

Totems in Nzema coastal communities



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INTRODUCTION

TOTEMISM IN GHANA

According to Okyeame Ampadu-Agyei, a renowned Ghanaian conservationist, *“the term ‘totem’ comes from a North American Indian language that refers to vegetables or animals which are revered by individuals, particularly group of people or an ethnic group as sacred. A totem can be an animal, a plant or any other natural object believed to be ancestrally related to a tribe, clan, or family group as a tutelary spirit. The totem system or totemism serves to identify different geographic and dialectic identities by associating each group with a natural species, usually an animal”*. Plants and other natural items are also regarded as totemic.

Although totemism may not be a very familiar word in mainstream language usage, humans have practiced it over the ages. It has been used basically to preserve humanity, in that it has in many ways culminated in the conservation of other life forms bequeathed to man on whom he is dependent for sustenance of life, and continuity of humans as a race.

Totemism came into practice as part of man’s reverence for nature and its linkage to the unknown therefore venturing into spiritual realms. In Ghana, one cannot delineate reverence for nature as a repository of or habitat of unseen spirits which are worshipped as deities. When a deity or a spirit is associated with a particular natural object or phenomenon, it is treated with care and not exploited anyhow but rather, through laid down procedure. The primary reason is that if all totems become destroyed it would have a negative rippling effect on the very core or fabric of society - its culture and values would be adversely hampered. There would be no values to live for and no point in using totems if the species become extinct.

Throughout Ghana, totemism thrives especially at the grassroots communities. There are popular examples of totemism in Ghana such as the

- Monkey sanctuaries in Buabeng-Fiema in the Brong Ahafo Region, and Tafi-Atome in the Volta Region respectively, where reverence for the primate has brought about the now famous monkey sanctuaries.
- Another is the crocodiles of Paga in the Upper East Region.
- The last example is the Adangbe community of Old-Ningo of the Greater-Accra Region where turtles are considered gods and so, have by default, created a sanctuary area of conservation for the marine creatures in that coastal stretch.

Paying particular attention to umbrellas or the staff of a chief's linguist and other cultural paraphernalia at any traditional gathering, one is bound to notice that almost every traditional ruler, chief or king, whether highly or lowly regarded anywhere in Ghana, has a totem.

Totems are conspicuously displayed at the entrance of or inside the chief's palace in some communities. When the chief sits in state, the linguist (spokesperson) holds the chief's staff with the totem atop it. At function or meeting where chiefs are present, there are as many

staffs and totems as the number of chiefs present. Most chiefs use the skin of their totems as footrest when sitting in public or in state to carry out an official assignment. Official chairs of chiefs, usually, are carved out in the shape of the totemic symbol of the clan he comes from (*that of the royal family*).

Apart from the chiefs however, members of all clans/tribes has a totem. As revealed by Okyeame Ampadu-Agyei in a paper presented at a conference on the “bushmeat crisis in Ghana” in 2003, any wildlife specie could be regarded as a totem because of the historical or socio-culture significance that can be attached to it. He disclosed that each of the eight clans of the Akan tribe of Ghana (the Nzema inclusive), has a totem called "*Atweneboa*" which means “animal leaned on or relied upon for spiritual inspiration”. Therefore, totems have a symbolic quality, which chiefs and clan members are expected to adopt or emulate. This clearly falls in the purview of the conservationist’s call for preservation of cultural heritage with a roll-out benefit of food security and livelihood benefits, in the fight against poverty.

In this study the focus was laid on the “*Atweneboa*” or totem of the Nzema. The purpose is to bring to the fore, knowledge of traditional practices of totemism in the Nzema area so as to preserve an important aspect of its cultural heritage as a people and also use the knowledge to promote food security, ecotourism and governance at the grassroots through awareness creation and conservation of the species.

NZEMA TOTEMISM

In the coastal communities where totemism thrives, the increasing use of unorthodox methods like “light fishing”, “chemical application” and “pair trawling” has gradually decimated fish and marine stock to levels of “near extinction” of many species. Middle-aged and elderly fishermen report of at least 15 marine fish that they have not seen since the past 20 years (locally known as *nkanfena*, *kookow*, *asisin*, *momondaw*, *safon*, *ntantemei*, *aman*, *tantre*, *edwir*, *ekyekye*, *wawaye*, *skwe*, *abieku*, *nfinfina* and *ewurefua*). Disregard for preservation and wise exploitation of natural resources has led to decline in fish stocks and other flora and fauna with the result being high poverty levels in the Nzema fishing communities in

1). Nzema East Municipal Area; 2). Elembelle District; and 3). Jomorro District; Local Government Areas in the Western Region of Ghana closest to the area where oil was discovered in commercial quantities in 2007 (surveyed by Friends of the Nation in 2008).

It is believed among the Nzemas (*and other Akan groups*), that amongst the members of the group of families, certain classes of natural objects such as animals, birds, fish and plants, have certain intimate relationship or bond existing. Such species of animals, birds or fish are regarded respectively as totems of the common origin of the tribe, group or clan. For this reason, the members do not eat, kill or trap such animals or birds or fish. In some instances, when a totem dies or is sold, members of the tribe it represents would show respect by for example, mourning and burying it as in the case of a human being. In 1984, according to the secretary of the Community-Based Fisheries Management Committee (CBFMC) of Apewosika in Axim, a funeral was held for a whale that died and was washed ashore with all the pomp and pageantry that characterized a dignitary’s transition. Similar stories are told in other coastal grassroots fishing communities. If the animal or totem is captured alive, an adequately corresponding “ransom” of money is offered and appropriate ritual performed to facilitate and secure its release back into the wild.

Among the Nzemas, there are eight clans and each of them has its own totem. They are listed in the next two (2) pages and is elaborated upon later in this work. It should be noted that, the Nzema are part of the larger Akan ethnic group of Ghana and La Cote d’Ivoire. Therefore, their tradition and culture are virtually the same (*eg clans and their totems and the common annual Kundum festival celebrated with the neighbouring Ahantas*), except for the language that is distinctively different from other Akan dialects. Effort is therefore made in this report to give the translation of some names where appropriate.

CONSERVING NATURE, TRADITION AND TOTEMISM

In the past, wildlife forms such as fish, animals, birds and plants, which have been used as totems for several decades, have come under threat of extinction due to high deliberate disregard for rules governing their exploitation, protection and conservation, or ignorance of the fact that natural resource is not inexhaustible and need to be managed judiciously.






Species regarded as totems are facing extinction due to 'modernism' and wanton disregard for conservation. The increasing use of unorthodox and illegal methods to till the land for farming by setting bushfires and to fish at sea by using dynamite and chemicals has seriously decimated at alarming proportions, rare totemic species. All these are highly destructive agricultural and fishing practices contribute immensely to food insecurity in the communities thus exacerbating poverty.

According to Okyeame Ampadu-Agyei, "the list of fauna considered totems facing extinction, is frighteningly tall and amazingly includes those protected under the Wildlife Laws of Ghana. This clearly demonstrates the fact that the laws are not really biting and are ineffectively enforced. Usually, we wrongly assume that, nature's store is an inexhaustible resource that can be extracted anyhow without fear of it getting finished though its hardly anyone's duty to make sure what is taken out, is replaced or replenished.

Animals and plants are used traditionally for healing. That is in psychic and herbal medicine respectively. There has been a positive resurgence of herbal medicine in the country in recent years. These have helped the 'poor man' to access medical attention which he otherwise could not have done at the orthodox medical facilities. The point here is that, ignorance of totems and especially by the youth is apart from leading to poverty, has also created a gap in cultural awareness. If this is not managed at this point in our history, very soon, we as a people would become a nation without an authentic culture. The youth and all interested persons should have access to information, knowledge about our traditions and reasons why we do things the way the way we do them.

These days because of "modernisation" and "progress" it is nearly impossible to tell what clan a person belongs to unless you know what town a person comes from. Even coming from a particular town does not necessarily mean that the person is from the dominant clan in the town. This problem is likely to occur among the Nzema. An example, although Saltpond in the Central Region is considered a Fante town, their ancestors came from Akyem. So to find the *abusua* (clan) of somebody from Saltpond, one might have to head in the direction of Oda in Akyem which is about 100km away in the Eastern Region where their ancestors migrated from.

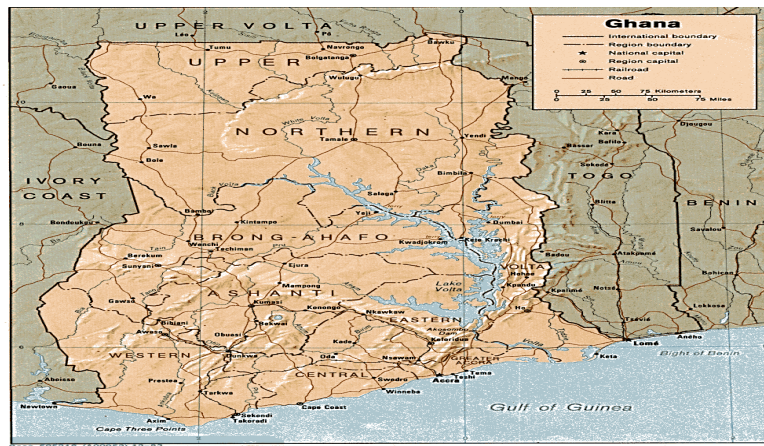
TABLE OF NZEMA CLAN TOTEMS

	NAME IN NZEMA	NAME IN TWI	TOTEM	IMAGE	ZOOLOGICAL NAME
1.	Ahwea	Aduana	DOG with <i>fired-torch</i> <i>in its</i> <i>mouth</i>		<i>Canis familiaris</i>
2.	Nvavile	Agona or Anona	PARROT		<i>Psittachus eritacus</i>
3.	Madwuri	Asakyir	VULTURE		<i>Coragyp atratus</i>
4.	Asamangama	Asenie	BAT		<i>Order Chiroptera</i>
5.	Ezohile	Asona	CROW		<i>Corvus brachyrhynchus</i>
6.	Azawua	Bretuo	LEOPARD		<i>Panthera pardus</i>
7.	Akisi	Ekuona	BUFFALO		<i>Syncerus caffir</i>
8.	Awongoba	Oyoko	FALCON		<i>Falco spaverius</i>

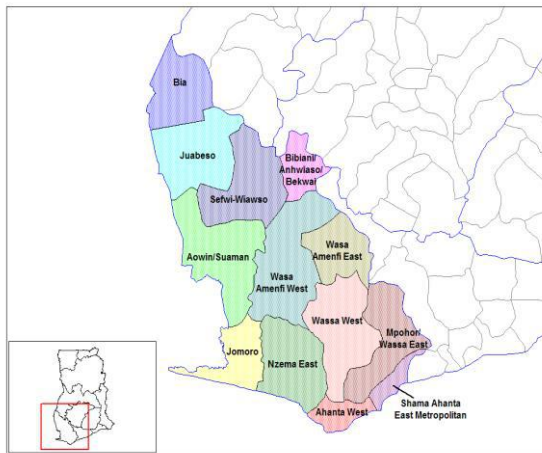
Contextual Geographical Maps



Map of Africa



Map of Ghana



Map of Western Region with the Districts



Map showing coastal areas and others

Please note that Nzema-East Municipal with its capital at Axim has been carved into two Local Government areas with the other one being Ellembelle District with its capital Nkroful. The third district is Jomoro with its capital at Half-Assini.

WESTERN REGION IN BRIEF

The Western Region of Ghana, adjoining the border with Côte d'Ivoire, presents a striking contrast between ancient and modern. Although one of the first areas to welcome early European traders and now, so distinguished by the large number of castles and forts, it also boasts some of the oldest mines in the country and a modern harbour and commercial centre at Takoradi which has also become the "oil capital" of Ghana due to the recent oil-find in the country. The Region has some of the most fertile agricultural lands in Ghana, and the roads are lined with rubber, cocoa plantations and farms. Whilst it is arguably the most endowed region in terms of natural resources, it is among the most deprived in terms of social amenities and development in general.

For the tourist, the forts and castles are a powerful draw, as they reflect the diversity of architectural styles that were employed by colonial traders. Of particular interest must be Fort Appolonia at Beyin the ancestral home of Ghana's first president, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in the heart of Nzemaland. Many of the castles overlook some of the most pristine beaches in Ghana.

Because the land is so agriculturally viable, farming is a major part of the people's life. The larger farms are happy to welcome visitors (usually by prior arrangement). On some of the cocoa farms, you can see the full operation from the growing of the crop to the harvesting and processing of the crop for market. The Region is among the earliest to mine gold and other minerals, and several of the mines welcome visitors (by prior arrangement). Tarkwa is the centre of the Region's mining industry. Though artisanal mining is common, farming and fishing are the mainstay of grassroots livelihoods coupled with some industrial occupations in the urban areas.

The Region is the gateway to Ghana from its western frontier. It is also the hub of some of the most unspoilt eco-tourism attractions not only Ghana but the sub-region. To discover the Western Region is to discover an area that reveals many of the diverse attractions of Ghana. It has a rich heritage demonstrated by the number of castles of historical and cultural significance still open to visitors and students for a fee. They are managed by the Museum and Monuments Board.



Fort St Appolonia



Fort Sao Antonio



Fort Friederichsburg



Fort Metal Cross

1. Fort St Appolonia at Beyin is situated in the ancestral home of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.
2. Fort S. Antonio at Axim (1515) was built by the Portuguese in addition to their headquarters at Elmina, in an effort to maintain their monopoly and exclude foreign ships from the gold markets.

3. Fort Groot Friederichsburg at Princesstown, is located on Manfro Hill 5km east of Fort St. Antonio, was built by the Brandeburgers in 1683.
4. Fort Metal Cross at Dixcove, east of Princesstown was built in 1693. In the 1680's, the area around this fort situated in Ahantaland was a bone of contention between the English and the Brandenburgers (Germans).

KUNDUM FESTIVAL

Among the Nzemas the festival of 'Kundum' is celebrated between August and November. It moves from town to town every week featuring prominently traditional drumming and dancing. Kundum was originally practiced by the neighbouring Ahantas and was later adopted by the Nzemas. (*The people of Sekondi which is Ahanta celebrate their annual Kundum Festival between July and August*). It lasts in each community over a seven-day period.

It is believed that Kundum originated from Aboadze (Ahanta), a village on the Tarkwa-Takoradi road. Oral tradition states that a hunter from Aboadze saw dwarfs dancing to the rhythm of strange music while on a hunting expedition. The hunter watched these strange creatures perform their strange dance for one month and later brought the dance home. Another legend also says that there existed in the village of Aboadze a palm tree which is associated with the origin of the festival. The fruits of this tree used to ripen once in a year, and with time, this period became a symbolic calendar in the lives of the people. The ripening of the palm fruit became the signal for the festival to begin. Kundum is a very old festival. It is known to have been originated around 17th Century.

Although there are similarities in the way Kundum is celebrated among these people, there are some unique features in the way it is celebrated in every district. Through these festivals, the people remember their ancestors and ask for their help and protection. The festivals are also used to purify the whole state. It is a belief that, during the period of the festival the people experience bumper harvest of food-stuffs and plenty supply of fish hence, Kundum is seen as an agricultural festival and associated with the goddess of fertility by the indigenous Nzema people. It is of interest to note that, Kundum is also performed because of its religious significance. That is, during the celebration of the festival, sacrifice is offered to the ancestors and for that matter the dead. It is believed that this ensures communication between the living and the dead.

During the celebration of most of the festivals in Ghana which Kundum is no exception, traveling outside the towns are not encouraged. This is so, since participation in the celebration of the festival is greatly welcomed by all (chiefs and people). Fishermen do not have to go deep sea fishing where they will stay very long as turnout on the festival grounds should be high. Going far to farm is also discouraged.

Though the highlights of the festival span a one-week period, it is essentially a one-month celebration. (*The outline of the programmes is spelt in the appendix of this document*). Activities that go on include the pouring of libation at five traditional spots at the periphery, outskirts of the town. These spots are believed to be the abode of five gods/ goddesses, some of which may be mountains, trees, rivers, lakes, streams or even the sea goddess. Drumming and dancing on some of the days especially in the evenings to keep the festive spirit moving also take place. Again, the ritual of lighting the special fire goes on. This activity is done in the evening at about 7.00 p.m. at the chief's palace. In the process, a whole lot of people congregate. These include sub-chiefs, elders, people in the town and visitors who are in to witness the festival. Here, grievances are brought and solutions found to them, libation is also poured by the chief to get the ancestors involved in the celebration of the festival. However, it must be noted that, some of the sub-chiefs and elders (clan-heads) light such fires on which meals are prepared (Kundum festive meal) for kinsmen, visitors and the public for a general Ghanaian hospitality. In course of the festival, individual and family differences are settled and deceased relatives are also remembered and mourned.

The chief sits in a palanquin in a procession through the principal streets of the town. A durbar of chiefs and people is held. There is also an entertainment package like the Kundum state dance and the crowning of Miss Kundum which climaxes the festival occasion.



Chiefs participating in a social function



Chief fisherman of Axim and his officials with FoN staff

It is interesting to note how foreign contact and modern economic development have reshaped the manner of celebrating the festival as the years go by.

When the paramount chief sits in state to receive homage from his subjects, development projects are planned and means for raising funds are discussed. The unique feature about this festival is that it moves from town to town. If you miss it this week, you get another opportunity to see it at another place.



Interviewing fishermen/women on the beach and in the community respectively

TRADITIONAL AREAS OF THE NZEMA IN GHANA

<u>NAME</u>	<u>CAPITAL</u>	<u>CLAN</u>
1. Nsein	Nsein	Ahwea (Dog)
2. Lower Axim	Lower Axim	Nvavile (Parrot)
3. Upper Axim	Upper Axim	Ezohile (Crow)
4. Ajomoro	Apatiem	Ezohile (Crow)
5. Gwira	Bamienkor	Azawua (Leopard)
6. East Nzema	Atuabo	Ahwea (Dog)
7. West Nzema	Beyin	Ahwea (Dog)

CONCLUSION

The challenges experienced by FoN on the field in the researcher's attempts to gather information through focal group discussions, community transient walk, structured interviews and strategic visits to traditional authorities has uncovered the dearth of awareness among the present crop of youth about our traditions as a people (with focus on the seven (7) Traditional areas that form what has been referred here as Nzemaland). It should be without any reservation be mentioned that the land or home of the Nzema people straddle the south-western part of Ghana and the south-eastern part of la Cote d'Ivoire. Therefore the Nzemas fall within two (2) nation-states which only came into being as a result of European colonization. There is also an apparent signs of inadequate motivation among the elderly to impart knowledge on culture save for annual display of rituals and other mores in form of festivals. Otherwise, some "traditional practices become dormant" the business of nobody.

Interestingly though is the fact that "custodians of tradition" in form of chiefs despite being western or formally educated, has not thrown overboard the zeal for maintaining tradition in its positive aspects for example in the areas of morals, environmental sustainability, sanitation, cooperation among the people and the drive for development.

Urbanization, migration and emigration has all contributed to the 'pollution' and 'dilution' of the culture. The settlement among the people by migrants (traders, fishermen, fishmongers, government workers); emigration by indigenes to other places, inter-marriages, the advent of Christian and Islamic religions among other factors has contributed to the eroding of the value placed on tradition.

It is however heartwarming that, in researching for information to put together this report, many willing and enthusiastic persons from all aspects of Nzema society, traditional authorities, officials of the Western Regional House of Chiefs, Western Regional Centre for National Culture and the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board in Accra have encouraged the idea of putting together this 'important' information for posterity and more especially, drawing the attention of people to their own tradition that promotes conservation of the environment in this era of Climate Change.

It was realized that apart from the knowledge by some sections of the population on national laws (eg Games and Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission), and a few other traditional practices for the protection of flora and fauna and other endangered species on land and in sea, much attention has not been paid or put into educating people on these issues. To make people aware, it was suggested by respondents to the questionnaire that, books on the culture should be published for educating the youth at basic and secondary school level before they become full-fledged adults. It was also mentioned that, traditional authorities should be given back powers to enforce their local laws.

Conservation efforts should be a vehicle for ecotourism programmes which the area with its pristine beaches and other natural resources has a huge potential for. Ecotourism and a well-packaged cultural programmes and sites like the “Village-on stilts” in Nzulezo, and awareness and preservation of totem species will motivate the people to subscribe to conservation efforts and ultimately bring sustainable economic returns to the people.

Appendix

General Outline of Kundum Festival Celebration (Programme) at Axim

1. **Sunday** (one month before general public involvement).
The traditional religious authorities under the auspices of the traditional council place a ban on noise-making for three (3) weeks in the community after performing rituals in the sacred grove.
2. **Monday** (fourth after the rituals in the sacred grove and ban on noise-making was placed). Chief signals end on ban on noise-making by firing a shot very early in the morning.
3. **Tuesday** Public dances and merrymaking; families gatherings and, settlement of disputes.
4. **Wednesday** Chief of Lower Axim is carried in a palanquin and goes on procession followed by a retinue of courtiers and townsfolk; ballads are sung to praise good deeds, and lambast bad ones that happened within the past year; people put on fancy dresses and parade the streets in carnival mood and merrymaking continues.
5. **Thursday** Ballads are sung to praise good deeds, and lambast bad ones that happened within the past year; people put on fancy dresses and parade the streets in carnival mood and merrymaking continues. Community congregates on the central park to socialize (dance and games).
6. **Friday** Ballads are sung to praise good deeds, and lambast bad ones that happened within the past year; people put on fancy dresses and parade the streets in carnival mood and merrymaking continues. Community congregates on the central park to socialize (dance and games) at 3.00pm.
7. **Saturday** Carrying of Chief of Upper Axim in palanquin in procession through the town which climaxes in a grand durbar at town park at 1.00pm.

NATURAL & SPIRITUAL CHARACTERICS / ATTRIBUTES OF NZEMA / AKAN TOTEMS

The Bat (Totem of the Asamangama or Asenie clan)

There are different species of bats, which have widely divergent characteristics. Some are small and others are large. With one or two exceptions, the large bats live on fruits and find their way visually. The small bats feed mostly on insects, catching them on the wing by a process known as echolocation in which an animal produces sounds and listens for the echoes reflected from surfaces and objects in the environment. When this is fully developed in man intuitive and clairvoyant abilities are accurate.

Studies on bats showed that when they are placed in a refrigerator, they will go into an instant state of hibernation and come out unharmed when they are warmed, which is unique for a warm blooded mammal. The *Asamangama* clan is noticed for the adapting with relative ease to situations compared to their cousins of other clans. This indicates that the life force of the bat is strong and is able to regenerate and replenish it when needed. Bat has the capability to adapt to any situation. Everything about them, senses, feeding, flight, mating and size is suited to their particular environment. When bat appears in your life its message may be to examine your surroundings to discern what bounty is being offered to you, and then alter your patterns so you can receive it.

An out of balance bat will get scrambled and confused and will fly into things. Are you crashing into barriers as you try to get what you need and want in life? If so, bat may be trying to tell you to take a moment to get your bearings and determine the relative importance of what you are seeking. When bat flies into your life transformation of the ego self is about to occur. The old familiar patterns and ideas that have been your truth are about to change. What which once worked for you may no longer work. The process of transformation represents a death and a rebirth. Bat offers you the wisdom necessary to make the appropriate changes for the birthing of your new identity. Bats reflect a need to face our fears. Because the bat is a sociable animal it can indicate a need for more sociability or increased opportunity with greater numbers of people. It has great auditory perception and can navigate through the dark easily. Their built in sonar enables them to know what lies beneath the surface. Those with this medicine have uncanny abilities to discern hidden messages both from people and the environment.

When bat appears, it is asking you to surrender yourself to the process of change. Opportunities unknown to the conscious mind are about to manifest.

The Buffalo (The totem of Akisi or Ekuona clan)

According to the *Akisi*, the buffalo is a symbol of abundance and physical strength. Its large head represent exceptional intelligence and their strong bodies keeps them firmly on earth. They are the uniting force between the mundane and the divine and hold the teachings of right action joined with prayer.

Both the bulls and the cows have horns as well as humped shoulders. Horns grow out of the head and extend to the sky indicating a connection with a higher intelligence. Humps are often symbolic of stored energy locked within the body. The buffalo's humps are located at the shoulders. In man the shoulders hold our personal energy which expresses itself through our hands. Whatever we touch or hold onto is connected to the energy stored in the shoulders. Shoulders carry responsibility or joy. What we carry within is manifested outwardly. The buffalo teaches us how to eliminate our burdens by directing our energy in a balanced way.

When defending against danger, the cows will form a defensive circle around the calves and the bulls will form a circle around the cows. This symbolizes the buffalo's mutual respect for one another as well as their protective instincts to defend and honor life. To the *Ekuona*, it is a symbol of sacred life and abundance. It gave the gift of life to others by sacrificing its own. It provided meat for food and hides for clothing in the past and shelter. Buffalo's can be unpredictable and dangerous when provoked. Those with this totem need to remember to see the good in all things and not let their frustration store up inside them.

The buffalo reminds one to give thanks for what one has, respect all life forms and to honor the integrity of our own divine essence. It is a symbol of equality, sacrifice and service and can show us how to live in a state of understanding, acceptance and joy. It helps us release our self pity and awakens abundance within our consciousness. Buffalo is a powerful totem to have and serves as a stepping stone towards healing our imperfections and reconnecting with mother earth and father sky.

The Crow (Totem of the Ezohile or Asona clan)

The Ezohile says the crow snatches what it wants with timing and precision. The clan therefore is a "go-getter". Crows are sly and often deceptive in their actions. Crows have been known to build false nests high in treetops to confuse predators. The height of their nests gives them the opportunity to watch everything that is going on around them. It is knowledgeable and nothing escapes its keen sight.

Crows travel in groups and make mischief in teams. As one crow explores something new, others will watch closely to see what happens and then learn from it. In this way they seem to always be in council with each other. They often raise a ruckus when hunters are around, warning deer and other birds. Crows recognize possible danger and always post lookouts when feeding--their most vulnerable time. Their language is complex and they have a remarkable voice range. Each caw has its own meaning. Sometimes crow warns of impending danger. Other times, it signals a time to join in council and make decisions. Listening to crows teach one how to discern the truth of what is being said.

The striking black and white colour of a crow represents creation. It is the womb out of which the new is born. Black is the colour of night gives birth to the light of a new day

which is white. It is a daytime bird reminding us that magic and creation are present in both. Its ability to shift between the known and unknown world indicates new journeys. Because a crow is adaptable to all environments and will eat almost anything, it can survive in almost any situation. Significantly, the crow is associated with magic, unseen forces and spiritual strength. If one flies into your life, get out of your familiar nest, look beyond your present range of vision, listen to its caw and act accordingly.

The Dog (Totem of the Ahwea or Aduana clan)

Loyalty and perseverance is the hallmark of an *Ahwea*. Throughout history dogs have been known as protectors and guardians. Their acute hearing and keen sight forewarned their masters of impending danger. Dogs are known as man's best friend. They serve selflessly never asking for their service to be praised. They hold the energies of unconditional love and teach us its true meaning. Their loyalty is unsurpassed.

The domesticated dog is a faithful companion to humans and has a strong willingness to serve. Their sense of spirit and the ability to love even when abused is incredible. The dog teaches those with this totem how to give and receive love unconditionally. It also carries the energy of forgiveness. Dogs are intelligent and sensitive. They are able to sniff out dangerous situations accurately and guide people into safety. Psychic gifts have long been associated with the dog because of their ability to detect subtle energy frequencies often unknown to mankind. If dog suddenly appears in one's life, he ought to pay attention to his immediate surroundings and let the dog guide his footsteps. Legend has it that, the *Ahwea* dog though through trickery, or even treachery, preserved fire torch from going off by successfully swimming with it when his friend the cat could not.

The behavior of a dog often reflects the personality of its owner. Through its observation and constant interaction with one, it anticipates one's next move, and serves as a mirror image of who one truly is. The dog is a great teacher for those who are willing to be loyal students.

The Falcon (Totem of Awongoba or Oyoko clan)

The falcon represents a messenger. It often appears in our life when we need to pay attention to the subtle messages found in our surroundings and from those we come in contact with. As with all messages received it is important to recognize its underlying truth. Because there are so many varieties of hawks its messages vary and can affect all levels of our psyche. One thing that all species of falcons have in common is the skill to move between the seen and unseen realms gracefully connecting both worlds together. Their acute vision compliments this ability and their discriminating nature keeps them out of harm's way.

The broader vision of the falcon allows them to see what the future holds. In man this symbolizes prophetic insight. If this is underdeveloped, a tendency towards over-analyzing everything is common. In so doing, clear vision is lost. Those who hold this totem should remember to keep their analytical mind under control and not allow it to run wild. It has many foraging techniques. The most typical in their pursuit of prey is swiftly

following the animal's efforts to escape. Once the falcon has secured the prey with its powerful talons, the bird dismembers it with its sharply pointed, strong beak. In man, this suggests that we can run but we cannot hide from our destiny. Sooner or later it will catch up with us. The destiny of all humankind is to awaken from their spiritual amnesia and realign with the original intention of their soul. When the falcon flies into our life we will be asked to evaluate who we have become and rip out the threads of our self created illusions. This enables our inner truth to surface. Falcon signifies union with God. A bird of the heavens, it orchestrates the changes necessary for people's spiritual growth.

Having this totem can be bitter-sweet. If one accepts its presence in one's life we will be asked to surrender anything that doesn't honor the integrity of all life. Be it an idea, a feeling or an action. Although hard work is involved the rewards the falcon offers is great.

The Leopard (Totem of the Azawua or Bretuo clan)

The Leopard has a beautifully dotted coat with a long dark tail. Unlike most cats it can exist in an area without much water giving it an edge for survival.

Leopards are excellent stalkers; silent and inconspicuous hunters and are able to move in and out of situations without being seen. This invisibility allows them to observe every situation they encounter with clarity. The character trait of the *Azawua* is therefore "people with strong intuitive" abilities. Learning to trust and respond to their inner instincts is part of their life lesson. They are also highly sensitive and need to pay attention to what they feel and then respond accordingly. Caressing touch in various forms is important for this clan. As with all cats, the whiskers of the leopard have specialized sensory hairs that can register very small changes in air pressure enabling them to avoid objects whilst moving around in the dark. The whiskers are also used to establish the position of prey and locate the exact position for the killing bite. Because leopards kill by biting the back of the neck and do not attack their prey from the front, those with leopard energy often have difficulty confronting conflict head on. Sometimes this can be beneficial and at other times harmful. Learning how to conquer conflict in a balanced way is part of what the leopard teaches.

The leopard is a strong and powerful leaper it shows man how to leap over obstacles efficiently and gracefully. They are masters at maneuvering their environment and will continually serve to encourage that mastership in those who hold this totem.

The Parrot (Totem of the Nvavile or Anona)

The parrot is an alert bird with a good temperament. It is very intelligent and has been taught to mimic humans. A bird which can speak the human language is considered to be a link between worlds mankind's and nature. They serve as a bridge in which both can cross to gain a deeper understanding about one another. This understanding allows both kingdoms to live in harmony.

One of the most outstanding features of the parrot is its range of coloring. Parrots invoke a sense of hope and promise. Just looking at its brilliant feathers gives us a feeling of excitement and wonder. For those who identify with this totem opportunities to renew their dreams and visions are offered. Parrots teach us the power of magic. Their feathers are used in healing rituals to invoke the properties of color and light. Color and light therapy have been used by many native tribes to heal the sick or injured. For those with this totem the study of its colors will reveal a lot about oneself.

Parrots can be very vocal or very quiet depending upon the situation. This is the characteristic of the *Nvavile*. That knows when to keep quiet or talk. This is an indication an instinctive ability to know when to voice one's opinion and when to be silent. The parrot is a feel good bird and is a great ally in healing depression. When the parrot flies into your life it is asking you to recapture the magic of living. It is time to enjoy your life and all it holds.

The Vulture (Totem of the Madwuri or Asakyir)

The *Madwuri* is the sanitizer of society. The vulture feeds exclusively on carrion and performs a very useful function by disposing of potential sources of disease. It is the symbol of purification and of transformation. As old decayed flesh is removed, new life emerges. That is the vital role this amazing bird plays for the health and well being of mankind and all other life forms.

Many people don't like vultures because of an impression that, since they feed off carrion, they must be unclean birds. The truth is that vultures are actually quite clean, and they perform the valuable service of eliminating the remains of decaying animals. This is one of the gifts the vulture holds for us; the cleaning up of messes. Many times we create physical and psychic messes that we don't want to deal with. The vulture can guide us to the efficient and joyful resolution of such problems. If vulture has flown into your life you are being asked to remedy a messy situation and turn it into something positive. If however, messes seem somehow to always be around you; eventually you will end up with a reputation for attracting and creating problems. This can put you in a bad light, like the vulture.

Vultures are adaptable and have a keen sense of smell which they use to locate food. Because the vulture has weak feet and short talons it cannot tear or grasp their prey as other birds do and must rely on the remains of another's kill for their food source. Its trust in the creative force to provide for it is unshakable. This trust is one of the main teachings they offer those that hold this medicine. In Akan tradition and folkloric music, this "patience" is also regarded as procrastination.

Although the vulture is a somewhat homely bird in appearance they are magnificent in flight gliding through the heavens with a grace unsurpassed by most other birds. They ride the thermals and wind borne currents with little effort soaring for hours without flapping their wings. They know how to use what is available to them to the fullest extent and teach us how to be resourceful and innovative with what we have. When this

medicine is fully developed those with this totem can accomplish great things in life. Resourceful and patient they have the ability to stay focused on their goal despite influences that try to distract them. They have the ability to initiate the pure force of spirit into every thought they have and every action they perform.

QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME OF COMMUNITY..... LOCAL GOVT. AREA (DISTRICT

NAME OF CHIEF.....

NAME OF CHIEF FISHERMAN.....

MEETING DAYS.....

NAME OF LOCAL FESTIVAL.....

NAME OF OTHER CULTURAL FESTIVITIES THAT TAKE PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY OR THE AREA PERIODICALLY

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CULTURAL FESTIVAL (SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, HISTORICAL-MIGRATION, ETC)

LEVEL PARTICIPATION IN THE FESTIVAL(S): MEN / WOMEN / YOUTH / CHILDREN / FISHERMEN (LOW / MODERATE / HIGH)

	HIGH	MODE-RATE	LOW	REASON
WOMEN				
MEN				
YOUTH				
CHILDREN				
FISHERMEN				
FISHMONGERS				

ROLE OF CHIEF IN THE RITES :(SIGNIFICANTLY LOW / MODERATE / HIGH, PLEASE COMMENT FURTHER)

.....S.....

WHICH OTHER RELEVANT AUTHORITIES (RELIGIOUS SOCIAL ETC), PLAY ACTIVE ROLES (BE SPECIFIC)

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.....

WHAT ARE THE FAMILY GROUPS / CLANS IN THE COMMUNITY; WHAT ARE THEIR SPECIAL SYMBOLS / EMBLEMS (TOTEMS)?

NAME OF FAMILY / CLAN	SYMBOL /TOTEM	REASON / HISTORY / SIGNIFICANCE

DO YOU HAVE ANY MARINE SPECIES THAT YOU CONSIDER TO BE OF CULTURAL / RELIGIOUS IMPORTANCE? YES.. / NO..

(IF YES, PLEASE NAME THEM)

CAN YOU MENTION ANY CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE TOTEMS TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?

.....
.....

HOW DO YOU TREAT THESE SPECIES?.....

DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL ACTIVITY(IES) FOR PRESERVING THESE TOTEMS

SOCIAL.....

POLITICAL.....

ECONOMIC.....

OTHERS.....

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO PRESERVE THE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THESE SYMBOLS?

.....
.....

WHO SHOULD CARRY OUT ACTIVITIES FOR PRESERVING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SYMBOLS AND HOW?

.....
.....

WHEN YOU HARVEST A BUMPER CATCH, WHAT DO YOU DO WITH IT, DO YOU PERFORM SOME RITUALS?

.....
.....

DO YOU STILL PRACTICE THESE RITUALS? YES.. / NO..

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THESE RITUALS TO YOU?

.....
.....

IN FACE OF MODERNITY AND THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIONS OTHER THAN TRADITIONAL, WHAT DO YOU SAY ABOUT THE RITUALS?

HOW DOES YOUR COMMUNITY DOCUMENT TOTEMS (WRITTEN, ORAL TRADITION, MUSIC, ETC)?

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GENERAL REMARKS

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CONTACTS

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Sunset on the Nzema coastline!!!!

Acknowledgement:

- Awulae Agyenfi Kwame II (Paramount Chief of Nsein Traditional area).
- Awulae Neba Kwao III (Paramount Chief of Upper Axim Traditional area).
- Okyeame Ampadu-Agyei, Conservational International report on Conference on “Bushmeat” (January 2003).
- Community-Based Fisheries Management Committees (CBFMCs) in Lower Axim, Upper Axim, Asanta, Ekpu, Ahobre and Half-Assini
- Mr. Keelson (Centre of National Culture), Sekondi
- Mr. Raymond Agbo (Ghana Museums and Monuments Board), Accra

References:

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- Ghana government website on Local Government areas

- Wikipedia
- Google