

**KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**  
**COLLEGE OF ART AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, KUMASI**

**AESTHETIC AND EDUCATIONAL UNDERPINNINGS OF SIGNS AND SYMBOLS**  
**AMONG THE CENTRAL EWES OF GHANA**

BY

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the Ph. D and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no materials previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of any other University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Central Ewes have identifiable signs and symbols that are of significance to them. The youth, especially, do not adequately benefit from them. The older generations are dying with the knowledge, so a gap is created as to how to learn the accumulated knowledge and values from the signs and symbols. Central Ewe signs and symbols are also not generally known and the larger population is generally not familiar with their values. They are ‘coded’ and need to be unravelled for better appreciation. In order to solve the problem, the research sought to identify and discuss the signs and symbols, their aesthetic and educational values. The study sets out objectives, which help develop a structured interview guide to gather information. Geographically, the study is limited to eleven (11) towns in the Central Volta region of Ghana. Twenty-one (21) signs and twenty (20) symbols were identified. The signs and symbols have aesthetic and educational values from which moral lessons are learnt and it is an integral part of their everyday life. Central Ewes also have additional concepts of aesthetics which spell out the theory of excellence. Besides, they equate beauty with function or usefulness. Some of the signs and symbols are similar to that of the Akans. Their use will achieve cultural unity among the Central Ewes and other cultures, especially non-Ewes in the country.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **1.0 Overview**

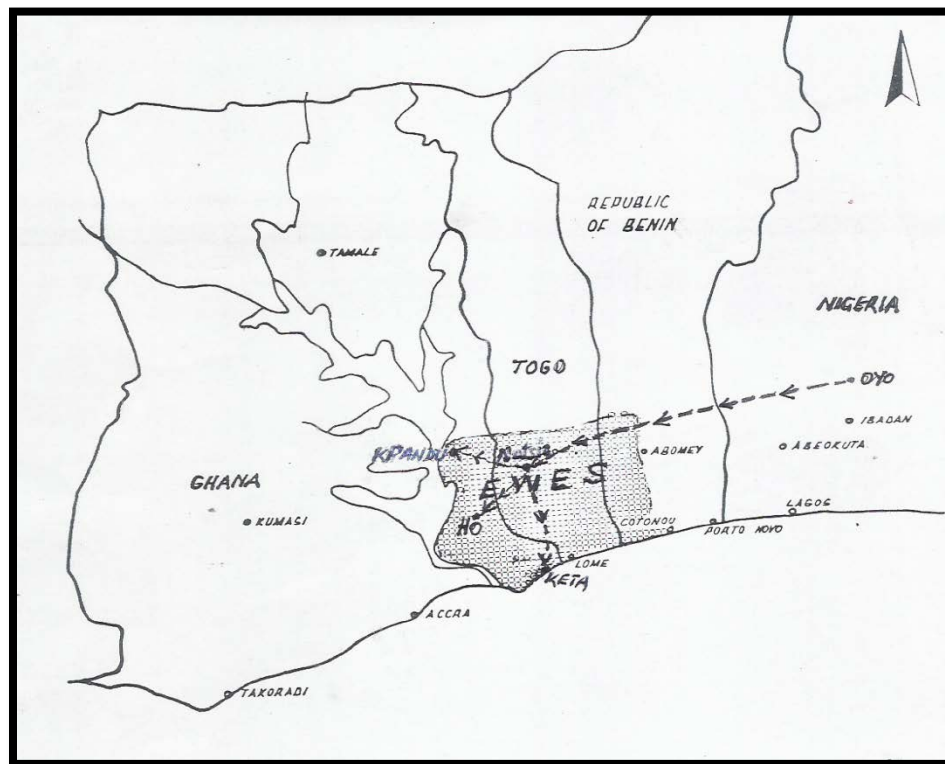
This chapter describes the background to the study which involves the history of migration of the Central Ewes of Ghana, their political practices, their culture which they still transmit through education and their economic activities. The chapter also discusses signs and symbols, their nature and the roles they play in the Central Ewe traditional society. The chapter contains the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, research questions and assumptions. As well, it includes the delimitation, limitation, definition of terms, the importance of the study and finally, the organization of the text.

## **1.1 Background to the Study.**

In the absence of written literature in the past, signs and symbols were used among the Central Ewes of Ghana to understand their history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology and their total way of life. Therefore the philosophy of the study is to unravel the keys to better understanding of Central Ewe culture.

According to Mamattah (1976), the Ewes migrated from Oyo in Western Nigeria in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and settled in Notsie in the Republic of Benin. They migrated again, and this time split in three parties on the way. The first party currently inhabiting Ho traditional area took the middle course. The second party, now in Kpando and Peki, went northward. The third group went to Atiavi, Keta and Anlo along with their culture. There are islands of linguistically distinct ethnic groups in Amedzofe, Logba, Tafi and Akpafu traditional areas who presumably were not part of these groups, but settled at the present dwellings from the Western Region of Ghana.

Prior to the advent of European rule, Ewes never lived under one political authority. They were organized into a number of chiefdoms, varying in size from a few villages to large and powerful kingdoms such as Anlo and Peki (Mamattah, 1976). Despite the absence of political unity, the Ewes share a common myth of origin and history of migration; a common Ewe language spoken throughout Ewe land; signs and symbols are used in their activities; and finally, the consciousness of being one people.



**Fig 1.1:** A map showing migration route of the Ewes

Source: Ghana Geological Survey Dept., Ho (April, 2009).

The vegetation of the Central Volta is mixed forest. The major traditional economic activities of the Central Ewes depend predominantly on the fertile land and the long stretch of the Volta River and other rivers such as *Dayi*, *Amimli*, *Tsawe*, *Koloe*, and *Aflabo*. This has made the

central Volta area agricultural communities. Farming is largely subsistent and depends on individual, family and cooperative labour drawn from the various communities. Major farming tools are rudimentary. They include hoes, machetes, axes, and cutlasses. Other farming items are baskets and containers for harvesting crops such as cassava, maize, palm, sweet potatoes, plantain, fruits and vegetables. Farming activities are carried out during the major season between March and July and during the minor season between September and December. During bumper harvests, thanksgiving offerings are made to the divinities. Inhabitants also engage in economic activities such as hunting, fishing, cropping and trading. Most of the well - known leaders during their period of migration were hunters. Hunting therefore, is identified as an old traditional occupation. It is for this reason that various hunting rituals are performed today. Several hunters' shrines are living monuments of hunters' exploits in the past. This is closely associated with folklore such as songs, proverbs, legends and myths. Religion transcends the life of the people in the Central Volta Region of Ghana. The major religious groups include Traditional religion and Christian religion and Islamic religion.

From time immemorial, signs and symbols have been visual representations for communication through which men have applied their philosophies, knowledge and skills to execute specific functions in the indigenous society. The meaning of a symbol may be arbitrary, therefore different symbols may be used to mean the same thing. Conversely, a particular symbol may have different meanings in different cultures. The *Swastika*, for example has highly negative connotations in Western cultures because of its association with Nazis; but to Hindus it signifies good fortune.

The meaning of any symbol is determined by culture, not by genes or biology; (Howard, 1989). Societies throughout the world have drawn upon important cultural symbols as a means of

distinguishing their community from others. With oral tradition, signs and symbols are an adaptive necessity for our system of indoctrination. They are used as encoding and mnemonic instruments to make important information more easily and accurately assimilable. As a result, even in the absence of written texts, essential aspects of culture are not lost, ignored or dismissed. Instead, coded in non - literate ways, they are integrated and expressed in socially shared symbols. Signs and symbols express moral philosophy for traditional Africans who were not constrained by the precise implications of writing, but who were nonetheless constrained by an evolving group consensus based on proverbs and myths. Often a traditional symbol might refer directly to certain proverbs explicitly taught in association with the symbol. Such symbols existed as enduring, material evidence not only of the proverbs themselves but also of the ways in which these proverbs were used.

Symbols are objects, characters, or other concrete representations of ideas, concepts or other abstractions. A symbol, according to Heider (2000), is a visible form of an invisible concept. It could be an idea or mental image of an absent reality. The symbol could be a natural object or man-made or even an abstract form in the cosmos. For example in Egypt, the sphinx at the entrance of the pyramid is a symbol of security, stability and endurance. Symbols are fascinating, because they stir one's imagination and intuition to help one discover new meanings and insights. They invite one to explore the possibilities, and force one to go beyond a limited definition and literal thinking if one wants to understand the concepts they represent. An object can be described as a symbol of something else if it seems to represent it because it is connected with it in a lot of people's minds. It can be used to represent a quality or idea. For example, a dove is a symbol of peace and the black star in the Ghanaian flag is a symbol of hope for the black race in Africa.

The nature and role of signs and symbols can be mixed up in the process of transmitting information. Both signs and symbols show that something exists or might happen. They are used for visual communication and to provide stimuli for fairly determined and appropriate responses. In astrology, a sign is really more of a symbol because it has many levels of meaning beyond the ambiguous name which indicates a particular sector of the sky. Clear notion of the difference in the way signs and symbols are used and their nature is therefore necessary. Symbols are different from signs in the sense that they are not associated with any direct concrete item or physical activity; they are abstract.

A symbol's meaning is always obvious and has immediate meaning while a sign is always less than the concept it represents. Symbols are arbitrary units of meaning, in contrast to signs, which are directly associated with concrete physical items or activities. Signs can be learnt and be applied to different sorts of activities or concrete items. There is that difference between a sign and a symbol, depending on how it is viewed or used. A symbol has only the meaning that people have given it. Even a powerful symbol can lose its meaning, value, idea, historical consideration and philosophy if the society dishonours or ignores it for a period of time. In other words, the value of a symbol will depend on the sort of empowerment the people have given it.

Most African traditional signs and symbols are created from proverbs or as a result of paremiology. Though proverbs are symbolic, their symbolism can only be visualized when they are created in the form of symbols. Therefore it is worth talking about proverbs when it comes to discussions and analyses on signs and symbols in Ghana and Africa as a whole. To Africans in general, a proverb is a short structured saying widely known in a community, which conveys traditional observations on human nature and natural phenomena, moral judgments, mockery and

warnings. The people and their culture are therefore responsible for the meaning given to any particular symbol.

The synthetic process of giving meaning to symbols is expressed by proverbs as illustrated, in the saying: “fragile state power held in one hand is safe”. In another form, “power is like an egg, when held tightly, it might break or it will fall and break when held loosely.” Portraying it in a visual form, a hand holding an egg is created as shown in Fig 2.

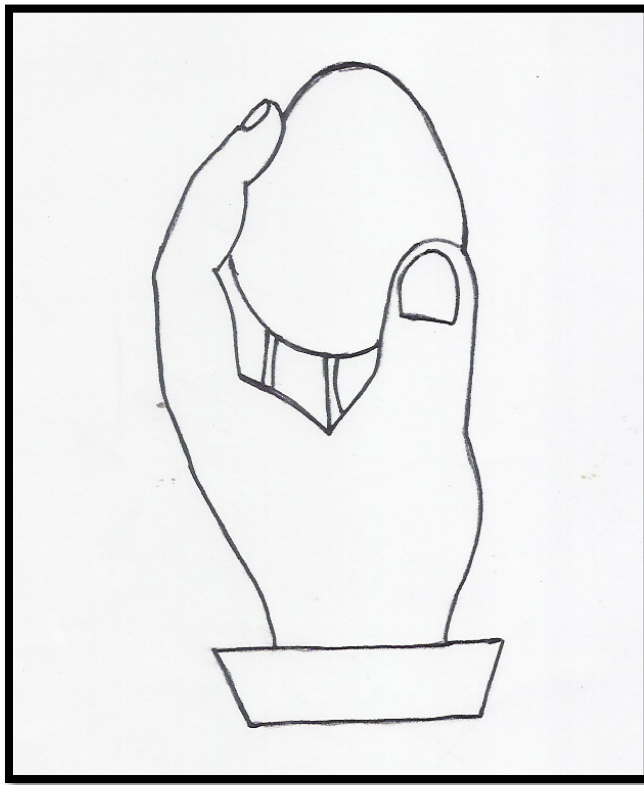


Fig. 1.2 A Linguist Staff Symbol (Peki) – hand holding an egg

Symbols permeate human culture in ways other than language. Objects, arts, and artistic performances may represent powerful cultural ideas and attitudes. People’s behaviour and understanding of the world are based on meanings expressed through symbols. Terms that are



symbolically used do not call for action appropriate to their objects. They make one think of their objects in a certain way. A symbol therefore is a vehicle for the conception of an object. It enables one to conceive or form an opinion of an object and for the formation of mental image. Art forms have served as symbols of rank and signs of status at all levels of society. In our society today, this is not immediately obvious, for we no longer consider many of these tokens as Art.

The conception of a symbol is therefore in what it means; for example, a woman is a symbol of peace, creativity, productivity, life, growth and care. The conception of objects is derived from certain unique and relatively enduring traits, noticeable in the objects used as symbols. For example, a snake is a symbol of continuous renewal or rebirth and wisdom to live without hands and legs. The meaning of a symbol, such as that of a sign is determined by the one using it and so the snake can be a symbol of humility and also a symbol of evil and deceit, as well as resurrected life. The subject and his culture are therefore responsible for the meaning given to any particular symbol; and the synthetic process of giving meaning to a symbol is expressed by a proverb. For example, “the potter, and not the pot, is responsible for the shape of the pot”.

The indigenous cultures of Africa are replete symbols and symbolic expressions. In the indigenous Ghanaian culture, symbols are used in different situations of life, and the context in which they are used. There are symbols that derived their name and popularity from one of the national cloths called “adinkra”. The word ‘adinkra’ comes from Akan words ‘di nkra’. This means goodbye. The ‘adinkra’ cloth is a mourning cloth. It is normally worn to express sympathy for the bereaved family and so it is commonly seen at funerals and memorial services.

The 'adinkra' cloth is used as an appropriate canvas for displaying traditional symbols which express their unique apprehension of reality and of death.

The traditional stool of Ghana, like the 'adinkra' cloth, is used as a medium for displaying various symbols. The stool itself is a symbol in its own right and considered as the abode of the soul of a nation or an individual. Traditionally, in Hohoe a bride is given a stool by her husband so as to settle her soul in the husband's house. The middle portion of the stool is carved as a symbolic representation which may be an object or abstract symbol such as elephant, leopard, and porcupine. The stool usually derives its name from the symbol that is used in its middle portion. The particular message of any stool is found in its middle portion.

At the court of any Ghanaian chief, there is always an official called 'okyeame'. He is a linguist or a spokesman through whom the chief is, in turn spoken to, on both private and public occasions. A linguist has a staff of office which is carved in wood and topped with a symbolic emblem, usually silver or gold-plated. The emblem depicts a proverb, expresses a highly cherished value in the society or communicates to subjects.

It has become clear from the preceding discussion that in the indigenous African society, it is evident that signs and symbols were born of religious or philosophical beliefs. All these sum up the indigenous creative view of life, which is an essential component of Africanity.

As a means of communication these practices are intimately bound to the peoples' way of life, tradition and religion. This relationship is a phenomenon which makes the signs and life of the people inseparable. Signs and symbols reflect the communicative aspects of Ewe culture. Ewes in general have been famous for a long time for their exquisite culture. Ideas and values of this culture are expressed in words that are used in ordinary language, idiomatic expressions,

proverbial renditions, songs, minstrel and so on. In all these aspects of life, the aesthetic and educational values become paramount.

The Central Ewes of Ghana use signs and symbols or images to maintain concepts of reality, to enhance art and to maintain their culture as well as its organization and roles. Like other cultures, Central Ewe signs and symbols are the age-old pictorial presentations of the values that have stood the test of time. Analysis and interpretation of these will reveal their aesthetic appeal and educational values.

It is through the arts that symbolism can be studied. The arts should not be consigned into oblivion. They are cultural indices, reflecting the philosophies and beliefs, as well as giving insight into the culture of the Central Ewes and other ethnic groups. Their beliefs and values determine the signs and symbols or the images. Through them, the society recognizes its own values, and thus, offers a means by which members of the community may express and evaluate new elements in their lives. It is evident that their philosophies, beliefs, aesthetic considerations and functionality have been the determining force underpinning the creation of signs, symbols and other images. In other words, the philosophies and beliefs are whipped up or enhanced by signs and symbols. Among Central Ewes, signs and symbols have a more diverse background than is ordinarily perceived. It spans the length of Ghana, and Ewe history by making allusions to issues related to items of culture.

The Central Ewes of Ghana build their life around the community and extended family system. Hence, whatever signs, symbols or images that have been created is for or used by all. The signs and symbols are functional, community-oriented and depersonalized. It may be disagreed on because there is no proper reference to the cultural environment and the historical reality of the people. As a result, there are all sorts of misinterpretations of the signs, symbols,

and images of the people. Signs and symbols of Central Ewe society are visual, and may be for identification, direction, caution or warning. They convey varied messages which are significant and capable of educating the citizenry in their socio-cultural life for the development of the society. Most people, especially the youth, see this as a creation and more so as a funny images without understanding their educational implications. Symbols and signs serve as instruments for education and aesthetic enjoyment.

A symbol is permanent, accepted and adopted by society so that it becomes a norm. A sign is temporary and serves the challenges of the moment. Signs that serve longer purposes also serve as symbols. A sign may warn or caution, prevent the unpleasant, and becomes a protector. If a sign does not teach, disaster may result. A sign is beautiful if it has a functional value, if it teaches morals and if it educates people. The moral teaching learnt from a sign or a symbol constitutes the educational value. The Central Ewe concepts of aesthetic and educational values are used to understand the signs and symbols presented in the photograph that follow.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

There are deep abstract philosophical, accumulated knowledge, values and beliefs of Ewes that have been useful to the society over the years, and which have been locked up in signs and

symbols that have not been unearthed. Therefore, Central Ewes, especially the youth do not adequately benefit from the usefulness of these signs and symbols.

The old generation who are familiar with, or who have some knowledge about signs and symbols of Central Ewes are dying with the knowledge. Besides, the youth who are to harness this wealth of knowledge, see it as an expression of 'primitivism'. This setback in the culture of the Central Ewes may be attributed to the wind of social change blowing across Ghana and the continent at large. However, the impact of modernization has not totally wiped out the practices, but has reduced the interest and enthusiasm for them. There is a little written literature on signs and symbols of Central Ewes; no enough documentation exists. Though a few adults know the signs and symbols, the meanings are little known or not known at all because the transmission of knowledge about signs and symbols is dependent on oral tradition.

Central Ewe signs and symbols are peculiar to Ewes and little known or have not been exposed to other Ewe cultures and other ethnic groups. The aesthetics of Ewe signs and symbols are not generally a common knowledge and the larger population is not generally familiar with the educational values. Ideas about the aesthetic are usually locked up in the minds of a few, and when expressed, spell out a theory of excellence, that is, some form of perfection. These ideas and usage of signs and symbols need to be investigated and documented for posterity.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The study sets out the following objectives:

1. To identify and describe signs and symbols among Central Ewes.
2. To discuss the aesthetic values of signs and symbols of Central Ewes.

3. To discuss the educational values of signs and symbols of Central Ewes

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What are the identifiable signs and symbols among the Central Ewes?
2. What aesthetic values of signs and symbols are of significance to the Central Ewes?
3. What educational values of signs and symbols are of significance to the Central Ewes?

#### **1.5 Delimitation**

In terms of content, the study is limited to aesthetic and educational values of Central Ewe signs and symbols. Geographically, it is limited to an area of 6857sq km bounded in the north by Hohoe, south by Abutia, west by the Volta Lake and east by Togo.



Fig. 1.3

Map of Central Volta Region of Ghana

K  Places visited for data collection

Source: Ghana Geological Survey Dept., Ho (April, 2009).

## **1.6 Assumptions**

1. It is assumed that most signs and symbols of Central Ewes metamorphosed from proverbs.
2. Signs and symbols display various Art forms and their significance in the cultural matrix of the people.
3. There are useful educational and aesthetic values in signs and symbols.

## **1.7 Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following terms carry the meanings attached to them:

**Acculturation -** A process by which an individual or group acquires the cultural characteristics of another culture through direct contact and interaction.

**Aesthetics -** Is the study of the theory or the science of beauty.

**Belief -** A cultural convention that concerns true or false assumptions, specific descriptions of the nature of the universe and humanity's place in it.

**Culture -** The sum total of the ways in which human beings live, transmitted from generation to generation by learning.



<b>Emblem -</b>	An object or its symbol adopted by a country, company, club or firm and used as a distinguishing mark or sign of office or honour.
<b>Education -</b>	It involves the changing of behavior in a desirable direction.
<b>Insignia -</b>	Is a symbols or token of personal power, status or office, or of an official body of government or jurisdiction.
<b>Philosophy -</b>	A particular system of belief, values and principles.
<b>Population -</b>	Any group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common.
<b>Proverb –</b>	A short sentence, that people often quote, which gives advice or comments on life or useful wisdom.
<b>Sample –</b>	A small unit of an entity which carries the same characteristics represented in the larger population.
<b>Sign -</b>	Something that stands for something else, to someone in some capacity. It may be understood as a discrete unit meaning, and include words, images, gestures, textures - especially all ways in which information can be communicated as a message.

**Symbol -** A visible form of an invisible concept. It could be an idea or mental image of an absent reality.

**Symbolism -** The use of visual images and ordinary objects which represent a deeper meaning than the images themselves.

**Values -** The standard by which members of a society define what is good or bad, holy or unholy, beautiful or ugly.

### **1.8 Importance of the Study**

The study will unearth the educational and aesthetic ideas expressed by the signs and symbols to the public. Also, it is a body of knowledge, which will serve as a reference material for other researchers, historians, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists and students. Thirdly, it will expose Ewe signs and symbols to the understanding of the Ewes and other ethnic groups in Ghana and beyond. Furthermore, it will add to the stock of existing signs and symbols in Ghana. And lastly, it will help preserve the Ewe culture.

### **1.9 Organization of the rest of text**

This work consists of five chapters. Chapter Two presents a review of the theoretical and empirical foundations of the study. Chapter Three, deals with the methodology. It discusses all the features employed in collecting data for the study. Chapter Four however, presents and discusses the findings of the study. And Chapter Five focuses on the summary, conclusions and recommendations. The text ends with References arranged in alphabetical order of the surnames and authors.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.0 Overview**

This chapter defines and explains a sign and a symbol. The chapter also reviews available literature on theories, signs and symbols, emblems, insignia, icons, logo and designs. Culture, proverbs and totem have also been reviewed to provide theoretical framework of the research. Finally, the chapter finds out the views of some scholars on the aesthetic, education and Art Education.

#### **2.1 Definition of Sign**

Fleming (1986) defines sign as something representing something else, or something that indicates or expresses the existence of something else, not immediately apparent. For example: a sign of poverty; a sign of trouble or a sign of life. It is also a gesture or action used to convey an idea, information, a wish or command.

A sign says one thing, and says it clearly without ambiguity. For instance, if one is driving across an intersection which has a STOP sign for an on-coming vehicle, it is giving one something with a single meaning and no other. In other words, a sign conveys simple information. It directs and indicates. A sign has direct immediate connection to what it indicates. We look for a 'sign' of rain in the sky. Another example is the traffic sign. Red means stop or prohibition. Placing one's arms across the middle of the head or at the back of the head is a sign of mourning. Therefore a sign is temporary and an event of the moment. It is created to satisfy a specific purpose at a given time (Dzobo, 2004).

## **2.2 Definition of Symbol**

‘Symbol’ is derived from the Greek word ‘symbolon’, which means contract, token, insignia and a means of identification. There are different concepts and definitions of symbol by various authors. Bevin (1977) defines a symbol in a design term as anything that stands for something else. It is a simplified image that because of certain association in the viewer’s mind represents a more complex idea or system.

According to Fleming (1986), a symbol is a form, image, sign or subject standing for something else. In the visual art, as he says, a symbol is often an invisible suggestion of something visible. Gilbert (2002) also defines a symbol as an image or sign that represents something else, because of convection, association or resemblance.

On his part, Dzobo (2004) says a symbol is a vehicle for the conception of an object. It enables us to conceive or form an opinion of an object, and for the formation of a mental image. The meaning of symbol is determined by the one using it. Symbol may be presented graphically, for example, as in the cross for Christianity. Symbols are most cherished ideas, which have been presented as a visual image accepted as a norm by a people, and are used symbolically to communicate knowledge, feeling and values.

## **2.3 Theory of Signs and Symbols**

According to Wechner (2000), theories under which signs and symbols operate are that, signs and symbols rule our lives. They also communicate and educate. This theory applies to the Central Ewe community. Signs and symbols gave them moral education. In addition, signs and symbols express life and have aesthetic values. Signs and symbols make humans think,

conceptualize as well as provide mental exercises in understanding and studying the meaning and messages that lie behind them.

## **2.4 Theory of Aesthetics**

According to Bernstein (1992), Kant's theory of aesthetics states that a beautiful object's form and design are the key to the all-important features of purposiveness. Appreciation of beauty has to be disinterested, in other words, instead of its purpose and the pleasurable sensations it brings about them. An object is beautiful because it promotes internal harmony or 'free play' of our faculties. Adorno (1997) is also of the view that art is beautiful because it is functional and brings about harmony in a society. This is evident in the Central Ewe community. Their signs and symbols serve as a unifier.

## **2.5 Theory of Education**

In education, learning is done through observation, imitation and participation. Education is to change behaviour, give knowledge, skills and understanding. Education is an integrated experience which combines not only physical with character training but also manual with intellectual training through observation, imitation of and participation in adult roles (Amissah, 1992). A person can be more educated if he adds extra knowledge to what is already known.

## **2.6 Theory of Constructivism**

This theory focuses on better understanding and interpreting social phenomena being studied through direct in-depth contact and relationship with the research subjects involved (Rubin & Babbie, 1997). The researcher applied this theory to get familiar with the Central Ewe

Community to gather reliable and authentic information by observing and interviewing them in their natural settlement. By direct contact with the people, a bond was established giving the researcher opportunity to become intimately involved.

## **2.7 Sign**

A sign is something which refers to another thing other than itself. Signs can be literal “signs”, such as a sale notice in a store window or directions on roads. Words and images are all signs (as they always refer to as something besides themselves.) behavior are often signs, as are mental concepts such as metaphors or equations that “stand for” some other reality. A sign is temporary and denotes future happening. A sign means any identification, description, illustration or information device, illuminated or non-illuminated, which provides information as a product, place, activity, person, institution or business and is displayed on the exterior of a building or property. The Holy Scriptures, (Exodus 12: 13), attests to sign as a mark for identification as it states that, “but the blood on your homes will be a special sign. When I see the blood, I will pass over your house.” From what has been said, blood is used in this context as a sign for identification.

A sign has direct immediate connection to what it indicates. It can be taken or designed to mean so many different things and so different meanings can be read into them that are possible: for example, “stick – up” thumb in Ghana and the United States. As well, the left hand can be a sign of filth or peace and reconciliation. Also, the protestors wave and throw their shoes at somebody as a sign of disrespect. A similar incident was viewed on Aljazeera Television Network in 2008, when an Iraqi threw his shoe at George Bush, the former president of The United States of America.

Signs can convey ambiguous information. Yet they furnish information about the environment, intentions and feelings of people so as to evoke appropriate responses. Eco (1976:16) defines a sign as, “everything that, on the grounds of a previously established social convention, can be taken as something standing for something else.” The major limitations of signs are their ambiguity and they do not point beyond themselves to hidden meanings and information as symbols do. As a contribution to this, Scupin (2001:45) says that “symbols are arbitrary units of meaning, in contrast to signs, which are directly associated with concrete physical items or activities.”

Semiotics was once associated with philosophy which Langer, (1953) cited in Littlejohn and Foss, (2008) considers symbolism to be the central concern of philosophy because it underlies human knowing and understanding. Human feelings are mediated by conceptualization, symbols and language that humans go far beyond simple signs by making use of these. Langer argues that signs signal the presence of an object. Contrary to that, symbols allow humans to think something apart from its immediate presence. The process of symbolism and symbols became an integral part of human life.

Scholars and other people often consider signs and symbols to be synonymous because symbols are the type of signs most often of interest in communication, and some symbols incorporate elements of indices and icons. Symbols are arbitrary units of meaning, in contrast to signs. The nature and role of signs and symbols can be mixed up in the process of transmitting information. Signs indicate, direct or convey simple information. Signs communicate “reality” whiles symbols have cultural representation.

Jung (2011) asserts that, a sign is related to the known and can be understood by reason. A symbol however, opens up the mysterious path of the unknown with profound and deep meanings. The sign operates on a conscious level whereas the symbol unfolds itself unconsciously and spontaneously. So among the Central Ewes, there is no difference between a sign and a symbol. Both are referred to as “dzesi” in the Ewe language.

## **2.8 Symbol**

Signs and symbols are expressed through visual artistic means worldwide. It is generally maintained that the most distinctive feature of the human being is the ability to create symbols. Before writing was invented, signs and symbols were used to communicate. They are still used today to indicate, identify and understand almost everything. They are essentially part of our cultural heritage. It has taken years to understand, put them together and interpreting them to the best of ability (Howard, 1988).

Signs and symbols are artistic creations which form an integral part of African culture. It is learnt from one generation to another. Signs and symbols are physical manifestations of man's inner feelings, knowledge, ideas, philosophies, unconscious thoughts and conceptions. In other words, the ideas, philosophies, knowledge and thoughts are given concrete shapes or forms by man to reach one another for development. Existing, or for an extremely long time, ideas and facts are recorded by man in one form of writing or another. It has been observed in many cultures around the world that, the alphabet are used to stand for sounds in the combination of alphabet for words and the combination of words for an idea and the combination of ideas to tell a story, or explain an event. Talking about other societies, what can be compared to the alphabet already represents ideas or facts. Before the third century BC, characters such as: the Chinese,



Japanese, Greek, Arabic and adverse do exist. Latin Americans, Melanesians, as well as Polynesians have characters in their symbolism. Commenting on symbolism of characters, Achampong (2007:iv) also notes that:

In some other societies, what is compatible to  
the alphabet already stands for ideas or facts.  
And so over the years, we have had such  
characters as the Greek, Hebrew, Roman,  
Sanskrit, Arabic, Japanese and Chinese. Even  
in what are considered to be and called simple  
societies as the Inca of South America, we have  
these characters that stand for ideas or even whole stories.

It would be recalled that the evolution of symbols dates back to the prehistoric periods, when cavemen drew images on walls in caves for visual communication. The world has existed for million years and it has been inhabited by different geological, botanical and zoological creatures including human species. Humans are characterized as rational beings and have the capability of thinking and creating things with full will and intellect Human acts vary depending on our environment, personal experiences and psychological disturbances (Olaguer 2008). He goes on to state that in 1985, a cave in Spain had been discovered with dozens of wall paintings with symbols which dated around 40,000-100,000 years ago. These figures found were graphical representations of bison, deer, horses and other animals painted in black, red, brown and yellow inks.

In Ghana, the popularly known among traditional symbols are the Adinkra Symbols. They are the pictorial representations of the values that have stood the test of time in the Akan

culture. But it is believed that the abstract ones may have been of Islamic origin, hence older than the Akan state. There are so many stories in connection with the origin of Adinkra Symbols. The precise dates and origin of the symbols cannot be ascertained. Boateng (1980:15) indicates that:

There is strong evidence to suggest that more abstract ones may have been of Islamic origin and hence older than the Akan State. The most obvious is the crescent moon and star symbol of the Adinkra Symbol which means “faithfulness” and this came as a result of the contact with Islamic traders.

Though the Adinkra Symbols have been documented and widely used, there are symbols of great significance among other ethnic groups, notably, the Fantes who have a lot of symbols in their Asafo flags and on their canoes, depicting bravery, protection, hard work and so on. The ethnic groups in the Northern and the Upper Regions of Ghana equally have a lot of fascinating symbols which they incorporate in the weaving of their *Fugu* or smock to enhance their beauty as well as to communicate values and beliefs to one another. Some of these symbols are portrayed in their architecture. It is rather regrettable that most of these symbols are not acknowledged and promoted for people to recognize their value.

Ablade Glover of Artists Alliance Fame has contributed to the promotion of Adinkra Symbols. He produced three literary works in a form of a chart. The first collection is made up of sixty (60) Adinkra symbols. The second and the third are made up of linguist staffs and stools respectively. He published all these between the years 1969 and 1971.

Ablade Glover goes on to explain the word “Adinkra”, the history of origin and also, the process of producing the symbol as a pattern in fabrics with their Akan names and proverbs. Even though these names and proverbs are explained literally in English, the symbols were not originally designed by him. In his compilation of the stool symbols, most of the symbols depict abstract forms and belong to the chiefs of the Akan States. Few proverbs and stool symbols, such as of the Ga State are also his collection. In Glover’s two symbolism charts (1992), he states that apart from stool’s use in everyday life as furniture, they play an important role in social as well as religious matters. Socially, they act as mere seats or symbols of authority. Religiously, they usually become objects of veneration. They are “fed” and “given drinks”. Usually during “Odwira”(Akan) or “Homowo”(Ga) festivals. On Glover’s linguist staff symbolism chart, the symbols are proverbial and pictorial which mainly depict animals such as lion, porcupine, elephant, hawk and many more. He emphasizes that whatever stands on top of a staff, represents the beliefs and aspiration of an entire clan, ethnic group and the state. The symbols on Glover’s chart serve as a source of reference to students, artists, teachers, and researchers.

Owusu-Ansah (1992) is another creative contributor to the promotion and presentation of indigenous symbols. On his part, he created one hundred and thirty-two (132) new Adinkra motifs in Twi with English translations. They look abstract in form and do not relate pictorially to the proverbs or the names given to them. Central Ewes, though they believe in concrete things, with their symbols having expressive and communicative qualities that sometimes influence their pictorial form; they are also represented in abstract form. It is these pictorials and abstracted qualities of symbols with their forms and shapes that make them works of art.

Before the introduction of formal education in Africa for that matter Ghana, symbolism was an effective means of bestowing meaning on artefacts to enhance one’s learning capabilities

as humans in comparison with other types of animals. This assertion still holds. The organization of social life in traditional society gives a special place to symbolism, due to a general consciousness of its potential as a vehicle for transmitting or affirming the values of a society.

This also strengthens the bonds that bind its members. We have the uniquely human ability to abstract the essence of complex events and patterns, creating images through symbols, and giving them meanings to conform to reasons for their creations. In the traditional set up, it is easier to learn, understand, grasp and disseminate knowledge or information through artistic creations. This has been the order, since illiteracy is predominant. Even though the wind of social change is blowing across the globe, making more people literate, it has not changed their conceptions, ideas and philosophy so much. Symbolism, for that matter, signs and symbols are common denominators for all in terms of meaning, expression and appreciation. Gyekye (2003:27) confirms this idea by adding that, the creation of artefacts prompted symbolism. In the light of this, his writing on African cultural values stresses that:

symbolism was a medium of artistic production,  
expression or appreciation. The pre-literate  
cultural context of artistic creation necessitated  
this symbolism; meanings and ideas were given  
expression through (symbolic) Art. In general,  
every artistic product must have meaningful  
qualities appropriate to the purpose for which it  
was created.

Apart from visual images and ordinary objects, there is symbolism in ordinary lines, be it horizontal, broken, bold, thick, parallel, zigzag, vertical and so on, depending on how it is used.

These make communication accessible to all. Commenting on symbolism of lines, Rader et al., (1976:57) states that:

In Graphic Design, which is another area in Visual Art, logotypes, trademarks and crests are all forms of insignias that are noted in symbolism. The use of parallel lines suggests movement and action. Horizontal lines express the idea of stationary and restfulness. The use of broken lines may connote an idea of lack of confidence, timidity and shyness. While bold, thick lines rather, typify courage and aggression. Vertical lines conceptualize a state of stability and conservativeness.

Thus, symbolism may be expressed as the most important representational signs and codes functioning as embodiments of societal concepts, ideas, socio-cultural values, philosophies and imaginations. This is perceived and truthfully expressed by Robbins and Nooter (1989:16), as they state that, “African symbolism supplemented by oral history served as principal means of socio-religious communication within ethnic groups. That, in the absence of written languages in most traditional cultures, these comprised of Africans, a symbolic language.”

Through sculpture, pottery, textiles, architecture, jewellery, and others, the craftsman gave form and outward expression within him to the material in such a way that they capture attention of those who would see it. Coullson (2005:72), seems to agree with Robbins and Nooter (1989), when he posits that:

the Akans of Ghana and La Cote d’Ivoire make extensive use of a system of ideographic and pictographic symbols.

Individually each symbol is associated with a specific proverb or saying rooted in Akan experience. Collectively, these symbols form a system of writing that preserves and transmits the accumulated cultural values of the Akan. This ideographic and pictographic writing system can be seen in use extensively in textiles, pottery, metal casting, wood and architecture.

Semiotics is the systematized body of knowledge that carefully observes and studies not only the signs, symbols and their meanings but also other factors that affect them such as the encoder, interpreter, culture and others. Signs and symbols are not only limited to visual representations but also can vary from language, shapes, colours, textures, clothing, to actions, gestures, mannerisms and facial expressions (Reyes, 2009).

Symbolism simply is the use of symbols in art, literature, and so on to represent ideas. For the purpose of this dissertation, symbolism is the use of visual images and ordinary objects which represent a deeper meaning than the images themselves. This kind of extension of meaning can transform the images into very powerful instruments. It is in this view that, Opoku Asare (1997:ix) defines symbolism as “the practice of representing things by symbols or of investing things with symbolic meaning.” Symbolism is derived from the word symbol. Fletcher and Gill (2000:657) also opine that:

“symbol” is therefore another word for “symbolize”.

By the word ‘symbol’, the concepts of representation, typification, and association are very much revealed which is why such words as budge, emblem, figure, image, logo, mark, sign, token and allegory are all associated with symbol.

Symbolism is the use of visual objects to represent abstract ideas. In many of the indigenous cultural settings symbols are used to represent many ideas. For example, swords are symbols of protection. Some of the symbols may be proverbial symbols and figurative sculptures. Most symbols and signs are created through imagination of people in the communities. Even though the craftsmen produce beautiful and good works, their functionality and symbolism are the most cherished. In this regard, Kyeremanteng (1964:1) also observes that:

some of these signs and symbols show the imagination  
and ingenuity of the Ghanaian craftsman and rank  
among the peaks of art design anywhere, while they  
are important not for their beauty and dignity but for  
their historical connections, their social and ritual  
functions or their symbolic meaning.

Symbolism therefore, embraces a people's customs, traditions and culture. These tend to manifest themselves through all the coded messages, communication and actions conduct, institutions, systems, music, art, dances, laws, artefacts, totems, morals, values, aspirations, philosophies, folklore, myths, legends, fables, chieftaincy, history, education, occupations, enterprise, language, food and its preparation and mode of eating, and many more. Symbolism is therefore synonymous with survival and life's sustainability and continuity. This claim is true of Central Ewe culture.

Visual images or symbols represent or reproduce the world from time immemorial, the major goal of the use of symbols is to capture and portray the conceptual frame of both the natural and the spiritual world. No wonder in cultures where the art of writing was not much developed

emphasis was put on the use of visual symbols to record their experiences. The meanings of symbols of any cultural tradition are essentially negotiable. That is, each symbol evokes a wide range of meanings among those who accept it. But what that symbol means in any particular situation is obvious. Such matters are cultural dilemmas that people grapple with to solve. Symbols are used to transmit ideas to one another. This is done not only through language but images and objects as well. Every ethnic group in Ghana and Africa at large, place premium on its symbols. Commenting on meanings of symbols, Bruslin (1983:367) stresses that:

a society's cultural symbols themselves, as well as  
their meanings, are valued-particularly symbols of  
subjective beliefs and ideologies. The symbol becomes  
a way to value them. Our symbols tend to have more meaning  
to us than others do, thus we value other symbols less.

According to Dzobo (1997), Ewe symbols started as myths, and developed into fables, to poems and songs, which later condensed into proverbs before crystallizing into visual forms. Symbols have many beautiful facets of life which encapsulates all that is needed in our lives as political, moral, cultural, social, religious, psychological, and the technical beings. Symbols grow. They come into being by development out of other signs. These mental signs are of mixed nature; the symbol-parts are called concepts. If a man makes a new symbol, it is by thoughts involving concepts. So it is only out of symbols that a new symbol can grow. A symbol, once in being, spreads among the people. In use and in experience, its meaning grows. Symbols have many functions in nature and are appreciated for both their aesthetic and communicative values. They are non-verbal illustrations of proverbs, parables and maxims which portray the



philosophical thinking and the way of life of a particular group of people, of which Central Ewes are no exception.

Remarking on multi-functionality and the philosophy that symbols express, Fosu (1993:17) explains through the use of Adinkra symbols that, the messages may be expressed philosophically, satirically or,

allegorically, to depict religious, social or political concerns as well as reflections on issues pertaining to beauty, morality, or other higher values. Almost every Adinkra symbol is a literary and non-verbal illustration of a proverb, a parable or a maxim with profound interpretation.

A symbol, as we have seen, cannot indicate any particular thing; it denotes a kind of thing. Not only that, it is itself a kind and not a single thing. It can be a material object used to represent something invisible. In another way, a symbol is a word, image or object that stands for cultural ideas or sentiments. To buttress this claim, Bonvillain (2006:32), says, “a symbol is a sound or object that represents or stands for an idea, event, meaning or sentiment.” Some institutions, nations, ethnic groups, companies and so on, use marks, signs and objects to represent ideas or identify various entities and activities. Symbols reflect and convey perceptions, concepts, ideas, thoughts, proverbs, behaviours, lives and culture.

Human communication is hardly limited to language. We also convey information non-verbally, through gestures, facial expressions, body posture, use of space and touch. Some forms of non-verbal communications may be universal, in that, they mean the same thing to everybody,

regardless of culture. Therefore, all the various people in the world employ symbols in all aspects of their lives. As symbol communicates a fact or an idea or stands for an object, some symbols, such as flags and stop signs, are visual. Others, including music and spoken words, involve sounds. Symbols rank among our oldest and most basic inventions. Almost everything can be a symbol. For instance, the letters of the alphabet are among the most important symbols because they form the basis for almost all written and spoken communication. Gestures and sounds made by human beings also symbolize ideas or feelings.

From all that has been said about symbols, it generally stands for something visible: an object, a mark or an abstract idea. Adding to the observation made by Bonvillain (2006) on symbol, Field (1980:453) points out that:

Symbol is a mark or an object used to represent  
an idea, sentiments, an institution, a nation, or  
something else. There are many kinds of symbols.  
They include colour, objects, work and pictures.  
Basically, all symbols are for identification. They are  
used to identify various entities and activities in life, and  
are therefore synonymous with the things they represent.  
A typical example is the golden stool of Ashanti, which  
is a symbol of the Asante people.

In respect of this fact, a symbol is an image, an object, a design or colour which has meaning that goes beyond its physical appearance or outside its normal usage. In line with the definition given on symbol by Bonvillain and Field, Schultz, et al., (1998) are also of the same

view expressed and therefore say that, “a symbol, be it a word, image, or action is something that stands for something else. It signals the presence of an important domain of experience.” For example, the lion is a symbol of courage. This definition tends to emphasize the fact that symbols can serve as catalysts and keys in the realms of encoding and decoding certain messages and secrets. For instance, in some Ewe communities, a chief or a hunter with a leaf in his mouth symbolizes that he is in a state of keeping mute. In this instance, the symbolic leaf stuck in the mouth assists the communication of the silence state of the chief or the hunter, as in the Central Ewe community.

A symbol can also be defined as “something standing for or calling up something else, especially a concrete object which stands for an intangible object or idea; a character, letter, or cipher, which by convention or arbitrary usage, has come to represent something else, as the name of a chemical element” (World Book Dictionary, 1983:368).

Sarpong (1994) debunks the idea that a symbol is an event or a concrete thing. He suggests that, “a symbol generally stands for some abstract notion as power, wisdom, humility, purity, prudence, group solidarity and so on”. He therefore explained that symbols enable people to represent abstract ideas which would be impossible for them to represent to themselves directly.

To the artist, a symbol is a pictorial representation of some abstraction to which is appended a name. It is applicable to any pictorial device, sometimes objects and, sometimes a combination of objects, intended to serve as a chosen object. For instance, if an eagle is represented with two wings and a beak, it would be seen as an eagle. The symbolism is all-pervasive in all categories of art. Mbiti (1998:2), in his contribution to combination of objects to form a symbol, says that, “a symbol can be alone or in combination with other symbols. It has

only the meaning that people have given it. Even a powerful symbol can lose its meaning if the society dishonour or ignores it for a period of time.”

Many symbols are powerful and often trigger unconscious stimuli of behaviours or emotional states. There is the potency of symbols and the different meanings evoked by the symbols for different people. For instance in Ghana, a thumb pointing to someone is seen as an insult, while it is also seen as an ‘encouragement’ or ‘go-ahead’. In another development, the design and colour on the flag of different countries represent symbolic associations with abstract ideas and concepts, or associated with complex levels of meaning. People can understand those meanings by examining the context of flag use, the way people talk about their national colour, and the way people react to them. Flags are used to symbolically represent a country, a territorial and cultural unit differentiated from all other similarly organized territorial and cultural units. National symbols such as flags, coat of arms, and soon, have the potential for expressing deep-felt emotions in condensed forms. These with their great public visibility, have been an extremely important symbolic medium of political and social communication for some time now. In many countries including Ghana, the desecration of the national flag is considered a crime. Commenting on emotional reactions, stirred by symbols, Turner (1979:19) says that:

symbols are ‘multi-vocal’, suggesting that they have multiple meanings for people within a society. He further says that symbols have the characteristic of ‘condensation’, having the ability to unify many things and actions into a single formation. Destruction of a community’s secular symbol will result in serious protest and confrontations.

On symbols' effect on emotions, Rieser (1972) explains that in visual art, human feelings and emotions are expressed in symbolic form using colours and shapes to communicate meanings, which can be conveyed only with difficulty in normal language. Symbols have deeper and more complex meanings than signs, for symbols provide opportunities for analyzing abstract problems. He refers to the circle. **O** as: 'one of the most significant symbols used universally, for the circle or sphere expresses the totality of human nature and environment.'

Our life philosophy reflects the religious and secular values of our society. Objects and images or artefacts seem to percolate all interstices of the fabric of culture. Moreover the art forms appear to be the "panacea" for all the cultural problems of the people, hence their use in solving religious, political, economic, social, medical and other problems militating against the people. Since the artefacts are functional or for solving problems, their aesthetic and educational values cannot be over looked.

Scupin (2001) observes that religion is a domain with symbolic meanings. Believers invest tremendous importance in objects considered to have religious significance. Ordinary objects and substances used in rituals take on sacred properties. Books, cups, images, pieces of cloth or wood can be symbols of beliefs and can evoke powerful emotions and dramatize sacred actions. Certain symbols in a society are associated with cosmic forces in that society. They may directly represent the deity or deities, or they may symbolize major religious principles and beliefs. Religious symbolism is the use of text, images, procedures, or actual physical objects to represent an idea or belief. The most common example is the use of objects to symbolize the faith itself, as in the use of a cross to represent Christianity, the crescent to Islam, the Star of David to represent Judaism and many others. Various religious symbols have produced fundamental meanings and metaphors for many countries throughout the world. For example, the

symbol associated with the Virgin Mary in Roman Catholicism has developed into national symbols of unity for some countries. Mexico is one of such countries.

Certain religious symbols may be universal, but most are culture-specific, and individuals must be conditioned to understand and appreciate them. Conditioning occurs in formal and informal instructions. The power of culture-specific religious symbolism is exemplified in what is perhaps the best known Rastafarian symbol; their long and unkempt hair, their “dreadlocks”. The wearing of their hair in this fashion is justified by reference to the Bible in Leviticus 21: 5 which say, “They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cutting in flesh.” The dreadlock serves as a powerful public symbol of what the Rastafarian religion is about.

When rituals and sacrifices are performed, these symbols become abodes for spirits. Africans have beliefs and philosophy which are whipped up or enhanced by symbols. In other words they become sacred images. Ray (1963:64) notes that:

African religion is centred on ‘Archetypal symbols’,  
by this, I mean sacred images whether they are gods,  
ancestors or things which make up the traditional universe.  
Such images are enshrined and communicated  
in myth and rituals, provided a net work of symbolic  
forms, uniting social, ecological and conceptual  
element into locally bounded cultured systems.

Political symbolism falls under secular values. It is used to represent a political, royal or leadership stand point. It takes the form of banners, acronyms, pictures, flags, mottos, coat of arms, state sword, mace, and many others. Simple colours can also be symbolic, depending on

the location, or the context in which they are used. For example in Africa, red, black, brown and white colours are for mourning. Green represents anything which is environmentally friendly. Colours can represent different things depending on the culture in which they are. For example in Asian countries, red symbolizes happiness, marriage and prosperity. Colour symbolism is prominent in the Ghanaian kente cloth. The colours in kente cloth carry meaning. Certain colours are worn to designate status and occasion; for example, a chief might wear a kente cloth of golden yellow, the colour of wealth and joy. In the Central Volta region, yellow is associated with ripe lemon, and wealth in gold. Colour also symbolizes sanctity, preciousness, royalty, abundance, spiritual vitality, and fertility.

White is associated with egg white and a white clay used in spiritual purification, healing, sanctification rites, and festive occasions. Thus, it is worn by priestesses and others involved in religious practice to signify their contact with divine entities. Although white is worn by those who work with spirits of ancestors or deities of various denominations, a queen or any woman might wear white, blue, or silver to signify joy, virtue, or purity. White often is combined with black, green, or yellow to express notions of spiritual vitality and balance. Grey, associated with ash, is used in healing and spiritual cleansing rituals, and rites to promote protection from malevolent spirits. A related colour, silver, is associated with the moon, and represents the female essence of life. Ofori-Ansa (1993) writes that women may wear silver ornaments in the context of spiritual purification, naming and marriage ceremonies, and other community festivals, because it symbolizes serenity, purity, and joy. Associated with blood, shedding of blood, and sacrificial rites, red can signify heightened spiritual and political mood, sacrifice and struggle. A red-eyed mood, according to him, signifies a sense of seriousness, or readiness for a serious spiritual or political encounter. Red, while it can be worn to political meetings if the

wearer is angry, is largely considered to be the colour of death, loss, sadness, or dissatisfaction, and also, it is associated with mourning.

Furthermore, black, a funeral colour, may stand for melancholy, vice, strength, old age, death, and history. Holding the notion that new things darken as they get older and spiritual maturity comes with physical maturity, Ewes blacken most of their traditional ritual sacred objects to increase their potency. Black, in this context, represents intensified spiritual energy, potency, and maturity, as well as communion with ancestors, and antiquity. Since Ghana's independence in 1957, black or blackness has come to symbolize Ghanaian pride and power. For instance, the men's national soccer team is named the Black Stars and the women's national soccer team, the Black Queens.

Purple and maroon are related; in that they are both considered earth colours and are used in rituals of healing. Purple is also associated with feminine aspect of life, and is worn largely by females. Maroon, the red-brown colour associated with Mother Earth, can be obtained from clay and is used to repel malevolent spirits. Pink is another colour associated with females. Ofori-Ansa (1993), on his chart of kente meanings explained: "it is viewed as red rendered mild and gentle and therefore associated with tenderness, calmness, pleasantness and sweetness." He went on to state that, in Akan social thought, these attributes are generally considered as essential aspects of the ideal woman. Additionally, the colour green is associated with vegetation, planting, harvesting, and herbal medicine. Young girls sometimes wear green to signify newness, freshness, and puberty. Moreover, tender green leaves are used to sprinkle water during purification rituals. Green symbolizes growth, vitality, fertility, prosperity, fruitfulness, abundance, health and spiritual rejuvenation. As well, blue, the colour of the sky, is associated with the Supreme Creator. In this regard, it is used in different ways in the culture of Ewe as well



as other ethnic groups to symbolize spiritual sanctity, harmony, love, good fortune, peacefulness, and related aspects.

In literature, symbolism is used to provide meaning to the writing beyond what is actually being described. Traditionally in Ghana and Africa as a whole, there is symbolism in our indigenous art forms. The objects that are represented in symbolic art forms among the traditional ethnic groups in Ghana are the textiles, pottery, stools, umbrella tops, linguist staffs, jewellery, canoe art, architecture and many more. They are used in everyday life of the people, be it social, religious, political and economic. In the light of this usage, people's identity is revealed or known. As said earlier by Mbiti (1998), some art forms or objects can be put together to have a powerful symbol or symbolism. Very good examples are the stool and the ceremonial sword. The stool in its totality is symbolic, while its top arc, the middle, and base separately have also got different symbolism. Amenuke, et al., (1991:151) describing the female version of a stool, say that:

The stool symbolizes the soul of society and serves as a symbolic link between the common people in the society and their head. Every component part of the design of the stool represents one of the main ideas that make a perfect society. The curved top of the stool symbolizes the loving embrace of a mother, thus represents the warmth of the female influence in society. The four rectangular-shaped pillars at the corner of the stool represents the influence of male power in the society. It signifies strength, power and good fortune. The strong circular pillar in the centre of the

stool symbolizes the power and the presence of God in society,  
whiles the base signifies the stability of the earth.

Fig 2.1 is the illustration of a female stool. Fig 2.2 is a ceremonial sword which is a symbol of power. They are frequently decorated with animal motifs, which signify attitudes or social standing of the clan or group.

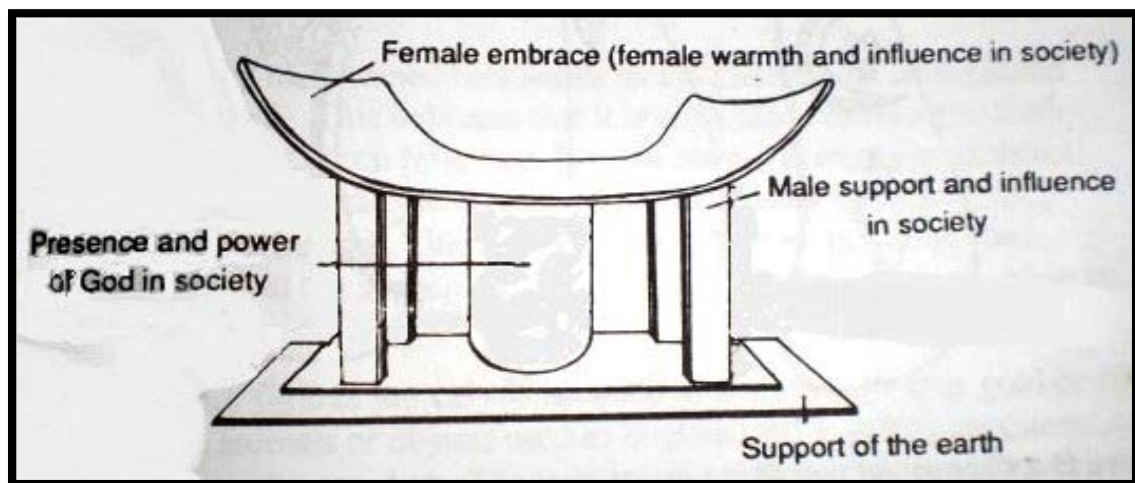


Fig. 2.1: A Central Ewe female stool

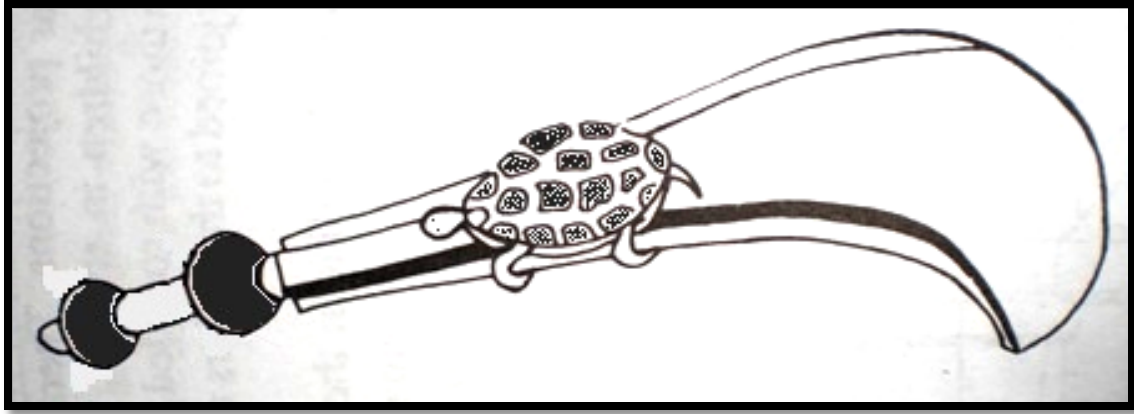


Fig. 2.2: A ceremonial sword

The art of a society reflects the ideas and values. Attitudes, behaviours, habits and beliefs are some of the values which are of importance to one's daily life in terms of practice. For instance, the values which one deems high in life include honesty, respect, honour, hospitality and hard work. Other values deal with the part one plays in society, how to relate with neighbours, dress code and talking to people. Some of the values are also reflected in the people's ideas about religion and the rites of passage. This can also be said of the people of the Central Volta Region of Ghana. Signs and symbols are the basis of their everyday life. The signs and symbols are used to make life much more worthwhile. This goes to prove the theory which says that signs and symbols rule our lives.

The definition of Central Ewe symbols involves a number of fundamental, linguistic, philosophical and historical considerations. These symbols have continued to be a potent medium of expression, and serve as reference points in the Ewe belief system. To the Ghanaian, the meaning of the symbols adds to appreciation and enjoyment of an art work, be it oratorical, dance, music, ritual or decorative art. How symbols are used by the people of Central Volta Region to achieve the purpose of which they are meant for, translates their beauty.

Ewes in general have an elaborate system of symbols which incorporates a lot of meanings. These range from simple everyday items in the environment to very complex ones that are used to explain philosophical, cultural, sociological, mythological and anthropological views about life in general. The meaning of Ewe symbols could in certain situations be highly contextual. In some cases, the meaning of some visual symbols can only be revealed by a special group of people who are authorized to interpret them. It is through the meaning and interpretation of the signs and symbols that education values are learnt.

Signs, symbols and images or objects in Ghanaian arts are meant to represent the basic social principles of life. These have guided the general outlook to life throughout the ages. As a result, there is no variation between symbols and general ways of living. The functions of symbols in nature are many. This is because they are recognized and understood in terms of their communicative and aesthetic appeals. A lot of visual symbols were used by people in the olden days to communicate their thoughts, besides, to outwit their opponent in war. When the cultural significance of the symbols is not known, ordinary beauty is appreciated. Most symbols are proverbs which are transformed into visible forms to show knowledge, ideas, unconscious thoughts and conceptions of a particular society.

Agbo (2006:114) confirms these values and believes that “symbols are multifunctional in nature. They are appreciated for their aesthetic and communicative values.” Any signs and symbols created are integral part of life. It is therefore imperative that Ewe philosophy, beliefs, aesthetic consideration and functionality are the determinant forces underpinning the creation of symbols. The use of symbols is essential in discussing the terrain of popular culture. Symbols themselves are found in a number of applications. It is the habit of Central Ewes to adore their environment. Of this practice, Rattray(1959:127) writes:

there is hardly any object of artistic treatment which is not made the medium for some ornamental design which gives aesthetic delight to the African's mind and eyes; such as stools, spoons, wooden plate, combs, sticks, calabashes, sticks, canoes, staves of office, wari boards, knives, mortars, drums, ivory tusks, pots, pipes, weights and scales, metal work of every description, wall of temples and dwellings and textiles of every kind. Even those tools used to obtain these effects, the forge itself, the shuttle, the mesh used for making nets are ornamented, being decorated with artistic effects, which however crude, are never vulgar and inartistic.

Based on Rattray's description, it is possible to envision the use of signs and symbols as pervasive visible throughout the Central Eweland of Ghana. This is so because they are potent visual statements familiar to most of the people. Central Ewe symbols are being used as illustrations in books, which the people appreciate a lot. Some also make symbols on the walls of their building, educating other people, and serving as a constant reminder of the canons of their share cultural heritage.

The Ewe signs and symbols reflect wisdom and philosophy as they did in the past. They also have a communicative role in Ghanaian art and society and it is also possible to see every culture's art and symbol as a language to be examined in its function relative to its particular people. This could be an effective means of conveying significant information about Ghanaian art and culture through the study of its symbols.

Leeds - Hurwitz (1993:99) describes the field of communication as “including, among other things, the study of meaning; the study of how people convey ideas for themselves and to one another, whether through words, food, clothing, objects, or in other ways.”

The human body is one of the supports on which signs and symbols could be made. For example, tribal marks to identify where one comes from. When this is done, it becomes a body mark or body art. So if the impulse to create signs and symbols is one of the defining signs of humanity, the body may well have been the first canvas. Identification, medicinal, decoration or fashion and social status are the results of the signs and symbols on people's body. These are done with knives, needles, painting and drawing even with acidic plants, for example: the cashew. This is not different from that of the Ewes in general. Body art is a visual language which communicates a person's status in society; displays accomplishment; and encodes memories, desires and life history. Leeds' ideas are pertinent to this work because they support the premise that a symbol is a form of communication, and therefore, can be viewed and read as a visual language. This study looks at signs, symbols and images which carry very specific meanings and how they are used to convey meaning.

One way in which an artistic object and image is symbolic is that, particular artistic elements reflect emotions or meanings. In this case, the symbolism is culturally specific, and one needs knowledge of the particular cultural meaning assigned to a particular artistic element. Symbols represent certain universal aspects of human thoughts, needs and emotions. Freudian psychology for example, assigns certain universal meanings to certain kinds of symbols. Ion Lewis, an anthropologist, stressed the need to consider the emotional meanings of symbols, in addition to the more common cognitive meanings.

Discussing the relationship between signs and symbols Lewis (1997:1) says “by ‘symbols’ we mean, of course, something more than signs. Unlike the latter, which may be so, symbols are in principle never fully self-explanatory, self-sufficient or fully autonomous.” Symbols convey meaning largely through connections implied with other symbols. This, then, provides another distinction between symbols and other sort of signs, the latter carry emotion freight less often.

## **2.9 Emblem**

Emblem, insignia, totem, icon and logo are synonymous with symbol. They communicate and represent something. Emblem is a Latin word ‘emblema’ which means raised ornament. Emblem can also be defined as an object or a representation that functions as a symbol. Further, an emblem is a distinctive budge, design, device, or an object to represent an idea, a country and so on. For instance, the lion is often used as an emblem of strength. Cambell (2001) gives synonym to emblem as; crest, mark, design, image, figure, seal, shield, budge, insignia, coat of arms. The rest are symbol, sign, type, pattern and sigil. An emblem is a pictorial image, abstract or representational that epitomizes a concept. In other words, an emblem is a visible object or representation that symbolizes a quality type, group and so on, especially the concrete symbol of an abstract idea. Emblem and symbol appear interchangeably in day- to- day conversation without causing undue confusion. Pointing out the similarities between a symbol and an emblem, Jung (1999:70) posits that:

A distinction between the two may seem  
Unnecessarily fastidious. Nevertheless, an  
emblem is a pattern that is used to represent

an idea; or an individual. It crystallizes in concrete, visual terms some abstraction; a deity, a tribe or nation, a virtue or a vice. It can be an object or a representation of an object. He further stated that insignia is also a symbol or token of personal power, status or office, or of an official body of government or jurisdiction.

Insignia (the plural of the Latin word *insigne*) means emblem or symbol. Insignia are especially used as an emblem of specific or general authority. It is also a distinguishing sign, a badge of office, rank, membership or nationality. Examples are Flags of state, coat of arms, crown, and so on. These insignia are often protected by law as to allow their use only by people holding a specific office or staff members acting on behalf of such a person. Misuse, defacement, and destruction of such symbols are considered an offence in many countries.

Cormack (1997:4), defines iconography as “a way of studying symbolic meanings, be it religion or politics.” The word “icon” means “image” but since the early centuries of Christianity, the word “icon” is normally used to refer to images with religious content, meaning and use. An icon (from Greece *eikōn* ‘image’) is a religious work of art, most commonly a painting, from Eastern Christianity and in certain Eastern Catholic churches. More broadly the term is used in a wide number of contexts for an image, picture, or representation; it is a sign or likeness that stands for an object by signifying or representing it either concretely or by analogy, as in semiotic; by extension, icon is also used, particularly in modern culture, in the general sense of symbol – a name, face, picture, edifice or even a person recognized as having some well-known significance or embodying certain qualities: one thing, an image or depiction, that



represents something else of greater significance through literal or figurative meaning, usually associated with religious, cultural, political, or economic standing (Lossky, 1995). Most icons are two-dimensional, thus paintings, mosaics, and enamel but ancient three-dimensional icons also exist. An icon is always the representation of a religious subject but not every representation of a religious subject is an icon. It has become standardized by convention; an example is the picture of 'the virgin Mary' or 'the crucifix.'

A logo type, commonly known as a logo, is the graphic element of a trademark or brand. A logo is a design symbolizing an organization. It is a design that is used by an organization for its letterhead, advertising material and sign as an emblem by which the organization is recognized. Gilbert (1998:244) describes a logo as:

a symbol of a company name, trademark,  
and abbreviation and so on often uniquely  
designed for ready recognition. Logo may  
also be a simple visual mark to identify a  
company product or service. There are  
types of signs and emblems early recognized  
and associated with purposes. For instance,  
crests are used to identify a country, family,  
or institutions of learning. A logo can be related  
to many different aspects of business.

Among the most pervasive symbols in our visual environment today are logos and trademarks, which are symbols of an organization or product. As with any symbol, logo means

nothing in itself. It is up to an organization to make its logo familiar to convince people through sound business practices to associate it with virtues as service, quality and dependability.

In late nineteen hundred (1980-1985), logo had become such familiar part of the visual landscape that is one of the most powerful symbols of the decade. A comparatively recent use of symbols is in logos for businesses and institutions, who have adopted them to express the motto or spirit of their organizations. Just a few examples are the crests of University of Ghana, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana Standards Board, Ghana Stock Exchange, Ghana Commercial Bank and many others.

## **2.10 Design**

According to Groneman, (1983:14), the creation of an artefact has prompted symbolism, where meanings are given to it. So commenting briefly on design, may not be out of context in this case. The word “Design” is from a Latin word *designare* to mark out, describe, from DE- + *signare* to mark, from *signum* a mark, SIGN. “Design” in short, is a plan within the framework of art. So, layout, pattern, motif, sketch, draft, form, and arrangement of line, are all synonymous to design known in Ewe as ‘adaɲu’.

A design may be created to serve a functional purpose as in architecture and in industrial designs or else purely to provide aesthetic pleasure. Design may refer to preparatory stages for a work of art or it may be extended to include the compositional elements in a finished work of art. It is the organization or composition of a work, which involves elements and design principles. Though elements and design principles are two different entities, they work in unison.

On what constitute design, Geninger (1977:47) says, “the development of a successful design also depends on the understanding of basic design principles including proportion,

balance, rhythm and harmony. Although each principle is a separate entity, combining them successfully produces an appealing work.”

The need to create signs and symbols is basically for identification and communication. Creativity is problem-solving. So the need to solve a problem should be creatively planned. Groneman (1983:3) observes that “design is creative planning used to solve problems. This begins with a need. The problem with which the designer works always stems from human needs.” Central Ewes have needs and problem to be solved. Creative planning is always resorted to solve these problems. To do this, creative signs and symbols were made and still being made for use.

## **2.11 Culture**

Signs, symbols, and Art are necessary and important as a part of culture. This relationship exists and can be seen and felt. As a result, they are inseparable. In recognition of this fact, Read (1960: 38) states that:

Art has been and still is coupled with human  
and spiritual values the psychologist is willing  
to admit; but these have nothing to do with aesthetic  
itself. One may speak of artistic values but they are  
distinct from values in ethics, sociology, religion and  
philosophy.

Signs, symbols or images have been the visual representations which humans have used their skills and knowledge to perform for specific purposes in their culture. In examining the place of art in culture, in order to discover more about it, Geertz (1973:89) suggests that,

art is more a symbol to transmit meaning.

It is itself semiotic, a mode of making meaning.

Artists learn in some degree their modes of  
thoughts from their culture and their work is  
created to be responded to by people who share  
the same cultural modes of knowing and seeing.

He further describes the basic factors in the arts as those which give “audible” and what he calls “tactible form to ideas so that we can respond with our senses and emotions and then reflect on or think about our response.” To the human mind, symbols are cultural representations of reality. Every culture has its own set of symbols associated with different experiences and perceptions. Thus, a representation, a symbol’s meaning is neither instinctive nor automatic.

The human capacity for culture is based on our linguistic and cognitive ability to symbolize. A consequence of human evolution that had the most profound impact on human society was the emergence of culture. As perhaps the most important defining characteristic of human, one would ask what really culture is. Banks et al (1989) present the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) description of culture as:

one which should be regarded as the set of  
distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual  
and emotional feature of a society or a social  
group and that it encompasses, in addition  
to art and literature, lifestyle, ways of living  
together; value, systems, traditions and beliefs.

There are other definitions and many different meanings of culture, dating as far back as nineteenth century. For some, it refers to an appreciation of good literature, music, art and food. For a biologist, it is likely to be a colony of bacteria or other micro-organisms growing in a nutrient medium in a laboratory. However, to the anthropologists and other behavioural scientists, culture is the full range of learned human behaviour patterns. Culture is an integral part of every society. It is a learned pattern of behaviour and ways in which a person lives his or her life. Culture is essential for the existence of a society, because it binds people together. In the explicit sense of the term culture, constitute the music, food, arts and literature of a society. However, these are only the culture, followed by the society and cannot be defined as culture. Culture could be defined as a “distinctive way of life of a group of people: it is the way they do things and therefore the means by which they do things. It is the sum total of a people’s way of life. Culture is therefore, synonymous with civilization.” (Heider, 2001:34). He goes on to enumerate the components of culture as:

- (i) Material things - tools, food, clothing, housing, means of transport, drums  
and so on.
- (ii) Symbolic values - beliefs, norms, rules and rituals which govern behaviour and  
are accepted as the proper legitimate or expected mode of action.
- (iii) Institutions – chieftancy, religion, festivals and so on.
- (iv) Language.

Taylor (1971:24), defines culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, moral, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Taylor’s classic definition captures several significant features that have

been preserved in most definitions of culture today. It focuses on the holistic quality of culture (“that complex whole”) and embraces all the activities, attitudes, and beliefs of human beings.

Significantly, these are traits “acquired” by people. That is, people’s attitudes, beliefs, and the ways of acting are learned rather than inherited, instinctual or automatic. Finally, Taylor stresses that people acquire culture “as members of society”. People live and interact with other people, learning skills and attitudes from them and in turn transmitting their knowledge and beliefs to others.

Anthropologists have expanded on and refined the definition of culture innumerable times. Statements about behavior acquisition and activities in the context of families, groups and communities including statements about people’s selectively shared knowledge, attitudes, values and beliefs featured in all but differ according to their focus and theoretical orientation that underlies them. In this light, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963:47) state that:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consist of traditional (ie historical derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of action.

In the twentieth century, “culture” emerged as a concept central to anthropology, encompassing all human phenomena that are not purely results of human genetics. Specifically, the term “culture” in American anthropology had two meanings (1) the evolution of human capacity to classify and represent experiences with symbols, and to act imaginatively and creatively; and (2) the distinct ways that people living in different parts of the world classified and represented their experiences, and acted creatively (Borofsky, 1994).

From all the definitions, culture is the patterns of learned and shared behaviour and beliefs of a particular social, ethnic or age group. It can also be described as the complex whole of collective human beliefs with a stage of civilization that can be specific to a nation or time period. Humans in turn use culture to adapt and transform the world they live in. Culture is a common denominator that holds the society together and differentiates its members from those of other societies. The most important way of understanding the behaviour of people in a society is by first looking at their culture.

Although each culture is unique, a number of characteristics in their organization and functioning are universal. Any culture is a product of a group of people who share and transmit some basic attitudes and assumptions about the world. In addition, aspects of culture tend to interrelate and function together with some consistency to form a coherent system of behaviours and beliefs. Through their cultures, people adapt to life situations and to change in their social and physical environments.

Culture, is shared, learned, adaptive integrated and symbolic. Culture is “shared” meaning that, it defines a group and meets common needs. Humans are by nature social creatures; that is human beings do not live in isolation, or as individuals alone. Rather, we live with other people in families, households and communities of various sizes and relationships.

Societies are held together through social structures that organize family life, means of making a living, and ways of arriving at decisions and establishing methods of leadership. That is the reason for defining society as a group of people who live within an acknowledged territory, who could potentially interact with each other, and who share certain practices and values. So to say culture is shared does not mean that all members of particular society have exactly the same attitudes and do exactly the same things in the same way. Rather, the general principles of culture are shared (Williams, 1983).

Kluckhohn and Murray (1962) say that, culture as a shared beliefs and practices of a group of people is a viable arena for examining their collective system of beliefs and therefore, contains evidence of standards which govern value. These values are often found in the norms of the society and are formally dictated by its recognized intellectuals, scholars and other interpreters of the group's historical-cultural heritage. As evident in the Central Ewe communities, communal life exists. Common needs are always met. Each person is his neighbor's keeper so they live as a family; so whatever culture exists is shared by all. Hence, the meanings and values of signs and symbols are shared by all.

Kluckhohn and Murray (1962) go on to say that culture is learned through transmission, from generation to generation. It is done mainly in childhood and during maturation. Behaviour alone is not learned but also attitudes and values. Humans are born with a potential to learn whatever knowledge and skills are practiced in their communities. They do this through the process of enculturation – learning one's culture through informal observation and formal institutions, beginning in earliest childhood. Children learn the culture they are exposed to. One expects sign and symbol usage to have been learnt by Central Ewe children. This did not happen because they did not show much interest; hence, the need to conduct this study.



Culture is said to be adaptive. It helps individuals meet needs across variable environments. It is referred to behaviours and beliefs that respond to environmental constraints and opportunities that ensure community's survivals. People must adapt to their environment, and culture is their chief mechanism of adaptation. People can modify their environments and create artificial ones to enhance survival. Culture adaptation often involves technological innovations and elaboration of material culture.

For example, people living on islands or coastal environments construct canoes and boats to cross rivers and oceans or symbols for communication or where people make a vast array of tools and equipment to help them obtain food and perform other kinds of substance task (Moran 1979). Like other ethnic groups in Ghana, the Ewes generally adapt to their environment for survival in terms of creating signs and symbols, agriculture and food security. So survival of a community is determined by the environment depending on how it is adapted to.

According to Heider (2001), no set of cultural practices is perfectly integrated and without contradiction because anthropologists have good evidence that culture is not just a hodgepodge of unrelated elements. He further indicates that, the direction in which cultural creativity goes may differ widely from one group to the other, but in any particular society, culture tends to be coherent and patterned; thus, an individual's everyday attempts to account for experience are not isolated efforts. Members of the same society make use of shared assumptions about how the world works. As they interpret everyday experiences in light of these assumptions, they make sense of their lives and their lives make sense to other members of the society. This statement made is supported by Bonvillain (2006:32) as he states that:

Cultural integration refers to the observation  
that people's practices and beliefs form a

relatively coherent and consistent system.

Cultures are not simply random collection  
of activities but instead are patterned and  
interrelated in systematic ways.

That is, there is recourse of similar ideas. Related cultural beliefs and practices show up repeatedly in different areas of social life.

Bonvillain, (2006) further posits that culture is also based on symbols. It is expressed in symbolic interaction between individuals using verbal and non-verbal languages. Symbols are abstract ways of referring to and understanding ideas, objects, feeling or behaviours – and the ability to communicate with symbols using language. People have culture primarily because they can communicate with and understand symbols which allow people to develop complex thoughts with others.

Williams (1983) asserts that, culture and society are not the same. While culture is complex of learned behaviour patterns and perceptions, societies are groups of interacting organisms. Societies are groups of people who directly or indirectly interact with each other. While societies and cultures are not the same thing, they are inextricably connected because culture is created and transmitted to others in a society. Without culture, the world would be only a very limited basis for humans to interpret one another's behaviour. It is also through the dimension of culture that human society has attained its unique level of complexity and flexibility.

Williams (1983) goes further to indicate that a culture consists of the “objects” of a society, where as a society consists of people who share common culture. When the terms *culture* and *society* first acquired their current meanings, most people in the world worked and

lived in small groups in the same locality. In today's world of six billion people, these terms have lost some of their usefulness because increasing numbers of people interact and share resources globally.

Sociologists define society as the people who interact in such a way as to share a common culture. The cultural bond may be ethnic or racial based on gender, or due to shared beliefs, values, and activities. The term *society* can also have a *geographic* meaning and refer to people who share a common culture in a particular location (Miller 2007).

Culture is a social system that shares a set of common values, in which such values permit social expectations and collective understandings of the good, beautiful, constructive, and so on. Without normative personal values, there would be no cultural reference against which to measure the virtue of individual values and so culture identity would disintegrate.

According to Kohn (1977), values are a central aspect of the non-material culture of a society and are important because they influence the behavior of the members of the society. Values are the standards by which members of a society define what is good or what is bad, holy or unholy, beautiful or ugly. They are assumptions that are widely shared within the society. They differ from one society to the other. Those values which are not physiologically determined and normally considered objective, such as desire to avoid physical pain, seek pleasure and so on are considered subjective, vary across individuals and cultures and are in many ways aligned with beliefs and belief system. Types of values include ethical value, ideological value (religious, political) values, social values and aesthetic values.

Appelbaum, (2009:173) define values as "broad preferences concerning appropriate courses of action or outcomes." Therefore, values reflect a person's sense of right and wrong or what "ought" to be. "Equal rights for all", "Excellence deserves admiration", and "people should

be treated with respect and dignity” are representative of values. Values tend to influence attitude and behavior.

Values (beliefs or attitudes about what is good, right, desirable, worthwhile, etc.) and value system (the ways one organizes, ranks, priorities and make decisions based on values) provide the foundation from which personal and professional judgments and choices are made. They are one’s beliefs about what is important in life. Some values refer to how one should act (such as to be honest, self-disciplined, and kind). Other values refer to what one wants to accomplish or obtain in life (Bonvillain, 2006).

Another aspect of non-material culture is beliefs held by the members of a society. Beliefs are cultural conventions that concerns true or false assumptions, specific descriptions of the nature of the universe and humanities place in it. Most people in a given society assume that their beliefs are rational and firmly grounded in a common sense. However, some beliefs may not necessarily scientifically be valid. Cited in Scupin (2001), Yengoyan (1986) says that, some beliefs may be combined into an ideology consisting of cultural symbols and beliefs that reflect and support the interests of specific groups within society. In the Central Volta Region of Ghana and for that matter African society at large, beliefs are transformed into three- or two-dimensional forms as images and symbols for religious and secular purposes. This confirms what Yengoyan (1986) says that: “Culture is not acquired by birth but through education be it formal or informal”.

## **2.12 Proverb**

Proverbs cannot be excluded when creating or writing on signs and symbols. In other words, they play important role in symbolism. Paremiology, which is derived from the Greek

word *paroimia*, is the study of proverbs and can be dated as far back as Aristotle. (Mieder and Alan, 1994). Often a proverb is found in variations in different parts of the world. Literate societies dating to the ancient Egyptians have collected proverbs (Koch, 1994). One cannot tell exactly when proverbs started with the Central Ewes. It is believed to be with their ancestors before the migrated from ~4tsie.

A proverb is a short saying of unknown authorship, expressing some general truth or superstition. Proverbs are found in most cultures, and are often very ancient. The Hebrew scriptures include proverbs. So proverbs have been in use from time immemorial. Many poets notably Chaucer and William Blake incorporate proverb in their work to add humour and others imitate their condensed form of expression. More homely than aphorisms, proverbs generally refer to common experience and are often expressed in metaphor, alliteration, or rhyme. For example, “a bird in hand is worth two in the bush” (Mieder, 1993:24). This literary means that whatever is already yours is worthier than what one expects to get in future. In Ewe, it means “Nusi su asiwo la nyo wu nusi le gbe me”.

A proverb is a succinct and pithy saying that is in general use and expresses commonly held ideas and beliefs. It can also be taken as a verbal vehicle for the conveyance of cultural values. It can also be viewed as a symbol of canon in the large Ewe belief system. Proverbs are part of every spoken language and folk literature originating in oral tradition. A proverb is realized in the Ghanaian society through various channels. It is transmitted both through aural and visual means; the aural can be oral, written or drummed. The visual is conveyed through design, symbol and artefact and also through demeanour and behaviour. Many proverbs act as catalysts of knowledge, wisdom, philosophy, ethics and morals. They provoke further reflection and call for deep thinking which must be understood. On understanding of proverbs, Mbiti

(1998), gives an example of South African proverb as “marriage roast” (hardens) in this case, one is challenged to look at marriage seriously, to reflect on it and see how far this proverbial statement is true, false or both. This proverb is symbolic. This can also be said of the Central Ewe proverbs, known as “Lododo” in the Ewe language. In this study, some of the proverbs are made visible and appreciated.

Agbo (2006:vii) adds to the reason and understanding of proverbs. He intimates that, “proverbs can be likened to riddles, which have puzzling statements or description, mostly intended to make a person use his or her wits. However, in its proper sense, the motive of proverbs must always lend itself for easy understanding.” A proverb is a short sentence, that people often quote, which gives advice or comments on life. It is synonymous with; adage, axiom, maxim, saw and saying. It also tells the truth or useful wisdom in a short sentence. Proverbs are symbolized or become symbols when they are made into two or three – dimensional form. Agbo (2006:vii) again denotes a proverb as a short statement of wisdom or advice, which has passed into general use. He goes on to say that, “a proverb is a short saying, with word of advice or warning.”

From the various definitions of proverbs, it is obvious that peoples’ judgment and understanding of proverbs are almost similar in one way or the other. Some describe them as short, others crystallized or as a summary. It is also asserted that they are widely held statements, meaning that they are commonly used in everyday language. It is again observed that all definitions recognize that proverbs are words of wisdom, advice, useful thoughts and warning. It must not be forgotten that proverbs require interpretation; else they become ambiguous

statements because, whoever created them, experienced the situation which prompted their creation. That idea is true in connection with Central Ewe proverbs.

In a Ghanaian culture, philosophy is translated directly from written language to oral to visual art form. The principal carriers of Ewe philosophy are thousands of proverbs, each of which represents a bit of wisdom designed to guide and shape the society. There are a lot of methods used in communication, in order to get ideas, philosophies, values and beliefs to the people in the community. Proverbs are short sayings which are used in this case. They are symbolic expressions that lead us to conceive of situations, events, ideas, patterns of behaviour and of values. Briefly on Ewe proverbs, Dzobo (2004:6) similarly says:

In the process of communication, various devices

are used to get our ideas, feelings and attitudes

to people, proverb are some of the devices.

A proverb is an indirect way of communicating

what people want to say to others. They are generally

short and pithy sayings used to express symbolically

certain ideas, values and beliefs.

A proverb is a short saying or sentence that is generally known by many people. The saying usually contains words of wisdom, truth or morals that are based on common sense or practical experience. It is after a description of a basic rule of conduct that all people generally follow or should follow. Proverbs can be found in all languages. They condense common experiences into memorable form. In other words they are memorable and intuitively convincing formulations of socially sanctioned advice. To add to that, one can say that, a proverb is a

statement one enthusiastically embraces when one is unwilling to examine the particulars in general situations.

In further definition of a proverb, Mieder (1993:119) has the same view as expressed earlier and says that:

a proverb is a short generally known sentence of  
the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals,  
and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and  
memorable form and which is handed down from  
generation to generation. It is believed that proverbs  
contain wisdom and truth, as well as lessons and  
useful thoughts which can be learnt by both the youth  
and the adults.

To emphasize Mieder's definition of proverb, Brunvand (1986:74), says that, "a proverb is a phrase, saying, sentence or expression of the folk which contains above all, wisdom, truth, moral, experience, lesson, and advice concerning life and which has been handed down from generation to generation". This can be said of Central Ewe proverbs.

A proverb is therefore more than a wise old saying. It leads us beyond the literal meaning of the saying to think of how to understand the function of proverbs in general. Proverbs are oral literary expressions that help us conceive of relationships, ideas or to arrive at certain understanding of life. For instance, when we say: "knowledge is like baobab tree and no one person can embrace it with his hands, not even with both arms". This can be said in another way. That is, "there is no limit to what an individual can know from life's experience". Another



proverb says the same truth this way: “knows all knows nothing”. This is how the Greek philosopher Socrates also puts it- “the only thing I know is that I know nothing” (Mieder and Allan, 1994). Comparing the different ways the same truth is said, it’s been deduced that, proverbs are symbolic and pictorial ways that our forebears express their thoughts and feelings, their beliefs and aspirations. So, aesthetic and educational values of proverbs are evident and can also be traced to the Ewe generation.

Structurally, a proverb is a different way of saying something. It therefore invariably contains a hidden meaning or message in itself or in its symbols. Certainly, Dzobo (2004:7) is of the same view, and therefore says that: “A proverb may be compared to a palm-nut. You may have to crack its hard shell of symbolism before you can see the kernel inside it”. From the analysis, in this case, a proverb has a ‘shell’ and a ‘kernel’, which invariably can be seen as a form and content. The content is where we have the moral truth, principles, values, or attitudes, while the linguistic structure provides its forms to illustrate the point; “it is the slave who becomes wealthy that dares to go after the chief’s wife”, that is “sudden material wealth can make people lose their sense of judgment”. In this context, Central Ewe proverbs demand critical thinking or imagination and reasoning to decipher the Language to understand the culture.

There are reasons for the use of proverbs worldwide. It is to make people behave according to their society’s standards of behaviour and expectations. This is due to the fact that, proverbs reflect the philosophies, beliefs, values, ideas and thoughts of the society. Through proverbs the length of unnecessary conversation is cut. They also serve as medium of caution to the society on the dangers that bedeviled it. Besides they expose the evils of society and as well resolve conflicts. Proverbs are used as a means of encouragement. In short, proverbs present an opportunity for inter – disciplinary exploration and discussions in various fields including

religion and philosophy, sociology and anthropology, linguistics and literature, history, geography, economics, medicine and communication. Viewing it from the religious context, Mbiti (1999:5), asserts that,

proverbs are rich source of African religion  
and philosophy. They point to the deep  
spirituality, as well as theological and philosophical  
insight in this case they form a bridge between  
Traditional African religiousity and biblical teaching.  
This concern is one of the main objectives of the  
African proverb project, which is taken up in  
word details in individual volumes on proverbs  
or preaching and teaching services.

Attention has been given to paremiography or composition of proverbs in this research. It is an inevitable fact that the source of most symbols can be traced from there. In another view, proverbs with connotative meaning, which may not generally be accepted by everyone, make interpretation and their symbols sometimes difficult. For instance, when one says “a live dog is better than a dead lion,” its literal meaning provides us with denotative or primary meaning. In everyday language, the ‘dog’ denotes domestic quadruped, while the ‘lion’, a wild quadruped. These are the primary meanings of the words. ‘Live dog and dead lion’, however are used in the proverb to imply different ideas, that is to express secondary meaning. They are used to represent the idea of “limited power” and powerlessness. These two ideas are implied in the primary understanding of ‘live dog’ and ‘dead lion’. So, ‘limited power’ and ‘powerlessness’ are the implied or the connotative meaning or the primary meaning of the terms. The logical relationship

between the denotative and connotative proverb is always one of entailment. Here, the proverb is used to symbolize limited power and powerless.

In addition to denotative and connotative meanings, proverbs have evaluative functions. For example, “no one scratches the back when it is the chest that itches.” There are two courses of action portrayed in this proverb. The two courses are presented as the possible ways of solving problems; direct attack and the evasive method. The proverb is advising the latter one, and besides, passing judgment and evaluation on the two methods. It is in this view that one can say that a proverb has an evaluative function.

Some proverbs can be illustrated in two or three dimensional forms. In other words, in picture or in sculptural form to make them physical symbols even though proverbs are symbolic on their own. This is where the relationship can be drawn between signs and symbols and proverbs. Proverbs do not only show the mode of thought and general principles used to direct personal and social behavior but they also reveal the way Central Ewes look upon the tangled web of human relationship and life. As stated earlier, proverbs in Central Ewe culture are aural and visual. The aural ones are traditionally communicated through spoken, gestural, as well as drummed versions. For the Central Ewe, proverbs represent not only a means of conveying cultural truisms, but also a way to display intelligence and elegance through language. Collected and passed down through the ages by oral tradition, proverbs are statements reflecting historical, societal, and philosophical knowledge. Ackah (1998:49) explains:

The origin of any proverb has usually been a  
terse or metaphorical statement which falls from  
the lips of a wise or an elderly person, such as  
a chief, his linguist, or a respected or wealthy man,

in a particular situation or context. If it impresses his audience as rich and pregnant with wisdom, any of them may quote it in a similar situation, and soon it becomes a popular idiom in the language of the people. In the case of proverbs with moral significance, they become current and popular, if they are acceptable to what might be called the social conscience of the tribes.

Good proverb speakers are known by the Central Ewes not for their knowledge in proverb, but for their application of proverbs in appropriate interactional contexts. Outside normal discourse, a speaker's proverbial wit is indeterminate; for wit derives from the intrinsic value of the proverb in relation to its logical relevance to the situation at hand.

It is not known exactly how many proverbs actually exist. But because of changes that occur in meanings in various contextual application. It is virtually impossible to make an accurate accounting. Proverbs are used by speakers of all Ewe dialects and none are used by single dialect- speakers exclusively.

The Ewes consider truth to be most important. The proverb, "honest confession is difficult to make but it brings peace to mind." This implies that it is important to own up to the truth openly, because, although a person may find him or herself in difficulty, if he or she speaks the truth, it will at least bring him ease of conscience, which is more valuable to him or her as a human being than the apparent advantages of telling a lie.

One of the many proverbs which refer to generosity and beneficence is "when the palm ripens birds eat some." This refers to the fact that a cluster of about 150 ripened palm-nuts is cut

from the palm tree by the owner when he needs it. Before he does so, the hungry birds which fly over, the tree will eat some of the pericap on the nut. This proverb implies that it is only natural that a person should make it possible for others to benefit from his wealth.

The inculcation of morals in the home is described in a number of proverbs, most of which points out that the quality of the home is manifested in the quality of its products. The emphasis, in nearly every case, is on the type of moral training and an example given in the home. “If the yam does not grow well, we should not blame it, it is due to the soil.” That is, if one makes a failure of one’s life, the failure is attributed to one’s background and upbringing.

As a contributor to the proverb literature, Dzobo (1975) reveals his purpose for the study and collection of Ewe proverbs that “it is to discover and state in straight forward language the traditional moral truths that are enshrined in them. By such a treatment it will be easy to have a better idea of the value system of our traditional society”. From the discussions, a proverb plays an important role in communicating values in culture generally, and symbols as their visual manifestation, serve to remind the public of standards held dear in the society.

### **2.13 Totem**

If some symbols depict animal or humans, while others depict simple abstract shapes, which represent the beliefs and aspirations of the people then it is worth reviewing what others have said about totem. A totem is any natural or mystical animal to which one feels a close connection during one’s life or some particular period of one’s life. In many religious traditions, animals are much more closely linked to humans. Australian Aborigines, as well as Africans, “conceptualize a single, unified cosmic order in which man and the natural species, ancestral beings, spirits, and other concede entities are on equal terms” (Tonkinson 1974:74). The energy

of the totem animal speaks to one in a way that is relevant to one's personality or circumstance in life.

Animal symbols are common in town like Ho, Peki, Matse, Abutia, Hohoe and others in the Central Volta Region. Therefore it is relevant to discuss what totem is. Totem is believed to be connected to people's spirit. Indigenous people from the different parts of the world have animal spirits that play very important roles in their lives. In Chinese and Western astrology, most of the signs and symbols are animal motifs. Coming back to Africa, and for that matter Ghana, the same can be said of most of the linguist staffs and umbrella tops.

In most circles it is the belief that by getting to know one's animal totem, one can gain insight and understanding of one's life circumstances more clearly, and share in the totem power. Animal totems manifest a specific kind of energy that aligns forces of the spiritual realm to influence life (Heider, 2001). Below are some totemic animals, their significance and associated towns.

<b>Totem</b>	<b>Lesson Learnt</b>	<b>TOWN</b>
Bee	Diligence, Productivity	Peki
Butterfly	Change, Love, Transformation	Hohoe
Cat	Agility, Magic, Mystery	Kpeve
Cow	Nurturing, Growth	Ho
Crab	Simplicity, Peacefulness	Hohoe
Dog	Loyalty, Unconditional Love	Peki
Eagle	Courage, Spiritual Balance, Superiority	Anfoega
Elephant	Strength Intelligence, Loyalty	Vakpo

Fish	Life, Transition	Golokuati
Frog	Abundance, Fertility, Transformation	Peki
Lion	Personal Power, Courage, Strength	Kpetoe
Monkey	Energy, Curiosity	Taviefe
Owl	Magic, Wisdom	Matse
Ram	Adventure, Wisdom	Peki
Rooster	New Beginning, Sexual Powers	Kpeve
Snake	Rebirth, Wisdom, Healing	Hohoe
Squirrel	Trust, Preparedness	Abutia
Chameleon	Patience,	Hohoe

Giving the definition of totem, (Malin, 2000) says that:

...because there is no one definite response  
that satisfies the definitions provided by hundreds  
of different cultures, spiritualities in past  
traditions and contemporary practices.  
Traditionally, the totem was an animal that  
represented a clan familial group in order to  
distinguish them from other clans and thus prevent  
inbreeding or incest, and help one to monitor the  
kinship. I believe that the totem is an animal that  
is reflective of our own personality and spirit,  
it is a part of us, and shows itself to us clearly.  
It cannot often be found in simple mediation,

it is not often your favourite animal. It is also not the primary source of power in the other world, in other words if you are a shamanist, there should be spirit helpers that you work with intimately- not just your individual totem.

More and more people tend to believe that they also have more than one personal totem and are familial totems. One will not go with this but rather one believes firmly that people only have one individual totem, with no exception of this law. Totems have symbolic connotations. Some of the animal symbols are deduced from proverbs as done in the Central Volta Region of Ghana. They express abstract truth and show moral teachings, which are translated and given aesthetic value.

People believe that they are the descendants of spirit beings or ancestors, a belief called 'totemism'. Totemic ancestors may have human or animal forms. From ancient times, they gave protection or life saving advice to human beings in need or in danger. Totems are the primordial protectors of the people to whom people owe gratitude and respect. Ancestral totems may also be identified as the actual progenitors of the present – day people. In either case, people perform rituals in their honour so that they will continue to receive protection and guidance.

'Totemism' celebrates the solidarity of social groups. It is believed that each clan is descended from a specific animal in the mythic past, which is transformed into human being. Due to this fact, eating of the meat of such animals is prohibited. In this case, it becomes a taboo. This is also common in the Central Ewe community. Hume, (2000:125) highlights this by saying that:

At some time in an earlier realm of existence,



the mythic animal ancestor was transformed  
into human being and continues to be connected  
to its human descendants. The descendants honour  
their animal ancestor; or totem, by performing rituals  
in its honour and refraining from eating its flesh.

The moment the animal becomes a totem, it is revered by the clan. Spirit links among the people have survival value because they create bonds of mutual acknowledgment, interdependence and obligations to extend hospitality and share resources. Discussing peoples' relationship with totems, coupled with its being used as a ritual symbol, and forbidden or prohibited as food, Neider (2001:357) also shares his view on it and reiterates that:

In the prototypical example of totemism, descent group such as a clan or sib takes its name from its totem, which is a symbol that represents the common identity of the group members and their special relationship to the totem. This relationship is often explained by a myth about a common ancestry. This myth often tells a story about the founding of the clan. The people who refer to themselves as their totem – tortoise, monkey or whatever – use visual symbols of totem in their art and are not allowed to kill or eat their totemic creature.

So the quote confirms that a totem is a symbol. This human – nature identification is quite widespread, turning up in many different parts of the world. The manifestation of totemism

in our modern life today, is the so – called mascot of schools, their sports teams as well as national organized games. With reference to Ghana, the mascot for the last organized African Cup of Nations in 2008 was ‘Agor4 Nana’. It depicted an eagle, dressed in the national colours, juggling a football.

## **2.14 Aesthetics**

The creation of a sign and a symbol or a visual image has aesthetic quality. The aesthetic therefore refers to the ways in which humans experience the world through their senses. It is especially concerned with the appreciation of particular objects when they strike the senses in a pleasing manner. Therefore, aesthetics most frequently focuses on works of art and other similar objects that are explicitly designed for human sensory enjoyment. So any combination of qualities that delight the senses concerned with the appreciation of beauty and anything that is good. Commenting on human experiences in aesthetics, Gilbert (2002:4) says,

Aesthetic is the branch of philosophy concerned  
with the feeling aroused in us by sensory experiences  
-experiences we have through sight, hearing, taste,  
touch and smell. Aesthetic concerns itself with our  
responses to the natural world, and to the world we  
make, especially world of art.

Aesthetics is also defined by Allen (2002:36) as: “the field of philosophy that studies the ways in which human beings experience the world through their senses. It is especially linked to the recognition and appreciation of particular objects when they strike the senses in a pleasing manner”. This author further explains that aesthetics mostly focuses on works of art and other

similar objects that are purposefully designed for humans to enjoy. However, he indicates that aesthetic appreciation is not limited to art but it is frequently directed to the world at large.

Aesthetic is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of art and the criteria of artistic judgement. Some of the central questions of aesthetics focus on the beautiful: under what circumstances it may be said to exist. Generally speaking, there are two basic approaches to the problem of beauty- the objective, which asserts that beauty inheres in the objects and that judgement concerning it may have objective validity, and the subjective, which turns to identify the beautiful with that which pleases the observer.

The most influential discussions on aesthetics embrace the beautiful and the good. A distinction has also been drawn between what appears beautiful and what is beautiful. It is almost accepted that the beautiful is whatever is useful or powerful; but some schools of thought object that power may be used for evil, which is not beautiful, so power and beauty cannot be the same. One may make a qualification by saying and agreeing that, power when used for good is beautiful. This implies that the good and the beautiful are cause and effect and therefore different things. Yet this is ridiculous, given the long accepted identification of the beautiful and the good. It is suggested that the “beautiful” is a particular species of the agreeable or pleasurable comprising all things that give pleasure through the senses of sight and hearing, (Levinson, 2003).

The definition and discussion of the origin of the term “aesthetics” is important in this thesis. Budd (1998) notes that, aesthetic (also spelt esthetic and Aesthetic) is the field of philosophy, which is devoted to the study of beauty and art. Aesthetics owes its name to Alexander Baumgarten, who derived it from the Greek word “aisthanomai” which means perception by means of the sense (Kelly, 1998:521). By its definition and characteristics,

aesthetics basically consist of two major parts: the philosophy of art; and the philosophy of aesthetic experience and character of objects or phenomena that are not art. Non-art items include both artefacts that possess objects susceptible to aesthetics, appreciation and phenomena that lack any trait of human design by virtue of being product of nature; not humanity. There are two obvious possibilities that show that in aesthetica, one of the constituents is more fundamental than the other. The first is that the philosophy of art is basic, since the aesthetic appreciation of anything that is not art is the appreciation of it as if it was art.

The second is that, there is a unitary notion of the aesthetic that applies to both art and non-art; this notion defines the ideas of aesthetic appreciation as disinterested delight in the immediately perceptible properties of an object for their own sake; and artistic appreciation is just aesthetic appreciation of works of art. But neither of these possibilities is plausible.

Budd (2002) further indicates that the meaning of aesthetic as adjective may be illuminated by comparing it to aesthetic which is by construction and antonym. By extension, if something is unaesthetic it turns to dull the senses or causes sleepiness. In contrast, aesthetics may be thought of as anything that tends to stimulate or enliven the senses. Aesthetics is used to mean “that which appeals to the senses”. To summarize it, when aesthetics came about as a field of study, prominence was on beauty, taste, transcendence and the sublime. Aesthetically appealing objects were beautiful in and of themselves. What was believed beautiful was differentiated from the sublime. Beautiful symbols might fall into the category of what we perceive today as pretty, pleasant and pleasing to the eye. To the Central Ewes, it is perceived that the environment is the element that induces aesthetic feeling which is defined in terms of its functionality and its symbolic significance.

Dutton (2005:2) asserts that “pure” aesthetics is all about form and structure. It is an intuitive appeal to this formalist way of thinking through aesthetics. Dutton went on further indicates that:

....people who cannot feel pure aesthetics emotions  
remember pictures by their subjects; whereas people  
who can, as often as not, have no idea what a subject of  
a picture is. They have never noticed the representative  
element, and so when they discuss pictures they talk about  
shapes of forms and the relations and quantities of colours.

Traditional Africans, of which Central Ewe is not exception, see beauty in everything around them. This is evident in their philosophy of life. It is the principle underlying these philosophies that control the traditional Africa. Aesthetic is seen as one of the basic aspects of their daily lives, which generally has a moral basis. This is pointed out by the fact that, in many African languages the same word means “beautiful” and “good”. In Ewe, “Enya kp4”, Beautiful, refers to the total out look of a particular animate or inanimate object; and “Enyo”, good, is mostly used to describe inner qualities inherent in an object including human beings.

In humans however, it is judgmental of moral fibre. The manifestation of this aesthetic quality does not conflict with the use and meaning of African art. It should be both beautiful and good, since it is meant not only to please the eye but to uphold moral values. Aesthetics in African artefacts have generally been shown publicly in connection with cultural context and use. In the African aesthetic principles, as well as related moral and religious values, it is worth giving attention to the formal aesthetic aspect of the objects and the moral and religious ideas they show.

On aesthetic values and their characteristics in several other cultures as Gyekye (2003:125) posits that:

The aesthetic is characterized by delight, interest and enjoyment experienced by human beings in response to objects, events and scenes. It holds the attentive eye and ear of the person and arouses his or her appreciation and enjoyment as he or she looks and listens. Aesthetic values refer to those features of objects, events and scenes that are considered worthy of sustained appreciation, attention and interest.

The concept or value of beauty is central to aesthetic experience and evaluation and is generally associated with works of art such as painting, sculptures and musical composition, as well as artistry through dance.

African aesthetics is more open; and its concerns are much greater. "Beautiful" is given importance in terms of human life than work of art, event and scenes. It also has to do with the standards of value in appraising other facets of human life and culture, such as humanity itself and morality. The aesthetic qualities of the arts are not only determined by the Language of art. They are also determined by the ethnics of value of the people. This is so, when the arts conform to what is good in the society.

In most aesthetic evaluations, the purely aesthetic element may probably be the most important element. It is evident that the traditional wood-carver for instance, is concerned with how his linguist staff or the umbrella top will cause a strong feeling of the purely aesthetic

judgement of an observer, which is how beautiful the linguist staff or the umbrella top appears to an observer. As a result, its beauty may persuade the observer to appreciate it. So to the African, beauty in connection with artistic product is defined in terms of functionality and symbolic importance as well as the purely aesthetic.

Ackah (1988) asserts that beauty is considered a comprehensive aesthetic idea. According to him, in indigenous African societies, especially the Akans of Ghana, beauty is held as the central concept in an aesthetic experience. He reveals that different cultures hold different conception about what may be considered beautiful.

For the Ewe in general, the notion of aesthetics govern what is considered “*enya kp4*”, beautiful, “*nux4asi*”, valuable, “*nuvevie*”, important and worthy of sustained appreciation. This can be seen as part of the larger African world view, which integrates the sacred and the secular in all aspects of life. What is considered beautiful includes work of art, scenes, events and also, behaviour. Visual art forms, performing art and social conduct are evaluated using the same standards of appraisal.

It is clear that beauty is not seen only in works of art and in human figure, but also in morals and behaviour as well as in humanity itself. This is revealed in the Ewe Language and culture, for instance, in which aesthetic expressions are used in describing moral behaviour as well as works of art. Discussing beauty in Akan, Gyekye (2003:133) again indicates that:

Beauty in Akan and general African conceptions  
is a many-faceted notion with much wider application.  
It is not just a feature of works of art; there is also the  
idea of beauty, speech, thought, action (behaviour),  
and appearance and of humanity itself. Standards

of aesthetic value are constantly impinging themselves  
on moral valuation; so that what is morally good also appeals  
to the aesthetic sense.

These criteria of beauty and virtue have to do with the quality of significance of the work or act as pertains to its social function and relevance to the mainstream of the Ewe value system. Stated in another way, the criteria are, “it must be fitting or appropriate”, “it must show good taste”, “it must be graceful”. Besides, it must properly and accurately reflect the standards of the Ewe value system. Ewe symbols are valued for their aesthetic appeal which is based on part of their meaning, its significance and appropriateness for a particular location or occasion. They formed multilayered Language that is universally accepted yet culturally specific.

Central Ewes see beauty in things and associate them with their usefulness. Anything or object that satisfies a purpose is deemed beautiful. The Central Ewes refer to anything useful, good, craftsmanship, for that matter technical finish of an item, neatness and cleanliness as “enya kp4”, which literarily means “it is beautiful” or “enya kp4 ɲut4 ” which literarily means “it is very beautiful” to express the degree of beauty. In giving another example, a large drum that can give a deep tone is beautiful because the deep tone stirs up one’s spirit. In another instance, the Central Ewes see beauty in a pair of things – two of everything because of connotation of balance.

Symbolism of colour evokes beauty among the Central Ewes. Green symbolizes vegetation. It provides avenues for farming and therefore food, a basic necessity of life. Also, brown is beautiful because it is the colour of the earth on which on which we plant crops for food. Grey represents wood ash. Wood ash is medicinal and it is also used in killing termites under foundations of building. Furthermore, the colour red is beautiful because it represents



blood, which is life. In addition, beauty can be seen in black because it represents excessive strength. It obliterates other colours. That is it prevents them from being seen, therefore making them ineffective. Thus beauty is equated with functionality.

Verticality or anything vertical is also beautiful because it represents male erection. That is power for procreation to multiply the family. It implies that if something has no use or is useless, it is not beautiful. Any anti-social act such as theft, prostitution, adultery, abortion, murder and madness are not beautiful because they cannot make any meaningful contribution to life in the society. Fighting and excessive drunkenness are not signs of beauty rather, signs of ugliness. A destructive sign or symbol such as thunder sign is beautiful only to individuals whose desire are fulfilled but ugly to the rest of society.

On humans, apart from character, beauty is seen in the human form. Cognizance is also taken of agility, manliness and parts of the body especially that of women. A beautiful Ewe woman is one that has a good character, good shape, ringed neck, good legs, fat breast, buttocks, and dark or fair skin and even the art of walking and talking. What is useful in life is beautiful. The criteria for beauty include a reason for the usefulness of the entity. The woman is beautiful because she has a good character. The green colour of the oil palm leaflets is beautiful because it is pleasant to look at, and because the leaflets are used for cleansing. The concept of beauty, locked up in the minds of the cultural specialists or the custodians of the Ewe culture, are ideas which when expressed, spell out the theory of excellence or perfection. A beautiful thing must be excellent or perfect.

Ewe aesthetics affects social behaviour and moral characters which are viewed beautiful and tasteful. Conversely, their opposite is described as being “ugly”, “unbecoming”, or “not agreeable to the eye”. The statement, “his character is ugly” reflects the relationship of aesthetic

standards and personal conduct. So what is morally good in Ewe philosophy is seen as being appealing to an aesthetic sense. It is therefore not wrong to describe Ewe idea of beauty as comprehensive, which influences all aspects of life from the physical, personal, visual and spoken. The Ewe value of beauty as defined in their philosophy and its manifestations in visual culture is evident specifically through the use of their signs and symbols.

## **2.15 Education**

The term education has been looked at from different angles. However, in many of these works, education has been seen basically from two principal areas. That is, the informal and formal types of education. Some of the available literature that deals with education is discussed below:

The term education has been given various definitions by different scholars and philosophers. Hence, there is no univocal definition of education as the concept has been exposed to different and often contradictory interpretations. In its etymological derivation, Ducasse (1958:1) notes that it comes from the Latin word “educere” meaning to “lead out” or to “bring out”. Unfortunately, this definition is sterile, as another school of thought who denies that education comes from “educere”, but rather from “educare”, which means to “form” or “train” (schofield, 1982:32). Notably, while these views or definitions both claim that they are right in terms of etymological meaning; they of course establish very little on the idea of education, and at best, they provide clues which may be worthwhile to follow up.

The definition of education might have stemmed from these two Latin words put together. However, from the ancient days to this day, there have been slight changes in the concept. The old concept of education is based on the idea that education is a preparation for life

(Cahn, 1997). This means that education should be used to refer to all procedures and practices by which individuals are prepared to live their lives on this earth. However, some critics believe that simply preparing an individual for life could mean transmitting the same skills and values continuously, and if there are mistakes, committing them over and over. In this case, no room is made for improving the individual and the society. In line with Cahn's assertion, the moral education derived from signs and symbols prepares the youth in the Central Ewe community for life.

As a result of this deficiency in the old concept of education delivery, the new concept which has been developed is based on the idea that education involves procedure and practices that lead to an improvement in the quality of individuals, their living and societal conditions as a whole, Quist et al.,( 2002). Education as a social phenomenon has therefore undergone a series of metamorphosis; however, its various definitions are based on the context in which the education is delivered in a particular society within this world.

One of the earliest definitions of education was given by the Greek philosopher Plato who saw education as “the turning of the eye of the soul from darkness unto light”. Plato's definition means the conversion of the immature from what is perceived wrongly into the right forms (Phillips, 2009).

According to (Agyeman, 1993:17), another definition of education was given by a well-known French scholar called Emile Durkheim. He saw education as “the influence exercised by adults on those that are not yet ready for social life”. His definition holds true today since as part of education, societies continue to pass down habits, skills, values and knowledge to their young.

Quist et al., (2002:28) on the other hand looks at education in terms of its product. According to them, “Education is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge”. Any

person who knows how to use knowledge has gone through education. By this, it means that the individual cannot be said to be educated simply by receiving knowledge. It is only when such knowledge is used to improve efficiency that the one is said to have gone through education.

According to Shafritz et al., (1988:168), education in broad terms, is the life-long process of acquiring new knowledge and skills through both formal and informal exposure to information, ideas, and experiences. Similarly, Bown and Olu Tomori (1979:15) state that "education is consciously facilitated learning, that is life- long and can affect young and old." These writers, therefore, view education as a continuous activity that the individual goes through from infancy to the time that the individual will die.

Additionally, Farrant (1980:18) describes education "as the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed". Learning is, therefore, taken to mean a change in behaviour, knowledge, understanding and the capabilities that the learner retains for use in other situations.

This large scale change culminating in the development of compulsory schooling for all, and may well have brought about such a radical conceptual tightening up that we now only tend to use the word in connection with the development of knowledge and understanding (Hirst and Peters, 1990:23). Within this purview, the UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education (1995:2) defines education as comprising organized and sustained communication designed to bring about learning. Thompson (1984:23) emphasizes on communication as a basic means of transmission of education. He explains 'communication' that it requires a relationship between two or more people involving the transfer of information. 'Organized' means planned in a sequence with established aims and curricula, and 'sustained' means that the learning experience has duration and continuity and describes 'learning' as any change in behaviour,

knowledge, understanding, skills and capabilities which the learner retains and which cannot be ascribed simply to physical growth or the development of inherited behaviour patterns. He contends that:

what goes on in the institution we call a school is intended to be education in these terms, but equally clearly education may be carried on outside formal schools and that all societies have all times sought to develop appropriate behaviour patterns, spread the possession of knowledge, understanding and skills among their members in ways which possess many of the above characteristics even though the degree of organization and the extent to which aims were articulated tended to be limited.

To Thompson, education is therefore a learning process where knowledge, skills, understanding and critical thinking are acquired (Yawkumah, 2007).

Schultz et al., (1998:116), refer to education as socialization and enculturation, life-long processes by which an individual is incorporated into the group and made capable of behaving in the ways accepted by the society for a person of a particular age, sex, or status. Recently, educationists have begun to refer to such process by which an individual learns the culture of his group as informal education, to distinguish between the processes of learning provided in specially designed learning environment- formal education (Thompson 1984).

To add to, Fafunwa (1982:17) defines education as “the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or a young adult develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are

of positive value to the society in which he lives”. Explicit in this definition is the fact that it recognizes the development of individuals and concerns itself which provide total – mental, physical and vocational development of human beings, especially, as they are beneficial to society. This form of education can be related to that which is acquired from Central Ewe signs and symbols.

Aggarwal (1995:5) argues that education is the development of all those capabilities in the individual which enables him to control his environment and fulfil his responsibilities, hence a functional definition that depicts education as an instrument of personal change and challenging to the threat of the environment to show that education is a developmental process in a person that enables him or her to make an original contribution to human life in his or her best capacity. And in this view, it is very essential to note that this definition captures the point that education is a lifelong process; neither is it terminal nor is there age limit to education; hence it is a lifelong process, from the womb to the tomb.

Furthermore, Bowan (1974:12) informs us that “education is the earned virtue, the direct logic, and the resultant effect of individual encounter with a given experience”. This definition is wider and imprecise as it portrays all experience to be educative wherein experience may be of skills, elements of knowledge, the influence of others, the total atmosphere of a social environment, or any experiential encounter of human daily living. To Bowan, whatever the experience, it should be sufficiently deep and dynamic so as to evoke educating effects.

Also, Abosi and Brookman Amissah (1992) contend that education is an integrated experience which combines not only physical with character training but also manual with intellectual training through observation, imitation of and participation in adult roles.

Additionally, Moghadam (2003) sees education as a key part of strategies to improve individuals' well-being and societies' economic and social development. Moghadam sees the development of societies being contingent on the kind of education the individual receives.

After analyzing the available literature on the definition of education, one can say that, education refers to any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of the individual. In this sense education is a lifelong process in which we continue to learn from experience throughout our lives. Hence all kinds of experiences can be education, starting from the ones we learn at home, school, from the radio, television, in news papers and even the ones learnt from society through a process of taking in cultural norms.

## **2.16 African concept of education**

Adeyemi et al., (2003) observe that the type of education prevalent in the days before the coming of Western civilization is generally referred to as African traditional education or indigenous education of the various communities. It is believed that the development of the individual is the ultimate goal of all education. As Adeyinka (1993:22), opines that the purpose of education by traditional Africans is to enable:

1. the individual to fix himself or herself in the society into which he or she has been born to live;
2. him or her to explore the environment and find his own place;
3. him or her to cultivate good habits and develop the right attitude to life and work;
4. him or her to develop as a good citizen;

5. him or her to develop his or her potentialities to the full so that he or she could acquire knowledge and training in a profession so earn a good living.

These ideas are implicit in Crittenden's (1974) argument that, initiation into the culture of the society and the development of good character and socially acceptable behavior are more than what the school alone can give. The aims and intentions of community-wide education are implicit in the societal expectations of individual members. That is why the wider community has to complement the effort of the school.

To add, the traditional education of African children is further briefly summed up in the words of Kenyatta (1961:99-100) when he describes the educational system of the Gikuyu (also spelt Kikuyu) people of Kenya:

it will be found that education begins at the time of birth and ends with death. The child has to pass various stages of age groupings with a system of education defined for every status in life. They aim at instilling in the children what the Gikuyu call "otaari wa mocie" or "kerera kia mocie," namely, educating the children in the family and clan tradition. Apart from the system of schools which has been introduced by the Europeans, there is no special school building in the Gikuyu sense of the word: the homestead is the school... this is one of the methods by which the history of the people is passed from generation to generation.



This traditional system of education is similar in other African countries. In Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania and Malawi, traditional education of youngsters involves intellectual, physical and attitudinal training in order for them to develop fully into acceptable adult in the society. In addition, different kinds of games, including wrestling and running, training for healthy living, cooking, dressing, hunting, farming carpentry, training to become a smith, critical thinking, drumming dancing and marriage counseling form part of the traditional curricula at different stages of the life of the youth. Even on becoming an adult after the usual rites of passage, traditional education continues as a lifelong process for the average African, to foster unity and citizenship in the immediate environment in which the African finds himself or herself.

According to Kelly (1991), pre-colonial education, even in most centralized and stratified societies, was gender-based with boys and girls receiving the kind of education that enabled them to fulfil masculine and feminine responsibilities respectively. Male education thus produced farmers, warriors, smiths, rulers and other male-dominated occupations from which women were excluded. On the other hand, female education was predominantly designed to produce future wives and mothers. The principle of preparations further meant that male and female education prepared its recipients to adjust to the community and to play a useful role in it. Children developed a sense of obligation towards the community and grew to appreciate its history, language, customs and values.

Earlier writers such as McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1975) also see African traditional education from this perspective. The indigenous form of education is therefore basically geared towards training the individual to enable him fit into his society. Antwi (1995) agrees with these writers when he states that this type of education is effective because it is closely related to life in the community. It is through participation, imitation and observation of productive activities,

family life and group activities that the education of the child takes place so that he is simultaneously educated and instructed in the 'school of life'. One can see from Antwi's argument that indigenous education had and still has the sole purpose of introducing society with all its institutions, taboos, norms and functions to the individual and making the individual a part of the totality of the social consciousness. Indigenous education therefore incorporates all aspects of the personality of the child and the adolescent.

Fafunwa (1974:20) also identifies the concept of purposeful living in the following cardinal goals of African traditional education:

1. To develop the child's latent physical skills.
2. To develop character.
3. To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority.
4. To develop intellectual skills.
5. To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour.
6. To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs.
7. To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

The identified principles listed above have far-reaching implication for the formal education of today. Translated into modern curriculum and pedagogical theories and practices, the cardinal principles are largely similar to the goal, contents, methods and evaluation techniques of the modern-day institution, although the approach may be different. For instance, the seven traditional objectives can be categorized into the cognitive, psychomotor and the affective domains as found in modern-day curricular practice.

It is important to stress that in societies where sometimes education is indigenous; parents are predominantly responsible for teaching their children. Such is the case of the Central Ewes. They inculcate good manners, norms and values into their offspring, using their household as the “school”. This household education covers practical skills and continues as long as the child lives with his or her parents. The educational efforts are supplemented by those of the other adults in the community. All elders in the society are expected to play mother and father roles in teaching, scolding, advising, rewarding and punishing children in the village or community. In this dissertation, the concept of education among the Central Ewes is applied. This concept is very fundamental. It teaches that any additional knowledge that a person adds to what is already known, makes a person more educated. This means that anything learnt from signs and symbols added to previous knowledge makes a person more educated.

## **2.17 Art**

Art has a huge scope and it is prevalent everywhere. That is why it can be traced to the core of every society worldwide. It is a global activity which encompasses a host of disciplines. There is no universally accepted definition of art. Art is commonly used to describe something of beauty or a skill which produces an aesthetic result. We might say that art requires thoughts - some kind of creative impulse - but this raises more questions. For example, how much thought is required? If someone sprinkles paint on a support, hoping by this action to create a work of art, does the result automatically constitute art? (Wollheim, 1980).

The original classical definition of art is derived from the Latin word “ars” (meaning “skill” or “craft”). In light of this historical development in the meaning of “art”, one can perhaps make a crude attempt at a “working” definition of the subject. This broad approach leads to art

being defined as the product of a body of knowledge, most often using a set of skills (Janson, 2001).

Again, Encyclopedia Britanica (1988:305) defines art as: “the use of skills and imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environment or expressions that can be with others”. Wolf (1991) also defines art as: “the skill, technique or manipulation with organized and communicable, and culturally transmitted. It is the means by which the creating artist through his work, is invited with receptive audience” (pp. 50-51).

In addition, Taylor et al., (1967) indicate that visual art derives its significance from man’s ability to create symbols and to endow them with meaning. Both the creation and appreciation of art require the synthesis of sensuous, emotional and intellectual activities. Jones et al., (1967) as well state that “the work of art is the product of man’s intellect also his imagination.” They contend that no matter in what material, or medium, an artist works the principle remains the same.

Another thing to be aware of is the fact that art reflects and belongs to the period and culture from which it is spawned. In other words, whatever definition of art we arrive at is bound to be limited to our era and culture. From this, one can see that the world of art is a highly complex entity, not only in terms of its multiplicity of forms and types, but also in terms of its historical and cultural roots. Therefore a simple definition, or even a broad consensus as to what can be labelled art, is likely to prove highly elusive.

Kaufman (1970) explains that the arts may be a vehicle for social comment, embodying the virtues and the defects of society, a collective symbol of a society, or they may be an individual avenue of expression, embodying a sensual or symbolic transformation of ideals and

visions as well as physical state of being. They serve as emblems of the past, as precursors of the future, and as the vivid, yet spiritual projection of the present.

All the definitions offered over the centuries include some notion of human agency, whether through manual skills, intellectual manipulation, public or personal expression. Artists, philosophers, anthropologists, psychologists and programmers all use the notion of art in their respective fields, and give it operational definitions that vary considerably. Furthermore it is clear that even the basic meaning of the term “art” has changed several times over the centuries, and has continued to evolve during the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as well. In practice, the proliferation of new styles, artistic techniques, and theories have led to a new broadening of the meaning and definition of art. In fact, one might say that from this point “art” started to become “indefinable”. Notwithstanding, various definitions assigned art have been looked at.

The expression theory of art explains that art is the expression of the emotion of its creator. This theory tries to show that art can also do something important for people. It attempts to relate art to the lives of people. And finally it attempts to account for the emotional qualities of art and the way in which art moves people.

Art is in essence, the foremost expression of human creativity. As difficult to define as it is to evaluate, given that each individual artist chooses the rules and parameters that guide ones work, it can still be said that art is the process and the product of choosing a medium to express one’s self, a set of rules for the use of the medium, and a set of values that determine what deserves to be expressed through that medium, in order to convey either a belief, an idea, a sensation, or a feeling in the most effective way possible for that medium.

Art communicates on many levels and is open to many interpretations. If returning many times to the same work of art, one uncovers variations of meaning over and over again, it passes

an important test. Art communicates with people across different cultures and stands the test of time, possibly the ultimate test for any work of art. In analyzing the place of art in culture, Geertz (1973), proposes that art is more a symbol to transmit meaning. It is itself semiotic, a mode of making meaning. Artists learn in some degree their modes of thought from their culture, and their work is created to be responded to by people who share the same cultural modes of knowing and seeing. In support of the above statement, Fisher (1984:9) affirms that, “society without art is unknown”.

In effect, the arts reflect the culture that created them. So culture and art cannot be discussed in isolation. If we lose sight of the fact that art impacts upon culture, we are removing one of the central means of transmitting, organizing and learning culture. If the understanding of culture is set aside from art, society is hopeless. Signs and symbols are part of art used by society in understanding itself.

## **2.18 Art Education**

Art education is the area of learning that is based on the visual, and performing arts. Art education is a vital and basic component in the development of all human beings. It is a necessary and legitimate part of public education for all learners, regardless of their innate talent or academic ability. Art education may simply be defined as “education in art and through art.”(Solomon, 1999,). Succinctly, this is to say that the skills, practices and experiences in art can be taught and shared by the art educator. In art education, focus is on how to improve learning through the art, how to transfer leaning in and through the art to other disciplines. It is also concerned with discovering and creating understanding of human behavior, thinking, potential, and learning especially through the close observation of works of art and various forms of

involvement in arts experiences. Art education is unique in the sense that it is able to satisfy the individual needs in every area of development.

Amenuke (1979) supports the assertion above as he indicates that, art has special values to its advantage over the other subject areas because it embraces all the domains necessary for the education of human beings. Roy (1967) seems to agree with Amenuke as he portrays that education through visual arts has both broadening and humanizing effect and contributes to the overall development of the child or individual as a whole. Education through art helps the individual to act, feel and think creatively. Art activities are part of general education or culture as social studies, mathematics or language.

Is symbolism necessary in the total education of mankind? Yes it is necessary. Already signs and symbols are largely applicable in every aspect of education and general education as well. There are signs and symbols in Mathematics (+, -, =,); English Language (letters of the alphabet); Music (treble, bass clef and solfa notation); Science and Geography.

In much the same way, art education is one set subject that hugely thrives on the application of and use of signs and symbols. Signs and symbols are meant for both literates and illiterates for easy understanding and transmission of values. By looking at signs and symbols, and appreciating or analyzing them, people, make informed judgments about their cultural products and issues. With the communication skills of the people are improved by expressing their thoughts and feelings in a variety of modes, giving them a vastly more powerful selection of self-expression. Central Ewes make useful judgments about their signs and symbols.

Fletcher et al., (2000:65) are in agreement to the fact that there is some greater dependency of visual art on symbolism when they observed that:

in China, much of the folk art, was literal and

symbolic, as it was made by and for an illiterate society to transmit legends, morals and values visually. For instance many of the values of the Chinese peasants often contain symbols of the desire for wealth.

Kemevor (2001) also says that, art education has several aims and goals: ultimate, mediate and proximate objectives for different educational systems and levels. These objectives attempt to satisfy the goals of general education. The aims of general education whether for: personal development; transmission of the cultural heritage; improvement of the society; earning a living or life, are attainable through education in and through art. In effect, one may say that the arts also share many features with other content areas. For instance, in reading and writing, the learner interprets from a symbol system. Learners also read, write and construct meaning with visual images or symbols. Again, in social studies, learners begin to appreciate cultural differences and similarities by examining the art of the culture. As well, art, mathematics and science encourage students to observe and analyse content critically.

From all that has been said, signs, symbols and values of any group of people can be used to enhance any teaching and learning processes since there is related literature that reveals that symbols are aiding elements in communication.

According to Wemega-Kwawu (2003:7), in African tradition, the spiritual content of a work of art outweighs its aesthetic form or beauty. He further asserts that:

Traditional African Art was therefore more of a moral guide, an art for right living. Even though African art aims at celebrating high aesthetic standards and dealing with formal and contemporary issues, the



content of the work, its moral and humanitarian and educational values are most paramount.

It can be inferred from the discussions and quotations above that societal signs, symbols and their values have a lot of benefits to its educational system and could have significant implications especially for art work. Hypothetically, this dissertation envisages a similar position that would attempt to document aesthetic and educational underpinning of signs and symbols among the Central Ewes of Ghana.

People acquire concepts of art that are quite different from those they encounter in the school, museums and galleries. Amenuke (1996) opines that core philosophies should stem from traditional, socio-cultural, contemporary and individual sources. His aims are:

- To meet the need for the preservation and development of traditional culture
- To provide the youth with readiness to meet the contemporary changes that have become the integral part of our life.
- To meet individual needs.
- To acquire the skill of “how to do” something, but the learner must first understand “what is to be done”.
- To relate the learner to the super natural forces and mediate among our social relationships.
- To express our emotions and enhance our present life by way of embellishment, devoting pride and status.

Wright (2003) emphasizes the above assertion as she indicates that education in the arts enhances the individual’s perception by teaching one to use his senses qualitatively. The visual

arts allow us to develop and use our creative potential, to see the value of our own ideas and feelings, and to respect those of others. The visual arts give us a chance to think divergently, to search out beyond the boundaries of what is known (Freedman, 2003).

Again, the arts involve learners intellectually, personally, physically and emotionally like no other subject in the school curriculum. When learners are engaged and involved in the educational process, they learn. Art gives all learners the opportunity to express their own unique visions of the world. Art allows learners to have expectations for dealing with divergent outcomes as well as opportunity to seek out creative solutions beyond the boundaries of accepted wisdom.

She also portrays that the generative power of the arts makes it basic to all educational programmes. Through art education, learners are able to learn more about themselves and the world around them. Studies have shown that through art education, learners develop thinking and perceptual skills and their own intellectual abilities to discover images of possibility. This wealth of experiences and intellectual abilities provide a strong and rich illusionary base from which to draw upon future creative experiences.

Furthermore, she posits that it is critical to recognize the importance of art as its own discipline. Art education is much more than making things. It enables learners to develop and creatively express their ideas and solve problems. Visual art is defined as sequential development in these five areas: communication, perception, analysis, use of materials and techniques, and understanding history and culture. He further explains that education theories have evolved within the framework organized by the following basic philosophies; thus:

All children are capable of growth through art experiences, not just a talented few. Art is a quality, that is potential in all visual daily human experience and not restricted to “object art” in a

museum. Again, Art education is concerned with total human growth and not just with aesthetic development as the most satisfying and inclusive technique for understanding and enjoying art through participation.

To add to that, creativity can be inculcated through art experiences and promote the development of problem solving ability, particularly in the visual art. The total organization can be deeply involved, providing growth on a fully integrated basis. Finally, art experience can provide both emotional release and the development of self confidence.

In a nutshell, one would say the inventive spirit is an important attribute of humankind; in fact, the society depends on the ability to create new and better solutions to the challenges that continue to face us. Individuals who can think creatively, feel sensitively, and see clearly will be our greatest resource for the future. These individuals will invent the future. Visual arts education contributes to the development of the individual inventive spirit, provides a means for understanding oneself, and provides a means for understanding the diverse world in which we live. Art education is not essentially confined to the transmission of a body of factual materials, or the inclusion of specific media skills. Broadly, it is concerned with the maturation refinement of people and emphasizes human total growth. These philosophies are not different from that of Central Ewes of Ghana and for that matter Ewes in general. Signs and symbols of Central Ewes emphasize total growth of individuals who experience them.

One gets educated when he or she adds any knowledge to what he or she already knows. Therefore, anyone who adds any knowledge about signs and symbols of Central Ewes to what he or she already knows gets further educated.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Overview**

The previous chapter established the theoretical basis of the research. This chapter discusses the research procedures followed in gathering data for the study. It covers research design, library research, population for the study, data collection instruments, validation of instruments as well as types of data, data collection procedures and data analysis plan.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The qualitative research paradigm was used to gather data for this work. Qualitative research is referred to by a variety of terms, reflecting several research approaches. Field research is often used interchangeably with qualitative research to describe systematic observations of social behavior with no preconceived hypothesis to be tested. Qualitative research is concerned with non-statistical methods of inquiry and analysis of social phenomena. It draws on an inductive process in which themes and categories emerge through analysis of data collected, (Rubin & Babbie 1993).

Grix (2004), believes that qualitative research method generally seeks to amass information from studies on a particular event, decision, institution, geographical location, an issue, a piece of legislation, with a view to discerning patterns, trends and relationship between key variables. He further says that this type of research involves the interpretation of data, whereby the research analyses cases, usually in a few number, in their social and cultural context over a specific period of time, and may develop grounded theories that emphasize tracing the process and sequence of events in a specific setting.

Grix (2004) observes that, it does not rely on, but can involve, numerical measurements. If the researcher is involved closely with an individual or small group of individuals in the research process, one-on-one personal qualitative research enables one to have an insight of the experiences that have occurred. In the qualitative research process, there is interaction with those giving the information thereby fostering relationship as well. The language of a particular study is likely to be first person and personal. The researcher would have to lay his own personal values on the information gathered. Therefore, employing this design, there is the need for the researcher to be aware of his or her own value judgment and strive to view the gathered data from other angles and so as to adopt an objective approach to the research. In studies of social processes of complex human systems such as families, organizations, and communities, qualitative methodology may be the most appropriate research strategy, Reid, (1987).

The qualitative research enabled the researcher to explore the aesthetic and educational values in signs and symbols of Central Ewes of Ghana (fig 3). The specific method used in the qualitative research is the descriptive technique.

### **3.2 Descriptive research**

This seeks to observe with close scrutiny the research parameters, after which a recorded version of what the researcher has observed, through photography, can be subjected to critical analysis in order to arrive at the results. In this research, Descriptive techniques for data collection are viewed as compatible with the knowledge and values of the socio-cultural basis of the core zone (Epstein, 1988).

In this study, the Descriptive technique was employed in order to have a clear and logical presentation of ideas and facts. The Descriptive analysis helped the researcher to examine the phenomenon of signs and symbols to describe vividly the aesthetic and educational values among the Central Ewes. It was also used to complete the whole dissertation.

### **3.3 Library Research**

Information on general issues concerning signs and symbols globally was accessed from libraries, while issues of specific study indigenous to the Central Ewe were largely sourced from public enquiry. The Libraries used included- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Libraries, Kumasi, Ho and Hohoe Libraries in the Volta Region, University of Cape Coast Libraries, Cape Coast, the Balm Library of the University of Ghana, Legon. The British Council Library in Accra, Sunyani Polytechnic Library, Sunyani and the Catholic University Library, Fiapre, Sunyani. Also, Libraries of the University of Education at Winneba and Kumasi were visited as well as the Ghana Library Board in Accra. These Libraries and the internet were visited to search for secondary data on signs and symbols, globally and on Ewes. Generally, documentary sources and printed matters such as books, brochures, magazines, periodicals, catalogues, newspapers and thesis were studied. There were also attempts to gather information on Aesthetics and Art Education.

### **3.4 Population for the study**

Population is the totality or aggregate of individuals regarding which inferences are to be made in a sample study. It involves all the people, objects, documents and so on, that are proposed to be covered under the scheme of study (Best 1981:8).

Best (1981:8), goes on to say that, “population is any group of individuals, objects and events that have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher. The population may be all the individuals of a particular type or a more restricted part of a group”. It would not be possible or practicable to gather information on signs and symbols from the entire traditionalists, scholars and the Youth in the Central Volta Region of Ghana. Since the population is so large, all members could not be reached for the study. Therefore an accessible population was chosen, from which a sample was selected for the study.

#### **3.4.1 The target population**

The target population is the people who would benefit from the research. They are comprised of chiefs, queens, elders, linguists, priests and priestesses, knowledgeable individuals, the youth, and the educated elite. Some have faint ideas about signs and symbols. Some have forgotten their facts. Some have used the signs and symbols but do not understand them so about three hundred and fifty (350) people have useful information for the research and these have been classified as the accessible population in order to make the data valid and more acceptable.

### **3.4.2 The accessible population**

People who could be reached for information in this research were the accessible population which consisted of: ninety (90) traditionalists, one hundred and twenty (120) scholars and one hundred and forty (140) youth, totaling three hundred and fifty (350).

### **3.4.3 Sampling**

Sampling is a process of selecting a portion of a whole from the accessible population for study. This is the process of selecting a small sample from a population by dividing the population into parts called sampling units. Babbie (1992) says that, it is the procedure a researcher uses to gather people, places or things to study. Best (1981:26) maintains that, “sampling, a deliberate rather than haphazard method of selecting subjects for observation, enables the scientist to conclude about a population of interest from the observed characteristics of relatively small number of cases”. Shorter time-lag, greater scope, and higher quality of work, are few advantages of sampling.

### **3.5 Data collection instruments**

Data-collection instruments used were observation and structured interviews. They were largely employed in order to have a clear and logical presentation of ideas and facts. Through these research instruments, aesthetic and educational contexts of signs and symbols of the Central Ewes of Ghana were assessed, and relevant information gathered.



### **3.5.1 Observation**

As a qualitative research, observation is a naturalistic research or inquiry into everyday living. In seeking to explore the natural scene, the qualitative researcher aims to be as unobtrusive as possible, so that neither research presence nor methods disturb the situation. This is why observation is one of the favoured approaches. Here the researcher adopted a recognized role within the institution or group. Researchers have become, among other things, teachers, gang-members, pupils, nudists, hippies, bread salesmen, and medical students (Taylor, 1993).

Observation as an instrument, blends in with natural activity, it gives the researcher access to the same places, people and events as the subjects. It also gives access to documents relevant to the role, including confidential reports and records, and provides personal first-hand experience of the role and thus, heightens understanding of it, as well as facilitating the use of mechanical aids, such as tape recorders and cameras. Denzin et al., (1994). Direct observations were made of the signs and symbols as to how they look like. Aside this the aesthetic appeal of signs and symbols have been appreciated through direct and critical observations. Insightful and revealing answers were given accordingly when intriguing questions were asked the respondents.

### **3.5.2 Interview**

Interview is a face-to-face meeting between an interviewer and an interviewee or an oral presentation of a descriptive studies, action research, evaluation and sometimes correlational studies. The interview approach has several advantages that stem from personal contact, response rate and issues can be clarified. The interviewer can probe for specific meanings of responses

made. Interview can be used to collect facts; for example, information about people's place of work, age, and so on., but such questions are usually no more than opening items which precede the main substance. The bulk of interview questions seek to elicit information about attitudes and opinions, perspectives and meanings, the very stuff of much of both psychology and sociology. They are also in common use as a means of selection- for entry to school or college, getting a job or obtaining promotion. They are widely used because they are powerful means of obtaining information and gaining insight (Hannan, 2007). There are different types of interview, namely, structured interview, semi-structured interview and unstructured interview.

A structured interview guide was used to collect data for the research, due to its ability to obtain a higher response rate, or with respondents, especially children or those who were not literates. The theory of positivism was applied to win the trust of the interviewees. The interview tapped deep into the reality of the situations and discovered subjects' meanings and understandings. All these were achieved as a result of the empathy developed with the interviewees to win their confidence.

### **3.6 Validation of instruments**

The research instruments were drafted and vetted by the researcher. Another researcher vetted them and finally was approved by the supervisor.

### **3.7 Types of data**

Two types of data were used namely, primary and secondary data. Primary data are information that deals directly with the study collected by observation and interview. Any other

information that is related to the topic but culled from books, magazines, other literatures and the internet are considered as secondary data.

### **3.8 Data collection procedure**

An interview guide was prepared and used to interview the respondents. The questions were based on the identification of signs and symbols, interpretation, aesthetic and educational values. The questions were mainly centered on the respondents' knowledge and level of understanding and their interest and appreciation of the signs, and symbols. (Refer to Appendix). Scheduled meetings were arranged with interviewees on specific dates and the researcher met them on one-to-one discussions to gather the data. Summarized versions of discussions were later confirmed by the interviewees.

Personal interviews based on identification of signs and symbols, interpretation and moral teaching were conducted on three hundred and fifty (350) respondents. The respondents were put in groups and interviewed at different times for authentic results. The researcher in most cases accompanied the respondents to observe directly how the identification and description of the signs and symbols are carried out. The researcher also handled, felt and experienced the signs and symbols. Intriguing questions were asked, and respondents gave insightful and revealing answers accordingly. Some of the questions were centred on the respondents' knowledge and level of understanding of signs and symbols, aesthetics and their educational values in their areas. (Refer to appendix A). There were a number of proverbs mostly from the traditionalists which the researcher simplified and abstracted in illustrations. Signs and symbols collected were categorized into themes. Their literal translations in English, meanings, moral teachings or education and their aesthetic values were also given.

The validity of data collected for the study is confirmed by the photographs taken of the actual signs and symbols. The researcher himself did the data collection and participated in the discussion with the respondents. This confirms the validity of the data.

### **3.9 Data analysis plan**

Data were collected and relevant concepts, theories, signs, symbols, proverbs and explanations have all been noted and assembled in a descriptive form, analyzed, interpreted, conclusion drawn and recommendations made.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.0 Overview**

This chapter deals with identification and description of signs and symbols. It discusses the aesthetic and educational values of signs and symbols. In this chapter, the content of each photograph and hand-drawn illustrations have been described and analyzed. Their interpretation is either of their aesthetic or educational values. The discussions include analysis, interpretation of facts leading to conclusions and recommendations.

#### 4.1 Identifiable signs and symbols, their aesthetic and educational values



‘Tr-10’

Plate 4.1: Literal translation: (Ram for a deity) – a sign of warning.

### **‘Tr-10’: Ram for a deity (Plate 4.1)**

#### **4.1.1 Aesthetic Values**

Among the Central Ewes of Ghana, beauty is equated with significance, purpose or functionality of the object. They observe that beauty is not always considered in terms of physical qualities as stated in the literature review. Plate 1 is a ram with three white cowries threaded with raffia, hanging on its neck. The beauty of the cowries on the neck of the ram is for a purpose. They serve as a sign and at the same time a symbol belonging to a deity. Since the ram belongs to a deity, no other entity has anything to do with it. Beauty lies in the three cowries because they are the property of a deity. The white cowries were used for the ritual because they represent purity or faithfulness to God and the deity.

#### **4.1.2 Educational values**

According to the respondents, the sign is a warning to people not to interfere with anything that has to do with the deity's ram. In other words, one does not interfere with a property that does not belong to one. One will invite trouble if one does otherwise. Therefore, the sight of the three white cowries on the neck of the ram is meant to prevent vices or negative attitudes to life.



‘Tr-gb4’

Plate 4.2: Literal translation: (Goat for a deity) – a sign of warning.



## **‘Tr-gb4’: The billy goat for a deity (Plate 4.2)**

### **4.1.3 Aesthetic values**

It was confirmed by traditionalists that billy goats, by their nature, are used for rituals. They are noisy, smart, energetic and destructive. In Plate 4.2 is a billy goat, also with three white cowries hanging on its neck. Like the ram, it serves as a sign and a symbol, belonging to a deity. In the case of a billy goat, the deity is powerful, and unforgiving. The destructive character of the billy goat is replicated in its appearance. The cowries were used for rituals to protect the billy goat as a property of the deity.

### **4.1.4 Educational values**

Like the ram, this sign cautions people to stay away from what does not belong to them. Any attempt to take or steal it will invoke disaster. This is so because a billy goat is boisterous and associated with anti-social behaviour. The cowries are meant to prevent negative tendencies. The whole scenario of a billy goat with cowries is meant to avert crime. To them, communication of message educates.



‘@u, atadi kple tukpe’

Plate 4.3: Literal translation: (Gun powder, pepper and pellets) – constitutes a sign denoting  
quest for war.

**‘@u, atadi kple tukpe’: Gun powder, pepper and pellets (Plate 4.3)**

**Constitutes a sign denoting quest for war**

#### **4.1.5 Aesthetic Values**

The physical appearance of the items in Plate 4.3 in totality, presents a “funerary mood”. As said by most of the traditional rulers of the Central Volta Region of Ghana, the silent intension of war is averted when the neighbour chief returns the package, meaning he wants peace. The package spells war but its reverse speaks peace. The beauty is in the dichotomy. That is beauty in contradiction of life.

#### **4.1.6 Educational Values**

This package is a visual knowledge. To them, there can never be war if there is no cause or provocation. Therefore, this is meant to prevent provocation and let tolerance and peace prevails.



‘Abladzomakpa’

Plate 4.4: Literal translation: (plantain leaf) – a sign of protection.

### **‘Abladzomakpa’: plantain leaf (Plate 4.4) a sign of protection**

#### **4.1.7 Aesthetic Values**

From time immemorial, Ghanaians protect themselves with broad leaves from the mercy of the weather. The types of leaves are determined by the environment or the vegetation in which they are found as shown in Plate 4.4.

In Central Ewe, plantain or banana leaves are used by people, especially farmers to protect themselves from the rain or the scorching sun. The plantain or banana leaf is streamlined in a way by nature to prevent the user from getting soaked by water or scorched by the sun. Its beauty is in its protective function. The size and shape provides adequate coverage.

#### **4.1.8 Educational Values**

The sight of this is a sign of protection from the rain or the sun. It provides visual knowledge, and can be done by any one. One can quickly look for one's source of protection from the mercy of the weather, where umbrella is not readily available. Man must learn to understand the wisdom of God in providing man's basic needs of life. "Learn to explore and use the resources of your environment" is the message.



‘^e, ala kple aklala’

Plate 4.5: Literal translation: (Kaolin, raffia and calico) – constitutes a sign  
denoting quest for peace

**‘^e, ala kple aklala’:** Kaolin, raffia and calico (Plate 4.5) a sign that denotes peace.

#### **4.1.9 Aesthetic Values**

Most of the respondents identified each item in Plate 4.5 as symbolic. The kaolin and calico represent the colour white, which the Ewes refer to as ‘^e’. It symbolizes joy, success, victory and happiness. Raffia which is used long ago by the ancestors and then passed on to the new generation, symbolizes the totality of life. They further said that, putting ‘^e ala’, and ‘aklala’ together symbolizes peace. If a community sends these items to its neighbour, it simply means they should co-exist in peace. The symbolism in Plate 4.5 is opposite of what is in Plate 4.3. Anything peaceful is positive, healthy, and beautiful. The physical appearance of the items portrays a pleasant mood.

#### **4.1.10 Educational Values**

To the people of Central Volta Region of Ghana, the items in Plate 4.5 give one a usual knowledge. When there is peace in the communities, development thrives. So, communities coming together in peace can learn from each other. It should also not be forgotten that it takes two to quarrel and so if one wants to avoid quarrel, one should not be a party to it.





‘Kuz1’ (Dehakpa5e)

Plate 4.6:     Literal translation: (Entrance to a palmwine tapping area indicated by ‘Kuz1’)

**‘Kuz1’ (Dehakpa5e): Entrance to a palmwine tapping area indicated by ‘Kuz1’**

**(Plate 4.6) Sign of direction**



#### **4.1.11 Aesthetic Values**

In Plate 4.6 there are two calabashes containing palmwine opposite each other at the entrance to a path. In front of the calabashes, across the path is a green, immature and dry palm frond. The respondents confirmed that it is a sign indicating that palmwine is tapped in the area. If one walks along the path, one will get there. The green, immature palm frond represents freshness or newness while the dried one represents old age. This indicates that tapping started long ago and is getting finished but at the same time, fresh palm trees are being tapped. This follows a beautiful order. As one is diminishing or finishing, the other (green frond) simultaneously, is coming up. There is beauty in pairs of things. Two of everything can be seen as a connotation of balance. Therefore the two calabashes opposite each other is a sign of beauty. Balance creates harmony, peace and pleasantness.

#### **4.1.12 Educational Values**

The respondents said the sign gives one a direction and informs about palmwine tapping. One cannot get lost in pursuance of the palmwine. Visual knowledge is acquired because one gets to know that palm frond is used in making the torch which is used to smoke the palm tree in palmwine tapping. One also learns that palmwine is served in calabashes.



‘Abayaf8’

Plate 4.7: Literal translation: (immature palm leaves) - a sign of warning.

**‘Abayaf8’/ Blekpo: immature palm leaves (Plate 4.7) sign of warning**

#### **4.1.13 Aesthetic Values**

Plate 4.7, 'Abayafe'/ Blekpo is said to be mostly used by militants (Asafo group) for their rituals. Knotted young palm frond as shown in Plate 4.7 has a strong connotation. If a piece of land is being cleared and one happens to see this sign on it, clearing must stop immediately. This is used to stop one from working on a disputed land. Knotting of the leaves gives it that attention. Its compliance not to temper with the land prevents chaos, which is peace creation and therefore beautiful. 'Enya kp4' (It looks good, beautiful) is an expression to indicate that the fresh palm frond is pleasant to look at.

#### **4.1.14 Educational Values**

The respondents posit that it is also good to obey warning signs in order to prevent trouble. The end result (peace and harmony) are the tenets of education. One learns that the particular community has a peculiar way of alerting its citizens of danger or trouble. It is a secret or silent way of showing a signal which only community members understand.



‘M4xexe’

Plate 4.8: Literal translation: (blocking of way) - Sign of direction

**‘M4xexe’: blocking of way (Plate 4.8) Sign of direction**

This is a non-verbal sign of direction. It is very common among the indigenous people of the Central Ewe Community.

#### **4.1.15 Aesthetic Values**

Plate 4.8 depicts fresh greeny leaves on the ground. The green leaves have been used to block one of the paths leaving the one which was used. To the Central Ewe community, this is done normally by those who used the path earlier to assist those who would follow later. It gives an indication that when one passes the blocked path one would get lost and would not be able to get those who passed earlier. That common sense of giving direction with leaves that can easily be fetched and used is a beauty among the communities. This sign is used to direct people and prevent them from being lost.

#### **4.1.16 Educational Values**

They indicated that, this sign provides a visual knowledge, and can be replicated everywhere. This is another way of giving meaningful direction to both literates and illiterates. The sign that indicates 'go straight' and 'don't turn right' is a direction given to any member of the community in absence of written directional sign-posts. The secret non-verbal sign is a protective communication tool known among natives of an area, not foreigners.



‘Af4kpa’

Plate 4.9: Literal translation: (footwear) – a sign of humility and obedience.

**‘Af4kpa’: footwear (Plate 4.9) Sign of humility and obedience**

#### **4.1.17 Aesthetic Values**

This is a wall of one of the shrines in the Central Volta area. A local sandal is shown with an inscription. 'Af4kpa' is a general name for all kinds of footwear. From the occupants of the shrine, the sign on the wall prohibits anyone entering the shrine with footwear on. The type on the wall is very common among the people in the community. Prohibition of footwear to the shrine is to show respect and humility to the deity. Even in the homes, one removes one's footwear before entering an adult's room. This is to show humility. In another sense, it prevents dirt and other particles from entering their rooms. There should be that cleanliness and respect in the presence of God and gods. Therefore the footwear as a sign of humility is appropriate. Humility is one of the beautiful virtues of mankind. An example could be read from the scriptures, when Moses was asked by God to remove his footwear before drawing near the fire (God). Humility is the idea of beauty attached to the symbol.

#### **4.1.18 Educational Values**

Portraying the educational value of the sandals on the shrine wall, the occupants said it is a moral issue to serve God with respect. One will learn this and apply it at sacred places. The sign on the wall also provides a visual knowledge. One learns about humility and obedience from the symbol.





‘Atadi-le-ga-dzi’

Plate 4.10: Literal translation: (Pepper on money) – Protective sign.

**‘Atadi-le-ga-dzi’: Pepper on money (Plate 4.10) Protective sign.**

#### **4.1.19 Aesthetic Values**



Plate 4.10 depicts pepper placed on money. This is a common sign especially used by market women. To the Central Ewe community, it has a common belief that evil spirits steal money from them. To avert this, anywhere money is put, pepper is placed on it. Pepper is a very hot spice. 'Exɔɔzo' (It is hot). By its nature, it is not pleasant when pepper is in contact with one's body. It is a beautiful occurrence to find a means of repelling evil forces. Life is pleasant when there are no evil forces disturbing it. Money is a force and essential in life. In the same way, pepper has also got its strength. The two coming together makes a potent symbol.

#### **4.1.20 Educational Values**

This gives a visual knowledge. To the Central Ewe community, every possibility must be explored to protect one's valuables.



‘Hagl7’

Plate 4.11: Literal translation: (Jaw bone of a wild pig) – a sign of bravery.

**‘Hagl7’: Jaw bone of a wild pig (Plate 4.11) Sign of bravery**

#### **4.1.21 Aesthetic Values**

In the Central Ewe community, warriors are commended and recognized when they return from the battlefield with their booties. In relation to the phenomenon Plate 4.11 depicts the jawbone of a wild pig hanged at an entrance of a home. Among the Central Ewes, every entrance of a home that one finds a skull or the jawbone of any wild animal means the chief hunter resides there. He is regarded as 'kal8t4' which means a brave man. Anybody with hunting expertise can also hang a skull or a jawbone at his entrance for people to recognize his bravery.

#### **4.1.22 Educational Values**

To the youth, it will edge them to emulate bravery in all spheres of life. Responsibility, bravery and leadership roles are learnt from this sign.



‘W4tsi’

Plate 4.12: Literal translation: (Cornflower mixture) – a sign of prayer.

**‘W4tsi’: Cornflower mixture (Plate 4.12) Sign of prayer**

#### **4.1.23 Aesthetic Values**

Libation is the dramatic side of praying. According to the elders of the Central Ewe community, non-alcoholic mixture is poured to invite the ancestors to be present at an occasion. When 'w4tsi' is poured towards the pourer, it means good things should come. On the contrary, it signifies bad omen. When it is poured away from the pourer, this means there should not be any negative re-occurrence. The colour of 'w4tsi' is white. It signifies joy, victory and success, which are beautiful aspects of life.

#### **4.1.24 Educational Values**

The elders of the Central Ewe community said that, on important occasions, prayers are said to invite ancestors, whose wisdom are solicited. It is a way of showing respect for the wisdom of the elders.



‘Tr45eflaga’

Plate 4.13: Literal translation: (Flag of a deity) – a sign of identity

**‘Tr45eflaga’’: Flag of a deity (Plate 4.13) Sign of identity**

#### **4.1.25 Aesthetic Values**

The colours of the flag are white, red and black. White signifies joy; red for blood and black representing the power of the ancestors. To the Central Ewe community, the flag represents the contribution to total life – present, past and the future because the deity is in control of the present, past and future life. Therefore the beauty is in the significance of the flag.

#### **4.1.26 Educational Value**

The people of Central Ewe community said, when people see the flag, they will know that there is a deity that can be consulted for present, past and future life.





‘Adela le amakpa de nu’

Plate 4.14: Literal translation: (A hunter with leaves in his mouth)

A sign that denotes silence

**‘Adela le amakpa de nu’: A hunter with leaves in his mouth (Plate 4.14)**

**Sign that denotes silence**



#### **4.1.27 Aesthetic Values**

This sign with leaves in the mouth, is common among the Central Ewes. They declared that, a man in this state is known as ‘Amedegbedela’, meaning human hunter. When one is seen in this state, (Plate 4.14) coming from the bush, it means one has killed a big animal or one has seen a dead body. In this case, the person does not want to talk, and therefore puts leaves in his mouth. The Central Ewes further stated that this prevents the person from being an agent of death. Therefore the leaves protect him from calamities. A rite would have to be performed before he is allowed to talk.

#### **4.1.28 Educational Values**

In the Central Ewe community, it was said that it is more honourable to be quiet than to talk. It is safer and more dignified to be quiet. The words that come from one’s mouth will be used by society to judge one. So it is better to keep quiet.



‘Amewula le aha nom kple miasi’

Plate 4.15:     Literal translation: (An executioner drinking using his left hand) - a sign of  
bravery

**‘Amewula le aha nom kple miasi’: An executioner drinking using his left hand  
(Plate 4.15) Sign of bravery**

#### **4.1.29 Aesthetic Values**

Traditionally, it is not very common to see a man holding a calabash with his left hand, and drinking from it. According to traditionalists, among the Central Ewes, if one is seen in this situation, then the one is 'Amewula' (an executioner). Rites are performed for him before he becomes an executioner. When this is done, he finds himself in a "different world". Therefore some of the behaviours he puts up are always in contrast with those of the ordinary people. Left denotes negative attitudes. Even though it is not a good thing to kill a human being, it demonstrates bravery in securing the skull of an enemy. The bravery is demonstrated to save other member of the society. Again, beauty is in contradictions of life. The concentration on the drink can be seen on the executioner's facial expressions.

#### **4.1.30 Educational Values**

To the Central Ewes, it is a good knowledge to learn that certain persons specialize in capturing the enemy. Such people operate as protectors to remind the community of their safety at all times. Drinking with the left hand immediately identifies someone as an executioner, while he is not known to the ordinary person.



‘Schnapps, akpeteshie, deha kple 3egbametsi’

Plate 4.16: Literal translation: (Schnapps, local gin, palm wine and water in an earthenware bowl) -This sign denotes the mortality of mankind and life after death.

**‘Schnapps, akpeteshie, deha kple 3egbametsi’: Schnapps, local gin, palm wine and water in an earthenware bowl (Plate 4.16)**

**This sign denotes the mortality of mankind and life after death.**

#### **4.1.31 Aesthetic Values**

The Central Ewe traditionalists said, Schnapps, local gin, palm wine and water in an earthenware bowl is a sign that depicts a serene and a final resting place for those whose deaths are not of a natural cause among the non-Christians in the Central Volta Region of Ghana. The Central Ewe traditionalists believe that such death is 'hot', and therefore the spirits of the dead are not at peace. They wander around. To make them be at rest, bottles full of schnapps, dry gin and palmwine are laid horizontally on the ground. An earthenware bowl full of water which means life, is also put near the drinks to quench their thirst. Beauty is derived from the sympathy that is shown to the departed soul in the society. This shows that they are not forgotten, and it is the wish of the people that they are always satisfied to avert calamities caused from the other world. Three bottles lay on the ground in front of an earthenware bowl are described as "te5ea nya kp4". The place looks beautiful. The other concept of beauty is the evidence of re-incarnation, such that water and drinks are provided for life after death.

#### **4.1.32 Educational Values**

Natural and accidental deaths are unavoidable phenomena. It is certain that a misfortune can befall anyone irrespective of the place and time. The Central Ewe traditionalists believe that the sign in plate 15 reflects the unpredictable and uncompromising nature of death. Therefore there is the need to be prepared and alert. The youth should be modest in life. The education element is that death is inevitable, yet there is hope that life continues after death. It is important

to create a “balance” between this world and the next so that no disturbance of the equilibrium will turn the scale unfavourably for mishaps to occur.



‘Gbede mekple/Dzokpo’

Plate 4.17: Literal translation: (Blacksmith’s furnace) – A sign of sacrifice

**‘Gbede mekple / Dzokpo’: Blacksmith’s furnace (Plate 4.17) A sign of sacrifice**

#### **4.1.33 Aesthetic Values**

“Dzokpo”, furnace is built with fine clay, which is always polished beautifully with clay slip before the commencement of work. On the lower part of the furnace are burnt palm kernel shells and iron metal. On the upper part of the polished clay furnace, is a broken egg with its content leaving dried patches of lines. According to the elders of Central Ewes community, “Dzokpo” is a receptacle for a deity called “Egu”. An egg or a fowl is used as a sacrifice for the deity. This makes it potent in the healing of wounds created by bites from fellow human beings. It is a taboo to be bitten by a fellow human being. Violation of taboos brings calamity. So it is positive and beautiful for calamities to be prevented by this deity.

#### **4.1.34 Educational Values**

“Dzokpo” serves as a sign and the same time a symbol. It’s a sign in the sense that it is associated with healing of a type of wound. Blacksmiths are identified with “Dzokpo”. This makes it a symbol. In the black smith’s workshop, the apprentice begins his or her lessons by operating the bellow and learns how to keep the furnace constantly hot. The explanation is that when the metal is not sufficiently heated in the furnace, the black smith cannot hammer it adequately on the anvil. The “Dzokpo” is an important source of knowledge.





‘Ven4vidzonu le al4nu’

Plate 4.18: Literal translation: (Beads for twins on a wrist) –

A sign for identification of twins

**“Ven4vidzonu le al4nu’: Beads for twins on a wrist (Plate 4.18) A sign for identification of twins**

**4.1.35 Aesthetic Values**

Most respondents are familiar with these beads and therefore said the beads are special and are worn on the left wrist by parents of twins and the twins themselves. When a woman brings forth twins, a rite is performed for her and the babies. During the performance of the rite, an adult woman, who is also a mother of twins, ties the beads on the left wrist of the mother of the babies. In most cases the father of the babies is also a recipient of the beads. The beads are brown in colour and inter-spersed with white and few black ones. The brown colour signifies mother earth – for having a new generation. The black, for the ancestors and the white signifies joy, happiness success for having the children. The beads on the wrist portray physical beauty. The significance of the special bead items is paramount.

**4.1.36 Educational Values**

In the Central Ewe community, seeing these beads on the wrist of anybody tells one that, the wearer is either of twins or a parent of twins. Therefore the identification accords the wearer a different status and a role in the community. According to them the beads are a symbol of identity. People get to know that the wearer is a twin-half or twin-parent. This type of knowledge is acquired through the sense of sight. It means that blind persons cannot identify with the sight of the beads and will remain in the dark unless told.



‘Sokpe eve le tre me’

Plate 4.19: Literal translation: (Two thunderstones in a calabash of water)

A sign of equilibrium

## **‘Sokpe eve le tre me’: Two thunderstones in a calabash of water (Plate 4.19)**

### **A sign of equilibrium**

#### **4.1.37 Aesthetic Values**

When thunder strikes, the stone that comes down is known as thunderstone. It looks like a disc with a hole in it and cream in colour. The elders say that it is a “bullet” from the thunder. When the thunderstone hits anyone the one can be hurt or die. It at times splits people into two.

A deity called “so” is responsible for this power. It is pronounced as a curse on people, who are believed to have done wrong. It is believed that the water on the thunderstone in the calabash is the only source of healing for the one who is hit by thunder. It is a good sign that the stone has healing powers. On the other side, one would bemoan the destructive nature of the stone. This is again beauty in the contradictions of life. The indigenes say “sokpea nyakp4” (the thunderstone is pleasant to look at) is an aesthetic talk.

#### **4.1.38 Educational Values**

The Central Ewes acknowledged that this gives a visual knowledge and alerts citizens of danger. It will deter the youth and avert any misfortune. The thunderstone is supposed to deter people from the wrong and therefore acts as a preventive source of knowledge. At the same time, it is a guide to moral conduct as far as people are afraid to engage in wrong-doing. It is a deterrent.



‘Akp4kpl4, abayaf8 kple koklovi’

Plate 4.20: Literal translation: (Toad, immature palm fronds and a day old chick).

A sign of purification

**“Akp4kpl4, abayaf8 kple koklovi’: Toad, immature palm fronds and  
a day old chick (Plate 4.20). A sign of purification**

**4.1.39 Aesthetic Values**

The picture in Plate 4.20 is a common phenomenon one will see on occasions at the end of roads in Peki and Ho as well as other towns in the Central Volta Region of Ghana. From their observation, the respondents confirmed that at mid-night, before the day of the annual yam festival, a toad and a-day old chick are tied on immature palm fronds and dragged in town. This is done from one end of the town to the other. It is accompanied by drumming and singing. This rite is performed to ward off evil and misfortunes. On the other hand, it ushers in prosperity and good luck. The two creatures carry bad omen away. The toad signifies peace and the chick, unblemished. Cleanliness is next to Godliness. Therefore it was established that purification of towns before a festival is a positive sign. Anything clean is beautiful. The items in Plate 4.20 are unpleasant to look at. It is only the devil that likes unpleasant things. The ugly items are used to ward off evil and therefore create beauty.

**4.1.40 Educational Values**

It is normally good to occasionally purify one’s community. Respondents said there can never be progress if “enemies of darkness” are not subdued. The spirit of communalism is also awakened by the gathering of the youth in the community for the rite. When the community is purified, the positive energies are directed to progress and prosperity.





‘Zevi le atikplet- dzi’

Plate 4.21: Literal translation: (a small pot on a tripod) – A sign of stability.

**“Zevi le atikplet- dzi’: a small pot on a tripod (Plate 4.21) A sign of stability**

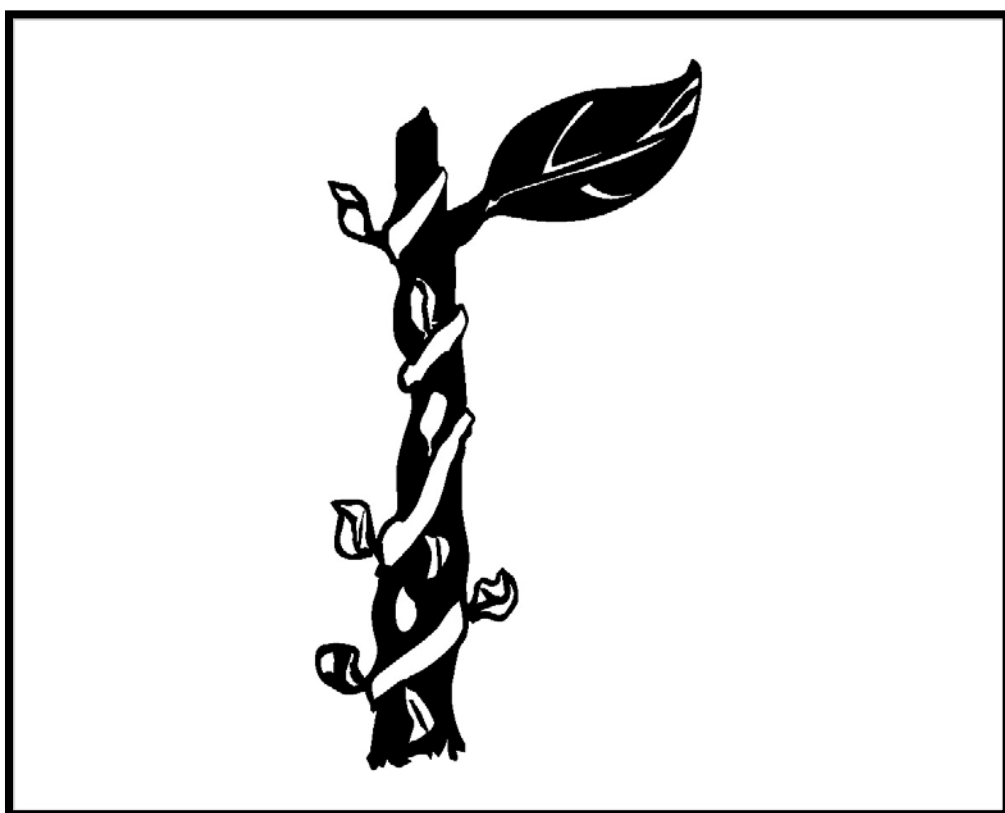
**4.1.41 Aesthetic Values**

In the Central Ewe community, this state of being is described as “fafa” meaning coolness. It is one of the definitive characteristics of the Ewe High God. The people referred to as “fafat4”, meaning the father of coolness. This signifies the altar or the worship place of God. It also represents a shrine. The three-pronged stake is erected in front of a shrine or a home under a tree, which serves as a shade. An earthenware pot filled with water and herbs is placed between the stakes for purification and cleansing rites. It serves as a drinking place for the ancestors and other benevolent spirits. It is said to protect the people from evil forces. Therefore its protective capabilities are a sign of beauty. The respondents said it is also a symbol of stability and inner repose called “et-”, that is three. Anything on tripod is stable, “ele te” or “es4 anyi” and would not fall.

**4.1.42 Educational Values**

According to the people, it will urge them to acknowledge the presence and protection of God. He should also be worshipped and venerated. It teaches that God is pure and dwells in serene places, God is everywhere even under the trees.





Kavuvu (a symbol of patience)

‘Ati n4 agbe `uti ka vuna do’

Fig 4.1: Literal translation: (It is on a living tree that vine grows)

**‘Ati n4 agbe `uti ka vuna do’: It is on a living tree that vine grows. (Fig 4.1)**

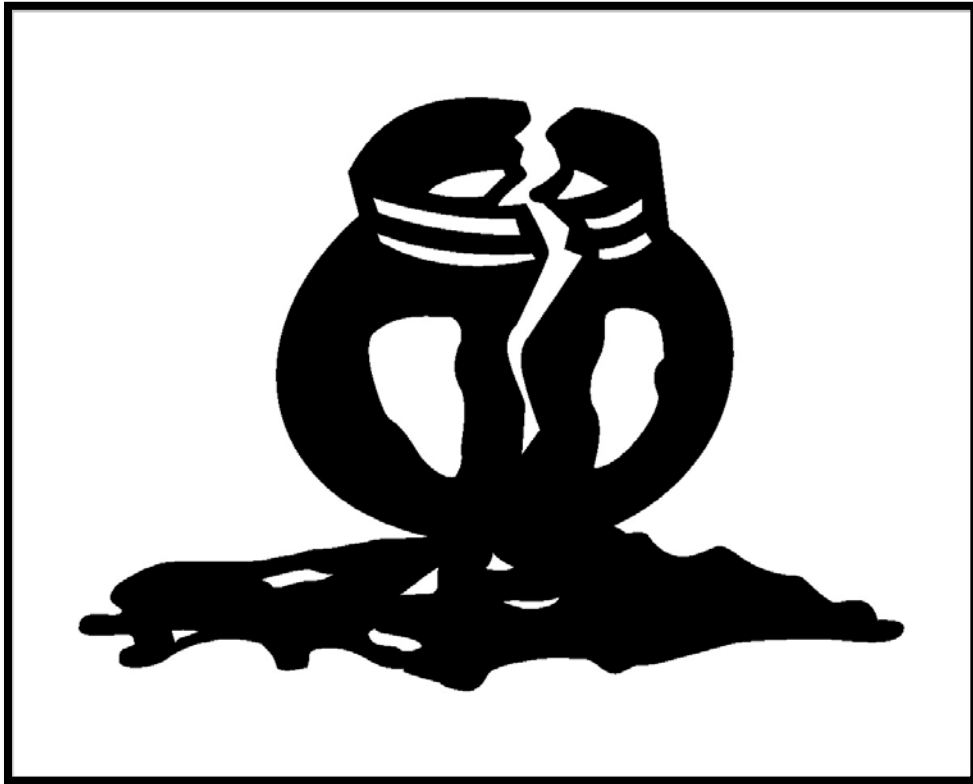
**Kavuvu - a symbol of patience**

#### **4.1.43 Aesthetic Values**

The green vine represents the young vegetation and therefore the youth of the society. It symbolizes growth. The respondents attested that the green vine (young) spiraling around a living tree indicates the beauty of the kind of support the older generation provides for the youth in the Ewe communities. To them, individuals are not obliged only to care for their relations, but any one in need of help. Physically the young vine with its green leaves against the background of the grey tree that supports it is a beautiful phenomenon that is a ‘perfect’ arrangement pleasant to the eye in Ewe ‘edze ani’ (it is beautiful).

#### **4.1.44 Educational Values**

The Central Ewe community attested that the vine has a life-force in its stem and therefore only spirals around another tree that also has a life-force in it for support. As well, the vulnerable in the society cannot be supported by other vulnerable when they are all not strong. If one is not strong, nothing prevents the weak to “hang on” the strong for support. It is an in-built provision for a welfare system among Central Ewes. The extended system allows for the wealthy members to support the poor.



Z1gbagba (a symbol of imperfection)

‘T4medelae gbaa z1’

Fig 4.2: Literal translation: (It is the one who fetches water that breaks the water pot)

**‘T4medelae gbaa z1’: It is the one who fetches water that breaks the pot (Fig 4.2) Z1gbagba**  
**- a symbol of imperfection**

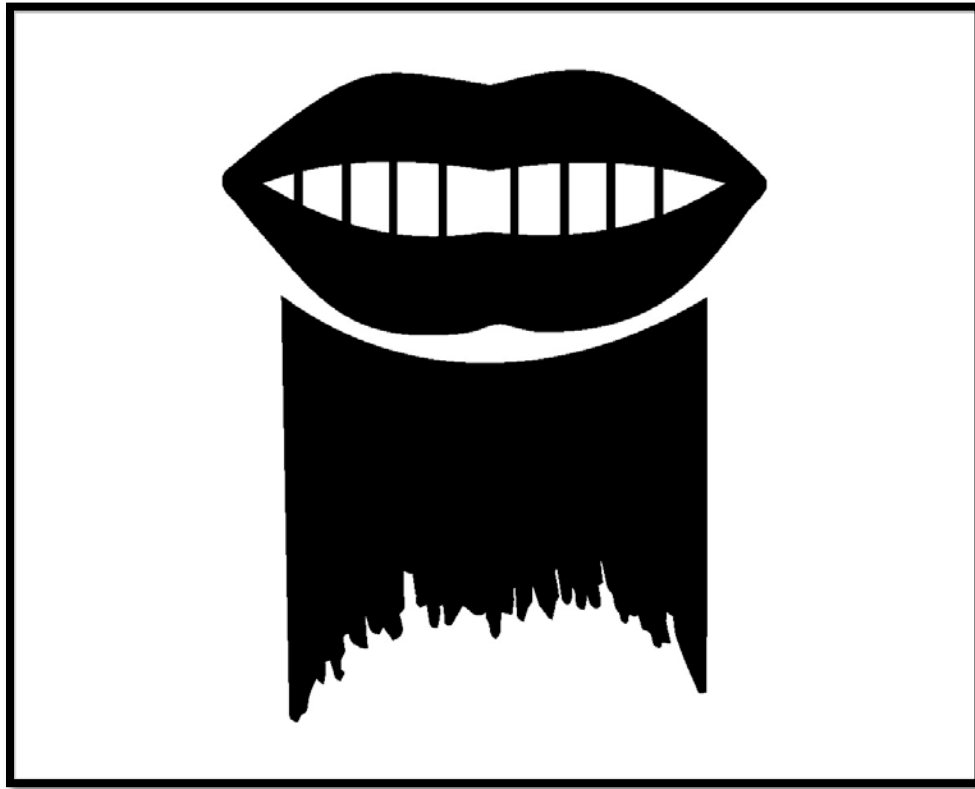
The adage goes: it is the one who fetches water that breaks the water pot. The one who carries the water pot is the one responsible for it. But if the unexpected happens and the pot gets broken by accident, the one who fetches the water cannot be blamed. This means that certain mishaps are pardonable.

**4.1.45 Aesthetic Values**

This proverb illustrates the beauty in tolerating contradictions in life. The respondents indicated that, evil is unacceptable to society, but it does happen, and therefore provision should be made for it. It is not only the positive aspects of life that are acceptable to man. The beauty is in the ability to accommodate both positive and negative aspects of life.

**4.1.46 Educational Values**

It was confirmed that both the good and the evil are tolerable among the Central Ewes, for such is life. In the performance of daily chores, the unexpected could happen. When it does, it is tolerable, no one is blamed. Be on the alert for the good or the bad at all times.



‘Nu kple ge’ (a symbol of sharing)

‘Ne nyo na nua eye w9gbana 2e ge me’

Fig 4.3: Literal translation: (It is when the mouth is full of food, that some fall into the beard)

**‘Ne nyo Na nua eye w9gbana 2e ge me ’: It is when the mouth is full of food, that some fall into the beard. (Fig 4.3) ‘Nu kple ge’ – a symbol of sharing**

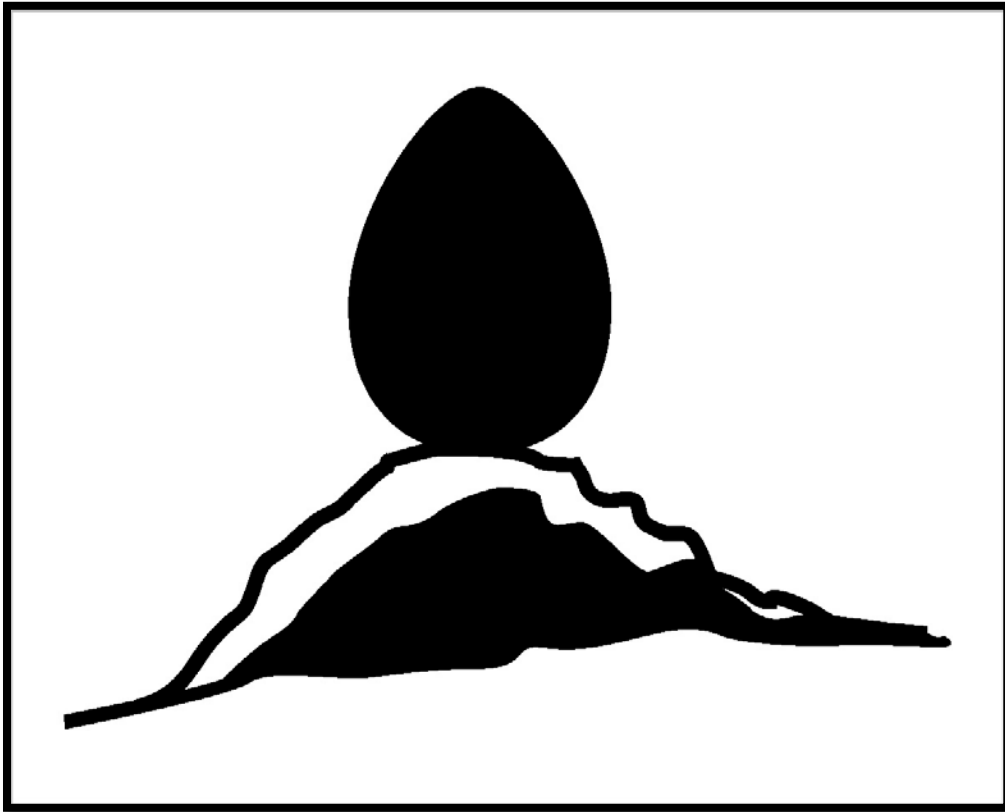
Food ‘overflows’ the capacity of the mouth and some fall into the beard. When someone struggles to look after his or her children and they grow to become useful citizens and bring great benefits to the house, it is when the struggling parents have enough of benefit that some are shared with others. The mouth and beard are neighbours. When the owner has enough to eat, some are shared with others.

#### **4.1.47 Aesthetic Values**

The Central Ewes believe that it is beautiful to share the fruits of someone’s labour. When things in one family become very successful, they flow onto others or relatives. It is beautiful to share the fruit of someone’s successes.

#### **4.1.48 Educational Values**

The people disclosed that when someone is encountering difficulties in life the neighbours or relatives are aware but do not help. But when by the benevolence of someone, the person surmounts the difficulties and begins to reap bountiful fruits, the neighbours or relatives benefit.



‘Koklozi le kpe dzi’ (symbol of cautiousness)

‘Koklozi me2ua 6e le kpe dzi o’

Fig 4.4: Literal translation: (The egg does not dance on a rock)

**‘Koklozi le kpe dzi’ (symbol of cautiousness)**

**‘Koklozi me2ua 6e le kpe dzi o’: The egg does not dance on a rock (Fig 4.4)**

The egg is fragile and needs to be handled cautiously. The egg cannot dance on a rough hard surface, for, the consequences are grave. Issues that need to be handled with care and circumspection should so be handled. Otherwise, disaster occurs.

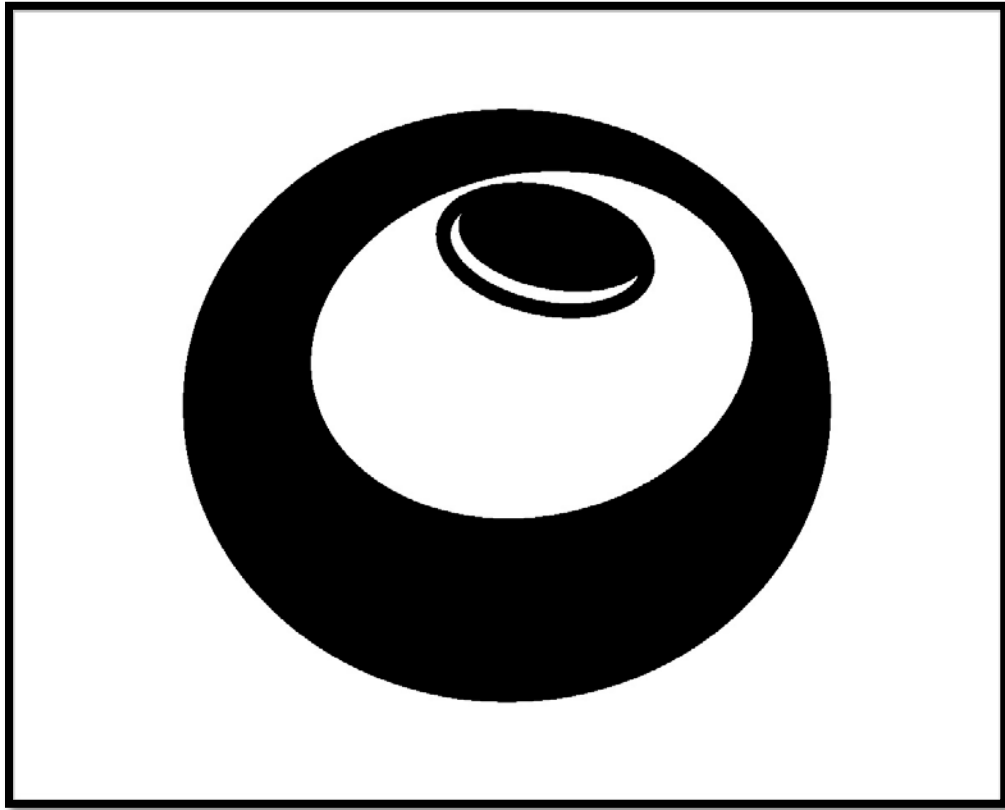
#### **4.1.49 Aesthetic Values**

The elders of the Central Ewes revealed that the beauty of cautioning people to operate within their capabilities is meant to avoid calamities that could have been avoided. If one fails to heed caution and runs into grave consequences, it is not a beautiful part of life. There is beauty in acceptable behaviour.

#### **4.1.50 Educational Values**

The elders further said everyone knows his or her limit and capabilities. If one attempts to go beyond his or her capability, the proverb is used to caution the person.





‘Atamagui’ (symbol of kindness)

‘Atamagui be ame si nyo d4me na ame la 2e w96lěa efe ta 2e ati’

Fig 4.5: Literal translation: (The snuff box says that it is the head of a benefactor  
that is knocked against a tree)

### **‘Atamagui’ (symbol of kindness)**

**‘Atamagui be ame si nyo d4me na ame la 2e w96lěa efe ta 2e ati’: The snuff box says that it is the head of a benefactor that is knocked against a tree. (Fig 4.5)**

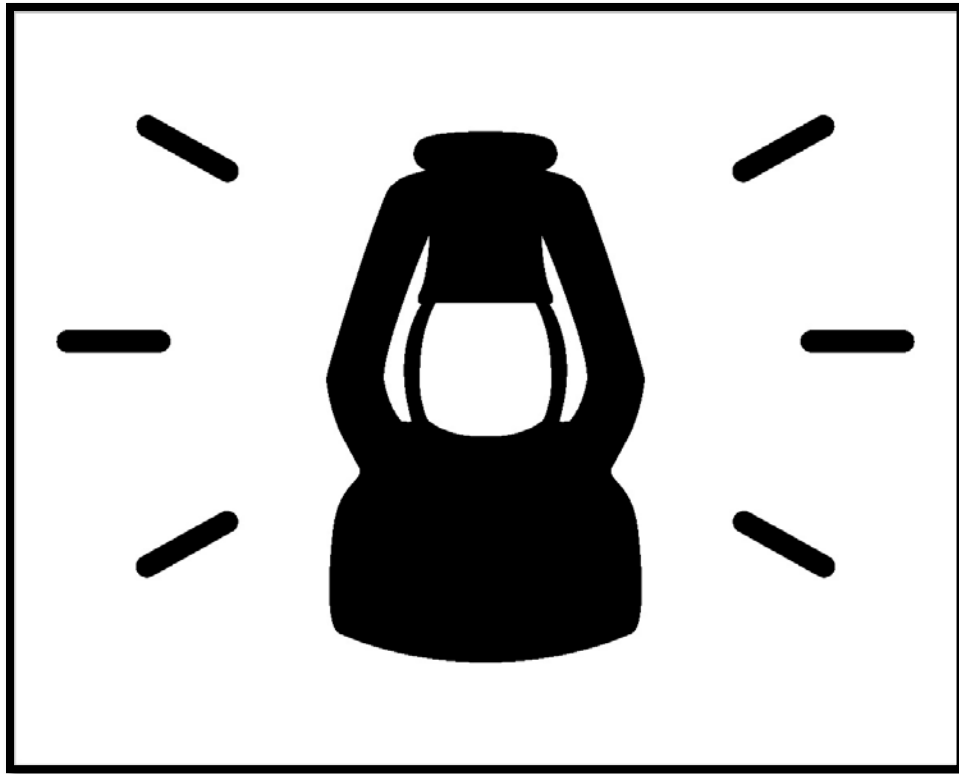
It is the kind person who in turn suffers the consequences of his or her kindness. Sometimes, one attempts to help other members of the community who are in desperate need. In the attempt to help such persons, the benefactor suffers some kind of set back. This is where the proverb is relevant.

#### **4.1.51 Aesthetic Values**

The Central Ewe community expressed that it is beautiful to be kind because kindness breeds good relationships. It is beautiful to ‘die’ or suffer for another person.

#### **4.1.52 Educational Values**

According to them, one must be kind but must be weary or aware of possible negative consequences. Life is full of ups and downs. Whatever one does, one should beware of positive and negative consequences.



‘Gomeka2i’ (symbol of light)

‘Kekeli’

Fig 4.6: Literal translation: (Light)

### **‘Gomeka2i’ (symbol of light)**

#### **‘Kekeli’: Light (Fig 4.6)**

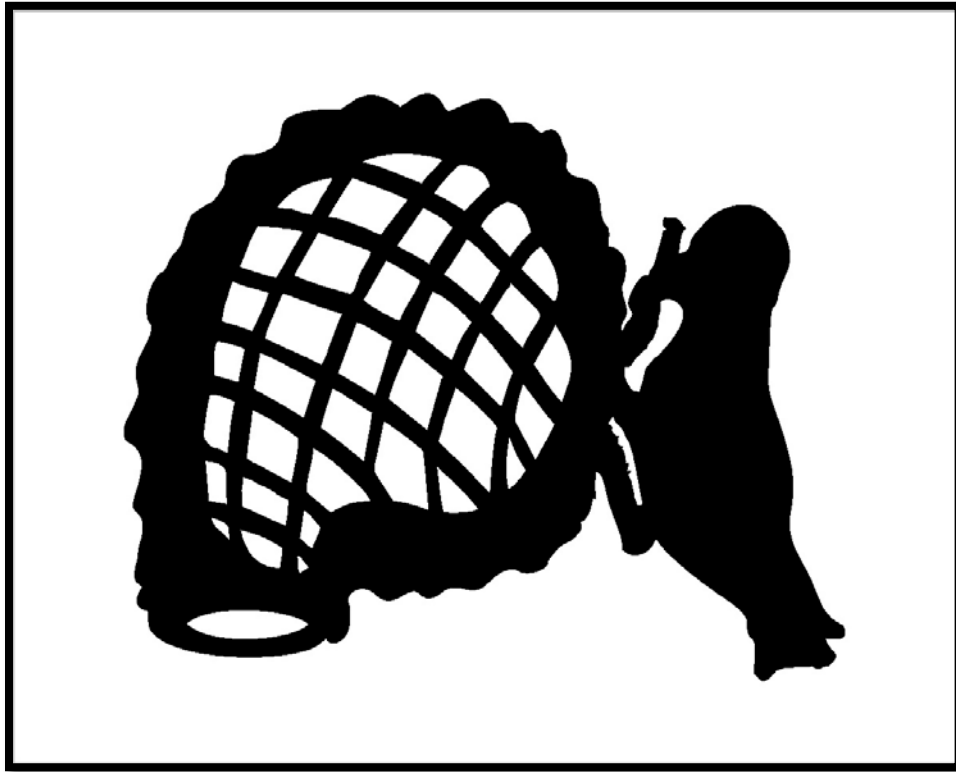
‘Gomeka2i’ is a lantern. It represents light. Where there is no darkness, there is light. Light overpowers darkness. When the day (light) is gone, night (darkness appears). Light represents clarity, non-ambiguity, transparency, and truthfulness. Also, understanding positive attributes as well as good or shining examples.

#### **4.1.53 Aesthetic Values**

On the words of the people of the Central Volta Region of Ghana, light is considered positive and goodness while darkness is considered negative. Light could mean progress while darkness could also mean backwardness. Light is beautiful when it is applied to positive attributes to life, where there is clarity of issues so that people can ‘see’ or perceive ideas clearly. Everyone is at peace with light because it signifies normalcy.

#### **4.1.54 Educational Values**

As said by the Central Ewes, reference to light in life is reference to knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment. ‘You have not seen the light.’ means that ‘you are ignorant’.



‘E3li kple at4’ (symbol of perseverance)

‘#li be degbe nana at4 tsina’

Fig 4.7: Literal translation: (The weaver bird says regular going and coming  
enables a nest to grow)

‘E3le kple at4’ (symbol of perseverance)

**‘#li be degbe nana at4 tsina’: The weaver bird says regular going and coming enables a nest to grow. (Fig 4.7)**

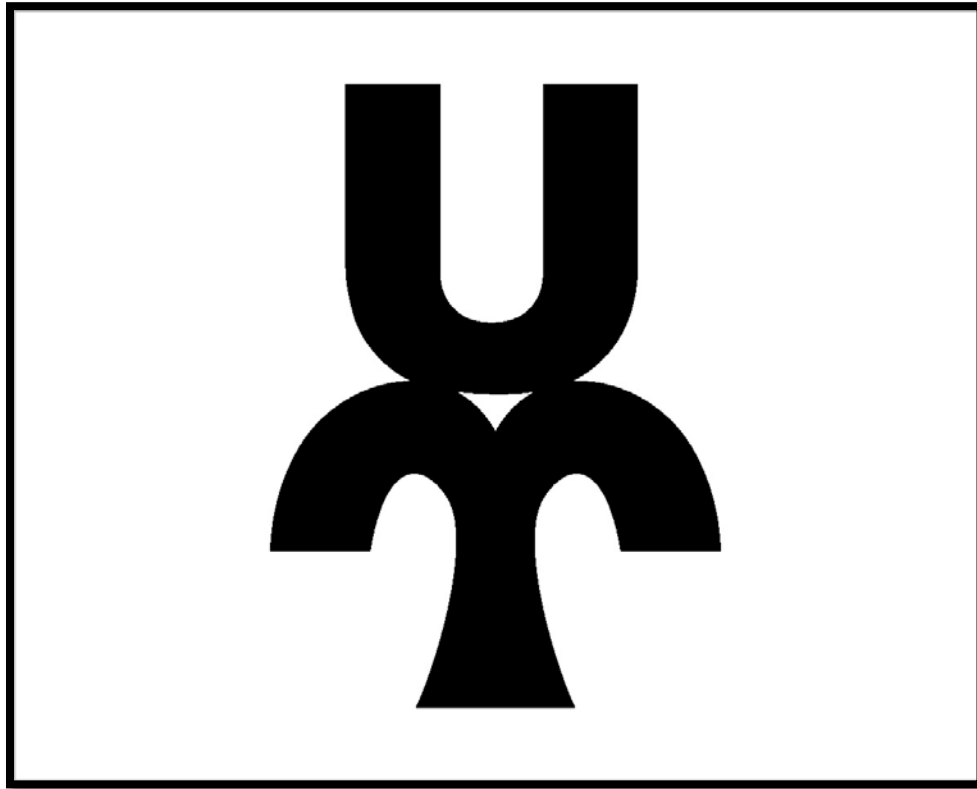
Constant regular building bit by bit enables the nest to grow. It is the same saying 'little drops of water make an ocean'. When one perseveres, one succeeds. When one works hard, one achieves great goals.

#### **4.1.55 Aesthetic Values**

The Central Ewes claimed that there is beauty in persevering, being patient and disciplining oneself to achieve life's purposes. Beauty in organizing oneself to get things done very well is the education message from this proverb.

#### **4.1.56 Educational Values**

To them it does not pay to rush in doing anything; the result of rush may be disastrous. It needs patience and regulated pace of work to attain great results. Young people should learn that it takes calculated and regular steps or stages to carry out a great responsibility.



‘T4tr4gb4’ (symbol of reversibility)

‘Nusianu si yi dzi la gbugb4na va anyigba’

Fig 4.8: Literal translation: (Whatever goes up comes down)

‘T4tr4gb4’ (symbol of reversibility)

**‘Nusianu si yi dzi la gbugb4na va anyigba’: Whatever goes up comes down**

**(Fig 4.8)**

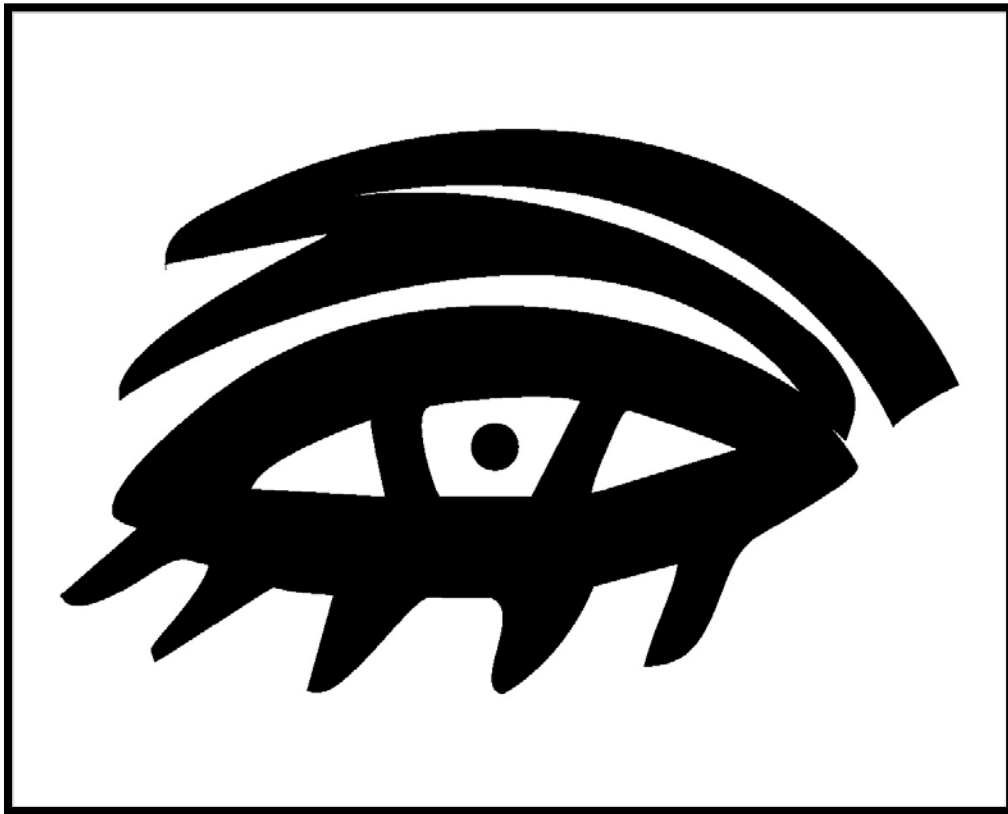
#### **4.1.57 Aesthetic Values**

The Central Ewes said beauty is in reversibility. Whatever happens can be reversed so that at all times, there is balance in society. Life in the other world must balance with life in this world. This ‘balance’ is aesthetically beautiful.

#### **4.1.58 Educational Values**

Scientifically, the force of gravity pulls down anything that is thrown up. As per the Central Ewes, naturally God has not made things to hang in the air when thrown up. This means that there are two sides of every issue. Any unpleasant situation that occurs in the community can be corrected. This applies even to death, such that when a person dies, it is believed that the person will eventually reincarnate.





‘~ku kple al-‘ (symbol of tolerance and co operation)

‘Dzre mele `ku kple al- dome o’

Fig 4.9: Literal translation: (There is no quarrel between the eye and sleep)

‘~ku kple al-‘ (symbol of tolerance and co operation)

**‘Dzre mele `ku kple al- dome o’: There is no quarrel between the eye and sleep**

**(Fig. 4.9)**

A person does not sleep until the eye lids close. This means that it is difficult to say that a person is asleep when the eyes are still open. This means that it takes the co operation between the eye and sleep to produce the event of sleeping. If the eye and sleep cannot co-exist, there will be no sleep.

#### **4.1.59 Aesthetic Value**

It was disclosed by the Central Ewes that the good relation between the eye and sleep produces positive results. The beauty is in the discord-less life style.

#### **4.1.60 Educational Value**

The Central Ewes also stated that there should be no enmity between any two persons who must come together or counsel to get great or important things done in life. If the fate of the community hangs on the cooperation, co-existence or tolerance of certain members of the community, the situation should not be toyed with.



‘Hliha’ (symbol of support)

‘Ta gb4lo mets4a hliha o’

Fig 4.10: Literal translation: (The bare head cannot carry a laterite rock.)

**‘Hliha’ (symbol of support)**

**‘Ta gb4lo mets4a hliha o’**

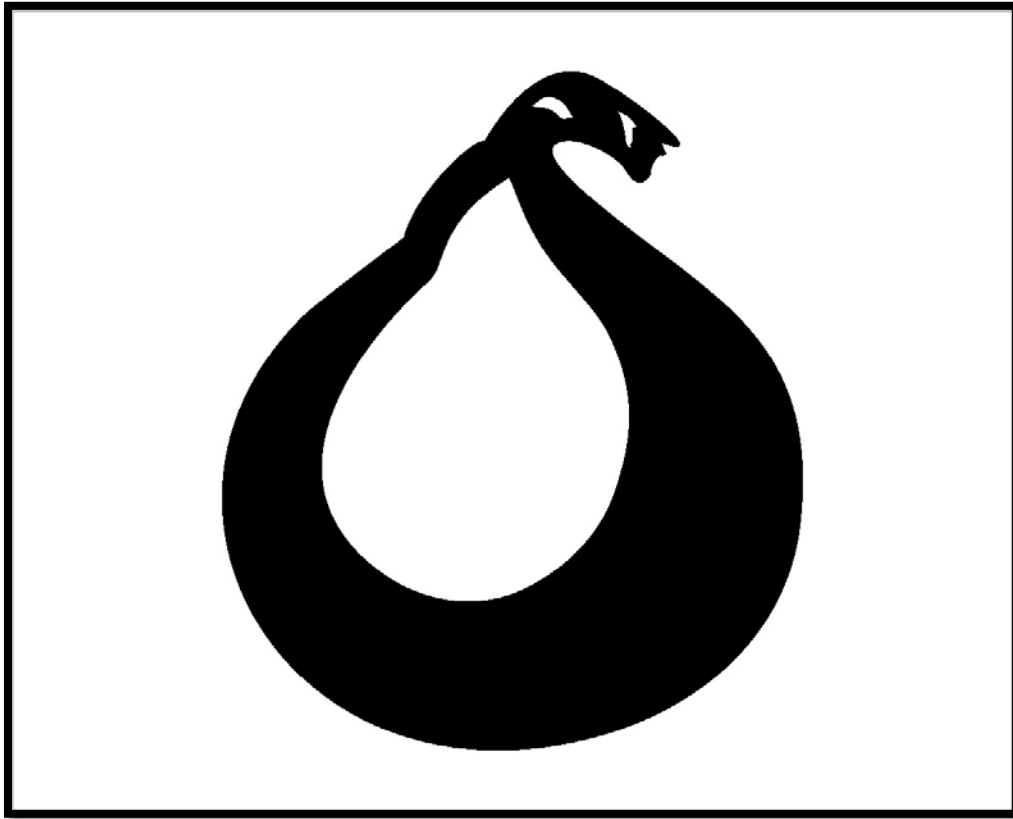
**: The bare head cannot carry a laterite rock. (Fig 4.10)**

#### **4.1.61 Aesthetic Values**

On the words of the people of the Central Volta Region of Ghana, ‘hliha’ is a very rough stone. Its texture is a beauty. Carrying ‘hliha’, on the bare head needs a support to ease the pain the carrier goes through. To surmount great challenges, one needs a support in life. The support therefore makes the challenges surmountable and is beautiful, because it helps to solve a life’s problem.

#### **4.1.62 Educational Values**

The people again observed that without a pad on the head, carrying of ‘hliha’ is difficult. In this case, the pad becomes the support or the help. This stresses the importance of help given to the individuals to enable them start anything where such a help of others is indispensable.



‘Gui’ (symbol of usefulness)

‘Gui me2i naneke o, gake `ud4w4nu le e`u’

Fig 4.11: Literal translation: (The gourd looks unimportant, but has its usefulness.)

‘Gui’ (symbol of usefulness)

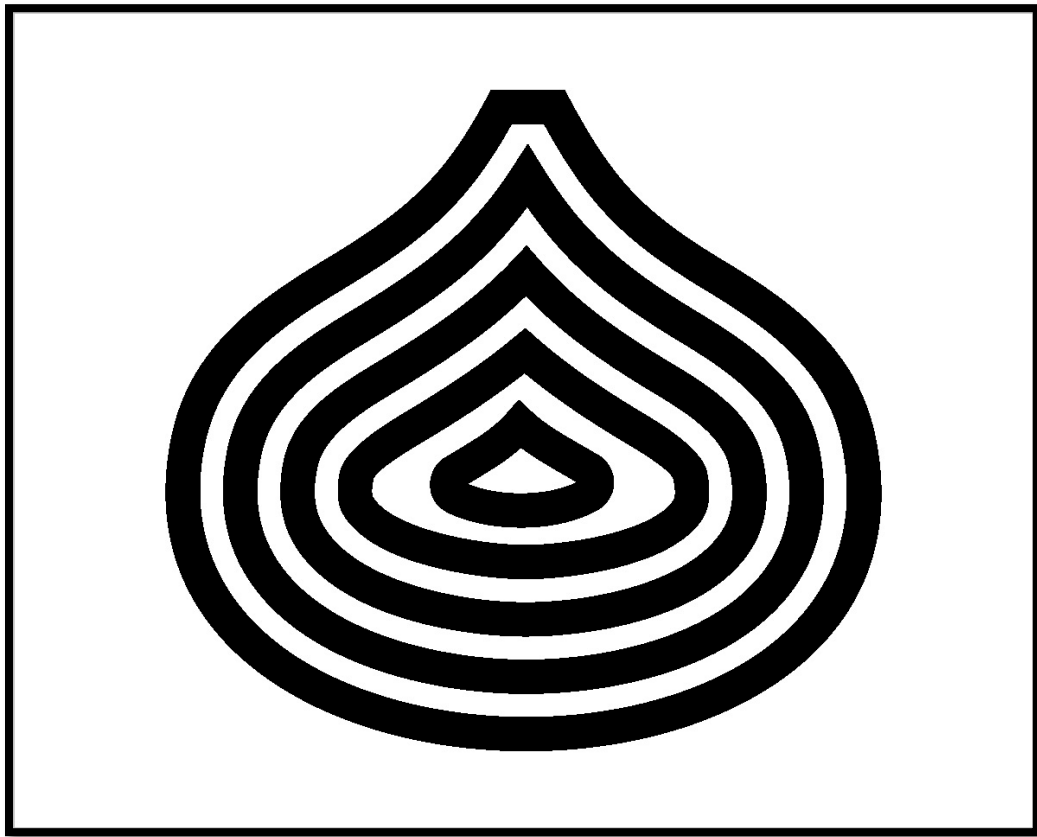
**‘Gui me2i naneke o, gake `ud4w4nu le e`u’: The gourd looks unimportant, but has its usefulness. (Fig 4.11)**

#### **4.1.63 Aesthetic Values**

There are different shapes of gourds. The Central Ewe community observed that the gourds are designed or cut differently for different purposes. The Central Ewes produce articles such as calabash, musical instruments, hair pieces, fishing float, spoon or ladle and other containers from it. The brown colour of a gourd represents the earth colour. That is why the gourd plant creeps on the ground. Its beauty is in its many uses.

#### **4.1.64 Educational Values**

The gourd thrives well on refuse dumps, where waste and valueless things are kept. They said, ironically, the gourd is a very useful fruit. When matured, it can be very useful in the production of articles. Everything, irrespective of its status has a role to play in a society. Therefore, no human being is considered useless among Central Ewes.



‘Sabala’ (symbol of individualism)

‘Sabala le nogo gake m4 le eme’

Fig 4.12: Literal translation: (Onion is round but has space in between its layers)

‘Sabala’(symbol of individualism)

**‘Sabala le nogo gake m4 le eme’: Onion is round but has space in between its layers (Fig 4.12)**

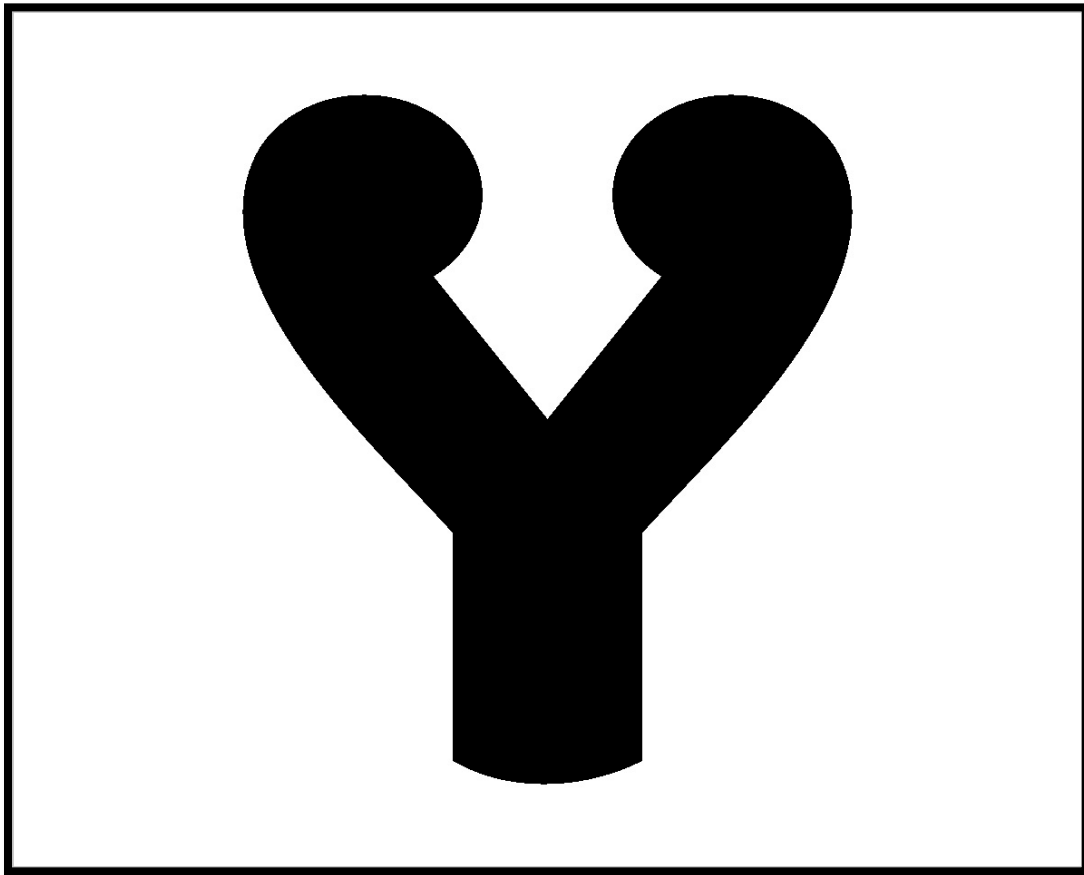
**4.1.65 Aesthetic Values**

The Central Ewes revealed that a bulb of onion represents ‘oneness’ or ‘togetherness’, therefore that ‘we’ feeling of the people in the community. It has been cut vertically and beautifully, showing segments to represent the different calibre of people in the community. They also observed that the apex of the onion is where growth is seen. So a community is also bound to grow with individual differences. Besides, the onion, which belongs to the food group, represents life. Looking at the symbol for a long time creates a “movement” which turns to be optical illusion.

**4.1.66 Educational Values**

The Central Ewes confirmed that there is no society or community in which one will not experience individual differences or misunderstanding in personal relationships. Understanding these differences will check disunity in the community. Therefore disagreement between relatives and close associates should not be carried to such an extent as to destroy good relationships. This symbol also promotes co-existence and tolerance.





‘Ven4n4 nyo’ (symbol of mutuality)

Fig 4.13: Literal translation: (It is good to be in pairs)

‘Ven4n4 nyo’ (symbol of mutuality)

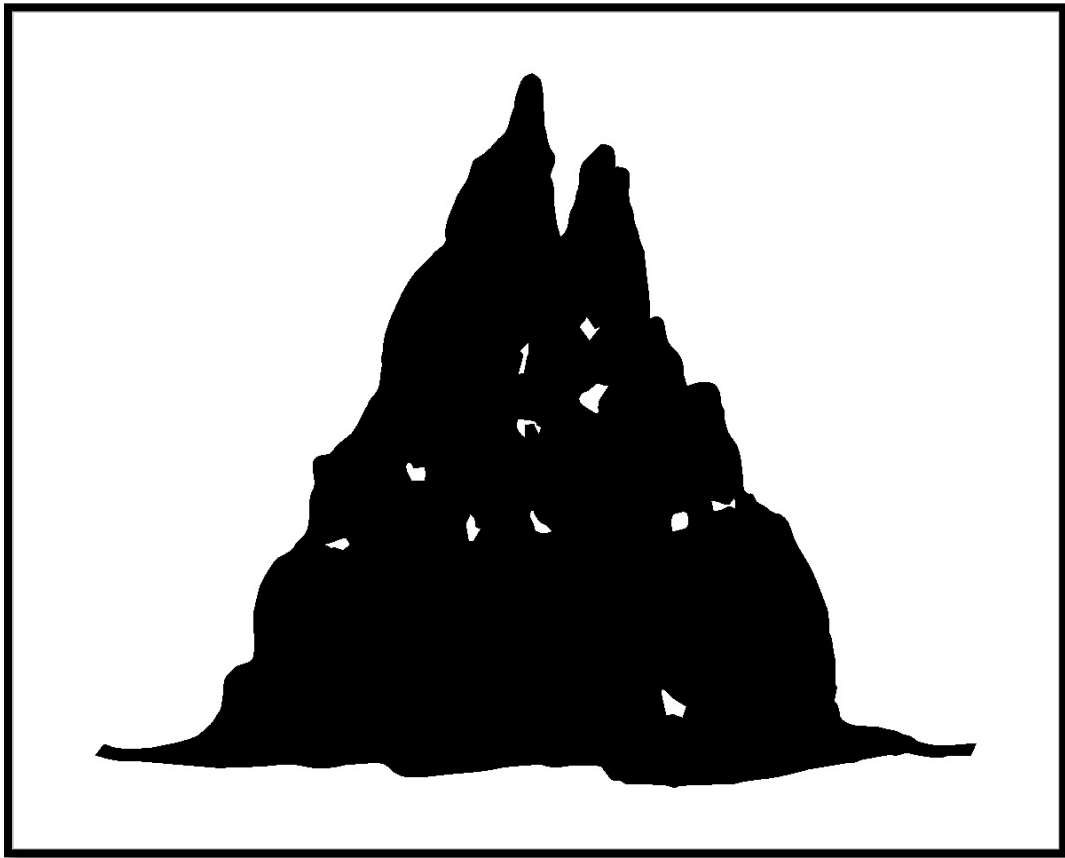
### **‘Ven4n4 nyo’: It is good to be in pairs (Fig 4.13)**

#### **4.1.67 Aesthetic Values**

This symbol depicts two figures facing each other but standing as one. To the people of the Central Ewe community, strength and support is the beauty one sees in anything that is in pairs. Strength is dependent on the individuals linked together. The socio-cultural set up of the Central Ewes is such that, everybody is each other's keeper. One will have to share joy, sorrow, hardship and other conditions with others. This promotes unity and therefore a beautiful occurrence.

#### **4.1.68 Educational Values**

On the words of the Central Ewes, the importance of inter-dependence is learnt from this symbol. It stresses the need for the recognition of the wisdom of co-operation and working together. This seals the bond of brotherliness among the Central Ewes. It does not pay to be isolated and secluded.



‘Babak4’ (Symbol of humility)

‘Babak4 matea `u agbl4 na na anyigba be neteda yeanye o.’

Fig 4.14:    Literal translation: (The anthill cannot ask the earth to push away in  
order to increase its size.)

**‘Babak4’ (Symbol of humility)**

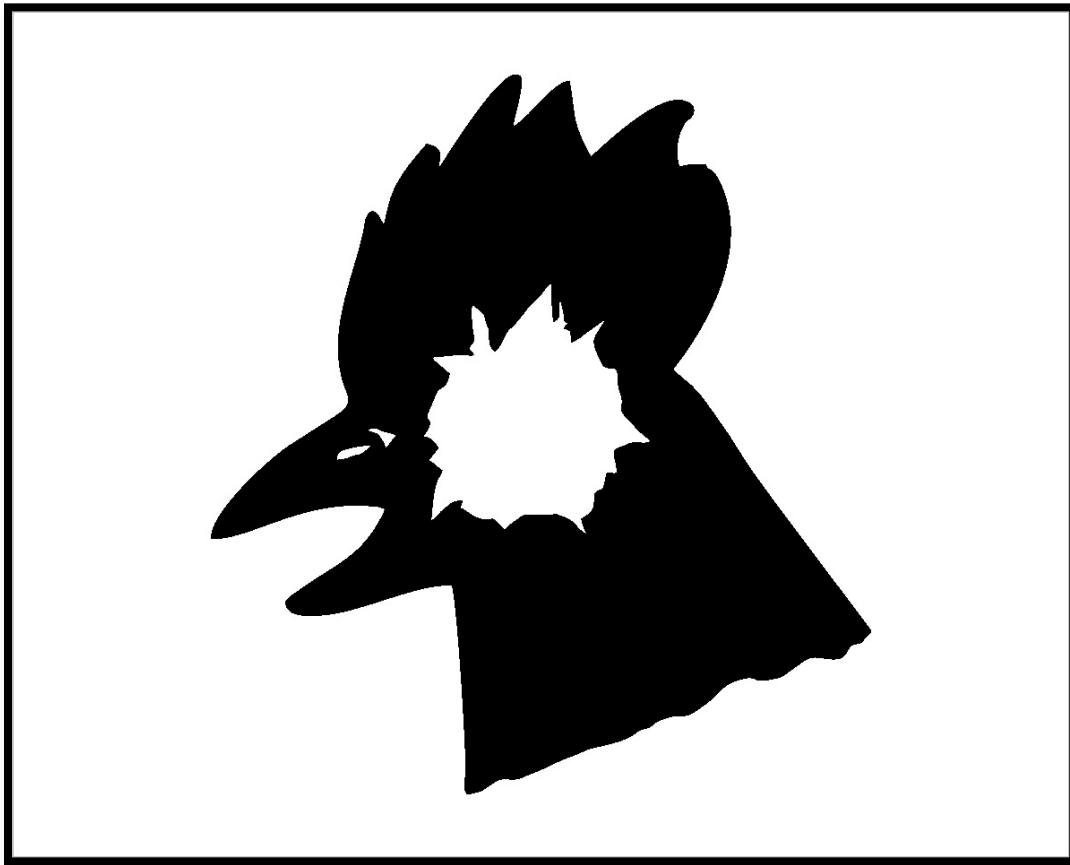
**‘Babak4 matea `u agbl4 na na anyigba be neteda yeanye o.’: The anthill cannot ask the earth to push away in order to increase its size (Fig 4.14).**

#### **4.1.69 Aesthetic Values**

The respondents claimed that termites are responsible for the building of hills (anthill). They also believe that it is built from the ‘mother’ earth. It is broadly and firmly rooted to ‘mother’ earth. One sign of beauty in the anthill is its stability. It has a relationship with the earth. Without it, there would not be any anthill. So the youth in the Ewe communities see every adult as a parent without whose support, they cannot make any headway in life. It is beautiful to be humble.

#### **4.1.70 Educational Values**

The respondents suggested that the individual is not greater than the group, even if he or she becomes wealthy. His achievement comes through the fact that he or she is a member of a particular society. This teaches people or the youth to have respect for the family and the social groups because they derive their being and living through them. This is admonishing Central Ewes not to think too highly of themselves. They should not be arrogant.



‘At4kula’ (symbol of dawn and awakening)

‘u yeye ke na mi’

Fig 4.15: Literal translation: (New dawn has come to us)

‘At4kula’ (symbol of dawn and awakening)

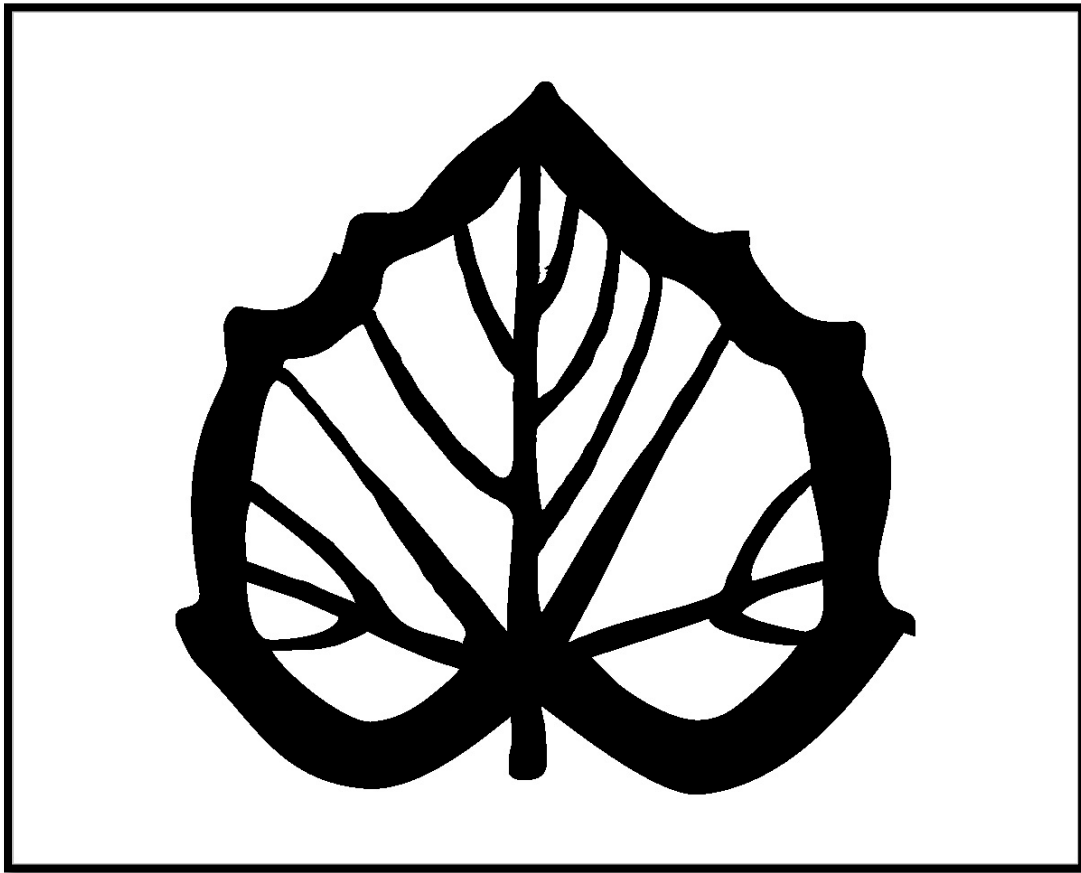
**‘u yeye ke na mí ’: (New dawn has come to us (Fig 4.15)**

#### **4.1.71 Aesthetic Values**

As per the respondents, cockerel is a call to positive, productive life which in turn produces joy, peace, prosperity of individuals and the community. The beauty is in its call of positive attributes to life.

#### **4.1.72 Educational Values**

The cockerel crows to awaken people from sleep at dawn so that they can carry out their daily chores. The Central Ewe community mentioned that symbolically, the cockerel stands for the call to delve into new ways of life, the call to make the maximum out of human potentials.



‘Kp4timakpa’ (symbol of defiance)

‘Mele te 6eyi6i sia 6eyi6i’

Fig 4.16: Literal translation: (stable in all situations)

‘Kp4timakpa’ (symbol of defiance)

### **‘Mele te 6eyi6i sia 6eyi6i’: stable in all situations (Fig 4.16)**

This symbol is adopted from ‘kp4ti’ plant. ‘kp4ti’ is the jetropha plant which is normally used for fencing.

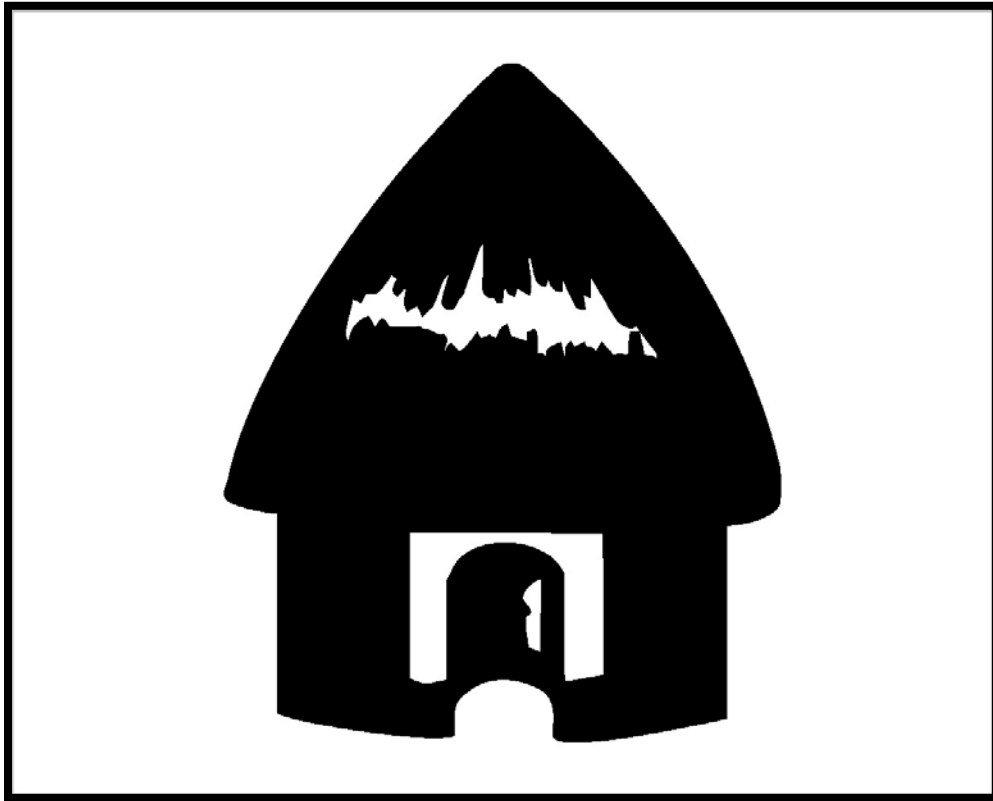
#### **4.1.73 Aesthetic Values**

Jetropha leaf is tough, broad and heart shaped as observed by the respondents. For the fact that it has the ability to defy hard weather conditions and bad soil types, Central Ewes have adopted it as a symbol of defiance. They stated that the green colour of the leaf represents vegetation. It symbolizes growth. The symbol indicates the different sides of life. The survival of mankind requires strong-will to face challenges in life. The respondents again revealed that lack of strong will and endurance in time of difficulties exposes vulnerability of the youth, which could be capitalized on by their opponents. The symbol gives them the power to overcome challenges. The symbol signifies endurance and defiance of difficulties in all aspects of human endeavour. Therefore the quality endurance and defiance in the symbolism of the plant suggests defiance of the rough side of life, to let life go on; thus, the beauty of it.

#### **4.1.78 Educational Values**



The Central Ewes have learnt from the symbol that life is full of uncertainties. However, they disclosed that one must persevere to make life positive. It teaches the sense of adaptability in any condition. It encourages the individual to be independent, self-reliant and resourceful.



‘Koklox4’ (symbol of contentment)

‘Koklo-x4 mekpea `u na koklo o’

Fig 4.17: Literal translation: (A fowl is not shy of its coop)

‘Koklox4’ (symbol of contentment)

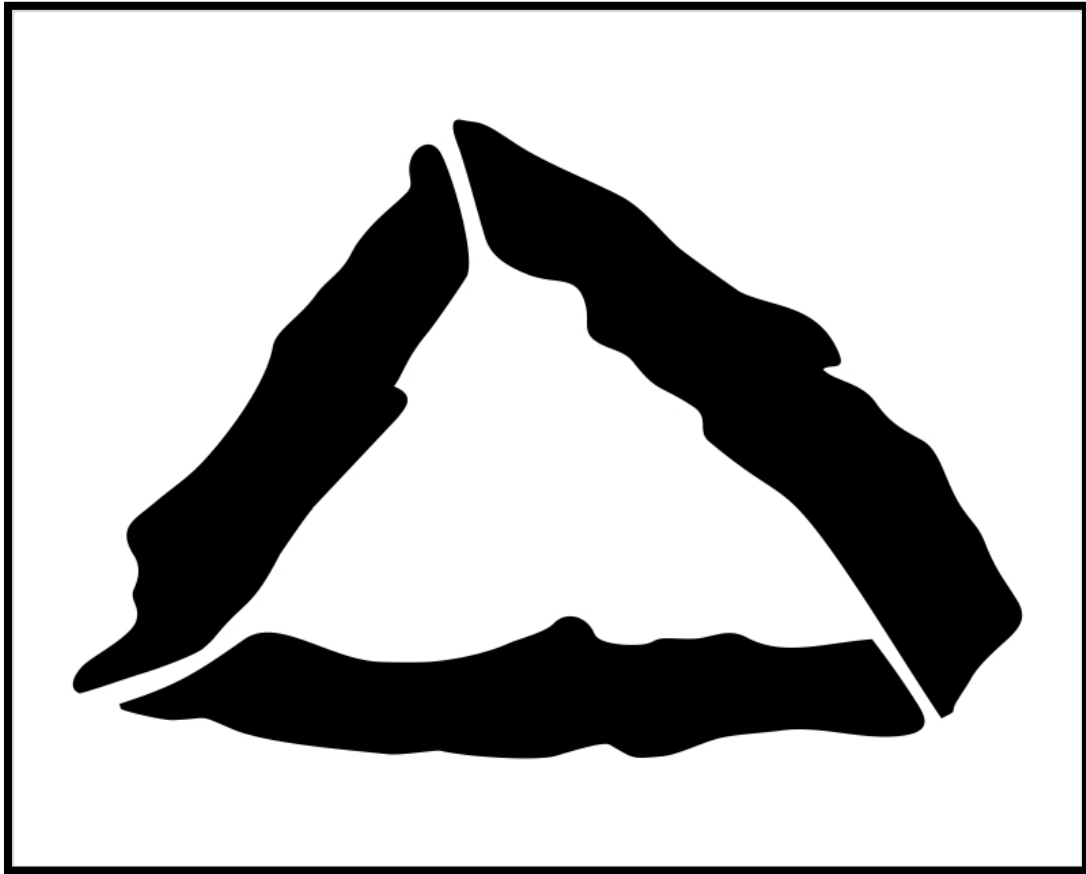
**‘Koklo-x4 mekpea `u na koklo o’: A fowl is not shy of its coop (Fig 4.17)**

**4.1.79 Aesthetic Values**

This symbol depicts a hut; a humble abode for human beings. It is metaphorically used here as a coop for fowls. The elders of the Central Volta Region of Ghana interpreted the symbol as: ‘the fowl is not ashamed of itself for using its habitat.’ That is what it is capable of providing. They said it shows a sense of belongingness and satisfaction. It is beautiful that on its own, it has something to be content with. Humility as one of the virtues is also exhibited in this symbol. This is used in a community where the youth are shy to be related to their families or homes because they are not rich. It can also be related to those who are attending or have attended less endowed schools as compared to those who are attending or have attended endowed schools.

**4.1.80 Educational Values**

The people of Central Ewe community have an adage that goes: ‘This is who you are, what you have and what you have to use’. They explained it as: ‘one will learn to appreciate, admire and be satisfied with whatever one has. Whatever is yours should be most cherished’. They also said, ‘one should not be shy because of one’s low social status; one must be satisfied with what one has.’ That sense of identity should be cultivated among the youth and this is a warning against greed.



‘Ati al4 et4’ (Symbol of worship)

‘Nu et- yae w4 agbe’

Fig 4.18: Literal translation: (Three things make life)

‘Ati al4 et-’ (Symbol of worship)

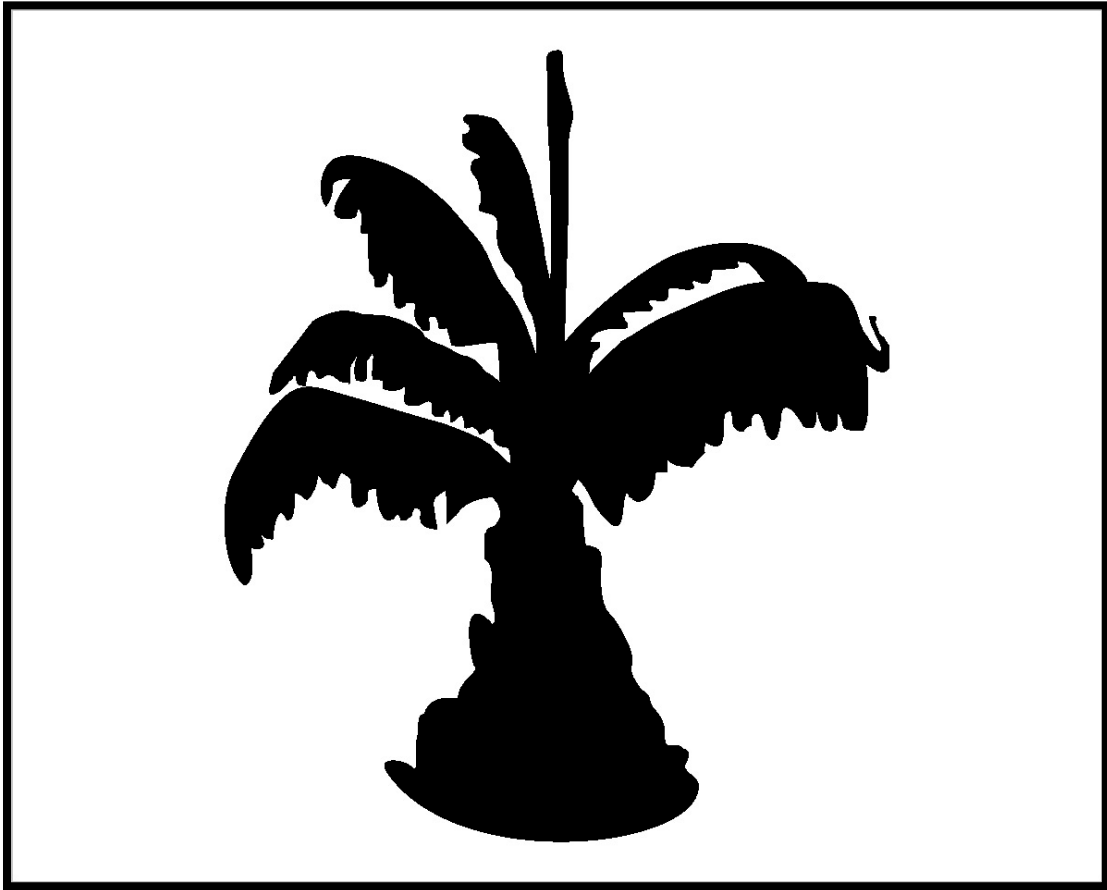
### **‘Nu et- yae w4 agbe’: Three things make life (Fig 4.18)**

#### **4.1.81 Aesthetic Values**

This symbol is three rugged sticks put together to form a triangle, known as ‘Ati al4 et-’ in Ewe. It is a symbol derived from the opening proverb of a traditional prayer. This is found in the Mawu-cult among the Ewes. The respondents indicated that the symbol signifies a place of worship or an altar to God. It also signifies the presence and the protection of God. They also stated that the symbol can be equated to the Christian worship which runs as follows: ‘God in three persons’ or ‘Trinity’ (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit). Each rugged stick represents a phenomenon in life. Solidity and stability can be seen in the symbol.

#### **4.1.82 Educational Values**

The respondents said this symbol is used to urge people to acknowledge the presence and protection of God, and also worship and venerate Him in sincerity. Spiritual elements inherent in them should be rekindled and purified.



‘Deti’ (symbol of versatility)

‘`ud4w4nu le `unye le m4 ge2eewo nu’

Fig 4.19: Literal translation: (One is dynamic or versatile in all aspects of life)

‘Deti’ (symbol of versatility)

**‘ud4w4nu le `unye le m4 ge2eewo nu’: One is dynamic or versatile in all aspects of life (Fig 4.19).**

#### **4.1.83 Aesthetic Values**

The symbol is a palm tree, known to the Ewes as ‘Deti’. As per the Central Ewe community, it is regarded by the majority of the Central Ewes as king of symbols, in the sense that there are a lot of proverbs on ‘deti’. They opined that its beauty is in its several uses. Thus: the leaves are used for broom and shed. The branch for basketry and the trunk for palm wine. Even the decayed trunk produces mushrooms. In addition, the roots play two roles. They are used to stitch broken calabashes and as well, negatively to poison people. The beauty here is in the dichotomy. Certainly, there is beauty in contradictions of life. The respondents stated that this symbol signifies the ability of the youth in the Central Volta to take initiatives and play many important roles. On the other hand, the symbol can be likened to the saying, ‘one may be good but have a bad side’. This saying may refer the root of the palm tree.

#### **4.1.84 Educational Values**

The respondents disclosed that it challenges people to develop their entrepreneurial skills and explore other possibilities in life to benefit themselves and the society. It also encourages people to make bad situations better and be optimistic in life, or have the ‘can do’ spirit.



‘Af4x4dzo’ (Symbol of punishment)

‘Ne anyigba x4 dzo la, af4e nyana’

Fig 4.20: Literal translation: (It is only the foot that knows when the ground is hot.)

‘Af4x4dzo’ (Symbol of punishment)



**‘Ne anyigba x4 dzo la, af4e nyana’: It is only the foot that knows when  
the ground is hot. (Fig 4.20)**

Expressed in ordinary language it means that one who has done wrong is one who will have to bear the consequences of his or her action.

#### **4.1.85 Aesthetic Values**

The Central Ewes said the symbol depicts a foot in centre of a flame. They explained that the symbol signifies the pain that one goes through, as a result of punishment for doing the wrong. They also revealed that the traditional Ewe society takes a serious view of punishable deeds to instill discipline. It is therefore a good sign and a beauty to let one account for one’s misdeeds in a community. On their words, this symbol is used as a reminder for a person who persists in doing the wrong. The beauty is in the prevention of wrong-doing.

#### **4.1.86 Educational Values**

The respondents observed that the symbol serves as an advice to individuals not to commit offence against others. Otherwise, they will face the consequences and it is a caution to educate persons who enjoy wrong-doing.

## **4.2 Summary**

This research claimed that signs and symbols of Central Ewes are reservoirs of aesthetic and educational values and that their analysis and interpretation reveal their meanings and everyday usage. In this chapter, facts collected on the ground have been assembled in photographic and descriptive forms and discussed. In the discussions reveal findings which confirm the assertion that Central Ewe signs and symbols contain aesthetic and educational attributes that are pertinent to their way of life.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Overview**

This chapter deals with the summary of the dissertation, findings, conclusions and recommendations.

#### **5.1 Summary**

The signs and symbols of the Central Ewe as well as their meanings are not known to the majority of the people. The aesthetics underpinning of the signs and symbols are also not well understood by the people. Again, the educational values of signs and symbols and their role in everyday life are not generally familiar to the larger population and they have not been fully documented.

Central Ewes have identifiable signs and symbols which served very valuable purposes in the past. They were effective means of communication, education and expression of culture. However, while the older generation still recognizes and upholds the significance of signs and symbols, the youth know nothing or very little about them. The meaning of signs and symbols is the preview of a few citizens. This means that the silent, non-verbal means of communicating the beliefs, values, attitudes and sense of purpose, as well as philosophical attitudes of Central Ewe life have been significantly blocked.

Besides, the secret “language” of signs and symbols which need to be understood by the larger percentage of the population in order to properly manage their lives, have been missing over the years. Modernity and globalization have also turned the attention of the youth to other things which appear to be more important to them. Therefore, the need to study the signs and

symbols among the Central Ewes so as to unravel the meanings for better understanding and invigoration of development of the area becomes imperative. Hence, the need for this research.

In order to attempt to resolve these problems, the study sought to:

1. Identify and describe signs and symbols among Central Ewes.
2. Discuss the aesthetic values of signs and symbols.
3. Discuss the educational values of signs and symbols

Qualitative research approach was used, specifically descriptive research. Information was accessed from the library and the internet on related literature. The population for the study was identified as target and accessible population. About three hundred and fifty (350) people have been classified as the accessible population. Validated data collection instrument of participant observation and structured interview were used. Data were primary and secondary. Appropriate data collection procedures were followed. Data were assembled, analyzed, interpreted, conclusions drawn and recommendations made.

## **5.2 Findings**

The researcher found out that Central Ewes signs and symbols express Ewe culture. They inform the viewer through a silent language. He also observed that the meanings of some of the Central Ewe signs and symbols are similar to that of the Akans. For example, plate 14, (a sign that denotes silence) and figure 18, (a symbol of mutuality). The Central Ewes have identifiable significant signs and symbols which have not been fully documented. Examples are:

- ‘Tr-10’ (Ram for a deity) has three cowries threaded on raffia on its neck; thus a warning sign.
- ‘Du, atadi kple tukpe’ (Gun powder, pepper and pellets). These denote war.

- ‘xe, ala kple aklala’ (Kaolin, raffia and calico). These denote peace.
- ‘Hagl7 (Jaw of a wild pig) hanged at an entrance of a house shows a sign of bravery.
- ‘Ne nyo na nua eyea wōgbana2e ge me’. Meaning it is when the mouth is full of food that some fall into the beard. (Nu kple ge). A symbol of sharing.
- ‘T4medelae gbaa z1’ meaning it is the one who fetches water that breaks the water pot (z1gbagba). A symbol of imperfection.
- ‘Kekeli’, meaning light. (Gomeka2i) a symbol of light.
- ‘Ve n4n4 nyo’. Meaning it is good to be in pair. (‘ven4n4nyo’) a symbol of mutuality.

Central Ewes have peculiar concepts of aesthetics in which beauty is equated with function or usefulness. Their signs and symbols have educational values from which moral lessons are learnt and are used in everyday life. When an event happens especially, each corresponding signs and symbols are used as a normal aspect of life.

In addition, signs and symbols of the Central Ewes constitute part of their visual culture. Despite this fact, the use of signs and symbols are integrated with the theoretic (abstract, philosophical, metaphysical and psychological) aspect of the culture. Besides, signs and symbols carry messages (knowledge) that is spiritual, moral, philosophical, psychological and aesthetic, which educate the viewer. It was also established that when a thing is beautiful, it means it is perfect and that while signs serve a more temporary purpose, symbols serve relatively more purposes.

### 5.3 Conclusion

- a. Signs and symbols describe the way Central Ewes live.

- b. The Central Ewes have a system in which signs and symbols are used to manage their daily lives through has remain in oral traditions for years.
- c. Central Ewes relate beauty to everyday life in which useful things are considered beautiful.
- d. Signs and symbols of the Central Ewes are avenues for non-school education.
- e. Central Ewe signs and symbols form an integral part of everyday life. Therefore Central Ewe signs and symbols cannot be separated from everyday life. They are inseparable.
- f. It can be concluded that among the Central Ewes, aesthetics is seen in both the visual and theoretic aspect of life.
- g. Central Ewe signs and symbols direct, mould and influence social behaviour.
- h. Finally, it can also be concluded that the Central Ewes have a criteria for determining beauty. For example '*es4*', meaning it is complete or well structured.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

- a. Central Ewes signs and symbols express both theoretic and artistic culture. So their use must be kept alive.
- b. Signs and symbols are impotent features of the Central Ewe culture. Therefore, they must be upheld and documented in a written, video and electronic form.
- c. Central Ewe concept of beauty linked to function is unique. Therefore, that knowledge should be made available to other cultures.
- d. If moral education could be learnt through signs and symbols, then it will be useful to the community to organize public education or moral lessons learnt from signs and symbols.
- e. The signs and symbols serve as keys to the understanding of the Central Ewe culture. The traditional councils of the area invigorate efforts to get the majority of the population to understand the use of signs and symbols so as to retain the dynamism of their culture.
- f. Visual significance of signs and symbols should not be done in isolation of the theoretical significance. The two make up life.
- g. Signs and symbols should be used as tool to check anti-social behaviour.
- h. Judgement should not be passed about signs and symbols without understanding the underpinning criteria for determining beauty.

### **5.5 Area for further research**

The problem of silent language of signs and symbols could be solved perhaps by researching into possible translation of the silent language in a written form.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Interview Guide**

1. Can you identify a sign? If yes, what is a sign?
2. Can you identify a symbol? If yes, what is a symbol?
3. What is the difference between a sign and a symbol?
4. Can you tell how signs and symbols came into being?
5. What is a proverb? Give an example.
6. Is there any relationship between a sign and a symbol?
7. Are there different types of signs? Are there different types of symbols? Give an example.
8. When do you say a thing is beautiful?
9. Is there any beauty in your signs and symbols? How do you see it?
10. Do your signs and symbols promote unity among your people and the country at large?

11. Are signs and symbols educative?

12. What can be done for the youth to know some of the signs and symbols?

13. Do you think the representation of proverbs with graphical symbols will be beneficial?

14. What lessons can be learnt from signs and symbols?

15. Which groups of people in your area use signs and symbols most?

16. Do your signs and symbols serve as media for communication?