{jcomments on}

My eleven years of stay in the north of Ghana revealed varied experiences, various people, landscape and languages. I guess too many people equate the North to Tamale and sometimes to Bolgatanga . Sometimes we hear on the news that something has happened in Sandema in the UPPER WEST REGION. For those of us who know, this hits us in the face since Sandema is in the UPPER EAST REGION!

For most Ghanaians, especially those of us from the south, the North connotes a place of suffering, a no go land, a form of Siberia, a land mass not worth visiting. Unfortunately, most people of Northern extraction do little to correct this impression except to show anger at those that express such ignorance. While our country needs its citizens and especially the youth to know much about it, very few people are interested in going beyond their districts to even talk of other regions. Kofi Akpabli's work **A SENSE OF SAVANNAH** wakes us from such a slumber.

The North for 11 years was my home and continues to be my second home since I have so many friends and even a piece of land there! I met my wife in the North of Ghana and our first child was born there. So, Mr. Kofi Akpabli's work becomes important and necessary for internal tourism as well as a work that raises the awareness levels of most Ghanaians about what I term the 'flip side 'of Ghana.

Mr. Akpabli adopts the conversational/ humorous style. He narrates or tells his stories with some crispness and gives the sense of the familiar thereby breaking the mysticism that surrounds the North. 'For those who open their doors to the stranger' is an appropriate dedication to the proverbial Ghanaian hospitality. But, more appropriately this is an apt description of what the North is all about and Kofi Akpabli foregrounds this so beautifully.

The story of Navrongo brings in the history of education and the catholic mission pioneered by Father Oscar Morin and his two colleagues. The various aspects of Navrongo life comes to the fore. Kofi artistically creates suspense by keeping silent about the night life on Condemned Road. Indeed he has the right to contemplate on the meaning of 'You don't have conscience'.

'Way West to Wechiau' in the Upper West Region for me is very revealing. Apart from the safari itself, I did not know that Ghana had the Hippopotamus species! I also did not know cowries are used in some parts of Ghana as money!
The bus ride from Kumasi is all too familiar until recently that buses are that regular and reliable,

a breakdown of a bus and people sleeping close by the broken-down bus is a good ingredient in an adventure to the North!

I obviously read the piece on Bawku first because that was where I lived in my sojourn in the North of Ghana. I meticulously read the piece to make sure the information is so right. Indeed, the rows of donkey cart guide by boys Tesh Natinga, through Palnaba and Sarabogo heading for the Bawku market filled me with nostalgia..

In all, Mr. Akpabli has provided us with a multi-faceted document: a travelogue, a narrative, a tourist guide, a reference book on internal tourism and a work filled with humour! Therefore, we no longer need foreign websites to tell our own story of what Northern Ghana look like.

In Mr. Akpabli's next book, I expect more stories on the Northern Region, on paces like Bole, Nakpanduri, Yunyoo, Jinbale, Gbumgbum and the like!

Without trying to appear very generous to Mr. Akpabli's work, we must appreciate how difficult it is to capture one's travels into a work like this. The humour and descriptions are so graphic that one feels he is with him on the journey!

The art work is good enough and, Mr. Akpabli's picture dressed in goatskin really sets the tone for the adventures in his book.

BOOK REVIEW
AUTHOR: KOFI AKPABLI
TITLE: A SENSE OF SAVANNAH (150 PAGES)
REVIEWER: DAVID AKO ODOI

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