Dear Guest,

Mohee!/Akwaaba!/Obaak3!/ Woezor!/Welcome!

The Adibea Royal Clan (Adibea We), Ancestor Project, and Nkyinkyim Museum welcome you to Ancestor Veneration Ceremony 2025. Ancestor Veneration Ceremony is one of the museum's annual sacred festivals, dedicated to undemonizing African traditional religions and fully appreciating African Spirituality and the valuable knowledge systems it affords contemporary African societies. We use the term "undemonizing" to reference the intentional work of repairing and reclaiming African traditional narratives from centuries of framing by colonial powers and missionaries as evil, primitive, or superstitious. Ancestor Veneration consists of a series of acts and rituals acknowledged by various African groups and communities to honour the spirits of good people who have departed. These acts and rituals include feeding people in the community, especially children, alms giving, libation/prayers, and community development. When these acts are done in the name of the said ancestor, they are considered Ancestor Veneration.The festival is aimed at building bridges between local residents and the global African diaspora through celebrating our shared history, culture, and traditions. This effort, we believe, will create a dynamic platform to reunite spiritual connections and build stronger ties across the diaspora.

The annual Ancestor Veneration Ceremony serves as a sacred ground to honour our ancestors and offer them peace and respite. The event involves libation, prayers, and traditional African rites dedicated to our ancestors, special prayers for our enslaved ancestors and their descendants, rites for twins and fertility blessings for those who want twins, and supplications for blessing and prosperity in the upcoming year. The main event of this four-day festival occurs each year on Saturday. Surrounding events include communal labor and educational programs

focused on understanding African traditional rituals and indigenous spiritual practices through art, dance, music, and symbolism. Sunday is reserved for the closing ceremony. It has become a custom for the museum to unveil and venerate newly commissioned funerary portraiture, Nsisu.

Adibea We and Nkyinkyin Museum acknowledge the presence of diverse African ethnic groups with varying practices. In good faith, we welcome you to our lands and sacred space to join us with mutual respect and understanding as we venerate our united African Ancestors.

SYMBOLISM

Please note that while the Ancestor Veneration Ceremony is grounded in southern Ghanaian and indigenous West African traditions, not all ethnicities describe their spiritual practices as a 'religion' as understood through Western logic. African spiritual philosophies are very diverse, but inclusivity and tolerance toward inter-ethnic spiritual practices are common across the African continent. This tolerance and understanding are the foundation that allows the ceremony to take place on the sacred grounds of Ga Dangme land.

Symbolic systems within African spirituality do not conform to Abrahamic religious symbolism. Applying Judeo-Christian, Islamic, Pagan and Western symbolism to traditional African spirituality is disrespectful to the intellectual traditions of Africa. Examples of Abrahamic religious symbolism include the appropriateness of representing spiritual beings in material image and form or the practice of praying to the deceased, and monotheism, or the recognition of one exclusive God.

BASIC GUIDE

Colours: White is the official colour of the Ga-Dangme traditional ceremony.

Language: In an attempt to explain traditional culture to others, untrained people and even locals may still use colonial language, such as "Fetish Pries,t" without understanding the problem such language poses. Not every word in African languages translates well into English. For example, the word "som" in Akan can translate into serve, venerate, worship, respect, understudy, and respect. Cultural assets used in ceremonies are deeply revere,d but they are **not idols.**

Colonial Language	Respectful Alternative
Fetish Priest / Priestess	Traditional priest, Spiritual leader, Bokor, Okomfo, Wulomo
Witch Doctor	Healer, Herbalist, Traditional Medicine Doctor
Idol	Sacred Sculpture
Superstition	Esoteric knowledge, Traditional belief system
Tribe	Ethnic Group, Community
Objects	Cultural Asset

Masks and Masquerade: Masks and masquerade costumes have a variety of uses and purposes, including various levels of community relations both physical and spiritual, and for fostering communal morale, entertainment, security, and spiritual rites. Masqueraders on site serve as security and assist in guiding guests through silent gestures away from restricted areas and towards event programming. While they may appear intimidating, they intend no harm.

African Symbolic Coffin/Proverbial Coffins: 'Abebuu Adekai' (Proverbial Coffins) follow the rich tradition of honouring people's journey into the Afterlife. The lion coffin used in the Ancestor Veneration Ceremony 2025 carries a brass vessel containing the hair of Dr. Julius Garvey, son of Honorable Marcus Mosiah Garvey. The coffin was built by Eric Adotey Kpapko, son of Kane Kwei, who is credited with a significant contribution to developing the proverbial coffin art form.

Nsisu/Nsodiɛ: Nsisu/Nsodiɛ are Akan funerary portrait vessels that carry DNA of the deceased, such as hair, nail clippings, or teeth, along with any other personal items the family wishes to include. These portraits rarely depict the dead isolation; it is customary to also include portraits of the living descendants who are saying farewell to the deceased. The render styles range from hyper-realistic to stylized to abstract. Nsisu/Nsodiɛ are not "idols." The portraits depict the dead and the living who are honouring the dead and or are presenting gifts to the dead. Those who wish to present gifts to their ancestors should request a portrait commission, which will include a vessel that will hold their gifts. 2025 Honorary Nsisu/Nsodiɛ

portraits include Nana Apau Sanwansan Ababio, Nana Pebi Date and family, Nana Obadele Kambon and family, and Robin Rue Simmons (USA).

Twins and Twin Figures: Twins are considered to be announcers of positive outcomes and grace coming from the spiritual realm. If a twin dies, a sacred twin miniature figure is carved for the surviving twin and the parents of the twin. This figure has both spiritual and therapeutic effects on the surviving family.

Libation: Libation is a ritual of pouring a liquid as an offering to a deity or spirit, or in memory of the dead. Upon consulting multiple groups and shrines about colonial relics and other European drinks used for libation, we will continue to use Schnapps and other drinks that the ancestors are familiar with, while we continue to decolonize traditional practices together. However, because Ancestor Veneration rites and rituals precede the colonial era, we propose the following forms of libation from the Adibea Royal Family: corn wine, palm wine, millet wine, rainwater that has not hit the roof of the building, and seawater. The museum encourages locally produced and manufactured natural drinks as the official libation drinks for the hosts; however, for personal ancestral experiences, people are invited to bring their own drinks.

Henotheism: Libation pouring in African traditional beliefs acknowledges a henotheistic hierarchy and not polytheism, as is commonly believed. Henotheism (heno - meaning "one" and theism - meaning "supreme being") worships one particular deity exclusively while recognizing the existence of many gods, deities, spirits, and ancestors. In polytheism, all gods are equally worthy of worship, whereas in henotheism, a single deity holds a primary or superior position without denying the existence of other deities.

Processional: The formal processional of the Ancestor Veneration Ceremony occurs each year on Saturday. The processional is made up of participating chiefs, priests, priestesses, traditional leaders, and community leaders. Each representative is accompanied by their entourage, consisting of members of their own group as well as hired members. As is customary in Akan tradition, participants carry an umbrella (“kɛtɛ” in Twi) richly decorated with sacred colors and symbols. The umbrella is usually carried by the attendants and not by the chief or leader themself, demonstrating honor and service. Participant groups lead the procession to the sacred area, carrying gifts for the ancestors. All guests are invited to join in the processional. Chiefs, priests, priestesses, traditional leaders, and community leaders lead in libations and prayers in their local languages at the sacred area.

Ancestors: Ancestors are all good people who have transitioned into the Afterlife, including one's immediate parents or elders. Ancestors are usually recognized for living a morally upright life and fulfilling their duties to the family and community. Once acknowledged as an ancestor, the role of the departed spirit is to guide and protect descendants, act as an intermediary between the living and the spirit world, influence health, harmony, and well-being, and remind descendants of purpose and values.

What to Expect: Topics addressed during the Ancestor Veneration Ceremony, including death, life, and healing, are highly sensitive, especially for guests who are grieving, unwell, or emotionally vulnerable. The hosts of the Ancestor Veneration Ceremony cannot and do not intend to control the experiences or outcomes of rites, rituals, and prayers on individual guests. This honest explanation is meant to limit unmet expectations and guard against the misuse of spiritual practices and exploitation of vulnerable people.

Ancestor Project and Nkyinkyim Museum Griots will be available to explain and demystify anything that you do not understand and aid you as you enjoy a genuine spiritual and cultural experience.

NOTE: Creating a healing experience is a joint responsibility. Please help us improve this ceremony with constructive suggestions, volunteer services, and donations.

"I have fed and I continue to feed the spirit of both my maternal and paternal grandmothers by feeding the children in the community and helping to foster healing through the African diaspora. Please join us to continue un-demonising African Traditional belief systems and practices."

- **Kwame Akoto-Bamfo, 2025**