

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study.

Art, especially the visual art can be said to be the only way of bringing out the philosophies and concepts of given society into physical form. Usually, it is these philosophies and concepts that become the norms and ethics which keep the society together. It can also help to educate people about the mindset of those who made it and the use it was intended for. Similarly, it can be used to teach others in the society to make art forms not just for its aesthetics but also as a way of preserving the culture of the people. Thus it could be realised that knowing the socio-cultural, educational as well as the philosophical importance of a particular work of art helps to tell others about the work, how it was made and what it is intended for. This helps in preserving the culture of a particular society for subsequent generations. It also helps the individuals in the society to have a common cultural identity.

The quest by individual societies for a cultural identity is not just to prove to the world that, they are the most important but rather to have a stage of development that would make them fit into the dynamism of the ever growing world. Perhaps it is in line with the ever popular saying that “one needs to know where he is coming from to enable him know his ultimate destination”. This saying can also be linked to the Igbo proverb that “Onye na eweghi ihe arimama di ka onye nwuru anwu”, literally meaning “a person or people with no identity are as well as dead”. Thus, being aware of one’s culture is important but knowing the essence of that identity in terms of the concepts and

philosophies is equally very important as the popular Akan adage has it that:

“Ωο ωερζ φιρι ωο κυρομηενε αβζν α, ωο ψερα δωαβο ασε” literary translated as “the one who gets missing at the gathering is he who forgets chief’s horn”.

In a world of increasing cultural assimilation, there can be the facing out of an entire culture. Okere (1996:10) is of the view that:

...the African today is a living confluence of cultural rivers, the major rivers being, on the one hand, the traditional culture with its tributaries of religion, social structure, language, values and world view, and, on the other hand, the Christian -Western culture (and other alien cultures including Islam) with its own tributaries.

There is therefore the need to protect the cultures of the various societies by transmitting them onto subsequent generations since there are adequate indications to prove that “the present and the future live in the past”. The best way to harness the present and the future is to revisit the past. In modern times, the African cannot continue to live in the past neither can he live in the present or the future away from the past. Danielsson (1980:16) sums up the need for a systematic cultural transition with the view that:

Culture... is never a set of fixed and uniform behaviour, and any attempt on a large scale to turn back the clock is bound to end in dismal failure. The eternal question that the (*African*) will have to face also in the future therefore, is what to retain of the traditional culture and what to adopt in the form of new ideas and things.

The African, living in a contemporary world can still retain the salient part of his indigenous culture because the nature and effects of his cultural context are omnipresent but differ depending on time, space, events and people involved (Thaman, 1999).

In Ghana, a range of artforms have over the ages been used to serve a similar purpose. One such artforms is the indigenous stool which is the subject of this research. It is known among the Akan as “sesedwa” or “sesegua”. It is basically a wooden seat however, its essence and symbolism permeates every fabric of the society. The origin of the stool cannot be easily traced however it is believed to have begun as a simple formless seat with a handle (fig 1.1) called “dufua” Arthur (2001).

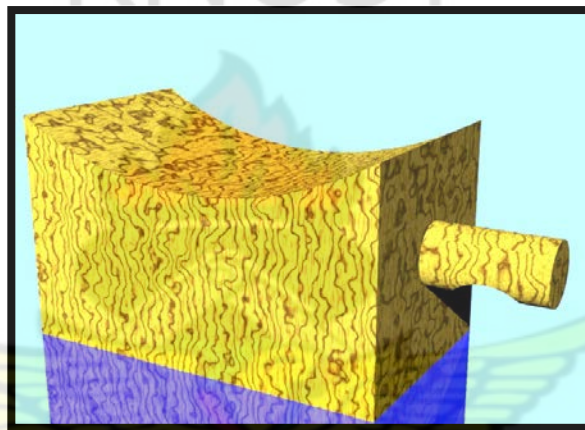


Fig.1.1. An artist impression of an early stool (Dufua).

The importance of stools in the total lives of the people in most part of the indigenous Ghanaian societies is highly remarkable. Twumasi (1975), citing the golden stool of the Asante, talks about its significance in the unity it gives to the nation and also the strong belief that it contains the soul of the nation. The golden stool may be just one example however; every stool used by chiefs in any part of the indigenous society is believed to be imbued with the soul of the land. It also acts as a political symbol of power and authority.

Warren (1986) sees the chief as not just a ruler, but also a symbol of ethnic identity and values. This makes his stool to be revered above any other object in his paraphernalia. They carry a lot of powerful symbols meant to impart knowledge on the cultures and traditions of the society.

The stool features prominently in the religious lives of the indigenous Ghanaian. It is believed to embody the spirits of the ancestors as such used in various ceremonies and rituals of religious dimensions. The stools of chiefs and some elders in the society are blackened after their death. These black stools are usually regarded as highly sacred objects.

Another use of the stool is its role in the socio-economic development of the society. It helps to foster a harmonious co-existence among all members of the society. Looking at the importance of the stool as discussed, it becomes an extraordinary artwork which is indispensable in the very lives of the indigenous Ghanaian societies.

In recent times, African and for that matter, Ghanaian culture, has assumed a dual facet. An attempt to blend cultures to arrive at a generally acceptable one, might result in a superior culture dominating the weaker ones. Usually, the distinctions which separate cultures, (*which mark one group of people as different from another*), is dominated in today's globalizing world (Gadzekpo, 2004). This creates a “cultural vacuum” where later generations will be struggling for a fitting culture. One way out of this is to document the existing culture to serve as a handy reference for future generations.

Over the years, indigenous societies either consciously or unconsciously documented their cultures through the various art forms such as sculptures, textiles, music, and dance as well as the various body art. This is the underlying objective of this research which aims at documenting the indigenous stools of the Okre ethnic group of Akuapem in Ghana.

Such an objective will provoke the thoughts of Ghanaian artists and academicians in documenting of the cultural practises of the people, not only in the field of anthropology but also in all spheres of human endeavour. It will also go a long way in achieving a credible trend that has a reputable modern sense of expressions for a Ghanaian cultural identity.

In the field of Art Education, the sociological as well as the philosophical insight of the various art works used in individual cultures are very important. Gilbert (1989:34) re-echoes Leach (1983:256) argument that “objects which we rate as works of art need always be considered in context. Works of art are not just things in themselves, they are objects carrying moral implications”. The knowledge of such “moral implications” enables both the teacher and student realise how various societies the world over react to their art works.

This reaction is usually in the thought process governing their making and use. Adzraku (1996:18) is of the view that it helps the society “to solve nagging spiritual, psychological, sociological and emotional problems of mankind”. Adu-Agyem (1998:2) stressed that such knowledge “fosters creativity and also helps the individuals

in the recipient society to make intelligent judgement about their environment and that of others in the wake of technological advancement”.

The knowledge gathered in the study of the sociological and philosophical aspect of an art work usually become the basis for the formulation of curricula aimed at helping students and their would-be students not only learn the designing and making of artworks but also, to be able to:

- design items meant to be used in solving specific problems in the society as has been done over ages.
- enshrine the cultural context of either their society or a given society in the work of art they produce.
- appreciate the concepts and practises of a particular culture in the light of their art forms.
- pass on the essence of their culture to subsequent generations in their teaching by interpreting current and past works. This could help them to compare the art forms of different cultures and generations, thus drawing a conclusion as to how the present day art should be.
- incorporate new ideas and materials in the making of their art works suitable for the present generation without losing the essence of their own culture in their works.
- formulate administrative and educational policies on the making and use of art forms as a relevant ingredient for national development.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to the National Art Educators Association (NAEA),

“Knowledge is not given but made. Whatever we believe we know is the result of our effort to inquire, organize and finally, to build structures of conception that illuminates and forms of expression that can be made public and therefore shared. (NAEA 1977:14)

The urge to interrogate the self is a phenomenon which pertains to all human beings. It ultimately leads to probing to find answers to both simple and complex questions in the society. The association further noted that once the truth is grasped, there is always the urge to push further, to examine it critically, to question its validity, to determine its appropriateness to particular context. When a result is arrived at, inquiry terminates, (NAEA, 1977). This research, the result of such an interrogation of the self has been prompted by some basic factors.

Firstly, the indigenous Ghanaian society, like most indigenous societies in any part of the world is made up of a number of ethnic groups which are very complex and close-knitted. Owing to this, there are a lot of similarities in the practises as well as the art forms used by these ethnic groups. The arts and objects used function as powerful organizing symbols, connecting spiritual and social values as well as representing various cultural histories.

Most of the objects represent bridges between the everyday lives of the African peoples and the worlds of the divine where the link between the everyday and the spiritual worlds are drawn and understood through the use of these objects. With this attribute (especially the concept of similarities) one might easily mistaken to make a wholesale

judgement on the interpretation of the practises of all the ethnic groups based on the activities of just one or two. Such a judgement may not be a true reflection because individual ethnic groups have a unique structure that identifies them.

Secondly, anthropologist and ethnologist including Sarpong, Kyeremateng and Bocola, have given the stool an in-depth exposure. Here, meanings are usually derived from the values, history and the symbolism associated with such stools. Much focus, however, has not been on the stool as a work of art in the lives of the indigenous and perhaps contemporary Ghanaian.

However, in as much as it will not be proper to attend to the aesthetic aspects of art apart from cultural context, one can equally not attend to myth, meanings, history, and social structure apart from the physical embodiment in the objects (Newman, 1997). Thus, an aesthetic appreciation of the indigenous Ghanaian stool will not be out of context but rather, an effort to enhance its essence.

Another factor is that most of the literature available on stools in Ghana is on that of the Akan, particularly the Asante, (perhaps because they are the largest among the Akan ethnic group in Ghana). However, just like the individuals who make up the societies, each ethnic group is highly unique. This uniqueness in the individual ethnic groups cannot be identified if it is seen through the “eyes” of others. Adu-Agyem (1998:315) sharing a thought with this idea is critical of the fact that:

Almost all the books (*information*) relevant to art education by both local and foreign writers are Akan based. That is, they wrote more

on the Akan ethnic group than any other. This probably may be due to the fact that researchers or writers research more into the Akan ethnic groups of Ghana than the rest. It is high time researchers went into other ethnic groups to unearth the knowledge over there to make Art Education more enjoyable, meaningful and enhanced than before, by broadening the base of source and materials *as well as philosophies and concepts* in Ghana.

This would create a fair playing field for individuals to interact with the art forms they encounter because art forms, both exposed and unexposed, express the quintessence of human expression and have a profound effect on the lives of the individuals in the society where they were produced.

Therefore the full understanding of the essentials of any culture, should not be an across-the-board judgement using the findings from just one or two ethnic groups rather, there should be an in-depth exploration. This will expose the nuances that give the culture its unique features. It will also justify the fact that “although each item of regalia has its own practical and symbolic function, the collective royal art of a given state provides a record of its history, a measure of its wealth and a statement of its collective identity” (Ross, 2002:35)

The focus of the research is not on the much written about Akan stools but rather on the Okre stools of Akuapem. The Okre ethnic group is a relatively small arm of the Guans, found along the Akuapem ridge in the eastern region of Ghana. It is made up of seven main towns namely Apirede, Adukrom, Aseseɛso, Abonse, Awukugua, Dawu and Abiriw as well as a number of villages. Very little is known about them because they are usually lumped together with the majority Akan ethnic groups on the ridge, referred

to as the Akuapem. In this light the research will attempt to find answers to such questions as:

- are there indigenous stool of cultural relevance to the Okre people?
- do these stools have any aesthetic, philosophical and socio-cultural (political and educational) essence imbued in them for the future development of subsequent generations?.
- is it possible, by using the witten and photographic method, to document such essence for the future generation?

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

- To identify and describe selected indigenous stools of the Okre people of Akuapem
- To examine the aesthetic, philosophical and socio-cultural (political and educational) values of the stools and possibly present an illustrated thesis on a selection of the indigenous stools of the Okre of Akuapem.

1.4 Limitations

As much as the researcher would have wished to gather information from every quarter related to this study, there were some socio-economic as well as cultural aspect of the people which inhibited the gathering of information. They included the fact that some aspects of the chieftaincy institution, especially in the area of the black stools is regarded as highly sacred as such obtaining information on its symbolism was very difficult. Secondly, the researcher was barely given the chance to visit the stool rooms

to have a look and feel of the stools. In areas where access was given, he was not allowed to take photographs.

Another factor that limited the researcher in his study was the rate at which the elders who have a lot of first hand information were dying. For example, within a period of three years used for the research, as many as seven (7) of these elders died. This was seen as a big threat to the preservation of indigenous knowledge. Although some of the present generation might have some of these information passed on to them, it would have been appropriate to validate them with the older generation, some who were witnesses to some of the events being recounted in this thesis.

Another limitation was the long standing chieftaincy dispute (especially at Apirede which has lasted for over 100 years). This had greatly distorted valuable information about the stools in favour of either the ruling house or their immediate opponent. It therefore slowed the pace at which authentic information was received. Some chiefs were also very reluctant to give out information about their stools. They felt that it was their ancestral asset and should not be given out so freely.

Finally, there was the economic constraints. Although this was an academic exercise, in most cases, bottles of schnapps and money were demanded before certain stools could be seen or shrine houses entered. The researcher most of the time had to travel long distances and spent much time for the data.

1.5 Delimitation

In view of the limitations enumerated, the scope of the study was limited to stools selected from four towns in Okre namely Apirede, Adukrom, Aseseeso, and Abiriw. Two of the selected towns (Apirede and Abiriw), represented the oldest towns of Okre, the youngest town (Aseseeso) and the capital of the Okre towns (Adukrom). The selection of the stools was based largely on their importance to the cultural and historical development of the Okre ethnic group.

Documentation was largely limited to indigenous stools in the palaces and shrines of the Okre towns. Some relics connected to stools were also documented. Stools selected for documentation included that of the chiefs and queenmothers. Others included the stools of priests of the senior deities in the selected towns. In some few instances, some chairs were also documented.

The study was limited to written and photo-documentation. While most of the personal and ceremonial stools were presented in photographs, the sacred (black and white) stools described were presented in drawings and 3-D reconstructions.

1.6 Definition of Terms

In the writing of the thesis, certain words were used which had contextual meaning other than its every day use. They included:

Art forms: Technically, limited to the dictates of function, aesthetics, as well as skills. The use of “art forms” focuses on the indigenous Ghanaian stools, taking into account the aesthetic and educational aspect.

- Idioms:** Refers to the physical, psychological and spiritual aspect of expressing an idea. It also embraces the materials, tools and equipment as well as the various methods used in the expressing of such ideas.
- Contemporary:** This looks at the era within which the research is being conducted. It also refers to all the periods having the fundamental features of the proposed era.
- Indigenous:** This refers to the beliefs and practises native to the Okre society before the influence of external factors. It also refers to the Akan beliefs and practises introduced and imbibed by the Okre.
- Aesthetics:** Aesthetics in this context refers to both the surface and inner beauty (intrinsic and extrinsic) of a work of art in terms and its suitability, function and how the norms and the values of the society have been incorporated in the work.
- Theocracy:** The system of government (formally practiced by indigenous ethnic groups) where the priest of a deity or supernatural being is the head of the community. He rules by what can be termed as divine instructions from the deity.
- Primitive:** This refers to the items, actions and thoughts in the stages of development within the indigenous context of the African society which did not have as much scientific explanation as the modern society.

African art: this refers to the art form that embodies the philosophies and values of the African society in terms of the mode of making and their functions. Particular interest will be on the objects either made before the era of foreign influence or those done in modern times but still possessing these characteristics.

Akuapem: Refers to the Guan (Okre and Larteh) as well as the Akan (Akyim and the remnants of Akwamu). It covers the entire seventeen towns on the Akuapem ridge from Apirede to Berekusu and surrounding villages.

Indigenous stools: These refer to the various types of stools used by the individual societies in Ghana especially the type carved from single blocks of wood and revered for their spiritual and political importance.

Okre Stool: This refers to the sacred black and white, ceremonial and personal stools of cultural, historical and religious importance found among the Okre.

Kyerepong: The dialect spoken by the Okre people. It is just like Larteh and Anum but with a slight variation.

Nenyɔ: Kyerepong name for chief, same as “Nana” in Twi. The titles “Nenyɔ” and “Nana” have been used interchangeably in this thesis.

Priest / Ɛσξφο: The custodian of the deities. The kyerepong title is believed to be “Ɛdedifo”. They were formally the head of the Okre communities.

Akanisation: With reference to Labi (1989), it refers to the introduction of and subsequent imbibing of the Akan culture and values particularly the chieftaincy system of leadership by the Okre ethnic group.

1.7 Abbreviations

UEW: University of Education. Winneba.

NCCE: National Commission on Civic Education

NAEA: National Art Education Association.

LDCE: Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

P.T.C. Presbyterian Training College, Akropong-Akuapem

1.8 Assumptions

This research has become necessary and is based on the fact that:

- there were stools with remarkable aesthetic, historical, educational, political and socio-economic importance among the Okre people.
- there was the willingness of the custodians of authentic information on the Okre stools to divulge such information to the researcher at little or no cost.
- the study will not breach any of the existing traditional, social, cultural, political and religious laws of the Okre people.

1.9 Importance of the study

The study will:

- be a contribution to the artistic (aesthetic) documentation of an aspect of the cultural heritage of the Okre ethnic group of Akuapem in Ghana.
- help establish the extent of similarity and difference between the Okre stools and other known ones.

- provide comprehensive information on how the stool as an art work has been used in preserving the culture of the Okre society in terms of the socio-cultural, philosophical, political and religious aspect of a particular ethnic group in Ghana.
- serve as a body of knowledge, a rich source of reference to other researchers such as students, chiefs, artists, archaeologists, anthropologist and art educators investigating into how various indigenous and contemporary art forms have impacted positively on the development of ethnic groups in Ghana.
- suggestions and recommendations offer useful information for the documentation of other art forms apart from the indigenous stools.

1.10 Arrangement of the Rest of the Text.

The thesis is made up of six chapters with each chapter highlighting on an important aspect of the research. Chapter two reviews the available literature relevant to the study touching on the concept of African art in the areas of religion, education, aesthetics and symbolism. It also looks at documentation, highlighting on some indigenous forms of documentation in Africa as well as the need for such documentation in both the indigenous and contemporary societies. There is also the discussion on the indigenous Ghanaian stools in the areas of aesthetics, manufacturing, sanctification as well as the modern trends in the making and use of the stools.

The third chapter considers the methodology including the various instruments used in the collection and processing of the required data, the criteria for the admissibility of the methods and instruments used as well as the validity and reliability of the data

collected. Finally, it touches on the various facilities available for the collection of information.

The fourth chapter identifies and describes the aesthetics, educational, socio-cultural as well as the political essence of a selection of the Okre stools. Chapter five discusses the basic findings of the study to draw an appropriate conclusion from them. Chapter six deals with the summary, conclusions and recommendations, followed by the references and appendixes.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Overview.

A people become because they are
A people develop because they are
Like the roots of a tree
The history of a people makes them
They are spineless who have no history
They are worse than dead whose origin cannot be traced,
(Jectey-Nyarko: 2008)

The poem sums up the fact that man's ability to discover the "self" depends not just on gathering information about oneself but also on the engaging process of restoring the scattered, hidden, suppressed, denied, distorted, and forbidden part of his ancestry. This statement could be confirmed by Batovsky's (1999: vii) assertion that "perhaps the greatest privilege of life is man's ability to explore because without this, man will never discover anything new and thus never learn".

In Africa, a vast range of artforms could be seen. These are not just the process of creating something as a matter of the calculated choice and use of whatever materials are technically best-adapted to a clearly predetermined purpose, but rather, a dialogue with the materials and means of execution, (Lévi-Strauss 1979).

This creative process might even go further to bring to the fore the reflection of the beliefs, thoughts, desires, fears as well as imaginations of the creator. Vogel (1990) in an exposé on African art re-echoes the fact that most traditional masks and figures

in the indigenous African society are carved to bring into the world a new name being in much the same way that a birth brings a new person into the world. As such, art forms found in Africa are not just a spontaneous exhibition of a child's play but rather, a presentation of a structured language aimed at bringing to physical terms the innate and abstract aspect of the culture to which the artist belongs. Kofi (1969:21), is of the view that; "Art expresses both the tradition and aspiration of a people, what they have experienced in the past and what they will consider desirable in the future".

2.2 Concepts of African Art

Over the years, archaeological findings such as that of Nok, Kwahu and Yoruba have unearthed various types of artistic objects which are believed to have influenced the lives of the ethnic groups. Thompson (1971) viewed the sculpture of the Yoruba as an expression of the earthly and celestial, sacred and profane, monarchic and common. There is the clarity and tranquility of such works of art as a representation of all aspects of life; for that matter the art forms of the African should be seen as a testament of both the artist and his entire society. It therefore becomes "philosophy made concrete" (Fraser, 1974). Tearo (2001) citing Dodd (1969:31) posited that:

A man's art is the essential expression of himself and his society, his record for the world to see; his communication down through the ages of his innermost feelings, his joys, his sorrows, his passions, his wonders, of all the most refined and treasured-up tangible things that set him apart from his fellow beasts and make him a man.

On the African continent, the concept of art permeates the entire way of life of the people. A remarkable observation is that in the African society, man's life is not led just on the physical plane but also on the spiritual plane. Here, the spiritual aspect of life is also given much prominence. The "unseen" world together with its inhabitants is believed to be a part of its day to day activities. The association with the "unseen" world has given rise to a whole lot of myths.

Perhaps to the early man, (and even some modern men), the mythical world was a reality. He believed that an invincible world where powers greater than what he possesses makes him highly venerable as such myth was established and preserved in their plastic art. Most art works (object) were therefore created in reaction to man's pattern of thinking.

2.2.1 Concept of religion in African Art

For ages religion has been one of the principal sources of artistic inspiration which provides the creative force for artistic expression. Taking into consideration the pre-historic art, examples which have been displayed in plate 2.1A and B, although the creators of such works were moved basically by the desire to survive their hostile environment, their belief in the supernatural forces become the main source of inspiration for the making of most of the "sympathetic magic"

The indigenous African society has being labelled by Mbiti (1975: 30) among others as "notoriously religious". This idea is buttressed by Paris (1995: 27) that "the

ubiquity of religious consciousness among Africans constitutes their single most important common characteristic”.



A

B

Plate 2.1 A and B. Some prehistoric sculptures

A: Bison, (Unbaked clay) Tuc d' Audoubert **B:** female fertility figure (Venus)



A

B

Plate 2.2. Indigenous African sculptures

“Akuaba” Akan fertility doll. Ghana Ere ibeji. twin figures. Yoruba, Nigeria
[www2.lib.virginia.edu/artand media.html](http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/artandmedia.html). Accessed 20/06/2008

The various artforms found in Africa usually have a serious religious undertone in that most of them are expressions of belief conceived in an age of faith, (Davidson 1969). Perhaps Holloway's (1990:37) observation makes the strict relationship between religion and art in Africa clearer with the claim that;

Religion was (and remains) a vital part of the lives of most Africans. For some it encompassed their entire existence. It substantiated and explained their place in the universe; their culture, and their relationship to nature at large. Religion among most African ethnic groups was not simply a faith or worship system; it was a way of life, a system of social control, a provider of medicine, and an organizing mechanism.

Since most ideas in religion are abstract, beliefs evoked by the existence of supernatural entities which would have otherwise remained abstract can be communicated to the society in a physical form through the medium of art. Most ethnic groups in Ghana have a great collection of folklore based on myths and beliefs. Such myths and beliefs are presented archetypal in the form of birds, fishes, reptiles, quadruplets, plants as well as human beings. These are in turn presented in both graphical and sculptural forms which include cloths, stools, umbrella tops, drums, linguist staff tops, ivory horn, swords, various jewellerys and even footwear as can be seen in plate 2.3.

Could it then be said that all the strange beings and forms created by the early man were purely a product of his imagination and beliefs? If this question is answered in the affirmative then it could be concluded that the process of linking an observed fact with an imaginary cause and then giving it a physical nature perhaps becomes a perfect basis for the birth of art. Vogel (1991) affirms on this line of thinking that:

The focus and subject of traditional art had been the invisible, that art's famous stylization resulted from its concern with depicting not the visible but the other world, and the beings in it – or even with the materialization of new beings, a nineteenth-century figure representing a chief is not a description of how a man looks but an expression of ideals of proper leadership; a mother-and-child figure, more than a woman with a baby, embodies ideas about increase, nurturing and protection.

In analysing this claim, it becomes obvious that the meaning and interpretation of African art goes beyond its physical form.



Plate 2.3a Totems of some Akan clans.

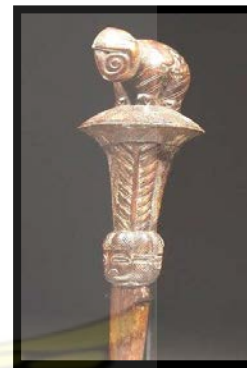


Plate 2.3b. A linguist staff top.



Plate 2.3c. The three leaders of the Fanti

Plate 2.3 a,b,and c. Sculptures depicting some popular myths in Ghana

Although, there is the belief in the connection between the living and the supernatural beings, only the lesser supernatural beings are portrayed in sculptural forms. The Supreme Being (God the creator) is never given any image. In Ghana, there might never be a shrine which is dedicated entirely to him. Danquah (1968: 26) observed that:

The Akan (*and for that matter the Ghanaian*) does not make any representation of God in any form, shape or image because He is very close and near, not because he is an unknown God to him, but because one does not need to keep picture or image of one's parent for the purpose of keeping them in mind.

The stool, which is the centre of this discussion, is revered for its spiritual potency more than its physical function of a seat. In most cases, it is seen as a link between the living and the spirit beings.

2.2.2 Concept of Education in African Art

One important aspect of every society or human institution is to disseminate useful information concerning their concepts and philosophies to both the present and subsequent generations. The core of this information is usually the various ethics and norms that have helped the culture of the society to survive throughout the ages.

The indigenous African society developed a systematic way of educating generations to embrace and imbibe the various essence of the culture to which they belong. There were various training centres dubbed “Bush school” by anthropologists. These “bush schools” had a mode of instruction that was aimed at communicating knowledge, which invariably helped in developing and disciplining both the intellect and moral faculties. Teaero (2002) is of the view that this reinforced the underlying

factor that indigenous education was concerned with the maintenance and continuation of the culture of the people.

Another important element was the enforcement of conformity among members of the young generations to the cultural norms, values and practises. It is therefore demanded that the “truth” is not actively and openly challenged as it is in the Western education system. Such knowledge were a sum total of the thought and practises of the society. It could therefore be said that the indigenous *African* societies had functional, meaningful and relevant education systems before the introduction of the *western system* of schools (Thaman, 2002).

Medium of Education.

Unlike the modern system of education where instructions are basically written in books, the indigenous African kept most of his instructions in the various forms of art, perhaps fulfilling Lowenfeld’s (1957) assertion that “art is a human activity, a vehicle for developing human creative capacities”. It becomes the wheel on which the entire life of the people revolves. Through art, religion, custom as well as every aspect and behaviour of the entire community becomes a composite unit. Art therefore is created for life’s sake but not for just the sake of it, (Davidson 1969). Bates (2000) citing London (1994) describes art as a powerful tool through which the quality of an individual’s life can be transformed from its current condition to a preferred and elevated one.

This situation occurs because art, which is a basic intrinsic behaviour of mankind,

has the potentials to teach about cultures and to develop intelligence (Dissanayake, 1991). In the same vein, the arts can be a part of a universal core of knowledge and skills that can be instrumental in assisting society achieve particular individual, social and technological goals, or it can, in the view of Teaero (2002) citing Saemala (1990), become a core point in the pursuit of knowledge, understanding and appreciation of a society's cultural forms and expressions

The art forms were usually presented in symbolic forms, which confronted the individuals in the society in their daily activities. The movement in a dance, the printed design in a cloth, the hair style, the design on jewellery, the design in the chiefs' regalia, as well as the various verbal art forms such as proverbs, appellations and songs are usually imbued with cultural knowledge of the people.

Knowledge is usually communally based and not the prerogative of a privilege few. It is therefore accessible to everyone. The dance steps, linguist staff tops, drum language as well as the symbols in the stool are readily understood by almost everyone in the cultural community. In view of this, the African becomes a student all his lifetime because he is constantly confronted with the various artforms which act as a manual for the study of the concept and philosophies of his society. The impact of the various forms of art on the society, especially its educative nature equips the individuals in the society according to Bates (2000:42) to:

- a. gain understanding of the culture as a whole
- b. increase awareness and to demonstrate the knowledge of the ethics and norms of the society.

- c. develop skills in the making of most of the practises, for example the use of proverbs, dance, drumming as well as skills in the production of items helps to demonstrate the ability to use such skills appropriately.
- d. develop the appreciation for the culture and its practises. This gives the individual a sense of belonging in the society.

The educative ability of the African art cannot be over emphasized. Deducing from the above argument, it was about the only way by which the existing generation and subsequent generations acquired vital information that led to the development of mental skills, helping the society to analyse issues and to solve problems. It also helped them to train thinkers, inventors and leaders. (Art Propel as cited by Bates, (2000).

One characteristic of the educative nature of African art is the ability of its creators to compact a lot of ideas into a single symbol, song, proverb, sculpture or dance. This is in line with the Akan saying that “ξβα νψανσαφο ωξβυ νο βε να ωξγκανασεμ” λιτεραρψ τρανσλατεδ ασ "the wise is addressed in proverbs but not in plain words". As such dissemination of knowledge throughout the society becomes very easy. It was, therefore, frowned upon where someone who is of aged claim ignorance of the symbolic message in a simple work of art. In view of this, African art can be said to be self documenting. Generations upon generations have freely acquired cultural knowledge through this method.

2.2.3 Concept of aesthetics in African art

Art plays an indispensable role in the lives of the African peoples and their communities. It is made to serve a much more vital purpose than just to beautify the

surroundings. The beauty of African art is basically a part of its function. Almost all these objects would not be effective if they were not aesthetically pleasing.

Significantly among African societies, art has a role in ethical training and the administration of justice as well as the joy of aesthetic pleasure (Karickhoff, 1991).

Roberts (2005) opines that: “for many African cultures, how an object looks is related to the way it works, according to strict aesthetic specifications, for protection, healing, communication, mediation, or empowerment”. Fosu (1993) commenting on these characteristics of African art asserts that:

Both the content and form are essential to the proper understanding of the function of an artwork. A piece of work, expressed either in abstract or in the realistic style with polished or rough finish and embellished with simple or intricate designs, was appraised on the basis of the communicative symbolism unified within its physical form. Anything short of this, challenging customary convention of artistic evaluation nullifies both the function and the aesthetic value of the work.

In the light of this assertion, Willett (1988:35) hypothesized that: “form and content are scarcely separable in societies in which the artist is an integral member of the community but not as an individual struggling to express a private vision. As such each culture has its own concepts of efficacy and to a large extent a standard for assessment. Blake (1927) in a contribution to Rattery (1927:357), assessed the aesthetics of Asante art that:

I am inclined to think that in any form of *primitive* religious art, the moment that an almost symbolic statement of attributes and so on is made, both the artist and the public are content.....it is evidently foolish to quarrel with an artist for not having put into his work that which he has never sought to put there, and which his national aesthetic does not demand.

Karickhoff (1991:74) buttresses this thought with the observation that “aesthetic values are considered such an integral part of most African societies that the notion that everyone in the society is a critic is undeniable. The language of art is therefore communally owned.

In this wise, African art does not just remain a work of art but in the opinion of Ampofo (1991), it is something that speaks and can be heard and read. It is a language that speaks about several aspect of the culture of the people. It is a direct expression of the mentality of the society to which it belongs. Such an expression is usually devoid of confusing detail and possibly misconstrued explanation. On the whole, it becomes their transcription as well as the taste which is an integral part of their mentality. Have we considered the consequences of an adverse modification on the future of the culture which produced that particular art works? Would it probably be wrong to entirely assess the aesthetics of African art with the aesthetic conventions of the west?.

In the daily life activities of every human being, one goes through a whole lot of experiences. What distinguishes art from any other human experience is the ability to put together aesthetic units that harmonises with the recipient environment. Aesthetics becomes an active perceptual process, an active interaction between an individual and an object. This, according to Lowenfield and Lambert (1975) provides a stimulus harmonious experience. Aesthetics can therefore be a way of relating to the environment. It helps one to look at, respond to, feel a part of, and

become aware of different qualities and forms. It also helps him to react to differences and similarities within a work of art.

The concept of aesthetics in art is universal. Almost every culture anywhere in the world has developed an aesthetic standard for art. These are the value systems of the culture thus, making it different from others. The concept of aesthetics therefore becomes an integral part of the object. Bocola (1995:12) referring to the concept of aesthetics in western art notes that “even in our own culture, the ability to remove a given artefact from its socio-cultural context and to regard it primarily from a sculptural and aesthetic point of view is a skill only recently acquired”.

In indigenous African art, the concept of aesthetics was not something isolated from the work itself. Unlike most western art whose aesthetics can be measured in terms of the various elements of design and the principles that govern their arrangement, aesthetics in African art was measured in the totality of the work. It considered the physical appearance, its efficiency as well as the meaning of the work in terms of the concepts and philosophies it represents.

Although most art works, especially in the African society, have been accepted and appreciated for their aesthetics, especially from the western point of view, interestingly, the African artists who made these objects did not consciously seek to infuse them with these aesthetic qualities. Instead those who produced them had been carefully schooled from their childhood in the traditions and beliefs of their culture craft, often through long apprenticeships to master carvers. They knew

exactly and instinctively how to make their creations understandable and acceptable to those who would see and use them. In a Curator's Essay, Newman (1999) re-echoes Sweeney's (1963:16) argument in the Postscript to the revised edition of his *African Sculpture* that:

They saw in African art, on the one hand, a frank stress on basic three-dimensional form and its aesthetic order and, on the other hand, an encouragement of emotional expression, reinforced by the exaggeration and distortion of conventional representational forms.



Plate 2.4 Bronze heads and the photograph of the Oba of Benin
www.randafricanart.com/Beninhipmask 12/06/2008

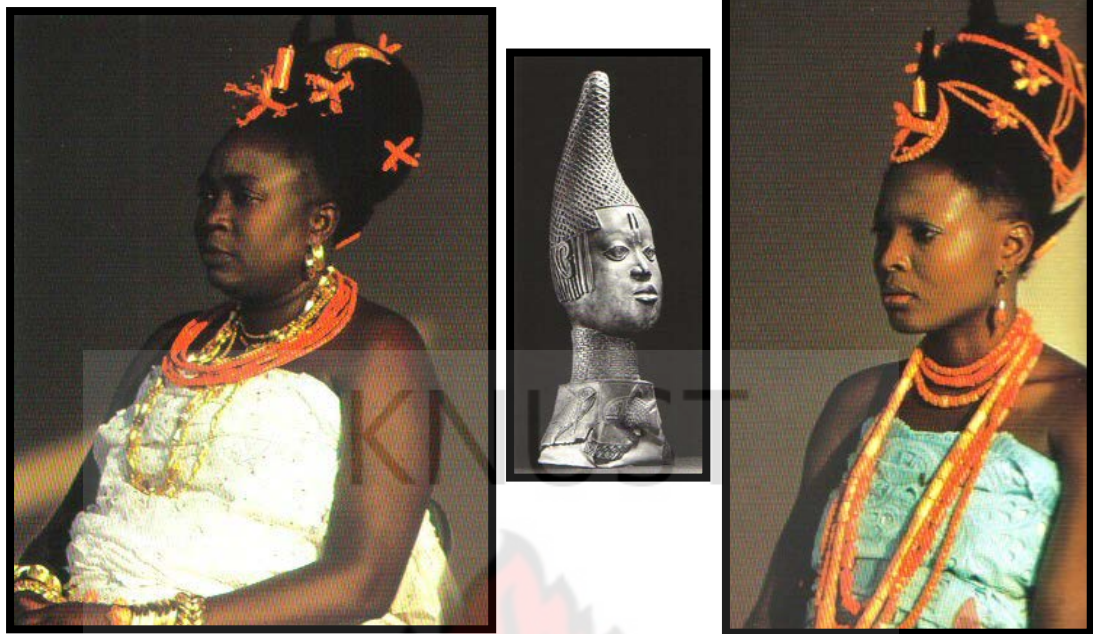


Plate 2.5 Wives of the Oba of Benin and a bronze replica

www.randafricanart.com/Beninhipmask 12/06/2008

The indigenous African artist was not enthused about bringing out forms and designs that have no bearing on the aesthetic concept of the society as such, many African artists worked with various abstract forms. Through these forms they were able to create the idea and concept of people, animals and deities which are an integral part of their everyday life rather than a likeness of these things.

It has been a common thought among art critics that perhaps the African could not produce art works, especially human figure in the resemblance of the subject depicted. This assertion is readily refuted when one considers the bronze and the terracotta heads of the Bini and Ife of Nigeria. Looking at the heads (plate 2:4), the

sculptor was able to capture to a high degree the exact likeness of the subject, the Oba being portrayed.

What most of the critics may forget is that the African artist has a different precept for his aesthetic contemplation. According to Vogel (1986) the elements which form the precepts of African aesthetics (using the Yoruba concepts) include;

- i) **Resemblance to human beings:** in the African society, a carver is praised usually with the comment that the carved figure “looks like a human being”. Artist seldom portray particular people, actual animals or the actual form of invisible spirits. Rather, they aim to portray ideas about reality and express these ideas through human and animal images.
- ii) **Luminosity or smoothness of object surface:** the lustre smooth surface of most African sculptures, often embellished with decorative scarification, geometric shapes as well as graphical symbols indicates beautifully shining healthy surfaces. Figures with rough surfaces and deformities are intended to appear ugly and morally flawed.
- iii) **Youthful appearance:** most of the figures produced in indigenous African art had youth appearance which connotes vigour, productiveness, fertility, and the ability to labour. Illness and deformities which are seen as a sign of evil are rarely depicted.

In addition to these, there were the clarity of forms and details, complexities of composition, balance and symmetry. Others included distinct stylisation which

conforms to an idea, a pattern or a design rather than to a real appearance. At times geometric patterns and colours were used.

Aesthetics in the moral sense is based on the fact that in many African societies, the same word means “good” and “beautiful”. It should therefore be both beautiful and good because it is intended not only to please the eye but also to uphold moral values as well as the ethical and spiritual concerns of the society. Bohannon (1961) observes that:

To study aesthetics, one must incorporate the art object with a general knowledge of ethnography, specific knowledge of art criticism by the members of the society that created it and a general knowledge of comparative aesthetics.

2.3 Symbolism in African art

The sum of the various definitions of symbols and for that matter symbolism has it as the practice of representing something that stands for, represents or denotes something else. Such representation is usually not by exact relationship rather by a vague suggestion or by unintended relationship.

The importance of symbols in the life of any group of people cannot be over emphasized because these are language that can help us understand both the present and the past and to be able to project into the future. Most ancient civilization had a way of coding very important facts, events and philosophies in a simple or complex artistic representation. This could be in a graphical, sculptural, painting, textile or

even music and dance form. This practice goes a long way to confirm the popular adage that “a single picture speaks a thousand words”.

Over the years, inquiries, either in the minds of individuals or groups have interrogated the need for the studying of such symbols. Such symbolic language mostly reflects our past and becomes a way of knowing the exact identity of a group of people. This identity plays a great role in determining how the ancestors of a particular group of people led their lives through their successes and failures. It has also helped in the development of the present and subsequent generation because understanding our past determines actively our ability to understand the present and for that matter the future. In view of this, humanity can never dismiss the influence of the past in their lives.

The culture of symbolism is deep rooted in the indigenous art of the indigenous African. It is a fact that the present expression of symbolism in man’s activities may have a slight difference compared to the indigenous African society because there is no way the system as seen in the world can remain the same forever. It has to change to suit the present situation and future generation. Cole and Scribner (1974:14) link a thought to this argument that:

All things in the world, organic or inorganic change over time in a definite direction. Simple forms that are initially homogenous become more complex and heterogeneous, their parts become increasingly differentiated but at the same time they become better-integrated and organised into super ordinate and subordinate.

Changes are good but the roots of whatever is changing are very important. It is the

basis for the development of the mindset of generations to come. Perhaps in a symbolic form, most of the essence has survived the storm of change. Although it has been discussed that the motifs found in the works of art are a representation of the myths, beliefs and the general imagination of the indigenous African, most of the physical representation are symbolic.

Almost all humans communicate through gesture, posture, facial expression and intonation. All these can be termed as symbols since they are used to represent the thoughts and state of mind of an individual at any particular time however, symbols actually come with their codes to facilitate easy decipher. Chandler agrees with Hall (1980) that analogical codes all the time 'give us away' in areas such as our moods, attitudes, intentions and truthfulness or otherwise.

Codes can therefore be seen as practises, something the society depends on such that over the years it has become so familiar to the members within a broad cultural society. They in the long run help to simplify phenomena in order to make it easier to communicate experiences (Gombrich, 1982).

If works of art found in most cultures in Africa are truly imbued with symbolic ideas, then it stands to reason that such art works, apart from rendering an aesthetic satisfaction to the viewer, communicates the very essence of the culture, which it belongs. Symbols in themselves are not an end but a means to an end. In employing them in the various art forms found in the African societies, they were used to perhaps drive home specific ideas generated by the art form being viewed. Langer

(1951:61) opines that:

Symbols are not proxy for their objects but are vehicles for the conception of objects... In talking about things we have conceptions of them, not the things themselves; and it is the conceptions, not the things, that symbols directly mean. Behaviour towards conceptions is what words normally evoke.

Considering Peirce's (1931:58) earlier argument that, "a symbol fulfils its function regardless of any similarity or analogy with its object and equally regardless of any factual connection therewith but solely because it will be interpreted as a sign", it could be concluded that generally the indigenous societies find ways to communicate essential information through the arts.

Boas (1949) had earlier indicated the idea that art forms are significant as such they must be representative not just for tangible objects only but also for more or less abstract ideas. The art works themselves are mostly symbolic expressions of the thoughts of the society. Ampofo (1991: 6), sums up with his modest view that. "African art speaks and portrays several aspects of the culture of the people".

Table 2.1 Some African animal symbols and their connotation

SYMBOL	MEANING	ETHNIC GROUP	COUNTRY
Elephant	Longevity, prosperity and greatness	Baule, Akan, Aja, Bini	Cote d'ivoire, Ghana, Benin, Nigeria
Monkey	Greed	Akan, Fon	Benin, Ghana,
Whale	Superiority and greatness just like the elephant	Fon, Ga, Akan	Benin, Ghana
Leopard	Monarchy, gracefulness and fearlessness	Bini, Akan	Nigeria, Ghana
Mudfish	Peacefulness and Prosperity Acceptance of Fate /Destiny	Bini, Akan	Nigeria, Ghana
Parrot	Eloquence	Akan	Ghana
Snake	Royalty, Treachery	Fon, Akan	Benin, Ghana
Ant and spider	Wisdom and hard work	Throughout the sub-region	
Tortoise and snail	Peaceful co-existence	Akan	Ghana

Table 2.2 Akan Family System, Their Totems, symbols and interpretations.

FAMILY	TOTEM	SYMBOL	INTERPRETATION
AGONA(anona)	Parrot (akoo)	Parrot (akoo)	Proud and eloquent
OYOKO	Hawk (akroma, asansaa)	Hawk (akroma, asansaa)	Spurious, hardworking, courageous
BRETUO(twidan)	Leopard (etwie, osebo).	Leopard (etwie, osebo).	Very wild, rich and proud
EKOONA(aboradzi)	Water buffalo (ekoo).	Water buffalo (ekoo).	Very brave
ADUANA (aborade or adwinade)	Dog (kraman, bodom) or frog (aponkyerene).	Dog (kraman, bodom) or frog (aponkyerene).	Reliable
ASONA	Crow (adene, akonkron)	Crow (adene, akonkron)	Clever
ASENE (odonana)	Bat (apane) or whale (bonsu)	Bat (apane) or whale (bonsu)	Hopeful and unassuming.
ASAKYIRI	Vulture	Vulture	

Ruby (1996:1345), brings out the general view of visual anthropologists “that logically, culture is manifested through visible symbols embedded in gestures, ceremonies, rituals, and artefacts situated in constructed and natural environments”. They also view culture as usually imbued with a lot of symbolic language that can and should be interpreted for a full enjoyment of the particular culture.

One or more artforms used either in isolation or in association with others becomes a testament of the entire mind-set of the people. Such symbolic language, as mentioned earlier, is usually the portrayal of a lot of abstract conception of the members in the society. The African therefore found the art form as a very good

means of getting a lot of abstract ideas across to the whole society using less language and time. Their works are created to solve Spiritual, psychological, sociological and emotional problems of mankind (Adzraku, 1996).

Despite the fact that most works of art found in Africa has strong embodiments of symbolic meaning, not every work of art is symbolic. Some might be meaningful but not symbolic. Sarpong (1971) re-echoes this fact by asserting that “a symbol has a meaning, but not all that have meaning are symbolic.” Symbolism has over the years become a powerful instrument of thought and conceptual transmission. It is the sure means by which abstract ideas, thoughts and conceptions, weird or ordinary could be made available to the whole society. Perhaps this is what gives an aesthetic and conceptual meaning to the work of art in the African sense.

Apart from portraying the symbolic language in terms of animals, plants as well as the various verbal forms, there are also the graphical representation of some philosophies and concepts of the society. These graphical symbols touch the basic areas in the life of men which include religion, social and the reverence for the environment. A popular type of such symbols is the Akan Adinkra symbol as has been shown in fig. 2.1. See appendix 2 for a full chart of symbols.

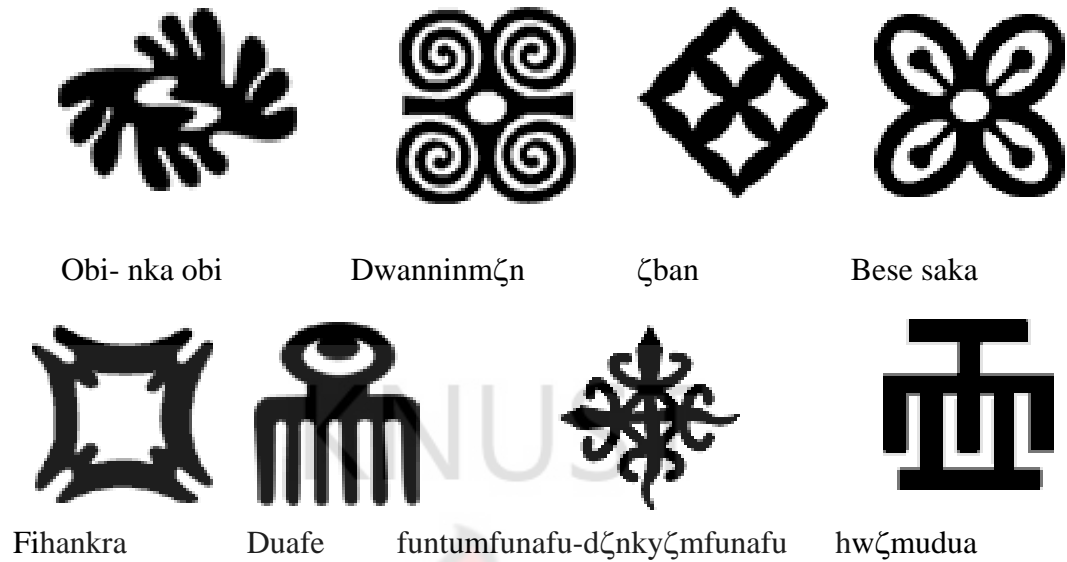


Fig. 2.1 Some Adinkra symbols

2.3.1 Symbolism as a language.

Language has played a very important role in transmission of very important concepts of a group of people over ages. It has become perhaps the most powerful system of communication to every society. Wilden (1987:138.) stresses that:

Human languages are unique among communication systems in possessing semantic universality... A communication system that has semantic universality can convey information about all aspects, domains, properties, places, or events in the past, present or future, whether actual or possible, real or imaginary.

Although language is used a lot to communicate ideas and thoughts, the art of communication transcends the boundaries of verbal language. Wilden (1987), further advances an argument to this effect that “all language is communication but very little communication is language”.

This argument perhaps qualifies art because the artist who did it, whether for an explicit intent or just for the sake of it, is in a way expressing an impression which

conveys some information to whoever comes in contact with it. In its own form, Ghanaian and for that matter African art carries its own language. They are a source of communication, helping to educate the society on their fundamental rights and responsibilities. It helps to foster social, political, religious and the economic development of the society by acting as a medium through which peace, harmony and the rule of law can be achieved.

Considering Garbarino's (1983:31) description of culture as a "complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society", it could be argued that works of art are in a way intended to immortalize the culture that produced it.

African art works has over the years been used to indicate various aspect of human activities served as communication between the living and supernatural entities as well as to show the wealth and status of its owner. Carefully made objects such as cups, boxes, staffs, neckrest and pipes can show the taste and social status of those who use them. The symbolic language of the stool goes beyond the interpretation of the symbols carved into them to include the symbolic essence of its origin and what it stands for. It even denotes the social status and office of its owner.

2.4 Art and Culture

Culture, from time immemorial has been an external portrayal of the conception and thought processes of a group of people. Cultural practises are therefore not actions born out of spontaneous reflex intuitions but rather, systematic and carefully planned

actions which are aimed at bringing to the whole society absolute peace and harmony as well as the will to survive all the hardship in their physical, psychological and cosmological environment.

Blake (1927) in a contribution to Rattray (1927) is of the view that the main essence of culture does not change, as such “It could seem probable that our own forefathers dealt in conception of much the same type, reasoned in much the same way. We are perhaps in presence of the infancy of our own thought”. Perhaps there are not many differences between the underlying factor, the mental process, governing our present way of life and that of our forefathers. Such mental process over the years developed to fit into the changing local and external conditions.

No single culture can stay and survive in isolation as such, over the years indigenous cultures have constantly and consciously infused into what might be seen as the fundamental aspect of the indigenous cultural practises some dose of practises alien to their culture. In the stages of acculturation, one aspect of the culture which is least affected is the use of art to transmit abstract thoughts and concept into physical terms.

In indigenous societies, art forms were the central pole of the culture. As such any anthropological or art historical survey which does not give adequate prominence to art form as an entity on its own will be a suspect of its credibility. This is because art acts as a window into human thought and emotion expressing the inner attitude of the artist (Adams, 2002). Just a cursory look at the work of art might reveal not

much than an idea expressing an aesthetic appeal. Works of art should be viewed beyond this. It should actually bring out the inner convulsive attitude of the artist. The best way to gain absolute satisfaction in African art is by viewing it for what it stands for. The aesthetic qualities, in my opinion, whether consciously done or otherwise become an integral part of the work. It also helps to sustain the interest of the viewer as he embarks on his journey into the real meaning and essence of that particular work.

In some times past, there has been an unfortunate branding of African art (especially by the westerners and those who patronize the “airport art”) as magico-religious objects. It is true that some of these objects were and are still being used for religious purposes because the versatile nature of most African artforms enables them to play multiple roles in the lives of the people who use them. Thus, a mask designed for magico-religious purposes could easily pass for a recreational or personal use. The socio-cultural aspect of the indigenous African culture is intertwined in such a way that they are usually inseparable but fit perfectly into this intertwined nature.

Most people especially non-Africans who are exposed to works of art found in Africa look at them with a lot of awe. African art has a style and an impact that goes beyond just the ordinary. Asihene (1972) argues that:

The dynamism and powerful beauty or ugliness of a traditional African carving has extraordinary impact. Ever since 1897.....admiration for African art and curiosity about its use and origin has mounted in the western world. But perhaps, too, what is a very simple art has become clustered with the paraphernalia of western scholarship.

The root of such fascination and curiosity about African art can best be understood when one considers the view of Bocola (1995:12) that

The meaning of ceremonial or ritual objects is not limited to their specific functions or to their symbolic role. It is realised rather in their organization in the plastic and formal terms. For, it is this that gives expression to the particular awareness of life, the value and the image of the world and of man that defines their creator and user. The same is true of everyday objects. Through its aesthetic dimension, material culture secures a community's collective identity, and thereby fulfils instant social function.

Although indigenous African societies might differ in their practises, there are remarkable similarities that can be seen in most art works of different ethnic groups in sub Saharan Africa. A more useful way to look at indigenous African sculpture is through common or recurring themes which to relate them to their cultural setting.

As one analyzes the ways various cultures express a common theme, the similarities and differences among them become more obvious. These subtle differences can be attributed to the climatic conditions, which determine the basic materials available for the making art forms. In the forest region of Africa where wood abound, one is likely to see a lot of artworks made from wood. This might be different when one considers the grassland. Here, hide and skins of animals are likely to be seen.

The basic ideas prompting their making and use are however the same. This perhaps confirms the fact that almost all the individual ethnic groupings are governed by the same thought processes. It is possible that since humans, can acquire and modify their culture through learning due to interaction with others (the processes of

enculturation and socialization), whose cultural practises are different from theirs, the different circumstances (in terms of cultural practises) help them develop an entirely different cultures, usually a blend of the traditional and the foreign .

A look at the individual cultures reveals that almost all culture has the same underlying determinant. Ethnographers have over the years pointed out that through culture people can adapt to their environment in non-genetic ways, so people living in different environments will often have different cultures ([answers.com/ethnography](https://www.answers.com/ethnography).) It could therefore be deduced that the arts of a people offer an informative view of their culture. This will definitely include the thought processes, attitudes, beliefs, and values. The art of a particular culture usually reveal the ever changing human images and attitudes. Newman (1997) shares a thought with Sieber and Walker (1987) that:

Much of art history has lost touch with the intensity of the cultural reality that works of art once possessed. Instead, the focus is often on the life of the forms or styles as if they existed independently of the cultures that gave rise to them, cultures that in fact supported the creators and used the objects, not as isolates, but as functioning parts of a cultural whole. The study of art is neither one, the study of contexts, nor the other, the study of forms and styles, but a continuum that reaches from the cultural context in its historical setting through the forms and styles so that the aesthetics of the maker can become comprehensible to a viewer of another culture.

By this assertion, work of art (especially in the indigenous African societies) does not become just an object of aesthetics or magico-religious practises but rather an evidence, a history book guiding the present generation into the world of the past. Such art forms help to paint the intangible past more real. Therefore, an awareness

of a people's indigenous art, visual and cultural attributes can become an important medium for cross-cultural understanding. Among the Akan of Ghana, Kyeremateng (1964), elaborately gives an overview of how the various art forms have helped to maintain the linkage between the past and the present. He establishes that;

the regalia of Ghanaian chiefs have been of special significance in that they have not been merely symbols of the kingly office but have served as the chronicles of early history and the evidence of traditional religion, cosmology and social organization ... [and] it has been customary for the regalia to be paraded whenever the chief appears in state at a national festival or durbar, so that all who see them may read, mark and inwardly digest what they stand for.



Asante royal stool
(wood and silver plates)



A blend of wood and leather
for a chief's chair

Plate 2.6 Types of seats for chiefs made from a blend of different materials.

Although Kyeremateng (1964) cited his example using the regalia of Ghanaian chiefs, the idea expressed is far reaching and extends to all indigenous societies worldwide. The structure of human thought processes is the same in all cultures. It usually leads to the discovering of underlying thought processes by examining such

things as kinship, myth, and language. As such, a hidden reality exists beneath all cultural expressions. Culture has been said to be dynamic and have the ability of changing to suit the times; however, we should not lose sight of the fact that the basic underlying structure is static, unmovable and unchangeable and that art has and is still acting as a vehicle to carry it through its journey of the ages.

2.5 Documentation

Documentation as was discussed earlier in this chapter has been done by different cultures for many years. Documentation in academic context is an older term coined by Paul Otlet for the field of study now known as library science. (<http://en.wikipedia.org>.) It can also be termed as the putting together of relevant information for easy accessibility. This includes any communicable material such as letters text, video audio or a combination of these used to explain some attributes of an object, system or procedure.

Anthropologists and ethnologists are generally interested in documentation that describes the daily lives of ordinary people and groups. Such information helps researchers to understand and to further describe the way a group of people functioned at any particular point in their history. It therefore becomes a medium used by researchers in their quest for the historical truth and reconstruction of the original context. Hanod (1977:285) defines documentation as: “The act of collecting, classifying and making readily accessible the record of all kinds of intellectual activity”.

Bradford (1953:48) defines it as the “process of collecting and categorising all the records of new observations and making them available to the discoverer or the inventor”. The sum of the definition of the term documentation from various sources including the Webster Collegiate Dictionary (1914), and the LDCE (2007) identify it as the general activity of recording authentic knowledge as well as their source and the organisation (processing) of such recording into a systematic form for easy accessibility. The recording can be done mentally and reproduced orally (as happens in many indigenous societies), on paper, films, tapes, fabrics, on walls or even the skin of human beings. Such a record can be relied upon as the basis, proof or support of a research or search being undertaken. Documentation is a scholarly activity which in the modern times requires a very good training.

Documentation goes beyond just information that is written to include any means by which useful information can be organised and easily accessed. In the indigenous society, where knowledge was not the prerogative of a privileged few, not much effort was exerted into their documentation because they were freely given out to the younger generation through story telling, oral tradition, songs and folklores as well as proverbs and wise sayings, myths, legends, songs, dance, the various rituals and appellation.

Societies, ethnic groups, as well as an entire race stuck together due to the indigenous knowledge that has been gathered and kept. Such indigenous knowledge is developed from experiences gained over a long period of time. It is usually the practises of the society which have been adapted as a useful tool for the socio-

cultural as well as the political, educational and religious development. It is usually collectively owned and come in very simple forms related to the everyday activities to the people.

2.5.1 Indigenous form of documentation in Africa

The misconception by some western researchers on anthropology, ethnology and art history that the African has little or no written records on the development of his culture is unfortunate. This idea has and continues to permeate a large portion of the educated society and is gradually gaining roots as a fact. What is being gradually forgotten is that the art form of indigenous societies when encoded becomes a rich store of information that can be used by generations. Indigenous African artworks for example are semantically loaded with texts abound in exegetic richness.

The process of making art is often more valuable than the final products. In the history of man there has always been a means of keeping records for reference by subsequent generations. Some might be conscious while others are done unconsciously. The early man did not do his art with the present generation in mind. His main aim was to produce an object that will help him survive his environment. However, it has remained as a testament of his culture to the modern society. The art works (paintings, drawings, engraving and modelling) of the caveman, has become an item without which his culture would have been lost entirely to the present world. It could therefore be inferred from this argument that sculpture (and other art forms) was perhaps used as an additional language through which cultures throughout the world communicated their inner feelings to the outside world.

The fear however, is that there is a high probability that a generation might overlook the cultural language as told in the various art forms of their fore-fathers and rather see them as objects of decoration or personal pleasure.

2.5.2 Need for documentation

The proper documentation of knowledge is very important to the cohesion and perpetuation of the society. Bradford (1953:40) affirms that “without documentation, the recorded observations (*in this case the indigenous knowledge*) are merely scattered separately and are of little use, which get buried in a great mass of scientific literature, like needles in a haystack.” It would perhaps be wrong to say that the indigenous African society did not document its culture.

With time, languages change, system of writing evolves into something new. In the event of such a situation, it becomes natural for the present generation to view vital indigenous information as a mere incomprehensive inscription. Others might consider them as just art forms meant for decorations. An example is the attitude of the present generation towards the “Adinkra” symbols. At least it is patronised by many for their aesthetic appeal however, very few people regard them as a rich store of the philosophies and the concepts that has governed the society over a long period of time. Moving out of Sub Saharan Africa, the hieroglyphics as shown in plate 2.7 and the Aztecs system of writing, as depicted in plate 2.8, as well as the various writings used to decorate the pyramids and temples are credible examples of how art forms have been used to document vital cultural information.

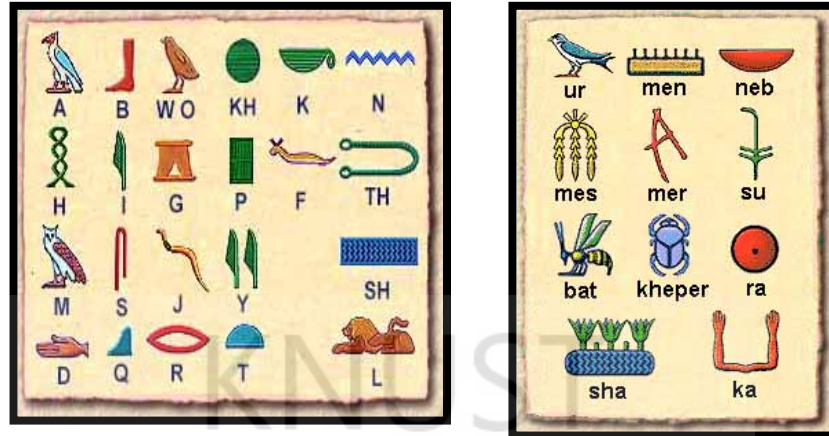


Plate 2.7 Hieroglyphics: the writing of the ancient Egyptians

www.discoveringegypt.com. 22-05-2007



Plate 2.8 system of writing used by the Aztecs of Mexico 1400 CE to ~1600 C.

Sharing a thought with Teaero (2002) on the attitude of the stakeholders to the study of art, it is sad to note that in most basic and high schools in Ghana, the study of art and culture received little more than mere rhetoric in curriculum development. They were given token attention at best or totally ignored at worst. Aspects of culture are taught in many schools but were given superficial treatment in the curriculum through more innocuous forms like dance, legends and some simple crafts.

Where art education is given some prominence, it is treated as a “stand-alone” and hardly linked to the cultural development of the society. This situation can completely erode the interest of the young generation in the indigenous culture of their forefathers. It could be gathered that in our modern day, the indigenous knowledge might not be valuable to only those who depend on it for their daily lives but also to the entire world around them.

Another problem as observed by Adu-Agyem (1998) is that over the years, indigenous African intellectuals who understand the concept of the culture have written relatively very little. Most of the literature available can be credited to the effort of foreign writers. As such even where the younger generation expresses interest, there will not be much literature for them. In this era of technological and educational advancement, some societies (example is the Okre towns where the research was conducted) still rely on oral tradition as a means of transmitting the cultural knowledge from generation to generation.

This method of transmitting very salient information about the society has the advantage of authenticity since in the indigenous societies, whatever would be talked about could be found in the daily activities, rituals and other practises of the people. It will therefore have not been easy to distort the truth. Again, there is the belief that one should never misrepresent what has been said by one’s father in the basis for the faith in the veracity of oral tradition, (Isichei, 1978). The disadvantage however is the waning of the interest in indigenous knowledge by the present generation due to foreign influence, urbanization and modernism.

Our world is fast developing an inter-dependent societal culture. The liberality with which foreign cultures are practised within different societies (sometimes not related in any form) has its own disadvantages. In the first place there is always the tendency of a generation to miss the nuances in their cultural practises. Of course this could easily be substituted with a seemingly fitting one from an alien culture. However, if such practises should go on for some time, the society in question tends to lose its indigenous knowledge entirely.

What will then happen to a generation without a trace of their indigenous culture? The answer is readily provided by Anquandah (1975:5) that "Every wise man knows where he is going but only the fool does not know where he is coming from" it could be argued further that if one can see culture, then researchers should be able to make use of the available technologies to record it as data amenable to analysis and presentation.

In the opinion of the researcher, another reason why documentation becomes very important to a given society is that "information available to one person or only a few people is better than lost". It is an unchallengeable fact that most of the custodians of important indigenous information are very old. In the likely event of such people dying, they will definitely take this unique ancient knowledge into their grave. The few who belong to the modern generation and are privileged to have had access to it are likely to distort such information. The consequence will be gradual and painful erosion as well as the loss of much to be cherished collective ethnic

cultural identity (in terms of language, proverbs, medicine, ecological preservation, songs, myths, craft and rituals).

The effect of the inevitable cultural change and the part it plays in changing the role of indigenous art forms in the society, downplaying and relegating cultural artworks to just an aesthetic piece of art work is another negative factor. Here, the link between aesthetics and the cultural development of the society that produced it is likely to be lost totally. Considering the factors discussed, there are all indications that documenting either some aspect or all of the concept, philosophies as well as the practises in whichever form they may appear will make the culture of a the ethnic group remain intact even in a modern society. The documentation will therefore be in a “language” which will be understood by the present and subsequent generation.

Duodu (2007) laments that

the rate at which the Ghanaian generation that saw our country's independence is perishing is worrisome. If there are really any adventurous publishers, they should be commissioning biographies of those who are left — as well as some of those who have died — so that succeeding generations can learn something from their lives.

El Anatsui, a renowned Ghanaian sculptor commenting on his works observes that:

If we exhibited by generations (I think we can talk about up to four or five generations of African art) you can have five shows, each devoted to a separate generation, that would give people an idea of what's going on.

He continues that:

If I seemed concerned with history, it is not that I want to relate history per se. I think I'm more like trying to play around with the effects of that history or where that history is eventually

consigning the continent and its people to. Rather than recounting history, my art is telling about what history has provoked.

Finally, there should be the view that in our world of cultural interaction, the documentation of an individual culture should be done in the light of other cultures.

Schaefer and Lamm (1995:45) echo this argument by citing Mead (1939) that:

As a traveller who has been once from home is wiser than he who has never left his own door steps, so knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to sometimes more steadily, to appreciate more livingly our own.

This, if done effectively will see individual cultural and ethnic groups complimenting each other. Weaker cultures, rather than being dominated into extinction, will be strengthened by the stronger ones. The whole world will be one big boiling pot of assorted cultures in which everyone is sure to find the essence of his indigenous culture.

2.6 Indigenous Ghanaian stools

A stool is basically a seat with no back or arms intended for one person. This has provided a form of seat for the majority of people for centuries. In the indigenous African society, stools are everyday items. It is one of the ubiquitous types of carving especially the sub-Saharan West Africa. Although there are many type of Ghanaian stools, most can be classified as being either rectangular or circular. The circular stool is most common in and widely distributed in West Africa. Patton (1979:74) argues that:

although circular stools are rarely seen in Ghana as against the rectangular stools, European records as well as indigenous oral tradition indicates that it was the earliest form of stools in Ghana,

and that it preceded the rectangular stools by about a hundred years.

They range from simple and unadorned to beautiful sculptures representing human beings, animals, floral and graphical symbols. In sub Saharan Africa, the concept of stool has never been the prerogative of just one group of people; it cuts across almost all the regions.

In the savannah regions of Africa where there are nomadic tribes a type of carving that has a striking resemblance in terms of appearance and function can be seen. Headrests, as they are commonly called are very varied throughout Africa. The oldest surviving examples come from ancient Egypt, and most commonly consisted of three main parts: the base (generally oblong), a vertical part that acts as support, and a top part. These were often found in tombs, as the headrest often was buried along with its owner.

The most common and simply designed headrests come from the societies of East Africa, mainly from the semi-nomadic peoples of Uganda, Kenya and Somalia. They are often carried on the arm or in the hand by means of a leather thong, an indication that their owners are warriors. The more elaborate the headrest is, the higher the seniority of its owner.

The similarities between stool and the neck-rest is that although smaller than the stool, it has the same design as the stool. Both are regarded as personal objects and to some extent having some spiritual essence as such, it plays a role almost the same as the stools. This discussion will however be limited to stools.

In Africa a persons most admired or exalted virtue is often represented by the stools he owns. The Akan of Ghana take this sentiment a step further. They transform popular social maxims and spiritual ideologies into tangible symbols and incorporate them in their stools. There are three distinct forms (or shapes) of the Akan stool. One is the formless stool with a handle. This stool is called dufua, (refer to fig 1.1).

The second type is circular in shape. The third type of stool is the most common in Ghana, has a rectangular concave seat with vertical supports. The stool is carved with a symbol in the middle part. These symbols are given names that reinforce the prestige of the political office and status of the owner. Some of the stool names serve to evoke, record, and communicate some aspects of Akan beliefs, history, social values and cultural norms.



a

b

c

a. stool from Ghana. b and c. Wooden headrest from Ethiopia Congo

Plate 2.9 a, b and c, Stools and headrest in West Africa.
www.african-tribal-arts.com.

There are two categories of stools. The first is the personal stool intended for everyday use by everyone in the community. Such stools are regarded as an everyday object. The second category comprises those that have ritual and or

political powers and are believed to be imbued with some amount of spiritual powers. Their use are either limited to the special occasions or reserved for political and ritual use. Aside the political essence, it is regarded as a sacred object with spiritual qualities. Sarpong (1971) is of the view that,

Many civilizations and ancient societies *venerate* the dead and communicate with their spirits in numerous ways, but none of them "communicates with their ancestors through the medium of a stool. The veneration of stools is a special peculiarity of the Akan-speaking peoples of Ghana" The stool is used in ancestor veneration. In this regard the stool, serves as a medium through which the living establishes and maintain contact with the ancestors. It serves as physical manifestation of the spiritual links between the living, the dead and the yet-to-be-born members of the family or the society.

Usually the ability to possess such stools are limited to kings, chiefs, priests and other honoured dignitaries. Stools are usually regarded as personal object. It is an absolutely personal possession of its owner and is regarded as the seat of the soul. For this reason, stools are usually laid on its side when not in use. This was to ensure that neither man nor spirit defiles it by sitting on it. Almost all the stools found in Africa, whether for secular or sacred purposes are in the definition of Bocola (1995) monoxylous, that is to say, carved out of a single block of wood. They are either a rectangle or cylindrical, varies between 12 to 30 centimetres although in recent times one is likely to find a stool taller than these heights.

Among the Akan and most ethnic groups in the southern part of Ghana, there are stools of every type for every status in the society. These include the common ones for the ordinary man or woman, and the more elaborate ones for the chiefs

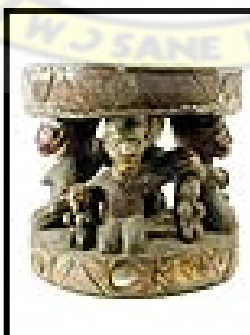
(oheneagua) or queenmother (ohemmaagua). The chief's stool is usually decorated in gold, while the queenmother's stool is usually decorated in silver.

Some ceremonial stools are usually attached with bells made of cast iron. This is usually referred to as “adɛnnwa”, the bell stool. A very good example of an “adɛnnwa” is the golden stool of the Ashanti which has two bells attached to it. The number of bells indicates the status of the owner. They can also be given as a gesture of elevation by a paramount chief to a sub-chief, as was given to the chief of Adukrom-Akuapem by the chief of Akropong, Kwadade I after the Awuna war in 1869.

In most cultures the chief's stool is believed to inhabit the soul of the state, that is, it marks continuities across generations as well as a close solidarity between the living and the dead. Through the stool, the reigning king serves as a link between the living, the dead and the yet-to-be-born members of the society. The chief, therefore, has the responsibility to preserve the stool for posterity in a culture where life is believed to be cyclical.



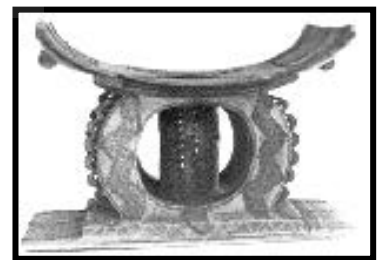
Bamileke.



Igbo.



Baga.



Asante



Yoruba.



Lobi.



Mende



Luba

Plate 2.10. Designs of stools found in the African sub region.

2.6.1 Aesthetics of the stool

The stool can basically be described a unique sculpture which can be enjoyed either partly or fully for its aesthetic appeal. Although there are some few cylindrical ones the regular ones are usually rectangular in form. Such rectangles can either be horizontal or upright. The stool is divided into three main parts. These are the top, middle portion and the base. The top usually exceeds the base in width but both have equal lengths.



Plate 2.11 A man carrying a stool at the nape of his neck.



Plate 2.12 Women carrying stools on their heads.

To facilitate safe and comfortable seating, the top is carved smooth with a slight curve. This is also to ensure easy carrying of the stool. It is a taboo to carry the ceremonial stool of the chief on the head as such; they are carried on the nape of the neck as depicted in plate 2.11 The stools of the queenmothers can however be carried on the head as indicated in plates 2.12.

The middle portion has no definite shape. This is where the deftness and creativity of most of the carvers is displayed. Different motifs are carved into it to signify the status of the owner. They can be a depiction of a wise saying, proverb, philosophy, plants and animals, humans and geometric motifs in a realistic or abstract form. All these ideas embody the concepts of the owner or the whole society and can easily be interpreted in the light of the thought of its owner.

This part is artistically the most expressive of the whole composition of the stool. It is the part that receives the greatest attention of the carver because it shows his

imaginative and creative responsiveness. It also shows how he is able to organize the elements of designs such as lines, dots, shapes and texture in accordance with the principles of design such as balance, rhythm, proportion, repetition, unity, variety and dominance to produce a superb work of art. The base which is usually rectangular and flat may be decorated with some linear designs. At times they may have either two or three tiers.

Most stools are designed to have a symmetrical balance as such if the stools were divided vertically into two equal parts, a mirror image of the one half would replicate itself (plate 2.14). There are however some stools, especially those with the animal motifs whose design are asymmetrical. When they are divided vertically in to two equal halves, they will not be a replication of the design of the opposite side. Although the top and base are not as elaborate in design as the middle part, they are decorated with meaningful symbolic linear and geometric decorative patterns such as zigzag, wavy and disk like lines and crescent shapes.

These patterns transform the top and the base from their basic function as a seat to an artistic creation worthy of attention and admiration. There are instances where other materials such as metal strips, leather and even cowries have been used as embellishment. The stool can also be painted. In the indigenous societies, the common paints used for stools are either black or white.



The top.



The middle portion.



The base.

Plate 2.13 Parts of a stool.



Plate 2.14 A symmetrical and an asymmetrical stool symbols.



Plate 2:15 A stool decorated with strips if metals
(Courtesy T.N.O. Quarcoopome 1987)

2.6.2 Making of the stool

The vocation of stool making could be traced back to as far as the existence of the stool itself. It requires expert craftsmanship and skills as well as a very good knowledge in the traditional concept and philosophies of the people. Carvers have to train over a considerable period of time not only in the skill of carving but also in the ethics and norms governing the vocation. A stool is usually carved from white wood “Sese” (*funtumia africana*) and “Nyamedua” (*Alstonia boonei*). In recent times, mahogany and other wood has been used.

Traditionally, the carving of the wood goes beyond just the physical engagement of wood and tools into a spiritual exercise. Bocola 1995:17 establishes that:

the suggestive impression of something animated and alive emanates not only from African objects of worship but also from the seat presented here is not easy to explain.among other things, to the living power of the wood that can always be felt in African sculpture, even if the carver appears to have worked against it by polishing, darkening or painting it.

The making of the stool, whether for ordinary people or chiefs, was seen as a serious spiritual exercise which demanded a careful adherence to stringent rules and regulations, however, in the case of the chief’ stool, the rules are even stiffer than for the ordinary people. Such stools were usually produced by seasoned carvers contracted by the court.

In recent times, the spiritual aura surrounding the making of the stools has been downplayed. The carving is seen more in terms of skill and craftsmanship rather than the spiritual aspect of it. Some indigenous carvers still adhere to the stringent rules

governing the making of the stools. Opanyin Kwasi Kusi, a retired carver at Apirede-Akuapem in an interview opined that:

My colleagues and I did not carve just for economic gains but rather, we saw the production of “Asesegua” as a way of documenting our culture and also, enhancing our spiritual entity. As such, everything used from the wood through the type of tools used to the type of embellishment should conform to this basic idea.

The indigenous wood carver views the production of “Asesegua” as a serious spiritual exercise where every single instruction should be followed in order to achieve protection both physically and spiritually. Before he fells the tree for carving, he had to offer a sacrifice of drinks (in the form of libation) and at times a fowl to the tree to appease the spirits that inhabit it. The tools as well as the workshop were also sanctified to ensure a total protection from malevolent spirits. Traditionally, the choice of wood is usually based on its ability to be an abode for various spirits. Other factors determining choice of wood is the colour and the weight of the wood.

In the Akan society, carving is a strictly male job. Under no circumstances were women allowed to carve. The aesthetics of the stool to the indigenous carver is not just in the surface beauty as well as the deftness with which he crafts his design but also in the philosophies incorporated into the stools and their relevance to the cultural development of the society.

2.6.3 Modern trends in the making of stools

In recent times, the making of stools has taken a new trend in terms of machines and

materials as well as mode of fabrication. Apart from carving from a single block of wood, there has been the joining of pieces of wood to form the stool, (plate 2:17). The choice of the wood is usually dependent on its suitability and formability. As such, any wood which can be used for shaping a stool is suitable.

The tools and equipments used which include manual, mechanical and power tools are determined by the type of work to be done. Interestingly, the producers of such stool might use an indigenous symbol or concept for his central design based on the aesthetic aspect of it rather than its meaning and essence to the society. Others form their own design to make the stool look beautiful. Such designs may include an addition such as an armrest and a back to make the stool more suitable for its function.

Although the spiritual aura of the stool in terms of materials and the mode of making are not much recognised in the modern trend of making the stool, the basic shape is usually maintained. In some cases, they are altered slightly. This is a good sign in the preservation of the stool culture because the shape and the symbolism used whether consciously or unconsciously will go a long way to ensure that such a culture stays with the people because it will not be seen only in the light of the past but also as an integral part of the present.



Plate 2.16 Samuel Anim, a contemporary Stool maker at Adukrom



Plate 2.17 A stool made by joining pieces of wood

2.6.4 Sanctification (blackening of the stool)

Every chief in any society that uses stools in Ghana is supposed to have a ceremonial stool. This is usually made when he is enstooled. Apart from the ceremonial stools, which are usually used when the chief sits in state, there are also the personal stools of the chief. This can be a gift from an elder in the family as in the case of the present chief of Apirede Akuapem whose father, the late stool father of the town gave him a personal stool when he was enstooled.

The ceremonial stool of the chief becomes the ancestral stool upon the death of the chief. A new one may also be made in his honour. Ancestral stools are usually blackened and kept in special stool rooms. Such stools are visited on special occasions. During these times, rituals are performed on the stools for the ancestors. The “blackening” of the stool is the process of making it fortified and imbuing it with some amount of spiritual power. It is also a way of preserving the stool from destruction by pest and the weather. These types of stools are known as the ancestral stool as in the case of the Odum Gyekete stool of Apirede. It is believed that an ancestral stool picked up some of the “power” of a living chief when he uses it in his life time. It keeps that power after the death of the chief.

In the stool room, most of the black stools are placed on various items such as rugs, skins and beds in either a straight or horseshoe formation. Items such as cups, bowls weapons and musical instruments used by the owners of such stools while they were alive are usually placed in front of the stools. In some instances, skulls, jaw bones and leg bones of defeated enemies are attached to the stools (Kyeremateng, 1964).

The ritual of blackening the stool of a chief or an ancestor is seen as a promotion in stature and respect. To do that, the caretakers of the stools, usually elders, males and non menstruating females, use a specially prepared black powder popularly known as “*b̥t̥t̥* (*singl.*) “*mm̥t̥t̥*” (*plural*). Bartle (1978), recounts its potency that:

Boto is an interesting traditional medicine. It includes charcoal, several medicinal herbs, and for blackening a stool it is held together by egg albumen. When you see a small scar on a child’s cheek, it is not a tribal scar as found, say, in Yoruba groups; it is because a traditional herbalist has made a vaccination against "fever" (malaria). These are herbs such as found inside the bark of certain trees (similar to quinine in South America), which can reduce fever and help the body to fight malaria.

The *b̥t̥t̥* powder according to Bartle (1978), is mixed with egg albumen and applied to an ancestral stool. After some time it hardens to form a lacquer on the stool. With time, the layers of dried blood of the various animals such as sheep and fowls usually cover even the stools with ornamental decorations. Most of the black stools, especially those made after the death of the chief, are much smaller than the normal stools used and do not carry elaborate symbols. However, the personal stools of dead chiefs which have been blackened have the same dimension and features like the normal ones.

Apart from the stools of dead chiefs and prominent elders being sanctified with the *b̥t̥t̥* powder, there are instances where a personal object such as a charm or amulet may be put into the stool. According to Kyeremateng (1964) this is believed to makes it more powerful thus making it a shrine for the soul of the people believed to be able to protect and satisfy the needs of the people by itself not through the

ancestors. He sums up the importance of the black stool in the reverence given to the Golden stool (plate 2.18) by the Asante that it is regarded as the most important stool, the highest symbol of chieftaincy in the Asante Empire and is handed over from generations to generations of chiefs. Bocola (1995:28) buttresses this fact with the assertion that “the golden stool is seen as the collective soul of the Asante people”.

The sacredness of the Golden stool is such that no one is allowed to sit on it, not even the Asantehene (the king of Asante). It should be noted that although the Golden stool is not blackened, it is regarded as an ancestral stool, as such categorized under the black stools. It has its own seat, set of regalia, bodyguards and attendants.

“Where there is no stool, there is no chief” this popular Akan saying perhaps goes a long way to show the important role played by the stools in the rituals of enstoolment as well as the subsequent reign of chiefs. Kingmakers have confirmed that during the enstoolment process, the name of the stool which the aspiring chief touches first when blindfolded is adopted for his reign. Plate 2:21 show some examples of common stools seen in the Ghanaian society.



Plate 2.18 The Asante Golden stool



Plate 2.19 Black stool of Nana Amaniampong, founder of Asante Mampong
(courtesy A. Kyeremanteng:1964)

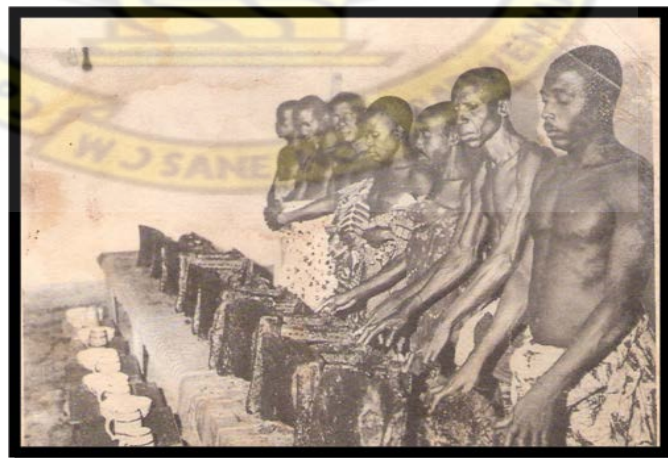


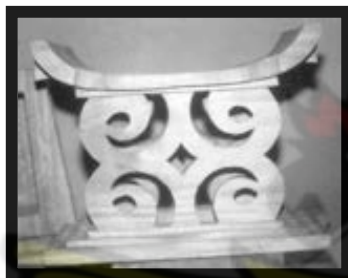
Plate 2.20 Black stools of the Akyim Abuakwa state
(courtesy A.Kyeremateng:1964)



Abusua Adwa- family stool . This stool is called “abusua kahyire”. It symbolizes the collective responsibility of the individual members of the family



Obi te obi so- someone sits on top of the other symbol of hierarchy, seniority, and social structure.



Dwennimɔ - Ram's horns. a symbol of strength in humility. This design is based on a popular proverb that “the strength of the ram lies in its horn; not in the heart.



Denkyemfunafu-joined(Siamese)crocodiles. This is a symbol of unity in diversity, democracy, and unity of purpose



“Nkabom adwa”- unity stool. This is a symbol of strength in unity, and national integration.

Plate2.21 Some common stools in Ghana:

www.marshall.edu/akanart.

2.7 Chairs

Traditionally, most chiefs seldom sit on stool during very special occasions such as the celebration of Aday, Odwira, or Ohum. Rather they sit on chairs most of the time. The queenmothers, however, usually sit on stools. In view of this, the discussion on the traditional stools will have to be broadened to include some specially made chairs. The use of such chairs as a form of seat by chiefs in most parts of Ghana has now become very common. They are gradually taking the place of the stools during gatherings, however, the stool still maintains its sacredness as the soul of both the owner and the state. Basically, three of these chairs are commonly used. They are the “Asipim” (to stand firm) “hwɛdom” (facing the fold of your enemies) and the “Akonkromfi” (the praying mantis). These types of chairs are believed to have been introduced by the early Portuguese who came to the Gold Coast around 1481.

According to Seiber (1995), the new type of chair introduced by the Europeans was seen equally as a symbol of power. Many chiefs therefore tried to procure some of these chairs. He mentioned some evidence of these chairs in Gold Coast in 1721, the King of Adrah, a city near the present day Nigeria in 1670, Senegal in 1728 and Dahomey in 1743. These chairs having the resemblance of the throne had high backs and armrests. Although Seiber (1995), gives credit to the Europeans for introducing high back chairs, the idea that the chairs as seen today in most of our palaces and important places are strict European imitation can be contested in the light of the various types of reclining chairs found in most part of the African continent.

Most of these chairs are however not given the same reverence as the stools. Bocola (1995) citing Homberger (1995) noted that:

The even more decoratively carved “*Akonkromfi*”, which have further ornamentation added to the arm and can also be carried as a form of sedan chair, are already illustrated in the early engravings, thus establishing the existence of this type prior to the arrival of the Europeans. Many of these brass-mounted chairs have a number of striking formal similarities to the golden throne of the Egyptian Tutankhamen, which were about 1385 BC. While this does not justify the attempt to evolve a new “Nile Valley Thesis”, the claim that European styles becomes established in African tradition only after the arrival of the Portuguese does need to be considered more carefully.

Although these chairs were not as refined as that of their European counterparts, they have very strong African characteristics. They are elaborately modified to meet the local aesthetics as well as the symbolism of the people.



A chair with a high back

Semi-reclining chair, Lobi, La Cote D'ivoire

Plate 2.22 Indigenous high back chairs in West Africa.

2.7.1 Asipim

The Twi word “Asipim” used as the name of one of the common chairs used by chiefs in Ghana can be translated, as “I stand firm”. They have no armrest but have a slight back sloping and are richly decorated with brass nails. The Asipim have seat and back usually made of hide. There are instances where some of the backs have been made of decorated brass sheets. Where there is a metal sheet, it usually has some symbolic representations of the concept and philosophies of the society. It is reserved for use by the chiefs at important assemblies and debates. Usually to fortify and protect the chief against any evil attack when he sits in state, a talisman is hanged under the chair. According to Kyeremateng (1964), what is now known as the Asipim started as a cane chair known as the “Ακζντζννωα ορ απζντζννωα”.



Asipim



δetaйл οφ τηe βαχκ

Plate 2:23 Asipim.

2.7.2 Hwɛdom

This is a more elaborately designed chair than the Asipim. It is usually made with plain or coiled designs. The back which is straight may either be plain or decorated with embossed metal patterns or velvets. The back is usually affixed with knobs of various designs. Some of these designs are in the shape of a calabash, grease-pot, as well as an abstract eagle claws. The designs are known as “ntuatiɛ”. In recent times, the use of the Asipim and Hwɛdom chairs are alternated. However, it was used by chiefs originally when they sit in state to declare war against a rival state and also used when the chief is in a business meeting with his elders. Perhaps the straight back as compared with that of the Asipim and hwɛdom suggest the tense atmosphere created by the issue being discussed.

2.6.3 ““Akonkromfi”” (the praying mantis) or nnamu.

This is the most elaborate of all the chairs used by the chiefs. Its design suggests the pose of the praying mantis hence the name ““Akonkromfi””. The Akonkromfi usually has an armrest and an elaborately perforated back. It is studded with gold or silver nails and the high-backs have various symbols worked into them. The backs have finials that encode some symbols. It is used by chief during joyous occasions. The state seat of the republic of Ghana, (plate 2.26) has a design which is a combination of the designs of the traditional stool and Hwɛdom. It however, has a more elaborate symbolic design depicting the concept of Ghana as a nation as well as the expected qualities of its occupant, the president of Ghana.

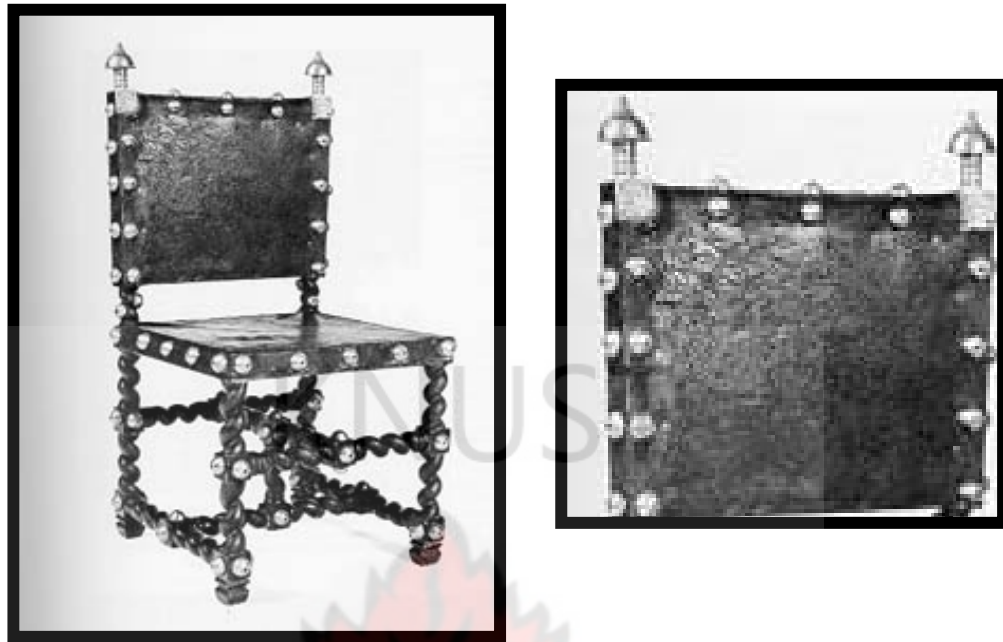


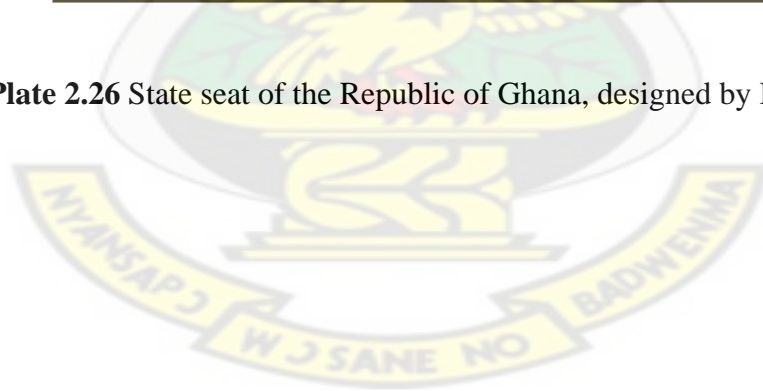
Plate 2.24 Hwɛdom (inset) Details of the back



Plate 2.25 “Akonkromfi” (praying mantis) of the Agogohene of Asante-Akyim
(courtesy A. Kyeremateng, 1964)



Plate 2.26 State seat of the Republic of Ghana, designed by Kofi Antubam



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview.

Ellis and Levy (2008) citing Creswell (2005) are of the view that since the viability of a problem as a starting point for scholarly research cannot be established through a single source, there is the need for researchers to “weave “together” the pieces of information gathered from a number of sources. Considering this assertion, results of a research may be considered more credible, if data from a multi source but on the same event corresponds, as much as possible, to each other. This chapter discusses the research design and the data collection instruments used. It also considers the validity and reliability which makes the data collected admissible. Finally, it discusses how data was analyzed and interpreted.

3.2 Research design

Although the focus of the research hinges much on the aesthetics, socio cultural as well as the educational aspect of the stools of the Okre ethnic group, this could not have been achieved without an ethnographic inquiry into a cultural and phenomenological background of the Okre ethnic group who produced and use such stools. The Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary 1914:305, Collins English Dictionary 2005:536, Longman’s Dictionary of Contemporary English (2007:533) as well as www.wisegeek.com. and www.sas.upenn.edu/Anthro. (12/05/2008), sum up ethnography as the scientific study of human social phenomena and communities.

It usually focuses on the study of human societies. Ethnography, a branch of anthropology, looks into and provides a scientific and detailed description of ethnic groups or the culture of a particular society. These descriptions are usually based on the researcher's observation and participating in the life of the society (www.sas.upenn.edu/Anthro.12/07/2008).

Through this, the researcher is able to gain an "emic" (insider) perspective or the point of view of the indigenes without imposing their own concepts. This emic perspective, which may be quite different from the "etic", (outsider's) perspective on local life, is a unique and critical part of anthropology (<http://faculty.reinhardt.edu>). The data collected, usually the basis for interpretation of objects or practises, provides an explanation for the cultural activities of the people. The suitable research method for unearthing anthropological data is the qualitative research method.

Berry (1999) alludes to Maykut & Morehouse's (1994:46) premise that "the data of qualitative inquiry is most often people's words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behavior". In view of this assertion, the researcher, aside the use of literary sources of information participated and observed various cultural activities of the people. He went further to interview a sampled population believed to possess the required information about the stools to be documented.

In this research, the qualitative research method used in sourcing for relevant information on the stools of the Okre ethnic group helped to bring out the

philosophical, aesthetic, educational and socio-cultural values of the Okre stools. Most of the information on the background of the stools were obtained in the course of the interviews. Owing to the scarcity of evidential literary materials on the stools and the culture of the Okre people, the researcher had to clarify the authenticity of almost every data obtained (especially through the interviews) by doing some further observation and cross-checking.

Apart from using the non-structured interviews, the structured questionnaire was also used. There was also the observation of the stools that were made available by the custodians for their physical forms and their use. The observation extended to include archaeological evidence marking the various events associated with the stools. The basic methods used to collect data from the field work included:

- The observational approach which involved the physical contact with the stools. Here, photographs, where permitted were taken. Where photographs could not be taken drawings and sketches were made based on the description given by the custodians of the stools.
- The descriptive approach to existing data. The researcher had to make drawings based upon description given by the custodians of the stools who were mostly the elders of the four selected towns of the Okre ethnic group.
- The investigators approach. This involved the sourcing of the same data from more than one person and in some cases, asking the same person the same question more than once but framed differently.

3.3. Library Research

Ellis and Levy (2008) once again citing Leedy and Ormrod (2005) are of the view that a researcher can find out what things are already known about existing topic of interest by reading scholarly literature. This helps to identify specifics in a problem observed as well as the information needed to bring out a well established solution. Data from selected libraries (both the electronic and the manual) therefore provided the bulk of the secondary data for the study.

They included books, publications, brochures, journals, thesis, hand written manuscripts, lecture notes as well the internet. Private collection and libraries, public galleries and museums were also considered. Notable among these were:

- Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (Accra and Kumasi.)
- The Centre for National Culture, Accra and Kumasi
- The libraries at the various universities, KNUST, UCC, UG, UEW and P.T.C.
- The Ashanti library in Kumasi.
- The private collection of the late Air Marshal Otu (Adukrom Akuapem)
- Manuscript of Ernest Okoampa, royal historian of Saforo Okoampa I
- The collections and writings of K.A. Obese-Jecty. (Apirede-Akuapem)
- writings of Martin Asare-Offei Agyeman (Apirede Akuapem)
- Writings and collection of Gyeke-Manka and Oteng -Manka
- Manuscripts of Drake Nyarko (former Mmranthene of Apirede-Akuapem)
- The collection of Opoposiopo (gyaasihene of Adukrom)
- The collection of Okatakyie Kusi Obuadum V, chief of Aseseɔso Akuapem.

- Writings and collection of Nana Kwame Henaku II, Abiriwhene.

Data acquired through these sources covered the historical records of the stool in the development of the Okre ethnic group. Relevant information from the Internet were also used. After all these, the data gathered were assembled, analysed and interpreted. To establish their reliability and legitimacy, they were compared with information given on the same issue by different people and also, cross checked with dates and events in books and other write-ups. In some instances, some landmarks served as archeological evidence to the information given. These were interpreted and conclusions were then drawn from them.

3.4 Population.

3.4.1. Sampling

In undertaking the study, it was realized that almost all the people in the selected Okre towns were potential sources of relevant information because they possess at least one common characteristic in term of socio-cultural norms and practises. Since it was not possible to reach out to all of them within the time frame for the study the researcher, in line with Kerlinger (1979) definition, sampled a part of the population to represent the whole. According to Kerlinger (1979: 411):

only rarely do survey researchers study whole population. They study samples drawn from populations. From these samples, they infer the characteristics of the defined population. This is needed because of the difficulties of attempting to study the whole population.

As such to arrive at an ultimate population the researcher, considering his specific objectives of the study as well as the data needed, used both the probability and non-probability sampling method. Here, there was the use of the random sampling, where

each member of the population had an equal and known chance of being selected, and the purposive sampling methods. These methods of sampling were used owing to the size of the population and their accessibility. Other factors that determined the size and make of the population were the duration for the research as well as the amount of literary information on the intended research. He realized that the sampled population selected through the random and purposive sampling actually had the needed information for the study.

The population selected at random had a fair representation of the formal and non-formal educated as well as all the social class. Although the sampling was done to include the general public, the bulk of the population who gave comprehensive information on the stools were made up of the chiefs and queenmothers, elders and opinion leaders, traditional priests as well as the workers at the various palaces and shrine houses. Almost all of them were selected through the purposive sampling method. On the whole, there was a total sampled population of 425 (see table 3.2). This number included the respondents for the questionnaires, interviews as well as those who were consulted in various ways related to the research.

3.4.2. Categories of the sampled population

a) General public (Students, researchers, historians etc)

Since the research is an academic exercise intended to bring to light new knowledge to the academia, it was proper to test for how much knowledge people residing outside the borders of the Okre ethnic group have about the intended research area. To arrive at this, the researcher sampled out views from a group of people from the towns sharing a

common boundary with the Okre towns. The towns chosen were Akropong, Koforidua, Accra and Somanya.

Those who formed this group comprised students from the senior high schools, teachers and educationists. Four (4) schools in the Akuapem ridge were chosen since the students from these schools might be from different parts of the country but have stayed among or nearer to the Okre people for some time. Two schools each were chosen from Koforidua, Accra and Somanya. The sampling was done at random by choosing any student from the lot. The choice was not based on the students' field of study, gender, ethnicity or brilliancy. In all, 100 students from 10 schools formed the population for this category.

The others in this category were made up of teachers, historians and researchers who are not related in any way to the Okre ethnic group. They numbered 40, thus bringing the overall total to 140. This sampled population was to represent the views of the world outside the Okre ethnic group. Their response was to determine the amount of information available to outsiders on the Okre stools.

b) Carvers

In spite of Asihene's (1972) assertion which has been mentioned earlier by Anti (1969) that the Guans and for that matter the Okre were natural craftsmen and prolific carvers in wood, no carving sanctuary could be found in any of the Okre towns. In view of this, a sampled population for the carvers was obtained from Aburi. This area was chosen because of its nearness to the Okre people. The proximity perhaps makes it a potential supplier of stools and other artefacts to the chiefs and elders within the Okre towns.

It should be noted here that just like some other Akan speaking areas (Ashanti and Akyim), information gathered from some elders showed that initially there were court carvers who carved stools and other artefacts particularly for the chiefs. In recent times an Okre chief may commission a carver to carve a stool for him after which the stool is sanctified through some rituals.

Just like the case of the students, the sampled population representing the carvers was selected with no particular consideration to any other potential apart from being a carver. However unlike the case of the students, the sampling was easy because almost all these carvers were clustered in one area. Apart from the carvers found in the carving sanctuaries around the Okre towns, a few retired carvers were also identified within the Okre town. These are people who are either too old to continue carving or have found a more lucrative job. The choice of the retired carvers in the Okre towns were considered because the researcher believed that as indigenous Okre citizens, their outlook to carving (especially in producing items for their chiefs) might be different from others who do not belong to that ethnic group.

The total sampled population of the carvers added up to 30. Their response was to determine among other things their extent of knowledge in the symbolism of stools in general and Okre stools in particular. Since they produce for both the Okre and Akan societies, it was also to help compare the nature of Okre stool and that of the Akan. Finally, it was to help determine the impact of the stools on the Okre society. This, the researcher believed could be determined by the level of patronage.

c) Okre community

A sampled population numbering 170 was obtained through the cluster sampling method. Here, the general population of the various towns was taken into consideration. The sampled population selected at random cut across age, gender, educational qualification, religious affiliation as well as occupation. In sampling for the population, the different suburbs (“Bron”) in the four selected towns (see table 3.1.) were considered. This helped to determine the number of people to be selected from each town. The number of people in each of the selected towns accounted for the number chosen. As such although Aseseζso have 6 suburbs as against 5 for Abiriw, the total population falls below that of Abiriw. This accounts for the population of Abiriw exceeding that of Aseseζso.

Apart from the answering of the questionnaire, a cross section of the same population was used for the interviews. Since this population is believed to be the direct beneficiaries from the stool, their response as well as the information given was used to determine the socio-cultural as well as the educational importance of the Okre stools. It also helped the researcher to trace the historical background of the stools.

d) Chiefs, elders and opinion leaders

Many lessons are learnt through stories passed down from their ancestors. This is generally transmitted from generation to generation through stories, myths, and reenactments or rituals and ceremonies. One method of transmitting vital information through generations in indigenous societies is by oral tradition.

Most of those who benefitted from this indigenous knowledge are among the custodians of the indigenous culture of the Okre people. They include the chiefs, elders and workers in the Okre palaces and shrine houses. A sampled population of eight-five (85) was obtained using the cluster and purposive sampling methods. This included a “hidden” population located through the snow-balling method. Here, a total number of twenty (20) people, made up of chiefs, elders, opinion leaders and the priests of some shrines were selected each from Apirede and Abiriw. Adukrom by virtue of their population had thirty (30). Fifteen (15) people were however selected from Aseseçso. The researcher and his two assistants, each from the four towns, visited various houses, shrines and palaces within the selected towns.

The respondents were either citizens of Okre or foreigners who have stayed among the Okre people for an accumulated number of years not less than twenty-five (25) years. This was because the researcher believed that having stayed among a group of people for that length of time, one would have imbibed a lot of their cultural practises including the kyerepong dialect. Unlike the sampled population for the Okre communities where foreigners were selected by virtue of their long stay among the Okre communities, the population for the chiefs and elders was restricted to only the indigenes of Okre. Part of the sampled population forming the opinion leaders overlapped especially for the Okre community and that of the chiefs and elders.

Table 3.1 Distribution of total sampled population for the research

GROUPS	TOTAL SAMPLED POPULATION.	(%)
General public	140	33
Okre community	170	40
Chiefs, queenmothers, opinion leaders etc	85	20
Carvers	30	7
Total	425	100

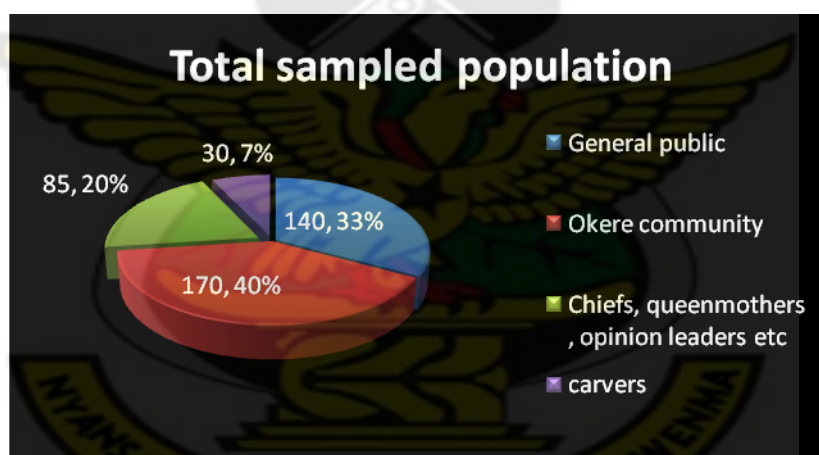
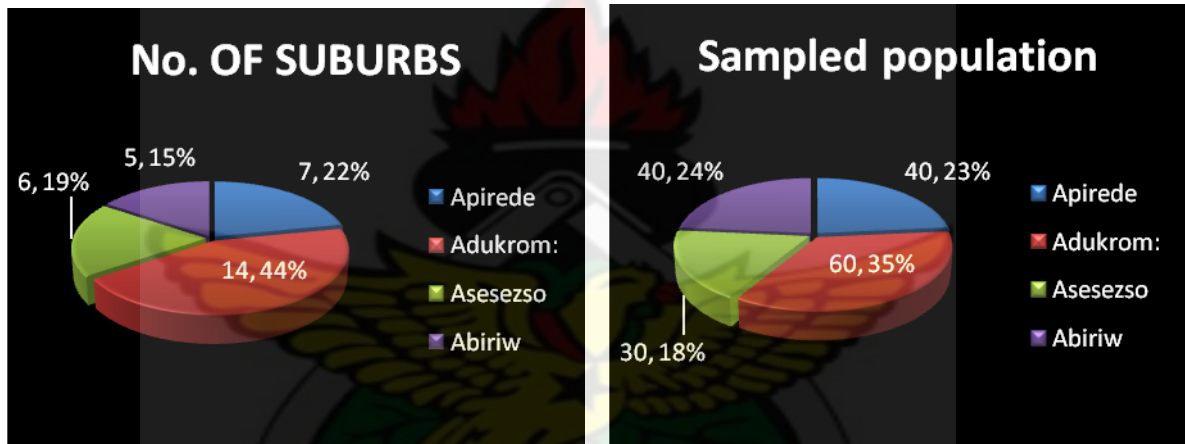


Table 3.2 Distribution of sampled population from selected Okre towns.

TOWN	No. OF SUBURBS	SAMPLED POPULATION	%
Apirede	7	40	24
Adukrom	14	60	34
Aseseζso	6	30	18
Abiriw	5	40	24
Total	32	170	100



3.5 Questionnaire

One of the research instrument used in the gathering of data was the questionnaire. Openheim (1976) describes a questionnaire as essentially, a scientific instrument designed to a particular specification, used for measurement and for collecting particular kind of data. In line with this assertion, the researcher constructed a three (3) page formal and standard questionnaire. It had a combination of close-ended and open-ended questions (Appendix 1). The close-ended had a set of fixed response questions from which an individual picks his or her response from a selection of possible

responses. The open-ended questions allowed the respondent to express their opinions in their own words. The questionnaire was designed to cater for both the literate and the illiterate. The use of questionnaire offered the respondents the freedom to choose their answers and to express their ideas without inhibition. It also gave the researcher sufficient time to read over and to interpret the responses given.

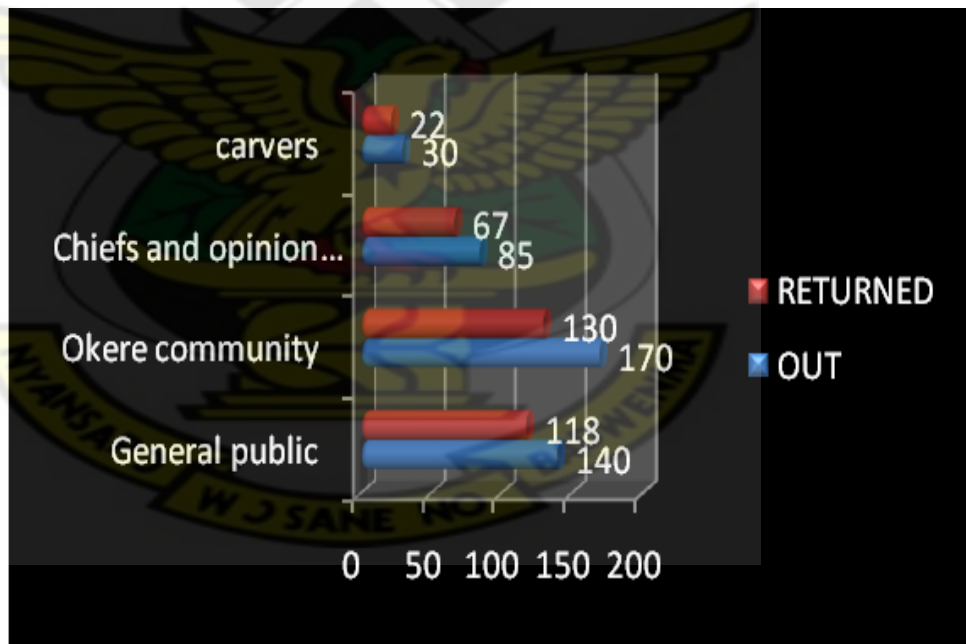
Although the use of the questionnaire was seen as a credible tool for sourcing the views and information from the indigenes about the role of the stools in their communities, some problems were encountered. Since the questions were in English, there was the need to interpret them to respondents who could not read or write. There was also the need to translate their responses from the Kyerepong dialect into the English language. This was however remedied with the help of an elder who could speak both kyerepong and English fluently. Generally, the use of questionnaire helped in an effective collection of data.

3.5.1 Administering of the questionnaire

The researcher, with the help of two assistants from each of the four (4) towns, initially travelled to the research area to do the distribution and collections of the copies of questionnaire. The respondents were given a time limit of between two (2) to four (4) weeks to answer the questions. In some cases, the postal mail box as well as the internet was used to distribute the questionnaire. Where the questions were translated into the local dialect, the questionnaire was handed over to the researcher on the very day it was given out. Out of the total number of 425 copies of questionnaire distributed, a total of 337 forming 79.4% were retrieved as noted in table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Number of questionnaire distributed and retrieved.

SAMPLED POPULATION	OUT	%	RETURNED	%
General public	140	33	118	27.8
Okre community	170	40	130	30.6
Chiefs and opinion leaders	85	20	67	15.8
Carvers	30	7	22	5.2
TOTAL	425	100	337	79.4



3.6 Interviews

Over the years, interviews have become the most ubiquitous method of obtaining information in all fields of human life. It usually focuses on the divided space of views when two or more meet face to face thus opening up spaces for alternative views (Schostak, 2004). McNamara (1999:1) is of the view that:

Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. Interviews may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaire, e.g. to further investigate their responses.

Its flexibility and adaptability to individual situations make it easy to use, especially when no other method is possible or adequate (Kerlinger, 1979). Since there was very little literary information on the Okre stools, this was the method used mostly to source for the bulk of information especially on the Okre stools. An interview guide (see appendix 1) was used during the interviews, to ensure that the whole process did not go off track. The interview was however reduced to a chat to make it livelier and also to probe for more information.

In conducting the interviews, two separate groups were considered. These were the individuals and the focus groups. The researcher allowed a level of liberality where some questions consciously were repeated in the conversation because repeating significant words of an answer can lead to further elaboration, (Kvale, 1996). However, since Berry (1999) cites Palmer (1928) that "proficient interviewers should be always in control of a conversation which they guide and bend to the service of their research interest", he made sure to always put the interview on track.

The nature of the interview conducted in both the formal and informal manner saw a free generation of responses from most of the participants. Such responses were put on tapes after permission had been sought from the interviewees. Some important names and dates were however jotted down in a notepad.

3.6.1 Characteristics of the interview groups

a) Individual groups

The population that formed the individual groups for the interviews were selected from a broad spectrum to include chiefs and queenmothers of the Okre ethnic group. There were also the linguists, elders of the towns, workers at the various palaces (Ahenkwaa), and senior priests in the various shrines in the Okre towns, retired educationist and civil servants. There were also a cross section of young men and women. This first group was interviewed individually. The researcher at a point realized that some of them had little or no knowledge at all about the topic being discussed. Those with little or no knowledge at all helped to determine the extent to which information available orally have been handled.

b) Focus group

The focus group (plate 3.1) was made up of the elderly from the age 50 years and above and the relatively young ones below the age of 50 years. The justification for the choice of the two groups is as follows:

- i) There is a high probability that most of the members comprising the elderly group might have met some of the older generation who were part of some of the event

surrounding the creation of some of the stools as such, have a lot of information pertaining to the stools being studied.

- ii) In a region where there is a political subversion between two ethnic groups, (the issue of paramountcy between the Okre and Akropong) as well as lingering chieftaincy disputes, especially in Apirede, there is always the tendency for one party to spice up authentic information in order to justify their supremacy and existence.
- iii) The group made up of the relatively younger generation, (below 50 years) was predominantly educated and have had some interaction with some other cultures. They have also had the privilege of getting the facts from the older generation. They were therefore able to make comparative analysis on information as told by the older generation.

These two set of people, although from the same ethnic group, gave room for comparism in order to bring out the cream of authenticity in the research findings. In Apirede for instance, due to a protracted chieftaincy dispute which lasted for over 100 years, the researcher consciously included at least one member from each of the three ruling houses in his focus group. This was to erase biases that would have favoured one party.

Comparism, in the opinion of Levinson and Ember (1996:262) is very important in a research that has an anthropological undertone because “all theories, despite fads or current trends require testing”. Without comparism there is no way to assess the

relationship between presumed cause and effect. Although the comparative method of research is particularly useful for comparing cultural patterns in multiple societies, it was used here because the relativity of time is believed to have reduced the cultural society into a multiple one. Putting two groups (each of them representing a different generation) under the same umbrella was a sure way of pruning most of the rough edges from the data collected.



Plate 3.1 a and b, The researcher with the focus groups at a. Adukrom and b. Apirede and Adukrom

The interview, conducted in a free atmosphere with no restriction on language was in Twi, Kyerepong and English. The researcher's fear of each of the groups intimidating the other either by age or educational background was dispelled. Each of the groups was free to air their views. The interviews were successful because information hitherto seen as "red taped" were freely divulged to the researcher. Again the claims and counter claims by the interviewees which sometimes resulted in friendly scuffle helped to bring out very authentic information needed to draw a credible conclusion.

c) Snowballing

Another type of sampling method used was snowballing. Snowballing usually relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects. This method helped the researcher reach out informants who were not initially listed to be part of the participants in the interviews. In a qualitative research especially where details of historical and cultural facts are concerned, there is always the likelihood to miss the participation of some people who have a lot of useful information relevant to the research.

In the course of the research, participants or key informants were able to refer the researcher to other people who were potential custodians of reliable information who were able to contribute to the study. Most of these people were very old (plate 3.2). Through this, a fairly large “hidden population,” that is, a group not easily accessible to researchers through other sampling strategies was reached. They were interviewed either individually or in groups.



Plate 3.2. Some members of a “hidden populations,” at Adukrom.

3.7 Participant Observation Method

Participant observation is a situation where the researcher sets out on a quest to understand the world of the subject being researched into. Here, the researcher becomes part of the world of the subject by identifying himself with their position. It requires a lot of time because the researcher needs to become accepted as a natural part of the culture in order to be assured that the observations are of the natural phenomenon.

In the use of observation as an instrument for gathering data, the researcher participated in most of the traditional activities in the various palaces and shrines within the Okre towns. To gather a good deal of valuable information, he used the continuous monitoring observational method where data were either photographed or videoed and later played back. To capture some of the culturally sensitive information on the activities related to some of the stools, the researcher used the unobtrusive field observational method. He used the disguised observational method (an unobtrusive field observational method) where he actually joined the Okre communities to record data about them. To some extent they did not know they are being observed for research purposes. <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/tutorial/Brown/lauratp.htm>.

Activities observed included the Adae and Ohum festivals, the ceremonies marking the eating of new yam by the various deities as well as the funerals of prominent royals. There were also visits to sacred grooves such as the Atti and Bohen at Apirede and the Otutu shrine at Adukrom.

The culture of a people is always unique to them as such for a better understanding of its basic concept, one has to acquire the characteristics of an “insider”. The researcher, as part of the study, took part in some social activities of the Okre towns. These included the carving of the emblem of Aseseζso town in 2007 as well as the redesigning of the emblem of Adukrom town. He was also the head of the history and culture sub committee to the Apiredehene’s 15th year anniversary planning committee 2009/2010. These activities helped him to get closer to the people to ask questions which were crucial in the validating of data collected.

Some aspects of the data gathered from the observation which were not clear were later discussed with some of the elders in the towns for clarification. The observational method of collecting data enabled the researcher to come into contact with most of the ceremonial and personal as well as some of the black and white stools. It also helped to know their real nature thus drawing a relationship between what he saw and what was described to him (the black and white stools) by the custodians of the stools.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures.

3.8.1. Primary Data (Field research)

The type of research consisted basically of narratives from the interpretation of cultural objects. There was the need for direct information to be sought from the indigenes in the selected area of study. The researcher, in a quest to obtain authentic data on the Okre stools, travelled to the various palaces, homes and shrines in the selected towns in the Okre traditional area to collect the necessary data. The procedure for collecting

primary data was used to collect data from a sampled population, here, research instruments such as questionnaire, survey and interviews as well as general discussions were used. Photographs and drawings related to the stools were also taken.

3.8.2. Secondary data

A research is not meant to bring out an entirely new idea, something that has never been thought of in human existence but rather, it is meant to delve into new area based upon findings from previous research. In view of this claim, the researcher gathered existing published and unpublished information by previous researchers on the subject of study from both manual and electronic libraries. This helped in choosing the appropriate research instruments, the sampled population as well as the general guidelines for obtaining other relevant data.

3.9. Data Analysis Plan.

In the collection of data for a study, the researcher observed that the human factor is likely to unnecessarily embellish the responses thereby tainting the credibility of the information to some extent. In such an instance, data gathered on the field during a research is likely be tainted with some level of ambiguity. The researcher, in order to present a plausible finding, therefore, sifted the responses, especially those from the copies of questionnaires and interviews, for possible inconsistencies. This was done against the background of the data collected from the literary sources and through observation.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to convert the responses from the questionnaire into a tabular form for easy analysis after which the results were transcribed into a prose. Responses from the interviews were first downloaded onto the computer before transcribing into the notepad. Through this, some of the data, especially those that described the stools were cross-checked with photographs which had been downloaded onto the computer. The photographs were edited and enhanced where necessary. Through these processes, both the primary and secondary data gathered for the study were analyzed, and checked for their validity and reliability.

3.10. Criteria for the Admissibility of Data

A philosophical inquiry into human activity reveals that it is full of ambiguity as against a controlled scientific research (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/burke/> 15/09/2008). In conducting a research, data collected should be subjected to scrutiny to ascertain their authenticity and dependability. Since most of the information on the stools were not available in written form, it became necessary for the researcher to do a thorough cross-checking to establish the truth in the information given to him. This was done by visiting the sources of information on a couple of times to ask the same questions (framed differently) again. After analyzing and drawing conclusions from the information gathered, there was a further discussion with the custodians of the information to make sure that the right information has been presented. The discussion of the processed information helped to ensure their validity and relevance to the study.

Although questionnaires was used to source for information, interviews (both formal and informal) were a preferred choice of the instruments used in sourcing for data. The

advantage of the person-to-person contact afforded the researcher a better chance to seek further clarification on a subject. In such a case, certain nuances that were likely to be overlooked in writing were readily obtained, thus rectifying the omissions arising from the effect of social and cultural changes. Also, the focus group type of interview used made validation of the data easy.

Interviews (with the permission of interviewees) were recorded with both note pads and portable digital recorder. The recorder came in handy since it affords the researcher the opportunity for multiple replays. Some important points especially dates and the correct spellings of names were scribbled down in the note pads. This was done to clarify the nature of names since they may be spelt differently from that of the Akan. Dates might also sound a bit different or deceptive on the recorder. Where certain ideas were not clear, a follow up telephone and internet chat interview were done for some selected people to clarify knotty points.

Observations from the stools and other related regalia from the shrines, palaces as well as the homes of individuals served as primary data. Some of the stools which were made available to the researcher were photographed. Others, especially the black stools and the white stools of some deities, which by cultural restrictions could not be photographed, were either drawn or reconstructed in 3-D with the computer based on descriptions given by their custodians.

The researcher, in his interaction with the members of the ethnic group under study looked for popular subject matters in the data gathered from a wide spectrum of the

population which included chiefs and queenmothers, elders, priest of the various deities, the citizens of the towns as well the intelligentsia. The secondary data gathered from the published sources and the Internet on the cultural trends and ethics of the Okre ethnic group were then compared with primary data gathered through interviews, and observation at the research site to establish their accuracy.

3.11 Specific Treatment of the Data for each Objective

As soon as the various relevant data were received they were screened for accuracy. This allowed the researcher to go back to clarify any problems or errors as well to eradicate oversights. Questions that prompted the screening included: the legibility/readability of the responses; have all important questions been answered?; are the responses complete, if no what is missing?; are all relevant contextual information included (e.g., data, time, place,), have the responses met the expectation of the researcher?.

(a) Objective 1

This objective was to identify and describe the indigenous stools of the Okre people of Akuapem.

i) Location of Data and means of obtaining Data needed

The data were specifically on a comprehensive physical description of the stools. The researcher there travelled to the various palaces and shrines in the selected Okre towns where the stools were located. By conferring and interacting with the custodians as well as other people who had relevant information on the stool, he was able to gather enough

data on the stools of the Okre state through photographing and sketching.

It should be stated here that due to the “Akanisation” of the type of leadership among the Okre people, data from three categories of stools were sourced. These were personal stools of the various chiefs, queen mothers and priests of shrines. Other items such as the sacred stones used by the priest to perform rituals were also taken note. Others were photographed during durbars and festivals. Interviews conducted with the sampled population helped to determine the historical, philosophical, political and socio-cultural essence of the stools.

b) Objective 2

The second objective was to examine the various selected stools in terms of their aesthetic, philosophical and socio-cultural (political and educational) values and their relevance to the society. This was to include the history on the origin of the stool as well as the development it has seen over the years. It was also to consider the philosophical and the cultural knowledge enshrined in it. Finally, it threw light on the similarities and differences between the stool used under the various types of leadership of the Okre, as well as the stools of the Akan.

i) Location and means of obtaining Data

The location of data was just the same as that of Objective 1 as such, the researcher employed the same means to obtain the required data. The data gathered in Objective 1, were assembled and examine for their specific meaning in terms of origin, cultural values and the philosophical essence.

ii) Treatment of Data

In view of the fact that there are not much information on the stool culture among the indigenous Okre (Guans) and also symbols in almost all Akan stools have the same interpretation, the aesthetic aspect of the Okre stools were examined in the light of the Akan specifically the Akyim. However, its origin (historical background), philosophy and the socio-cultural importance to the people were based on the information gathered concerning the occasion for their making as well as their ownership. Data obtained from the various interviews, questionnaire and observation conducted as well as those gathered from literary sources became the basis for the analysis of the stools. Results were interpreted and analyzed to generate appropriate conclusions.

3.12. Validation of Content and Research Instruments

The credibility of any research findings is usually based on the viability and reliability of such findings to the realities in the activities of the population (subject) under study. It also looks at the extent to which the research questions posed by the statement of the problem have been answered. Finally it must look at how well the research instruments have been used to bring out such conclusions. The researcher therefore subjected the entire data gathered as well as the research instruments used to such validating process.

This was in line with Kinsbury's (2009) claim that:

In psychology, research is a necessary component of determining whether a given treatment is effective and if our current understanding of human behavior is accurate. Therefore, the instruments used to evaluate research data must be valid and precise. If they are not, the information collected from a study is likely to be biased or factually flawed.

It could therefore be deduced from Kinsbury's assertion, that a study can be considered valid and reliable only where the instrument and tools used helped to actually measure what they claim to, and where there are negligible amount of logical errors in drawing conclusions from the data. It should also be mentioned that reliability is usually the tendency toward consistency found in repeated measurements (Carmines & Zeller, 1979).

The validation took into consideration the inaccuracies that could have arisen from the sampling method for the population, thereby eliminating much of the biases that would have discredited the credibility of the data gathered. Another way by which the content was validated was by the evaluation apprehension. This was done by the researcher sampling a test population from what he used in the actual study to do a retest. The main aim of this activity was to check the level of idealizing of answers to beliefs and activities rather than the true picture on the ground.

The response from the retest sampled population, whose interactions with the researcher was seen as a follow up to the main study, helped to correct some inaccuracies that would have been overlook and would have questioned the credibility of the findings. Aside this group, there were a number of post-research visits to some of the chiefs and traditional priests of Okre. A number of chiefs were also made to authenticate the conclusions to the study inferred from the data gathered.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE OKRE STOOLS

4.1 The Okre Ethnic group



Fig. 4.1 Map showing the location of the seven major towns forming the Okre ethnic group

<http://africanistes.revues.org/document117>.

The Okre who are part of the Guan stock speak the “Kyerepong” dialect and are located along the Akuapem ridge. They were initially referred to by the “factors” as the “Hill Guan”. Presently they are made up of seven towns (plate 4.1), namely Apirꝑde, Adukrom, Awukugua, Aseseꝑso, Aꝑꝑvse, Dawu and Abiriw forming part of the seventeen towns of Akuapem. The Okre were originally made up of five towns referred to as “Okre Ekueni” (the five groups of Okre). The coming in of Dawu and Aꝑeseꝑso brought the number to seven. The name “Okre” according to Nana Kwame Apenteng I,

Nkɛsuɛhene of Abɛnse is a Kyerepong word “Ɛkre/Zkre” meaning “to catch or to tie”; another meaning of this word which perhaps suits this context is “to establish, setup, found or create”. Thus the name of the group probably became known as “Zkre”, (the settlement) and was used to describe the Guans who settled on the Akuapem hills particularly those who spoke Kyerepong. For many centuries they have shared a common boundary with their immediate Guan neighbours, Lartɛ-Ahenease and Lartɛ-Kubease who speak Lartɛ. The term ‘Guan’ is used to describe a group of distinct languages spoken by about six (6) per cent of Ghana’s population.

They were originally savanna dwellers who lived in settlements that spread over a geographical area that extended from Bole and north-western Brong-Ahafo through to Krachi, the Volta Region, the Afram plains, Akuapem, Dangme down to the Accra plains and westwards along the coast even as far as Eguafo. According to Meyerowitz (1950) they are believed to be part of a larger group to which the name “Akan” now refers to. Probably, the name “Akan”, Meyerowitz further opines was derived from the “A Guan”, which was pronounced “A’Gban” and “Akpani” in the north-western part of La Cote d’Ivoire.

Moving gradually through the Volta valley in a southerly direction, they created settlements along the Black Volta, throughout the Afram Plains, in the Volta Gorge, and in the Akuapem Hills before moving farther south onto the coastal plains. Some scholars postulate that the wide distribution of the Guan suggests that they were the Neolithic settlers of the region now called Ghana. Ward (1953:12) confirms this claim with the assertion that:

When the Ga arrived, they did not find the country empty. Much of the country around Accra, if not Accra itself was ruled by the Guan or Kyerepong. [*the Ga are believed to have arrived at their present location around 1510AD (ward 1953:10)*] these people are related to the Ga and to the Akan [if their *dialect* is anything to go by] and seem to have been the earliest of any of the present Gold Coast people to arrive in the country. They may even have been the first people of the Negro race to arrive, succeeding the Stone-Age men. They live today all along the Akuapem hills, from Berekuso through Tutu and Obosomase to Mamfe and Mampong and Latɔ (Datɔ), ανδ σο το Αδυκρομ ανδ Απιρεδε.

The establishing of the Guan as the indigenes of Ghana is further seen in this assertion that:

Guan tradition asserts that they are the undisputed aborigines of Ghana. This assertion is confirmed by material cultural remains of Ghana's first pastoral farmers and village builders who are also the first manufacturers of clay sculptures of sheep, cattle and dogs. These pioneer farmers and village builders made polished stone axes, stone hoes, stone beads and local pottery. Their settlements date to between 1500 BC and 500BC..... Comparing the language and archaeological evidence, it could be suggested that there were Guan settlements in the Black and White Volta Basin some time around the second millenium BC from where they spread onto the Afram plains, Atebubu and southwards along the Volta valley to the coastal savannas. Also, archeological excavations conducted in the 1960s at Buipe, the Ngbanyito capital of northern Ghana revealed material remains of the earliest farmers and village builders' culture lying below the pottery of the ancestors of modern Gonja. (www.ghanadistrict.com/districts.22/04/08)

Throughout Ghana, the Guan language and culture has been influenced by their neighbours. The Efutu, a subgroup of the Guan, for example, continue to speak Guan dialects, but have adopted (with modifications) the Fante version of some Akan institutions and the use of some Fante words in their rituals. As far as the other Guan subgroups are concerned, Nkonya, Kadjebi and Jasikan speak a Guan dialect laced with local Ewe dialect. The distribution of the Guans ethnic group can be seen as an evidence of their north-south migration. The presence of the Gonja in the northern

region of Ghana attests to this. There has been a lot of influence by their immediate neighbours such as the Dagomba, Mamprusi and Wala. Their Guan dialect, although modified by that of their immediate neighbour has not been erased completely.

The identity of a people is a function of their history and culture. Therefore, any society whose people are without an identity derived from their history and culture lacks the basic ingredients to stabilise their culture.

The name “Akuapem”, according to Gilbert (1997) was first used in the eighteenth century to describe the hill Guan living on the ridges near Accra by the “factors” (Danes, Portuguese and British). Reindorf (1966) and Hansen (1967) had a view that it was coined from the term “nkoa apem” (thousand subjects). Later on, Kwamena Poh, (1973) gave a contrasting view that the name was possibly derived from “Akuw apem” (thousand companies). This was perhaps due to the way they were grouped to attack the Akwamu during the Nsakyi war of 1730. Poh’s view is sound because if what Reindorf and Hansen said is to be taken, it questions why the Akyim should also adopt that name since they were never subjects to the Akwamu.

Both the Okre and Lartɔ who have similar customs and language, share a common boundary with the Akan speaking group of Akropong who have for a long time been their overlords. According to Nana Apenteng I, Nkosuohene of Abonse, prior to the advent of the Akyim to the hills, the Okre state stretched from Apirede to Abotakyi near Mampong on the Akuapem ridge. With the settling of the Akyim warriors at Akropong, the Okre towns beyond Abiriw were coerced to enter into what could be

termed as a symbolic adoption of the Akyim culture. This happened during the signing of infamous “Abotakye accord” in 1733.

Table 4.1 Language, ethnicity and political divisions of the towns of Akuapem (Gilbert 1994)

Town	Language	Ethnicity	Divisions			Proposed secession, 1995
			Eighteenth century	1930s	1993	
Abiriw	Guan	Guan (Okere)	Nifa	Nifa	Nifa	Akuapem Okere
Dawu	Guan	Guan (Okere)	Nifa	Nifa	Nifa	Akuapem Okere
Awukugua	Guan	Guan (Okere)	Nifa	Nifa	Nifa	Akuapem Okere
Adukrom	Guan	Guan (Okere)	Nifa	Nifa	Nifa	Akuapem Okere
Apirede	Guan	Guan (Okere)	Nifa	Nifa	Nifa	Akuapem Okere
Aseseeso	Guan	Guan (Okere)	Nifa	Nifa	Nifa	Akuapem Okere
Abonse	Guan	Guan (Okere)	Nifa	Nifa	Nifa	Akuapem Okere
Larteh	Guan	Guan	Benkum	Benkum	Benkum	Akuapem Guan
Obosomase	Akan ^a	Guan	Benkum	Benkum	Benkum	Akuapem Guan
Tutu	Akan ^a	Guan	Benkum	Benkum	Benkum	Akuapem Guan
Mampong	Akan ^a	Guan	Benkum	Benkum	Benkum	Akuapem Guan
Abotakyi	Akan ^a	Guan	Benkum	Benkum	Benkum	Akuapem Guan
Mamfe	Akan ^a	Guan	Benkum	Benkum	Kyidom	Akuapem Akuropon
Aburi	Akan	Akan	Adonten No. 1	Adonten	Adonten	Akuapem Anafo
Ahwerease	Akan	Akan	Adonten No. 1	Adonten	Adonten	Akuapem Anafo
Berekuso	Akan	Akan	Adonten No. 1	Adonten	Adonten	Akuapem Anafo
Amanokrom	Akan	Akan	Adonten No. 3	Gyaase	Gyaase	Akuapem Akuropon
Akuropon	Akan	Akan	Adonten No. 2	Kurontiri	Kurontiri	Akuapem Akuropon

(a) Guan-speakers until the twentieth century.

The other southern Guan towns of Tutu, Obosomase, Mamfe, Mampong, and Abotakyi, which are predominantly Guan and some Akwamu settlers, assimilated different ethnic groups including Ewe and Krobo, (Gilbert 1997). Fig. 4.1 shows the present language and ethnicity of the Akuapem towns.

4.2 Social Organization.

Generally, the Okre like all the other Guan inherit patrilineally. The family plays a very important role in the life of the people. The well-being of one another is seen as a social obligation. Another social activity is the celebration of festivals. Most of the festivals have both religious and social significance. Some of the festivals include the “edze

ogyi” yam festival as well as the “iba” (ohum) and odwira. Socially, the festivals give opportunity for family re-union and forge closer ties among members of the community. They are also a way of affirming the community’s allegiance to the Supreme Being by offering sacrifices to the deities and ancestors for their guidance throughout the year.

Religion plays a very vital role in the everyday life of the Okre ethnic group. Each town has a number of deities with priests possessing additional powers to give ruling on cases brought before them. In times past, the priests of the senior deities were the “chiefs” of the various towns.

4.3 System of Administration

The Okre originally lived in independent states made up of a number of clans and therefore had no centralized administration. According to Labi (2002), the Okre ethnic group was predominantly governed by a theocratic government. In this type of governance, the priests of the various deities who were known as, “Adedifo” or “Asξfo” (plate 4.4) were the heads of the Okre towns. They were organised militarily and politically under the “asξfo”, “asafohenfo” and the linguist. The Adedifo wielded and exercised legislative, executive and judicial arms of government as well as religious, ceremonial and secular functions. There was also the head of families who commanded a lot of power and respect. This accounts for the numerous deities in the various towns. Every clan in every town had its own deity. One of the deities was however chosen as the head of all the deities.

This system of governance was so effective that it fostered absolute peace and harmony among the Okre towns. It is worth saying that aside some petty squabbles and inter family feud, there was no record of any two or more Okre towns engaging each other in a destructive war with another.

In a personal communication, (6th October 2010), Osofo Kofi Larbi the current priest of Bosomptra said the only time a war nearly broke out was when there was a disagreement between the priest chief of Abiriw by name Otutu Kwabena and the priest from other Okre towns. This unfortunate incident led to Kwabena Otutu committing suicide by blowing a keg of gun-powder near the palm tree where they were sitting. In the process all the other priests were killed. It is the origin of the great oath of the people of “Alabiri”, the royal family of Abiriw.

After this incident, there had never been any recorded event of the Okre towns engaging in a war against each other. This has perhaps helped the Okre towns to maintain their unique culture to this time. Although there have been some arguments to the effect that the early Guan had a chieftaincy system like their Akan counterparts, very little evidence of this claim exist now. As such:

It may be difficult reconciling some aspects of Guan traditions like that which claims that their ancestors were ruled by priest-chiefs who had regalia like the Akan chiefs, with their palaces located close to their shrines with that which suggests that they had secular chiefs who established Atara kingdoms.

www.ghanadistrict.com/districts.22/04/08

4.4 Major Deities of the Okre Towns

Among the Okre, there are two different types of deities. These are the “Abosom” (deities) and the “asuman” (charms). According to Osɛfo Kwasi Ayeh the head priest of the Otutu shrine of Adukrom and Awo Apesiwaa, priestess of the Bohen deity at Apirede, the “Abosom” are spiritual entities that came to possess someone within the clan and eventually stayed with them. In some cases they visited the people in the form of human beings (men and women). They initially had no abode or shrine. These were later made for them by following specific instructions given through a medium. An example is the Atti Kwao deity of Apired was claimed to have come in the form of a man to stay among the people for some time and then later vanished after building his own shrine. Usually all the shrines have objects which serve as receptacles for the deity.

The “asuman” on the other hand are objects which had some spiritual powers evoked into them. Unlike the “Abosom” which is owned by the clan or the whole town, the “suman” can be own by individuals. An example of a clan “suman” is the “Βανκζζμι” (plate 4.24) at the palace at Adukrom. The term deities used in this discussion refers to “Abosom” and not “suman”. The following are some of the head deities found in the Okre towns.

- Apirede: Bohen. (Later on Atti Kwao)
- Adukrom: Otutu
- Aseseζσο: Mantim.
- Abonse: Bole.

- Awukugua: Otimo.
- Abiriw: Bosompra
- Mamfe: Topre.
- Obosomase: Kyi-nko

4.5 Art of the Okre ethnic group

Every cultural group throughout the world could at least boast of a particular work of indigenous art form. Archaeological evidence of works representing some aspects of Okre and for that matter Guan art that has been excavated includes the clay works in sites in Akuapem. According to Gilbert (1989), these are terracotta heads found in a midden at Dawu relates to similar ones found elsewhere in Akan gravesites in Ghana dating from the sixteenth century.

Unfortunately, those who made these finding have attributed most of the works to foreign origin. They were of the view that the Guans produced no pottery locally. Shaw (1961) suggests that there are indications of importation from the lagoons near the coast of pottery and other works and beads found in the midden. Much of the pottery found in the sites dating back to c.1500-1900. Anquandah (1985:21), and Poh (1973:96) contend that:

Before the eighteenth century the Hill Guan produced abundant food supply for their neighbours—especially the Shai—with whom they exchanged these supplies for pottery. For example in 1848, Widmann and Dieterle noted that thousands of pots full of palm oil were transported annually from the Hill Guan to the coast.

The observation here is that aside taking most of the credit of making of pots from the

Okre ethnic group, it could be mentioned that just like any cultural group, a number of art works, had been used to achieve their social, economic, political as well as religious needs therefore their religious practises employed art as a medium to commune with the ancestors and deities.

Priests and priestesses at the Okre shrines used various art works to identify and protect the towns from evil forces as well as create abodes for deities. State deities, “*akpe*” (Kyerepong), believed to be spirits had non-figurative forms of art works made for them through whom their assistance was solicited. The popular ones were the stools and clay pots (*korow*), (*akorow*, pl.).

Perhaps their conclusions were based on the fact that the pottery works believed to have been exported to urban sites in Akuapem were of the sun-rays motif, the trademark of the Shai potters in about AD 1500-1700. Otu (1987) mentioned other items such as bone combs, ivory bangles and awls which were elaborately decorated with engravings in the form of concentric circles and dot designs found in the lower part of the mound excavated at Dawu.

It could be contested that since Dawu is nearer to Awukugua (Okreso), which was a major market town, the art of those (both local and foreigners) who patronized the market was likely to be seen. Secondly, the people of Dawu are said to have migrated from Asamang, which is an Akan town. Naturally, part of their Akan tradition would have found its way into the Guan culture. It is a fact that no culture exists in isolation, and with time, the pure blooded status of the members forming a particular ethnic group

becomes adulterated especially through inter-ethnic marriages.

The evidence of Akan or Shai influence in the art of the Guan of Akuapem should be seen as normal since they were their immediate neighbours. This should, however, not be used to down play the creative ability of the Guans especially, where Asihene (1972:56) was emphatic that “the Guans are natural craftsmen in wood and metals”. In recent times, there has been evidence of settlers especially Krobo and Ewes introducing their form of craft into the Okre communities.

Labi (2002) agrees that works of art found among the Okre may be viewed as man-made objects, which exhibit skill and order, and convey meaning as such almost every object of political, religious and social importance is decorated. These decorations were consciously added to an original work, and could be subjected to aesthetic comment and judgments. Consequently, they express the identity as well as values of the people acquired over a period of time to be used for both private and public functions.

4.6 The Okre Stools

The concept of the indigenous Ghanaian stools, as discussed in the earlier chapters runs through most of the ethnic groups, in Ghana. With this statement, one would wonder if it is necessary to isolate and talk about the stools of individual ethnic groups since the stools of the Akan particularly the Asante has been talked about extensively. It should be emphasized that the stool becomes the embodiment of the identity of the people in terms of their socio-cultural, philosophical as well as the historical background. Therefore not talking about the stools of a group of people amounts to not talking about the people at all.

With the introduction of the Akan type of chieftaincy, the concept of leadership among the Okre changed to see a separation of powers where the Akan type of chiefs took the place of the “Adedifo”. The Akan black stool became a central, political and religious art work. Stools were made with various symbols in the central part to communicate Akan values and beliefs. Other regalia such as linguist staffs, ornaments, drums, swords and cloths, imbued with symbolism and imagery which reflected and projected the chief's image and status were used in conjunction with the stools.

The paraphernalia of the present day Okre chiefs (plate 4.2) is therefore no different from that of the Akan chiefs from whom it might have originated. There is however very little information on how the gathering of a typical pre-Akan Okre leaders looked. Labi (2002) opines that “it was and still is a taboo for the priests to use gold, which is a mark of wealth and glory frequently displayed in many of the new Akan political ceremonies”. They were, however, permitted to use beads. It could therefore be concluded that such a gathering was characterised by simplicity of forms and an aura of a high level of spirituality as seen in the present day gathering of the priest of deities (plate 4.3).

4.6.1 Types of Okre Stools

The use of stools by the Hill Guan prior to the coming of the Akyim has been indicated in the writings of some anthropologists and historians. Ward (1953) mentions a Ga stool called the “Guan stool”. Although he indicated two possibilities to have been the source of the stool, a third possibility can also be inferred from the relationship between the Ga and the Guan. In his opinion, the stool might have been captured in a war

between the Ga and the Guan (there was no history of the Ga fighting the Guan).



Plate 4.1 Okre chiefs sitting in state.

Secondly, it is believed that Dede Akai, the Efutu wife of Owura Mankpon Okai, a Ga chief, brought the stool from her people who are also Guan. The inferences to be made from the relationship of the Ga and Guan is that since the Ga came to meet the Guan at the coast, it might be possible that when the Guan left, a few might have remained, among them who were chiefs maintained their stool. (Coincidentally, the Ga also practised the theocratic system of leadership). The above argument clearly puts the presence of the stool among the Guan (Okre) ahead prior to the coming of the Akyim.

Most of the Okre shrines relied on deities who invoked to inhabit the objects such as stools and pots intended to be their abodes. Traditionally, according to Opanyin Yaw Kono of Apirede, Okre stools did not have any designs in the middle part. They were

simple blocks of wood with crescent shaped tops to act as seat with a handle on both sides of it. In some instances, they had either a single central pillar or four pillars. Other designs were diamond and circular shapes. Labi (1989) confirms this view that the shrine of the *Kyi-nko* deity in Obosomase deemed it a taboo to enter with any stool with symbolic or proverbial meaning. Only simple four legged stools were permitted in this shrine. These stools were ritually washed and painted with white clay (hyirew) during annual festivals.

With the introduction of the black stool, both stools are used side by side although in some cases, the nature and the blood rituals associated with the black stool did not allow the priest to actively participate in festival where the black stools were present.

Labi (2002) justifies this situation that:

The traditional Guan art associated with the priests was not integrated in the new political regalia dominated by gold, symbolic imagery and black stools..... They also abhor the use of black stools. The blood used on the stools is a taboo to the *odede* or *asɛfo*. Hence, the Guan priests, for religious reasons passed on this responsibility to the *asafohenfo* or other leaders. The wearing of war regalia in the form of smocks, hats and the use of swords and knives contradicted the sacredness and sanctity of the position of priesthood.

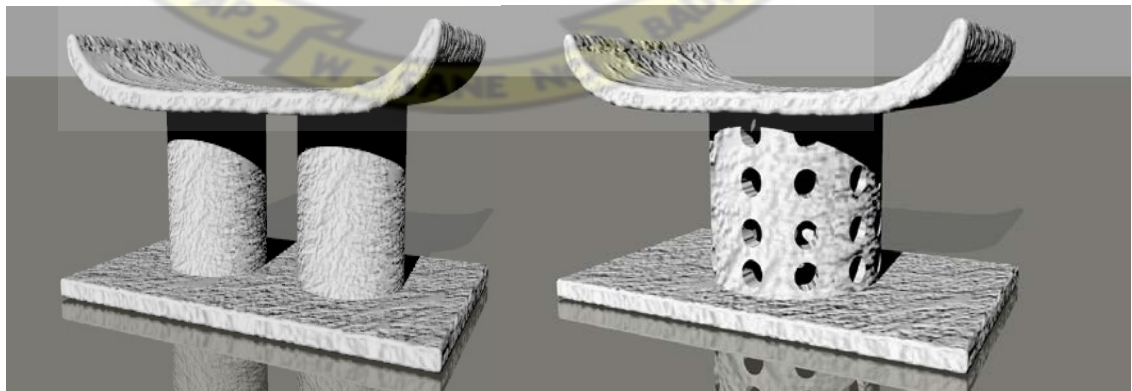


Fig. 4.2 An artist impression of early Okre shrine stools.

Owing to the change of the system of leadership in the Okre, the discussion on stools will focus on both the stools belonging to the chiefs and the shrines. As the stool embodies the origin, culture, philosophies as well as the development that has taken place in the entire life of the people, it would always be proper to talk about the formal and aesthetic aspects of the stool in its cultural context by considering the myth, meanings and history associated with it. The talk on the Okre stool will therefore help to trace the gradual transition from their emergence to the Akuapem mountains through the 18th century when the Akyim arrived, to the present times.

Classification of Okre stools:

Two basic types of stools can be found among the Okre. These are the stools belonging to the deities known as the “Abosomgua” (stools of the deities) and the “Nsamangua” (ancestral stools). The “Abosomgua” were used by the priests (Adedifo) before the Akan system of chieftaincy was adopted. Otu (1987:27) relates the “Abosomgua” to the white costume of the “Adedifo”. The priests (Adedifo) abhor blood and therefore have white stools (fig. 4.3), as symbols of authority. It also symbolises purity and spirituality.

In Akan interpretation, the colour black denotes a high level of spiritual energy, potency and antiquity as well as the communication with the ancestors therefore the use of both the black and white sacred stools among the Okre ethnic group was an indication of their strong linkage with the ancestors and the Supreme Being (God)



Plate 4.2 Priestess and the stool of the Dideku deity at Adukrom



Plate 4.3 “Nnadefo” of Abonse sitting in state at a durbar grounds.

Most of the stools used when the priest sits in state or is possessed by the deity are “sakyi-dua-krogua” or the “mmaagua” (see appendix 2). The choice of that design may be due to the interpretation given to the design of that stool. The design in the “mmaagua”, according to Amenuke et al. (1991), represents the universality of co-

existence taking into consideration the interdependency of man on his fellow man, the sustainability of life by the earth and the central role played by God the creator. Such a stool used by the priests and priestesses of deities suggest their intermediary role between the Supreme Being, ancestors and the living. Some can be used at all times while others are used only on special occasions. All rituals, especially those concerning the towns were done with these stools.

The priestess of the Bohen deity at Apirede (plate 4.10) seldom uses her white stool outside the shrine house. The priests of Atti Kwao and the Otutu shrine which are state deities for Apirede and Adukrom respectively have similar white stools used for their various rituals. In some cases, some elders sat on it to perform certain rituals (plate 4.5). This ritual stool is used in offering libation once a year at Apirede- during the “enumde eba” (ohum for the elders)



Plate 4.4. An elder of Apirede sitting on a stool to offer libation. Inset, detail of the stool.

Although the “Asɛfo” sat on stones to perform most of their rituals, they actually had stools regarded as sacred objects. This questions the claim by the Akyim that they

brought the stool system to the Okre with the introduction of the chieftaincy system however, before then, the Okre had their sacred white stools (Abosomgua) as a symbol of leadership. There should not be the question of which of these two stools is most superior because both were sacred objects meant for the leaders of the towns. They were also a link between the living, the dead and the supernatural forces.

4.7 The Okre towns

Although the Okre towns are seven in number, stools from only four were selected for the purpose of this research, the criteria for the selection has been discussed in chapter three. The selected towns are as follows:

4.7.1 Apirede

Απιρεδε Ακρονκρομονε, αμο του αμο ενι, αμο του αμο εβι ακ
πε ελξφενι. αμο ωε ασερεδοωα μυ κξ αμο βζνδε ξωε.

The people of Apirede, “Okronkronbξ ζνι” together with their children all numbering a thousand five hundred could not eat one wren “aseredowa”.

the original name of the town as discussed in chapter five is “Okronkronbξ ζνι”, Thus “Apirede Akonkromone” should have been “Apirede Okronkronobξ ζνι”

This slogan describes the generous and caring nature of the people of Apirede that no matter how small the a morsel of food, it was shared for everybody to get a piece of it. It was ridiculous to imagine that such a large group of people were not able eat one tiny wren. The symbolism in this slogan, according to Opanyin Kwaku Amoako, depicts the extent to which the people of Apirede care for one another.

4.7.2 Origin

Oral traditional history narrated by some Okre elders claimed that, Apirede, together with Abiriw were founded long before any of the Akuapem towns. It is still not clear when they began to arrive into the district especially in the face of scanty archeological and written records; however, there is enough evidence to show that when they got to the Akuapem Hills they first settled at “Duamahuru” near the “Agyensakyi” stream near the present day Apirede town. During their journey, people of Apirede brought with them two deities. These were “Nyada” and “Bohen”.

In an interview with some elders of the town it came to light that Owing to scarcity of water, they continued looking for a better place until they settled at the site of the present day town of Apirede.

The original name of the town was to be called “Okronkronbɛ ʒvi” literally translated as “we were created by the holy one (God).” This name according to the late Opanyin Kwaku Amoako, was perhaps adopted because of perfect nature of their new settlement (which offered them a good hiding place from their enemies). As the Okre towns increased and also due to the numerous wars at that time, ‘Okronkronobɛ ʒvi’ by virtue of its location became a strategic position from where the attacks of the enemies could be repelled. Again it was a place where the other Okre towns found safe to hide their valuable items and even royals before going to war. ‘Okronkronobɛ ʒvi’, thus became an “akprɛsi or akprɛ-ade” (the Okre name for a “Safe Haven” (fortress). The name “akprɛ-ade” with time became corrupted as “Apirede” as it is known today.

4.7.3 Founder of Apirede

In his hand written account based on narration from some elders of Apirede, the late Reverend George Jectey Nyarko (1938) credited the founding of the ancient town to hunter called Ayim, and his right hand man Okoampa. When they got to the Akuapem hills, they settled near five hills each having an underground cave. The place was named “Zboni” a kyerepong word meaning “the five holes”. It could also be that the name was “mmoni” “five hills”. The name “Zboni” or “mmoni” was later to be corrupted to Monu. The state symbol of Apirede (fig. 4.3) will be discussed under the Saforo Okoampa.

To distinguish the leader of the group from other “Ayim”, the name “Zboni” was added to his name. Thus, he became known as “Zboni or Oboni Ayim” (Ayim from Zboni). The political leadership was for the priest of the Bohen and Nyada deities. It is worth mentioning that long after the demise of the founding fathers, another deity by name “Atti Kwao” came to reside among the people of Apirede. It eventually became the head deity and therefore its priest became the chief of the town.



Fig. 4.3 State symbol of Apirede

4.7.4 Clans of Apirede

Seven main clans form the social bedrock of the Apirede people. These are the Abonde, Anyaakode, Abitease, Ayakade, Animde, Akonde and Anwagyiri. History has it that the Anyaakode and Zbitease clans were part of the Abonde Clan and are all descendants of the founder of Apirede, Oboni Ayim. These three clans form the royal and ruling houses of Apirede namely Abondi, Anyaakode and Zbiteasi who were of the direct lineage of Oboni Ayim and Opampim Okoampa. Each of the clans however had its own deity. The deities of the Apirede clans are:

Abonde,	}	Bohen, Nyada, Atti Kwao,
Anyaakode		

Abitease,	
Ayakade,	Εδεωρρυ
Animde,	Tano/Abocha
Akonde	(Nwagiti) Amkpa
Anwagyiri.	Okumi



Bohen

Atti Kwao

Plate 4.5 The shrines (grooves) of the head deities of Apirede.



Plate 4.6 a) The seven stone seats at the forecourt of the “Atti” shrine used by the seven priests of the clan deities in Apirede (these were used during the performing of state rituals) **b)** the researcher sitting on one of the stones.

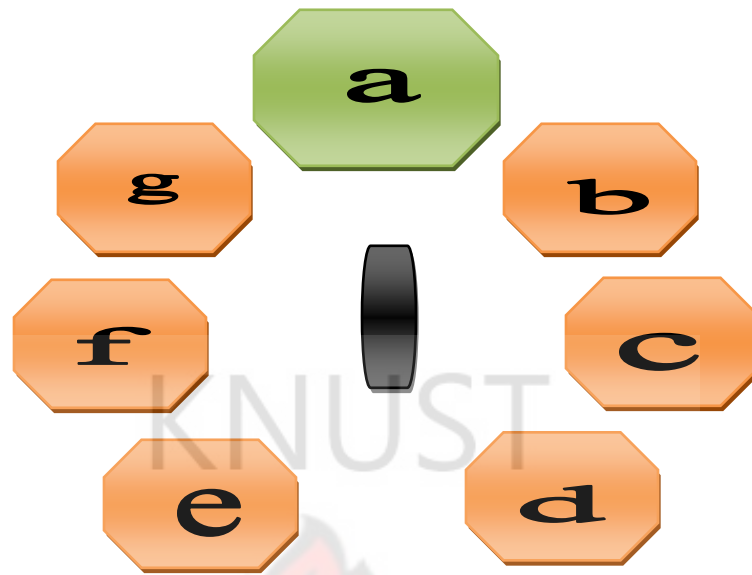


Fig. 4.4 Seating plan for the priest of the various clans on the ritual stones at the Atti shrine

- a- Atti (Anyakode)
- b- Edewuru(Ayakare)
- c- Okumi(Anwagiri). She is also said to be the wife of Atti
- d- Abocha(Animde). He is the linguist of Atti
- e- Bohen(Abonde) Sanaahaene of Atti
- f- Akonde
- g- Nyada(Zβιτεασε)

The central stone was used as a bowl for preparing ritual food “ξτξ” mashed yam) during the gathering of the priests. In the olden days, the head priest of these deities met to perform rituals at the shrine of “Atti Kwao” during the performing of such rituals they sat on stones as seen in plate 4.6. Each of the priest had a specific duty to perform this determined their seating position (fig 4.4)



Plate 4.7 The clan stool of the Anyaakode royal house of Apirede.

4.7.5 Past Chiefs of Apirede

Oral tradition and a compilations of Ernest Okoampa (royal secretary and historian to Saforo Okoampa I), show that Apirede has had about 31 chiefs since they settled on the Akuapem hill. Out of these, 14 were Priest chiefs. That is to say they were the head priests of the three senior deities (Nyada, Bohen and Atti.) who were the head of the people. The history and dates of the reign of the first priest chiefs from Oboni Ayim I as well as most of the early priest chiefs is not known. It is, however, known that during the reign of Berko Asamoah Sirih III, the 9th chief, the name Dawu was given to the Asamang people who lived near Awukugua.

All these first 14 Priest chiefs served under the “Abosomgua”. Their names are still remembered, because during the celebration of the annual ‘Odwira’ festival, there is a particular ceremony of offering libation and sanctification during which the names of all the chiefs (including the Priest chiefs) were repeatedly mentioned. Through this ceremony, their names had been handed over from generation to generation. The

information available and presented here on the few past chiefs of Apirede is related to specific events in their periods of reign. Below is a list of the chiefs of Apirede.

- 1.Oboni Ayim I: Priest chief.
2. Gyekete I Priest chief
3. Berko Asamoah I (Alias Asamoah Sirih): Priest chief
4. Nsoke Priest chief
5. Gyekete Kuma II Priest chief
6. Amakye Koampa I: Priest chief
7. Berko Asamoah II Priest chief
8. Kwame Saforo Priest chief
9. Berko Asamoah Sirih III: Priest chief
10. Aboagye Kyemireku: Priest chief
11. Opei Kankam: Priest chief
12. Asare Ankyeahene: Priest chief
13. Larbi Koranteng: Priest chief
14. Gyekete Adaa III: Priest chief
15. Gyekete Odum IV (Obofo –a –omo-Nyane:) First chief of Apirede under the Akan system of chieftaincy. Circa 1725-1768.
16. Kokora Koranteng
17. Kwaamina
18. Gyekete Odum V
19. Gyekete Kofi VI
20. Kwaku Adade
21. Amankwatia Anom
22. Ansong Henaku (Alias Akwatia Mpatu I) Died 1874
23. Ayeh Kofi, 1874-1890

24. Kwaku Asiedu (Alias Kwaku Pese)	1890-1900
25. Saforo Koampa I (Kofi Fofie)	1901 – 1936.
26. Kwabena Ansa,	1936
27. Obonu Ayim II,	1936-1944
28. Saforo Okoampa II,	1944-1963 (Destooled)
29. Gyekete Kwabena (Alias Akwatia Mpatu II)	1963-1967 (Destooled)
30. Oboni Ayim Nyarko,	1968-1990 (Destooled)
31. Saforo Okoampa III,	1994 to date

Source: Nana Saforo Okoampah III. 23-05 2007

4.7.6 Stools of Apirede

The stools of Apirede as discussed in the thesis are among a selected few whose occupants have played a remarkable role in the general development and growth of the town. This cannot be discussed without touching on the Bohen, Nyada and Atti deities since their priests were originally the chiefs of the town.

i) The Bohen stool

Okyeame Yaw Kono, an elder of Apirede, sums up the importance of Bohen in the existence of Apirede with the phrase “Bohen is Apirede and Apirede is Bohen”. This is perhaps the best description of the Bohen deity by most indigenes of Apirede. It has the appellation “ogyee abaatan, oye kurow and Obro asuo”. Bohen is said to be a male water deity who is so generous that apart from bringing goodwill to the people of Apirede, it will never harm any one even when the person offends him. He has the Nyada deity as his wife. In order to be able to reprimand his children, (the people of Apirede) when they go wrong, he made the more ruthless and aggressive Atti Kwao deity his

ξsafohene (warlord). This perhaps accounts for the front role played by Atti Kwao in Apirede which has in a way relegated Bohen and Nyada physically to the background. It is therefore no wonder that, the seven sacred stones (plate 4.6 a, b) constituting the ritual seat of the priests of the seven (7) clans in Apirede can be found in the shrine of Atti and not that of Bohen.

The actual Bohen stool is a small white stool. Like most of the “Abosomgua”, it has no elaborate design. The design in the middle of the stool is a single cylindrical support with round holes (fig 4.5). It has been encased in a thick layer of kaolin (hyirew). The layers over the years have generated cracks perhaps adding some beauty and age to the stool.

The age of the stool could not be determined since the present priestess of the Bohen deity, Awo Efua Apesiwa, claimed that the stool dates as far back to the times of her great grand father. It is a very important stool in the lives of the people of Apirede considering the fact that it is believed to have protected them spiritually throughout their journey to the present settlement. It was also instrumental in the making of laws and taboo and its effective implementation.

The ceremonial stool of the priestess of the Bohen deity, (plate 4.8) is a white “sakyi-dua-krogua”. Small splits, scrapes and cracks have become a normal part of their patina over the years attesting to its age and extensive use.

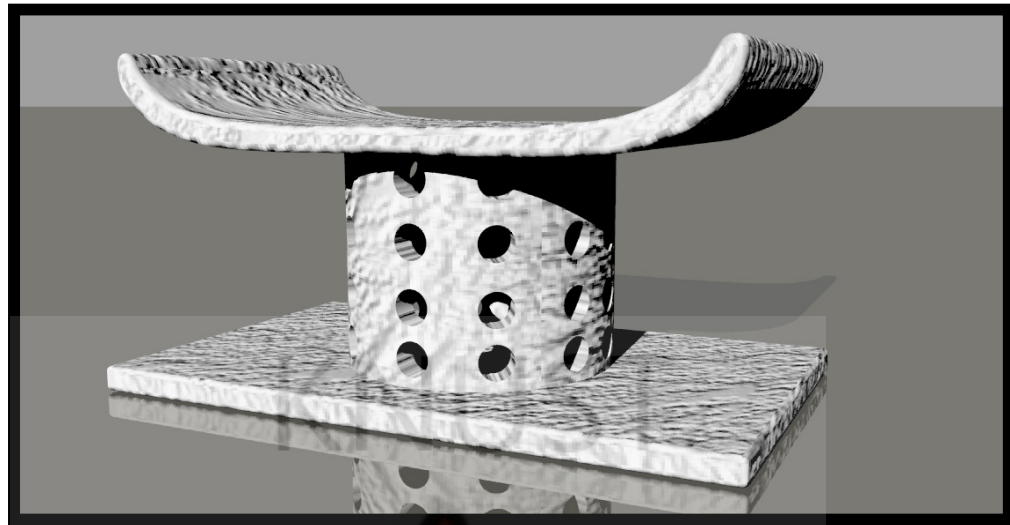


Fig. 4.5 A reconstruction of the Bohen stool.



Plate 4.8 The ceremonial stool of the priestess of the Bohen deity.

Atti Kwao on the other hand does not have a stool serving as a receptacle for him. Stools found in his shrines are those used by the priest and priestesses. The main stool found in the shrine of Atti Kwao (plate 4.10) was an aged one. A careful observation shows that it might have been a white stool but unlike that of Bohen which was constantly whitewashed with kaolin, this had assumed a dull colour with time. This may be due to the fact that for some time now, there has not been a regular priest.



Plate 4.9 Awo Efua Apesiwa, the priestess of the Bohen deity sitting on her white ceremonial stool. (Inset) The researcher in a photograph with the priestess of Bohen.



Plate 4.10 Stools at the Atti shrine. The smaller one used for special rituals for the Atti deity is always placed on an animal skin.

In this discussion, some of the chief's stools from Apirede to be discussed will include the Oboni Ayim stool, the Saforo Okoampah stool, Gyekete Odum, also known as

“Ebofo a omo onyane”. These three stools were chosen because they represent the three ruling houses of Apirede. These are: Oboni Ayim of Abondi, Okoampa of Anyaakode and Gyekete of Zbitease. The others will be the Tufuhene stool as well as the stool of selected queenmothers. In an ethnic group which inherits patrilineally, the role of the queenmother is usually not very significant. However, in the present society, females are taking the centre stage in the development of their communities, it is therefore worth mentioning and acknowledging their presence and contributions.

ii) The Oboni Ayim stool

The Oboni Ayim stool at Apirede might have originated from the era of Oboni Ayim I, who was also the founder of Apirede. It is believed to have a very strong relationship with the Bohen stool because being a priest chief; he automatically inherited the Bohen stool which is the most important of all the sacred stools of Apirede. The Oboni Ayim stool (fig 4.6) was described by Nana Kwame Anom, nkonguahene of Apirede as a simple stool with a single supporting pillar. It has a round base instead of the popular rectangular base.

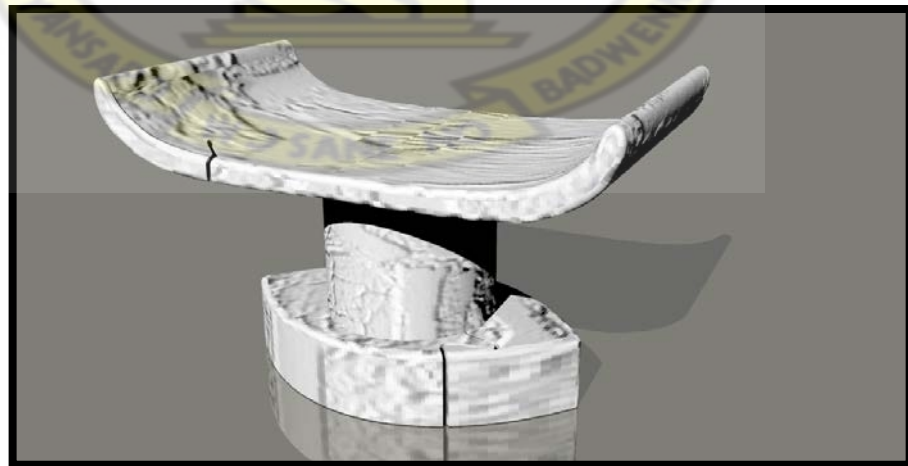


Fig. 4.6 An artist impression of the original Oboni Ayim stool.

The ceremonial Oboni Ayim stool as seen in plates 4.11 and 4.12, given to Oboni Ayim Nyarko III (1968-1990) from the repertoire of Oboni Ayim II (1936-1944) is about seventy-three (73) years old. It has an intricate central design compared to the original Oboni Ayim stool. Since the distoolment of Oboni Ayim Nyarko III in 1990, the stool has been kept on its side on the platform of the Abonde palace at Apirede (plate 4.12). The stool having an aging brown colour has four supporting pillars. Each of the pillars has a number of triangles projecting lengthwise from the outer part. The middle portion has a design of the head of a key also set lengthwise. Part of it is cracked while others show visible signs of splitting. It shows a sign of neglect, perhaps because it has not been used for a long time.

This symbolism of design in the stool according to Okyeame Kono, senior linguist both Oboni Ayim II and III signifies the key to nation building and absolute development of its people. The occupant of the stool therefore symbolises the key to peace, unity and total spiritual and physical development of the town and its people as well as Okre. Some elders of Apirede claim that Oboni Ayim I was a leader who abhorred inter-ethnic conflict and bloodshed. He was a strong-willed leader whose peaceful nature and kind-heartiness was not to be taken for a weakness.

Hundreds of years after his demise, the town earned the prestigious position of being the protectors of the important relics and royals of Akuapem during war times. Aside being the Kyidom (rear guards of Akuapem) they were ironically the Abrafohene (chief executioners) of Akuapem.



Plate 4.11 The ceremonial stool of Oboni Ayim II and III



a



b

Plate 4.12 Details of the central portion of the Oboni Ayim stool. (b) The Abondi palace at Apirede where the Oboni Ayim stool is housed.

The character of the Okre ethnic group, has helped to maintain their language and most of their culture in the face of massive acculturations. This concept of nation building through a systematic strategic but peaceful means of leadership was also exemplified by Oboni Ayim II and III. However, a chieftaincy dispute that lasted for over 100 years had a bad effect on the development of the cultural assets of the town.

iii) Gyekete Odum stool (circa 1725 – 1768)

It will not be proper to say that some of the Okre chiefs and priest resorted to suicide as a means of saving their towns from shame and untold calamity. What they did would rather be seen as an ultimate sacrifice aimed at preserving the dignity and integrity of their towns. Perhaps Gyekete Odum who was the fourth to have ascended the Gyekete stool and the first chief of Apirede under the Akan system of chieftaincy was one such hero, (The other being Otutu Kwabena of Abiriw).

The reign of chief Gyekete, who was nick-named “Obofo-a-omo nyane” was the beginning of the traditional history of the stool of Apirede because he was the first chief under the “nsamangua” system of leadership. He is believed, according to Okoampa, Oteng- Manka and Obese-Jecty, to have become the head of the Apirede community around 1725 because some of the famous battles including the battle of Nsakyee, between the Akwamu and the allied forces of the Akyim and the Akuapem in 1730 were fought during his reign. Owing to an incident which eventually led to the burying of the original Gyekete stool, the researcher could not have a description of that stool. The stool described here, is the replacement of the buried stool.

Chief Gyekete was a great hunter (obɛfo). In a narration by Opanyin Kwame Gyekete, he claimed that the chief was very rich that while other hunters made cover clothes from the bark of ‘Kyenkyen’ or ‘Ofo’ tree, chief Gyekete as part of his hunting costume wore strings of some valuable beads called ‘nyaane’ around his neck and wrist. It was unheard of for someone to wear it as part of his hunting costume since such beads were

used by chiefs and prominent personalities for special occasions. This earned him the nickname “the hunter who wears the “nyaane” beads” (Obξfo a omo nyaane). Aside been a hunter, he was also a great warrior whose symbol of office, according to Opanyin Yaw Kono, was the leopard, a symbol he embodied in his personal stool.

As a hunter, chief Gyekete knew the prowess of the leopard in hunting and also how it is feared by a lot of animals in the forest. The tiger is also known to be a climber therefore, its prey stands just a little chance of escaping even if it climbs a tree. This symbol might have been chosen to show to his peers and adversaries that he has the skills and ability to guard the important regalia of the Guans kept in his custody during war times.

An incident recorded by Ernest Okoampa and retold by Obese-Jecty (1975) made Chief Gyekete Odum not just the bravest but also the most selfless of all the chiefs in the history of Apirede. The narration has it that he returned from one of the wars to find that the entrance to the sacred rock where he had hidden his sacred stools and other relics blocked due to a landslide.

He decided to fashion out a new stool and consecrate it with his own blood. When the stool was ready, he set it between a cleft in the rocks. He then told his elders to surround the stool while he went up to the steep top of the rock. He hurled himself headlong down onto the stool. Thus he died, his blood having gushed on to the stool. The stool is therefore regarded as the next in sacredness to the stools that has remained sealed up in the cave to this day. Chief Gyekete was buried between the cleft rocks next

to the sacred cave. The place has ever been called “ξδαδίζντζμ” (he lays between treasures).

The stool fashioned by chief Gyekete (fig 4.7) as was described by the Baamuhene of Apirede is a relatively small stool having a diamond shape support in the middle. In the stool room of Apirede, this stool always rests on the personal stool of chief Gyekete. His personal stool is also said to have a string of the “nyaane” beads (believed to have been used by him) placed on it.

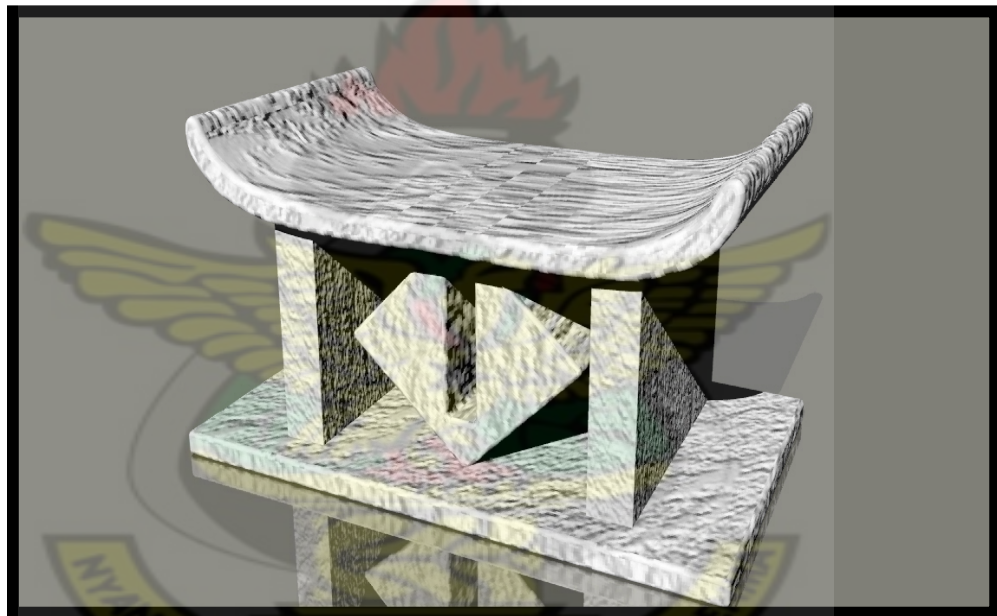


Figure 4.7 an artist impression of the Gyekete Odum stool.



KNUST

Figure 4.8 A reconstruction of the personal stool of Chief Gyekete OdumV.



Plate 4.13 The personal stools of Nana Gyekete Kwabena (Akwatia Mpatu), 1963-67

iv) Saforo Okoampa Stool: 1909-1936

After the death of Kwaku Pese, Kofi Koampah was made chief under the stool name Saforo Okoampa I as the 11th chief and the 25th leader of Apirede. He reigned from 1901-1936. Saforo Okoampa I, was the most dynamic, visionary and ambitious chief in

the political history of Apirede. During his reign, there was an attempt to put into writing a lot of the oral tradition of Apirede. The reign of Kofi Koampah was the turning point in the development of Apirede because he brought a lot of positive changes in the lives of the people. He had a simple slogan for his vision, that was: “embre dane a dani bi”, (be abreast with the changing times). This idea which is a symbol of dynamism became the slogan of his office.

From the description given by Nana Saforo Okoampa III, the present chief of Apirede, his ceremonial stool was bigger than normal size “Kontonkorowigua”, (fig 4.9). Unlike the normal stools it had a three-tier base. It is said to be elongated so as to give it a majestic look. According to the description by the late Opanyin Kwadwo Offei, stool father of Anyaakode and son of Saforo Okoampa I, it was elaborately embellished with gold and silver sheets. It was a perfect aesthetic and royal object. He was quoted to have made the comment that “ζνψζ enkyinae kξse a ne ahζ bζ mo wuntζ” (when a man (chief) sits well, he can reason well). The choice of the “Kontonkorowigua” was perhaps an indication of how he used his office and the collective effort of his people to develop Apirede in all spheres of life.

Soon after his enstoolment he embarked on a series of ambitious projects aimed at elevating the status of Apirede above any of the Akuapem towns. He saw to the upkeep of Christianity, construction of roads and schools. He believed so much in hygiene and neatness that it became an offence punishable by a fine for one to keep his environment dirty. He elevated the status of his stool by making stool paraphernalia which none of his predecessors dreamt of.

He built a palace and a court hall, made Ernest Okoampa his court secretary and historian and was carried in a hammock. He applied for a tribunal and engaged a paid tribunal registrar and office clerks. Chief Okoampah bought among other things ostrich feathers, golden scepters and golden linguist staffs required for the stool. He also had interactions with a lot of merchants in possible areas of investment.

In the course of time, he contracted a man by name Kwaku Rudolf of Akropong, educated in Basel in Switzerland, to construct a road between Apirede and Adukrom as well as the road from Apirede to Trom junction, which hitherto, were footpaths. His main intention was to make the road accessible for cars which was a novelty at that time and which he intended buying one. After the construction of the road, Chief Kofi Okoampah I engaged some people to prospect gold, which he believed could be found in the hill. The prospection however proved negative.

Fifty eight years after the death of Saforo Okoampa I, his grandson, in 1994, became the 31st chief of Apirede at a relatively tender age of 33 years. He inherited a town with a divided political front due to a chieftaincy dispute that has plagued the town for well over one hundred years. Even though it had started earlier, the dispute gathered momentum from 1944 after the death of Oboni Ayim II. From 1963 to 1990, Apirede saw the distoolment of three chiefs in a row.



Plate 4.14 Chief Okoampa I in a photograph taken in 1916 with merchant from Winneba on a visit to Apirede.

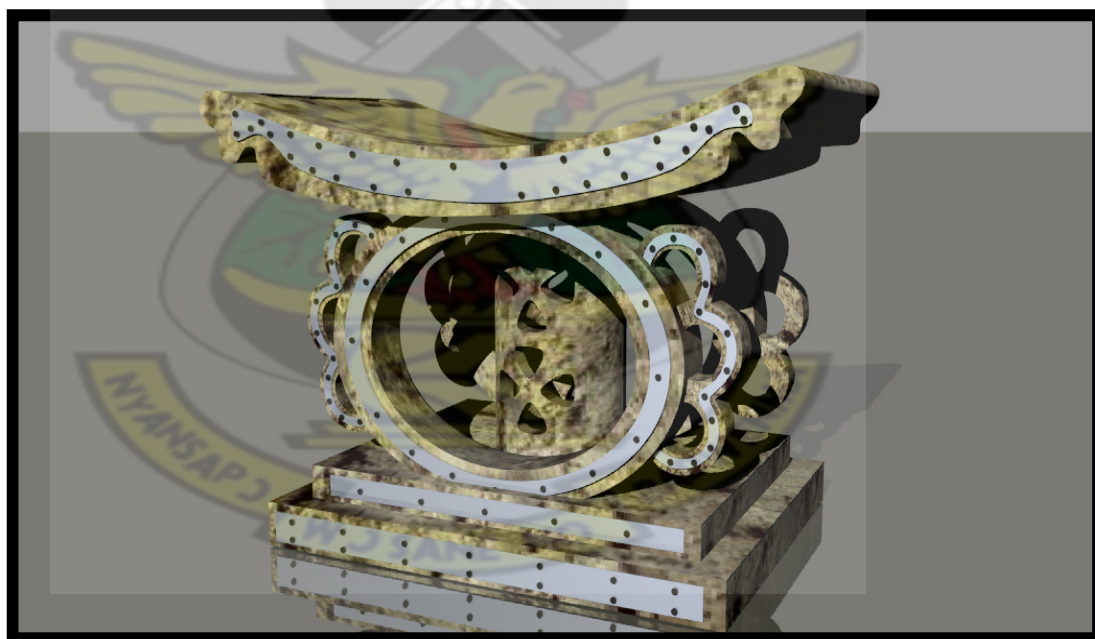


Fig. 4.9. Artist impression of the Ceremonial stool of Saforo Okoampa I.

Saforo Okoampa III came in with his grandfather's ambitious and dynamic nature. He had a burning desire to bring all the warring houses under one umbrella, a feat he was

able to achieve within a year of his enstoolment. His father, who was also the stool father of Anyaakode, gave him the Nyansapow stool as his ceremonial stool. This is a symbol reminding one to solve problems with wit rather than with war. He also adopted his grandfather's “ζμβρε dane” slogan as his symbol of office and ultimately the symbol of Apirede.

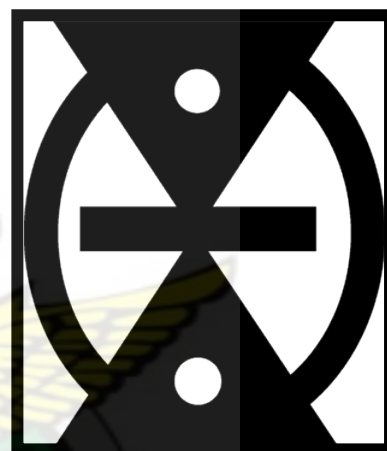
The reason for combining of these two symbols (ember dane ... and the Nyansapow) is that he believed that the people of Apirede cannot be left behind in the ever growing world of technology. As the times are changing, one has to be part of the changes around. He was of the view that to be able to steer a town caught up in a protracted chieftaincy dispute, he had to be very wise, thus the Nyansapow symbol in his personal stool. In the state symbol of Apirede, (fig 4.2), the “embre dane” symbol is seen rising from a group of mountains. At its background is the rising sun. According to Nana Saforo Okoampah III, development in terms of the current technologies should be a part of the people of Apirede.

The ceremonial stool of Saforo Okoampa III, as depicted in plate 4.15, is a relatively new stool. Although it was given to him by his father, it has been kept well. It has a smooth golden brown colour. The symbol in the stool is an idealized form of “Nyansapow”. The symbol has been elongated into a vertical rectangular shape. Part of the edges have been extended upwards and downwards to form what looks like four pillars supporting the top of the stool at the side, perhaps to be in line with the traditional four pillar stools. In this stool however, the middle part of the pillar has been taken off leaving just a stump. This creates an impression of a reduction in weight.

Each of the stumps has three triangles protruding from it. The elongation of the Nyansapow makes the stool look taller than it actually is. The symbolism of the stool as has been discussed earlier is simply the need to be witty in the solving of problems in order not to worsen the problem. The general view is that in such volatile community, leaders should be very wise in their dealings to ensure lasting peace and harmony in the society.



a.



b.

Plate 4.15. a. Ceremonial Nyansapow stool of Saforo Okaampa III.
b.“embre dane a.... ” his symbol of office

v) Barima Gyeke stool (Tufuhene stool)

The Barima Gyeke stool is among the young stools in Apirede. It has not yet attained a black stool status since its first occupant is alive, however, the position of Tufuhene which this stool holds is a very important one. Traditionally, he is in charge of the warriors as such, seeks to protect the society from both internal and external aggression. He is also in charge of policing and ensuring the enforcement of the traditional laws.

He is also in charge of state prosecution and overseeing to peace and harmony in the society. It is therefore no wonder that he is the “Mponuahene” (chief of the borders) of Okre whose duty is to protect the entire Okre stoolands from encroachment.

The Barima Gyeke I stool which is over fifty years old was taken from the stool collection of his grandfather, who is from the royal Abonde and Anyaakode houses of Apirede. The stool has a brilliant golden brown colour. Although it is said to be about half a century old, it has been well kept and has not suffered much wear and tear as a result of extensive use.

The stool (plate 4.16), is devoid of elaborate designs. It is a derivative of the “Asantehenegua”. However, in this stool, the central pillar has been taken off leaving the centre with a circular shape. The circular shaped design has been placed vertically with six triangles attached to each edge of the circle. The triangles are repeated in low reliefs at the side of the circle. The base is in a three-tier pyramidal form.

Barima Gyeke I explain the symbolism of the stool as using the authority given to him (the circle) to ensure that none of the members in the society (the attached triangles) go astray. In his opinion, the law of the land as divinely inspired, obeying amounts to being godly. Another reason for the use of the triangle, which represent the males in the society, might be that since men are the head of the family, they can easily bring their wives and children to be law abiding if they do so first.



Plate 4.16 The ceremonial stool of Barima Gyeke I (Tufuhene of Apirede)



Plate 4.17 Barima Gyeke I (Tufuhene of Apirede and Mponuahene of Okre) riding in a palanquin at a durbar of chiefs

vi) The Queenmothers' stool

Although the patrilineal system of inheritance practised by the Guan and for that matter the Okre make the men powerful in the role of political administration:

the queenmother has a very important role to play. Aside her political duties, she oversees to the development of women in the society, she is also consulted for counsel by the chief and his elders in matters of importance. Like their Akan counterparts, she occupies a very important and influential position in the society. As part of her duties, she has the prerogative of nominating someone from the royal line to occupy a vacant stool. She can also cause the destoolment of a chief if his activities and behaviour run contrary to the conduct expected of occupants of stools (www.ghanadistrict.com/district.22/04/2008).

The role of the Guan queenmothers as discussed in the quotation is unfortunately not seen in the Okre towns. Their role as part of the king making council is most of the time taken over by the stool father. Unlike in the case of the chiefs, very little records exist for the past queenmothers of Apirede. Most of their stools therefore cannot be traced especially in the era of protracted chieftaincy disputes. It is worth mentioning here that unlike the chiefs who seldom sit on their ceremonial stools (usually use chairs instead), the queenmothers hardly use chairs. This discussion will consider the stools of the past three queenmothers of Apirede.

i) Ohemea Botwe stool - Apirede

The first ever known queenmother of Apirede was Nana Akua Botwe I (Ohemea Botwe) who was the queenmother to Nana Saforo Okoampa I. Just like the chief she served under, she is credited with a lot of dynamism in the activities of the women of Apirede especially in the area of the production of beads and palm oil. She was of the

view that women have a role to play in the general development of the town and its people. Although she had no formal education, she encouraged the education of young girls. (One of the beneficiaries of this idea was the grandmother of the researcher). Her ceremonial stool is a simple “Ohemmaagua” (plate 4.19) perhaps chosen to reflect her position as the queen mother.

This stool which is almost 100 years old had been well kept although it showed visible signs of aging. It had lost a small portion of its base as well as part of the design in the middle portion. A part of the middle portion has been mended with a metal sheet probably to check a crack from further developing. According to Awo Abena Ayebea, a granddaughter of Ohemea Botwe, the white colour of the stool, which is getting dull with time, was given to it about twenty years ago after they realized that it was being infested with pests. The Ohemea Botwe stool is a symbol of feminine development resulting in the total development of the citizenry of Apirede and beyond.



Plate 4.18 The ceremonial stool of Nana Akua Botwe I of Apirede.

ii) Otopea stool: 1968-1990

The Otopea stool is a ceremonial stool which belonged to Nana Akua Otopea I. She was the queenmother during the reign of Oboni Ayim Nyarko III. Although she ascended her stool in the heat of a protracted chieftaincy dispute, most of the elders of Apirede notably Opanyin Yaw Kono, Opanyin Kwame Gyekete and Opanyin Kwaku Amoako recalled that she was a mother to all the people of Apirede irrespective of one's clan affiliation. She used her position to urge women to back out of the dispute and to encourage their husbands to find an amicable settlement. She was seen as the “eye of the hurricane” during those turmoil years in Apirede.

The ceremonial stool of Nana Otopea stool (plate 4.20) is another version of the “mmaagua”, a message to the people of Apirede that she would be a mother to everyone. Although it is close to forty years old, it is relatively new and bears signs of having been kept well. It has a milky golden brown colour. The smoothness of the pillar contrast sharply with the overworked support in the middle. The elongation of the pillars coupled with the play of smooth and rough textures gives the stool a serene aura, that can be likened to a good mother. The Otopea stool can be seen as a stool of motherliness and reconciliation. Perhaps its candid effort was what started the journey to peace sometime after her reign.

i) Ama Odi Stool

The ceremonial stool of Nana Ama Odi II, seen in plate 4.20, is the youngest of all the stools belonging to the chain of queenmothers of Apirede. Unlike all the other stools which were carved from a single block of wood, this stool is different because it was

made from different pieces of wood joined together. There is also the concept of using multi-colour, an idea not common in the indigenous stools. The stool which is a vertical version of the “ohemmaagua” has pillars which are less bulky than the carved stools. With the exception of the triangles attached lengthwise to the outer pillars, there are no designs on the stool. However, since different coloured wood were used, there are streaks of dark brown in the middle of every pillar. The elongation and slenderness of the pillars give the stool a feminine look.

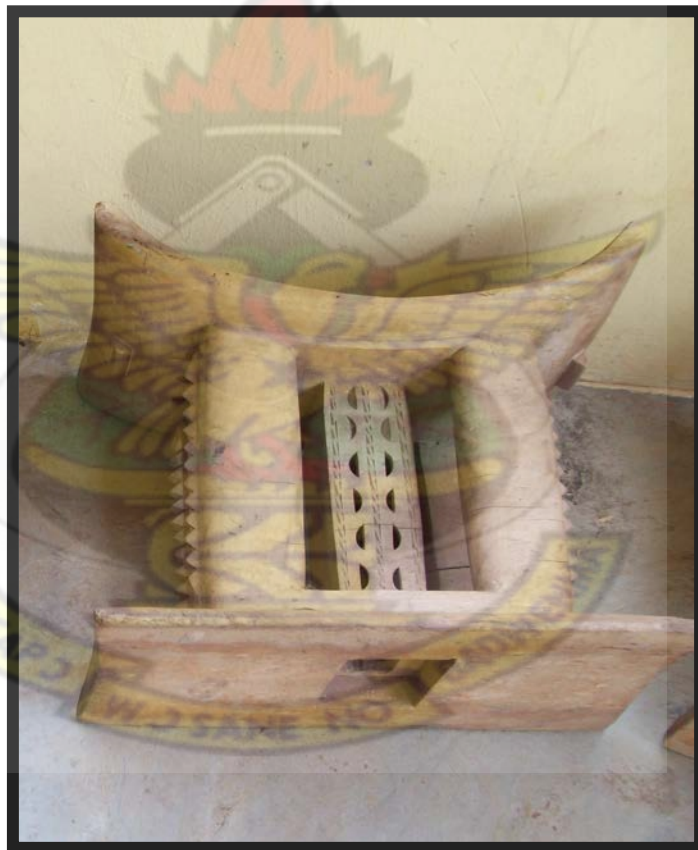


Plate 4.19 The ceremonial stool of Nana Akua Otopea I of Apirede.



Plate 4.20 Ceremonial stool of Nana Ama Odi II, present queemother of Apirede.
(inset) Nana Ama Odi II, sitting in state on her stool.

The stool aptly reflects the mindset of Nana Odi as a queen mother. In a conversation, she indicated that she believes in women empowerment in all spheres of life in order to augment the effort of the men in nation building. She also believes in development through collective effort. She related the different pieces and colour of wood in her stool to the differences in gender (men and women) seen in the society. She was, however, of the view that these differences come together to form a “meaningful whole” to develop the society. The Ama Odi stool is perhaps a sign of modernity in the chieftaincy institution.

4.8 Adukrom –Akuapem. (The capital of Okre)

ΑΣΕΙΝΣΟ ΚΞΤΞΚΞ, ΞΚΠΖΤΖ ΩΟΡΟ ΚΠΖ. ΑΜΟΖ ΚΠΟΤΖ, ΑΜΟΖΚΠΖ ΩΟΖΝΑ

The porcupines of Asienso, they, who separate the fight by pulling at the enemy's feet.

This slogan attributed to the people of Adukrom shows the level of brotherliness among them. They believe that they should not sit aloof as their brothers are defeated by their enemies. Therefore they should make all effort to ensure that their brothers defeat their enemies. They employ the cunning way of pretending to separate the fight while holding the legs of the enemy for their brother to have an upper hand in the fight. “Αμο κποτζ, Αμο κπζ ωοζνα, which means they pull your leg while separating the fight talks about how they will help their brother to defeat his enemy without openly getting involved with the fight. This is seen as a stance of nationalism.

4.8.1 Origin

Adukrom, (Adu's town) which is now the head of the Okre ethnic group is one of the two young towns of the Okre. Oral tradition as told by Opanyin Essiful, the son of the late Otutu Ababio IV, has it that it was a settlement created by a hunter who doubles as a herbalist by name Adu. Due to this he was nicknamed “Adu a ξμα nnuru” or “Adumnnuru”, “Adu who gives medicine”. In his hunting expedition which was mostly between Apirede and Okreso (Awukugua), he was given a place to settle right at the boundary of Apirede and Awukugua. The place became known as “Ζsζνκζσο”, literary meaning “peoples boundary”. “Ζsζ” in kyerepong means “people” while

“ακζσο” (singl.) νκζσο (πλυραλ) means “boundary”. The word “σζκζ” which means to hang on something is also believed to be the right term.

Thus, the new settlement which “hangs” on the shoulders (boundaries) of Apirede and Awukugua became known as “εσζκζσο” with the passage of time, the name of the place became dialectically corrupted to “Asienso”. Here, Opanyin Adu and his people put up a small village where he could dress his game and sell them to interested customers. With time, people came to the village to either buy meat or for the treatment of their sicknesses. The place came to be known as Adu-krom (Adu’s town), a name which has remained to the present day.

Another version, narrated by Nana Asare Brempong, chief of Awukugua, has it that first the Okre people moved from Nyanawase, a place near the present day Nsawam to settle on the hills. Their capital town by then was Abotakyi, a town near the present day Akuapem Mampong. (Unfortunately, Abotakyi is now in ruins due to a purported insignificant feud between two main families that formed the town. Its place has now been taken by Amonokrom and Mampong). Owing to the numerous quests for supremacy by neighbouring ethnic groups especially the Akwamu, the Okre people saw it advisable to live in clustered communities rather than in sparsely placed settlements. After some time as the population increased, there was the need for expansion so a group moved in from Okreso (Awukugua) to settle around where Opanyin Adu has already built his village. The new settlement was known as “Adu-krom”, after the first man who settled there.

4.8.2 Political system

Adukrom has been divided politically/administratively into 14 main clans or suburbs namely Ako Awi, Animade, Adu Awi, Agyekede, Aninkode, Abonde, Asewede, Abondi, Akwaside, Adwede, Akramade, Akukude, Asenkade and Amuakwade. All the clans have a semi-autonomous status with each of them having a chief and his retinue. They however pay homage and are accountable to the Adukromhene. Each of the suburbs (“Bron”) has a deity which is believed to oversee to the wellbeing of the people within that “Bron”. The people of Adukrom were governed by the various heads of the suburbs who doubled as priests to the deities. The Otutu deity (plate 4.23) was the head deity of the town as such its priests were made the chiefs of the town and even to this day, the chief owes a lot of allegiance to the Otutu deity. The Otutu priest is still the spiritual head of the town.

4.8.3 The state symbol of Adukrom

Unlike that of Apirede, the full list of priest chiefs of Adukrom is not very much known. However, after the chieftaincy system had been introduced by the Akyim after 1733, Nana Otutu Kono I becoming the first chief of Adukrom. It was not until around 1869 during the reign of Nana Otutu Opare Ababio I who was also known as “Aketewa Mpanyinsem” (the young one who has the abilities of an elder) that Adukrom shot to prominence. This was due to the bravery he exhibited to rescue Okuapehene Kwadade I.



Plate 4.21 The Shrine of “Otutu”. The “korow” pot and stone serve as receptacle for the Otutu deity.



Plate 4.22 Courtyard of Adukrom palace with part of the Otutu stone in the foreground

During the “Awunasa” (Awuna war in 1860) the Akuapem people suffered the most humiliating defeat ever recorded in their history. The greatest oath of Akuapem “*meke wukuda ka Sokodee*” (I swear by a Wednesday at Sokodee) (Sokodee is an Awuna town where the Okuapenehene was captured) is symbolic of this war. As part of his reward, he was given the following items:

- Adžnnua: the bell stool with four bells
- Ntakrakyew: feathered cap
- Double fontomfrom (A set of two big drums)
- A palanquin and the bones of the lower legs and jaw of the captured Awuna chief attached to the asafo drums (“apagyakwane”) of Adukrom.

A state symbol for Adukrom which was designed by the researcher in consultation with the chiefs and elders of the town depicts the bravery of the chief. It shows a man standing on thorns to take the cub of a leopard from its back. This invariably became the symbol of the Otutu stool which is the main stool of the ruling house of Adukrom. Originally the symbol of the Otutu stool was the Leopard.



Fig. 4.10 The state symbol of Adukrom

Interpretation

The symbol carries the concept of bravery, intelligence and craftiness combined to help one achieve an impossible feat. It is not an easy task to take the cub of a leopard from its mother. Who ever will attempt that should be bold, strong and very crafty. Secondly, before some one can attempt and succeed that feat, he should be well fortified and protected. Looking at the symbol, the human being represents Otutu Opare Ababio I and perhaps the inhabitants of Adukrom. It sends a message that they are people who are prepared to attempt unimaginable course of action. This is evident in Nana Otutu Opare Ababio I snatching chief Kwadade I (the cub) from the ever vigilant eyes of chief Ocloo of Sokodee (the leopard).

The thorn on which the man is standing has a multi-facet meaning. In his quest to achieve an unachievable feat he stands on thorns, another difficult thing to do. Secondly, the thorn serves as a protection against the attack from the leopard. The man is therefore seen as not just being brave but also witty in his dealings. The message conveyed here is that to be able to achieve greatness, bravery must go hand in hand with intelligence.

4.8.4 Past Chiefs of Adukrom

Available records of the chiefs of Adukrom start from the reign of Otutu Kono I in 1733. They are selected from the three Otutu royal homes in the Aninkode clan. In view of this, all the chiefs associate themselves with the Otutu sacred stool. They relate themselves with the Asona clan. One advantage of the selection of chiefs of Adukrom from the same clan is that unlike some other Okre towns, (especially Apirede), there

have been very few cases of chieftaincy disputes. Below is a list of chiefs of Adukrom dating from 1733.

Otutu Kono I	1733
Anim Ampaana	
Apagya Kofi	
Otutu Yaw Ababio I – Nana Kwadade	
Otutu Ababio II - (Kwame Donkor) (Ababio Koko)	
Otutu Opare Ababio I – Aketewa Mpenyinsem.	Circa 1865 - 1900
Otutu Ababio III – Kofi Larbi	1901 - 1933
Otutu Kono II - Kwame Korang	1933 – 1945
Opare Ababio II – Robert Mintah	1943 – 1945
Otutu Ababio IV – Kwabena Kono	1945 - 1998
Otutu Kono III	1999 to date

Source: Handbook of Adukrom Odwira 1990.

For this discussion, four ancestral and ceremonial stools (Nsamangua) and a deity stool (Abosomgua) will be considered. These are the Otutu, Adummannru and Adongua. There will also be the ritual stools of the priest of the Otutu Shrine as well as that of the queenmother. The discussion will also take into consideration the relics associated with the “Adongua”.

4.8.5 Stools of Adukrom

i) The ritual stools at the Otutu shrine

As mentioned earlier, the priest of the Otutu deity is in charge of performing various rituals connected with the Otutu stool. The Otutu deity is believed to be very fierce and powerful. It was traditionally the foremost war deity of Adukrom known to use stones to attack its enemies. The people of Adukrom believe that its strength, usually in the charms and medicinal herbs used in concoctions, has the power to protect against gunshot and arrows in war. The Otutu deity is attached to the main Adukrom stools. Its receptacle, (plate 4.22), consists of a large pot and a stone containing sacred relics. A piece of the stone (plate 4.23) could also be seen in the inner court of the Adukrom Palace.

The Otutu deity is attributed to the appellation “Otutu a ogu korow” (Otutu who annihilates towns). It is believed to have the power to override its enemies, a feat exhibited in the rescue of Kwadade I, the Okuapehene who was captured by the Awuna. Its symbol is the leopard. The relationship between the people of Adukrom and the Otutu shrine is not just a simple deity and subjects, but rather, a reflection of a close traditional and spiritual relationship between a leadership position (chieftaincy) and its spiritual guardian.

In the shrine house, two main stools can be found. One is used by the chief while the other is used by the priest during the performance of rituals in the shrine house. These stools (plate 4.24) are fashioned in the manner of the mmagua design. It has four supporting pillars with one central cylindrical pillar having perforations on it. The stool

belonging to the chief is much bigger. According to Osofo Ayeh, the stools are over 60 years old. The one for the chief has lost part of one of its supporting pillars. There are cracks and splits on the remaining pillars as well as the seat. Although this creates a feeling of instability, it is an evidence of age and extensive use.

The stool for the priest is smaller than that of the chief. Part of the supporting pillar has been braced with a metal sheet perhaps to prevent it breaking off entirely as seen in the case of the chief' stool. Both stools look very frail and should have been discarded. Their continuous use is an indication of the importance of a work of art as long as it is functional. These stools, have replaced the ritual stone seat which were hitherto used by the “adedifo” to perform their ritual.



(a)



(b)

Plate 4.23 Rituals stools of the Otutu shrine, Adukrom. (a) is for the chief while (b) is for the priest of Otutu.



Plate 4.24 The chief of Adukrom Osuodumgya Otutu Kono III (seated middle) with the priest of Otutu (in white cloth) sitting on their ritual stools during the “edwe egyi” ritual to mark the eating of new yam by the Otutu deity.

The Otutu shrine has also got a number of sacred stones (plate 4.26) on which the various Adedifo from the fourteen clans of Adukrom sat to perform rituals. These were sizable boulders of granite with flat tops. It has no designs on them and shows no sign of having been worked on in terms of enhancing its aesthetics. The stones have been placed around the walls of the shrine.



Plate 4.25 Ritual stones at the Otutu shrine used by the “Adedifo”.

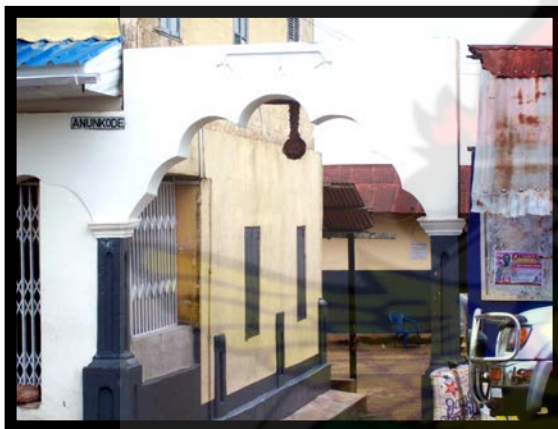


Plate 4.26 The charm (Βαγκζζμι) hanging from the arch at the entrance to the Palace of Adukrom.

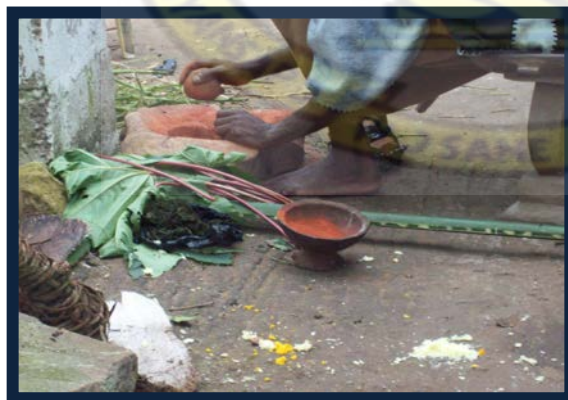


Plate 4.27 Rituals for that fortification of the Βαγκζζμι” charms.

The “Βανκζζμι” charm

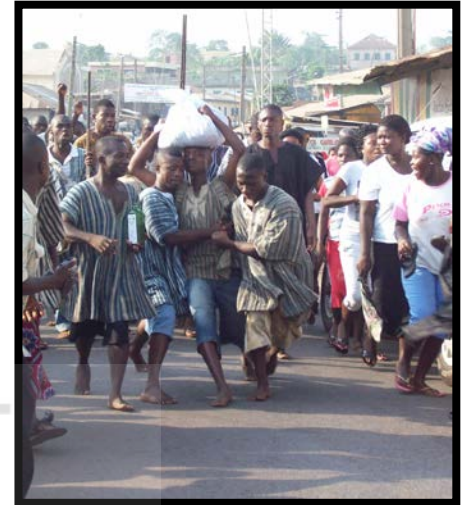
Almost every state stool in Okre has either a protective deity, a charm (a protective object) or both. One such object connected with the stools of the Otutu shrine is the “Βανκζζμι” charm. This object is seen as the protector of the Otutu stool and its occupants. It is made from raffia fibre and hunged on a bundle of mangrove reed on the arch in front of the Palace at Adukrom, (Plate.4.26). Once every year the “Βανκζζμι” charm is taken down from the arch and fortified in a special ritual (plate 4.27), during which some leaves mashed together with some red stone are smeared all over the object. This ritual is done within the Otutu shrine. The “Βανκζζμι” is hunged back at midnight.

The “gyabum”

The “gyabum”, (plate 4:28a) is another protecting object connected with the Otutu shrine and stool. This object is said to have the power to ward off as well as protect the people of Adukrom from evil. In the ancient days, according to the Abontendomhene of Adukrom who is also the custodian of the “gyabum”, the object, usually wrapped in white cloth, was carried together with the Otutu deity and the “Apagyagwane” (war drums) to the battle field. This was believed to give them victory over their enemies. The one who carries the “gyabum” usually becomes possessed by the object and has to be assisted and guarded by a group of heavily armed warriors (plate 4.28b). In recent times, it is carried to parade the streets of Adukrom on special occasions such as Odwira or the funeral of a chief.



a



b

Plate 4.28 The “gyabum” object of Adukrom wrapped in a white cloth. (b) a possessed carrier of the “object” being assisted by two of the warriors.

ii) The Otutu stool

The Otutu stool is the ultimate sacred stool of Adukrom. Although other chiefs may have their stools blackened, they all inherit the utmost Otutu stool. This is evident in the name of almost all the chiefs having the prefix “Otutu”. The stool belonged to the deity long before the institution of the Akan chieftaincy system of leadership. Owing to its sacred nature, it is replaced at very important functions by the Adongua, the reward given to the chief and people of Adukrom for their valour during the Awuna war.

The stool (fig 4.10) which is said to have been given by the Otutu deity has a single central pillar as its design. It is believed to embody the soul of the entire Adukrom town as such it is closely guarded by the Otutu deity because any harm that befalls the stool will be seen as harm to the whole town. It is revered above every stool in Adukrom. Currently, its occupant is the Okrehene, who is also the chief of Adukrom.

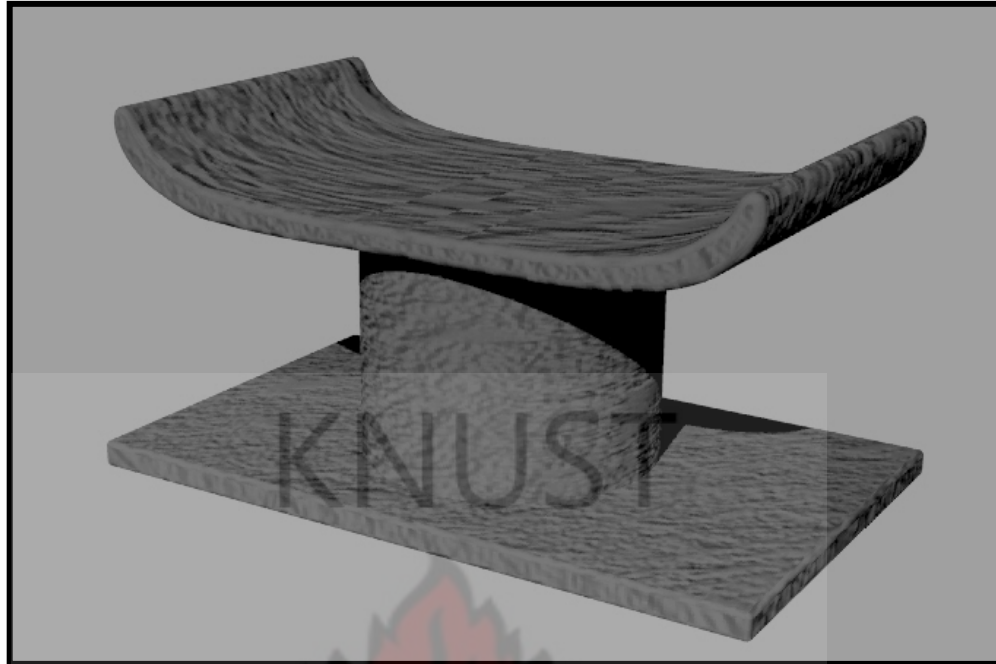


Fig. 4.11 A reconstruction of the Otutu stool of Adukrom



Plate 4.29 The ritual stools used by the king makers of Adukrom

The Otutu stool comes with an array of sacred stools and objects some, which have already been discussed, include Bankeemi, “gyabum” the “Adongua” and “Apagyagwane” (plate 4.35.). There are also the aged stools used by the kingmakers in a special ritual connected with the selection and installation of a new chief. The stools, (plate 4.29), which are over 100 years old look very frail and worn out, some are even broken in certain places as a result of extensive use. Although they are not kept in the

stool room, they are kept in a special quarters at the palace together with the war drums and other sacred items. These set of stools are rated next to the black stool.

Their importance is seen in the fact that although they are very old and broken in some places, the custodians are reluctant to replace them. The replacement, according to the Nkonguahene of Adukrom, demands lot of rituals to elevate the new stools to the level of the old ones. Thus, although very old they still serve their intended purposes.

iii) The “Adongua” (bell stool)

The “Adongua” of Adukrom, depicted in plates 4.30 and 4.31, is the only one within the whole Okre ethnic group. The circumstances surrounding its making and use has already been mentioned in the opening paragraph of this discussion, however, it should be emphasised here that it is a stool of valour. The stool made from wood is organised in a set of four comprising one “mmarimagua” (men stool) and three mmaagua. Usually there are the two central stools and the two side stools. They are arranged by placing the mmarimagua in front, the gorgeously carved mmaagua is then placed directly behind it followed by the two mmaagua at each side (plate 4.31 and fig.4.11). The “mmarimagua” is always surrounded by the “mmaagua”. Only the two central ones have bells attached to them. The stools at the sides have no bells.

The “mmarimagua”

The stool has four supporting pillars and a cylindrical central support. The central support has some delicately carved basket-work perforations all around it. On each of the four supporting pillar, there are a number of semi-circular protrusions. At the base of the stool is the inscription “OTUTU KONO ABABIO”. The stool which is about 130

years old looks very new because it is polished every year and also it is not subjected to excessive use as most ceremonial stools. Two brass bells hung from the seating top to the base. The brass bells and the colour of the stool give it a metallic appearance.

The “mmaagua”

The “mmaagua” (plate 4.31) have a lot in common with the “mmarimagua” in the set of stools constituting the Adongua. The difference is in the middle portion. Here, the cylindrical pillar in the middle has a number of small rectangular holes arranged horizontally in a half-drop manner. There is also a plain portion on the supporting pillars as well as cylindrical pillar in the middle. These plain surfaces which are aligned contrast sharply with the well worked surface of the middle pillar. The other two “mmaagua” which are usually placed at the sides are less elaborate in presentation. Like all other Adongua, whether the chief is sitting on it or it is being carried to the durbar grounds, the bells are rung to remind people of its presence during gatherings.

The Adongua usually appears in public in a set of four as the ceremonial stool of every chief of Adukrom on very important occasions such as the “Odwira”, “Ohum” and “adaebutu”. On such occasions the central stool is paraded through the principal streets of Adukrom. The carrier of the stool usually, like the “gyabum” becomes possessed and has to be assisted by a group of armed warriors. Where the chief has to sit on a chair on such important occasions, the “mmarimagua” is placed either underneath the chair or just behind as seen in plate 4.34. In times past, according to Opanyin Kwabena Mante, unlike the other stools which were usually placed on sheep skin, the Adongua was placed on the skin of a leopard (the animal associated with the Otutu deity) to actually prove its status as a stool of valour.

The “Adongua” is a reminder and a motivation to the people of Adukrom on the laurels their forefathers achieved as a result of their bravery as such, the present generation can also achieve great feats if they are brave enough. The stool also gives a message on the role Adukrom played during the Awuna war to avert a disaster and humiliation that would have befallen the Akuapem state.



Plate 4.30 The two central stools of the Adongua, (bell stool) of Adukrom



Plate 4.31 The arrangement of the full set of the Adongua of Adukrom

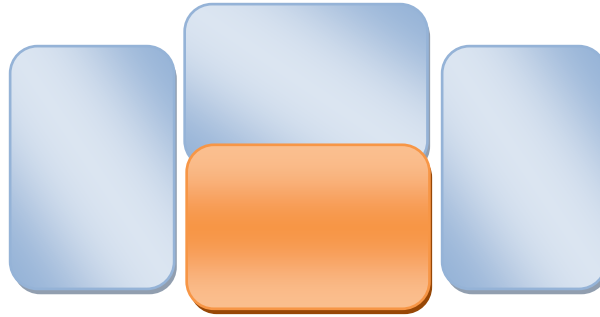


Fig. 4.12 Plan of the arrangement of the set of Adongua. The orange represents the Mmarimagua while the blue represents the mmaagua.



Plate 4.32 The chief of Adukrom Nenyé Otutu Kono III sitting in state on the Adongua during the “Adaebutuu” ceremony.



Plate 4.33 A ceremonial chair to be used by Nenyé Otutu Kono III during an Odwira festival at Adukrom. The Adongua can be seen directly behind it.



Plate 4.34 The Adongwa being carried through the streets of Adukrom.



a



b

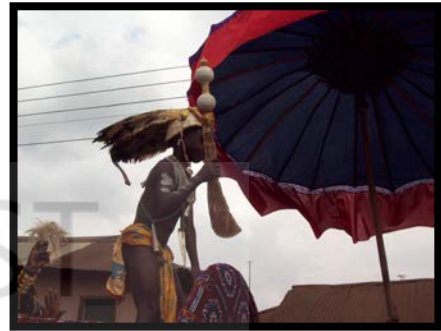


c

Plate 4.35 The “Apagya” war drum. The leg and jaw bones attached to it is said to be that of chief Ocloo captured in the Awuna war. (b) the set of the “apagyakwane” (war drums) of Adukrom. (c)The set of fontomfrom of Adukrom.



a



b



c

Plate 4.36 a and b, the soul (okra) of the chief of Adukrom wearing the “ntakrakyew” (feather cap) and holding the “Akrafena. (c) the chief of Adukrom riding in a palanquin with his okra (soul)

ii) The queen mother's stool

Adukrom, just like the case of Apirede, has very little records of the past queenmothers. Much is not said about them like the way it is done to the chiefs. However, unlike Apirede, they play a vital role in the process of choosing who should be the chief as well as which chief should be destooled if he does not live up to expectation. Within the past 100 years (1909 to present), Adukrom has seen three queenmothers. The ceremonial stool of the queenmother who reigned from 1909 to 1950 could not be traced by the researcher. The ceremonial stool of the present queenmother of Adukrom, Awo Adwowa Gyeko III was used by her predecessor, Awo Yaa Asantewaa I. She was the queenmother of Adukrom from 1950 to 1970.

The stool, given to Awo Yaa Asantewaa I by her mother was handed over to the present queenmother of Adukrom when she was enstooled. The stool (plate 4.37) is about 60 years old. It is relatively new and does not show visible sign of extensive use. It is a modified version of the “ahemmaagua”. The central design is an opened book placed on a stool. The book according to the present occupant represents the Bible.

Awo Gyeko recounted that her predecessor Awo Asantewaa I and her mother were ardent Christian at the time of her enstoolment. Her mother decided to remind her to let her Christian virtues guide her activities as a women's leader. Her Christian beliefs and virtue were represented in the stool by the open Bible (plate 4.37). This was the time when the chieftaincy institution was regarded by many as a heathen institution. Awo Asantewaa I, as well as the present custodian of the stool, were of the view that one can confidently merge chieftaincy and Christianity. It also carries the message that the best

way to have a successful rule is to believe and to walk in the ways of God. In other words, in modern times, the virtues and Godliness that were upheld by our grandfathers (who were not Christians) in their daily activities should still be seen in our dealings in everything that we do.



Plate 4.37 The Ceremonial stool of Awo Adwoa Gyeko III, queenmother of Adukrom.



Plate 4.38 Awo Gyeko III. The queenmother of Adukrom sitting in state during a durbar of Okre Chiefs.

iii Adummannuru stool

The Adummannuru stool is the oldest stool in Adukrom. It belonged to the founder of the town who was a hunter and a herbalist. According to the present “Adummannuru”, the stool, (fig. 4.12), was not carved but rather descended from the skies. This claim has not been authenticated by any other quarters as such, it remains the opinion of the people from Adu-Awi (Adu’s house) believed to be the direct descendants of the founder of Adukrom. Usually the head of Adu-awi (Adu’s house) becomes the existing “Adummanuru” who is regarded as the founder of the town.

His deity, “Dideku” is also the first to eat the new yam at Adukrom before any other deity does. The Adummanuru has a white and a black stool both of the same design. The black was fashioned after the design of the white stool. While the white stool is kept at the shrine house of the “Dideku” deity, the black stool is kept in the palace of Adummanuru.

The ceremonial Adummannuru stool (plate 4.39), is a simple mmaagua with no elaborate design. Being over 60 years it has acquired a dull brown patina. It also has cracks in both the supporting and the central pillar. According to the description given by the present Adummanuru, the original stool is a normal size with just a single central cylindrical support (fig. 4:12). It has the same design as the Otutu stool. The reason for the similarity could not be explained however, it is believed that the Otutu stool was an adaptation of the Adummanuru design. Unfortunately, the presence of the “Adongua” and other politically vibrant stools in Adukrom has completely relegated the Adummanuru stool to the background.



a



b

Plate 4.39 a) The ceremonial stool of Adummanuru. b) The present Adummanuru sitting on his ceremonial stool in his palace.

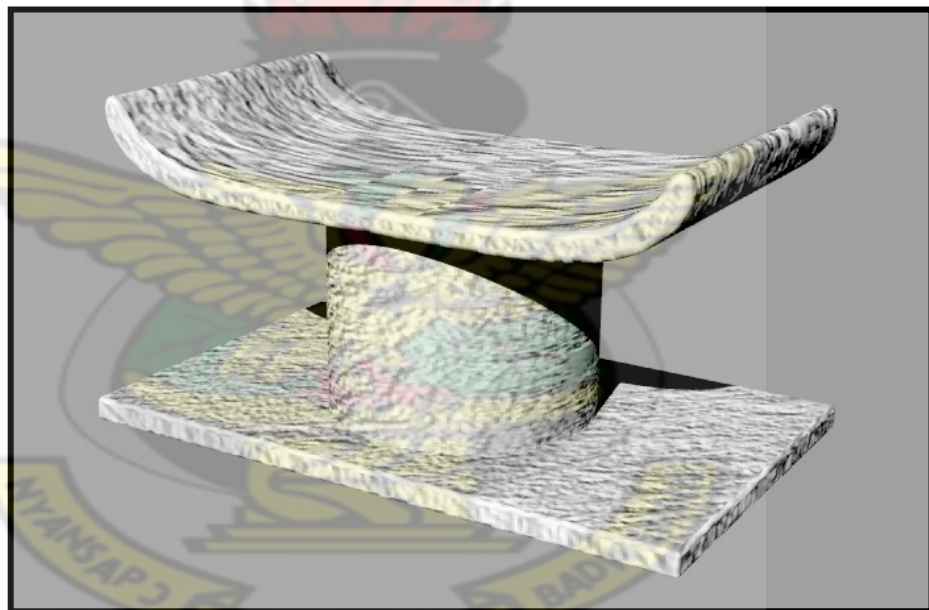


Figure 4.13 A reconstruction of the Adummanuru stool

iv) ““Akonkromfi”” of Adukrom chief

The chief of Adukrom has a number of chairs which he uses during special occasions. The most remarkable of these ceremonial chairs is his “Akonkromfi”. Like any other ““Akonkromfi”” it has an imposing elegance. This chair although a little bit old still

maintains its strength and beauty. Over the years, it has acquired a dark green and brown patina. The most interesting part of the chair is the design on the back rest which is an idealised version of the “funtunfunanfu Denkyɛmfunanfu” symbol. In the middle of the symbol (where their stomachs meet) is a brass disc embossed with the “sankofa” symbol. The dull colour of the brass disc harmonises with the background on which it has been placed. Nana Otutu Kono III, the present chief of Adukrom explained the motive behind the choice of such a combination that:

Although we might not agree in totality with all the decisions taken by our fathers concerning important issues of Adukrom and Okre as a whole, [*perhaps an example may be the Abotakyi accord*] partly because they found themselves in a different era, I feel that we are all fighting for a common goal [*the satisfaction of the Siamese crocodile*]. In order to achieve this goal we need to revisit (*Sankofa*) their dreams and aspirations to pick out the appropriate ones which are applicable to the quest to make Okre a perfect state. In short, the past is not outmoded from the present, it rather has the ingredients required to build a firm present that will be a strong foundation on which the future of a developed Okre state will be built.



Plate 4.40 The “Akonkromfi” of the chief of Adukrom. Inset: details of the backrest.

4.9 Abiriw

Αβiriw Kωαβο Ξσζκψερε ξνομ Αδακασυ κρονκρον
Ξσζκψερε βρυκυ
Οκοκυροκο α αμανσαν νιμ νο
Οκοκυροκο α αμανσαν συρο νο
Οκοκυροκο α ξετε ανανκαδυρο
Οκοκυροκο α αμανσαν καε νο
Εσζν κζσε α ογψε αηξηο

The above slogan is literary translated as:

Abiriw from Osζkyere who fight with stones
The one who drinks pure clean water from
A Henderson box
Osekyere the first
The mighty one whom many states know
The mighty one whom many states fear
The mighty one who picks herbs for the
bite of the puff adder
The mighty one whom many states remember
The great pot which welcome strangers

The slogan of Abiriw recounts that inspite of their might and fame; they are very generous and show a lot of warmth and affection to strangers. Abiriw is believed to be (together with Apirede) the oldest of all the Okre towns. Opanyin Yaw Larbi, an elder at the Abiriw palace claimed that the same people who founded Abiriw, settled and founded a town called Σζκψερε ιν τηε πρεσεντ δαψ Ασηαντι ρεγιον, hence the appellation “Osζkyere Bruku” (Osζkyere the first).

This claim is debatable considering the fact that it might possibly have taken place at an earlier time long before the Asante came to occupy their present place. However, some elders of Abiriw try to link the relationship between the two towns by the fact that similar names can be found in both towns. It could also be that on the journey to the

south, they might have stayed at a settlement called Osɔkyere. Unfortunately the actual location of the town in question has been lost in history.

According to Akuapem Watch (September 2008:3), the first point of settlement on the Akuapem hills was Ademirekusu, a place near Obosomase. The initial settlements were just isolated villages. After some time for security reasons the people decided to come together to form one town. The name of the present town is a corrupted form of the kyerepong phrase “ζνε ζνι δζμ αβιριωα” (let us come together or let us live in a cluster). It later became known as “Abiriwa” and subsequently as “Abiriw”. The town is made up of seven clans as follows: Alabri (which is the royal family), Konkoso, Bale (Ogyamawi), Adweriemau Bosomtwe, Adweriemau Kprokpro, Atemantere and Akesere.

Gilbert (1997), mentioned the Alabri as the indigenous Okre who were the first to settled at the present day Abiriw. Later, others including some Akan migrants came to join them. The people of Akesere clan from where the Akwamuhene of Abiriw is elected are descendants of the remnants of the Akwamu warriors who stayed behind after the Nsakyee war of 1730. The head of that group was called “Akese” therefore the area where they stayed became known in kyerepong as “Akese le” (Akese’s property). Over the years it has become corrupted dialectically to become “Akesere”.

It is believed that the people of Apirede and Abiriw were one group who splitted upon reaching the Akuapem hills. This is evident in their dialectic accent which is different from the other members of the Okre group as well as their generosity. Oral tradition

from some of the elders of Abiriw indicates that the group was led by Aku Nanka, who was the priest to the Bosomptra deity. This deity, seen as the most powerful of all the Okre deities celebrates the yam festival (Akpi edwe) before any Okre town is allowed to do so. Since the people of Abiriw and Apirede are contemporaries, during the celebration of “Akpi edwe” festival, Apirede was the only Okre town that was not required to pay homage to the Bosomptra deity.

Gilbert’s (1997) differing view on the relationship between Abiriw and Apirede is manifested in the argument that:

Abiriw and Apirede people are more similar in dialect, manners, physical appearance and custom than any of the other Okre towns. It is said that they were once one family of Alabri people. One brother offended the Bosomptra deity and as a result his lineage was exiled as such to this day, the priest of the Nyada deity of Apirede is not permitted to see the Abiriw town.

This claim has however been rebuffed by the people of Apirede as such one can consider only the physical appearance and the dialectic commonality as the basis for the relationship between Abiriw and Apirede.

4.9.1 The Bosomptra deity

The story of Abiriw will never be complete without touching on the Bosomptra Deity. According to Nana Henaku II, Abiriwhene, “He is Abiriw and Abiriw is Him” therefore, the symbol of Bosomptra which is a big pot that has been put on fire, has become the state symbol of the people of Abiriw. He is regarded as the mother to the people of Abiriw as well as strangers, thus, he is referred to as the “Ξσζν κζσε α ογψε αηζηο” (the big pot that welcomes strangers). The priests of

Bosomptra are chosen from the Alabri clan who are also the royal family of Abiriw. Just like the most of the Okre deity, the Bosomptra deity has a sacred white stool which all his priest inherits.

4.9.2 Stools of Abiriw

Records available from oral tradition as well as written records by Yeboa-Dankwa (1991), shows that from the time the people of Abiriw settled at their present place, there has been about thirty-three (33) chiefs. Out of this number, twenty one (21) were priest chiefs while twelve (12), starting from 1866 are black stool chiefs. It is surprising to notice that after the Abotakyi accord of 1733 that saw most of the Okre towns embracing the Akan system of chieftaincy, it took the people of Abiriw over 130 years for them to select Nana Kwadwo Bosomptra as the first chief.



Plate. 4.41 State symbol of Abiriw Akuapem.

i) The Bosomptra stool

The Bosomptra deity like most of the Okre deities has no image made for it but it has a stool which serves as a receptacle for him. It is regarded as the most sacred stool in Abiriw and until 1866 when Abiriw adopted the Akan system of chieftaincy that was what all the priest chiefs of the Abiriw inherited. Yeboa-Dankwa (1991), opined that even after the Akanisation of the leadership system the Bosomptra stool (fig 4.13) was regarded above every black stool. Much is not seen of the stool itself however, it has been described as a sizable white stool which like the Kyenku stool has no elaborate design in the middle. It has just a circular block as its central design. It abhors blood, as such, should the priest of Bosomptra go to war, his hands will be stained with blood and subsequently desecrate the deity.

Until 1866, when there was separation of powers which saw the installation of a chief who was not the priest of Bosomptra, the leaders of Abiriw did not go to war. The men of Abiriw, therefore, went to war as individuals but not as a group. This situation arose because the people of Abiriw, according to Nana Henaku II, realised that they were left out in the sharing of war booty because they did not participate actively in wars.

Although the Bosomptra stool can be described, in terms of design as a simple stool, its greatness transcends the domain of the elaborately designed stools. The symbolic white colour (which is kept by the occasional application of kaolin (hyirew) is a manifestation of its sacredness and sanctity. This can be deduced from the fact that the colour white represents purity, sacredness and sanctity. The circle at the central part of the stool can also be attributed to the presence of God. The stool, therefore, becomes truly the

“Ξσζν κζσε” big pot which does not only take care of the physical needs but also the spiritual needs of both the people of Abiriw and all who come to him.

Otutu Kwabena

Although he might not be associated directly with a black or personal stool, the name of Otutu Kwabena, who was a priest chief of Abiriw, is important not only to the people of Abiriw but to the entire Okre ethnic group. His ultimate sacrifice served as a bitter lesson to all Okre so much that it is believed to be the reason why there has never been a significant war between any of the Okre towns.

Accounts by Nana Kwame Henaku II and Agya Yaw Adu, a prominent elder of Abiriw confirmed by the records of Yeboa-Dankwa (1991), Otutu Kwabena then the Priest chief of Abiriw presided over a meeting with other priests of the deities of the Okre towns. For days running, there was confusion and misunderstanding among the priests. All indicators pointed to war among the towns. Otutu Kwabena the priest of the most powerful deity in Okre, decided to solve the matter his own way.

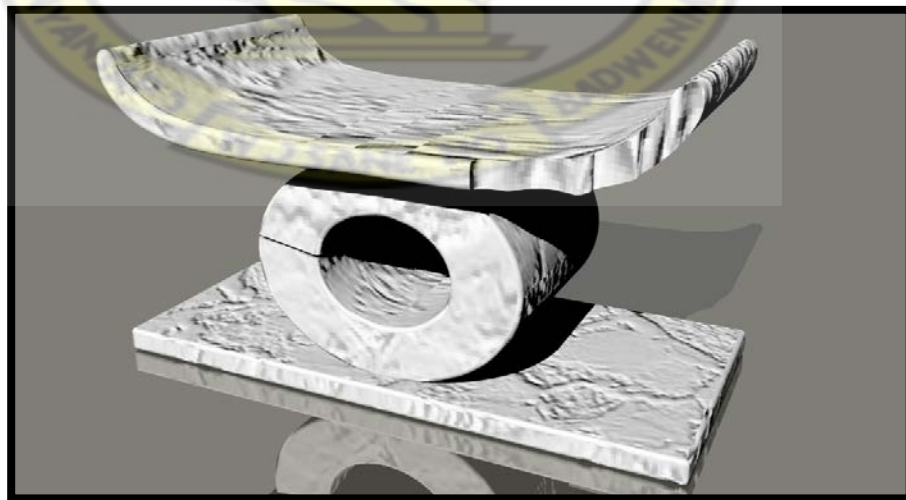


Figure 4.14 An artist impression of the Bosomptra stool

On the final day of sitting, he planted kegs of gunpowder around and under the hut where they met. The meeting ended without any settlement of the matter. Otutu Kwabena out of anger set the gunpowder on fire blowing up the hut and in the process killing himself and all the priests. This incident had remained the greatest oath of the people of Abiriw, especially the Alabri clan (the royal family) that “mekā behene ase” I swear by the great oath of the great palm tree. Otutu Kwabena’s action is regarded as an example of what a mother (Bosompɔ) can do to make sure that peace and unity prevails among his children.

ii) The Kwadwo Bosompɔ stool

Kwadwo Bosompɔ I was the first chief of Abiriw under the chieftaincy system of leadership as such the first chief of Abiriw to have had a black stool, (although it is said that the people of Akesere, who are the remnants of the Akwamu warriors had a black stool), he was enstooled as a chief of Abiriw in 1866 after the Awuna war. Nana Kwame Henaku II, the present chief of Abiriw and Opanyin Kwadwo Opare an elder of Abiriw stated in a private conversation that the need for a chief was prompted by two main factors. The first was that warriors from the other Akuapem towns ridiculed the people of Abiriw as weaklings and cowards who are scared to go to war. Secondly, because they did not take part in most of the wars, they were not given some of the spoils of war.

Perhaps the last straw was the sharing of the dismembered parts of Ocloo, the Awuna chief captured during the Awuna war among the Akuapem towns. Abiriw was not given any because they were not part of the war. Kwadwo Bosompɔ, the son of the

then priest chief of Abiriw was made the chief. His black stool is described as a simple stool having a diamond shape flanked by two pillars (Fig.4.14). He was described as a very aggressive person, a character that perhaps helped him redeem the image of Abiriw. The simplicity of his stool can be attributed to the fact that he still found himself owing allegiance to the Bosompra deity.

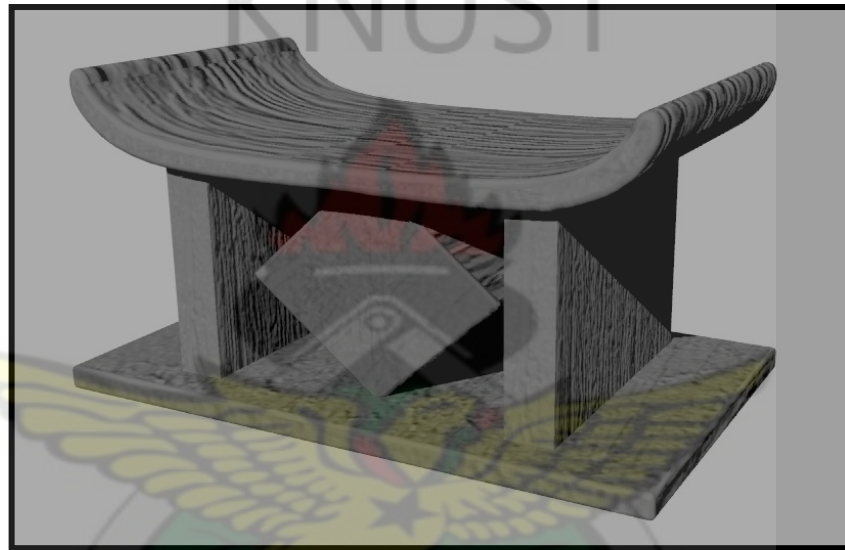


Fig. 4.15 An artist's impression of the Kwadwo Bosompra stool

iii) Kwame Henaku stool (the silver stool)

This silver stool occupied by Nana Kwame Henaku I who reigned as chief of Abiriw around 1911 is the most unique and revered second to the Bosompra stool. He became chief after a lengthy court action with a usurper called Kwasi Botwe. Kwasi Botwe had used the lands of the Abiriw stool as collateral for a loan he contracted. In 1911, the case was ruled in favour of Kwame Henaku. Soon after becoming chief, he paid all the money collected by Kwasi Botwe. By that action, he was able to redeem all the land of

Abiriw. To assure the people of their freedom, he went ahead to build a magnificent palace. To this day, he is seen and recognized as the redeemer of the people of Abiriw.

What set the Kwame Henaku stool apart from all the others was that it was the only stool in the stool room of Abiriw that had not been blackened. The uniqueness in the stool according to the elders interviewed is seen in the fact that it is a stool with the power to redeem its people from bondage as such instead of it being black and dull, its silver and gold colour is a sign of well being and freedom. The stool, (fig 4.16), whose description fits the “mmarimagua”, was carved in wood and was given a silver and gold plating.

The personal stool of the present chief of Abiriw (plate 4.42), Nana Kwame Henaku II is a reflection of the dynamism he inherited from Kwame Henaku I. He had a strong heart and zeal to protect the people’s culture and property of the Abiriw town. He demonstrated this attitude in 1994 by taking arms against Akropong , their immediate Akan neighbours over the latter’s refusal to allow the bodies of some Abiriw citizen to be buried on a piece of Abiriw land being claimed by some citizens of Akropong. He is also making a lot of effort to ensure the development of education and other social amenities in the area. His personal stool, a “Sankofa” stool, sums up his whole idea of revisiting the hopes and aspirations of Nana Kwame Henaku I to elevate Abiriw to a higher height.

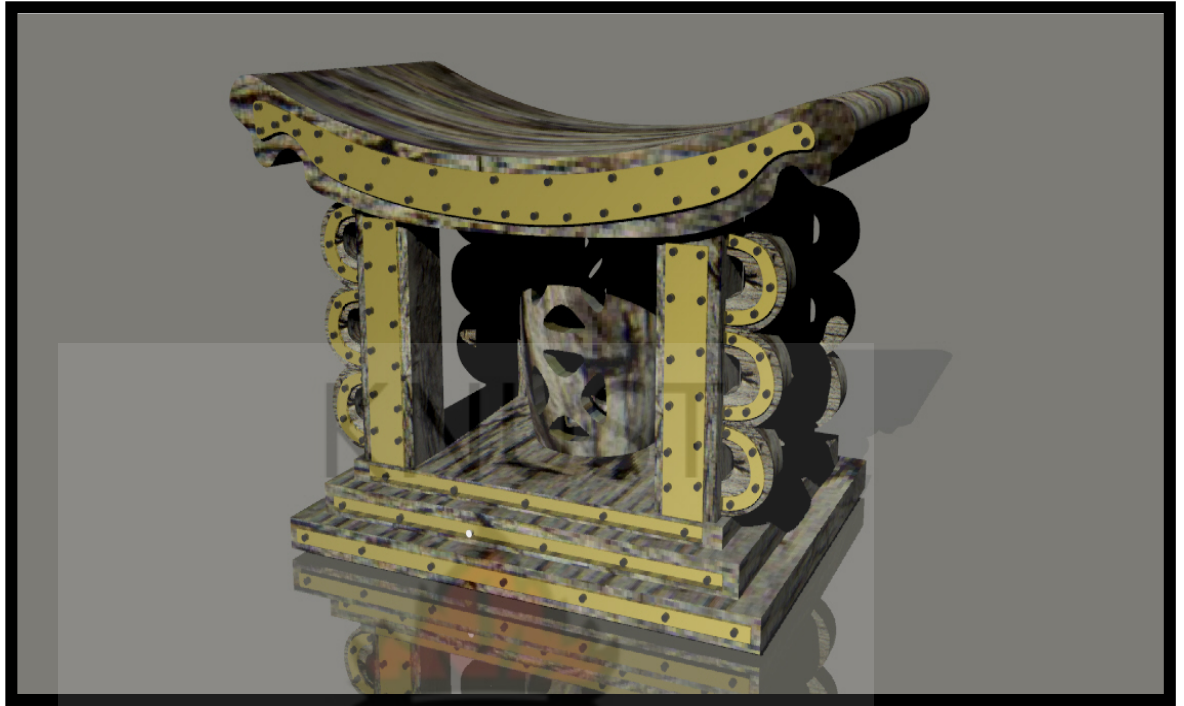


Fig. 4.16 The silver stool of Nana Kwame Henaku I



Plate 4.42 Personal stool of Nana Kwame Henaku II, the current chief of Abiriw.

iv) The Akese stool

This stool belonging to the Akesere clan of Abiriw is perhaps the first black stool in Abiriw. Unlike the other Guan chieftaincy stools whose origin was influenced by the Akyim who settled at Akropong and Amonokrom, this stool was brought by the Akwamu before 1733. It was traced to the remnants of the Akwamu fighters who stayed among the Hill Guan after the Nsakyé war.

Akese, one of the chiefs of Akwamu and his forces decided to stay at Abiriw, he brought with him his black stool which ultimately belonged to the Akwamu. The black stool brought by Akese is described as a small stool having two crescent-moon shape as the middle design as seen in fig. 4.17. Although the Akese stool may not be the most important stool in Abiriw, it serves as a reminder to the people of Abiriw and perhaps all Okre of the war and conquest of the Akwamu by the Akuapem.

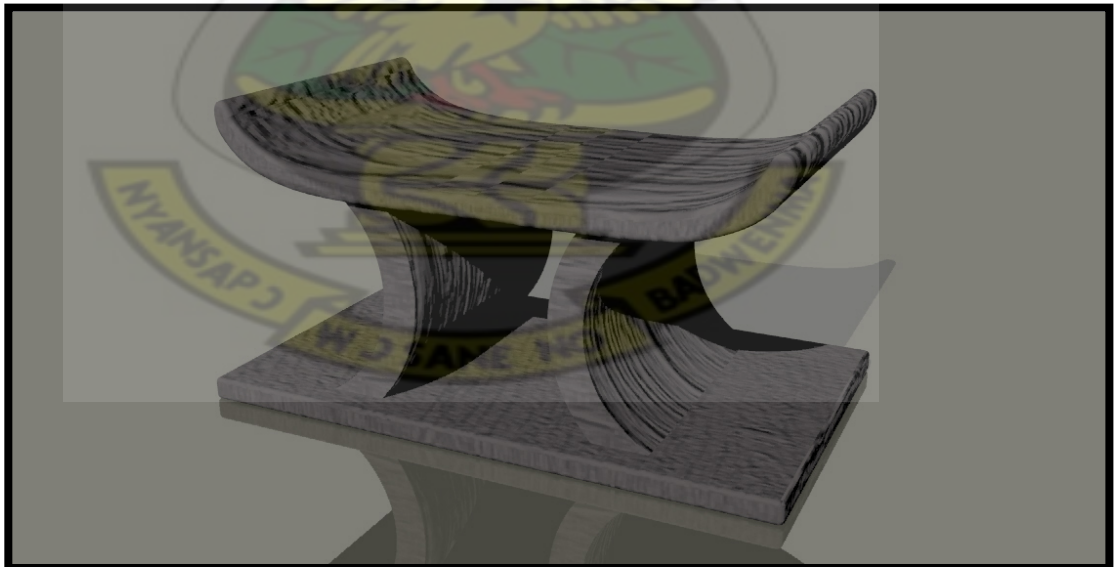


Fig. 4.17 An artist impression of the Akese stool

iv. Bagyiri stool

The Bagyiri stool pre-dates the coming of the Akyim to the Akuapem hills to the era of Nana Bagyiri I, who was the chief of Bosomptra in the late 18th century. He is credited with the resettlement of the Akyim warriors at Mpeniase, the present day town of Akropong. According to Opanyin Yaw Larbi of Abiriw, during the reign of Nana Bagyiri as the priest of Bosomptra, he realized that where the Akyim warriors had settled at Amamprobi was swampy and becomes flooded during the rainy season. He decided to relocate them to a higher ground by allotting to them a patch of land at Nsorem, the present site of the Akropong-Abiriw market, around 1731. The newly established town was to share a common boundry with Abiriw. The head of the Akyim warriors at that time was Safori. In the same year, Safori's successor, Fianko Betuafo began establishing the town of Akropong around the huge Mpeni tree.

Nana Henaku II, the present chief of Abiriw stressed that one condition given by Nana Bagyiri to the Akyim warrior was that they should not interfere with the culture especially the dialect of the people of Abiriw. This condition could be the reason why Abiriw has been able to maintain its dialect inspite of their nearness to Akropong. Although the Akyim were the overlords of the Guans, they still regarded the people of Abiriw as their landowners. It is generally known among the Guan that until recently, the Okuapehene presented firewood and other gifts to the priest of Bosomptra during the “eba” and “odwe egyi” (yam eating) festivals.

The personal stool of Nana Bagyiri was blackened during the reign of his grandson Bagyiri II who was also known as “Kakabaa”. He was the first educated chief of Abiriw and was very much interested in education that he encouraged the people of Abiriw to take advantage of the schools set up by the Presbyterian missionaries at Akropong. His popular saying, according to Nana Henaku II, is “Nimdeɕ ne yiyedi fapem” literary translated as “knowledge is the key to development.

The Bagyiri stool (plate 4.17) has two slender middle pillars supporting the top. In the central part of the stool is a sphere having a hole in it. An assertion by Opanyin Yaw Larbi and confirmed by Nana Henaku II, gave the interpretation of the symbolism of the Bagyiri stool as the responsibility one encounters as the head of the people. He was of the view that when one is elevated by the society (represented by the sphere and pillars) to the highest point of leadership (chieftaincy), it should be an ethical duty to protect them both physically and spiritually.

The conditions given by Nana Bagyiri to the Akyim warriors can possibly be the reason why some of the Okre towns (from Abiriw to Apirede) have been able to maintain their Kyerepong dialect to this day.



Fig. 4.18 An artist impression of the Bagyiri stool.

vi) The queenmother's stool

The position of queen mother in Abiriw was hitherto not popular because before the change over from the priest system of leadership to the present chieftaincy system, women did not play much political role. Another factor is the type of inheritance (patrilineal) which relegated the role of women in the society to the background. As such, the only woman who was recognised in the chieftaincy institutions in Abiriw was the “Aberewatia” (the grand old woman) who was also known as “Atwζζ”

The “Aberewatia” was in charge of keeping the kings regalia and other royal jewellerys. Although she did not have any political duty she was consulted secretly in matters of grave importance concerning the town. According to Nana Henaku II, there has not been a black stool for any queen mother of Abiriw because the first ever prominent queenmother of Abiriw is the current one by name Nana Ama Aboagyewaa I. Her personal stool reflects her vision towards the development of the town as well as the protection of the culture of Abiriw and the Okre people.

4.10 Aseseζso

Κρανκραν ασε εβι; Ακπε ψι νε ελξφε ωε ογψι; Ασασε κξκξξ α
ξωο μμαβιρι. Ακπεε οβα ηψια ηψια, οβα βζηψια.

τηισ σλογαν ις λιτεραρψ τρανσλατεδ ασ:

The children of the Krankran⁸ thousand wait while hundred go
feeding, the red earth that gives birth to dark children. The legs of
the antelope may be very thin yet the human hand cannot circle it.

This slogan shared jointly by Aseseζso and Abonse talks about how its people were
able to achieve impossible feats. The idea of hundred feeding while thousand wait or go
hungry can be likened to the Akan saying that,
“Νεα αδεζ ωο νο να οδιε να ζνψζ νεα ξκζμ δε νο”. λιτεραρψ μεανινγ “the food
is eaten by the one who owns it but not by just someone who is hungry.

Secondly, red earth naturally is supposed to produce red “children” but here we see
black children coming out of red earth. The indigenes of Abonse are described as short
and dark- skinned. In recent times, there are a lot of average height as well as fair-
skinned citizens of Abonse. Finally, they warn their enemies to beware not to judge
their size with their strength. All this gives the impression that the people of Aseseζso
(as well as Abonse) have the capabilities to over turn the natural laws to suit them.

4.10.1 Origin of Aseseζso

Ασεσεζσο, translates literally as the “cluster of hut”, which is just a little over 100 years
old, is the youngest of all the Okre towns. It was founded by a group from Abonse as
such, its citizens trace their roots directly to Abonse which is one of the ancient towns
of Okre. Nana Kusi ObuadumV in an account said that in a quest to expand their

farming and commercial activities, a group of Abonse citizens moved to Takase, near Abonse. Among them was Asafohene Kusi Obuadum.

After the Awuna war and the rescue of Kwadade I, the Asafohene (warlord) of Abonse, Kusi Obuadum, being instrumental in the rescue mission, was rewarded with a stool. The chief of Abonse, Nana Kwaku Anobi VII also known as “Abonse Kwaku” then suggested that the group move to the roadside where the present day Aseseeso is located. According to Nana Obuadum V, the place which was on the main route from Adukrom to Akuse had been used as a camp for Anum refugees during the Akatamanso war. After the war, traders plying the route would stopover to rest in the huts. Highway robbers took advantage to rob the traders.

The settling of Kusi Obuadum and his group was to curb the activities of the robbers and to ensure a smooth trade between Akuapem and Akuse. He was also made the Mponuahene to protect the eastern territories of Akuapem. Unfortunately, Nana Kusi Obuadum I died of a snake bite at Takase before the final journey as such, he never saw the final settlement of his followers which is the present day Aseseeso. In 1885 they finally moved to the present location of the town.

The first chief of Aseseeso, Nana Kofi Ameyaw was enstooled in 1888. Since then, there have been a number of chiefs. These chiefs are usually elected from the “Ahantré koko” clan and affiliate themselves with the Asona clan. Aseseeso is made up of four main clans. These are the:

- Ahantre (koko and bibi)
- Anunkore (Mankrado's clan)
- Anyaakode (this have a lineage with the Anyaakode clan at Apirede)
- Akukode.

The head deity of Ασεσεζσο, "Mantim" is the clan deity of the Ahantre royal clan. The name "mantim" (the town should be strongly rooted) indicates the deities protective nature of the town. Although "Mantim" is not as prominent in the political history of the town as other deities in the other Okre towns, (perhaps due to the fact that by the time Ασεσεζσο was founded, the Okre towns had already embraced the Akan type of chieftaincy making it the only Okre town which did not go through the theocratic system of governance as practised initially by the Guan), it is strongly regarded as the deity for the Kusi Obuadum stool.

4.10.2 The symbol of Aseseζso town

The symbol of the Aseseζso town designed by the present chief Nana Kusi Obuadum V was carved by the researcher. This symbol, depicts a relief carving of two lions, one with a gun and the other with a sword guarding a crow standing on a stool. The stool in the design is a "nnamagua" (the two-penny stool) having a crossed "Akofena" carved into it. The whole design is mounted on a crimson background.

The aggressive pose of the lions, (the symbol of Kusi Obuadum I), together with the positioning of the sword and gun form a canopy over the crow which is perching on the

stool confidently. The crow on the stool represents the Asona who are the royal family from which chiefs of Aseseζso are selected. The two lions and their weapons represent the collective effort of the chief, elders and all the citizens to safeguard their heritage.

According to Nana Obuadum V, the use of the “nnamagua” having the “Akofena” carved into it is a message to the people of the town that although the chiefs and elders are in the forefront of safeguarding the heritage, they, (the crow) rest on the ordinary citizens of the town who have the power (“Akofena”) in their hands for absolute comfort. Finally, the red background symbolises the call to “war” in the quest to protect their heritage of Aseseζso.



Plate 4.43 State symbol of Aseseζso -Akuapem

4.10.3 Past chiefs of Aseseζso

As a growing town Aseseζso is still going through the process of building their traditional administration. New chiefs are being installed and new traditional positions created. A list of the past chiefs is as follows:

- Nana Kusi Obuadum I (died at Takase before the migration to Aseseeso)
- Nana Kofi Amoyaw I (the first son of Nana Kusi Obuadum I)
- Nana Komfa Larbi I
- Nana Kusi Addo I
- Nana Ofori Amoyaw II
- Nana Kwadwo Tete Larbi I (distooled)
- Nana Adu Larbi III (abdicated just 3 months after his enstoolment)
- Nana Larbi IV
- Nana Kusi Obuadum Amoyaw V (the present chief)

4.10.4 Stools of Aseseζso

Although Aseseζso may not be too old it has some remarkable stools worth talking about. These include the stools of Kusi Obuadum, Asona, Mankrado and the queemmother.



Plate 4.44 An arrangement of stools in the “Danpan” at the palace of Aseseeso.

i) Kusi Obuadum stool

The ultimate stool of Aseseeso is the Kusi Obuadum stool (fig. 4.18). It is a stool of valour presented to the Asafohene of Abonse for his exemplary valour exhibited during the rescue of Kwadade I. Kusi Obuadum has already made a name serving as Asafohene under Nana Anobil VII the chief of Abonse (who was also the Twafohene of Akuapem). He was credited with the rescue of some Okre citizens as well as the policing of the Okre towns to ensure that no intruding bandits troubled them. He had a special passion for the total liberation of the Okre people and the whole Akuapem and was quoted by the elders of Abonse to have made a statement at a war meeting of

Akuapem

chiefs

that

“sζ ωξ ωοο με ντζμ α, ανκα Ακωαμυφο βζγωαν αγψα ωξν μπαβοα” (If I were born earlier, the Akwamu would have run away leaving their footwear behind) implying that he would have led a strong force to chase the Akwamu army away.

He did not see the need for an external force (the Akyim) to drive away the Akwamu. According to Nana Apenteng I, Nkosuohene of Abonse, the then chief of Abonse never agreed to the overlord position given to the Akyim, thus was not a signatory to the Abotakyi accord in 1733.

According to Okatakyie Kusi Obuadum Amoyaw V, the stool was carved from the same piece of wood used to re-carve a stool for Kwadade I (his stool got lost during the Awuna war, therefore a new one was carved for him). There is therefore a special relationship between the Kusi Obuadum of Aseseζso and the Kwadade stool of Akropong-Akuapem. It is a small simply carved stool having a diamond shape flanked by two pillars as its central design as seen in fig.4.19.

Kusi Obuadum during his reign as a chief adopted the lion his symbol of office. The reason for the choice of the symbol of the lion is very obvious, because the valour exhibited by Asafohene Kusi Obuadum in the rescue mission during the Awuna war could be attributed to the might and strength of the lion.

ii) The ceremonial stools of Okatakyie Kusi Obuadum Amoyaw VI

There are two stools used as the ceremonial stool by Okatakyie Kusi Obuadum

Amoyaw VI, the current chief of Ασεσεζσο, who is also a great grandson of Kusi Obuadum I. The first one (plate 4.45) is a Leopard stool. The second one (plate 4.46) has the symbol of a gunpowder keg placed on top of a stool. Above the gunpowder keg is an ammunition belt. Both stools are used interchangeably depending on the occasion.

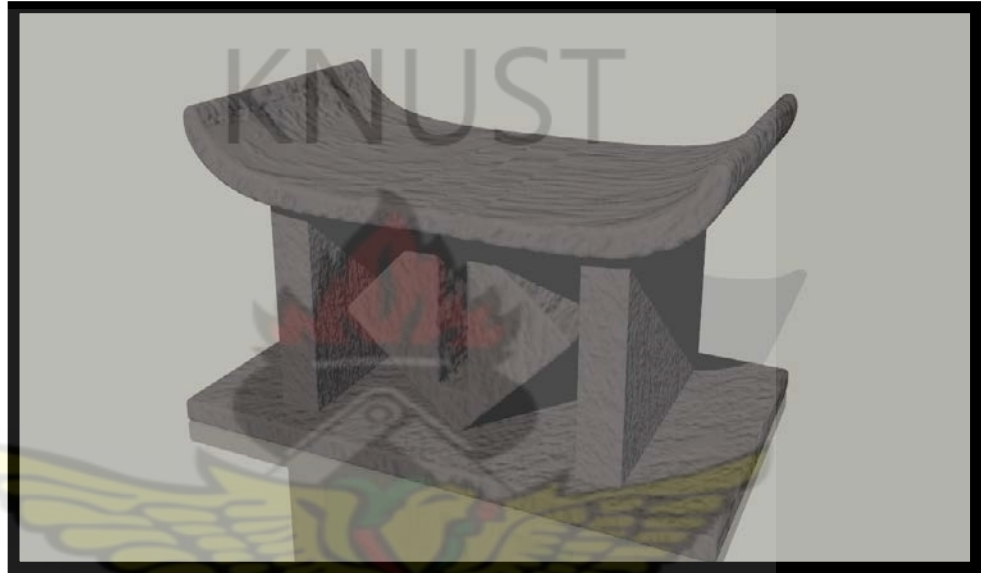


Fig. 4.19 An artist impression of the Kusi Obuadum stool

The leopard stool, which is over 60 years old, was first used by Nana Ofori Amoyaw II, father of the present chief. It is a simply carved stool with a standing leopard as the central design. Its standing pose gives an impression of its battle readiness. The leopard has its spots made conspicuous by elaborate tool marks. The stool which has been stained brown looks aged, perhaps as a result of its long use. The stool apart from its smooth finish has no embellishment however the presence of the leopard is enough to put the stool in its proper place of majesty and might. The choice of the leopard, a feline, is an indication of the bravery and ferocious nature of the chief.



Plate 4.45 The ceremonial leopard stool of Okatakyie Kusi Obuadum Amoyaw V, chief of Ασεσεζσο-Ακυαπεμ.

In contrast to this which might be misconstrued for domineering and dictatorship, it also symbolises the agility, stealth, as well as the determination and patience with which he is able to rule and solve the problems of his people.

Opanyin Adu Larbi, the son of the linguist to the original owner of the stool, narrated the history behind the carving of the stool that, during the reign of Nana Ofori Amoyaw II, a man from Abonse came to threaten the chief over a trivial land issue. He dared the chief to arrest him. The chief on the other hand allowed him to go without taking any action. No sooner had he walked away impudently than he came running back. According to him, he met a leopard on the way that would not allow him to pass neither would it go away. He suspected that it might be the chief who had transformed into the leopard just to punish him for his rude behavior. Friends of the chief gave him the sobriquet “kurotwiamansa” (the leopard) and the leopard stool as a gift as well.

The second stool is more elaborate in its design, (plate 4.46), according to its present

occupant he designed it and had it carved for him when he was enstooled. It is taller than most stools. Its four elongated pillars make it look vertically rectangular in shape giving it an air of elegance and majesty.



Plate 4.46 The ceremonial stool of Nana Kusi Obuadum V, chief of
 Ασεσεζσο-Ακυαπεμ

The middle portion which is high is highly elaborated has the design of two gunpowder kegs placed on a stool. On top of the kegs is another stool having an ammunition belt as its central design. The stool, which has a golden brown colour, shows visible signs of aging. It has generated some deep cracks in the pillars. This might be due to either weathering or a long period of extensive use. The serene nature of the stool enhanced by the elongation and the brilliant brown patina coupled with the deftness in the carving of the central design give the stool an aura of age, majesty and spirituality.

The design in the stool as explained by the present owner depicts the idea that power and might are what a group of people needs to develop. In times past such power and

might was measured in terms of the size and number of guns as well as the prowess in war. This is symbolized by the gunpowder kegs and the ammunition belt. The power, when well harness can be used to climb the ladder of development.

The symbolism of the stool is further explained that in recent times where wars are no longer the basis for development, the gunpowder keg stands for the power in knowledge. Such knowledge, in the areas of socio-cultural, economic, science and technology, is very important in the quest for a total development of the people. The gun powder as well as the ammunition belt will therefore be used to fight illiteracy, social and moral decadence as well as help to protect the cultural heritage of the people of Aseseζso, Akuapem and Ghana as a whole. Armed with the necessary information (in terms of knowledge and skills) the people of Ασεσεζσο as well as Okre can climb to the top. In summary, the symbolism of the stool is that to achieve absolute power and self reliance, there is the need for relevant knowledge and skills.

(iii) The Asonahene stool

Citizens of the entire Okre town may therefore be affiliated to either one of the clans. The royal family of Ασεσεζσο is affiliated to the Asona clan. Ideally, the Asona stool should have borne the symbol of the Asona clan which is the crow and the snake however, since this has been taken care of by the linguist staff, the discussion will be focused on the ceremonial stool of Nana Kusi Addo IV, the current Asonahene of Ασεσεζσο. He is the fourth person to be enstooled as Asonahene. The second Asonahene is the current chief of Aseseeso.

Although this stool has not yet attained the status of a black stool, it belongs to the sub chief in charge of the Asona clan of Aseseeso who also serves as the administrative head of the clan (family). The Asona Abusuapanyin on the other hand is regarded as the spiritual head of the royal family. He is the stool father to the Kusi Obuadum stool as such the head of the king makers in Aσεσεζσο as well as the ultimate custodian of the main stool of the town.

The ceremonial stool of the current Asonahene of Aσεσεζσο depicted in plate 4.47, is a “Kontonkorowigua” (the circular rainbow stool). The top (seat) rests on a double tier platform which gives it a unique imposing and stable nature. Ideally, this stool should have belonged to the chief because its symbolism, the circular rainbow is an indication of the popular Akan saying that “Kontokorowi da amansan kξn mu” (the circular rainbow which circles the neck of all). The Asonahene as the chief of the royal clan, ensures that like the “Kontonkorowi” (circular rainbow), he always gathers his children (all the people of the town including the chief) under one umbrella to achieve a common goal geared towards the ultimate development of the town.



Plate 4.47 Ceremonial stool of Nana Kusi Addo IV Asonahene of Aseseζso

iv) Ama Adobea stool

As it was in the case of almost all its Okre counterparts, the office of the queenmother at Aseseeso was not given center stage till during the reign of Nana Ofori Amoyaw II when Nana Yaa Dodobi became the queenmother. Her contribution to the development of the town resulted in the recognition of subsequent queenmothers in Aseseζso. She was succeeded by Nana Adwo and then Nana Ama Adobea I. The current queenmother whose stool will be discussed is Nana Ama Adobea II.

The ceremonial stool of Nana Ama Adobea II was first used by Ama Adobea I, who was a maternal aunt to the current queenmother. The stool, according to the present occupant, was given to Nana Ama Adobea I by her mother when she was enstooled as a queenmother of Aseseζso. After her enstoolment, Nana Ama Adobea II adopted it as her ceremonial stool.



Plate 4.48 Ceremonial stool of Nana Ama Adobea II, Queemother of Aseseζso

The ceremonial stool, as seen in plate 4.48, has lost its luster to assume a pale brown

colour. It however shows signs of having been kept well because apart from the seating portion which has developed a little crack, the stool still maintains its firmness and solidity. On the whole, the serene atmosphere surrounding the stool is likened to the calm and motherliness of its occupant whose main aim is that aside being a mother for all, there should be a revitalization of girls and women in the areas of knowledge and skill acquisition. This she believes will go a long way to empower the women of Aseseζso to take their rightful position in the society.

Mankrado stool

The position of Mankrado in the Okre towns was initially for the ambassadors of the Okuapehene. They were the second in command to the chief and usually act in their absence. According to Barima Gyeke I, Tufuhene of Apirede and Mponuahene of Okre, the enstoolment of Mankrado in the various Okre towns were for security reasons. First, they were the informant to the Okuapehene on issues of security importance and secondly, they were to help consolidate his rule among the Okre. As such, most of the early Mankrado of Okre, after 1733, were from Akropong. In recent times however, the Okre town have been enstooling their Mankrado. In an interview (09/02/2008) with the researcher, Nana Abedi Armah I the current Mankrado of Aseseζso, intimated that after settling at their new place, the town was without a mankrado for sometime until Nana Apenteng I from Anunkore was enstooled. It is worth mentioning here that the Mankrado is one of the occupants of the black stools in Aseseζso

v) The ceremonial stool of Nana Abedi Armah I

The ceremonial stool of Nana Abedi Armah, the current Mankrado of Aseseζso is an idealized form of the “Nyasapowgua” (wisdom knot stool) as seen in plate 4.49. It has a light brown colour with dark brown streaks running through it. This blend of shades of colours gives the stool a touch of modernity given the fact that most indigenous Ghanaian stools were not painted in multicolour. The symmetrical form of the stool has been joined in such a way that the top part and the bottom part meet to create a circle in the middle of the stool. The design has been elongated making the stool look taller. Nana Abedi Armah affirmed that two popular traditional Akan aphorisms relating to his duties as a Mankrado compelled him to select this stool from the collection of his grandfather. These aphorisms are (it take the wise to undo the wisdom knot) “Nyasapζw wζsane no ζbadwemma” and (it is expedient to send the wise rather than the swift on an errand). “ωξσομα ονψανσαφο να ζνψζ αναμχν τεντεν”.



Plate 4.49 Ceremonial stool of the Mankrado of Aseseζso.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The process of ethnological documentation, as in the case of the research, is all about the preservation of a set of indigenous knowledge (in the form of ideas, philosophies, concepts etc.) for easy accessibility by the present and future generations. It is usually based on survey and conclusions derived from an interaction with a specific group of people in order to find out in-depth information on aspect of their culture. Such a survey usually needs a thesis statement, which is often the answer to a set of guiding questions as its foundation. This statement must be persuasively argued and presented. In other words, the documentation which ultimately becomes the conclusion of the research is intimately linked to the process of data analysis (www.sas.upenn.edu, 22/08/2009). This chapter will consider how the data obtained from the study were analysed and interpreted to form a meaningful conclusion.

Indigenous African art has over the years been a discipline that involves not just an exhibition of skills on a material with an appropriate tool but also it embodies a whole lot of story-telling geared towards educating people and preserving the culture of a particular group of people. Generally, the research exposed the idea that the various forms of art had over the years been a conscious act of addressing all the senses of the viewer's experience in totality (www.webBritannica.com, 15/02/2008). The viewer is considered and manipulated by the nature of the work in order to achieve a state of total

artistic engagement. Such an art form is theatrical, because there is a strong bond between the object and the viewer who is expected to be at once immersed in the sensory or narrative experience that surrounds him and maintain a degree of self-identity as a viewer (Fried, 1998:45). This can be a very good description of almost every art form of indigenous African origin.

In such works, the central importance is the irony of the subjective point of view which points toward a physical and platonic image theory. In effect, it neglects any ideal form in favor of optimizing its direct appearance to the observer. African art operates fully within the realm of sensory perception as well as physical function to achieve its ultimate goal. With the improvement of technology, artists are now able to explore outside of boundaries that were never able to be explored by artists in the past. This had to some extent affected the basic cultural element in the work. This can be found in the areas of the sociological and philosophical mindset of the people usually enshrined in the older works being improved upon (in terms of materials used and mode of making them).

There is also the fact that usually, in the absence of recorded empirical evidence, such as is inherent in any account with the benefit of eye-witnesses, we can only glean our knowledge of that period from sources which are largely circumstantial or even, in some cases, conjectural. It has been the habit of communities throughout the world to recount dramatic events and tales both in times of war and peace, and aspects of indigenous social, polity and mythology which constitute the composite parts of their

history and give them their sense of identity and cohesion (www.ghanapage.com 26/05/2008).

In as much as the above statement seems to debase most of the information gathered through oral information, it was evident that the conclusions drawn on this study, in terms of the stools and their background, were based on three main pillars. These are the (a) oral history, (b) archeological evidence and (c) available written records. These three areas formed the basis for the authenticating of information gathered in this research. As cultures grow, acculturation sets in. This might distort some aspect of its basic essence, however, various artifacts, (in this case the stools), which served as archaeological evidence helped the researcher to have an insight into the basis of the culture. This assisted in the answering of probing questions which led to the core of the information.

5.2 Literary research

Documentary sources gathered from both the public and private libraries as well as other sources mentioned earlier formed the basis of the secondary data. From this a lot of background information on the indigenous art worldwide and in Africa, especially Ghana in particular was obtained. There was also evidence of how various thoughts have been processed and documented and also the benefits that various societies in and out of Ghana and even Africa have derived from the documentation. The information obtained also formed a basis for an inter-ethnic comparism of views and reactions of individual ethnic groups about similar works of art.

In the case of the stool, which is the focus of this research, the information obtained which covered Ghana and the sub-region of Africa and even beyond gave an insight into how extensively stools have and are still been used in the lives of several ethnic groups in areas such as the social, political and religious life of the people. Stools for that matter have been the symbol of status, wealth and power. It is also a symbolism of families (clans) as well as a link between the living and the dead. It has been a generational documentation of a chronology of leaders as well as their philosophies to the people they ruled. This is seen in an exposé on how aesthetics and symbolism have been partnered to bring out the educative and documentary as well as the communicative aspects of the stools.

Sadly, most of the information gathered on the indigenous Ghanaian stools in the literary research had a bias towards the Akan (Adu-Agyem, 1998). Most of the time, the Hill Guan and Akan were put together as Akuapem. Where this happened, the spotlight was on the Akan rather than the Guan. Comparatively, very little information was available on the Okre concerning their history, art and their stools. It was realized that there were some distortion of facts which run through most of the written records. For example, there was the generalized impression that it was a culture whose leaders did not use stools but rather sat on stones (Gilbert.1994).

Available information from the elders of Okre coupled with archaeological evidence indicates a long standing tradition of the use of stools by Guan rulers and that the use of the stones was strictly for ritual purposes. Judging from the weight of stones, it would be very ridiculous and incredible to attempt carrying them about the same way as stools

are carried. Although the choice of the stone could not be explained well by any of the elders, the researcher was of the opinion that perhaps the abundance of stones in the hill could have been a factor. There can also be the issue of its permanency and naturalness.

Data gathered from the secondary source substantiated the claim that the Okre are part of the Guan group who are known to be the aborigines of Ghana (www.ghanapage.com/district). It also answered the question whether the Okre had stools or not as part of their leadership culture before 1733. There were written records by Labi, (1989), Yeboa-Dankwa, (1991), Otu et al., (1987) to prove that the leaders of Okre (who were the priests of the head deities of the Okre towns) had white stools (Abosomgua) as their symbol of office. They later on came to adopt the black stool (nsamangua) concept of chieftaincy as a symbol of leadership.

Although the assertion, as discussed in chapter four shows that the Guan has the position of queenmother who occupies a very important and influential position in the society, there was very little information to support this claim. It rather came to light that the Okre by their system of inheritance (patrilineal) did not have queenmothers who played a strong political role. Even where they existed, their roles were relegated to secret counselors (“abrewatia”) and custodians of the jewelries of the stool as happened in Abiriw.

Finally, information from the literary sources gave a comprehensive account on how various cultures have used their art forms as a means of preserving the culture and educating subsequent generations on the philosophies and values of such art forms. The

stool has been given a lot of prominence by historians and anthropologists as the most important item in the paraphernalia of the chiefs in most part of Africa. It embodies all the qualities of indigenous African art which include political, symbolism, religious, social (personal objects), educational and recording of events.

5.3 Questionnaire

Research findings are always meant to provide an updated knowledge to the academic population. In order not to adversely duplicate the existing knowledge there should be a survey to find out the level of knowledge of the target group to the research findings. Such a survey usually determines the extent to which the researcher should delve to unearth relevant information. This survey was conducted with a very simply-constructed questionnaire as seen in Appendix 1. The questionnaire, in line with the objectives of the research targeted four main groups of respondents. These were,

- a) cross section of the Okre communities,
- b) Chiefs, elders, queenmothers, opinion leaders, priests of shrines as well as workers at the various palaces in the selected towns.
- c) students, teachers as well as intellectuals in and around Okre
- d) carvers at Aburi and Okroase and others within the Okre towns

The questions which were in line with the objectives of the research were to source for a broad spectrum of information from the Okre ethnic group who the researcher believed would be the immediate beneficiary of the findings. It was made up of a combination of open-ended and close-ended questions and was in four main parts. The first part which was the same for all the groups demanded personal information about

the background of the respondents. These included age, gender and educational level. This was to ensure that there was a fair representation of all the groups found in the society.

The second part requested for information on the socio-economic importance of the chieftaincy institution. The third part was on the stool as a work of art and its educational value. Finally, the fourth part requested for information on the benefits to be derived from documenting broad and indepth information about Okre stools and stools in general. There was a space provided for additional information. Respondents were able to supply vital information which was not addressed by the line of questions by openly expressing their thoughts on the questions asked.

On the part of the carvers, the second part was about their work as carvers, taking into consideration how they acquired their skills, working experience, choice of materials and reason for that choice as well as their source of inspiration. The third part was about the stools they produce and their link with chieftaincy. The final part is about the knowledge carried by their stool and the benefits to be derived by the society if such knowledge were documented.

The second part of the questionnaire for the chiefs, elders and opinion leaders requested for information of the knowledge of the symbols and titles of their office. The third part which requested for information on the socio-economic importance had additional questions on the level of knowledge of their symbol of office by their subjects.

A fifth questionnaire which is an appreciation of selected Okre stools was directed to no specific group of people. Here, a selected group of respondents (selected at random) from the groups mentioned earlier were given the sets of questionnaire. Although the questions were the same, the stool to be appreciated differed for each town. This was to test for the respondents' level of appreciation of the stool as work of art and its importance to the society. It was also to cross check on the number who indicated in the previous questionnaire that they had adequate knowledge on the stools and their symbolism.

Generally, the questionnaire enquired about the level of knowledge of the symbolism of the stools, the duties of some of the chiefs, the message conveyed by their stools, their socio-economic importance as well as the benefits to be derived from documenting of such stools. The results from the respondents to the questionnaire as analyzed with the SPSS and presented in prose, table and pie-chart is as follows:

5.3.1 Chiefs, queenmothers, elders, priests and opinion leaders

Fig. 5.1 represents the age and office distribution of chiefs and queen mothers, elders and priests as well as opinion leaders etc. From fig.5:1, it could be deduced that 43(64.2%) of this population are between the ages of 40-60. 10 (14.9%) were below 40 years while 14 (20.9%) are above 60 years. This puts the bulk of the population in this group between the ages of 40-60.

Forty-eight (71.6%) were males while nineteen (28.4%) were females. Out of this, twenty (29.9%) have no formal education, twenty-seven (40.3%) have MSLC/JSS certificates. While six (9.0%) have O' and A' level certificates, fourteen (20.9%) have diploma and university degrees. Twenty (29.9%) of them indicated that they have stools with various stool names while forty (59.7%) have no stools. (NB. stools as indicated here refer to the black stools). All of them, as seen in the table 5.1, agreed that the stool is an important symbol of chieftaincy and that it has a lot of the philosophies and basic essence of the Okre people. They are also of the opinion that it has played an important role in the socio-cultural development of the Okre people.

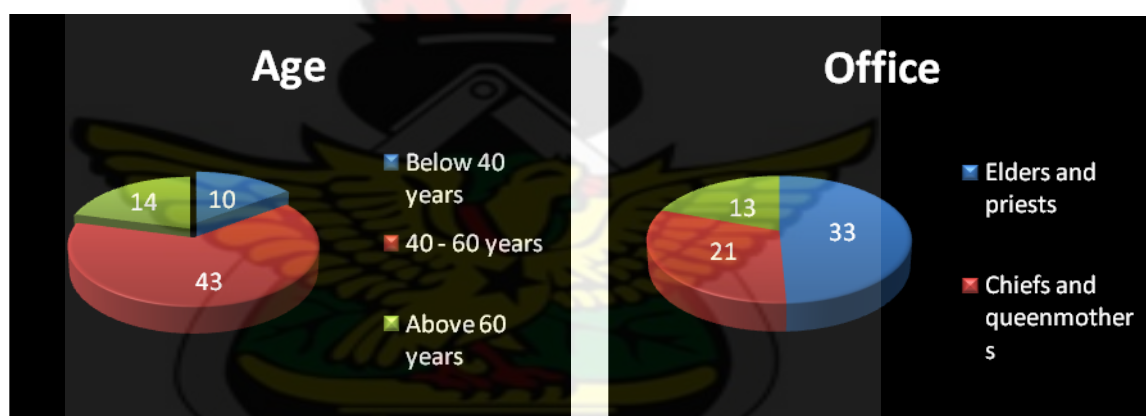


Fig. 5.1 Age and office distribution of Chiefs and queen mothers, Elders and priests as well as opinion leaders

Some responses to the questionnaire.

The stool is the most important symbol of chieftaincy

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	67	100.0	100.0	100.0

The stool has played an important role in the development of people in the society

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	67	100.0	100.0	100.0

The stools have helped in carrying the philosophies and basic essence of the Okre people

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	67	100.0	100.0	100.0

On the impact of the role of chiefs' stools in the society, while fifty-three (79.1%) were of the opinion that it is having a very good impact, eight (11.9%) feel that it is making no impact on the modern day society. The roles of the stools as indicated by the respondents were that it provides the towns with traditional leaders who help to unite the people as well as preserving their history and cultural heritage.

Although all of them agreed that the stool have a lot of symbolism which translate into the history, concepts and philosophies of the Okre people, only twenty(29.9%) had a good idea of the meaning of the symbols as against forty-nine (59.7%) who had a fair knowledge. Seven (10.4%) indicated that they had no knowledge at all on the symbolism of the stools found among the Okre. Twenty-seven (40.3%) as against forty (59.7%) believed that the people in their communities have adequate knowledge in symbolism, essence and philosophies embodied in stools.

While forty (59.7%) contest that due to the uniqueness of the Okre people and their culture coupled with the fact that every stool have a history behind its creation, Okre stools are different from their counterparts in other cultures, twenty-seven (40.3%) see the stool to be the same as that of any other culture in Ghana.

The stool has over the years been seen as a work of art with aesthetic values. It therefore requires a skilled person to carve it. On the part of the population under review, while over fifty-six (83.6%) share this view, eleven (16.4%) saw it as a seat which can be produced by anybody having just a little knowledge about carving. Majority of the population, fifty (75.6%) wanted the basic shape of the stool to be maintained. On the other hand, a small portion, seventeen (25.4%) were of the view that the shape has to be modified to suit the times.

More than 68% of the respondents in this population lamented that there is not adequate information on the stools in terms of their history and their symbolic essence. This is because most of the information was with the elders who occasionally give some out through the oral tradition and also writers have not paid enough attention to the Okre stools. From this argument, while twenty-one (31.3%) of the respondents pointed out that there are enough information on the stools, forty-six (68.7%) contested that the information available are inadequate. All the sixty-seven (100%) saw the need for the documentation of the history and symbolism of the stool for the future generation and even recommended that it is made an integral part of the school's curriculum.

This, in their opinion, will help the present and future generations to safeguard the information on the stools, which is an important cultural object from adulteration. It will help preserve the identity and culture of the Okre people as well as a credible point of reference for people outside the Okre communities. Finally it will also help to determine the differences and similarities between the Okre and other ethnic groups in Ghana thus bringing out the uniqueness of the Okre people and their culture.

5.3.2 Carvers

The total number of questionnaire for the carvers was 30 out of which 22 were returned. As indicated in fig. 5:2, thirteen of the respondents (59.1%) were between the ages of 20-40 years, five (22.7%) were in the age range of 40-60 years while the remaining four (18.2%) were above 60 years. All of them were males. Looking at fig. 5:2, four of the respondents (18.2%) had no formal education while the same number has O/A level/SSS certificate. five (22.7%) had primary school education while the remaining nine (40.9%) have either MSLC or JSS certificates.

Half of the population (50%) has been carving for about 15 years. While four of the respondents (18.2%) have been in the occupation for less than 10 years, only two (9.1%) have been in it for over 50 years. The remaining five (22.7%) have carved for about 25 years. Most of these carvers, eighteen (81.8%) who indicated that they derive their inspiration from the environment, proverbs, aphorism, folklores and dreams had their training through apprenticeship. The remaining four (18.2%) had formal training in carving at the JSS and SSS.

Although almost all the carvers indicated that they use either soft or hard wood to carve, they were of the view that their works are patronized by anyone who has the money and interest to possess them. All of them however, agreed that stools are the most important item in the chieftaincy institution and as such they need to be preserved for future generations, only four (18.8%) carve specifically for chiefs, all the stools produced were made for no one in particular.

Thirteen respondents (59.1) claim to have a fair knowledge of the symbolism of the stool and their essence, nine (40.9%) had a very good knowledge. While nine (40.9%), pointed out that every stool is different, the same percentage opined that stools (especially the ones they carve) are the same in terms of origin, philosophy and use.

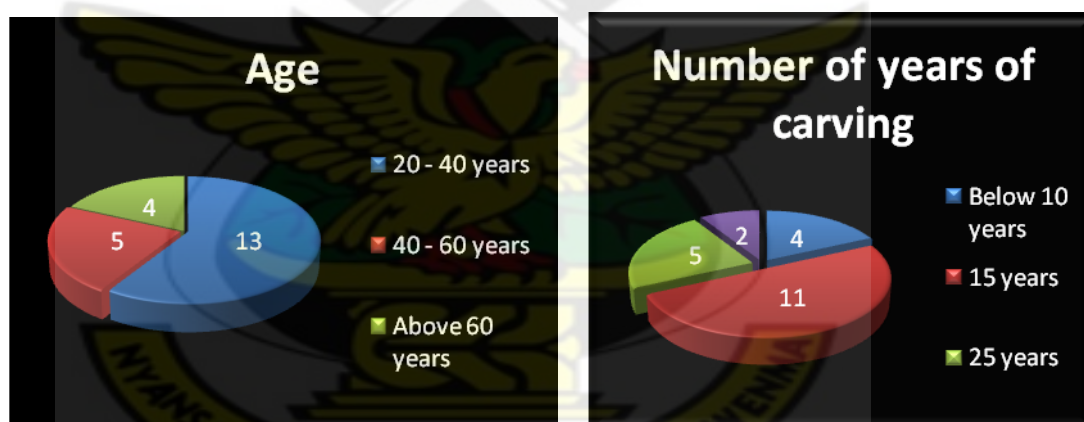


Fig 5.2. Age distribution and number of years of carving for carvers

Most of them indicated that their costumers understand the symbolisms in the stool they buy from them. Eighteen (81.8%) pointed out that at times they had to explain the symbolism in the stool to their clients. All the carvers agreed that stools as a work of art have a lot of aesthetic qualities which require a lot of skills to produce them. Eighteen

respondents (81.8%) indicated that since the stools they carve have the embodiment of the culture of the society, they see themselves as documenters of the basic cultural practises and philosophies of their people.

Finally, just like in the case of the chiefs, almost all of them lamented that the interest of the people especially the present generation in the stools is waning due to lack of information about them. They therefore called for its documentation as well as its inclusion in the cultural studies of schools. This, they feel, would help immensely to preserve, protect and maintain the culture of the ethnic groups in Ghana. It would also serve as resource material for cultural education and finally, provide job opportunities for the youth especially those who want to go into carving.

The concern raised by the carvers and almost all the respondents about the waning of the interest of the present generation in the stool culture may be due to the fact that generally, most of such information was mostly shrouded in secrecy and mystery and had not been modified to suit the new generation. The researcher could recount the ordeal he went through in order to collect information about the stool. In an era where cultures are adapting to each other, certain indigenous information has to be demystified to be acceptable to all, irrespective of ones religious or educational orientation. In the absence of this, either very few of the present generation will venture into their domain or will find a seemingly perfect substitute for them.

5.3.3 Okre community

Out of a total of 170 pieces of questionnaire distributed, 130 were returned. The respondents were 84(65%) males and 46(35%) females. The age distribution was as follows: (see fig. 5:3)

20-40 years	43 (33.1%)
40-60 years	65 (50.0%)
Above 60 years	22 (16.9%)

The population cut across all levels of education as indicated here. (fig.5.3)

Non Formal	28 (21.5%)
Primary	19 (14.6%)
MSLC/JSS	34 (26.2%)
O/A level/SSS	28 (21.5%)
Diploma/University	21 (16.2%)

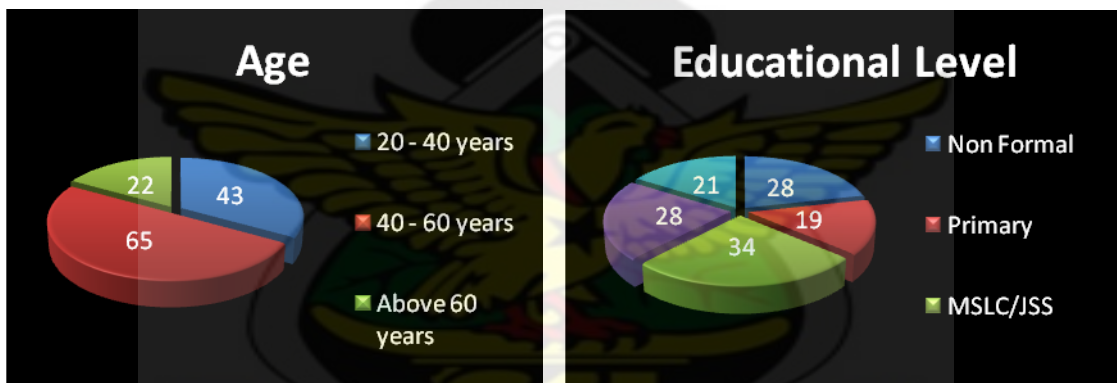


Fig. 5.3 Age distribution and educational level of the Okre community.

Generally while one hundred and twenty-four respondents (95%) indicated that the stool is an important symbol in the chieftaincy institution, only six (5%) had a contrary view. One hundred and two (78%) as against twenty-eight (22%) indicated that the institution has contributed to the development of the towns. Out of this number, eighty-six respondents (66%) indicated that it is still relevant in the present system of government. Thirty-five (27%) were however of the view that it is no more useful.

Almost all of them saw the stools of chiefs as a work of art apart from a cultural object. While eighty-five respondents (65%) opined that Okre stools are unique and different from other stools from other ethnic groups in terms of use, symbolism and origin, thirty-three (25%) was on the contrary.

Seventy-eight respondents (60%) as opposed to forty-eight (37%) had very little or no knowledge at all about the symbolism and philosophies of the stool. Almost the same number attributed this to the lack of documentation. They were also of the view that under the circumstance, the stool culture might not have a future. Once again, all the respondents called for a documentation of the stool as well as the inclusion of its study at all levels of education. This could serve as a resource material and as well help preserve the culture of the Okre people for the indigenes of the Okre, students and other researchers.

5.3.4 General public

This was a group made up of people who were not directly affiliated to the Okre. Their affiliation was by virtue of being neighbours or in the case of some students, schooling within the Okre towns. Out of the 140 sets of questionnaire administered to this group, 118(84.2%) were completed and returned. Seventy-nine were from the students while twenty nine were from the others. They were forty-seven females and sixty-one males. The breakdown for the age and educational distribution is seen in the pie charts in fig 5.4.

Seventy-two respondents (80%) as against eighteen (20%) indicated that they have heard of the Okre and majority of them, 75% classified them as part of the Akan in terms of their cultural practises. Almost the same number indicated that the Okre originally had chiefs who had wooden stools. About eighteen respondents (20%) had a contrary opinion. Ninety-one respondents (77%) pointed out that the chieftaincy institution has played a role in the development of the Okre ethnic group and Ghana as a whole. The roles, as indicated, are the custodian of indigenous culture of the people, serving as traditional leaders of the people and ensuring peace by arbitrating in cases at the traditional level as well as securing the land of the people from encroachment.

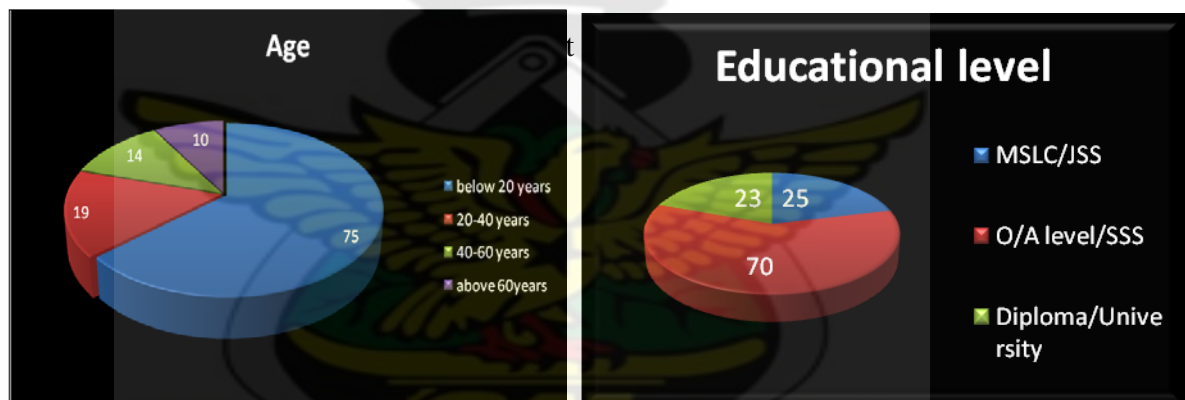


Fig 5.4 Age distribution and educational level of the general public.

Eighty-four (71%) were of the view that stools found among the Okre are the same as those found elsewhere in terms of origin, philosophies and status. Eighteen (20%) respondents had a different view and indicated that since the stool belongs to a different ethnic group it had a different origin and historical background.

Almost all the respondents saw the stool as an artwork with aesthetic values and 33% of them opposed to 61% who felt that the stools were “fetish” and an outmoded cultural object. Most of them were aware that through the stools, the youth in the present society could learn about the history and culture of the Okre people but indicated that they had very little knowledge about such historical background of the stools. This was attributed to the lack of effective education on our indigenous culture and authentic documentation of the Okre culture and, buttressed by the fact that the focus, most of the times, is on the Akan stools when writers are dealing with stools of Akuapem. In such a situation, eighty-six respondents (72 %) indicated their fear that the uniqueness of the stool culture would be lost to posterity among the Okre. Between 90% and 92% called for its documentation and study at all levels of education.

5.3.5 Aesthetic appreciation of the stools of Okre.

The stool has been talked about as a work of art. In view of this, it had to be considered from the aesthetic point to bring out the symbolism of its designs, its historical and educative importance and eventually, how it has helped the survival of the culture to which it belongs. A set of questionnaire, (see appendix 1) was therefore designed to test for the depth of knowledge of the people of Okre on the aesthetic appreciation of their stool and its subsequent interpretation. Out of the 50 pieces of questionnaire administered, 42 (84%) were returned.

Although the same questions were given to the sampled population selected from the four towns, the stool to be appreciated was taken from the repertoire of a select chief or

queenmother from the individual towns. For example, while Apirede had the Barima Gyeke stool, Adukrom had the ceremonial stool of Awo Adwoa Gyeko. Aseseζso on the other hand, had the Asonahene's ceremonial stool, while Abiriw had the personal stool of Kwame Henaku II. All the stools chosen were the ceremonial stools of the individual chiefs, this was to ensure that the stools have appeared in public on a number of occasions.

All the forty-two respondents (100%) recognised that the stools were made from wood. However, thirty (71.4%) indicated that since the wood used for carving the stool was felled; the stool is just a utilitarian object. Six of the respondents (14.3%), however, believed that the stool has part of the spirit of the owner in it as such it is "alive". Almost all of them saw the smooth finish as a sign of beauty. They also agreed that it was made to reflect the positions of chiefs. Interestingly, only a total of seventeen respondents (40.5%) from all the four towns could tell the owner/occupants of the stools. The remaining either gave wrong answers or did not know anything about the stool.

In spite of the fact that over 90% of the respondents were of the view that the uniqueness of the stool can be seen from the fact that since the stool belong specifically to the chiefs of Okre, they reflect historical event and also serve as a chronological evidence of the Okre chiefs. Once again, only seventeen (40.5%) indicated that they understood the symbolism in the stools presented. All the respondents agreed that the artist who carved the stool is telling them something about the history and culture of the

people as such it has educative importance. Some of this importance, in their opinion, is that it shows the vision of the chiefs in symbolic form, the symbols in them reflects the values, ethics and beliefs of the Okre people and finally, it helps to document the succession of chiefs.

5.4 Interviews

The use of interviews (conducted in focus groups and one-on one etc.) as an instrument for gathering the necessary information was about the most useful of all the tools used because it helped to validate most of the written records. It also helped in straightening up distorted information obtained from literary sources. The interview was also very useful in the light of very little written records on the stools of the Okre. Names, titles and events that have been a bone of contention or distorted entirely were corrected.

In the indigenous societies, names and slogans are very important. They are usually given to mark events and occurrences. The slogan of most of the towns (usually in a proverbial form in indigenous Kyerepong) was also a cause for worry as some of them are either being distorted or given a derogatory interpretation. The distortion of such names is highly likely to distort the history of a whole group of people. This could be said to be a disadvantage to most researchers who are alien to the area of research. This could however be corrected by engaging the services of a competent interpreter.

For example the original name of Apirede which is said to be “Ekronkronbɛɛade” (the holy one who create things), had been corrupted in the slogan of the town as “Akonkromone” this word cannot be related to any kyerepong word or term. There was

enough proof that the name is highly likely to be “Ἐκρονκρον bξ eni” (we were created by the holy one). The justification here was that although both the Akan and Kyerepong names have a common meaning, around the time of naming the settlement, the settlers were Guans who by all indications spoke kyerepong and for that matter it is highly unlikely that their settlement would be given an Akan name. The advent of their early Akan neighbours, the Akyim and Akwamu might have resulted in the Twi interpretation of the name. The present name of the settlement “Apirede” (Apresi or Akpre-ade) is a justification to this claim. This can also be seen in the names of their immediate Guan neighbours such as Abiriw (“ζνε ζνι δζμ αβιρωα”) “let’s live in a cluster” and Abonse (Abo- nse) meaning “he who have land”.

Another name that became a point of controversy was the kyerepong name of Adukrom. It is known as “Asienso” (the place of the monkeys) because of the large number of monkeys said to be in the forest where the settlement started. However, another name “ζσζ ζνκζσο” (the boundaries of other people) as well as “ζσζκζσο” (ηανγινγ ον της βουνδαριεσ) came up as possible names for the settlement. It should be noted that Ebofo Adu was given a land at the boundary between Apirede and Awukugua. Therefore, this new settlement was seen as hanging on the boundaries of the two towns. This truth about the name of Adukrom (“Asienso”) has gradually given way to that of the “presence of the monkeys”.

During the interviews, it was realized that the names of some of the prominent deities of the Okre has been distorted and have lost its meaning, for example the name of

“kyenku” of Obosomase is actually “Kyi-nko” This was explained as “ansζ akyi nko” (the one who takes care of others) this perhaps shows the generous nature of the deity .the name can be compared with the appellation of Bosomptra of Abiriw which is “Ξσζν κεσε α ογψε αηζηο”. Remarkably, almost all the head deities of the Okre towns are credited with a high level of generosity and kind-heartedness. This character has been with the Akuapem to this day. At Apirede, the controversy about which of the three deities is senior was readily settled.

Traditionally, the elders of the town do not become chiefs as such Atti kwao deity which is the youngest was made the chief. Over the years, Bohen and its “wife” Nyada have been completely relegated to the background. Interestingly, most writers have indicated the Nyada Deity as the senior deity of Apirede. During the interviews it came to light that the “father-motherly” nature of Bohen made him to operate in the quiet as such the two vibrant deities were elevated to the limelight. From the information gathered, it would not be appropriate to discuss the stools of the chiefs of the Okre ethnic group, which had a strong theocratic background, without starting from the deities and their shrines because this is where the leaders and the stool culture among the Okre started. This perhaps accounts for a lot of highlight on the deities and their stools in this thesis.

The origin of a prominent deities has over the years become a subject for debate among writers and researchers. One such debate that was put to rest was the supremacy between the Otutu Deity of Adukrom and the Tutu Abo deity of the Akwamu. It

became clear that both are war deities. However, there was enough information to justify the fact that the Tutu Abo was obtained from the Otutu deity at Adukrom.

An assertion by Wilks 1969:108 buttresses the oral information on this issue that:

The legitimacy of the Otutu shrine as an exclusive of the Guan particularly Adukrom is seen in the relationship between the Tutu Abo deity and the Otutu shrine of the Guans. Otutu is a *god* of war. Otutu has been a Guan *god* from time immemorial and the Akwamu had their Otutu shrine consecrated for them by the Guan.

The truth in this assertion could be seen in the fact that until 1730 when the Akwamu were finally driven away from the hills, they were the immediate neighbours to the Okre and more or less their overlords (although they were each other's enemy). By this they could either take part of the Otutu deity for themselves or as stated by Wilks, have a "suman" imbued with the powers of the Otutu deity for them. The Tutu Abo deity of the Akwamu just like the parent deity in Adukrom is said to cast (hurl) rocks at its enemies in battle. It is believed that the famous "Okum Akwamu" rock at Apirede (although not mentioned in this thesis) which is said to have rolled over the invading Akwamu forces, during the Akuapem and Akwamu war, killing hundreds of them might have been possessed by the Otutu deity to perform that act.

There was also a good amount of authentic background information for most of the stools the researcher came into contact with. It was a relief to have a confirmation about the white stools of Bohen and Bosompra in Apirede and Abiriw deities as their receptacles. It is gradually becoming accepted that until 1733 when the big process of Akanization started only the stones and pots "korow" were indigenous to the shrines

and leaders of the Okre. On the whole, the cultural set up as well as the differences and similarities it had with that of the Akan was also discussed.

Another conclusion drawn (discussed under the stools of Apirede) was that most of the Akwamu onslaughts against the Okre forces were channelled through Apirede. This was substantiated by archeological evidence. Perhaps the fact that the town was a “fortress” where the relics of the Okre were hidden during war times made it an easy target. Once it is captured, Okre is definitely captured.

5.5 Observation

Observation as an instrument for collecting data in this research was very effective. It afforded the researcher an emic insight into the cultural practises of the Okre people. In the processing of handing over information orally, it is natural for a generation to distort it by either spicing it to elevate them among their peers or downplay some very important part of it especially as their social, religious and educational orientation changes.

As was discussed earlier, one way to cross-check for the reliability and authenticity of information acquired from literary sources and interviews is to align them with existing physical (archeological) evidence. Here, most of the added or omitted parts will come up as questions which, when rightly answered, gets the researcher closer to the truth. The observational method, which included a direct participation by the researcher, was therefore a litmus test for most of the information gathered.

In doing this, the researcher actively participated in the various activities of the individual towns. Some of these activities included the Ohum and Odwira festivals, enstoolment and distoolment of chiefs, “akpe odwe egyi” (rituals marking the eating of new yam by the various deities) “mmie eduki” (the ritual cleansing of the black/white stools) and the sitting of the traditional councils either for arbitration in a case or to discuss matters of importance to the state. Others were the funerals of some prominent members of the towns.

Among these were those of Opanyin Kwame Gyekete, the stool father of the Oboni Ayim stool, Opanyin Kwaku Amoako the stool father to the Saforo Okoampa stool and Esofo Kwadwo Offei, a priest and the biological father of the current chief of Apirede. During these funerals and others observed from the other Okre towns, the various stools, relics, rituals as well as the display of the indigenous cultural essence of the Okre helped the researcher gather additional information needed for the research. It also helped him to undertake a number of follow-up interviews based on the practical and archeological evidence. It also helped the researcher to pose probing questions as to the reasons for certain names and practises.

In the course of observing the culture of the Okre via their stools, the researcher realized the presence of a new trend of symbolism and creation of stools in the chieftaincy system. This however, may not pertain to the chiefs of Okre alone. Interestingly, the modern trend has even affected the white stools of the priests. The stool of the Dideku priestess, (plate 4:2) at Adukrom has been painted with white oil

paint instead of the traditional kaolin.

Considering the making of the stool, mention can be made of the ceremonial stool of Nana Ama Odi, the queenmother of Apirede. This stool, (plate 4:21) was not carved from a single piece of wood as is usually done but rather, was assembled from pieces of different shades of wood. There was also the ceremonial stool of Awo Adwoa Gyeko the queenmother of Adukrom which has the symbol of the Bible as its central design. This obviously shows how the Christian beliefs have been effectively blended into the chieftaincy system.

The researcher in the course of the observation had to take part in some rituals concerning the towns. These include the fortification of the “Bankeemi”, the visiting of the inner groove of the Atti shrine in Apirede (most people out of fear will not even venture into the outer groove), Otutu of Adukrom as well as Bosomptra of Abiriw. There were also visits to various places where relics connected to some of the stools mentioned were housed. These included the rooms at the inner court chamber at the Palace of Adukrom where the “Apagya” drums (connected to the Adongua) and some old stools still used by the kingmakers in performing their rituals connected with the enstoolment of a new chief were kept.

During this particular visit, the researcher was made to strip almost naked to be able to take the necessary photographs. The “Osofo” at the shrine of the Otutu shrine explained the reason for this action with the simple statement that “what is special or demeaning about you that you would want to cover yourself before going before your naked

grandfathers”. Dr. K Edusei (KNUST) in an interview (03/08/2009) on the relationship between human beings and the supernatural forces, opined that human beings are the only things in creation that use an artificial coverings. Thus to be able to have a fruitful dialogue with the spirit beings, one has to take off the artificial covering (clothes).

Another observation made by the researcher which could not be explained by almost all the quarters questioned, was the absence of clan totems in stools among the selected towns. Apart from the clan stool of the Anyaakode royal house of Apirede, (plate 4.8) which had the clan totem of the Aduana as its central design, the researcher did not come across any such stool. Perhaps the only time a totem had been used is in the design of the symbol of the town of Aseseeso, (plate 4.49) where the crow, the totem of the Asona clan had been used in the design. The absence of these totems perhaps confirms Anti’s assertion that the Guan did not originally belong to such clans. It could also be possible that it was also part of the Akanization of the Guan (either by the Akwamu or Akyim). Unfortunately, there was not much information to confirm this assertion.

5.6 Summary of findings

5.6.1 Similarities in the Okre stools

Africa particularly Ghana, is made up of a cluster of individual ethnic groups which shows common regional traits. When the various art works used by the individual ethnic groups are taken into consideration, these similarities become much stronger. Their roles (symbolism, spiritual, social as well as cultural) also have a lot of

similarities. They usually act as a conceptual bridge between the everyday lives of the diverse societies and the world they find themselves. Depending on the regional setting, materials for making these objects which include wood, clay, bones and stones may differ, probably based on the availability. One thing worth mentioning is that the art objects, similar as they might be, are usually a true reflection of the mindset of the individual ethnic groups that produced them. It helps in bringing out the unique structure that identifies them and also, sets them apart from others.

This characteristic is present in the art work (stools) of the Okre. It could be realised that with the exception of Aseeseo which by virtue of their establishment (it was established when the Akan type of chieftaincy had become grounded among the Okre towns) did not enjoy the theocratic system of leadership as was practiced earlier by the Guans, all the other three selected towns considered have priest chiefs who played the role of leaders and who made laws for them. As such ever since the separation of powers, (from the theocracy to the chieftaincy system) there has been a strong bond between the stools of the deities and that of the chiefs. Among the Okre, chiefs are still regarded as the ceremonial priests to the deities. He should always be present at the ceremonies and performance of most of the rituals, for example the eating of new yam “akpe odwe” and the various “eba ektopare” (the ritual marking the ban on noise making in preparation for the celebration of Ohum).

The present chief of Abiriw, Nana Kwame Henaku asserts that “every chief of Abiriw has a stool that he inherited but he ultimately inherits the Bosomptra stool”. This readily paints the picture of how much reverence is given to the Abosomgua (white stool) by

those who occupy the black stools). Similarly in Apirede, the shrine house of Atti is usually referred to as the utmost palace of the town. The Otutu shrine located just within the walls of the palace is still regarded as the spiritual entity of the Adukrom town.

5.6.2 The Akan and Okre stools

The use of stools among the Okre as a symbol of leadership contrary to some assertion by some writers (that the leaders sat on stones) dates as far back as the existence of the Okre ethnic group. Mention can be made of the Oboni Ayim stool of Apirede, Otutu and Adummanuru stools of Adukrom, the Bosompra and Kyinko shrine stools of Abiriw and Obosomase.

There are existing archeological, oral and written evidence (Labi, 2002, Otu, 1987 and Gilbert, 1997) to substantiate the claim that most of the deities of Okre were enshrined in very simply-designed stools. Their simple design might be attributed to the simplicity of thought and the spiritual aura that surrounded the deities. Perhaps the idea of elaborate designs in stools as a means of communication is a contemporary idea which was introduced strictly with the introduction of chieftaincy.

The Okre system of leadership encouraged the use of relatively few stools of leadership positions. There were, however, ordinary stools for use by the people. Only the priest, his linguist and Asafohene used the ceremonial white stool which was regarded as sacred. Examples could be cited as that of Kyi-nko (Obosomase), Bosompra (Abiriw)

and Bohen (Apirede). All these deities are ancient Guan deities who were in existence long before the coming of the Akyim to the hills and subsequently the introduction of the Akan system of chieftaincy.

Although both the Guan and Akan stools might have started from the dufua stage, the Akan might have started the incorporation of elaborate designs in their stools. Some Guan stools, however, might have had some designs as in the case of the Odum Gyekete. On the whole, much difference cannot be drawn from a physical assessment of the early Akan and the Okre stools except that from description available, while early Okre stools were identified by their simplistic nature, (fig.4.5), the Akan inspired stools were characterised by both simple and complex designs. In recent times however, it might be difficult to differentiate between Akan and Okre stools by just a cursory look because almost all of them carry the some sort of symbolism.

Their physical appearance and the mode of making them are undoubtedly the same. They also serve the same purpose as a symbolic seat of office for the chiefs or leaders. Although in recent times the mode of making them has changed for both ethnic groups they are given the same type of rituals to make it potent enough for the status of the chiefs. Another similarity is that most of the chiefs select stools that carry the message they want to send across to their subjects. These messages are usually seen within the symbol in the stools. This occurs because most of the elaborately designed stools used by the Okre chiefs today have their root from the Akan, particularly the Akyim.

Some difference exists when comparison is drawn between the indigenous stools of the two cultures. Among the Okre, there are always two major stools in almost all the towns. There is the presence of the white stools (Abosomgua) which belong to the deities and the black stools (nsamangua) which belong to the ancestors. These white stools are very simple in shape, with no proverbial design in the central portion. The researcher did not chance upon any indigenous sacred white stool which has an elaborate proverbial design in the middle. Their white colour radiates an aura of spirituality piety. Although it might be very simple in design, its nature elevates it above all the other gorgeously looking ceremonial stools. This observation is further strengthened in the light of Otu's (1987), assertion that:

During the *Asuo Gyebi* festival, which I observed in January 1986, the late Nana Oparebea, the then priestess of *Akonnedi* shrine had a special stool on which she sat. The emphasis is on the religious appropriateness, symbolism and suitability for the gods rather than the aesthetics of colour, as well as the projection of the personhood and power of the priest or priestess of the shrine.

In recent times where the trend seems to have changed, most of the priests have adopted either the “mmaagua” or the “sakyi-dua-korogua” design in their personal stools.

The fact still remains that the chief in the present day Okre is the head of administration in the town; however, the stools usually owe allegiance to the deities. For example in Adukrom, the Otutu stool which is the main stool of the town has a direct link with the Otutu deity. The deity has among other protective objects, the “Bamkeemi” which gives an exclusive protection to the occupants of the stool as well as the entire royal family. The, stool therefore, belonged to the deity. A priest chief could have a

ceremonial stool made for him but would still have to inherit the white stool of the deity.

To this day, the chiefs of Adukrom still inherit the Otutu stool. This is reflected in their stool names which is always prefixed with “Otutu”. Such a situation might be different in most of the Akan states. Although each town might have a deity that is deemed as the spiritual protector of the town, most of the stools do not have a direct link with the deities. There is usually not the very strong relationship between the stools of the deities and the black stools of the ancestors.

5.6.3 Symbolism

Symbolism, as has already been discussed is a way of sending very important messages to people. The leaders of the Okre ethnic group have adequately used this to send their ideas across to their subjects. These symbols include both the indigenous and some contemporary ones. Some of these include:

i) The felines

The use of the symbol of the felines, particularly the leopard is prominent in the stools and state symbols of the Okre towns. Although it is not the predominating symbol, it has been used to depict the characteristics of a number of chiefs such as Odum Gyekete, the Otutu stool and Kusi Obuadum. It is also found in the state symbols of Adukrom and Aseseeso. The question that readily arises is how a seemingly peaceful ethnic group who are hunters and peasant farmers with no history of wanton attack of their enemies take on such a symbol.

From the information gathered, it was realised that although the people were very peaceful, they had a cunning way of going round their enemies. Through this, they depict the agility, stealth, bravery, ferocity as well as the determination and patience of the leopard. With this character, it could be seen that although they came under attack several times from the Akan, particularly the Akwamu, they were still able to sustain their cultural practises to this day. With the exception of the symbolism of the felines, animal symbols are not common in Okre stool. Usually, the older ones have very simple designs while the modern ones have adopted some intricate designs from the Akan.

iii) Colour

Another symbol which is prominent in almost all the shrine stools of the Okre is the colour white. This can be linked to the sanctity of the deities. It also ready paints a picture of the peace-loving nature of the leaders of the Okre. They abhor bloodshed for that matter would not want to spill blood to desecrate their stools. An example is the refusal of the priest chief of (Bosompra) Abiriw to go to war even long after the Akan system of chieftaincy has been introduced.

iii) The Bible

Although this is not a common symbol which can be seen in all the towns, the incorporation of the Bible which is a contemporary religious item in the stool of the queenmother of Adukrom, Awo Adwoa Gyeko III (plate 4:38) is very significant. It would be recalled that the pre-chieftaincy Guan leaders were priest of deities. Although the status of the leaders changed when they became chiefs, it was important that they maintained a high spiritual standard. Perhaps the symbol of the Bible (most of the

chiefs and queenmothers now are Christians) is a wake up call to not only the leaders but also the general community for the absolute reliance on God as well as maintaining of a high level of spirituality as was done by their predecessors.

iv) The Siamese-twin crocodile.

The human institution is made up of people with diverse views. To avoid conflict and ensure an absolute development, there is always the need to tolerate the views of each other. The presence of the “funtumfunanfu-denkyemfunanfu” symbol in the Akonkronfi of some Okre chiefs attests the fact that the best way to ensure development of the town and its people is to engage in dialogue with both the present and the past. This is likely to yield a lot of ideas which will be beneficial to the whole town.

5.7 The impact of the stools on the Okre society

The presence of the stool among the Okre community has had great impact on the general development of the area. In recent times, the central government system of leadership, contemporary education and religions as well as urbanization have down played such impact yet, the most important aspect of the human life is the society, something the stool strives to keep. Gyekye (1996) sums up the importance of the society with the statement that “I am because we are”. The sense of belonging is a very important to every human being. This is what makes him feel human.

The culture of a group of people has always been the mainstay of their existence. The stool as a cultural object which has the ability to be used for recording the concepts and history (background) of the people is a very important object. Among the Okre, not

only has the stool helped to maintain the cultural identity of the people in terms of their land, dialect, names, system of inheritance as well as rituals and festivals but it has also served as a bridge between the theocratic and the chieftaincy system of leadership. It has also given a record of the past chiefs and perhaps established the order of ascension to the stools thus fostering peace and harmony in the choosing of chiefs. In Apirede for instance a rare ceremony marking the “enumde iba” (the Ohum for the elders) is characterised by the offering of libation where an elder recounts the names of all the chiefs in the order they ruled.

The stool has over the years helped as a binding force for all the Okre towns because it has helped them to be identified as one people who should always be their brother's keeper and not to fight among themselves. It is, therefore, not surprising that there no history of any two Okre towns going to war with each other. Again the alacrity with which the Okre towns marshalled forces to support Abiriw during their feud with Akropong in 1994 is evident of how the people in the individual towns identifies with each other.

The stool of the Okre has also served as a link between the present generation and the past. A generation born into an Akan dominated society and a world of fast growing technology is likely to take any available culture and localize it to be theirs. However the presence of the stool and its cultural identity has given the present generation a sense of belonging and identity. In some cases, some of these young people might not be able to speak the kyerepong dialect but are always proud to belong to that group. All these are good indicators pointing to the fact that although faced with the impact of

modernism and intermarriage, there is hope that the Okre ethnic group will stay for a very long time.

Although there were war deities in almost all the Okre towns, with the exception of the numerous wars fought with the Akwamu, basically for self defence, there is practically no history of wars started by the Okre against any other ethnic group prior to coming in of the Akyim. The Okre and the Akan, (the Akyim and Akwamu) shared a common boundary for a number of years. Surprisingly, there is no history of any war between the Akyim and the Okre. This can be attributed to two main factors.

In the first place the Okre were hunters and farmers who did not interfere with the trade of any of the individual ethnic groups. According to Ward (1935:32-37), most of the wars fought in the developmental stages of the Gold Coast were either for trade supremacy or expansion of territories. Secondly, perhaps they felt secured on the hills as such did not find the need for territorial expansion. According to Barima Gyeke I, tufuhenhe of Apirede and Mpohuahene of Okre, they were smaller groups of theocratically administered autonomous towns ruled by leader who either saw no need for war or could not have raised an army large enough to fight the Akyim or the Akwamu had there been the need to do so. This is evident in the fact that they later had to fall on the Akyim to help them rout the Akwamu who were troubling them.

Land has always been the greatest physical assert of any group of people. Throughout the history of man wars have been fought just to maintain or conquer new lands. In Ghana, the presence of the chieftaincy institution has helped a lot of communities to maintain their lands. The land of a group of people is usually vested in the stool hence

the title “stool lands”. Although the lands commission, as an arm of the central government exists, the chiefs have a lot of power over their stool lands.

One aspect of the stool on the land of the Okre community is the protection from encroachment and its absolute take over by the custodians. This accounts for the installing of “Mponuahene” (chief in charge of the protection of the borders) whose duty is to see to the safety of the land from encroachers. The chiefs of Okre also ensure the equitable distribution of the land among the people for various developmental ventures such as farming, building and other infrastructural development.

A significant impact of the stool to the society is how the role of queenmothers in the Okre community helped capacity building or empowerment of women in the development of the society. The patrilineal system of inheritance practiced by the Okre sidelined women in most administrative and important decisions. In recent times, the queenmothers have been using their influence to organize the women in social activities. They have also been sitting in traditional council meetings where deliberations are made and important decisions taken. This has paved a way for women to contribute fully to the development of their communities.

5.8 Implications for Art Education

The best way to reach out to a group of people in order to help preserve their culture for posterity is by deciphering their artforms, particularly their sculptures. Through this, researchers have been able to unearth valuable information on the cultural practises of

the people. The interpretation of the information will also help the modern day artists to produce sculptures for the said societies by incorporating the essence of their culture although he will be using a slightly different material and technique.

In a situation where there is a lack of adequate information, especially on the stools of the Okre, present generation is likely to inherit a culture which has become adulterated because the indigenous culture can easily be tainted with that of their immediate neighbours and distant cultures as well. They are likely to substitute ideas and concepts from other culture which seems to answer the questions from their self interrogation about their own culture.

The question to be asked here is whether this answer will be a true reflection of the culture they were supposed to have inherited. If not checked, with time, there will be the tendency for the substitute to completely erase and take over the original. In the course of the study, it was realized that the mode of transmitting the indigenous knowledge (in this case the oral tradition) from one generation to another has become outmoded.

Its high time new ways of acquiring and processing information for easy accessibility was used. Although this has been in use for quite a long time, the culture of the Okre ethnic group has not benefitted much from it, hence the general lack of information. Perhaps a method of transmitting valuable information that has either been relegated to the background or completely overlooked is through the artforms particularly the stools. These stools are imbued with a lot of coded indigenous knowledge which when

properly deciphered amounts to volumes of information about the people.

With the emergence of the modern technologies, researchers now have the opportunity to manage information from variety of sources and to process their findings in a more competent way as never before especially where Wurman (1989) is of the view that the information supply available to us is now doubling every five years”. This has helped students of art to assume the responsibility of using the knowledge that is embodied in the various artforms to arrive at a meaning suitable for the present generation. This situation has also helped them shape their thinking towards a constructivist approach. These are some of the benefits artist, students of art and researchers are likely to gain from this research.

The findings of this research therefore become a very important platform to students in art education because it will be a case study by which they can learn about how the stools of an ethnic group have been used to preserve valuable information about their custodians. In this case, it could be said that the Okre stools have been used to preserve their culture for generations. As has been mentioned earlier on, the coming in of a massive acculturation has not adversely changed the culture of the Okre. They have been able to maintain their language, their system of inheritance as well as their festivals and rituals.

The knowledge and the history on the stools have also helped to track the stages of development, especially from the theocratic to the chieftaincy system of leadership. Although in recent times, the role of the chiefs has not been as strong as it used to be,

the presence of the stools in modern times has helped to maintain the chieftaincy institution.

The differences in the stools (especially their colour and spiritual affiliation) have become a basis for comparison. Such a comparison will help students to incorporate the basic concept of their culture in the artworks they produce.

The information gathered can also help the artists in the society to incorporate their indigenous knowledge in their craft as a way of improving upon their traditional crafts to suit the modern trends. Through this, the works produce will transcend time, materials, tools and techniques making it useful for the future generation.



CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

From the data collected during the research, it could be readily deduced that generally, a work of art is usually an expression of the impression formed by an individual or a group as they interact with their immediate and remote environment. As such the physical part of the work becomes a vehicle that carries the thoughts of the artist and for that matter, the whole society to which the work belongs. Therefore, the work of art is the totality of the inspiration and the aspiration of the cultures that produce various art works.

It could be argued from some quarters that the cultures which executed such work might not have meant the work interpreted the way it is being done now. However such an argument can be counteracted with the fact that art, especially in the indigenous African society, was never an exhibition of a spontaneous impulse of the artist but rather, a systematic use of skills to produce works aimed at satisfying the socio-cultural demand of the people. Subjects and themes should therefore have an approval from the entire society. As such no matter the age in which a work finds itself, it could still be interpreted in the light of the culture of those who made them.

The Okre ethnic group might not be credited with a lot of stools of political essence as could be seen in the case of the Akan. However, the few stools found among them can boast of a remarkable uniqueness which carry their indigenous essence in terms of their

origin, political/administrative system, religious practises as well as the social norms. These are stools indigenous to the Okre as well as those inherited from the Akan (Akwamu and Akyim).

Culture is dynamic and must therefore grow to fit into the demand and norms of contemporary society. The culture of the Okre ethnic group in fulfilling this basic law of culture has been overshadowed by the Akan majority whose culture over the centuries has been well defined thus reducing that of Okre to mere subordinates although in recent times, the attempt at secession from Akropong which had led to the creation of Okre paramountcy is gradually bringing back the awareness of the Okre culture.

This unfortunate incident created a scenario where Okre is always seen in the shadows of the Akan. These reflect in their language and art forms. Over the years, a lot of researchers have mentioned Akuapem when in actual fact they are just referring to the Akan speaking groups. It is therefore not uncommon to see documentations and write-ups about Akuapem which do not mention Okre at all or do so just on the surface.

In a situation like this, there is a high tendency, as is happening now, for the present generation of the Okre to accept whatever is being handed to them as their indigenous culture. This leads to a gradual erosion of the basic information which forms the heritage of the people as well as the general interest in themselves as a people. From the data gathered for the research, the response from the questionnaire, interviews as well

as the various activities and items observed exposed the general lack of interest among the younger generation of the Okre communities in the culture of the stools.

In view of this, only a small percentage had some insight into the aesthetic aspect of the stool, their owners/occupants as well as the meaning of its symbolism. Although there was the consciousness of the existence of the stools as the symbol of office for the chiefs and queenmothers it did not extend to the essence of the stools, its symbolism, recording and educational value. Unfortunately, only a small fraction (probably less than 10%) of the information on the indigenous stools in the various towns has been documented.

In this age and time, such vital information was still being handed down to the younger generation through oral tradition. This process has not only generated a general lack of interest in the stools but had also gradually corrupted the core of the information about the stool. There is therefore the need to salvage the available information and using the available technologies such as photography, videos and the prints, to properly document them for posterity.

It could be said that the general lack of questioning among the Okre over the years, as well as, the acceptance of the Akan superiority had created an entirely new system which has overshadowed the indigenous stools of the Okre. The general lack of interest in the availability of indigenous Okre stools has perhaps cemented the widely accepted idea that the indigenous leaders of Okre used stones instead of stools. This had permeated the minds of most of the Okre citizenry, both young and old, that even prominent educated citizens had accepted this as a fact without questioning its basis.

This idea however generated two fundamental questions, one to the members of the Okre ethnic group and the other to the general public.

The first question was an evidence of how the “stone seats” of office were used for a chronological documentation of their leaders. Surprisingly, there has not been a single person who could give any meaningful answer. This could be attributed to either the lack of knowledge by the present generation on how it was done or the fact that there was another means of keeping records of the leaders which has been overlooked by the people.

The second question was that information gathered by the researcher, especially in the review of related literature, show that with the exception of the ethnic groups found in the savanna and the desert region which use skins as their seat (some even have headrest made of wood), almost all the ethnic groups found in the forest areas in Africa and for that matter Ghana use the indigenous stool as their symbol of authority as well as the essence of their culture. Why would the Okre ethnic group inspite of the abundance of wood defy the generally acceptable norm of seating especially for their leaders to opt for only the stones?

Although it could be said that generally, the indigenous stools of the Okre had been overshadowed by the Akan stools thus reducing the authority of the “adedifo” in most cases to mere figure heads as far as administrative issues are concerned, indeed, there has been a perfect assimilation of the indigenous systems in most of the Okre towns. It might be true that the very nature of the white stools does not allow participation in

some of the rituals associated with the black stools, however, both are used as symbols of authority in the interest of the towns.

Whereas the black stools takes care of the administrative and partly religious (ancestral veneration) aspects of the society, the white stools are seen as the spiritual backbones of the town. It could be recalled that most of the black stools found in the Okre towns are directly protected by the head deities of the towns. For example Otutu of Adukrom, Atti of Apirede as well as Bosomptra of Abiriw could be described as the spiritual protectors of the main stools of the towns.

The assimilation of the Akan system of chieftaincy into the Okre culture is very evident in the choice of stools used by most of the present day chiefs and queenmothers, just like their Akan counterparts, they have acquired personal and ceremonial stools with symbols relating to their concept of chieftaincy or their lineage. Wherea no new white stools are created, (those recently created are usually to replace the old ones) a lot more black stools are always being created.

The main aim of the research was to identify the stunning uniqueness of the indigenous stools of the Okre, which have over the years been lumped up with that of their Akan speaking neighbours, in the area of their aesthetic, philosophical and socio-cultural (political, historical and educational). It should be mentioned that in a region where an immense cultural assimilation has taken place for close to three centuries, a lot of the indigenous characteristics of the less prominent culture, might have dissolved into that of the superior culture.

The aim of the research was not to rejuvenate the culture of the Okre that is gradually merging with that of the Akan but rather, to help trace the root and the development, over the ages of such a culture. It was also to inquire into how the culture became meaningful to its custodians. Perhaps another focus of the study was on how works of art, particularly the stools of the Okre, have impacted positively or otherwise in the lives of the Okre people. The use of the qualitative method of research was very appropriate in helping to unearth the nuances in the histories, mythologies as well as function of the stools.

6.2 Conclusions

Every culture would one day come to an end in terms of the practises associated with it. However, part of what it stood for should always be preserved to serve as an inspiration for future generation because in as much as no society can hold on to the indigenous cultural practises forever, it will not be proper to lose it without a trace to a superior culture. Inferences from this and other researches have proven that the best way to preserve or revisit such an asset is to look at the cultural objects, mostly the artforms of the people. Learning about an art work of the past is not aimed at perpetuating their existence but rather helping the present generation to be mindful of the valuable and cherished aspects of that cultural practice. It helps to correct the mistakes that hinder development and also to prescribe better ways of improving upon them for the future generation.

In a research which aims at gathering data in the quest to inform the present and subsequent generations about a cultural practice or object, one has to be very careful

not to make sentimental conclusions based on generalisations. This is because in view of the fact that narrations from the indigenes and writings from scholars may harbour a considerable amount of truth concerning the subject, the researcher should also be in a position to interrogate these information based on the current happenings and the relativity of time. This action is highly likely to expose a substantial amount of error due to the narrator's effort at presenting issues as ideal as possible. There is also the tendency to interpret ideas in the light of the modern era.

In as much as the researcher would not be in a position to authenticate the entire data collected, he is very much aware that in a region that is experiencing an amount of ethnic secession, each of the parties involved will try to justify its existence and superiority. This might lead to the idealization of information in favour of each of the group. However, a critical comparism of data from the indigenes as well as literary sources and existing archaeological evidence, helped to substantiate most of the claims.

The indigenous artfoms, particularly the stools of the Okre ethnic group in both the pre and post Akan era have attested to this fact, however, there is a general disinterest in the concept of the indigenous stools of the Okre, especially among the youth. This could also be attributed to such factors as:

- The contemporary system of governance which has more or less relegated the chieftaincy institution to just a cultural entity without much political powers.
- The advent of new forms of Western style of education and religion notably Christianity and Islam which have labeled the stools as a “fetish”. Converts to these faiths therefore find it difficult to associate with the stools.

- Lack of documentation has dealt the hardest blow to the interest of a greater part the community in the Okre stools. This claim can be justified in the light of the Akan stools, particularly the Asante stools. It could be seen the bounteous information on them creates an avenue for the present generation and obviously subsequent ones to show interest in it.

There was however a general agreement that documentation and perhaps the inclusion of study of the stool as an integral part of the curriculum on cultural studies at all levels of education would help to not only boost the interest of the present generation but also sustain the Okre culture and preserve it for subsequent generations. Perhaps from the simple styled stool seen among the early Okre shrine stools, there has been a steady development in both the making and the symbolism of the stool. It also shows the extent to which chiefs and queenmothers can now express their concepts without hindrance. This is perhaps a good sign for the future of the stool culture because other interesting and contemporary ideas apart from what the present generation is losing interest in can acceptably be included into the execution and use of the stool.

Another area of interest in the sustaining of the stool culture is the fact that in recent times most of the chiefs and queenmothers are Christians and elite or highly educate. This can be seen in the number of chiefs and queenmothers who occupy various positions in the civil and public service. There is also the formation of the Ghana Association of Christian Chiefs and Queenmothers. In some few instances, there are some Moslems. This situation has helped to demystify the seemingly mystical and “fetish” aura that surrounds the chieftaincy institution making it palatable for

everybody to be part. It should be noted that the sacred black and white stools still maintain their sacredness.

6.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made to help the present and future generation of Ghanaians, artists, students, teachers and researchers to “read” art and to produce art works as a means of enhancing the socio-cultural development of Okre and Ghana in general. These are:

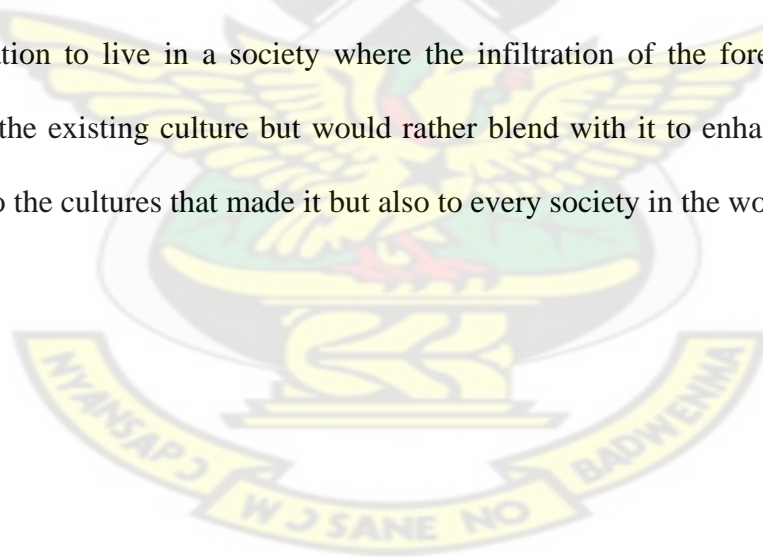
- Since the “people can be found in their art”, the institution mandated to draft the curriculum for the study of art as well as the teachers who implement them at the various stages of learning, should ensure that the study of cultural objects of a country like Ghana, should not be focus on just a majority ethnic group, the Akan, but rather, it should be broad-based to cover other minority ethnic groups through a thorough research and interactions.
- Ghana is made up of a number of ethnic groups each having its unique characteristics, as such, teachers should strive to give studies of the works of other ethnic groups apart from the Akan prominence at all levels of learning. Through this, they will help establish their similarities and differences bringing out the nuances in the rich artistic and cultural diversity in Ghana. It will also help the students to cultivate interest in their individual cultures thereby delving deeper into it to bring out much more information about it.
- In the classroom, the study of art should not be seen as just a “fill-in” subject but

rather, it should be given much attention in the development of the curriculum as a comprehensive and a full scale subject aimed at the development of the nation. Teachers must help their students to be aware of the importance of the various cultural objects and the role they have played in the development of any society. This will lead to further research aimed at unearthing other cultural objects and their significance to the society.

- Teachers of art as well as other practising artist should encouraged students to bring out works of art not just as a matter of course but as a testament of the times they find themselves. Apart from the classrooms, there should be various workshops and seminars geared towards ensuring that the works of art that students produce are in tune with their culture. By doing so, they would be documenting and immortalizing the mindset of their people for subsequent generation.
- The present times there are numerous ways of documenting cultural objects. Some of the processes of documentation include the audio such as the various sound recording systems and the video which takes care of the both still and motion pictures. There is also the literary aspect with stockpiles writings in the various libraries for accessibility. In view of this, the concept and importance of documentation of artworks should be inculcated into students by their teachers at a very early stage to invigorate, enhance and promote their interest in that direction.
- The preservation of a cultural heritage, in my opinion should be the responsibility of every member of a given society. Considering the present religious and cultural orientation, indigenous works of art should not be seen as “fetish” and outmoded to

the present society but rather, a key to the development of all generation. It should be seen as a brand for national identity especially in a fast growing era of globalisation. Artworks which constitute the cultural objects should be refined in both their making and use to make it acceptable to the present generation.

This serious attempt to use these recommendations for the development of art and culture should be spearheaded by the government. Institutions in charge of the upholding and preservation of the moral and cultural essence of the society such as the churches, various ministries in charge of the promotion of culture, the traditional authorities as well as the institutions of learning should endeavour to promote the culture of the people to suit the times. This would help the present and subsequent generation to live in a society where the infiltration of the foreign cultures will not erode the existing culture but would rather blend with it to enhance its usefulness not only to the cultures that made it but also to every society in the world.



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Endnotes:

1. The use of the spelling “Akwapim” and “Akuapem” are both accepted. Perhaps the term “Akuw-apem” was spelled “Akwapim” by the early missionaries.
2. The Gonja state refers to the early Guan state which was later dominated by Ndewura Jakpa (Flight,1968).
3. The terms “Abosom” and “suman” have been used extensively in context but not interchangeably. According to Osofo Kwasi Ayeh (priest of Otutu of Adukrom) the Obosom becomes the spirit entity (deity) that inhabits the receptacle (suman). As such every “obosom” have a “suman”. The ancestral stool therefore becomes a “suman” into which the spirit of the ancestor can be invoked.
4. Okrehene: refers to the chief of Adukrom who is now the head of the Okre ethnic group. It should be noted that until recently there was no such title as “Okrehene”. It might therefore not be found in many books and writings.
5. The Okre ethnic group celebrates both Ohum (eba) and Odwira. Two types of ohum is celebrated in a year these are the “enumdi eba” (the ohum for the elderly) and “ebe” (the general ohum). The eating of new yam by the deities (“akpe odwe”) is usually done during the “ enumdi eba”.
6. Okuapehene: refers to the head of the 17 towns of Akuapem. However in recent times, after the attempted secession by the Guan (Kyerepong and Larteh) and the Anafo (Aburi and its surround towns), his rulership has been reduced to Akropong, Amanokrom and some few Akan speaking Akuapem towns.

7. The words “le”, “re” and “de” (belonging to) added to most of the Okre clan names make it a possessive noun. Dialectically, the “le” should have been used.

Example “Anyaako-le” or “Akese-le”

8. ∇Κρανκραν∇ ις τηε γρουπ οφ μουνταινς ον ωηιχη τηε ανχεστορς οφ τηε Αβ ονσε πεοπλε οριγιναλλψ σεττλεδ, νοτεδ φορ τηειρ ρεδ χλαψ ανδ σλιππερψ σλ οπεσ.



List of some interviewees:

Nana Saforo Okoampa III Apiredehene

Opanyin Kono. Ex- linguist of Apirede

Barima Yaw Gyeke I Tufuhene of Apirede and Mponuahene of Okre

Opanyin Kwasi Akora

The late Opanyin Kwame Gyekete. Abusuapanyin of Abondi

The late Opanyin Amoako (Agya Kaya) stool father of Apirede

Nana Tieku Asare IV Monu Adikrohene

Nana Kwame Anom, Bamuhene of Apirede.

Awo Efua Apesiwa: priestess of the Bohen shrine at Apirede.

Osofo Kwasi Ayeh. Priest of Otutu shrine

Mr. Ansah Kumi

Awo Afua Ayebea

Opanyin Yaw Kono elder of Adukrom

Nenye Otutu Kono III. Okrehene

Awo Adwoa Gyeko III, Queenmother of Adukrom).

Mr. Essiful, son of Nana Otutu Ababio IV, late chief of Adukrom

Mr. Kudjo Mantey of Adukrom

Mr. Kwasi Aboah of Adukrom

Head of Adu-awi and current Adummannuru of Adukrom.

Miss Martha Adubea -Adukrom

Mr. Brown

Nana Henaku II, chief of Abiriw-Akuapem

Nana Apenteng I, Nkosuohene of Abonse-Akuapem

Oberempong Kusi Obuabum V. Chief of Aseseeso Akuapem

Mr. Daniel Amponsah (Agya Koo Nimo), Kumasi

Nana J.T. Owusu-Ansah. KNUST, Kumasi

Dr. Kodwo Edusei. Dept of Art Education, College of Art, KNUST- Kumasi.

APPENDIX 1

SAMPLES OF QUESTIONNAIRE.

A questionnaire for a sample of the Okre populace to solicit views on the essence, and importance of their Stools

Age: below 20 years ☐ 20-40 years ☐ 40-60 years ☐ above 60 years
Gender: M ☐ F ☐
Educational Level: Non Formal ☐ Primary ☐ MSLC/JSS ☐ O/A Level/SSS ☐
Diploma/University ☐

1) Do you know the name/title of most of your chiefs? Yes ☐ No ☐

2) Briefly tell us the meaning of some of the their name or title

3) Can you say that the stool is an important symbol of the chieftaincy institution among the Okre Yes ☐ No ☐

4) Name some of the symbolism in the stool in your town?

5) Have the chieftaincy institution been contributing to the development of the town? Yes ☐ No ☐

6) Is the chieftaincy institution relevant in our modern day system of government? Yes ☐ No ☐

7) If yes, in what way has the present society benefited from the stool?

8) Have you as an individual benefited directly or indirectly from the stool. Yes ☐ No ☐

9) Would you agree that the stools of the various chief in the Okre ethnic group are the same as all others found elsewhere in terms of origin, philosophy and status.

Yes ☐ No ☐

- 10) If no, what do you think makes the Okre stools different from the stools found among the various ethnic groups in Ghana?

- 11) Do you consider the stools of your chief as an art work with aesthetic value other than just a cultural object? Yes ☐ No ☐

- 12) In our present religious situation would you consider the stool as a “deity” and outmoded cultural object? Yes ☐ No ☐

- 13) What do you think are some of the things the society, especially the youth, can learn from the existence of the stool

.....
.....

- 14) are you adequately knowledgeable in the symbolism and the essence as well as the philosophies embodied in your stool Yes ☐ No ☐

- 15) Is there adequate information on your stool in terms of documentation? Yes ☐ No ☐

- 6) Does the stool culture have a future among the Okre people in terms of all the above mentioned attributes? Yes ☐ No ☐

- 17 Would you want to see stools, and for that matter the stools of the Okre people documented, if yes, please give your reasons? Yes ☐ No ☐

- 18) Do you see the studying of the stool and its symbolism in the school’s curriculum at all levels of learning in Ghana as a sure way of preserving our culture? Yes ☐ No ☐

- 19) Would you recommend the inclusion of the studying of the stool and its symbolism in the curriculum at all levels of learning in Ghana? Yes ☐ No ☐

A questionnaire for Okre chiefs, elders and opinion leaders to solicit views on the essence, and importance of their Stools

Age: below 20 years ☐ 20-40 years ☐ 40-60 years ☐ above 60 years

Gender: M ☐ F ☐

Educational Level: Non Formal ☐ Primary ☐ MSLC/JSS ☐ O/A Level/SSS ☐
Diploma/University ☐

1) What is your office/title?

2) Does your office have a stool? Yes ☐ No ☐

3) If yes, briefly tell us the meaning of your stool name or title

4) Do you believe that the stool is the most important symbol of chieftaincy in your area.

Yes ☐ No ☐

5) Give two basic duties of the chieftaincy institution?

6) Are those duties relevant to the society in our modern day? Yes ☐ No ☐

7) If yes, give reasons

8) What are some of the basic benefit the society have been deriving from the stools in your area?

9) Would you say that the stool has played an important role in the development of the people in your society over the years Yes ☐ No ☐

10) Mention some few of those roles

11) To what extent is your knowledge of the symbols in the stools in your area,
Good ☐ Very Good ☐

12) Would you agree that the stools in your area are the same as all others in terms of
origin, philosophy and status? Yes ☐ No ☐

13) If no, what do you think is/are the main difference(s) in the stools of the various
ethnic groups in Ghana?

14) Would you say that the stool culture has a future in your society in terms of all the
above mentioned attributes Yes ☐ No ☐

15) Can the stools in your society (and all others) be considered as an art work with
aesthetic value? Yes ☐ No ☐

16) In our present religious situation would you consider the stool as a “fetish” and
outmoded cultural object? Yes ☐ No ☐

17) Briefly say some of the things the society, especially the youth, can learn from the
existence of the stool.

18) Is there adequate information on your stool in terms of documentation? Yes ☐ No ☐

19) If no, what do you see to be the cause?

20) Would you want to see your stool, and for that matter the stools of the Okre people
documented, if yes, please give your reasons Yes ☐ No ☐

21) In your opinion, are the people in your society adequately knowledgeable in the symbolism and the essence as well as the philosophies embodied in the stools

Yes ☐ No ☐

22) Would you recommend the inclusion of the studying of the indigenous Ghanaian stool and its symbolism in the school curriculum at all levels of learning in

Ghana?

Yes ☐ No ☐

NB. Please any other comments or information should be written below in the space provided.



A questionnaire for wood carvers in and around Akuapem to solicit views on the essence, and importance of their Stools and other carvings.

Age: below 20 years ☐ 20-40 years ☐ 40-60 years ☐ above 60 years

Gender: M ☐ F ☐

Educational Level: Non Formal ☐ Primary ☐ MSLC/JSS ☐ O/A Level/SSS, Diploma/University ☐

1) How long have you been carving?

2) How did you learn carving Formally ☐ informally/apprenticeship ☐

3) Where do you derive your inspiration?

4) Who are your main clients?

5) What type of wood do you normally use and why that choice of wood

6) Apart from the other artifacts do you carve indigenous stools? Yes ☐ No ☐

7) How much is your knowledge in the symbolism, essence and use of the indigenous Ghanaian stools especially among the Okre Good ☐ Very Good ☐

8) Briefly mention some few symbols you use in your stools and tell us why they are used

9) Do you usually link the indigenous Ghanaian stools to chieftaincy Yes ☐ No ☐

10) Do you carve stools specifically for chiefs? Yes ☐ No ☐

11) Do you believe that the stool is the most important symbol of chieftaincy in your area
Yes ☐ No ☐

12) What are some of the basic benefit the society have been deriving from the stools

13) Would you say that the stool has played an important role in the development of the people in your society over the years, If yes, mention some few of these roles

Yes ☐ No ☐

14) Would you say that the stools you carve are the same as all others in terms of origin, philosophy and status? Yes ☐ No ☐

15) If no, what do you think is/are the main difference(s) in the stools of the various ethnic groups in Ghana?

16) Does the stool culture have a future in your society in terms of all the above mentioned attributes? Yes ☐ No ☐

17) Would you consider the stools you make (and all others) basically as an art work with aesthetic value? Yes ☐ No ☐

18) As a carver, would you agree that the culture of the people is usually embodied in the aesthetic values of their cultural objects Yes ☐ No ☐

19) With special reference to the stools do you consider yourself to be a documenter of the culture of your people in terms of the work you produce, if yes give reasons.
Yes ☐ No ☐

20) Is there adequate information on the works you produce especially the stool in terms of documentation? Yes ☐ No ☐

21) If no, what do you see to be the cause of the lack of documentation?

22) In your opinion, are the people in your society adequately knowledgeable in the symbolism and the essence as well as the philosophies embodied in the stools
Yes ☐ No ☐

23) Would you want to see the indigenous stool, of the ethnic groups in Ghana documented, if yes, please give your reasons. Yes ☐ No ☐

24) Would you recommend the inclusion of the studying of the stool and its symbolism in the curriculum at all levels of learning in Ghana? Yes ☐ No ☐



Interview Guide for Chiefs, Queenmothers, Priest and Priestess of Okre.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

- *Age:
- *Gender:
- *Educational Level:

- 1) What is the name/title of your stool?
- 2) Briefly tell us the meaning of your stool name or title
- 3) What are the basic duties of your stool?
- 4) Are those duties still important to the society?
- 5) What are some of the important role the stool has played in the all round development of the people in your society over the years

THE STOOL

- 6) Is your stool name inherited or a new one: if yes, do you have adequate knowledge on the history of your predecessors?
- 7) What is the exact origin of your stool?
- 8) For how long has your stool been in existence among the Okre people
- 9) What is the main symbol and meaning embodied in your stool?
- 10) How was the symbol and its meaning derived
- 11) Do you know of a stool that is similar to yours in terms of origin and philosophy among other ethnic groups in Ghana and beyond?
- 12) Do you think the chieftaincy institution and its associate stool culture has a future in your society in these modern times
- 13) What aspect of the stool (seat) and its office (chieftaincy) would you wish to see changed?

- 14) Do you think the change from the theocratic to the chieftaincy system of leadership by the Okre has helped maintained the cultural identity of the people?
- 15) Is there adequate information on your stool and others in the Okre towns in terms of documentation?
- 16) What do you think has been the cause of the lack of documentation in your stool and that of others among the Okre People?

KNUST

*= Optional



A Questionnaire on the Aesthetic Appreciation of some Okre Stools

Age: below 20 years ☐ 20-40 years ☐ 40-60 years ☐ above 60 years

Gender: M ☐ F ☐

Educational Level: Non Formal ☐ Primary ☐ MSLC/JSS ☐ O/A Level/SSS ☐
Diploma/University ☐

Please use the attached photograph of the stools to answer the questions.

What medium was used for the stool?

Does the stool look living?

Has the finishing given to the stool affected its look?

Does the size of the stool affect its physical appearance?

Who is the owner/occupant of this stool?

Does this stool reflect the office/position of the occupant/owner?

Why was this stool created?

Is the stool true to fact or exaggerated to make a point?

What is unique about this stool compared to other stools you have come across?

Does this stool as an artwork represent a historical event or a religious practice in your town?

Do you understand the symbolism in this stool?

What does the artist seem to be telling you?

Does the stool have any educative essence on the culture to which it belongs?

If yes, state two of them

What impact has this stool had in the preserving of the culture of your people?

NB. Please any other comments or information should be written below in the space provided

APPENDIX 2

Some popular Adinkra Symbols.



Gye Nyame (except God). Symbol of the Omnipotence and immortality of God.



Funtunfunafu denkyem funafu won afuru bom nso worididi a na wo ko." Sharing one stomach yet they fight over food.



Odenkyem (crocodile) da nsuo mu nso ohome nsuo ne mframa. The crocodile lives in the water yet it breathes air, not water.



Bi-nka-bi. Obi nka obi (bite not one another). Avoid conflicts. Symbol of Unity.



Adinkra hene (Adinkra king). Chief of all the adinkra designs. Forms the basis of adinkra printing.



Dwanimen (Ram's horn).
"Δωοννιν ψξ ασισε α ξδε νθακορανα να ξννψε νε μβζν." It is the heart and not the horns that leads a ram to bully. Concealment.



Hye wo nyhe (the one who burns you be not burned). Symbol of forgiveness. Turn the other cheek.



Nkξvσξvκξvσξv (link or chain). We are linked in both life and death. Those who share common blood relations never break apart. Symbol of human relations.



Gyawu atikξ. This is said to be the design shaved by Gyawu, a once Bantamahene.



Krapa (Musu yide). Good fortune sanctity. "Kerapa te se okera.Okyiri fi." Sanctity like a cat. Abhors filth. Symbol of sanctity and good fortune.



Ξhene niwa (in the king's eye). The king has lots of eyes and nothing is hidden from him.



Akoma (the heart). "Nya akoma (take heart)." Have patience. Symbol of patience and endurance.



Biribi wξ soro. "Νψαμε βιριβι ωξ σορο να μα εμβζκα μενσα (God there is something in the heavens, let it reach me.)." A symbol of hope.



Nyame dua (an altar to the sky God). Altar, place of worship.



Nkyin kyin (ξhema nkyinkyin). Changing one's self. Playing many roles.



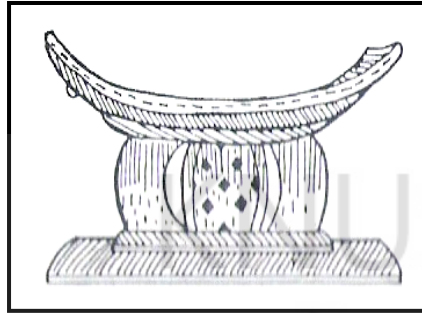
Ntesie-matemasie (I have heard and kept it). "Nyansa bun mu nne mate masie." Symbol of wisdom and knowledge.



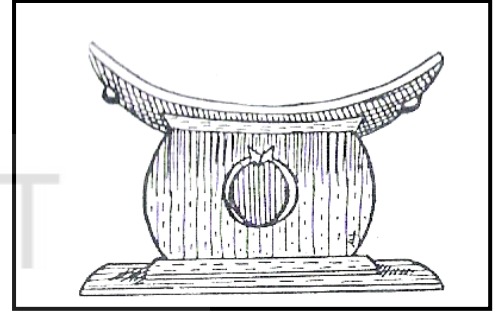
Sunsum (soul). Some Akans believe that the soul of a ruler inhabits a younger courtier.

APPENDIX 3

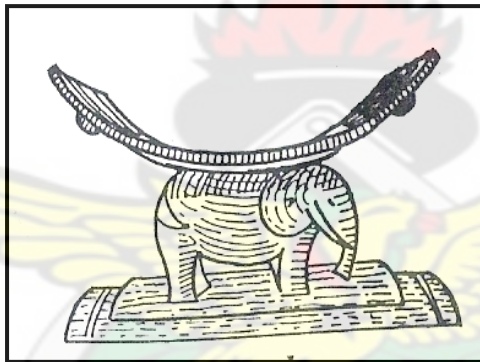
Some popular Ghanaian stools



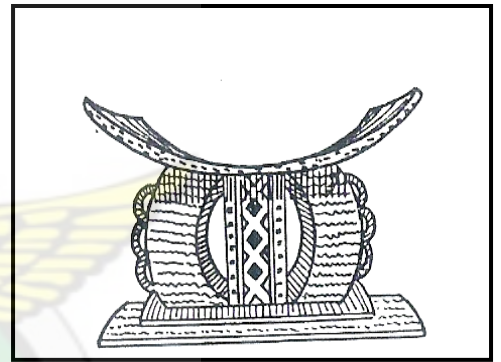
Ahemaagua



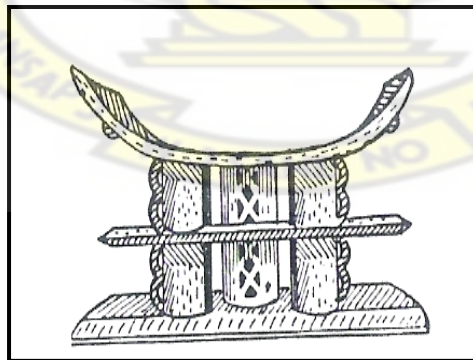
Kradogua



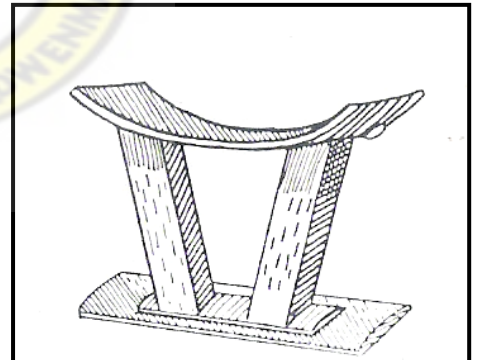
Osonogua



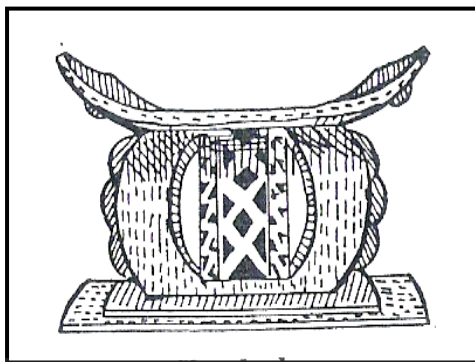
Kontonkurowigua



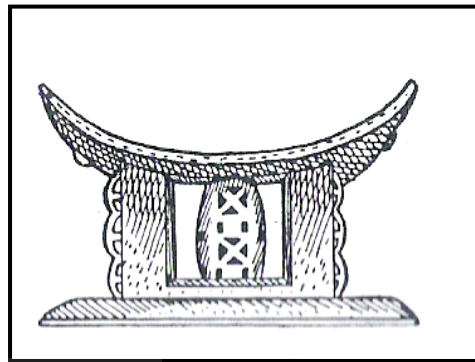
Obo-te-bi-so gua



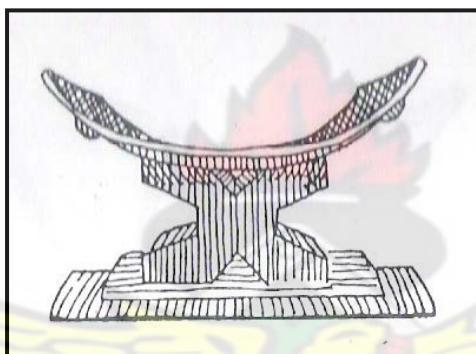
Ejusohene gua



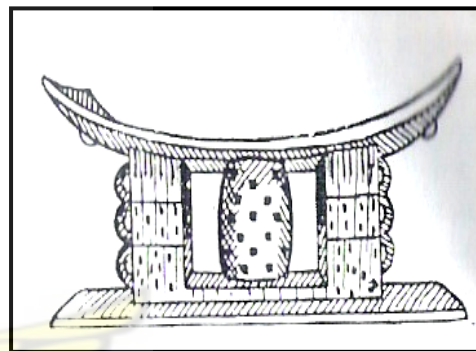
Κξκξtξγυα



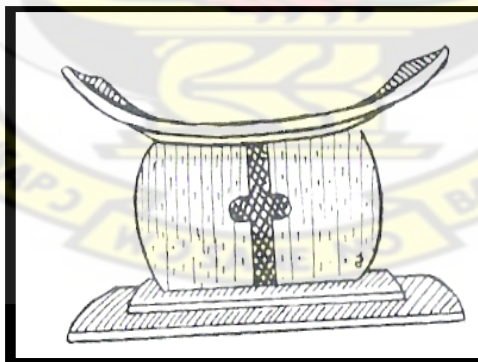
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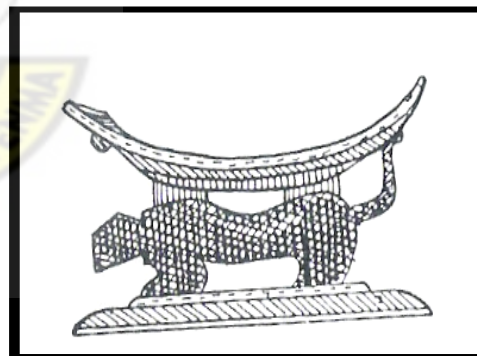
Osramgua



Nsζbζgua



Mamponghe gya



Ξεβξγυα