

# ABOSOM

Akan Spirits

**ABOSOM: AKAN SPIRITS**

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# Introduction

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Coming across “Abasoms” in the *Encyclopedia of Ancient Deities* by Charles Russell Coulter and Patricia Turner, one of the first things that stood out was the phrase “evil spirits”. Every time I come across something related to Africa being labeled as “evil” I do more research. Unfortunately, I kept coming across the same information.

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*To drive the Abonsam from the village or home and to cleanse the area it was necessary to have four weeks of silence. During this period, it was hoped that the evil spirits would be frightened away. This was followed by a night of creating noise; thunderous sounds by rattling pots, beating sticks together and screaming loudly.*

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According to the *Encyclopedia of Ancient Deities*, Abosom is “Probably the same as *Abonsam*”. Abasoms/Abonsam are spirits in Guinea. The only information I’ve been able to find on Abasoms/Abonsam is the same as found above. The information in this ebook will be in regard to information I was able to find on Abosom.

# Abosom - Ghana Spirits

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The Ashanti/Asante are the largest of the Akan people (34 subgroups) of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. In the traditional religion of the Ashanti, Abosom (spirits, plural - obosom, singular) assist humans on earth. They are the children and messengers of Nyame (Creator).

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*Similar in function to Yoruba orisha and Vodun loa, the abosom are spiritual forces evincing and operating throughout the Akan universe, assisting Nyame in the task of managing Creation, namely humanity. - Yaba Amgborale Blay*

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*The term **Abosom** (ah-boh'-som) is an **Akan** term for Deities, Goddesses and Gods, the Divine Spirit-forces in Creation. The Abosom are the children of **Nyamewaa-Nyame** – The Mother-Father Supreme Being. The term Abosom can be traced directly back to the **Ancestral Akan** language of **Khanit** and **Kamit** (ancient Nubia and Egypt). - Odwirafo Kwesi Ra Nehem Ptah Akhan*

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The original information I came across had the Abosom listed as house, water and tree spirits which were believed to be malevolent. According to Joseph S. Kaminski, “Abosom are believed to abide in other natural objects including trees, plants, rocks, mountains, hills, caves, brooks, wells, and so on.”

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*Although the abosom often embody various manifestations of nature (i.e., wind, bodies of water, trees, mountains, hills, animals, etc.), these objects are used only as temporary dwelling places and should not be confused with the abosom themselves. The abosom are essentially spirit. - Yaba Amgborale Blay*

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*These Deities are found everywhere in Ghana, even in the smallest communities, towns, and villages. They are male and female, or may have the power to embody both. The benevolent spirits form a major part of our traditional religion. There are Abosom at traditional levels, clan levels, house levels and individually. They range from tribal gods to community gods or gods of families, to individual or private gods. However, they were never in human form living on this earth. They are placed well above humans beings each having his/her own area of expertise. They are not in conflict with each other; rather they complement each other in various ways. Their main objective is to create harmony and peace, so they work in harmony with each other. - Nana Akua Kyerewaa Opokuwaa*

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According to Kwasi Bempong, there were divisions of Abosom.

1. Atano (water)
2. Ewim (sky)
3. Abo (earth)

Atano Abosom are spiritual entities which originate from water. These were the “children” of Tano (son of Onyame and Asase Ya (“Old Woman Earth”) and brother of Bia). Ta Kora/Taa Kora, another name for Tano, is the highest of the Akan spirits on earth. He’s embodied in the Tano/Tano River in Ghana.

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*The Supreme Being created lesser powers (abosom; singular obosom) to help humans with their lives. Tano, the river spirit, for example, is an obosom. Tano is neither a god nor equal to the Supreme Being. Tano is a lesser spirit created by the Supreme Being. After the Supreme Being created everything, he retired to allow decisions to be made by the living. - Joseph S. Kaminski*

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Ewim Abosom and Abo Abosam manifest as abrafo. Abrafo is a military term which means “warrior or executioner”.

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*The Abrafo are the executioners of the Company, and their emblem is a knife, like an ordinary kitchen knife, with which they attacked their victims. Their duty in battle is to behead those of the enemy killed on the field, who are not removed by their comrades. - [20,000 Names from Around the World](#)*

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The Ewim and Abo Abosom “were [in fact] those who saw the laws (mmara) were carried out”.

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*Punishment and death were meted out by the abrafo-abosom, while the older group of abosom, the Atano, were deliverers of blessings.*

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Another “group” of Abosom I came across are the Akradin Abosom. These are Akan spirits who govern the solar, lunar and planetary bodies.

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*The Abosom are the Asunsum, the Spirits, operating through the many Suns, Moons, Stars, Planetary bodies, Oceans, Rivers, Mountains, Wind, Fire and the Black Substance of Space comprising **Abode** (ah-baw-deh') or Creation. They are the Divine “Organs” regulating Order within the Great Divine “Body” of **Nyamewaa-Nyame** just as your organs (smaller bodies) regulate order within the greater body-you. The **Akradinbosom** are a particular grouping of **Abosom** identified by Their unique functions within the greater company of **Abosom**. - [Akradinbosom](#)*

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Other groups, according to Yaba Amgborale Blay, are as follows:

1. Tete Abosom - Tutelary spirits who protect the community from harm.
2. Egyabosom - Family abosom, inherited patrilineally, who govern, protect and assist in the actualization of nkrabea (destiny).
3. Abusua - Associated with each of the various Akan clans

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*The Akan connect the tete abosom, egyabosom, and Abusua abosom with the origins of Creation and have thus recognized and revered them from time immemorial. However, the Akan also believe that in the same way that Nyame continues to create the universe, he continues to create abosom. These contemporary abosom can be thought of as a type of medicine in that they are "owned" by highly specialized spiritualists who use them in the manipulation of cosmic energy. The continued reverence of these abosom largely depends on their ability to satisfy their intended purpose. - Yaba Amgborale Blay*

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As for the Abosom being listed through various sources as evil or malevolent spirits, I came across the following information, both of which are from *Asante Ntamera Trumpets in Ghana: Culture, Tradition and Sound Barrage* by Joseph S. Kaminski.

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*The Asante also make offering to abosom to court their goodwill and to pacify them, for instance the abosom are ambivalent, though, they may manifest as either good or bad. The Asante venerate Tano (the river spirit), for example, by pouring libations and reciting prayers and surrogate speeches to it.*

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*The deities are held either to be good and evil or to have powers of good and evil. Thus, unlike Onyame (God), they are not wholly good and hence they are considered in Akan theology and cosmology to have independent existence of some sort; they operate independently of God and in accordance with their own desires and intentions.*

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*Each obosom performs different functions and has the ability to reward, punish, protect, and guide human kind in all aspects of life. - Yaba Amgborale Blay*

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