

# Briefing Document: Kpeshie, Ghana

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## Introduction

This briefing document compiles information from various sources to provide a comprehensive overview of Kpeshie, Ghana. It covers the town's history, cultural significance, geographic location, environmental concerns, and administrative evolution.

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## 1. Historical and Cultural Context

- **Origins:**

Kpeshie was founded by the Ga people in the 17th century, who migrated from present-day Togo in the 16th century. The Ga settled in various parts of what is now Ghana, including the Accra plains, where they established numerous communities.
- **European Contact:**

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in the region in the 15th century, establishing trade relations with the Ga people, exchanging goods for gold and ivory. Later, the Dutch built Fort Crèvecoeur (Ussher Fort) nearby, which was used to regulate the slave trade. This demonstrates the early integration of Kpeshie and the surrounding area into global trading networks.
- **Colonial Period:**

Kpeshie became part of the Gold Coast colony under British rule and was considered crucial to the colony's development due to its role as a trading hub.
- **Festivals:**

Kpeshie is culturally rich, with numerous festivals celebrated by the Ga-Dangme people, including:

  - **Homowo Festival:** The most significant festival, marking the end of the hunger period and the start of the new yam season. Celebrated in August, it involves the sprinkling of "kpoikpoi" and ancestral offerings.
  - **Ngmayem Festival:** A harvest festival celebrated in March/April to thank the gods for a successful harvest.
  - **Kpledjoo Festival:** Celebrated in December for reflection and renewal, including cleansing rituals.
  - **Gbiε Festival:** Also known as Asafotufiam Festival in August, which honors warriors with military displays.
  - **Tejoo Festival:** Celebrated in May/June to honor the deities of the sea with beach rituals.
  - **Akplekε Festival:** Celebrated in October/November, dedicated to the youth and Ga-Dangme language, featuring cultural displays.

- **Cultural Traditions:**  
Traditional music, drumming, and dancing are integral to Kpeshie's cultural identity, regularly featured at festivals and cultural events.
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## 2. Geographic Location and Environment

- **Coordinates:**  
Kpeshie is located at approximately 5.593222° N latitude and -0.140138° W longitude.
- **Coastal Location:**  
It is a coastal city in the vicinity of Accra, Ghana.
- **Kpeshie Lagoon:**  
The Kpeshie Lagoon is a key geographical feature, described as being on a low-lying plain between the Teshie Rasta Rd and Ghana International Trade Fair corridors.
- **Lagoon Characteristics:**  
The lagoon is a shallow, coastal body of water susceptible to environmental changes, with limited water circulation. It's described as being divided into two parts by recent road construction.
- **Environmental Concerns:**  
The lagoon faces significant environmental challenges, including:
  - **Pollution:** Industrial activities, agricultural runoff, domestic waste, and refuse dumping are major contributors to water pollution.
  - **Eutrophication:** High nutrient levels from various sources lead to harmful algal blooms.
  - **Threatened Ecosystem:** The lagoon's ecosystem is fragile and vulnerable to pollution. Mangroves, which are critical to the ecosystem, are being destroyed and degraded by human activity and proposed development. The original four segments of the lagoon have been severely impacted, with two now extinct.
  - **Destruction of Vegetation:** Farming, construction, and saltpan construction are destroying vegetation and exacerbating desiccation.
  - **Conversion of Protected Area:** A proposed development seeking to change the designated mangrove protected area to a residential and recreational complex is a significant concern. The application for change of use of a 3.22-acre site from mangrove to mixed use has generated a petition from concerned residents.
- **Importance of Lagoons:**  
Lagoons are identified as critical ecosystems that:
  - Support fisheries,

- Protect against flooding,
  - Support biodiversity,
  - Are a crucial locus of ecosystem services.
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### 3. Socioeconomic and Administrative Aspects

- **Economic Activity:**  
Residents are primarily engaged in local small businesses, including industrial and manufacturing activities.
  - **Residential Areas:**  
Kpeshie has large residential areas, known for their multicultural society and high quality of life.
  - **Key Facilities:**  
The city is home to the Ghana International Trade Fair Centre and is near the Kotoka International Airport - Accra. It also has beaches (like Labadi Beach) and shopping malls.
  - **Administrative History:**  
Kpeshie was an area council within the Accra Metropolitan Council until 1989. In 1989, when the Accra Council became a Metropolitan Council, area councils became metro district councils. Later, Kpeshie was divided into the sub-metropolitan districts of Teshie, Nungua, and La. In 2007, Teshie and Nungua were merged into the Ledzokuku-Krowor Municipal District. In 2017, that district was further split into the Ledzokuku Municipal Assembly and the Krowor Municipal Assembly. Teshie is described as an independent town within the Ga State that stretches from Kpeshie Lagoon to Teshie-Nungua Estates.
  - **Political Action:**  
Local residents and organizations are actively involved in campaigns to protect the Kpeshie Lagoon from the damaging effects of human activity and development.
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### 4. Key Quotes and References

- "Kpeshie was one of these communities, and it was founded by the Ga people in the 17th century."
- "During the peak of the festival, there is a sprinkling of 'kpoikpoi,' a traditional dish made from maize, on the ground to signify the beginning of the new yam season."

- "The lagoon is characteristically located on a low-lying plain i.e. between Whittler Baracks corridor, on the eastern side and the La -Trade Fair corridor to the west where it forms a marshy zone."
  - "A lot of industrial activities are carried out around the Lagoon and it is being gradually turned into a place of refuse dump."
  - "Lagoons are highly productive coastal systems that could provide natural services to the surrounding..."
  - "Lagoons can also be fragile ecosystems susceptible to pollution effects from municipal, industrial and agricultural runoff."
  - "APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE OF SITE FROM MANGROVE (PROTECTED COASTAL WATER FRONT ZONE) TO MIXED USE..."
  - "Any attempt to destroy the little that is left of the Kpeshie Lagoon will have grave consequences on the La Community and its environs, causing threats to human life as well as nature including aquatic life within the landscape."
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## Timeline of Events

- **16th Century:**  
The Ga people migrate from present-day Togo and settle in various parts of present-day Ghana, including the Accra plains.
- **17th Century:**  
The Ga people establish the community of Kpeshie on the Accra plains.  
The Dutch construct Fort Crèvecoeur (later Ussher Fort) near Accra in present-day Osu, adjacent to Kpeshie. This fort is used to regulate the slave trade.  
European traders, initially Portuguese, begin to engage in trade with the Ga people, exchanging goods for gold and ivory.
- **Colonial Period:**  
Kpeshie becomes an important trading hub within the Gold Coast colony, incorporated under British administration.
- **1953:**  
The Accra Council is created, and Kpeshie is established as one of six area councils within the Accra area.
- **1989:**  
The Accra Council is elevated to Metropolitan status. The area councils, including Kpeshie, become metro district councils. Kpeshie is divided into the sub-metropolitan districts of Teshie, Nungua, and La.
- **2007:**  
The Teshie and Nungua sub-metropolitan district councils are merged and upgraded to a Municipal Status, becoming the Ledzokuku-Krowor Municipal District.

- **2012:**  
Joseph Apau, Simon Kojo Appiah, and M. Marmon-Halm conduct a study on the water quality parameters of the Kpeshie Lagoon, noting its pollution due to industrial activities and refuse dumping.
  - **2017:**  
The Ledzokuku-Krowor Municipal Assembly is split into the Ledzokuku Municipal Assembly and the Krowor Municipal Assembly.
  - **August 7, 2020:**  
A publication appears in the Ghanaian Times regarding an application to change the land use of a mangrove area near Kpeshie Lagoon from a protected coastal zone to a mixed-use development (residential and recreational).
  - **August 11, 2020:**  
A petition is launched on Change.org by Teki Akuetteh, with the support of the Tse Addo (East La) community and Social & Scientific Research for Development (SSRD-Global), to halt the proposed land-use change and protect Kpeshie Lagoon.
  - **Ongoing:**  
The Kpeshie Lagoon faces continual threats of pollution from municipal, industrial, and agricultural sources as well as development encroachments.  
The Ga people of Kpeshie continue to celebrate their cultural festivals, including Homowo, Ngmayem, Kpledjoo, Gbiε, Tejoo, and Akplekε. The Homowo festival, in particular, involves rituals like the sprinkling of kpoikpoi (a traditional maize dish) and is held annually in August.
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## Cast of Characters

- **The Ga People:**  
The indigenous group who migrated from present-day Togo in the 16th century and founded Kpeshie in the 17th century. They are primarily associated with the Greater Accra region. Their rich culture is expressed through various festivals and traditions.
- **Portuguese Traders:**  
The first Europeans to arrive in Ghana. They established trade relations with the Ga people in the 15th century, exchanging European goods for gold and ivory.
- **Dutch Traders/Colonizers:**  
They built Fort Crèvecoeur, later Ussher Fort, in the 17th Century near Kpeshie. They were heavily involved in the slave trade in the region.
- **British Administrators:**  
During the colonial period, they incorporated Kpeshie into the Gold Coast colony and

oversaw its development as a trading hub.

- **Joseph Apau:**

A researcher who, along with Simon Kojo Appiah and M. Marmon-Halm, conducted a study on the water quality parameters of the Kpeshie Lagoon in 2012. They highlighted the lagoon's pollution problems and potential long-term issues.

- **Simon Kojo Appiah:**

Co-researcher on the **Kpeshie, Ghana: A Comprehensive Study Guide**  
**Quiz**

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. **Who are the Ga people, and what is their connection to Kpeshie?**

The Ga people are an ethnic group in Ghana, believed to have migrated from present-day Togo in the 16th century. They established Kpeshie in the 17th century, making it one of their settlements within the Accra plains.

2. **Describe the role of the Dutch in Kpeshie's history and what fort they built near the area.**

The Dutch played a significant role in the trade history of Kpeshie. In the 17th century, they built Fort Crèvecoeur (later known as Ussher Fort), located near present-day Osu, to regulate trade and the slave trade, making it an important commercial hub for Kpeshie.

3. **What is the Homowo Festival, and what does the "sprinkling of kpoikpoi" signify?**

The Homowo Festival is a major Ga festival celebrated to mark the end of a period of hunger. During the festival, "kpoikpoi," a traditional maize dish, is sprinkled on the ground to symbolize the start of the new yam season and the victory over hunger.

4. **Name three other festivals celebrated by the Ga people in Kpeshie, and briefly describe each.**

- **Ngmayem Festival:** A harvest festival, celebrated to thank the gods for a good yield, typically in March or April.
- **Kpledjoo Festival:** A December festival dedicated to reflection and renewal, often involving cleansing rituals.
- **Gbiɛ Festival:** Also called Asafotufiam, it honors warriors with military displays, held in August.

5. **According to the text, what are the main concerns regarding the Kpeshie Lagoon's condition?**

The main concerns about the Kpeshie Lagoon include pollution from industrial and agricultural runoff, destruction of vegetation, and the potential conversion of protected mangrove areas into residential spaces. These factors threaten the lagoon's ecosystem, including its biodiversity and role in flood protection.

6. **What are some of the geographic features of Kpeshie and its lagoon?**

Kpeshie is located on a low-lying plain near Accra, with the Kpeshie Lagoon forming a marshy zone between the Teshie Rasta Road and the Ghana International Trade Fair corridors. The lagoon is shallow and susceptible to environmental changes, with parts of it divided by recent road construction.

7. **How was Kpeshie's political structure changed over the years from 1953 onward?**

Initially, Kpeshie was an area council under the Accra Council in 1953. In 1989, it

became part of the newly created Accra Metropolitan Assembly. Later, it was divided into the sub-metropolitan districts of Teshie, Nungua, and La. In 2007, Teshie and Nungua were merged into the Ledzokuku-Krowor Municipal District, which was split into two assemblies in 2017.

8. **Why are mangroves and wetlands, like those around Kpeshie Lagoon, considered important ecosystems?**

Mangroves and wetlands play crucial roles in protecting shorelines, supporting biodiversity, and providing breeding grounds for aquatic species. They also help in carbon storage and flood prevention by absorbing excess water during heavy rainfall.

9. **What kind of businesses are residents of Kpeshie involved in?**

Residents of Kpeshie are primarily involved in small businesses, including industrial and manufacturing activities. There is also commercial activity related to residential and tourism sectors, supported by nearby attractions like beaches and the Ghana International Trade Fair Centre.

10. **What were the original area councils that were created when the Accra Council was established?**

When the Accra Council was established in 1953, the area councils created included Kpeshie, among five other councils in the Accra region.

### Quiz Answer Key

1. The Ga people migrated from present-day Togo in the 16th century and founded Kpeshie in the 17th century.
2. The Dutch built Fort Crèvecoeur (Ussher Fort) near Kpeshie, which was used to regulate trade and the slave trade.
3. The Homowo Festival celebrates the end of hunger, and the sprinkling of "kpoikpoi" symbolizes the start of the new yam season.
4. Three other festivals celebrated by the Ga people in Kpeshie are:
  - Ngmayem Festival (harvest festival)
  - Kpladjoo Festival (reflection and renewal)
  - Gbiε Festival (honoring warriors).
5. The Kpeshie Lagoon faces pollution, destruction of mangroves, and the potential conversion of protected areas into residential spaces.
6. Kpeshie is located on a low-lying plain near the Kpeshie Lagoon, which is shallow, divided by roads, and vulnerable to pollution.
7. Kpeshie's political structure changed from an area council to a metro district council, then split into sub-metropolitan districts and eventually became part of municipal assemblies.
8. Mangroves and wetlands are important for coastal protection, biodiversity support, carbon storage, and flood prevention.
9. Kpeshie residents engage in small businesses, industrial activities, and tourism, with some involved in beach and shopping center industries.
10. The original area councils created in 1953 included Kpeshie and five others.

### Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Choose one of the following essay questions and develop a well-structured response.

- 1. Discuss the historical and cultural significance of Kpeshie, focusing on the interplay between its Ga origins, European contact, and its development as a hub of trade and commerce.**  
(Your answer should address how the migration of the Ga people influenced the founding of Kpeshie, the role of European traders such as the Portuguese and Dutch, and how these interactions shaped Kpeshie's role in global trade, including the impacts of the transatlantic slave trade.)
- 2. Analyse the environmental threats facing the Kpeshie Lagoon, and assess the potential consequences for the local community and the wider ecosystem if these threats are not addressed.**  
(This response should explore the causes of pollution, loss of mangroves, and other ecological challenges in the lagoon, discussing how these problems could affect local residents' livelihoods, biodiversity, and ecosystem services like flood control and water filtration.)
- 3. Compare and contrast the various festivals celebrated in Kpeshie, highlighting their cultural significance, the specific rituals associated with them, and their role in preserving the cultural identity of the Ga people.**  
(The response should examine at least three festivals, detailing the rituals involved and how these festivals reflect the Ga people's values, beliefs, and history.)
- 4. Evaluate the political and administrative changes that Kpeshie has undergone, focusing on how these changes have impacted the community and its governance.**  
(This essay should analyze the political shifts from Kpeshie's status as an area council to its current place within the municipal structures, reflecting on how these changes have influenced local governance, development, and community engagement.)
- 5. Considering the cultural, economic, and environmental context of Kpeshie, propose a plan for sustainable development that addresses both the immediate needs of the community and the long-term preservation of its natural and cultural heritage.**  
(This answer should suggest a balanced development approach that considers Kpeshie's historical, cultural, and environmental needs. Proposals might include sustainable tourism, lagoon protection initiatives, community involvement, and sustainable infrastructure development.)

### **Glossary of Key Terms**

- **Ga People:** An ethnic group in Ghana, believed to have migrated from present-day Togo, who are the founders of Kpeshie and surrounding areas.
- **Homowo Festival:** A Ga festival celebrating the end of hunger, featuring rituals like the sprinkling of "kpoikpoi," and it usually takes place in August.
- **Kpokpoi:** A traditional dish made from maize, significant in the Homowo Festival, representing the start of the yam season.
- **Kpeshie Lagoon:** A coastal lagoon located near Accra and a central geographical feature, whose ecosystem is threatened by pollution and other issues.
- **Mangroves:** Coastal trees that grow in saline water and protect the shoreline and support the natural ecosystem.

- **Fort Crèvecoeur (Ussher Fort):** A fort built by the Dutch in the 17th century near Kpeshie, used to control trade and the slave trade.
- **Ngmayem Festival:** A harvest festival celebrated by the Ga people, typically in March or April to thank the gods.
- **Kpledjoo Festival:** A December festival for reflection and renewal among the Ga people.
- **Gbiε Festival:** A festival honoring the warriors of the Ga-Dangme people, typically taking place in August.
- **Teshie and Nungua:** Sub-metropolitan districts that were part of the Kpeshie area council.
- **Ledzokuku-Krowor Municipal District:** Created from the merger of Teshie and Nungua sub-metropolitan districts.
- **Eutrophication:** Excessive richness of nutrients in a body of water due to runoff or industrial processes; can lead to algal blooms and harm the ecosystem.
- **Anthropogenic Pollution:** Pollution resulting from human activities that impacts natural environments.
- **Alkalinity:** A measure of a body of water's capacity to neutralize acids. It is important for supporting aquatic life and maintaining the balance of an aquatic ecosystem.

#### **Additional Questions:**

##### **What is the historical origin of Kpeshie?**

Kpeshie was founded by the Ga people in the 17th century, who had migrated from present-day Togo in the 16th century. The Ga people settled in various parts of what is now Ghana, including the Accra plains, and established communities, one of which was Kpeshie.

##### **How has European contact shaped Kpeshie's history?**

The arrival of Europeans, particularly the Portuguese in the 15th century, significantly impacted Kpeshie. Trade relationships developed, with Europeans exchanging goods for gold and ivory. The Dutch also built Fort Crèvecoeur (now Ussher Fort) near the town, which became a hub for the slave trade and other commercial activities in the area. Kpeshie subsequently became a trading post and a vital component of the Gold Coast Colony under British administration.

##### **What are the major festivals celebrated by the Ga people of Kpeshie?**

The Ga-Dangme people of Kpeshie celebrate several festivals throughout the year, including:

- **Homowo Festival:** Marking the end of the hunger period (August/September), with the sprinkling of "kpokpoi" (traditional maize dish).
- **Ngmayem Festival:** A harvest festival in March/April.
- **Kpledjoo Festival:** A reflective festival, occurring in December.
- **Gbiε Festival:** Celebrates warriors with military displays (August).
- **Tejoo Festival:** Celebrates the sea deities with beach rituals.
- **Akplekε Festival:** Dedicated to the youth and the Ga language.

##### **How do environmental threats affect the Kpeshie Lagoon and surrounding areas?**

The Kpeshie Lagoon faces several environmental threats, including pollution from domestic waste, industrial activities, and agricultural runoff. Eutrophication has led to algal blooms,

and the destruction of mangrove forests has increased vulnerability to flooding and habitat loss. These issues threaten biodiversity and the natural services the lagoon provides, such as flood control and water purification.