

Ghana, Togo and Benin, an extraordinary cultural odyssey

One of the most outstanding and complete tours in West Africa.

Remote regions, lost tribal worlds guided by ancient spirits, powerful kingdoms, haunting forts.

Colored festivals, intense ceremonies and initiation rites.

West Africa in all its beauty and awe.

An incredible variety of experiences - in terms of itinerary, sceneries and encounters.

A journey for travelers seeking deep and unique encounters, a must for any Africa lover.

Ghana, the south



*The former **Slave Coast**, with the highest concentration of ancient castles in Africa, built for the gold, ivory and slave trade ... **Elmina Castle**, the oldest European building in Africa and a UNESCO World Heritage site, was erected by the Portuguese in the XV century.*

*Four hundred kilometers of **palm fringed beaches** and tiny lively **villages** with countless colorful boats which every day skilled fishermen guide across strong ocean waves and currents....*

Ghana, the center



Kumasi is the historical and spiritual capital of the old Ashanti Kingdom, one of the most powerful nations in Africa until the end of the XIX century.

If available, participation in a traditional Ashanti funeral, attended by mourners wearing beautifully red or black togas.

We say “funerals” but it means a “festive” celebration: the deceased in fact is believed to be still with his/her family and through this ceremony he/she becomes an ancestor.

Akwasidae Festival - certain days each year are set aside for a very special celebration at the Royal Palace: the King, adorned in vivid cloth and massive centuries old jewelry, is surrounded by the Ashanti elders, advisors and dignitaries .A procession follows with attendants bringing gifts, storytellers, drummers & trumpeters, corpulent dancers in vivid red costumes... - the splendor, the flavor and the atmosphere of one of last great African monarchs of the forests.

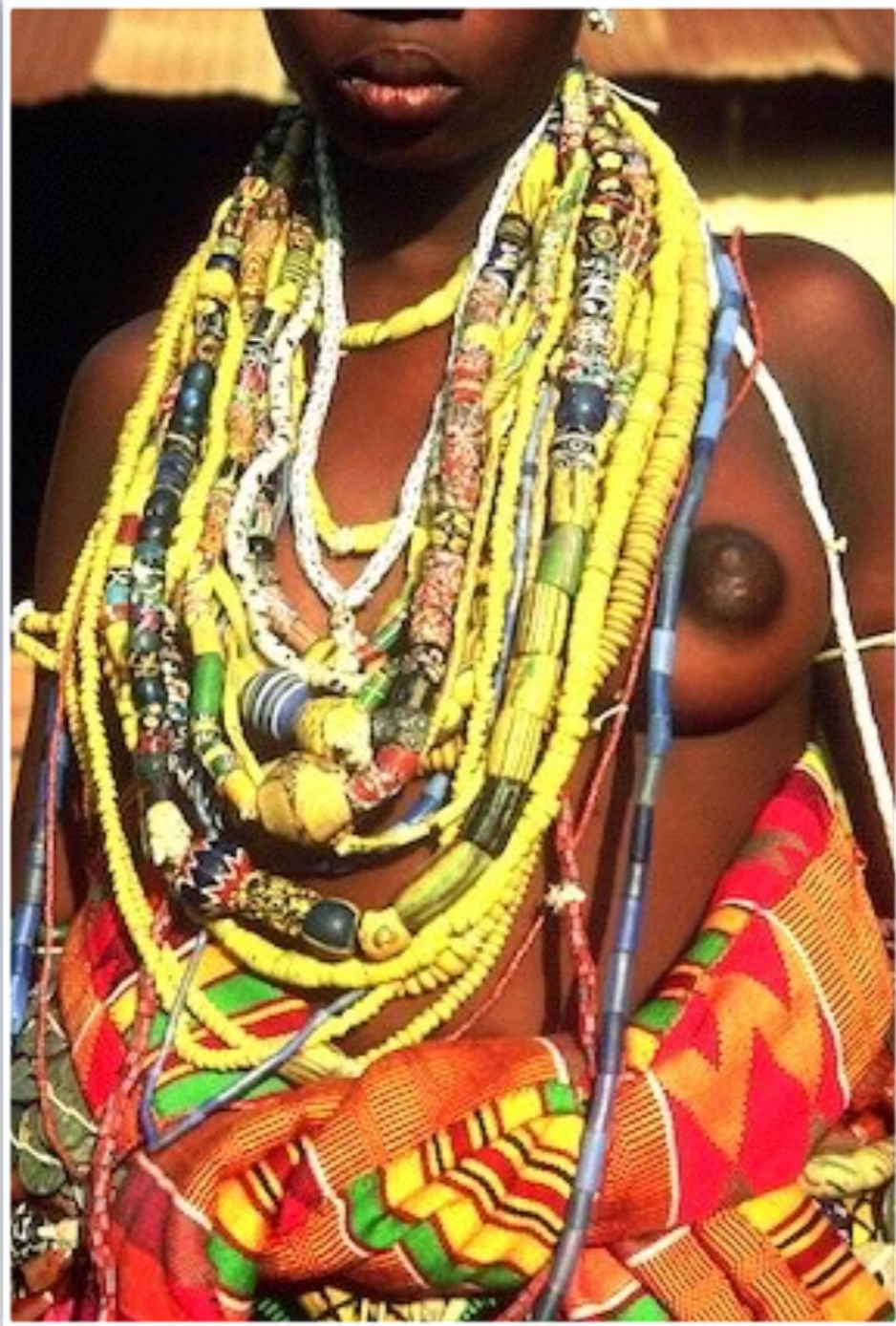


Ghana, the north



A unique mosaic of peoples with still very live traditions. The Gurunsi living in adobe fortified buildings decorated with amazing black, red and white African frescoes. The Lobi, where elder women still use labial discs and men worship ancestors' figures. The Talensi with their fortified house looking like a maze and accessible only through a single door.

Ghana, ceremonies and rituals



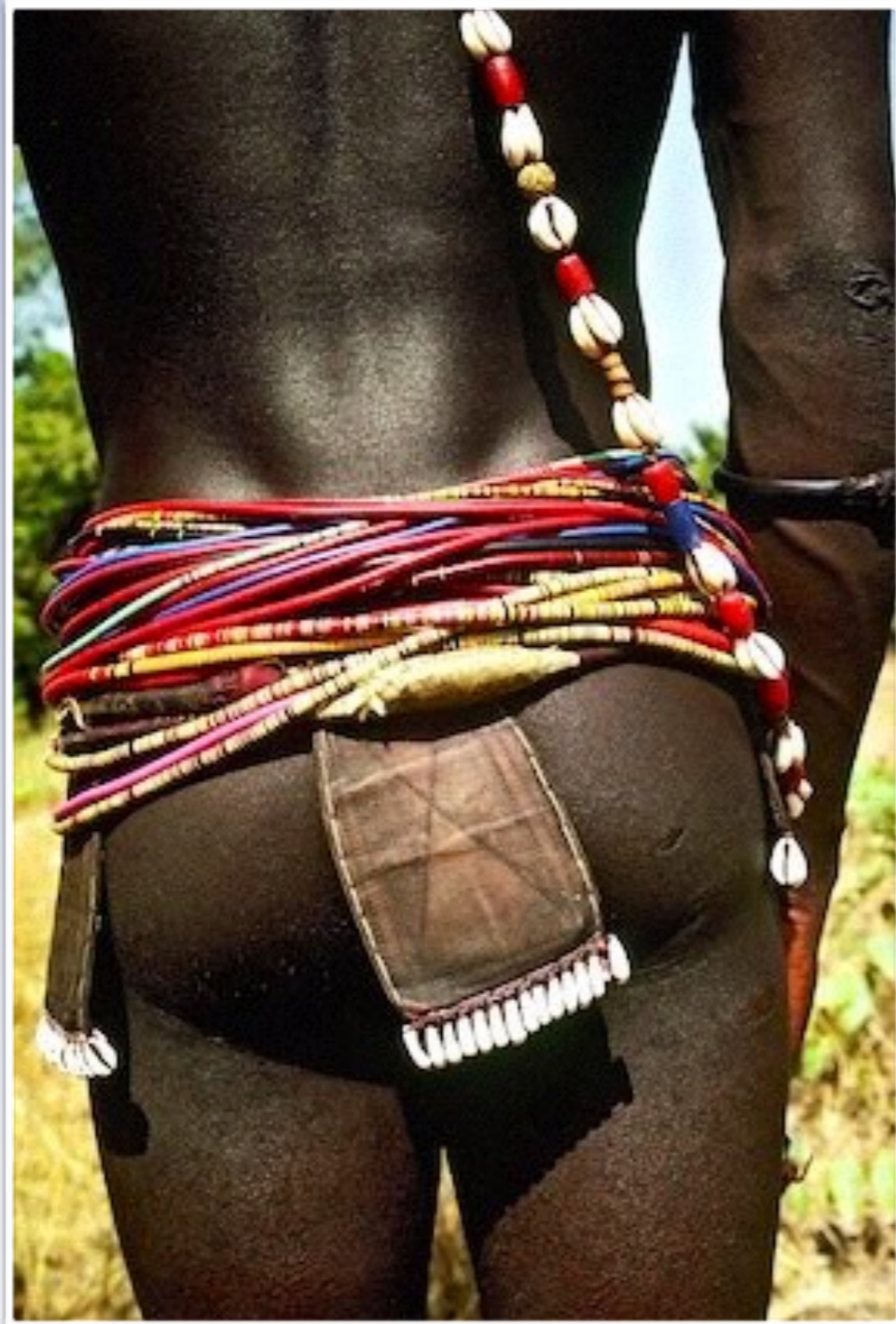
Initiation time: for young girls and for young men

Ghana, ceremonies and rituals



Dipo ... the “process” through which a young girl becomes an adult woman, fully integrated within her society.

Togo & Benin, the north



*As we wander among villages (of northern Togo), we may come across half naked men: the **Taneka** believe that in order to “become” a man, it is necessary to combine time, patience and a lot of blood from sacrificed animals. It actually is a lifetime process where life itself is a rite of passage.*

*In the heart of the Atakora Mountains (Benin), the **Tamberma** have taken refuge for centuries to flee especially from slave traders. Proof of their strong beliefs are the big shrines of phallic form at the entrance of their fortified dwellings. Similar in form to medieval castles, they are one of the most beautiful examples of ancient African architecture - their style impressed Le Corbusier so much that he spoke of «sculptural architecture».*

Togo & Benin, the south



All along the coast of Togo and Benin, voodoo is still fervently practiced. Although for many Europeans it is only a vulgar form of black magic, in truth voodoo is a true religion, far richer than people think. In a remote hidden village we participate in a Voodoo ceremony: the frenetic rhythm of drums and chants, adepts falling into a deep trance, insensitivity to fire or pain. We finally understand what people mean when they say: "In your Churches you pray God; in our voodoo shrine we become God!"

Benin, festivals and dances



The Egungun is a very powerful masks secret society. Egun masks are the reincarnation of deceased people and are known and feared for their aggressiveness and their unpredictable way of moving around. Intensively coloured, they emerge from the forest and form a procession through the streets of the village, leaping towards any foolish spectator who dares getting too close... and nobody wants to be touched since any contact carries the danger of death.



Benin, festivals and dances



Gelede is at the same time a cult, a secret society and a mask. It is a cult dedicated to Mother Earth and is celebrated by the Fon and Yoruba peoples in South Benin to promote fertility of the people and the soil. Gelede performances recall our western “theatre” and have the function of educating, not simply entertaining. Masks have feminine features but are worn by men who dance incredible performances, supported by a large chorus, two big drums and the happy and excited public who sings along and claps hands.

Benin, festivals and dances



The Zangbeto or “the night-man” stands for non-human spirits, the forces of the natural kingdom and of the night who have inhabited the Earth long before man. It is a large mask, covered by colored straw and during the ceremony it rises by means of acrobatic movements until it reaches a height of up to 3 meters.

People of Ghana, Togo and Benin



Places of Ghana, Togo and Benin



Mono River (Benin)



Fishermen (Ghana)



Ganvié (Benin)



Mosque (Ghana)



Market (Togo)

