

**DOCUMENTATION OF THE FANTE ASAFO FLAGS SINCE THE YEAR 2000  
AND THEIR SOCIO-CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

By

**Emmanuel Kofi Aidoo**

(B.A Integrated Rural Art and Industry)

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## DECLARATION

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

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AIDOO, Emmanuel Kofi (PG 2284608) .....  
(Student's Name & I. D. No.)                      Signature                      Date

Certified by  
Dr. Steve Kquofi .....  
(Supervisor's Name)                      Signature                      Date

Certified by  
Nana Afia Opoku-Asare (Mrs.) .....  
(Head of Department's Name)                      Signature                      Date

## ABSTRACT

The absence of appropriate documentation in some societies has led to the loss of vital information or adulteration of very important data. The Cape Coast *Asafo* Companies have suffered this unfortunate fate with respect to their *Asafo* flags. While few Cape Coast *Asafo* flags have been documented without written information on their significance, many have not been recognized at all. It was clear from the research that the rate at which the *Asafo* flags are commissioned has reduced significantly due to the fact that there is high level of poverty among the *Asafo* members. Others decline to such positions because of financial commitment that goes with the position of *Safohene*. Some custodians of the flags could not give dates on which some flags were commissioned, the name of *Safohene* who commissioned a particular flag and even the social and cultural interpretation of some vital symbols in some of the *Asafo* flags commissioned in the pre- and post-independence. Interviews were used to obtain historical background of the *Asafo* flags from the chiefs, custodians and the *Asafo* members. The flags were then observed for detailed description and analysis. The research revealed that a greater number of the indigenes of Cape Coast were aware of the *Asafo* flag but were unable to interpret their significance while others would not like to be associated with them due to the perception that they are fetish. There was no written documentation of the flags in all the *Asafo* posts visited. It is recommended that the flags of Cape Coast *Asafo* companies be properly documented for posterity. An endowment fund be instituted as a matter of urgency to support the *Asafohene* and the management of their respective *Asafo* activities.

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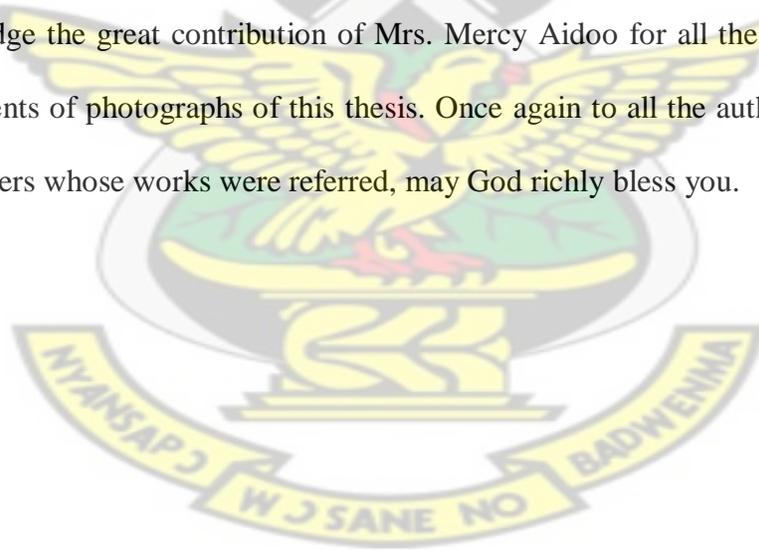
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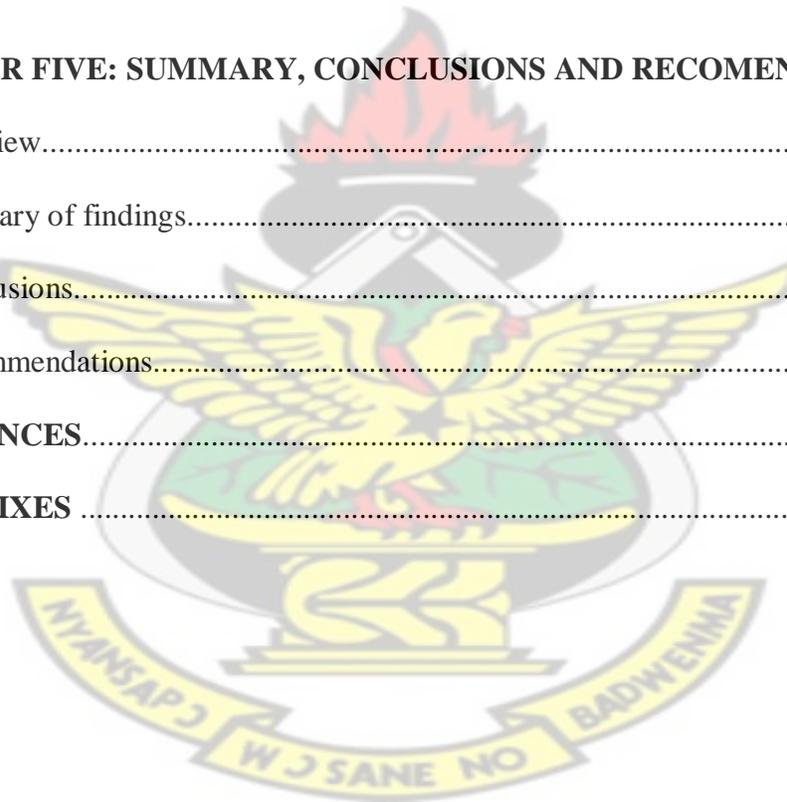
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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study

From Africa, south of the Sahara, Ghana, a former British colony, shares boundary to the west with Cote D'ivoire, to the east with Togo, to the north with Burkina Faso and on the south with the Gulf of Guinea. Ghana abounds with varied cultures stretching from the various ethnic groups in the north to the Akans in the south. The Fantes are located in the central region of Ghana covering towns such as Cape Coast, (*Oguaa*) Kormantse, Abandze, Mankessim, and Elmina among others. Cape Coast, which used to be the national capital, but now the administrative capital of the Central Region is situated 165km west of Accra and Gulf of Guinea. It is now a world heritage site because of the castle built by the Dutch in 1637.

Cape Coast has thrived on seven *Asafo* traditional military organisations – The *Asafo* Companies were made up of all able bodied men and women that share a common goal to protect and defend the town's internal and external invasion under a leader *Safohene*. The various *Asafo* groups are *Asafo* number one (*Bantsir*), *Asafo* number two (*Anafo*), *Asafo* number three (*Ntsin*), *Asafo* number four (*Nkum*), *Asafo* number five (*Borofomba*), *Asafo* number six (*Akrampa*) and *Asafo* number seven (*Amanful*).

Partly due to the advent of Christianity and modernisation, most people associate the membership of *Asafo* Company with paganism. Whiles some indigenes don't want to be

associated with cultural activities due to personal reasons, others alienate themselves because there is no financial motivation from the leadership of the *Asafo* groups (From respondents during interviews). For these reasons, some who are biological members from either maternal or paternal side disassociate themselves from the activities of the *Asafo*. In a personal conversation with an *Asafo* leader, he expressed regret that some rightful heirs of *Asafo* stool who are elite and in a better position to handle and manage affairs of the *Asafo* Companies have also declined to such offers. Therefore a number of *Asafo* stools in various homes are not occupied. In another development, the paramount chief (*Omanhene*) of Cape Coast traditional area in his annual speech to round off the 2009 *Oguaa Fetu Afahye* under the theme “Convergence between Christianity and Tradition” appealed to churches especially charismatic to appreciate the activities of the traditionalist (*source*: recorded speech).

One major artistic form of the *Asafo* company is the flag. Though a level of documentation of the *Asafo* flags of the Fante in general have been made, less attention has been given to the Cape Coast *Asafo* Flags and their socio-cultural significance to Ghanaian culture. Such historical information is only heard during annual festivals and other rituals of the *Asafo* Company. Sometimes, only few of the *Asafo* leaders who are vested in their history are allowed to do the interpretation. During a personal interview with an *Asafo* leader, the researcher realized that such vital and rich information were neither recorded nor documented but are said off hand when the need arises. This poses a great threat to the oral history of the Cape Coast *Asafo* flags since the absence of such people could either mean an absence of an interpreter. The next person who tries to

interpret may distort some vital facts. Such people could die with such information. As oral messages pass on from one generation to the other without any reference material, the tendency of exaggerating, adulterating and even forgetting some vital facts is very high and flag interpreters of Cape Coast Company are no exception.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

*Asafo* Companies have been in existence for centuries. Each of the *Asafo* Companies has flags which serve as morale boosters during wars and communal labour. It is believed that the *Asafo* flag is used to show last respect to a dead member and also serves as a historical record of the past as part of their culture. It depicts images, symbols and colours which have significance guiding the indigenes through life activities.

New flags are produced for installed chiefs, sub-chiefs, divisional heads, *Asafohene* etc. Old flags are replaced, and some are produced as a memorial to honour people for their contribution to the society. These new flags have their socio-cultural significance and custodians do well mainly on oral narration for their interpretation as against written documentation. The old flags are continually changed because of the effect of weather on them. The possibility of changing the original design is very high during the replacement. There is the tendency of losing, distorting or altering some vital information such as the original colour and positions of images losing the originality of the flag. The oral narration of the socio-cultural significance of a particular flag may be changed as it is handed over from one generation to the other. As a result of the above problems, this

research was embarked upon to document selected new flags produced since year 2000 of the *Asafo* companies in Cape Coast.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this research are to:

1. trace the historical development of the selected *Asafo* flags,
2. discuss the socio-cultural significance of the selected *Asafo* flags since the year 2000.
3. identify and document the selected *Asafo* Companies in Cape Coast, their flags, and symbolism since the year 2000.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. When were the *Asafo* companies formed in Ghana?
2. To what extent have the new (year 2000 to date) *Asafo* flags been documented?
3. What are the socio-cultural significances of the new *Asafo* flags?

### **1.6 Delimitation**

1. The study was centred on the identification, description and socio-cultural significance of the Cape Coast *Asafo* flags produced since the year 2000.
2. To be able to work within the time frame, the researcher limited the research to only the major towns under Cape Coast.
3. Finally, though the research was centred on new flags, references were made to the old flags to serve as basis for analyses into the new ones.

## 1.7 Limitations

1. Some of the *Asafo* Companies, especially those along the coast, have not produced new flags within the period under research and were not ready to release the old flags for discussion.
2. Some custodians were not able to give the exact dates of some of the *Asafo* flags making it difficult to be captured for discussion. The above limitations affected the number of flags selected for discussion.

## 1.8 Definition of Terms

*Asafo*: A traditional military organisation usually found among the *Fante* communities.

Shrine: Any object which is inhabited by spirits.

Custodians: All persons who are in charge of handling and keeping of *Asafo* art forms

Socio-cultural significance: How an object affects the general life style of group of people.

Canton: A division in a flag; usually located at the corners in the flag.

Monument: A memorial objects use to commemorate the achievement of a person's contribution to the society. (*Asafo* flag)

Sister Company: portion of lineage which was left in the cause of migration and is still regarded as part of the mother group. (*Nkwaadom*)

## **1.9 Importance of the Study**

1. The result of the research will serve as a means of preserving the culture of the people of Cape Coast and other *Asafo* companies.
2. Again it will help to educate people in Ghana and the entire world on the rich culture of the *Fante*.
3. Published results of the study in international journal may attract tourist which will eventually earn the country foreign exchange and may even create jobs such as tour guides, gift shop operations, hospitality etc., for some of the indigenes.
4. The result will also serve as source of reference material for researchers such as art historians, ethnologist, art educators, and geographers who will undertake further studies on *Asafo* flags.

## **1.10: Organization of the Rest of Text**

Chapter One gives the background to the study of the research. Chapter Two makes a critical review of literature related to the works in the area of *Asafo* companies, the *Asafo* flags and their significance. Chapter Three is devoted to the research design, whereas Chapter Four discusses the observations and analysis of the flags observed. Chapter Five focuses on summary, conclusion and recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.0 Overview

The chapter deals with a review of literature relating to documentation, history of flags, the structure of *Asafo* companies, the history of *Asafo* flags and their Socio-cultural significance. The reviews help to inform and direct the researcher towards the goal of the thesis. It also provided the researcher with an in-depth knowledge about the materials which are found in existing literature in order to know the vacuum to be filled.

#### 2.1 Documentation

The Librarians Glossary and Reference Book compiled by Harnod (1977) as cited in Adu Agyem, (1998) spelt out a series of definition of documentation but the ones which are most related to this research have been quoted below. Thus:

“The science of collecting, storing and organizing recorded informational materials or documents for optimum access”.

“The science of ordered presentation and preservation of knowledge serving to render their content available for rapid reference and correlation”.

“The procedure by which the accumulated store of learning is made available for further advancement of knowledge”.

“Collection and conservation, classification and selection, dissemination and utilization of all information”.

“The art of facilitating the use of recorded specialized knowledge through its preservation, publication, dissemination, storage, subject analysis organization and retrieval”.

Bradford (1953), as cited in Adu Agyem (1998) defines documentation in his introduction as “the process of collecting and subject classification of all records of new observations and making them available at need to the discoverer of the mentor”. He points out that without documentation the recorded observations are merely scattered items separately of little use which get buried in the great mass of scientific literature, like needles in haystack. Bradford’s definition and the in-depth explanation of documentation are very important to this research in the sense that, it is easy to have access to documented information if it can be located and identified. This is just what is deficient in Ghana. Accurately documented information in the arts and culture in Ghana therefore helps to unlock hidden knowledge and accelerate intellectual, artistic as well as cultural development.

On the nature and purpose of documentation, Bradford asserts that it contributes towards the progress of society since advancement depends largely on the accessibility of recorded information. He therefore considers documentation as a special aspect of the art of librarianship, which needs special study. While the wide subject of librarianship is concerned with every aspect of the treatment of books, the documentalist makes available the original information that has been recorded in articles, periodicals, pamphlets, reports and so on. He agrees that although “knowledge is power” yet there is considerable

percentage of accumulated knowledge in all spheres of human endeavours, which is unfortunately lying dormant and untapped. He makes it clear that there might be some valuable information in existence, only if one knows where to find it. Therefore, there is the need to assemble all the facts and sort them out according to their special areas so that one could find out instantly, whenever one wants to study.

### **2.1.1 Computerized Documentation**

Shera (1966), as cited in Adu Agyem (1998) again discusses the new technique in documentation and librarianship which have been made possible by the introduction of computers in processing the art of documentation. He writes at length on the scope of limitations of documentation; effect of machines and method of organization of knowledge. He stresses the importance of the use of machines especially, computer in documentation and librarianship. However, he cautions against pretension that where equipment turns an activity into something else just to fall into an all-too common hearsay that men are made to serve machines. But we must also not make mistakes in thinking that what was good enough in the 19<sup>th</sup> century will serve today. According to him the term “documentation” is not of recent origin, rather its attempt to define it precisely has been unsuccessful. Shera notices that it has been described in such a vague term as “a process by which are brought together classified and distributed documents of all kinds of all the areas of human activity”, a view in which Paul Otlet, a pioneer documentalist also shared.

Documentation therefore is to be considered as an essential part of present-day system of graphic communication within the world of scholarship, an active device to expedite the flow of recorded information within various groups of professionals. Shera makes a point by stating that information is a great national asset to be considered as jealously as forest, water, and rich top soil of the productive earth. This point is imperative to the study because without the proper documentation, preservation and protection of information on Ghanaian arts and culture, especially for the development of education, posterity will misplace a national asset in those areas in the nearest outlook. It is therefore important that attention is given to documentation of Ghanaian art forms as a means of preserving our cultural values.

## **2.2 History of Flags**

This section traces the history of flags and how it has been used through the ancient times in some countries. It tries to identify with considerations leading to the production of some flags as well as modern use of flags.

Flag is defined as "...a light piece of cloth, usually rectangular in shape, but varying in size, color, and design, and intended for use as an emblem or as a kind of signaling device" (Microsoft Encarta, 2008). Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia 2008 also defines flag as "a piece of fabric often flown from a pole or mast, generally used symbolically for signaling or identification. It is most commonly used to symbolize a country". The history of flags dates back more than 4,000 years. Ancient flags, known as "vexilloids" meaning "guide," were metal or wooden poles that featured a unique carving at the top of

the pole. The first known metal flag came from Iran and dates back to 3,000 BC. The first flags were used to assist military coordination on battlefields, and flags have since evolved into a general tool for rudimentary signaling and identification, it was especially used in environments where communication is similarly challenging (Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia, 2008).

Jaume, (1998), states in his article that flags have been used as symbols of tribal, national, and military identity since ancient times. The first flags were probably used by the ancient Chinese and Indians. It is recorded that a white flag was carried in front of the founder of the Zhou (Chou) dynasty (1045?-256 BC). In ancient India, flags were carried on chariots and elephants. Both Chinese and Indian flags may have developed from the streamers attached by the ancient Egyptians to poles crowned with symbolic figures.

Frequent mention of flags is made in the Bible. Numbers 2: 2 states: "The people of Israel shall encamp each by his own standard, with the ensigns of their fathers' houses." Other peoples of antiquity, notably the Greeks and Romans, also used flags. The early inhabitants of North and South America used such rudimentary standards as poles fledged with feathers.

The American flag has also changed designs more than any other flag in the world. The first flag, called the Grand Union, was first flown at the headquarters of the Continent Army on January 1, 1776. Betsy Ross, a seamstress, is said to have contributed to this design. The first national flag of modern Egypt was established by a Royal Decree in 1923 when Egypt gained conditional independence from Great Britain in 1922. The

colour was green with a white crescent and three stars in the middle.

According to Vieta (2000), Mrs Theodosia Salome Okoh, the designer of Ghana flag made thoughtful consideration of the geographical location and abundance of mineral on our land as well as the history and the hope for black Africa of emancipation and unity in the struggle against colonialism, came out with the tricolour Red, Gold and Green background stripes bearing the five pointed star in the centre of the gold stripe.

Today, countries, organizations and institutions in the world have flags. As governments change, so do their flags. Every state in the United States as well as countries on the African continent has flags. Others include The United Nations, universities, financial institutions, schools, brigade, and scout. Flags are generally used to give people information and also for symbols and signals. For example, when flags are carried in battle they could distinguish friends from the enemy. The five circles of the Olympic flag represent the coming together of people from five continents in friendly competition. Peace is the message of the olive branches cradling the world in the flag of the United Nations. Some people, like a king or queen, have their very own personal flag. Sometimes it flies over building where they are staying and is sometimes hoisted on their car to show their social class. Politically, flags are usually used by political parties to indicate their presence in a particular place. In the beaches of Ghana and other parts of the world a pair of red/yellow flags is used to mark the limits of the bathing area on a beach. Flags are also used in sports as assistant referees in soccer carry small flags along

the touch lines raising the flag to indicate an offside offence. In motorcar racing, flags are used to communicate with drivers.

In conclusion, flags have been used since the days of old to serve as identification and to show social class. The production has been grafted from careful considerations to meet the needs and aspirations of a society. Created flags undergo changes while new ones continue to be made by individuals, groups and nations with their significance. It is therefore important that proper documentation of such flags is made in order to maintain the original content which the flags represent.

### **2.3 History and Structure of *Asafo* Companies**

*Asafo* companies originated several centuries ago among the *Akan* peoples of southern Ghana as military organizations. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century accounts as cited by Labi (2001) by Muller (1662-1699) and later, writers such as Ellis (1887), Brown (1929), and Annobil and Ekuban (1952) support these early observations and argue that *Asafo* is an ancient tradition among the *Fante*.

Aggrey (1978) explains three views of school of thought about the origin of the name *Asafo*.

The first '*Asefo*' means colleagues. Second thought '*Asawfo*' means dancers. Adler and Barnard, share the same opinion on the third '*Asafo*' meaning warriors.

He concludes that from the activities of the *Asafo* companies the view of third school of thought outweigh the others. Adler and Barnard (1993: 8), adds that

Although these warrior groups are active throughout the *Akan* area, it is the *Fante* tribe, inhabiting the coastal region of Ghana that has developed a sophisticated and expressive community with a social and political organization based on martial principles and elaborate traditions of visual arts.

Depending on historical exigencies, a town may have several *Asafo* companies, each with its own ward. For example, *Anomabo*, *Asebu* and Cape Coast have 7 *Asafo* companies each; Komenda has 5, Shama 4, Winneba 2, *Kormantse* 2 and *Abandze* 1. Even though the *Asafo*, in the past had as its primary role to defend the state, it did perform other social, religious and political functions. According to Labi (2001) *Fante Asafo* have become socio-political entities involved in enstoolment and destoolment of chiefs, and for the elaboration of festivals. This assertion is also made by an article in (<http://www.ghanaexpeditions.com/regions/highlightdetail.asp?id=1&rdid=148>) where Cape Coast *Asafo* Companies supported the *Oman* (the people) in a bloody revolution on Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> January 1856 to destool Chief Kofi Amissa.

Turkson (1976), Amoako and Attah site some of the festivals which are graced by the *Asafo* companies as '*Fetu Afahye*' of Cape Coast, '*Aboakyir*' of Winneba, '*Akomase*' for Ewutu and Apam. Other social services such as a search party when one is lost or drowns in a river or sea, public sanitation, maintain public trails, foot paths and bridges. Also construction of public project such as school, chapels, recreational centres, clinics, feeder roads or repair of existing structures and are sometimes organized to contribute money towards a community project.

DeGraft Johnson (1932) a native of Cape Coast as cited by Turkson (1976) commented that the *Asafo* in normal times may be called upon without any previous notice to enter the forest or wood in order to capture a murderer or a highway robber or to search for a would-be suicider, or to hunt and kill any wild ravaging animal which has become a menace to the community.

Turkson (1976) adds that the *Asafo* companies also engage in competitions during festivals. An example is the *Bakatue* of Cape Coast as part of the activities marking the *Oguaa Fetu Afahye*. Adler and Barnard (1993) further indicate that “community entertainment such as procession, drumming, singing and dancing at special events fall within their domain”.

*Asafo* Company as a cultural entity would not be complete without artistic materials. Aggrey (1998) and Edusei (1981), illustrate and write on *Asafo* artistic materials use in their numerous activities as drums of different kinds, rattle, double and three in one gong, axe, carve sticks, bell, dance flags, banners, masquerade, shrines, guns, post, different colours of headgears, uniforms, sculptures, horns and other musical instruments. Adler and Barnard (1993) and Edusei (1981) adds that, other European military traditions were adopted by the *Asafo*, including musketry salutes, marching in procession, the use of distinctive described by a number, a special name, and its town of domicile. For example, No.6 Company, *Kyirem* of Anomabu, or No.5 company *Bromfumba* {white man’s children} of Cape Coast. Adler and Bernard further states that one’s membership in an *Asafo* company was determined by one’s father’s lineages. These groups are often the

basis of town wards, as a company's members tend to reside in a particular area, which they regard as an exclusive zone. Every able-bodied person was expected to serve a military duty when called to action. While among the Asante, women did not usually go to the war front, the rare case of Yaa Asantewa of Ejisu who led the Asante army against the British in the Yaa Asantewaa War of 1900, Fante had women who were war captains. Turkson (1976) contended that a woman at Winneba once led an *Asafo* company successfully to war. He further indicated that women are selected when there is no male to succeed a deceased father or have contributed towards the welfare of the *Asafo*.

The typical *Asafo* Company in a *Fante* township, according to Aggrey (1978), Edusei (1981), and Turkson (1976) has leadership roles to play in the community. “*Tufohene*” is the military advisor to the chief of the township. Next in line is the “*Asafobaatan*” the advisor. “*Supi*” was the commanding officer, while the divisional captain within a company was called the “*Safohene*” (for the male) or “*Asafoakyere*” (for the female). Other ranks in the *Asafo* were the “*Asafokomfo*” (the priest), “*Okyerema*” — head of the “*Akyeremafo*” (the drummers), “*Frankaatunyi*” (flag bearer), “*Sekanbonyi*” (sword maker), “*Okyeame*” (spokesperson or linguist), “*Abrafoo*” (police officers) and “*Adumfoo*” (executioners).

#### **2.4 History of *Asafo* Flags**

Although the exact origins of *Asafo* flags are unclear, there are reports of their use dating back to the early 18th Century. Aggrey (1998) and Edusei (1981), agree that there are two types of flag the first been smaller and is usually fixed on a stick which the flag

bearer holds to dance. The other, been broad and long and it is displayed on a post or shrine wall. It is locally called “*Nsunsuansu*” or “*Twuwii*”.

Most flags of the *Asafo* companies can easily be handled by a flag-dancer (*Frankaatunyi* or *Frankaakitsanyi*) during a festival or a ceremony with a spectacular dance performance. Very few flags are so big that they have to be escorted by many men or to be presented at a company post (*Aban* or *Posuban*). (Jarig Bakker, 04 Jan 2000).

Salm and Falola (2002) writing to describe Winneba Aboakyir festival stated that “ all companies have their own unique colours and flags that differentiates them from one another” Turkson (1976), further outlines the *Asafo* companies of Cape Coast, their respective colours and gods as:

<u>Asafo</u>	<u>Colours</u>	<u>gods</u>
1. Bentsir	Red and Black	Nana Otu
2. Anafo	Black and White	Dabor
3. Ntsin	Green	Gyambi
4. Nkum	Gold	Akyen Kweku
5. Borofomba	Varied	Gyebi
6. Akrampa	Violet	Kweku Wobir
7. Amanful	Blue and Green	Gura

The above submission makes it clear that each *Asafo* company of any community has a god for which rituals are performed and an identified colour. Images embroidered in the

flags expressing ideal, feelings and emotions have been a major cause of conflict between *Asafo* companies leading to political instability among the *Fantes*. The Europeans on arrival exploited the political instability and adopted divide-and-rule tactics to dominate the coastal area.

Edusei (1981) outlines some of the causes of riot between *Asafo* companies as insult and abusive songs that extol the bravery of the *Asafo* while ridiculing competing companies. A rival's attempts to prevent the singing of the song often led to conflict. The competitor may also decide to create its own flag, using imagery that "talks back." An attempt to pay back will result to fighting.

A symbol of a company may be adopted by another company without due notification. A rival's attempts to prevent the display of the symbol often lead to conflict. A clash may arise when one company tries to show superiority over the other while the rival tries to resist. . In that situation, intra-town *Asafo* rivalry complicates the usual competition with *Asafo* from other towns. Apart from the historical records of rifts between *Asafo* companies, [www.myjoyonline](http://www.myjoyonline) reports of nine people wounded and two government vehicles having their windscreens and driving mirrors damaged following a clash between the two *Asafo* Companies – “*Tuafo*” Number One and “*Dentsifo*” Number Two - involved in the celebration of the 2009 *Aboakyer* festival in Winneba.

Adler and Barnard shares the same opinion with Edusei on some series of measures that has been taken to curb this menace as; Cape Coast, beginning in the 1860s, all companies

were ordered to submit their flags to the Colonial Governor for his approval and to register the approved design and colours with his secretary. The display of unregistered flags was punishable by law. Even today a new flag must be approved by the paramount chief, the general of the combined companies and the *Asafo* elders, and then paraded before all the other companies in the area to make sure that no one is offended. The *Asafo* flag symbols are pregnant with meaning by allusions to historical accounts, myths, rituals, sacred places, and prominent persons. The colours in the flags are related to the respective colours of the *Asafo* Companies without much bearing to *Akan* traditional colour symbolism as enumerated by Sarpong (1974:103)

Gold or yellow among the *Akan*, *Ga* and *Ewe* especially, represents royalty, continuous life prosperity, warmth, glory, maturity, prime of life, and the presence of God. White represents purity, virtue, virginity, joy and victory, and green, newness, fertility, vitality, and primness in growth. The Black symbolizes vice, deep feelings of melancholy, the devil, death and their power over life, and old age. Red is used on occasions of melancholy, death of a relative, wars, national anger or crisis, violence or sudden calamity. Blue is the colour for love and female tenderness. The combination of red and yellow colours stands for life and its power over sickness. Green combined with white stands for bountiful harvest.

At special occasions like feasts and funerals the flags were showed and special dances were executed with it. The flag is also shown during the commissioning of a new or remodelled shrine, or on an important anniversary of its original construction. Town, regional and national events such as the enstoolment of chiefs, the annual Yam Festival, *Fetu Afahye* and state holidays, are all celebrated with a show of *Asafo* flags

Labi (2001) further in his article, *A Discourse between Rivals*, states:

Each company designs its own flag, which is to express its own power and might and, quite often, the inferiority of the adversary. When a tailor is

commissioned, he draws on his imaginative powers, his ability to represent images in his environment, and his knowledge of the values and meanings attached to them. In other cases he may copy an example provided by the *Asafo* or follow the company's explanation or description.

Though leadership position can be taken by women, the flag bearership (*frankaatunyi*) is reserved for males. Labi adds that as religious works used to venerate deceased leaders, flags may not be sewn or used by women.

Adler and Barnard (1993) and Edusei (1981) share the view that the flag is a cloth of solid colour that is about three feet by five feet in dimensions. The symbols on the flag are applied and occasionally embroidered. Solid blocks of colour predominate, with as many as fifteen different colours used on a single flag. Each side of the flag shows a mirror image; as a result, the depiction of the company number tends to be confused on one face of the flag or the other. On most flags, all but the hoist side is decorated with borders of repeating triangular and rectangular geometric patterns of alternating colours, and a white cloth fringe is added.

In the selection of old flags, the British Union Jack (or a variation of it is found in the canton, after independence in March 1957, the Ghanaian tricolour replaced the colonial symbol. The transition provides a useful approximate dating mark). It is clear, however, that *Asafo* companies continued, and continue to this day, to commission flags complete with the British flag to be made for use as direct copies of worn-out old examples.

Because the flags are sacred, there is a protocol surrounding their storage, display, and interpretation. They are usually folded and kept in boxes or sacks in the bedrooms of flag dancers or company elders. *Asafo* members are reluctant to show them to outsiders. They will bring them out only on the instructions of the *Supi* (company head) or other elders, and a libation poured to the ancestors.

Labi (2001), Adler and Barnard (1993) and Edusei (1981) are with the same opinion on the commissioning of new flags. For installation, a *Safohene* must order a flag whose theme usually reflects his ability to make a contribution to the collective heritage of the company. It may also be meant to replace an old flag. It may incorporate images of both past and current *Asafo* leaders. When a leader dies, the flags that they use or commission or that bears their image become memorial objects and a means of soliciting the deceased's assistance in the company's activities. The *Asafo* as a group may also order new flags to commemorate special occasions. Individual supporters may also commission one as a gift to a company. The content must adhere to the themes established by the *Asafo* Company.

Adler and Barnard try to categorize the themes of *Asafo* flags into three. These deliberately provocative images fall into three categories. Important historical events such as famous company victory in battles. The second category simply identifies the company with an animal, mythological or European image of power and strength. The final category is certainly the largest and most complex, and uses a wide variety of proverbs to provoke and challenge with taunts, boasts and threats. Images in the *Asafo*

flags are natural and artificial objects. Natural objects include man, animals, tree, sea, mountains and many others. Artificial objects range from local items to foreign and may include ship, gun, train, car among others. It should be noted that *Asafo* flag imagery may have more than one interpretation depending on the viewer's perception.

In conclusion, the review of related literature has revealed that flags are statute symbols and represent a country's beliefs, works and serves as ancestral property which are used from generations to generations and may usually have special historical attachments by the people who own them. Some flags may be in a form of a plaque and others may not. However its form and fashion may be, it usually depicts beliefs and the cultural practices of the people, organization, institution, or country which the flag stands for.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Overview

The chapter discusses the various methods employed in the research. The researcher discussed the research design used, the population, sampling techniques employed in the research, the tools for data collection and data collection procedure.

#### 3.1 Research Design

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) state that “research design provides the general structure or procedure the researcher follows, the data the researcher collects and the data analysis the researcher conducts”. To be able to have data about the significance of the *Asafo* flags, the researcher needed to make personal contact with the custodians and the *Asafo* members. The study employed the qualitative research method with interviews, observations, recording, description, analysis and interpretation of the selected *Asafo* flags produced since the year 2000 by the Cape Coast *Asafo* Companies. The *Asafo* companies are located along the coast and the hinterlands. The researcher visited the selected locality several times and also spent days to book appointment with some leaders and custodians of the *Asafo* flags where they were met on appointed dates for discussion and interviews. Through the discussions, many flags were brought out of which the new ones were selected with their socio-cultural significance explained. The data collected were in a form of picture, field notes and recordings of interview.

### **3.2 Library Research**

The libraries played significant role and served as one of the reliable source of information to the researcher with regards to soliciting for the related literature. This helped to facilitate the researcher's work of looking for information. The following libraries were visited to source for information:

1. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Libraries
2. University of Cape Coast libraries
3. Central Regional Archives
4. The internet.

The data were assembled, analyzed, interpreted and conclusions drawn.

### **3.3 Population for the study**

The research which was conducted in Cape Coast, the administrative capital of Central Region, targets the seven *Asafo* companies along the coast and their allies in the hinterlands. Out of the seven companies, three of them Anafo, Ntsin and Nkum were selected because they had flags commissioned from the year 2000 to date. Sampling was done to get the accessible population for the research.

**Table 1: Cape Coast *Asafo* and the location of their sister companies in the hinterlands**

Name	Number	Location of Sister Companies
Bentsir	1	Apewosika, Amamoma, Ekon, Kwesitu,
Anafo	2	Moree, Brebea.
Ntsin	3	Abura, Ebubonko, Kwaprow Siwdu, Pedu, Mempeasem
Nkum	4	Efutu, , Akotokyir
Brofomba	5	-
Akrampa	6	-
Amanful	7	Nkamfoa

### 3.4 Sampling Technique

Frankel and Wallen, (1996) refers sampling to any group of people from which information is obtained. They further categorize purposive sampling into two. First category being those that the researcher believes to be representatives of the population while the second category being those who possess the necessary information about the population. From the above submission, purposive sampling was used to solicit data for the research. The sample population was the *Asafo* leaders (*supis*), *Asafohene*, the custodians of the *Asafo* flags and some members of the companies making up the accessible population. In all 4 chiefs, 4 *Supis*, 10 *Asafohene*, 32, custodians and 46 *Asafo* members making 96 from the selected companies form the accessible population. The following reasons accounts for the selection of the sample:

1. The *Asafo* leaders are the cultural custodians of the *Asafo* Company and might have a say and control in the commissioning of the *Asafo* flags. They would therefore be in a better position to give accurate and reliable information.
2. The custodians and *Asafohene* of the flags may be familiar with the history behind the flags in his possession and may give clear accounts of a particular flag.
3. The members of the *Asafo* Companies will be able to give their perception about the socio-cultural significance of the *Asafo* flag.

### **3.5 Research Instruments**

Considering the nature of the study and data required, interviews, questionnaires and observations were combined and found to be the most suitable for the purpose of triangulation. Triangulation as stated by Leedy and Ormrod (2005) explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour and compare multiple sources of data by studying it from more than one standpoint. It involves not only the selection or designing of the instruments but also the conditions under which the instrument will be administered.

#### **3.5.1 Interviews**

Interviews according to McMillan and Schumacher (1993) consist of direct verbal interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Leedy and Ormrod explain that

interviews in qualitative study are basically open-ended or semi structured which is more flexible and yields even unplanned information.

For oral response, interview guides were used. They were flexible, that is, few restrictions were placed on the respondent's answers. Though they were prepared in English, it was translated in Fante (local dialect) for the benefit of the respondents. Even if pre-planned questions were asked, the queries were changed to suit the situation. During the earlier visits, it was also found that most of the interviewee concern could neither speak nor understand English language well. These made it necessary to adopt the local language (*Fante*) for the personal interview which they were comfortable with. In the hinterland, the chiefs delegate the power to elders in charge of the *Asafo* flags. Sometimes, elders also redirect the researcher to custodians of the flags who would be in a position to offer or add more information.

### **3.5.2 Observation**

Observation is one of the important tools for collecting data in qualitative research. It forms a greater proportion of the data collected on the *Asafo* flags. McMillian and Schumacher (1993) define observation as a particular kind of data gathering tool in which the researcher observes visually and by auditory some phenomenon and systematically records the resulting observation. Critical observation of the flags was done especially the ones produced within the period under research. For better description and analysis digital capturing of the flags and voice recordings of interviews was made.

### **3.6 Validation of Instruments**

Questionnaires were prepared based on the information needed. It was read through by the researcher and given to colleague researchers to read through. Copies were later sent to the supervisor for vetting where corrections and suggestions were made.

### **3.7 Administration of instruments**

Because of the disperse nature of the settlement of *Asafo* companies in Cape Coast, the researcher visited the *Asafo* leaders and booked appointment for interview. After briefing them of the purpose and importance of the research, some demanded specific sums of money, whilst others willingly accepted to be interviewed for a token. The questions on the interview guide were used to direct the flow of discussion on the significance of the *Asafo* flags. About ten trips were made to Cape Coast with a minimum of two visits each to the company leaders.

### **3.9: Primary and Secondary Data**

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) identify two main sources of data: Primary and secondary. The former being the valid and illuminating truth from the right source while the latter consists of the truth derived not from the truth itself, but from the primary source.

Written notes, voice recordings, digital capturing of images and video recording were used to gather primary data. The voice recorder was extensively used to record interviews whilst notes were made where necessary. Digital camera was used to capture the images of the flags during interviews. The video camera was used to record the 2009 *Oguaa Fetu Afahye* with more emphasis on the artistic aspects of the festival in general and display of

the flags in particular. It was also used to record the flag festival a week after the *Oguaa Fetu Afahye*. Secondary data were mostly collected from documentary sources such as books, thesis, journals and internet.

### **3.9 Data Collecting Procedures**

The researcher visited the custodians of the *Asafo* Flags and briefed them on what was expected. This gave the ample time to look for the flags and prepare them for the interview. It afforded them enough time to adequately inform those who were well vested in the issues of the flags. An average of four leaders met the researcher at a time with the flags usually in a sack. One person believed to be well informed on the significance of the flags led the discussion. The rest sometimes intervened when there was an omission, deviation or exaggeration of the presentation. Before the observation the researcher made a list of all the vital details from the flags and used this as a guide to assist him in the data collection.

### **3.10 Data analysis plan**

The data collected in the form of field notes, official records and pictures have been assembled, analyzed, interpreted, conclusions drawn and recommendations made in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Overview

This chapter presents a discussion of findings made by the researcher. It examines the flags as observed by the researcher and finally, their socio-cultural significance.

#### 4.1 General discussion of the *Asafo* flags observed

This section discusses the *Asafo* flags commissioned since the year 2000. It brings out the following in the cause of discussion: dimensions, arrangement of text, images and colours and changes observed in the flags under research as against the former flags. The materials used were basically cotton fabrics. The durability property of cotton influenced its choice by many as a suitable material for posterity. This assertion is supported by Adu-Akwaboa (1994) that “cotton has achieved this popularity because it has a combination of desirable properties which favour a great number of people who live in warm and sub-tropical climates”.

Unlike other institutional flags which may be square, triangular and even circle, the flags of the Cape Coast *Asafo* Companies are of rectangular. This makes it facilitate the fixing of the stick to the flag and be easily handled during display. The average dimension of the flags is about 1 metre by 1.6 metres. This suggests that the tailors who sew the flags took a clue from the old flags.

The symbols of the flag are of basic geometrical shapes, planes, and texture with its own aesthetic appeal. Conscious effort was made by the flag producers in the selection of colours of fabrics to produce the flags towing the line of the colours of the respective *Asafo* Company. This is regulated by a guide stating colours and emblems to be used by each of the Cape Coast *Asafo* Companies. The tailors also follow the instructions and specifications given by the people commissioning the Flag. This is to avoid conflict among *Asafo* companies which has been the cause of blood shed in the days of old.

Whiles some flags have few simple coloured fabrics forming the flags, others have variety of colours balanced and proportionally arranged on a background to visually communicate a message as in plates 7 and 8. This is perhaps to show the ingenuity of the local artisan and also to bring uniqueness in the production of Cape Coast *Asafo* flags. The symbols in the Cape Coast *Asafo* flags are impregnated with historical, traditional, moral values, et cetera and depending on a viewer's perspective, the symbols may be interpreted in several ways to suit a specific situation. The images in most flags are a blend of natural and artificial as well as traditional and foreign symbols. Techniques used were appliqué where motifs were cut from different coloured fabrics, pasted and machine sewn in either embroidery or machine stitches to the background as opposed to hand sewing of the flags produced during the pre-colonial days, presumably being the highest technique during the time of executing that job. The embroidered images look real with less emphasis on the choice of colour as in plates 4 and 8. (white human being and multi coloured tree) The main aim is to communicate to the audience and not necessarily to produce a master piece.

Dynamism of culture has woven itself into art forms of Cape Coast *Asafo* flags. Some of the flags portray the introduction of stencil and screen printing techniques for creating both text and images (plate 6). This may be admired by a fine artist and art fans because of its fine finish but might not be appreciated by an indigenous *Fantse* since it may seem deviation from the traditional way of producing the flags. It suggests the gradual adoption of modern technology into the production of *Asafo* insignia.

New flags produced within the period of research reveal that, flags produced during the colonial era as well as the ones after independence were significantly based on important historical events such as victory in battles and proverbs to provoke and challenge opponents resulting in confrontations. This was stated by Adler and Barnard in their third category of *Asafo* flags as “The final category is certainly the largest and most complex, and uses a wide variety of proverbs to provoke and challenge with taunts, boasts and threats”.

The recent ones under review have now taken a different direction with respect to their significance. All the flag observed advocate positive moral values, peace and goes on to advice both young and old to strive for excellence. This suggests a new focus of the current generation of the *Asafo* Companies in particular at striving to achieve peace in Cape Coast.

The Cape Coast *Asafo* flags were observed by the researcher to have undergone transformation in the use of national symbols. Whiles the flags created during the

colonial era witnessed the inclusion of British flag in the canton of the *Asafo* flags, Ghana's flag was included in the post independence *Asafo* flags produced. Some of the recent flags observed show total absence of a national flags as part of the symbol (plates 4, 5 and 6). Other *Asafo* flags also show some flags at the canton which are neither a national flag nor the flag of the company (plates 5 and 9). These suggest that there is a gradual breakthrough of monotony in the production of *Asafo* flags to bring variation. It also suggests that there is no fast rule governing the inclusion of national symbols into the flags.

The designs, motifs, colours of the fabrics as well as text of Cape Coast *Asafo* flags portray the beliefs, history and social lives of the people. All the flags are dominated with the colours of the respective *Asafo* Companies. Whiles some appear with both images and inscriptions, others come without any text (plate 7). This is to keep some myths enshrined in them confidential from an ordinary person, a typical of African culture. It might also mean to test the wisdom and ability of the individual to deduce different meanings from images since one *Asafo* flag may have more than one meaning depending on one's perspective. In the nutshell, the flags portray fantastic psychological and aesthetic appeal to both *Asafo* members and the general public.

#### **4.2 Socio-cultural significance of the flags identified**

The interviews were conducted within Cape Coast especially along the coast where the indigenes are mostly found and towns where the sister companies are located. A lot of positive responses were given about the significance of the *Asafo* flags during the

interviews by the leadership and some members of the *Asafo* companies. This was to solicit their views on how they uphold the history and regard the *Asafo* flags as part of their culture. The following are the summary of questions asked in the indigenous coastal areas and *Asafo* communities in the hinterlands.

- How do you see/cherish the *Asafo* Flag as an integral part of your culture?
- How do the images /symbols in the Flags affect your life as indigenous members of the society?
- How do the *Asafo* flags affect life socially?
- What is the history behind the commissioning of the *Asafo* flags?
- What role do the flags play in the religious activities of the *Asafo* companies?
- What were some of the myths/taboo that surrounded the flags?
- What moral lessons does one learn from the *Asafo* flags?

**Table 2 : The outcome of the interview**

	Total Respondents	Respondents who gave Social significance of <i>Asafo</i> flags	Respondents who gave Historical significance of <i>Asafo</i> flags	Respondents who gave Religious significance of <i>Asafo</i> flags	Respondents who gave Moral significance of <i>Asafo</i> flags
Chiefs	4	4 ( 100% )	4 ( 100% )	4 (100%)	4 ( 100% )
<i>Supi</i>	4	4 ( 100% )	4 ( 100% )	4 ( 100% )	4 ( 100% )
<i>Asafohene</i>	10	9 (90%)	10 ( 100% )	10 ( 100% )	8 (80%)
Custodians of <i>Asafo</i> Flags	32	28 (88%)	32 ( 100% )	32 (100%)	25 (78%)
<i>Asafo</i> Members	46	38 (83%)	44 (94%)	42 (91%)	30 (65%)
Section of the public	52	22 (42%)	42 (81%)	50 (96%)	32 ( 62% )
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>148 (100%)</b>	<b>105 ( 71% )</b>	<b>136 ( 92% )</b>	<b>140 ( 95% )</b>	<b>103 (70%)</b>

#### 4.2.1 Analysis of table 2

From the table 2, 4 Chiefs, 4 Supis, 10 Asafohene, 32 custodians of the *Asafo* flags and 46 *Asafo* members totalling 96 respondents were interviewed. The table indicates that out of the 4 chiefs interviewed, all the 4 representing 100% were able to give the social, historic, religious and moral significance of the *Asafo* flags. This is not limited to chiefs alone, all the 4 Supis who granted audience to an interview representing 100% contributed immensely to the significance stated above. This means that the Chiefs and the *Supis* interviewed are well versed in the significance of the *Asafo* flags. This will go a long way to affect other members in the *Asafo* companies since their position influences decisions in their communities.

Out of the ten (10) *Asafohene* who granted audience to the interview, nine (9) respondents forming 90% of the total respondents gave the social significance, all the ten representing 100% of the respondents, gave the historical and religious significance while 80% gave the moral significance. This means that all the *Asafohene* interviewed are familiar with historical and religious significance of the *Asafo* flags.

As shown in table 2, out of the 46 *Asafo* members interviewed 38 representing 83% could give social significance of *Asafo* flags. Forty-four (44) members representing 94% were able to elaborate on the historical significance of the *Asafo* flags. While 92 respondents representing 96% of the total respondents were able to give information on the religious significance, 71 respondents representing 74% gave information based on the moral significance of the *Asafo* flags. This means that, though greater percentages of the *Asafo*

members are knowledgeable in the socio- cultural significance of the flags not much education have being giving on the moral significance of the *Asafo* flags. If a step is not taken to document the socio-cultural significance of the *Asafo* flags, the rich values enshrined in them will fade with time.

In table 2, out of the 52 from the public interviewed 22 representing 42% could give social significance of *Asafo* flags. Forty-two (42) public representing 81% were able to express their knowledge on the historical significance of the *Asafo* flags. Fifty (50) respondents representing 96% of the total respondents were able to give information on the religious significance, 32 respondents representing 62% gave information based on the moral significance of the *Asafo* flags. This means that, though greater percentages of the public are conversant in the religious significance of the flags not much expressed their knowledge on the moral significance of the *Asafo* flags. Steps should therefore be taken to sensitize the public on the social and moral significance of the Cape Coast *Asafo* flags.

One hundred and five (105) respondents representing 71% of the total number interviewed were able to give the social significance of *Asafo* flags. One hundred and thirty-six (136) out of the respondents representing 92% could give the historical significance of the *Asafo* flags. Out of the 148 respondents, 140 representing 95% contributed in favour of religious significance of the *Asafo* flags. One hundred and three (103) respondents representing 70% of the total respondents gave the moral significance of the *Asafo* flags. This means that greater percentage of the leadership and *Asafo*

members are well versed in the socio-cultural significance of the *Asafo* flags. It also means that there are some members who need to be educated on the significance of the flags. From the table, it can be deduced that a higher percentage of the respondents have idea on the historic and religious significance. However, among the four significant areas covered, morals, which form one of the ingredients for peaceful co-existence of a society, took 70% of its total respondents as compared to 71%, 92% and 95% for social, historical and religious significance respectively. This suggests that moral significance of the *Asafo* flags should be emphasized during social gatherings to promote good morals among the *Asafo* communities in particular and Cape Coast in general. In the nut shell, the leadership as well as the members of Cape Coast *Asafo* have shown high sense of knowledge in the socio-cultural significance of the *Asafo* flags in spite of the fact that some exhibited ignorance of the significance of the flags. The result of the interview informed the researcher to classify the discussion under the following: *Social, Historical, Religious, and Moral Values* of *Asafo* flags and discussed in the next sections.

#### **4.3 Social significance of Asafo Flags**

The role of the *Asafo* flag in the social lives of the people of Cape Coast cannot be over emphasized. In response to the social significance of the *Asafo* flag in an interview it was stated by one of the elders, Supi Minnah that the *Asafo* Flags had served and continue to serve as a unifying force in the social life of the people of Cape Coast. He added that:

*Whenever the Asafo members meet to discuss issues concerning the welfare of the society, the flag is positioned among them to signify the presence of their ancestors. With this, deliberations are done peacefully among members and whatever decision taken binds all.*

The researcher observed that such gatherings are usually associated with *Asafo* performances. They make music with the traditional instruments and sing *Asafo* songs where children, women and men of the company and sometimes from different companies dance in turns as in Plate 1.

This helps to promote peaceful co-existence where social interactions are initiated. Company members directly or indirectly learn about the images in the flags which are very important for the perpetuation of societies. A person may come to observe the flag display but may end up making friends or even meeting a life partner.



Plate 1. A flag bearer (*frankaatunyi*) of *Asafo* No 3 exhibiting skills in flag movement to the musical tunes from drummers to the enjoyment of the audience.  
*Source: Photograph by the researcher*

One significant social life among the Akans is funeral where last respect is shown to a departed soul. In an exclusive interview with Uncle Ekow Sakyi the longest serving flag bearer of Bantsir *Asafo*, he said:

*When a member of Asafo Company dies, information is sent to other sister companies (nkwaadom) in the surrounding villages inviting them to observe the final funeral rites. Here, the display of Asafo flags by members in their respective colours amid drumming and singing make it spectacular to watch.*

On such occasions the people within the community come together either to take part in the activity or to catch a glimpse of the *Asafo* flags which open way for social interaction. It helps the members in the community to identify themselves with their culture even as they come together.

Festivals have been another unifying force bringing citizens and non-citizens far and near together. Since the commencement of *Oguaa Fetu Afahye* in 1964 after a long break, one of the elements that have sustained its beauty till today is the *Asafo* Companies and their flag display. Facts gathered by the researcher in personal conversations indicate that people specifically travel to witness the *Asafo* companies and their flag display during festivals. The *Asafo* members appear in their best outfit which is sewn confidentially by their tailors in order to attract the best comments from the general public concerning the best dressed *Asafo* group as shown in Plate 2. The flag bearer (*frankaatunyi*) of a group also dresses in raffia skirt (sometimes coloured) or its equivalent fabric. The bearer dances with the flag displaying all the skills learnt from his mentor to the admiration of the public. Adler and Barnard describing the social role of *Asafo* flag in Akwanbo festival stated that: “Bearing their flags, the *Asafo* Company parade through the streets, to the river side, to the town shrine and the houses of the chiefs to demonstrate their allegiances”.

Sometimes two or three flag bearers meet during procession and spontaneous flag dance competition is initiated. At the durbar ground, time is allocated for flag display by the *Asafo* companies. Plate 3, shows a spectacular dance display by three flag bearers at the durbar grounds during the 2009 *Oguaa Fetu Afahye*. These go a long way to add colour to the festival. The indigenes as well as those who grace the occasion judge the success or otherwise of the festival to the role played partly by the *Asafo* flags. During such occasions, there is an increase in economic activities. The transport industry, hospitality and marketing of goods get to their peak. There are family reunions where indigenous citizens outside Cape Coast come together and settle disputes, present gifts to parents and also meet old friends.



Plate 2. A section of the *Bentsir* No 1 *Asafo* group adorned in their colourful outfit and dancing to attract comments from the general public.

*Source: Photograph by researcher during 2010 Oguaa Fetu Afahye.*



Plate 3. Three *Asafo* flag bearers (*frankaatufu*) in a spectacular flag display to entertain the audience during the 2009 *Oguaa Fetu Afahye*.

*Source: Photograph by researcher during 2010 Oguaa Fetu Afahye.*

#### **4.4 Historical significance of Asafo flags**

The maxim, if you know where you came from, you will know where you are going buttresses the fact that one's knowledge about his history is very important for the socio-cultural advancement of a society. The *Asafo* flags as an integral part of Cape Coast *Asafo* history have been handed down from generations till today. The flags of the *Asafo* companies have served and continue to serve as a source of historical reference for the indigenes in particular and the entire people of Cape Coast in general. Safohene Kwesi Gyafu in his submission stated that the flags can be compared with historic relics from any society world over. He added that "The *Asafo* flags are regarded by the indigenes as history books with the images serving as the inscriptions and photographs".

The researcher observed that during festivals and social gatherings where the flags are seen, the leaders explain the history behind the flags to the public. This has informed many about certain battles that took place, defeats suffered and successes achieved by their forefathers. Also, achievements by an individual or as a group are recorded in a form of images in the flags. Adler and Barnard (1993) categorizing *Asafo* Flags stated that “Important historical events, such as famous company victory in battle are depicted. Such images bolster company pride and also antagonize and intimidate the opposition”.

This supports the assertion that the flags have history enshrined in them. For example *Nkum* No 4 has a flag showing the image of castle to show that they were the original settlers of Cape Coast and gave the land for the construction of the Cape Coast Castle to the Portuguese. *Amanful* No 7 Company is represented by the image of whale ( *Bonso*) to show that the *Amanful* beach once washed ashore a whale ( the largest sea Animal and god of the sea). A sister company ( *Nkwaadom*) of *Asafo* No 3 company from *Ebubonko* produced the flag (plate 7) to portray the migration of the first settlers to their present abode.

In a response to an interview on how she perceive *Asafo* flags, Aunti Martha of Jackson Street, a seamstress by profession and once an active member of *Asafo* activities said:

*The Asafo flags are regarded as historic record comparable to the Bible. Each contains the historical records such as defeats, successes and achievements of generations. She added that; great men of old have been honoured with the flags capturing their achievements in the images.*

From this assertion it can be said that if all the *Asafo* flags of the seven companies of Cape Coast are to be carefully analysed and documented, a collection of history of all the *Asafo* companies could be obtained.

The flag also serve as memorial or monument for dead personalities who have played a significant role in the society. It reminds the people of the achievements and role played by some people within their society whenever they see the flags. For example, Plate 4 depicts a flag with inscription “*Anamon papa na wo hwε do ko fie*” which reminds the people of good works done by their great grand fathers. Plate 7 shows how a woman led her people to come and settle at their present place. This has become an inspirational object for the younger generation to aspire to higher heights. If such flags containing important histories like this are left without documentation, posterity will lose much of their history.

#### **4.5 Religious significance of Asafo flags**

According to Oxford English Dictionary, religion is the belief and worship of God or gods. In other words, religion is a particular system of faith and worship. The *Asafo* flag is believed to be a shrine which is inhabited by spirits. As observed by the researcher the flags are kept in sacks and kept in a room of a leader usually the *Asafokomfo* (priest) in the case of *Efutu, Kwaprow and Anafo*. Some are also kept in small rooms within the company post (*Posuban*) as in *Intsin* No. 4 Company. Such places are regarded as sacred. The priests of the respective *Asafo* groups perform rituals to the spirits of the flags when and where necessary. They are sometimes done indoors whilst others observe the ones done outside. Through observation religious ideas are passed on to the next generations.

Uncle Ekow Sakyi again recounted in his submission that the flag bearers undergo both spiritual and physical training to introduce them to the dos and don'ts of the flags and the skills in movement when displaying with the flag. This equips the flag bearers to be fully prepared to face the task ahead.

In African religion, shrines have taboos to be strictly observed, and *Asafo* flags are no exception. Kofi Mbir, a fisherman and member of Brofumba enumerated some of the taboos as:

*The flag is considered as a shrine and the menstrual flow of women has the tendency to render it powerless. Since one may not know by face if a woman is in her menses, the founders in their wisdom came up with this taboo to avert the wrath of the gods on the society and any consequence on the woman.*

This particular taboo is well known by about 95% of the members in the *Asafo* communities interviewed. Another reason gathered was that women don't lead men during battle and for that matter a woman cannot be a flag bearer. He cited that Yaa Asantewaa of Ejisu was among few females recorded in Akan history to have led men into war. He concluded that women can only touch during special occasions like festival to soliciting for funds to support the *Asafo* group. Mr. Francis Martin Samuel Adainoo went further to explain that the lame are traditionally classified as unclean in communities and are not supposed to touch the *Asafo* flag.

However, the religious significance of the *Asafo* flags have been frowned upon by many churches and are gradually getting down well with the teenagers and youth of *Asafo* Communities. Response during the interview revealed that teenagers of the indigenous

*Asafo* groups have once seen the *Asafo* flag and images but only few could say that it contains historical information. The few who knew that it contains historical information could not specifically relate their socio cultural significance to their daily lives.

Further probe to ascertain why the teenagers are handicapped in this area, Egya Essiwa, a group member of *Anafo* No. 2 company enumerated some other reason as:

*“Formerly, parents either attended Asafo meetings with their wards or force the children to attend by themselves. This informally introduced them to the group’s activities from infancy. Today such things are rarely heard of allowing the children to do their own thing. They grow up with little or no interest in the Asafo activities.”*

It is important to note that religious objects such as *Asafo* flags and other *Asafo* materials are outward expression of religious ideas and beliefs. It has helped to shape the religious activities of *Asafo* societies from generation to generation. Measures should be taken to sustain its existence.

#### **4.6 Moral significance of Asafo flags**

Under normal circumstances, *Safohene* who commissions *Asafo* flag is expected to be morally upright. He might have been a person with good moral behaviour in the society. He should have good organisational skill to mobilise his group. He should also be an industrious person who has excelled in life. This has helped many especially those who are aspiring to be *Safohene* as well as the members from that family to lead good moral lives to merit such honour.

The images in the Flags are symbolic to life issues. An example is the mansion in Plate 4 representing wealthy life of forefathers. This tells the sort of life led by forefathers which set the pace for the descendants to emulate. In order not to incur the wrath of the ancestors, all descendant of a particular lineage are reminded at least once a year when the flags are displayed to follow the morals of their forefathers. As explained by Okyeame Abaka of Efutu, the jack trap in Plate 9 is known for its dangerous characteristics though it is used for trapping games. This serves as guide in life that reminds people of dangerous elements which can end a person's life if care is not taken. Such elements may include drunkenness, womanising, stealing and dishonesty. Plate 7 depicts a woman who was believed to have led a group of people to settle at a place. Whenever the inhabitants see the images in the flag, it reminds them of the achievement of the woman. This has helped those who understand the meaning of the symbols to take inspiration from the flags. It has also helped to regulate the lives of people as they go about their daily activity with others. Members within the communities relate very well irrespective of their affiliated *Asafo* Company.

The names of the *Asafo* flags suggest moral lessons to the people in the communities. They serve as a guide that regulates the life style of the members in the communities. Before the flags are produced, a lot of thought and consideration concerning life issues are deliberated upon. The current flags obtained, for instance, give advice to people on certain pertinent issues in life. In Plate 6 (*Ankobe* *Asafo* Company) palm tree is providing a resting place for an elephant and dragon. In this case, the flag tells how the palm tree is important to all creatures. It admonishes all to lead moral life which is

beneficial to the society such as kindness, alms giving, and goodness among others. Again Safohene Ekow Mensah on the flag in Plate 5 (Opanyin *nntena fie ma asadua mfow*) said: “An elder should not sit for things to go bad in a community”. It is clear that elders and people in leadership positions should be fair and firm in discharging their duties. In discharging their duties they relate very well with their subordinates. One can achieve this when he is morally upright. Safohene Kweku Ata Payin explaining the flag he commissioned in 2009 see plate 4 said:

*Good morals is worth emulating I have therefore come to continue the good works which were began by our forefathers to teach the younger generation of the good moral lives led by their forefathers which led to the acquisition of good names and properties.*

The lessons from these flags help to put the people in a position to face issues in life with moral uprightness.

Most of the old *Asafo* flags were commissioned and music composed as a result of a mistake by a member of a rival company or the company itself. These flags and songs have once brought about confrontations. Such flags are usually kept from the public because it can spark a fight between companies. Since the companies who are victims would not like such flags to be repeated, the members as well as the entire *Asafo* Company are very careful as they go about their daily lives. Each Company member becomes a keeper of the other. To some extent, it has helped to maintain good morals in the societies till now. *Asafo* flags commissioned since the year 2000 and their interpretation are given in the next section.

## Collection of Asafo flags



**Plate 4:** *Anamon papa na wo hwe do ko fie* (Anaafo No 3. Company)

*Source: Photograph by researcher*

Name of flag: *Anamon papa na wo hwe do ko fie*.

Medium: Khaki

Technique of production: appliqué

Accredited *Safohene*: Safohene Kweku Ata Payin (a.k.a Safohene Abraham)

Asafo company: No 2 *Asafo* Company (*Anaafo*)

Year of production: 2009

Description: “*Anamon papa na wo hwe do ko fie*” which literally means ‘good morals is worth emulating’ was commissioned by Safohene Kweku Ata Panyin. He was enstooled as the Safohene of Asafo Number 2 Company of Cape Coast on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2008 after the death of his grand father, Safohene Nana Ayaa, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 1994. (Fourteen years interval for lack of funds and unwillingness to take up the mantle by the succeeding heirs). He was officially outdoored during the 2009 *Oguaa Fetu Afahye* through which he commissioned this flag. There are two main symbols; a mansion and Safohene with a gun walking towards the mansion.

Elders and leaders in a house by this flag are advised to set good example which will have a ripple effect on the future generation. Morally, every leader of a clan or family should ensure that all members under them eschew social vices but put up good behaviour. This will go a long way to place them in high social class where other members would like to be associated with. Example of such association is marriage.

Economically, no woman would like to marry either a lazy man or a family giving their daughter to a notorious man of another family within a community. The flag is therefore advising both men and women to put up good attitude and be hard working in whichever economic activity they engage themselves, so that they would be recognized in their society.

To be nominated in Fanteland as Safohene is no mean an achievement. He (Safohene Kweku Ata Panyin) recounted in an interview that this might be due to the good work done by his predecessor and there is the need to continue the good works he inherited. A great lesson is also learnt from this flag as it advices the political heads of our country. How prudent and judicious they manage the economy when in power will be emulated by subsequent governments. This will go a long way in either pulling supporters for them or members withdrawing from the party and more importantly to enhance rapid national growth.

In the nutshell, the flag is challenging the up and coming generation to be more focused in life. Those who have inherited assets, properties, positions among others, from their

forefathers should work very hard to protect those properties and even add more. Those who are starting life are admonished by this flag to lead a life worth emulating by earning a good name, accrue wealth, contribute to national development, serve as role models for present and generations yet unborn.



**Plate 5** *Opanyin ntena fie mma asadua mfow*

*Source: Photograph by researcher*

Name of flag: *Opanyin ntena fie mma asadua mfow*

Medium: Cotton fabric

Technique of production: Appliqué and screen printing

Accredited *Safohene*: Safohene Ekuia Amissah

*Asafo* company: No 4 *Asafo* Company (Efutu)

Date of production: 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2002

Description: '*Opanyin ntena fie mma asadua mfow*'. Literally means an elder should not sit in a house for situation to get out of hand. A flag commissioned by *Asafoakyere* Ekuia Amissah of Efutu *Asafo* Number 4 Company. It was commissioned on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2002. ( the exact date could be read from the flag). The fabric is made of cotton

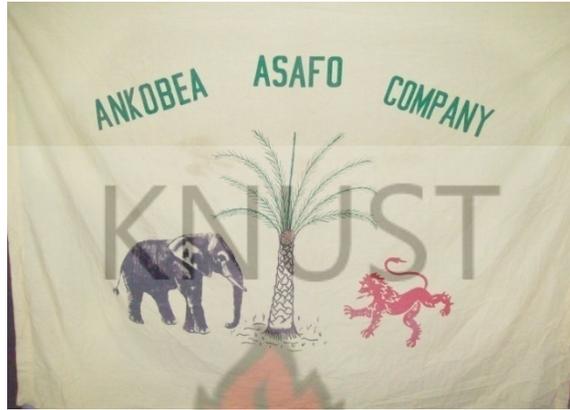
with the dominant colours of green and yellow for the background and inscriptions respectively. The main green background is bounded by yellow and blue with the usual white fringes around the edges. It also has a fold at the right side where a stick is fixed for easy handling by the flag bearer.

After a close observation, the researcher found that whilst most flags have their inscription appliquéd, this has been achieved through stencilling (a printing technique). The appliquéd motif depicts a man (family head) seated on a stool. In front of him is a table of pebbles. A queen mother pointing her fingers toward the table. A young man is picking his fair share of the pebbles from the table.

It is the responsibility of all family heads to bring and sustain peace. There should be fairness in settling disputes, make judicious sharing of family property to all members of the family, take good care of the young ones in the family in order not for them to become social misfit. Economically, the young and enterprising members of the family must be given the needed assistance in monetary, material and education where necessary in other for them to take their rightful place in the society. Socially, family heads and other heads of institutions are admonished through the name and images of this flag to settle all disputes which might arise in a family or department without fear or favour for peace to prevail in our society.

Politically, family heads, chiefs, political heads as well as those aspiring to be in a leadership positions irrespective of sex should have a political will to use their leadership

position to cause positive change and not to sit on the fence to allow situations to get out of hands before they act.



**Plate 6** *Osono tutu a otwer abe*  
Source: Photograph by researcher

Name of flag: *Osono tutu a otwer abe*

Medium: Cotton fabric

Technique of production: Screen Printed

Accredited *Safohene*: *Asafoakyere* Aunti Aba ( late)

*Asafo* Company: No 4 *Asafo* Company ( Efutu)

Year of production: Not Known

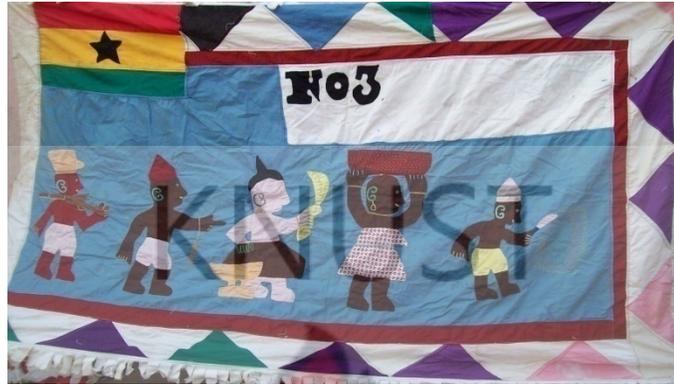
Description: ‘*Ankobe* *Asafo* Company’, the name of *Asafo* Number 4 Company of Cape Coast means the first settlers. The flag was commissioned by the late *Asafoakyere* Aunti Aba of Cape Coast. The year of production was not certain but the researcher considered it because of it’s method of production that is the screen printing which is a recent development. The fabric is yellow cotton. The application of motifs on the fabric is a deviation from the usual appliqué. Both motifs and inscriptions are screen printed

showing an elephant and a dragon meeting under a palm tree. It does not have the usual white fringes as observed by Adler and Barnard, and Edusei in other flags. There is a fold at the left edge to receive the stick for easy handling. It is dominated by one of the colours of the company (yellow) and green inscription.

A palm tree is an all purpose tree. The fronds through the fruits to the roots are all used in varied ways depending on its geographical location. Humans and animals alike rely on the palm tree for food and other use. The roots are fibrous and strongly rooted to the ground. It is also known that irrespective of the size and strength of an animal such as the elephant and dragon they are able to rely on the palm tree without falling. It is also known from tales and in real terms that the elephant is the biggest and the strongest animal on land. It can be very helpful when properly managed and also be very disastrous when provoked. The dragon, a mythical creature which is believed according to tales, from the sea, has a long tail and breathes fire. The adoption of these objects by the Asafo Companies signifies how versatile the company is and at the same time dangerous it can be when provoked.

Every human being in a society should prepare him or herself to become more useful to the society they find themselves like the palm tree. The elephant knows it is safe when it leans on the palm tree. These address individuals to be up and doing to be useful in the society. It further explains that all members of the company should aspire to higher heights in all aspects of life and be useful to his society like the palm tree. Husbands and

wives alike should be more dependable like palm tree in their children's upbringing. To whom much is given much is expected.



**Plate 7** 'Abusua'

*Source: Photograph by researcher*

Name of flag: 'Abusua'

Medium: Cotton fabric

Technique of production: Appliqué

Accredited *Safohene*: *Safohene Kwesi Gyafu*

*Asafo* company: No 3 *Asafo* Company ( *Ebubonko* )

Year of production: 2001

Description: 'Abusua' was commissioned by *Safohene Kwesi Gyafu* of *Ebonko*, a subsidiary (*nkwaadom*) of *Cape Coast Asafo* number 3. The flag is one of those commissioned in the year 2001 to honour the very woman *Nana Koodwua Mansa* who founded the town. In *Labi's* discourse he contented that *Asafo* flags are for religious works which are used to venerate deceased leaders and may not be sewn or used by women, contrary to that it has been sewn to honour a woman for her role in society.

Adler and Barnard, and Adusei state that those solid blocks of colours dominate the Asafo flags with as many as fifteen different colours used in single flag. This flag confirms that assertion combining embroidery and appliqué technique to finish the images to the tune of 13 colours.

There are five people in the flag two women and three men. The first person is the path finder followed by a woman who is believed to have carried the treasure in front of the queen mother (founder). She is seated on a stool (to signify her throne) and holding sword (to signify the symbol of authority). She is followed by the Safohene (immediate guard of the queen mother). The last is the rear guard with gun on his shoulder (showing his readiness to defend his people).

Under the nature and purpose of documentation, Bradford asserts that it contributes towards the progress of society since progress depends largely on the availability of recorded information. As documentation has progressed from cave writings through the use of scroll to the use of modern technology, this flag will serve as pictorial historical reference for generation yet unborn.

A society which does not honour her heroes is not worth dying for. This is the small way that Safohene Kwesi Gyafu has honoured the great grand mother and the founder of the town. This is a lesson for all to learn. Women are also encouraged to use this queen mother as a role model and aspire to do greater things.



**Plate .8** *Dua a osow aba pa nna nnoma dzidzi do*  
*Source: Photograph by researcher*

Name of flag: *Dua a osow aba pa nna nnoma dzidzi do*

Medium: Cotton fabric

Technique of production: Appliqué

Accredited *Safohene*: *Safohene Kwesi Gyafu*

*Asafo* company: No 3 *Asafo* Company ( Ebubonko)

Date of production: 2001

Description: ‘*Dua a osow aba pa na nnoma dzidzi do*’. Literally translated as a tree that bears good fruit is always visited by birds. It was commissioned by *Safohene Kwesi Gyafu* of *Asafo* Number 3 Company, Ebubonko in the year 2001. The technique of production is the usual appliqué using khaki colours as the background and varied colours to create the motifs. This depicts variation in the images against the background. The base of the tree shows white with the trunk and branches having a purple colour. Here, getting the message across to the admirers is more paramount as against portraying real images in the flag. It also suggests that the available fabric during the time of production was used. This and other *Asafo* flags were commissioned for production at

‘Kormantse’, another town in the Central Region noted for the production of *Asafo* flags. Some years after he was enstooled as the Safohene of ‘Ebubonko’, Safohene Kwesi Gyafu decided to commission memorial flags to honour his grand mother (Nana Koodwua Mansa) who founded the town.

The images in the flag depict a big tree full of leaves and fruits which shows how prepared, receptive and inviting the tree is to all those who matter to feed on. Birds are enjoying themselves from the fruits and shades from the tree. This imagery is related to the warm reception accorded to all manner of people who settled in the town. Today, there are various ethnic groups as well as different religious sects all living harmoniously in the town. Due to her good human relation, the place has become both academic and commercial centre where the Cape Coast Polytechnic is located. It has and continues to serve as one of the excellent centres of education in the country. The location of the institution has also created job opportunities in the catering, hospitality and other ancillary industry.

Morally, this flag is telling us that wherever we find ourselves, we must try to make the best out of the place. In an attempt to make the best out of a place involves a collaborative effort by all. We should also be receptive and accommodative to different manner of people. Most towns in Africa and for that matter Ghana have thrived as a result of opening their doors and arms to other people. One must always be prepared to tolerate each other for peaceful co-existence even now that there is freedom of association and movement.

A woman is being celebrated here. This serves as morale booster to women in general that if a woman has been able to establish a town and her descendants are now benefiting from the facilities stated above, then it poses a very big challenge to all women to remain focused to contribute meaningfully to society.



**Plate 9** *Enam a hwe woho yie*

*Source: Photograph by researcher*

Name of flag: *'Enam a hwe woho yie'*

Medium: Cotton fabric

Technique of production: Appliqué

Accredited *Safohene*: *Safohene Panyin Yena*

*Asafo* company: No 4 *Asafo* Company ( Kwaprow )

Year of production: 2006

Description: *'enam a hwe woho yie'* literally translated as take care as you move about.

The flag commissioned by *Safohene Panyin Yena* of number 4 *Asafo* Company during

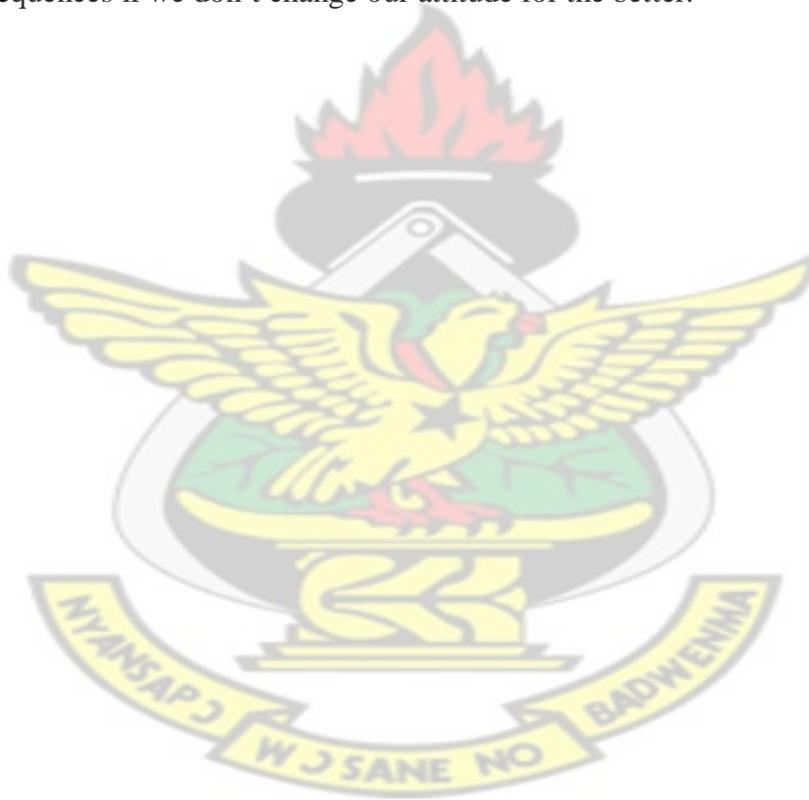
his enstoolment at Kwaprow. It was produced in the year 2006 with the usual appliqué technique.

Two main motifs are depicted here; the big jack trap well placed at the centre and four shakers (*nkodwuwa*) positioned at the lower part of the flag. The shakers are traditionally used to alert public of a passing chief, priest and to lead procession. The jack is one of the dangerous iron traps that are used for trapping games in our traditional setting. A lot of stories have been said about this jack and both animals and humans who have fallen victim to it were either perpetually maimed or died.

The flag seeks to sound a word of caution to all especially the youth, who are supposed to be future leaders that there are life traps in all aspects of human endeavour. For example, we do see people in our communities who have been lured by friends and siblings into serious life problem and not been able to recover since then. Again, we see people who are suffering in our society today as a result of life they led some years back. This and other situations that have taken place in our communities are enough life signals alerting us on the consequences of our actions and inactions.

Furthermore, fashions have served and continue to serve as bait to the derailment of our rich culture and both the youth and adult alike are caught in this web. Moral decadence is on the ascendancy. Unhealthy dressing and rebellious society is now our portion. In all these, there are life shakers alerting the society of the consequences. If we listen, the better, otherwise we will have ourselves to blame.

We used to have a good atmosphere, pure untreated water and clean environment. Human activity has degraded the environment to today. It has become clear to those who matter about the impending consequences of our action and the resultant effects on the earth. The shakers are sounding loud and clear and also showing dangerous signals ahead of our actions. The shakers in this case are individuals, governmental and non-governmental organisations and other international bodies all putting their voice together to educate the world on the effect of our actions on the environment. We should be prepared to endure any consequences if we don't change our attitude for the better.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Overview

Documentation as a process of collecting and subject classification of all records of new observations and making them available at need to the discoverer has gone a long way to sustain societies from generation to generation. However, a number of societies especially in Africa have relied on oral tradition to transmit information. Though it may have its own advantages, the disadvantages outweigh the advantage. The *Fante Asafo* flags of Cape Coast, full of morals, history, social values among others have suffered this fate.

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

The following were some of the findings which were unearthed through the research. These findings are very important for the sustenance of *Asafo* activities leading to the production of *Asafo* flags.

Religious affiliation of the people of Cape Coast has contributed to the indifferent attitude towards the *Asafo* companies. This is one of the serious concerns raised by almost all the places visited. The introduction of other religious beliefs apart from the traditional religion has been the foremost cause especially the introduction of conventional and charismatic churches. It came to light that those who were automatic members of the *Asafo* by birth feel reluctant to accept position with the panic of been

deprived of suitable burial after death. These have greatly affected the rate at which the *Asafo* flags are been produced.

It also became clear that poverty, economic hardships and lack of stool property as security for the *Safohene* to use to sustain the *Asafo* Company has become one major discouragement which has prohibited people from accepting the position as *Safohene*. Due to unfavourable economic conditions along the coast, some have travelled to seek greener pastures both locally and abroad abandoning their stool. According to *Safohene* Kweku Ata Panyin of *Asafo* Number 2 Company (*Anafo*), some stools have not been occupied for more than 50 years and are still lying. This development has hampered the slow rate of flag production. He concluded that it is now common to see foreigners who are well to do and prepared ascending onto the *Asafo* stools of which ever company. This is an indictment over our rich culture since rightful heirs are supposed to ascend to stools.

In a personal conversation with a custodian of *Asafo* flag he said it has become quiet expensive to ascend unto *Asafo* stool. The reason being that a *Safohene* will have to finance all the activities prior to his installation through to his outdoring. In addition, the creation of new flags and the repair of the old ones as well as the financial commitment involved in rituals and aftermath feast for the company members rest on him. Not all, money must be raised by the *Safohene* to fully participate in the annual *Oguaa Fetu Afahye*. These and many others have become a disincentive to becoming *Safohene* and it has greatly affected the rate at which *Asafo* flags are being produced.

Without proper documentation, preservation and protection of information on Ghanaian arts and culture, especially for the development of education, posterity will misplace a national asset through the adulteration of our culture in the nearest future. This is the cry of the researcher in that almost all the places visited, the *Asafo* flags were kept in either a sewn cotton or fertilizer sack and places kept were nothing better to write home about. In some instances, stains can be seen in the flags while some were defaced through insect bite (compare Plates 10 and 11). Unfortunately, none of the *Asafo* Companies could produce a documentary evidence of their own flags in either hard or soft copy but chiefly relied on oral narration of which facts can be distorted. Again as old flags continued to be renewed, the tendency of changing the original designs of the flags are very high as shown in Plates 12 and 13.



**Plate10** A flag which has been properly kept by a sister company.

*Source: Photograph by researcher*



**Plate11:** The same copy of the flag above which is faded and stained as a result of poor keeping



**Plate 12:** Asafo flag showing the Original design.  
*Source: Photograph by researcher*



**Plate13** The above flag after it has been renewed. The idea and concept still remains but the original design is distorted.

*Source: Photograph by researcher*

New flags produced within the period of research reveal that, unlike the old ones which were significantly based on important historical events such as victory in battles and proverbs to provoke and challenge with taunts, boasts and threats of which once resulted in confrontations, the new ones have now taken a different direction with respect to their

significance. Almost all of them talk about positive moral values, peace and further counsel both young and old to strive for excellence.

It was also revealed that, whenever the researcher met to interview the *Asafo* leadership, though one person led the discussion, others could interrupt to either make correction or add an important point that might have been omitted. These show inconsistency, an indication of absence of written documentation. Also, while those who are well vested in the history and the significance of the flags feel reluctant to readily pass on their knowledge to the younger ones because of mysteries surrounding them, the younger and the elites among them are not self motivated to mingle with such activities. Since protection and preservation of historic facts are of great importance to the *Asafo* companies, the leaders feel insecure to release all the information about the flags to the general public. It has also become an additional source of income to the custodians and releasing the information will mean a break of funds from that source.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

The study of the socio-cultural significance of Cape Coast *Asafo* flags came up with a number of challenges that face the *Asafo* companies which have gone a long way to affect the commissioning of *Asafo* flags. Among the problems identified include significant reductions in the rate at which the *Asafo* flags are being produced. This is so because victory in wars, confrontations between *Asafo* groups, and show of supremacy of *Asafo* groups among others accounted greatly for the number of many flags produced in the pre-colonial and post independence era. Today these topics rightly belong to history

and with the advent of rule of law and advancement in education, people are conscious of their actions and inactions. Therefore until the installation of *Safohene*, and perhaps honouring people for their contribution to the society with the flag, it is rarely heard of commissioning of new flags. This makes it imperative for the few that have been produced among the Cape Coast *Asafo* companies over the decade be identified and documented.

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It also became known that there has been apathy on the part of the youth towards the activities of *Asafo*. While the youth blame the leaders for not being transparent on financial issues, the leaders also contend that little or no money at all have been received from any quarters to finance the groups. In an interview with a group leader, he pleaded with the youth to disabuse their minds from those allegations and help to sustain the *Asafo* since that was what they have contended for ages. This attitude is gradually killing the interest of the youth who are supposed to take the mantle after the old are dead.

A visit to the Central Regional Centre for National Culture revealed that there was no trace of *Asafo* flag as well as any form of document on it. The Regional Library could not help either. The Ghana Museums and Monuments Board located inside the Cape Coast Castle could provide information mainly on the reports and brochures of *Oguaa Fetu Afahye* and not *Asafo* flags. The Heritage Houses which house the offices of Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust and PANAFEST Secretariat have photographs of *Asafo* post (Posuban) and some celebrities of Cape Coast and not *Asafo* flags. The *Oguaa*

Traditional Council had an expert (Supi Kobina Minnah) who gave elaborate oral accounts of Cape Coast and the *Asafo* activities supported it with documentary evidence. He concluded that apart from the flags in the custody of the seven *Asafo* companies, there are no collections or documents of the *Asafo* flags in the palace since the companies are supposed to keep them. It is therefore important that mechanisms are put in place to start proper documentation of the Cape Coast *Asafo* flags with their socio-cultural significance.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Many History books available to both the reading public and students were written by European scholars. This is particularly true about first few History books on Ghanaians and African people in general.

The information was given from the European perspective and therefore many credits which would rather have gone to the African were given to the white man. Pieces of information about Africa's past were distorted and it was easy to identify biases from the European source. It is therefore necessary for the African to rewrite his own history.

Gadzekpo (2005: 5) from the above statement the following recommendation has been made by the researcher.

The Ministry of Education Youth and Sports and Ghana Education Service, (the government's policy implementing agencies) should as a matter of urgency incorporate in the school syllabi and emphasise the teaching of Ghanaian culture based on regalia with specific emphasis on *Asafo* and its regalia in the Universities, Technical Education, Colleges of Education, at the secondary and the basic levels. This will help young as well as the youth to learn and appreciate the Ghanaian culture in general and Cape Coast

*Asafo* flags in particular. Emphasis should also be made on economic values of the flags as a means of promoting indigenous industry to sustain the indigenes of Cape Coast.

The Cape Coast District Assembly as well as N.G.Os and other international Organisation should collaborate to intensify the organisation of workshops, seminars and conferences at both local and international levels on Cape Coast *Asafo* flags. This may develop the interest in the people of Cape Coast to appreciate our cultural values. It will also help to trim down the interest in foreign flags at the disadvantage of local ones.

In the quest to promote African Art, the Cape Coast *Asafo* flags as well as other insignia, local artisans should be encouraged to produce the artefacts in miniature so that those who buy them can easily transport them. Other co-operate bodies should also be motivated to produce the *Asafo* flags in post cards, stamps, stickers and images on packaging containers to be sold at tourist sites and during festivals. This will serve as an additional economic venture for the people of Cape Coast.

The Ghana Tourist Board and Ghana Museums and Monuments Board should be reorganised to establish well constituted museums to house the historical relics of Cape Coast *Asafo* as a means of educating the general public on the cultural values of Cape Coast. In other words existing institutions, tourist sites such as Centre for National Culture, Heritage House, Cape Coast Castle, among others be resourced to play a leading role to showcase the cultural values of Cape Coast *Asafo*.

Local writers and academicians should be encouraged and resourced by the government to write and document in prints, pictures and videos of regalia of various traditional setting in Ghana with more emphasis on Cape Coast *Asafo* flags. The videos and pictures should be shown in a form of documentary on national and private T.V. stations in Ghana to promote Africa and Ghana in general and Cape Coast in particular. The prints should be made available to both Ghanaians and foreigners so that they can learn to appreciate and love their cultural values.

In addition periodic talk shows on FM as well as Television programmes should be introduced in the local dialect to develop and sustain the interest of the local people. This will go a long way to sensitize the people of Cape Coast on their culture and also to erase some misconceptions surrounding the *Asafo* flags. The *Oguaa* Traditional council should consider the establishment of an endowment fund to partly support *Asafo* activities such as installation of *Safohene* and also to establish a museums department in the new Cape Coast palace to house the *Asafo* regalia of Cape Coast especially the *Asafo* flags. This will help to unify the people, strengthen the history, attract tourist to Cape Coast and to serve as a source of employment and generate revenue for *Oguaaman*.

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## APPENDICES

### Research Questionnaire

The research questions are categorised into two main groups. Socio-cultural significance, sample questionnaire for *Asafo* leaders and the socio-cultural significant questions which are aimed at finding information related to a particular *Asafo* flag produced since the year 2000. It seeks information such as name of the flag, year of production and the person who commissioned it. Furthermore, it required data on meaning of the appliquéd images and their historic, social political and economic implications. Questionnaires for *Asafo* leaders and the people of *Oguaa* traditional area aim at finding how they regard and accept the *Asafo* flags as an integral part of their culture for better analysis.

### Appendix 1. Socio-Cultural Significance of the *Asafo* Flags

1. Name of the *Asafo* Company
2. Name of the flag (if any)
3. Year of production
4. Who commissioned the production of the flag?
5. Description: choice of colour and their significance
6. Images and their significance
7. Any new developments in production as compared to former flags?
8. What is the historical background of the flag?

9. What is the social role of the flag?
10. How does the flag affect religious activities of the *Asafo* Company?
11. What political role has the flag?
12. What moral lessons can we learn from the flag?
13. What role do women play in the production and usage of the *Asafo* flags?
14. Any other developments concerning the *Asafo* flags?

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**Appendix 2: Questionnaire to Sample the view of *Asafo* leaders**

1. How do you feel to be a member of the *Asafo* Company?
2. What is your perception about the flags of your Company?
3. Have you observed some changes in the current/new flags as compared to the former ones?

If yes, state your observations

5. What role does the flag play in religious activities of the *Asafo* Company?

Does the flag have any influence in the society?  Yes  No

If yes, state the influence (s)

6. Has the flags been affecting the social life of the citizens? Yes  No

If yes, state the effects

7. What moral values do the flags play in the society?