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978-1-107-10827-1 - Slavery, Memory, and Religion in Southeastern Ghana, c. 1850–Present

Meera Venkatachalam

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## Slavery, Memory, and Religion in Southeastern Ghana, c. 1850–Present

Based on a decade of fieldwork in southeastern Ghana and analysis of secondary sources, this book aims to reconstruct the religious history of the Anlo-Ewe peoples from the 1850s. In particular, it focuses on a corpus of rituals collectively known as ‘Fofie’, which derived their legitimacy from engaging with the memory of the slave-holding past. The Anlo developed a sense of discomfort about their agency in slavery in the early twentieth century, which they articulated through practices such as ancestor veneration and spirit possession, and by forging links with descendants of peoples they formerly enslaved. Conversion to Christianity, engagement with ‘modernity’, trans-Atlantic conversations with diasporan Africans, and citizenship of the post-colonial state coupled with structural changes within the religious system – which resulted in the decline in Fofie’s popularity – gradually altered the moral emphases on legacies of slavery in the Anlo historical imagination as the twentieth century progressed.

Meera Venkatachalam holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (2007). She has conducted post-doctoral work at the Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh. Her writing has appeared in *Africa* (journal of the International African Institute) and *Journal of African History*.

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Glossary

Most non-English words used in this work are Ewe, though a number of terms in other West African languages have also been used. All words below are Ewe, unless indicated otherwise. This glossary is intended for English speakers, and alphabetical ordering follows the English language. This list is not an exhaustive list of all foreign language words used in the following pages, but a Glossary of the most frequently occurring non-English words in the book.

Ewe uses the Roman alphabet supplemented by the following international phonetic alphabets: Ðḍ, Ɛɛ, Ff, Vv, Nn, Ɔɔ, Uu. (I have not used these in my text). The presence of certain sound clusters (Dz, Gb, Kp, Ny, and Ts) make Ewe a rather difficult language to learn. The tilde (~) mark nasalises vowels.

I stick to the Anlo dialect of Ewe as far as possible.

I use Anglicised spellings throughout the book. Instead of Anlo, I write Anlo; instead of trõ I use tro, and adaḍaḍa is adadada.

The final ‘e’ at the end of many Ewe proper nouns should be pronounced ‘é’. French spellings include this marking, while English spellings do not. In this text, Lomé is Lome, Sacrebodé is Sacrebode, and Kpalimé is Kpalime.

The plural of most Ewe words are attained by adding –wo, usually at the end. I follow this convention.

Ab(e)rewa	Anti-witchcraft movement; deity in the Anlo-Ewe Gorovodu pantheon; wife of Kunde
abusua (Twi; pl. mmusua)	matrilineage
Ada	One of the deities of the Yewe cluster
adadada	‘cooking for Ada’ (deity); part of the funeral rites for a dead Yewe initiate
adeha	‘hunting group’, casual supplicants of Gorovodu shrines, who organise ritual events, and are closely associated with the cult, but are not initiated into it

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<i>aduru</i> (Twi; pl. <i>nmuru</i> )	drinking medicine
<i>adze</i>	witchcraft
<i>adzeto</i>	owner of witchcraft, witch/wizard
Afa	Divinatory system of the Anlo-Ewe; a knowledge system; also revered as a deity
<i>afedo</i>	local patrilineage
<i>afedo-me</i>	ancestral house
<i>afeme</i>	house, home
<i>Agbodedefu</i>	a ritual associated with a Yewe cult, where a ram is sacrificed to the sea;
<i>agbota</i>	a ceremonial role within some Anlo cults, in particular Fofie
<i>agumaga</i>	divinatory apparatus used by an Afa diviner
<i>ahe</i>	uninitiated members of any cult associated with shrines in an informal capacity
<i>aklama</i>	unique personality traits and distinguishing features of an individual
<i>akonkofo</i> (Twi)	a social group in Asante of the early colonial period, consisting of wealthy businessmen, who often rebelled against the fiscal policies of the <i>Asantehene</i>
<i>akple</i>	cornmeal porridge staple of the Anlo
<i>alaga</i>	The state of going wild within the context of the Yewe cult, in reaction to insults
Alegba	protective deity, the guardian of ritual knowledge, the gatekeeper of the Anlo-Ewe pantheon
<i>alomevi</i>	person acquired through working with one's hands; one of the many terms used to refer to a slave in the late nineteenth century in Anlo
Amaka	one of the deities of the Yewe cluster
<i>amatsi</i>	a combination of ceremonial herbs and water
<i>amedzodzo</i>	process of sponsoring a descendant
<i>amedzoto</i>	<i>Ame</i> = person, <i>dzoto</i> = ancestral part which makes up an individual, or ancestral sponsor
<i>amefefe</i>	bought person, someone acquired through the slave trade
<i>amegasi</i>	soothsayer
<i>ametsiava</i>	war captive, prisoner-of-war, enslaved person; also an ancestor who has died a premature death, usually attributed to human agency

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<i>asafohenega</i>	war chiefs of the left and right wing of the Anlo army; borrowed term from Twi
<i>Asantehene</i> (Twi)	the Asante king
<i>asekyere</i> (Twi)	‘pedigreeing’, the offence of exposing or referring to an individual’s non-Asante ancestry
<i>atike</i>	medicine
<i>avadzi</i>	war stool, symbolising one’s slave-owning status in society
Avleketi	One of the chief deities of the Yewe cluster, the Goddess of the Sea and wife of Hevieso
<i>avlesi</i>	a sub-category of Yewe <i>vodusi</i> , pledged primarily to Avleketi
<i>awadada</i>	<i>awa</i> = war; <i>dada</i> = mother, war-chief of the Anlo, in charge of the central wing of the army
<i>awoamefia</i>	title of the paramount chief of the Anlo, which translates into ‘he who lives in seclusion’
<i>awoba</i> (or <i>awowa</i> , a loan word from Twi, pl. <i>nnwowa</i> )	pawn or indentured labourer
<i>batakari</i>	tunic worn by northern peoples
<i>bayi</i> (Twi)	witchcraft
Blekete/Brekete	Drumming rhythm; a Gorovodu deity; an anti-witchcraft cult; a type of ritual knowledge
<i>boko</i>	Afa practitioner
<i>bome</i>	the abode of unborn souls
<i>dasi</i>	a sub-category of Yewe <i>vodusi</i> , pledged primarily to the serpent Voduda
<i>dufia</i>	chief of a <i>duto</i>
<i>duko</i>	city-state, chiefdom
<i>duto</i>	town or village, generally not as big as a <i>duko</i>
<i>dzidzidome</i> (Mina dialect)	born-betweeners, category of people with male slave antecedents and free mothers in Mina society.
<i>dzingbe/dzingoli</i>	the sky
<i>dzo</i>	magic, medicine, protective measures used to combat witchcraft
<i>dzogbe</i>	destiny, the mechanism which charts out the specific path the individual has to follow during his or her lifetime; <i>dzogbe</i> may also refer to those ancestors who have not

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	followed the path of destiny and linger on as unhappy presences
<i>dzoto</i>	mother and father parts, and ancestor souls, which go into the making of the <i>luvo</i>
Eda	one of the deities of the Yewe cluster
<i>Evegbe</i>	sense of ‘Eweness’, Ewe identity, oneness of Ewe people, the Ewe language, Ewe nationalism
<i>Ezveme</i>	‘Ewe inside’, the central Ewe belt
<i>fetatrotro</i>	cow sacrifice, associated with Gorovodu cult
<i>fiamanya</i>	uninitiated members of the Fofie cult (translation, ‘unknown queens’)
<i>fiasidi</i>	initiate of a <i>troxovi</i> shrine, akin to <i>trokosi</i> (translation ‘woman fit to marry a chief’)
<i>foasi</i>	ceremony associated with the Nyigbla cult in the 1800s, by which two or more initiates from each Anlo clan could be recruited into that cult
Fofie	cult associated with slave ancestry, organised around a deity from Kete Krachi
<i>fofiesi</i>	pledged to Fofie, term used to describe a full-fledged initiate of the Fofie cult
<i>fome</i>	lineage, family
<i>gbogbe</i>	breath, or the force which kept the body alive
<i>goro</i>	kola nut
Gorovodu	cult associated with slave spirits from outside Anlo, and forms of medicinal knowledge derived from outside Anlo
Hevieso	thunder god; head of the Yewe pantheon; husband of Avleketi
<i>hlo</i>	clan, organised patrilineally in Anlo
<i>hlofia</i>	leader of a <i>hlo</i> , or clan
<i>hlokponu</i>	clan house
<i>Hogbetsotso</i>	festival held annually during the first weekend of November in most large Ewe towns to mark the peopling of Eweland after the mythical exodus from Notsie.
<i>home</i>	a pawned individual, though the word is also used for a bought person
<i>hozi</i>	stool of wealth
<i>hubono</i>	Yewe shrine owner
<i>hunku</i>	sacred palm nuts, part of an Afa diviner’s apparatus
<i>husunu</i>	a male Yewe initiate, a <i>vodusi</i> ’s counterpart.



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<i>juju</i>	(Colloquial) magic, witchcraft, medicine
<i>klu</i>	generic term for slave (word used in context of religious servitude, and also for a prisoner-of-war)
<i>Kodzogbe</i>	the world of the living
<i>Koku</i>	protective deity found in Anlo
<i>kope</i>	settlement comprising several patrilineages
<i>kpele</i>	divining beads
<i>kpokpo</i>	novice Yewe initiate, usually living in the shrine for a period of confinement. On completion of the period, they are known as <i>vodusiwo</i>
<i>kpoli</i>	signs of non-kin determinations/life signs, made by Afa divination
<i>Kunde</i>	an anti-witchcraft cult; head of the Gorovodu pantheon; husband of Ab(e)rewa; a slave-spirit
<i>luvo</i>	the physical elements of a person, believed to have powers special to an individual; <i>luvokuto</i> refers to the soul of death, while <i>luvoagbeto</i> refers to the soul of life
<i>Mami Wata</i>	a mermaid; a water spirit revered all over West Africa, whose worship is believed to generate success and mishaps in equal measure
<i>Mamma</i>	protective deity which was brought into Anlo in the 1980s from Nigeria
<i>Mawu</i>	the supreme God in Christian Ewe culture; one of the many Ewe <i>trowo</i> in some Ewe sub-cultures; along with Lisa the original cosmic couple in Ewe-Adja-Fon myth
<i>Maɖvufe</i>	the abode of Mawu; heaven
<i>Maɖvusbosubo</i>	Sunday service; Worship of Mawu (the Supreme Being)
<i>medzi</i>	one of the sixteen signs made by Afa beads as they are cast during divining sessions
<i>midao</i>	a Yewe priest, usually one step above <i>vodusiwo</i> and <i>husunuwo</i> in the Yewe cultic hierarchy.
<i>minao</i>	a Yewe priestess, usually one step above <i>vodusiwo</i> and <i>husunuwo</i> , in the Yewe hierarchy
<i>nkɔwankɔvaa</i> (Twi)	youngmen; a social class in Asante which arose in the nineteenth century, largely as a

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	result of the cocoa boom and colonial economy
<i>nukpekpe</i>	Yewe initiation ceremony
<i>nuvo</i>	evil
<i>nuvuvu</i>	mouth opening, after which spirits speak freely through a person, generally used within the contexts of cultic initiation, especially Gorovodu and Fofie
Nyigbla	patron deity of Anlo and war god
<i>obosom</i> (Twi; pl. <i>abosom</i> )	natural forces transformed into deities
<i>odonko</i> (Twi; pl. <i>nnonkonfoo</i> )	generic term for slaves in Asante from the northern grasslands
<i>ohoho</i> (Twi; pl. <i>ahoho</i> )	free stranger resident in Asante from a neighbouring Akan kingdom
<i>otani</i> (Twi, pl. <i>ntafo</i> )	term used to refer to Muslim traders in Asante from the English sentry; minders of the possessed Gorovodu spirit mediums
<i>senterwa</i>	from the Twi <i>osofa</i> ; priest, especially in the context of Gorovodu cult; owner of Gorovodu god-objects
<i>sofo</i>	
<i>sosi</i>	a sub-category of Yewe <i>vodusi</i> , pledged to the thunder god, Hevieso
<i>sro</i>	spouse; also means pledged in ritual contexts
<i>suman</i> (Twi, pl. <i>asuman</i> )	word used to refer to man-made deities, like protective charms and amulets
<i>togbi</i>	elder, grandfather
<i>togbui</i>	ancestor
<i>togbuiwofenoli</i>	ancestor who has led a dissatisfied life
<i>tokomefia</i>	ward chief, subordinate to the <i>dusia</i> or town chief
<i>tro</i>	deity, used mainly to denote ancestral deities in Anlo
<i>troklu</i>	initiate of a <i>troxovi</i> shrine, generally male
<i>trokosi</i>	initiate of a <i>troxovi</i> shrine, generally female
<i>trosi</i>	pledged to the <i>trovo</i> , term often used to describe Gorovodu spirit mediums in Anlo
<i>troxovi</i>	<i>tro</i> = deity; <i>kono</i> = unfruitful, lost (i.e. lost to parents and dedicated to deity); <i>vi</i> = child; literally, deities that took children.
<i>Tsiefe</i>	the world of the ancestors
<i>vide</i>	a little bit
<i>vodu</i>	deity, usually referring to nature spirits

Voduda	serpent deity in the Yewe cluster; companion of Avleketi
<i>vodusi</i>	pledged to the <i>voduwo</i> , used for a female initiate of Yewe shrines
Yewe	cult associated primarily with nature spirits, organized around Hevieso (Thunder), Avleketi (Sea), and Voduda (Serpent)
<i>Yewegbe</i>	ritual language spoken by members of the Yewe cult
<i>yewesi</i>	‘pledged to Yewe’, generic term for all Yewe initiates
<i>zikpi</i>	stool
<i>zikpifeme</i>	stool house
<i>zizidzela</i>	Nyigbla shrine initiates