drinking, amid the sounds of barbaric music. On these occasions the priests drank rum mixed with blood.” (Ellis 62)

- “On February 7th, there was a procession of about 700 of the king's women, who danced before the guard-house at Dahomi palace, while a number of men under arms were drawn up at a distance to prevent the populace approaching. When the women retired, the commander-in-chief advanced with about 5000 soldiers, who went through various evolutions, concluding with a general dance. Next day there was a festival at the parade-ground at Agringomi palace. On each side of the entrance were three human heads, which had been cut off the night before. In the centre of the square was a lofty tent, or large umbrella, conical in shape, about 50 feet high, and 40 feet wide. It rested upon a circular iron railing, through which the king could see what passed. He soon made his appearance and seated himself under his tent. After the music had played about an hour, a buffoon danced a grotesque dance, and the procession then began.” (Ellis 161)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: There were both priests and priestesses and both are treated the same

6.8 Missionary effect: Europeans sent diplomats and missionaries to the Ewe requesting that they cease slavery and abandon human sacrifices. The mission ended badly and with nothing more than bad feeling on both sides. (Ellis 331)

6.9 RCR revival: N/A

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: “Like the *kra*, the *luwo* existed before the birth of the man, and has probably been the indwelling spirit of a long series of men: after his death it becomes a *fwli*, or *luwo* without a tenement (the Tshi *sis*a). For a short interval after the death of the man the *noli* lingers near the grave in which is interred the body it formerly inhabited; after which it usually enters a new-born human body, and again becomes a *luwo*; but, failing a human body, it can enter that of an animal. If it should not succeed in entering the body either of a man or of an animal, then the homeless *noli* wanders about, working good or evil according to its disposition. The good, however, is generally confined to the family of the man in whose body it last resided, and for which, through association, it seems to have some friendly feeling. It works evil by causing sickness, by entering human bodies during the temporary absences of their *luwo*, or sometimes even by attempting to force a way in and displace the *luwo*. When such an internal struggle is taking place in a man, he is convulsed and foams the mouth, writhes, and gnashes his teeth. A *noli* who works evil is classed as an *abonsa*, "malicious spirit." (Ellis 102)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? No

6.12 Is there teknonymy? N/A

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): In the past, the Ewe have been voodoo practitioners as well as animists. Some are also monotheists who believe in Mawu. More recently, with the arrival of Europeans, many have become Christians. (Ellis)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: "Besides the ordinary tribal tattoo marks borne by all natives, the priesthood in Dahomi bear a variety of such marks, some very elaborate, and an expert can tell by the marks on a priest to what god he is vowed, and what rank he holds in the order. These hierarchal marks consist of lines, scrolls, diamonds, and other patterns, with sometimes a figure, such as that of the crocodile or chameleon. The shoulders are frequently seen covered with an infinite number of small marks, like dots, set close together. All these marks are considered sacred, and the laity are forbidden to touch them." (Ellis 146)

7.2 Piercings: N/A

7.3 Haircut: "Priests and priestesses may usually be distinguished by their having half the head shaved, while the hair allowed to grow long on the other half; priests always conform to this custom, and so do the great majority of the priestesses, though it is only imperatively required to be observed by those of Sapatán. Priests generally wear white caps, and priestesses decorate the head with beads, cowries, or the red feathers of parrots. In Dahomi the latter wear a broad-brimmed, steeplecrowned hat, called the *ta-bla*, the crown of which is very narrow, while the brim is enormous; they have gay-coloured cloths wrapped round the waist and falling to the feet, and handkerchiefs covering the bosom." (Ellis 146)

7.4 Scarification: N/A

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Chiefs and priests wear head adornment. Rarely, powerful clan members will wear one also

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Priests and ritual leaders have special clothing/headwear.

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: "Female followers of Dafih-gbi, or *Danh-sio*, usually appear in public with the bosom smeared with palm-oil; but their distinguishing mark is a necklace, called *adunka*, made of a very fine string twisted from the filaments of a palm-leaf. On ceremonial occasions they wear a fillet of the same material, with anklets, bracelets, and neck-strings of cowries. Their ordinary clothing consists of a strip of cotton-print, hanging from the waist and barely reaching to the knee. They are most licentious, and have not the slightest regard for public decency. Should a *Dahh-si* meet a man alone in the street, she unfastens her waist-cloth, and, holding it back, exposes herself naked without the least shame; sometimes even she goes so far as to importune or seize the man. Whenever it rains they strip off their cloths, fold them up, hold them under the arm-pit, and proceed about their business stark naked." (Ellis 147)

7.8 Missionary effect: Christianity is becoming a prominent religious force due to the intervention of missionaries.

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: N/A

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: The eldest son is always classified as the most important, and in the case of the mother's firstborn son, he is an heir. The subsequent siblings are rarely classified.

8.2 Sororate, levirate: No mention in any of the sources.

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

-Human sacrifice is common after wartime

-The Ewe are known for their dance-drumming ceremonies.

Numbered references

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