

CULTURAL SYMBOLISM IN ASANTE TRADITIONAL TEXTILES

KNUST



BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the PhD. 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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ABSTRACT

Cultural symbolism as an art form is never static but ever changing and these changes are influenced by several factors including literary education, religion and globalization. The extent of these influences in Asante traditional textiles cannot be measured easily. This thesis therefore critically examined the past and current knowledge including substantive findings as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to the topic. Methodological approach adopted looked at cultural differences that pertains in other countries on cultural symbolism in traditional textiles. This provided a solid background for further investigation. The significance on Cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles in the society were also discussed.

Qualitative research method was employed to examine the economic, political, religious and social functions of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles. It further evaluated the current state of traditional textile symbols in relation to Asante culture. The researcher has recorded, described, analyzed and interpreted findings from the research. It was observed that cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles has played and continues to play a significant role in the maintenance and promotion of Asante culture. This role is economically significant in nation building. However, some obstacles such as the state of the textile profession, capital and education were realized. Suggestions for solving these problems have been provided but a thrust by the traditional textile producers themselves is inevitable not only to help improve the living standards of the craftsmen but also to make the profession more attractive while further promoting the Asante culture.

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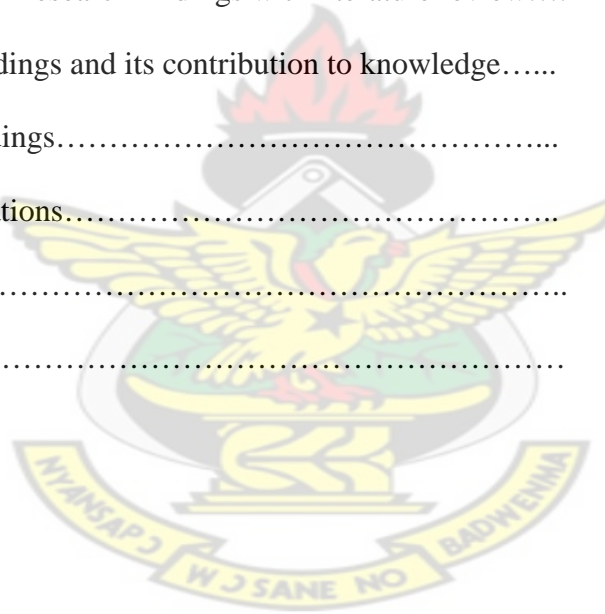
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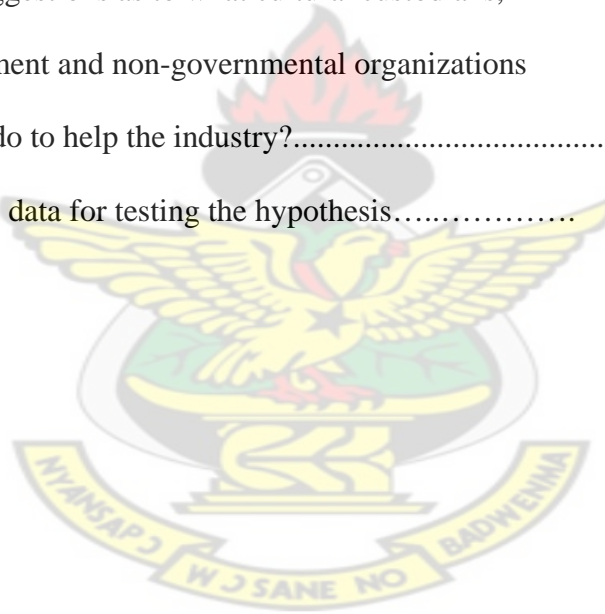
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

This thesis is a study of the cultural symbolism in *Asante* traditional textiles and the significance of *Asante* textiles in her culture. The study examines the current trend of cultural symbolism in *Asante* traditional textiles in the past and present and the role of traditional textile in the preservation, presentation and promotion of Asante culture and makes recommendations for its sustenance. Culture in this thesis should be understood as the totality of socially predominating attitudes and behaviour that characterize the functioning of a society or organization transmitted through behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other intellectual and artistic products of human work and thought within a particular period, community, or population.

Culture gives order and meaning to people's social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious life and distinguishes them from other people. It also manifests itself materially in artefacts, such as tools, clothing, utensils, and housing, philosophically in ideas, values and beliefs, and aesthetically through the creativity of oratory and literature, as well as visual and performing arts which are inspired and shaped by, and in turn help reshape other aspects of culture. For example the concept of *sankofa* (positive reversion) in the Asante culture does not imply a blind return to customs and traditions of the past. Rather *sankofa* affirms the co-existence of the past and the future in the present and embodies, therefore, the attitude of Asante people to the confrontation between traditional values and the demand of modern technology, which is an essential factor for development and progress.

1.1.1 The Asante Kingdom

According to the royal diary of 2006, of the *Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II*, the Asante kingdom which has been in existence since the seventeenth century is today made up of 4,282,447 people (Mid year population census of for 2005). The 2000 population census figure was 3,612,950. The annual growth rate of the Asante population is 3.4%. The Asante kingdom comprises sixty-five paramountcys spread in the Ashanti and *Brong Ahafo* Regions. Each of such paramountcy has an average of thirty to forty thousand people. The Kumasi Metropolitan 2005 mid year population census shows that the population of *Kumase*, the capital city of the Asante people was 1,556,181 in that year. The earlier population census of 2000 had shown that the population of Kumasi was 1, 170, 2770. The annual growth rate of Kumasi therefore is 5.7%. Under Asante paramountcys, there are divisional chiefs. Below them are towns and village chieftains. At the apex of Asante chieftaincy is the *Asantehene* (the king of Asante), the Occupant of a Golden Stool which is seen as the embodiment of the spirit and unity of the Asante people. His word is final and is respected throughout the Kingdom.

The *Asantehene's* title is *Otumfuo* and the present Occupant is *Otumfuo Osei Tutu II* the sixteenth occupant of the Golden Stool. A very significant aspect of Asante's governance is its judicial system. The King sits in council with his elders all clothed in Asante traditional apparel on appointed days to adjudicate on cases bordering principally on chieftaincy and land disputes as well as the swearing of *Otumfuo's Ntamkesie* (Great Oath). The mode of adjudication of cases reveals the beauty of democracy---- where every participating chief or elder is given the opportunity to

express his opinion. The final decision is announced by the King after the council has arrived at a consensus.

This judicial system is replicated in the paramountcys, divisions, towns and villages. Asantes observe some festivals such as *Akwasidae* and *Awukudae* that offer opportunities to the people to wear *Asante* traditional cloths, depicting Asante symbols, and who come together to renew their allegiance to their king and chiefs. Asantes has an overall Queen mother, who, as the counterpart of the king, is regarded as the mother of the kingdom. Just like the political arrangement of the chiefs, Queen mothers are found in all towns and villages in the kingdom.

Queen mothers play significant roles in the total governance of the kingdom. But principally they attend to problems that relate more to the female segment of the society. It is relevant to note that there have been occasions when Queen mothers have assumed the mantle of leadership in the Asante kingdom. A case in point is *Nana Yaa Asantewaa*, a late Queen mother of *Ejisu* in Asante who mobilised the men of the kingdom to fight against the British “impudence” in 1900.

Asantes are known to be enterprising, forthright and fearless---characteristics which held them together to resist foreign domination culminating in their seven wars against the British in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their defeat by the British in 1896 resulted in the exile of their king *Prempeh I*, to the Seychelles Island via Sierra Leone (Freetown) where he lived for 4 years (1888-1931) according to the *5th Anniversary Celebration Magazine Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Asantehene 1999-2004*. A long standing history shows that *Prempeh I* lived on the island until 1924 when he

returned to Asante. Even, during the capture of *Yaa Asantewaa* by the British in 1900, *Yaa Asantewaa* was deported to Seychelles to join *Prempeh I.*

Today Asantes are united by a common language, common allegiance to the Golden Stool and its occupant, and they have the desire to preserve their culture, including Asante symbols which are remarkably depicted in Asante textiles, wooden stools and on special Asante buildings such as the shrines housing the relics of Asante deities.

1.1.2 Uniqueness of Asante

Perhaps what make Asante remarkable and resplendent are her proverbial *Bonwire kente* and the *Ntonso Adinkra* cloths which normally depict Asante symbolic colour and patterns. funerals which are spectacular events in the region and which are celebrated amidst pomp and pageantry, drumming and dancing offer mourners the opportunity to wear Asante clothes which normally portray Asante symbols.

Among the *Asante* as indeed among all Akans, the symbol of the authority of the traditional ruler is a stool which as pointed out already, depicts an Asante symbols. The occupant of the stool is the political, cultural and spiritual (religious) head of his community; and the importance of the stool which he occupies is that it gives a community its group identity with the land which has nurtured it and provides it with not only its sustenance, but also, its link with its past and future.

The stool binds the people together in time and space and supports their belief in their community as a living and organic entity, a family with a continuous past, present and future. It is therefore central in the life of the community, and the occupier of the

stool, the traditional ruler, is at once, and in a real sense, recognised as a temporal and spiritual leader.

The stool confers divine leadership on its occupant who derives his right to rule from the position he has come to occupy. He becomes a “Nana” a revered person whose status and position are above everyone else in the community. His person becomes inviolate.

The stool also confers on its occupants the glory of the community's past, and symbolizes the Asante belief in the eternity of life, the power of spirits over matter and of the departed or dead over the living so that a traditional ruler who dies in harness, while still a chief is believed to continue to rule as a chief in the spirit world.

He is therefore thought to be immortalised. He is remembered and honoured with a black stool (*Akonnwa Tuntum*), specially dedicated to him, into which his departed spirit is invoked. He is always remembered, especially on *Adae* and other religious feast days, when departed souls are invoked and propitiated, and asked to bestow blessings on, and ward off disaster from the living (*Quoting from the Royal Diary 2006, Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II*). During such days of remembrance, some Asantes wears Asante traditional cloths that portray various forms of Asante symbolic patterns and colours.



Plate 1: Ghana Map-Ashanti Region Highlighted- from the Royal Diary 2006, *Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II*

1.1.3 Importance of Asante in view of its culture and economy

Asantes are the largest group among the Akan Communities that have always inhabited the southern and forest areas of the Gulf of Guinea of West Africa which came to be called the Gold Coast (see plate I). They are among the largest ethnic communities in what is today the modern State of Ghana, and have since the

Seventeenth Century exerted considerable influence on the political, cultural and economic life and development of the area of West Africa.

The Kingdom of Asante was founded in the seventeenth century by the union of previously separate, independent communities of the same cultural identity and ethnic origins. To free themselves from domination by *Denkyira*, another organised Akan community which interposed itself between them and the coast, and denied them direct access to the trade, which Europeans conducted from their forts and castles, Asantes had to use their military power. The need to control trade to the north and south for the survival of the new kingdom, rather than mere military gain, inspired Asantes to embark on a rapid expansion of their territory in the seventeenth century, following its foundation as a united kingdom. Asantes were so constantly at war with their neighbours to the north and south that the political structure from which their new kingdom evolved was much influenced by, and could be understood only in terms of the military organization with which they defended themselves and safeguarded their commercial and other economic interests.

The need to control the trade to the North in kola, gold and other items of commerce, during the trans-Saharan trade, brought *Asante* into contact with *Dagomba* and *Gonja* in the North and East *Jaman* in the North West; and the trade with the Europeans in the castles and forts on the coast, at the time of the trans-Atlantic trade, brought Asante into conflict with their kinsmen in the *Fante* States. (*Royal Diary 2006, Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II*) The wars of expansion resulted in economic expansion which doubtlessly encouraged the production and purchase of Asante traditional cloths, which in turn, tended to promote symbolism in Asante cloths.

From its capital, Kumasi, *Asante* controlled the trade routes to the North through *Salaga* in the North-East and *Bontoku* in the North West, and was in commercial contact with *the Moshi* and other states in the savannah and beyond the Sahel region, from where regular caravans carried merchandise in exchange for the gold and kola produced in the forest regions. By the middle of the eighteenth Century, Asante had become the most dominant kingdom in the forest belt of the Gold Coast of the Guinea Coast and provided a vital link between the coast and the savannah areas to the North. Asante was described on a 1764 French map of Africa as “Roy de “IL” Asiante, tres puissant!” (very powerful). (*Royal Diary 2006, Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II*). Since Asantes controlled the trade along the said routes, it may not be gainsaid that they had an unrestricted authority to sell their traditional cloths to other ethnic groups and thus introduced Asante, textile symbols to those people.

Today, as in the past, Asante remains the largest single community among the ethnic communities that constitute modern Ghana, and continues to make significant contributions to the country’s economy, partly through the manufacture and sale of her traditional cloths depicting a variety of symbols. Despite these enormous economic ventures stated above, the traditional textile industry has seen little or no progress in this sector of its economy due to the influx of foreign textiles into the Ghanaian market. In *Otumfuo’s* address in South Africa’s national house of traditional leaders in 2005, he raised his deepest concern about the threat posed by globalization to the existence of African culture, especially when the proponents of that paradigm have succeeded in diverting attention from traditional practices and development only to replace them with foreign ones. (*Royal Diary 2006, Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II*)

In his Royal Diary 2006, Otumfuo was emphatic: “I am not against globalization and the integration of global economics, but where it seeks to derail our respective cultural practices, values and ideals which encourage morals and entrepreneurship then, we as African traditional Rulers must look at it again”. And he cautions that efforts towards Africa’s emancipation might prove futile without an authentic African culture. This wake-up call must be heeded by all and sundry to safe-guard Ghana’s rich cultural heritage by preserving, improving or finding new ways of sustaining and enriching what the nation has for posterity. There is no better way to heed such a call than to diagnose and analyse Asante traditional symbolism in this seeming stagnant traditional textile industry.

1.2 The problem and its setting

Some aspects of Asante cultural symbolism have been treated by other authors, in the area of *Kente* and *Adinkra* cloths. However, cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles has not been fully explored and has taken on a new phase that yearns for attention to arrest its abuse and misinterpretations by contemporary writers all in the guise of globalization.

Asante cultural symbolism is evolving and is being influenced by globalization. The extent of this influence on Asante traditional textiles is not readily known and that is what this thesis seeks to unravel as it takes a critical look at the symbols used in the production of Asante traditional textiles. To this end the researcher, hopes to bring to the fore the possibility of rediscovering the purity of Asante textile symbolism and the appreciation of traditional textile in the society with the view to recapturing its vibrancy in order to promote Asante textiles and their Asante symbolism towards

national development. To regain the Asante textile cultural identity, research into Asante traditional textiles is needful to buttress the nation's capacity for change.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of the research are:

1. To identify and describe Asante cultural symbolism portrayed in Asante traditional textiles since the seventeenth century.
2. To examine the significance of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles.
3. To survey the role of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles in the promotion of Asante culture.
4. To examine the factors of change namely literary education, religion, and globalization on symbolism in Asante traditional textiles.

This study thus looks into the cultural symbolism (refer to definition of terms below) of Asante traditional textile, the role they have played in the promotion of Asante culture, whether real or conceptual, past or present and relates them to contemporary realities and demands of change and development. The study reviewed and analysed the problems and challenges faced by traditional and contemporary textile craftsmen in the face of the infiltration of foreign symbolism and puts forth recommendations and proposals for their co-existence with Asante cultural symbolism. It is vital in view of this, to locate, identify, collate, describe, evaluate and utilise effectively and efficiently every available documented and undocumented material for the promotion and enhancement of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles in Ghana; and that is what this thesis seeks to do.

1.4 Hypothesis

The knowledge, and understanding and application of Asante cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles are a positive means of promoting Asante culture in the world even in the phase of external influences and they serve as a way of identifying the people of Asante

1.5 Research Questions

- a) What aspects of cultural symbolism can be identified in Asante traditional textile culture?
- b) What is the extent of degeneration of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles?
- c) What role does symbolism in Asante traditional textiles play in the promotion of Asante culture?
- d) Will Asante cultural identity be maintained in their traditional textiles in the phase of globalization?
- e) What is the state of royal and local patronage of traditional textile products in Asante?

1.6 Assumptions

- a) It is assumed that this research will uncover some data which will show that Asante traditional symbols promote Asante culture throughout the world.
- b) It is assumed that this research will unearth some data which reveals that external factors influence the change and uses of Asante cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles.

- c) That the Asante traditional textile production is culturally and symbolically motivated
- d) That with encouragement the Asante traditional textile producer will not completely set aside their cultural symbolism and replace it with foreign symbolism, and
- e) That the authenticity of Asante traditional textiles will be sustained in the face of contemporary textile production,

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this thesis is that in Asante, the people's traditional symbols, which are significant, promote their culture throughout the world, though the symbols have been undergoing modifications and innovations.

1.8 Delimitations

The research was limited to cultural symbolism and the impact of foreign symbolism on the Asante traditional textiles since the seventeenth century. The study:

- a) treats some aspects of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles as fibre fabrics, namely, *Kente*, *Adinkra*, batik and tie-dye, embroidery, appliqué and their related techniques.
- b) involves chiefs, producers, buyers, and exporters to collect data through interviews and sampled opinions from a cross-section of the Ghanaian users of traditional textile products.

The study covered the traditional textile producing areas in Ashanti region specifically *Ntonso*, *Adanwomanse*, *Bonwire*, *Bantama*- Centre for National Culture, *Asokwa*, and *Wonoo*.

1.9 Limitations

The major limitation was the degree of inadequacies, or lack of resource allocation, for the research. These resources included funding, equipment and stationery. This limitation was truly grave; and it placed many hurdles in the way of the researcher.

1.10 Definition of terms

To facilitate the understanding of the report, technical terms used in the text are explained in alphabetical order as follows:

Acculturation: is the exchange of cultural features that results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact; the original cultural patterns of either or both groups may be altered, but the groups remain distinct (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acculturation>).

Bodice: (Upper part of dress) the part of a woman's dress or undergarment that covers the upper body

Cross-Dressing: wearing the clothing of the opposite sex

Culture: the attitudes and behaviour that is characteristic of a particular social group or organization at a particular time and place.

Cultural Symbolism: in an (anthropological sense, is the use of traditional symbols to convey different meanings. Traditional symbols may be anything: objects, words, colours, or patterns; their defining characteristic is that they stand for something other than their intrinsic property. For instance, while there is nothing intrinsically dangerous about the colour red, it has become a symbol for danger in a number of societies.

Documentation: is the recording of knowledge and the sources of knowledge, organizing such records systematically so that they may be found quickly, and

disseminating by various means, both the knowledge and the sources of knowledge. The essential task of documentation may be described as the scholarly activities in which the use of primary records play a part and the pattern of intermediary services which transmit primary recorded materials from the scholar-as- producer and the scholar- as – user.

Globalization: describes a process by which regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through a global network of communication, transportation, and trade. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Globalization>)

Kangas: (Woman's garment) a brightly coloured and decorated piece of cotton cloth for women to wrap around the body as a garment, worn originally and especially in East Africa

Laced-up top: a close-fitting, often laced-up top was worn over a blouse in the past or as part of some national costumes

Research; Systematic investigation to establish facts (*word web dictionary software*)

Sampling; Items selected at random from a population and used to test hypotheses about the population (*word web dictionary software*)

Schematic; Represented in simplified or symbolic form (*word web dictionary software*)

Stratified; Arranged in a sequence of grades or ranks (*word web dictionary software*)

Tattoo: A tattoo is a permanent marking made by inserting ink into the layers of skin to change the pigment for decorative or other reasons. Tattoos on humans are a type of decorative body modification, while tattoos on animals are most commonly used for identification or branding.

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title,Tattoo&fulltext=Search>)

Traditional textiles: is defined as a woven or non-woven fabrics made by the inhabitants of localities; e.g. Asante from natural or synthetic fibres, filaments, or yarns. The name “Textiles” comes from the Latin word *texere*, meaning to weave. Traditionally textiles are made from yarns, which are developed by processing fibre, although many textiles can be made by the direct conversion of fibre. This definition also includes simulation of natural products—for example, leather and fur replicas—but excludes others that do not involve the use of fibre, as in plastic sheeting. Textiles may be utilized commercially, domestically, or industrially.

For the purpose of this research, the researcher wishes that the above list of technical terms be consistently taken to carry the stipulated meanings throughout the study

1.11 Importance of the study

1. The result of this thesis will enlighten textile technologists to work towards recovering traditional symbolic designs, and principles involved in the production of traditional textile crafts to meet the challenges the world market imposes.
2. The thesis will serve as a link between the academia and the industry to stimulate creative understanding among teachers, students and producers for mutual benefit.
3. It will educate textile teachers, and instructors on how the various cultural symbolism, and principles used in this project can be adopted.
4. It will facilitate the understanding and effective use of the thesis, since photographs and drawings are included in the report to help readers visualise the various adaptations of the symbols in Asante traditional textile production.

The research outcome will also be a valuable asset and an adequate reference material to art historians, art educators, visual artists, art students, archivists, curators, social scientists, anthropologists, ethnographers and the general public by unearthing and making accessible important accumulated materials relating to cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles that are currently dormant and untapped to enhance the teaching of traditional textiles in institutions of learning. It hopes to stimulate further inquiry into this study.

1.12 Facilities

Libraries consulted for information were:

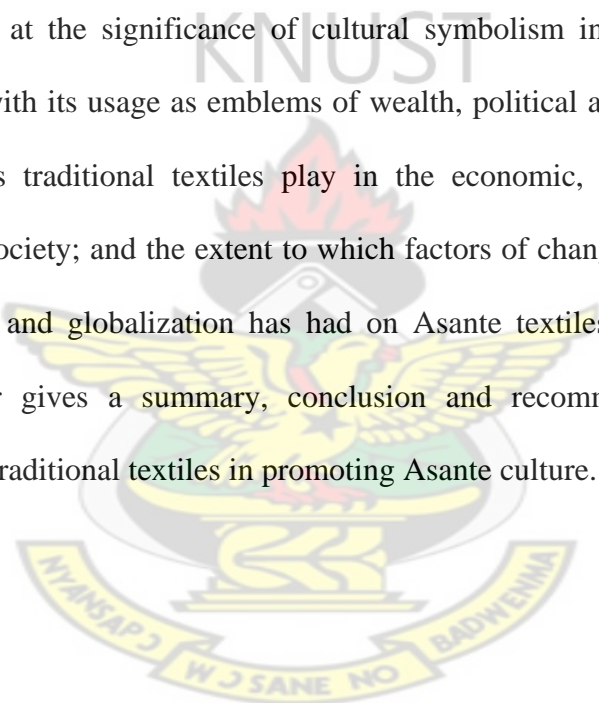
- a) College of Art and Social Science Libraries, KNUST, Kumasi
- b) Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Main Library, Kumasi
- c) British Council Library, Kumasi
- d) Wesley College Library, Kumasi
- e) Kumasi Polytechnic Library, Kumasi
- f) Ashanti Library, Kumasi
- g) Balme Library, Legon, Accra
- h) University College of Education , Kumasi Campus Library
- i) Library of the Department of General Art Studies, College of Art and Social Sciences. K.N.U.S.T., Kumasi.
- j) The Internet

1.13 Arrangement of text

In accordance with the research objectives, the thesis comprises seven chapters. The first sets forth the problems, their relevance and objectives, and its ethnographic

background. Chapter two reviews related literature on cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles under the following themes; Symbolism, Interpreting Symbolism in Art, Colour Symbolism, Colour Therapy, Literary Works on Asante Traditional Symbols and an Overview of African Traditional Textiles. Chapter three deals with methodology and surveys the role of symbolism in traditional textiles in today's Asante. Chapter four focuses on the metaphoric interpretations of cultural symbolism identified and used in Asante traditional textiles.

Chapter five looks at the significance of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles and deals with its usage as emblems of wealth, political and religious power, the important roles traditional textiles play in the economic, social and cultural development of a society; and the extent to which factors of change- including literal education, religion and globalization has had on Asante textiles.. Chapter six, the concluding chapter gives a summary, conclusion and recommendations for the sustainable role of traditional textiles in promoting Asante culture.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Overview

Textile uniqueness in the sense of symbolism reflects in a nation's culture and many forms of art especially traditional textiles. The major designs that have flourished in the 20th century are those which are both cherished in their local context and increasingly sought after by collectors and museums worldwide are obviously the African traditional textiles Clarke (2002, p.8).

Although there are no specific book titles that directly address this particular research on symbolism in Asante traditional textiles, there are, however, some related literatures which are pertinent to the research that address key words and bring to fore the clarity of the topic. This chapter considers the following topics for the review of related literature: Symbolism, Technical parameters for analyzing symbols or patterns, Symbolic designed textiles, Symbols in woven fabrics, Symbols in patchwork, Symbols in woven carpets, Flag symbolism, Mud cloth symbolism, Totemism in textiles, Iconography in textiles, Interpreting Symbolism in textiles, Symbolism in Ancient Egyptian textiles, Colour Symbolism in textiles, Colour Therapy in the context of textile symbolism, symbolism in Ghanaian Textiles and Designs, African wax prints and The socio-cultural implications of textile symbolism.

2.2 Symbolism

The need to explain the universal presence of symbols in all societies and to explain their importance is a matter of concern to many. In human history, symbols have been used to

express ideas, communicate meanings, and convey emotion.

([uk.encarta.msn.com/.../Symbolism; anthropology\).html](http://uk.encarta.msn.com/.../Symbolism;_anthropology).html))

In textiles, symbolism is the use of a unit, motif or design, which represents a deeper meaning than the unit, motif or design themselves. This kind of extension of meaning can transform the unit, motif or design into a very powerful instrument of communication. The relationship between the unit, motif or design and its meaning is an arbitrary one; however, they are set by rules and social convention. Producers and dealers usually handed down descriptive explanations of symbols, e.g. the "comb motif" or "spanner symbol". These descriptions do not compare with the original messages of the symbols. They developed over long periods of time but they also degenerated in the course of time. The only way to understand symbolism in textiles is by placing these products from the same regions but from different centuries side by side.

(http://www.kelim-art.de/exhib/2006/0506/e_index.html).

The strength of the people's culture and greatness lies in their ability to keep alive in the dark secrecy of symbolism the cherished truths and values of life. This adage is demonstrated strongly in African textiles. African textiles have long been appreciated for their beauty. That beauty is achieved through the choice of colours and designs or symbols, as well as by the manipulation of designs or symbols and colours to form pleasing patterns. African textiles however, seem to favour a more improvised, fluid effect that plays with deliberate asymmetries and pattern variations (Clarke 2002).

2.3 Parameters for analyzing symbols or patterns

The study of symmetry offers one approach to analyzing patterns in textile fabrics. Through symmetry analysis we may identify areas of pattern that exhibit expected repetitions, and areas that vary from that expectation if the whole fabric is to be considered as a symbolic object. To be able to appreciate and understand these symbolisms, the following technical terms ought to be explained i.e., pattern, symmetry, asymmetry, and symmetry-breaking. What is a pattern? A pattern, whether in nature or art, relies upon three characteristics: a unit, repetition, and a system of organization.

What is symmetry? Symmetry is a fundamental organizing principle in nature and in culture. The analysis of symmetry allows for understanding the organization of a pattern, and provides a means for determining both invariance and change. By varying relationships within patterns where symmetry is expected, otherwise predictable and repetitive patterns may be transformed into great works of art. Surprisingly, symmetry often relies upon asymmetry. (<http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/symmetry/index.html>)

What is asymmetry? Asymmetry is both the absence of symmetry, and a fundamental basis for symmetry. Symmetry analysis may result in the identification of a fundamental region that is the smallest element required to explain the repetition that forms a pattern, the fundamental region is asymmetrical. A motif or symbol may be asymmetrical (as for example, the *nkyinkyim* - zigzag), figure 1, or it may be symmetrical (as for example, the *nea onnim no sua a, ohu*- knowledge, life-long education), figure 2. The fundamental region, repeated to form a pattern, consists of a motif or design, or portion thereof, and the surrounding area that defines the unit of repeat.

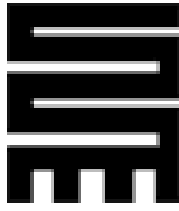


Fig 1: An asymmetrical motif

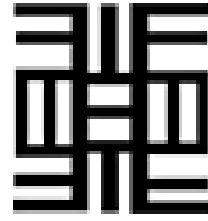


Fig 2: A symmetrical motif

What is symmetry-breaking? Symmetry-breaking exists where symmetry is expected, but that expectation is not met. It is playfulness with symmetry that results in intriguing patterns. In nature, symmetry is imperfect, although mathematicians may treat it as an ideal. In textiles, too, it seems that the approximation of symmetry, rather than its precision, teases the mind as it pleases the eye.

(<http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/symmetry/index.html>)

Possibilities for the composition of a design or symbols are limitless, and may rely upon choices. But possibilities for the repetition of that design or symbol, whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, are limited by the laws of pattern formation and are subject to the constraints of symmetry. In all patterns there are four basic symmetry operations that may be performed upon a fundamental region, design or motif. Mathematicians call these rigid motions because they suggest movements without distortion of size or shape around a point, along or across a line, or to cover a plane.

(<http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/symmetry/index.html>)

For example, the letter **F** (and the blank space around it as shown in fig., 3) is taken as our fundamental region to demonstrate the four basic symmetry operations or rigid motions:



Translation

rigid motion with repetition

along a line



Reflection

rigid motion with repetition

across a line (axis)



Glide

rigid motion with reflected
repetition along a line



Reflection Rotation

rigid motion with repetition
around a point

Fig 3: four basic symmetry operations or rigid motions

In textiles, the repetition of a design to form a pattern is accomplished by counting and repeating sequences of units or motifs. The basic symmetries in textiles are thus effected units/motif by units/motif.

2.3.1 Border patterns

In textiles, border patterns result when any or several of the basic symmetries are repeated in one direction. The constraints of symmetry are such that there are seven (7) possible combinations :(fig., 4)

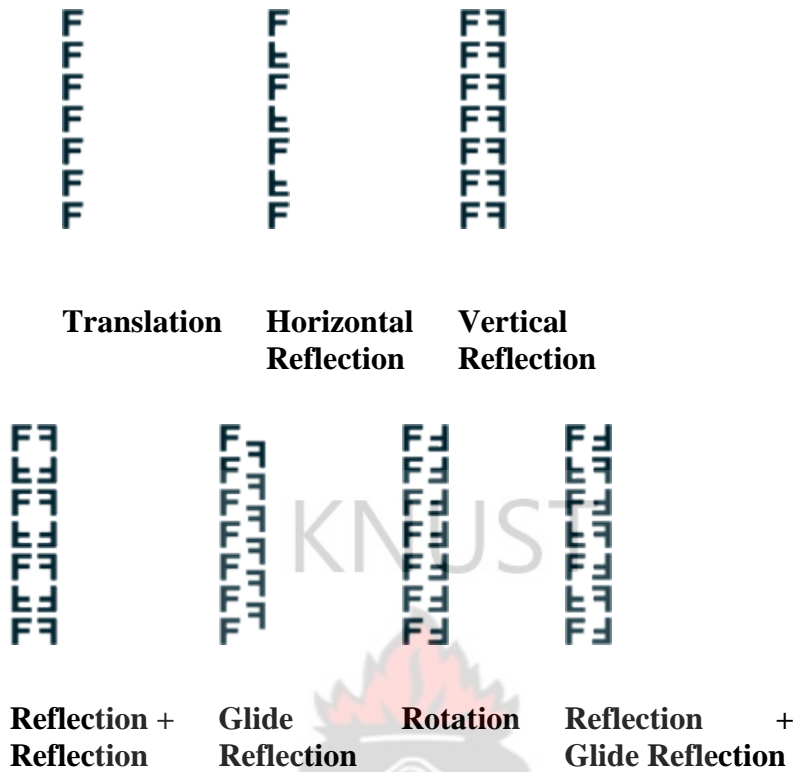
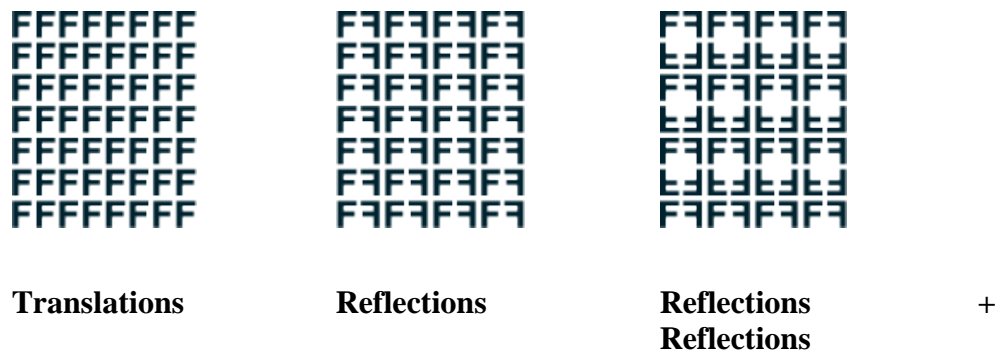


Fig 4: border patterns

(<http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/symmetry/index.html>)

2.3.2 Field patterns

Field patterns result when symmetrical repetition takes place in two directions, thus forming a two-dimensional pattern that covers the plane. There are seventeen (17) systems which mathematicians classify as symmetry groups:





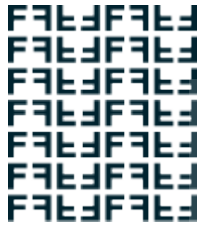
**Glide
Reflections**



**Reflections
Glide Reflections**



+ Rotations (2)



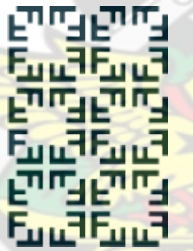
**Reflections
Rotations (2)**

+

**Rotations (2)
Glide Reflections**

+

**Rotations (2)
Reflections + Reflections**



Rotations (4)

**Reflections
Rotations (4)**

+

**Rotations (4)
Reflections**



Rotations (3)

**Reflections
Rotations (3)**

+

**Rotations (3)
Reflections**

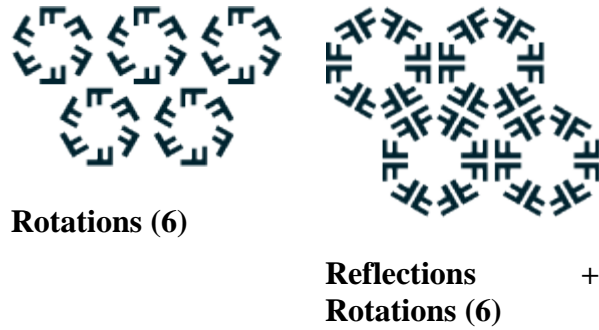


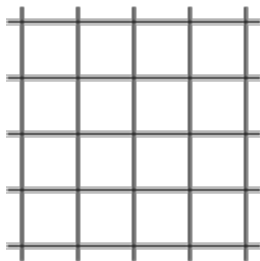
Fig 5: Field patterns
 (<http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/symmetry/index.html>)

2.3.3 Grids and Tessellations

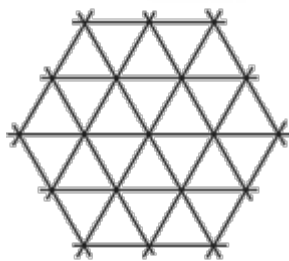
The easiest way to analyze a pattern is to locate points of rotation and lines of symmetry; because the rigid motions require centers of rotation and axes of repetition or reflection for symmetry to be present. (<http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/symmetry/index.html>)

What is an axis? An axis is a visible or implied line that is vertical, horizontal, or diagonal, along which designs are repeated or reflected to form patterns.

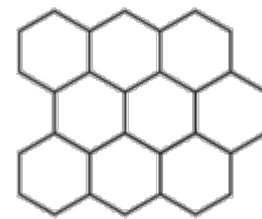
What is a grid? A grid is a visible or implied series of points, or axes that intersect. Grids underlie the structure of all two-dimensional patterns as shown below.



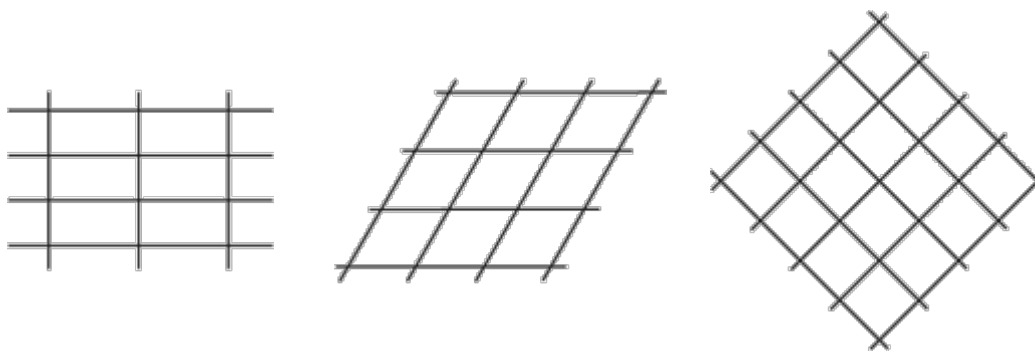
Square Grid



Triangular Grid



Hexagonal Grid



Rectangular Grid

Rhomboid Grid

Oblique Grid (Square)

Fig 6: two-dimensional patterns

Grids are usually based on regular polygons: squares, equilateral triangles, and hexagons. Or they can be based on rectangles, parallelograms and rhomboids. The arrangement of polygons that forms a grid is called a tessellation. Other shapes may also tessellate.

What is a tessellation? A tessellation is a pattern formed by the repetition of a single unit or shape that, when repeated, fills the plane with no gaps and no overlaps. Familiar examples of tessellations are the patterns formed by paving stones or bricks, and cross-sections of beehives. Tessellations are not typical of African textiles except as visible grid structures. Although they often appear in minor borders, only rarely are tessellations used as field patterns. (<http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/symmetry/index.html>)

2.4 Symbolic designed textiles

The art of poetry, articulated art in the form of mythology, are of symbolic objects used in adorning African textiles. African traditional textiles are a visual representation of history, philosophy, ethics, and social code of conduct, religious beliefs, political thought

and aesthetic principles. Today the main traditional events and court rituals for which indigenous African textiles are produced are not regular experiences in many sales outlets. Many of them have been replaced by modern mechanized designed printed or woven textiles; the evidence is seen in many social functions within the metropolis.

2.5 Symbols in woven fabrics

The use of strips is a chief construction technique, a dominant design element, and a symbolic form in West African, textiles. Probably invented by Mande peoples, strips-weaving technology spread via Mande Dyula traders throughout West Africa. These long narrow strips, once used as a form of currency, are woven plain or with patterns. A mixture of traditional, naturalistic and stylized configurations of symbols dominates most African traditional textiles. The various abstract designs have highly symbolic names dubbed after important personalities, social events and proverbial sayings. Its possession is a symbol of status and wealth in the society- Maude Southwell Wahlman (2001: 29). (http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/reader/0965376613/ref=sib_rdr_ex?ie=UTF8&p=S00V&j=1#reader-page)

Woven strips are often sewn together into larger fabrics to be worn as clothing or displayed as wall hangings and banners. This technical process of sewing long woven strips together to make larger fabrics usually worn as clothing, as in a seventeenth-century coat, is so old in West Africa that it has become a tradition, and has moved into the realm of aesthetic preference (Clarke 2002). Strips were preferred in many African textiles whether they were woven, tie-dyed. Cloth strips were a portable art that permitted

flexible designs. Strips were such a strong tradition that they became an essential part of ceremonial costumes. For example, the Yoruba *Egungun* society, in Nigeria, exists to honour ancestors, and commissions festival costumes that are worn by young men who personify the spirit of the ancestor- Wahlman (2001: 29).

(http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/reader/0965376613/ref=sib_rdr_ex?ie=UTF8&p=S00V&j=1#reader-page)

2.6 Symbols in Patchwork

Sewing strips together to form a larger textile is a form of patch-work. Many other examples of patchwork occur in the history of African textiles. Notable examples include cotton *Jibbeh*, Fante Asafo flags, *Egungun* costumes of the Yoruba people, Cameroon costumes, and patched- together bark cloth and raffia cloth made primarily by the Kuba and the Pygmies in Central Africa. Mbuti artists also paint bark cloth (plate 2) with designs that resemble strips and patchwork- Wahlman (2001: 29).

(http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/reader/0965376613/ref=sib_rdr_ex?ie=UTF8&p=S00V&j=1#reader-page)



Plate 2: Mbuti bark cloth painted

http://www.bufordskenya.com/pygmy_bark_pg3.htm

Plate 2 shows irregular lineal lines that create a picture of uncertainty and gives a feeling of assembling different components of lines into one piece of composition



Plate 3: cut-pile embroidered raffia cloth; *Kuba* kingdom, Kasai Region, Zaire- *From African textiles by Clarke 2002*

The patterns in Plate 3 are generally drawn from a huge repertoire of known symbols, at least two hundred of which are identified by name. The regular interlacing of warp and weft on the background cloth seem to promote a regular and symmetrical design, in fact *Kuba* artists seem to favour a more improvisational fluid effect that plays with asymmetries and pattern variation (Clarke 2002). The symbols in each grid or patch area in the field pattern are a translation in arrangement and the whole body of design maintains the same combination of colours.

2.7 Large Shapes, Strong Colours

Large Shapes, Strong contrasting colours, such as the indigo blue-and-white found in early and contemporary West African cloth ensure that a person can recognize the pattern in a cloth from a distance and in strong sunlight. It can be important to recognize patterns from a distance if one needs to give a proper greeting to someone. Important people wear

cloths with complex patterns and a great deal of colour. They believe in strong colour contrast characterized by strips of bright colours, large designs, asymmetry, multiple patterns, improvisations, and symbolic forms. Blue and white designs, as in the earliest cloths, are still made with domestic cotton dyed blue from an indigenous indigo plant (Clarke 2002: 17). (Plate 4)



Plate 4: An indigo dyed Ivorian cloth of blue and white vertical strip arrangement with intentionally locally produced spanned dyed yarns, a signature of motherhood. (<http://home.clara.net/adire/indigo2.htm>)

Later more colourful fabrics were made by unraveling European cloth and reweaving the bright colours African style. *Nasadua* cloth, made by the Asante weavers in Ghana, is the best known of the colourful West African textiles (see plate 5 & 6). It was once made from silk, but has been made with rayon since about 1947 (Maude Southwell Wahlman (2001).

Plate 5 is a *kente* cloth called *Toku okra ntoma* arranged in white, red, yellow and green background with the main motifs arranged in half-drop grids containing *nwotowa akyem* and *nwotowa* designs forming the field patterns arranged in a rigid motion with repetition along a horizontal line. The border pattern is a reflection + glide reflection arrangement of *akyem* with *babadua* and *nwotowa* design immediately above it.



Plate 5: *Toku okra ntoma*-from catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah 2006



Plate 6: KNUST *nyansapow ntoma*-from catalogue of cultures designed by Ekow Asmah 2006

Plate 6: is a kente stole called KNUST *nyansapow ntoma* (a name based on the symbols used) with an elaborate border pattern of *babadua* and *nwotowa* alternating in three parallel lines sandwiched by a translation arrangement of a royal stool symbol on a black warp background. The field pattern consists of an alternating *Achimota kanea* (Achimota light) and *nyansa pow* (wisdom knot) symbols crafted in the *Asanteman* colours of yellow, black and green, combinations of yarns, (A.E. Asmah, 2006).

2.8 Symbols in woven carpets

Distinctive styles based upon local traditions of production, availability of materials and dyestuffs, and preferences for particular symbols, patterns, designs, and colours were developed over the centuries, in rug-producing regions of the world. Refer to Plates 7 & 8.

2.8.1 Carpet, Central Asia, Turkmenistan (Chodor), nineteenth century

Seemingly simple in its arrangement of symmetrical medallions in the central field, this carpet exhibits a surprising degree of sophistication in its play with symmetry. Close examination of the stylized floral forms in each medallion reveals that there is no reflection along the horizontal axis. The field pattern combines vertical reflection and glide reflection with colour alternation resulting in a series of vertical bands of colour.

Above and below the central field, the symmetrical design of a serrated leaf is repeated as a field pattern using reflections and glide reflections (see plate 7). According to Myers (1924) all symbols and patterns reflect the pure beauty of numbers, considered to be of divine origin in Islamic doctrine. And by their very nature, symbols/patterns exhibit multiplicity as expressions of unity, which is an attribute of God. Symbols in such carpets may thus be seen as expressive of a world view in which multiplicity exists in relation to the unity of all existence. The symbol, medallion is an emblem of laurel wreath and a gift of worship as such carpets are normally used for worship.

(<http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/symmetry/index.html>)

Left and right borders reflection+ reflection+ glide reflections

Central field reflection+ reflection+ glide reflections

The textile Museum R37.61, Acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1914, 207 x 113 cm

Symmetries approximated in the rug





Plate 7: Symmetrical design of a serrated leaf

(<http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/symmetry/index.html>)

2.8.2 Tent girth, Central Asia, Turkmenistan, Nineteenth century

Tent girths are wrapped around the trellis structure of a circular tent, serving both a decorative and a structural function. The fascinating features in this tent girth are the symbols woven within each strip. The symbols are the embodiments of the philosophy that pertains in the Turkish regions where such girths are used. A close observation reveals a Carmel, a symbol of persistence and endurance, a mother cow and a baby cow a symbol of motherhood and protection, just to mention a few.

The long and narrow format of tent bands lends itself to border patterns but no field pattern. Typically, the designs are either asymmetrical, or symmetrical with reflections along both the horizontal and vertical axis. In weaving, the rectilinearity of interlacing warps and wefts is well-suited to the symmetry operations of reflection and glide reflection. (<http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/symmetry/index.html>)

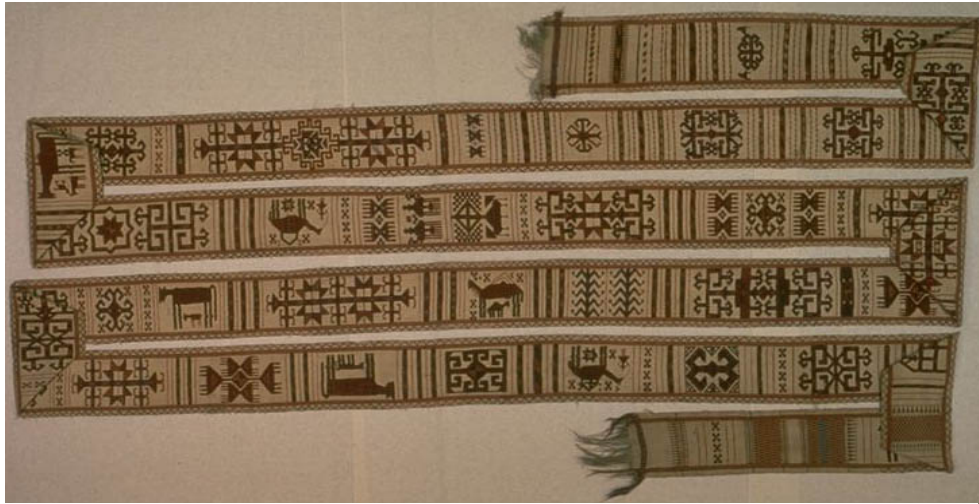


Plate 8: Tent girth, Central Asia, Turkmenistan, Nineteenth Century
(<http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/symmetry/index.html>)

Symmetries approximated in this rug.

Reflection + reflection



Fig 7: border patterns of Tent girth

(<http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/symmetry/index.html>)

2.9 Flag symbolism

Flags, are light pieces of cloth, usually rectangular in shape, but varying in size, colour, and design, and intended for use as an emblem or as a kind of signaling device. Depending on their form and function, flags are variously known as standards, banners, ensigns, or pennants.

The best-known type of flag is that used for identification, such as the flag of a country or flags that distinguish governmental subdivisions, officials, agencies, and services; military units; and various other types of organizations and institutions. Some flags convey information, such as those giving notice of an impending storm or a state of quarantine, or as in signaling from one location to another. Flags sometimes also serve as trophies of achievement or victory in athletic contests. Flags have been used as symbols of ethnic, national, and military identity since ancient times. *Asafo* companies of *Fantes* of Ghana use appliqué ceremonial textiles in the form of flags. The designs on these flags are proverbial allusions that promote the sponsoring company, (Plate 9) says (Edusei, 2003).



Plate 9: *Asafo* flag of the *Fante* men's company 2; appliqué made from cotton fabrics. From the *Art of African Textiles* (2002) Duncan Clarke

The designs on this flag are proverbial allusions that promote the sponsoring company. The ship and the shark indicate that the flag predates the British colonial era. Surprisingly, Benhazin the famous king of the Fon ethnic group of Dahomey, (now, the Republic of Benin) and king *Agadja* also of Dahomey had the shark as their insignia and the ship as their symbol. Both kings commissioned appliqué cloths to be made for them

with their respective symbols, an indication that it was an important royal art told in pictures of the history of the Dahomey kingdom (Clarke, 1997).

2.9.1 Chinese National Flag

Below is an example of the first version of the Chinese national flag, which was used from 1872 to 1890. It showcases a blue dragon, which symbolizes the East, and a bright red sun against a vivid yellow background. The dragon is a creature of Teutonic mythology; usually represented as breathing fire and having a reptilian body and sometimes wings that signify protection/security (Microsoft Encarta ® 2009, 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation).



Plate 10: shows the first version of the Chinese national flag
From; National Maritime Museum/Dorling Kindersley :-(Microsoft Encarta ® 2009, 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation).

Appliqué/embroidery is also applied on clothing and some ceremonial textiles of the royalty, for example, state umbrellas, tents, *akuninim ntoma* and banners.



Plate 11: shows an embroidered Asante *akuninim ntoma*
<http://www.adire.clara.net/akunitan1.htm>

This is common among the royals of the Nigerians, Ivorians, Senegalese and *Fantes*, *Asantes* and *Ewes* of Ghana and the Fon ethnic of Dahomey (Clarke.2002). Plate 11, above shows an example of a typical embroidered *Asante akuninim ntoma*

The cloth shows totemic symbols of a porcupine, a crocodile, a sword and some elements of the Asante crest pregnant with philosophical ideologies. The arrangements of these symbols are obviously asymmetric.

Another form of embroidered textiles was produced by the *Nupe* craftsmen for the Fulani aristocracy of the *Sokoto* ethnic group of Northern Nigeria. Embroidered abstract and proverbial symbols are made on smocks, caps, ladies kaftans and other dresses, (Plate. 12). It appears both on hand woven and printed fabrics. The art is also popular in Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Togoland and Senegal. (Ulzen – Appiah: 2005)



Plate 12: a silk woven robe embroidered mostly by the *Nupe* craftsmen for the courts of the Fulani aristocracy of the *Sokoto*, Caliphate, -Northern Nigeria. Twentieth century. <http://www.adireafricantextiles.com/agbadainfo.htm>

Plate 12, shows a cluster of selected royal symbols arranged around the neck of the smock to give it an elegance that befits a Fulani aristocrat. Each of these symbols has names that easily relates to other designs used.

2.10 Traditional Northern smock

The inhabitants of Northern Ghana weave a simple striped fabric with limited colours for their traditional smock using basically geometrical shapes, (Plate. 13). Natural objects used from nature are the lizard, the scorpion, the fowl, the spider, the crab and the *talantular*. The scorpion and the *talantular* (small stung creatures) are used to signify that even the insignificant counts in nation building. Vegetation oriented designs like the *bankye vari* motif, (cassava leaf), the *tupaeri* motif, (bean seed), are not common with ordinary male outfits but only for the royalties and the rich. These designs have the tradition of using yellow ochre as the background colour interwoven with dark shades of colour.



Plate 13: A Traditional Ghanaian Northern Smock worn by former president of the Republic of Ghana Jerry John Rawlings- from the catalogue of cultures - by Ekow Asmah-2006

According to *Abajori*, (1998), there are special motifs reserved for hunters, chiefs', chief's wives, warriors, attendants of chiefs and secret societies. The *nyolanyo* design (the oak leaf) now not in use was reserved for slave traders in the Northern Region (salaga). The limited dark colours of the smock are enhanced by introducing bright colours like yellow, red, green, and blue during embroidery. Other source of motifs was obtained from proverbs and the appellations of chiefs. Example 'fire is burning stones so wood run away' meaning 'I destroy the unmovable and I will destroy you in no time' stated by a powerful chief with great magical powers during one of their ethnic wars.

She further states that one of the animal oriented designs was derived from the foot prints of the hyena (*gbongbobere*) a replica of the *akoko nan tia ne ba a enkum no* of the Asante *Adinkra* motif. This design is commonly used in the traditional attire '*fugu*' both for the

royals and the ordinary depending on the quality and richness of the design. The bee design of the *Dagombas* is considered as one of the totems of the *Dagomba* ethnic group. According to *Abajori*, (1998), legend has it that in one of their ethnic wars, the *Dagombas* got short of weapons and seeing no hope of winning, the chief ordered his subjects to blow their nose towards the opponents. To their surprise bees came out of their noses to chase out the enemies. This sacred insect today forms part of the royal motifs. The *giwa* design is from the task of the elephant. Every male member of the royal family wears ivory bangles on their arms to distinguish them from the ordinary due to their significance. Today, the design has been modified by weavers and embroiders and this makes it difficult to recognize it at a glance (*Abajori*, 1998).

2.11 Embroidered Raffia Cloths of Zaire (Now Democratic Republic of Congo)

Raffia cloth during the Renaissance period was the treasures of kings and queens, (Plate. 14) but died out in the face of competition from imported European cloth, however, elsewhere in the Democratic Republic of Congo, production of raffia cloth continued and are now used during funerals of wealthy elders (Clarke, 1997).

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, symbols are more often introduced during weaving or embroidered or appliquéd on plain cotton fabric while some are cut pile and others woven in square yards and bound together (Plate 14, & 15). These cloths continue to form a practical and versatile currency throughout the region of the country, says Phyllis Martin an art historian (Price, 1976).



Plate 14: Kuba raffia embroidered cloth dimension 24" x 20.5" – from the art of African Textiles by Clarke 2002



Plate 15: Kuba raffia woven cloth dimension 21.5" x 20.5" -from the art of African Textiles by Clarke 2002

Complex patterns were woven into cloths in the course of weaving; it was by far more common to produce plain fabric that was subsequently decorated with embroidery and appliqué. Their remarkable exploration of abstract patterning were derived from nature or from images left on sand surfaces and these are linked to their way of life and given appropriate names that befits its purpose (Clarke, 2002).

2.12 Chinese Dragon Robe

Plate 16 shows a detail Chinese dragon robe showing off the elaborate embroidery that is often incorporated into formal clothing in China. The stylized images of dragons, kites, birds, and clouds are typical totemic motifs in Chinese fabric. The robe is designed in the loose and flowing style that was common in the 19th century.



Plate 16: A detailed embroidery of a Chinese dragon
From; Bridgeman Art Library, London/New York: - (Microsoft Encarta ® 2009, 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation).

2.13 Javanese Batiks

Batiks are made by dyeing fabrics that have been treated with a water-resistant wax.



Plate 17: A Javanese batik decorated with narrative Wayang (puppet) designs.
From; Werner Forman Archive/Art Resource, NY: - (Microsoft Encarta ® 2009, 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation).

The Javanese batiks pictured here in plate 17 are decorated with narrative Wayang (puppet) designs impregnated with ancient heroic stories that signify virtue and courage.

In Java, the making of Batiks has become a commercial industry.

2.14 Batik in Java



Plate 18: A traditional geometric or floral Javanese batik
From; Thomas Shin Suzuki/Asia Network, Co., Ltd.:- (Microsoft
Encarta ® 2009, 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation).

Batik, known to the ancient Sumerians, was developed into an art of great beauty by the Javanese and other Indonesian peoples (Plate 18). They used traditional geometric or floral motifs, often symbols of religion or social status with philosophical undertone, most frequently in blue and brown tones. The batik process has become commercialized in Indonesia (Microsoft Encarta ® 2009, 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation).

Batik and Tie – Dyed textile now exist in many African countries including Nigeria, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Ghana. Many individuals including the author of this thesis have written books on them and have significantly advanced this textile art in the area of production and design. Plate 20, 21 are examples of some West African batik works.



Plate 19: wax-resist cloth with a design inspired by *bogolanfini*, manufactured by Sotiba, Senegal, in the 1990's. From the *Art of African Textiles* by Duncan Clarke 2002



Plate 20: shows batik fabric called *Asummtwe* – from the *catalogue of cultures* by Ekow Asmah-unpublished

Portraying various ac
figure and in times c
Almighty God) are rep
life are the black linea



indicated by the dancing
ings of *Nyankopon* (the
ent the path of human

KNUST

Plate 21: shows a *kanto* print, an advanced form of batik that engages the use of screen in its production process.
—from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*—
unpublished

The field pattern of this design is a half-drop translation arrangement and the symbol used is the royal stool embedded in a stylized *Adinkra* symbol called *pempamsie* meaning steadfastness, valour and fearlessness.

2.15 Ancient Peruvian Textiles Gown

This gown was worn by a noble of the Chimú kingdom, which flourished in Peru from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. Like many ancient Peruvian textiles, it features a pattern of stylized animals, in this case, birds. The dyes were made from vegetable or mineral substances and the colours—brown, scarlet, and yellow ochre—are typical of Chimú textiles (Plate 21).



Plate 22: An ancient Peruvian textiles gown-From;
Bridgeman Art Library, London/New York- (*Microsoft ®
Encarta ® 2009., © 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation*).

2.16 Navajo (Native Americans) Blanket

The Navajo people (Native Americans) were accomplished weavers and most of their weavings were blankets intended for wearing. They then turned to weaving rugs. This nineteenth-century chief's blanket incorporates the symbolic diamonds, triangles, and stripes typical of Navajo designs. This signifies that there is always a hidden secret in the treasured palaces of the world. The black stripes represents the constructed past and the red and black diamonds/triangles represents the admirable treasures that is visible to the world- (*Microsoft ® Encarta ® 2009., © 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation*).



Plate 23: A typical Navajo designed blanket
 From; Christie's Images/Corbis:- (*Microsoft ® Encarta ®*
 2009., © 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation).

2.17 Mud cloth symbolism

Although mud cloths with a black background and white design are considered the traditional colouring of the cloth, other colours are used. A rust colour is supposed to represent the strong supernatural powers that protect the hunter. Bamana hunters also wear *Bogolanfini* in the form of red mud cloth laden with leather amulets, forceful visual symbols of the supernatural powers believed necessary for successful hunters to possess. It also signifies blood from either the hunt or from warfare and is useful as a form of camouflage. Each piece of mud cloth tells a story. No two pieces are alike and each pattern and colour combination has a meaning. The symbols, arrangements, colour as well as shape of the mud cloth reveal secrets. Women and girls typically wear the white colour during ceremonial events. Gray is a rarely seen colour but like rust, it serves as a camouflage for hunters. To the disdain of the older generation, nontraditional colours such as reds, purples, yellows and oranges are now being used. The mud cloth is also used

to define a person's social status, character or occupation. *Bogolanfini* is an expression of Malian national identity and a symbol of belonging to African culture.

Clarke, (1997) affirms this by saying that over the last ten years the perception of *Bogolan* mud cloth has been transformed from a despised rural cloth associated with non-Islamic peasants to a symbol of national identity. While international, its new influence embraces both Parisian interior designs and as Afrocentric dress in the United States of America. He continues by saying that in its local context it remains a crucial symbolic fabric for garment worn to mark important life cycle stages including birth, female circumcision, marriage and death. Plate 24, 25 are some examples.



Plate 24: *Bogolanfini* women's wrapper: - mud-dyed hand-woven cloth; Bamana, Mali, twentieth century. From the art of African Textiles by Duncan Clarke-2002

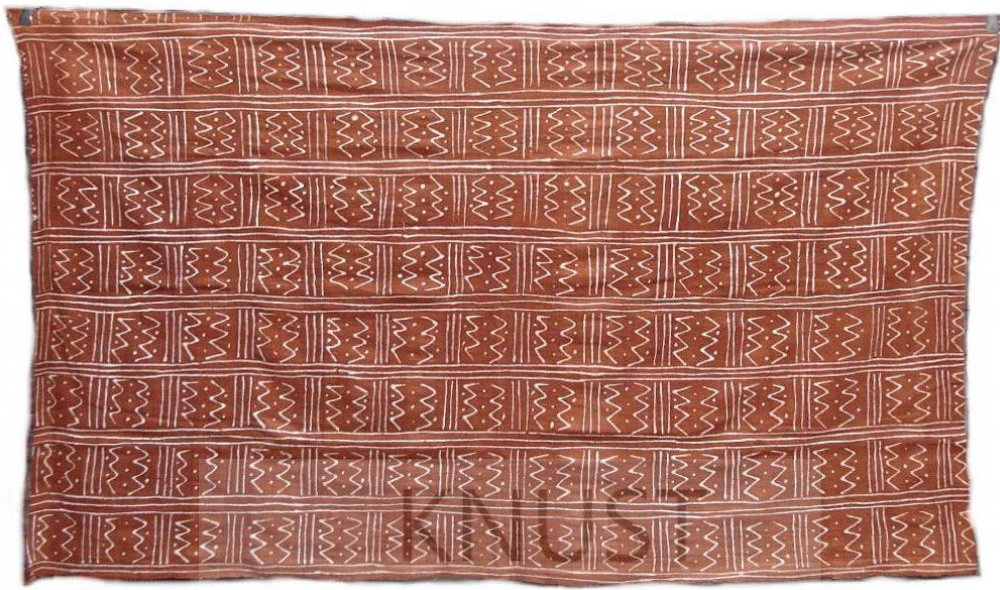


Plate 25: *Bogolanfini* women's wrapper, mud-dyed hand-woven cloth;
Bamana, Mali: - (<http://www.adire.clara.net/bogolangallery.htm>)



Plate 26: *Bogolanfini* women's wrapper, mud-dyed hand-woven cloth;
Bamana, Mali: - (<http://www.adire.clara.net/bogolangallery.htm>)

2.18 Totemism in textiles

Totemism is a complex system of ideas, symbols, and practices based on an assumed relationship between an individual or a social group and a natural object known as a totem. The totem may be a particular species of bird, animal, or plant; or it may be a natural phenomenon or feature of the landscape with which a group believes itself linked in some way. The term totem is derived from the language of the *Ojibwa*, indigenous North American people. (Microsoft ® Encarta ® 2007 © 1993-2006 Microsoft Corporation)

Totems are used widely by social groups and organizations in the world; totems normally reflect in the flags they carry for instance, the Cameroon's national football team, the "Indomitable Lions" has a symbolic totem on their flag that reflects their name; similarly, the Nigerian, national male football team the Green Eagles and their female counterparts the Falcons have represented these birds in their flags. *Kotoko* – (porcupine) the totemic crest of the Asante football club represents the fighting spirit of the Asante Kotoko football team (Plate 27).

A symbolic flag is a piece of cloth, usually bunting or similar light material, plain, coloured, or bearing a device, varying in size and shape, but often oblong or square, used as an ensign or totem, standard, or signal or for display and decorative purposes. It is generally attached at one edge to a staff by which it may be hoisted (Microsoft ® Encarta ® 2009, 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation)



Plate 27: *Kotoko* – (porcupine) the totemic crest of the Asante football club: - from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asamah- unpublished

In Africa, the elephant is commonly used as a symbol of a King or of some great power and strength. For instance, the Zulus are known to address their king as "Great Elephant" "Powerful Elephant" etc. The beliefs and practices which are called totemism fall on the border line between the notion of power in object, or magic, and the idea of a personalized spirit in things or religion. Totem is part of the socio-culture life of Africa. It is seen among the ethnic, chieftaincy system, social clubs, political parties and the nation at large.

2.19 Iconography in textiles

Iconography is particularly important in the study of cultural allegoric textile prints, where many of the objects that are printed—armulets, calabashes, stools, *adinkra* symbols, birds or swords—have special significance, which are often symbolic or not. Iconographical textiles may be in Christian Symbolism as well as cultural symbolism

(Microsoft ® Encarta ® 2007 © 1993-2006 Microsoft Corporation). Below are two examples of iconographic symbolic textile works.



Plate 28: Senegalese bridal cloth normally presented to a woman by her mother-in-law on the occasion of the birth of her first child. They are used by all the inhabitants of Dakar and other cities but are mostly woven by Tukolor or Serer weavers. From the *Art of African Textiles* by Duncan Clarke (2002)

These textile designs are drawn from well-known proverbs, either directly through the incorporation of a written proverb on the cloth, or more commonly by depicting realistic images that refer to aspects of a proverb. A popular example of such allegoric textile prints is the type that shows a falling tree in the woods, recalling the Akan proverb ‘One tree alone cannot stand in the wind’, while another combines images of a family with skulls and the warning ‘Death spoils the family’. Such designs have educational significance; one of these is the so-called ‘hand and fingers’ design, which according to Clarke (2002), was in production by at least 1905 and has continued through numerous modifications ever since. This design, (Plate 29), showing the palm of a hand surrounded by rows of fingers, has many levels of symbolism: it refers to a proverb likening the interdependence of the ruler and the ruled to the hand and its fingers; the educational

element comes from the twelve pennies (a denomination) in the palm making up one shilling (another denomination in British currency); while it also recalls the ‘hand of Fatima’ a popular Islamic emblem for warding off the evil eye.



Plate 29: wax print cotton textiles; one of the latest English versions of the long-running “Hands and Fingers” design. (1990) From the Art of African Textiles by Duncan Clarke

2.20 Interpreting symbolism in textiles

Symbolism in Textiles serves to amplify the subject-matter of the artwork in which they appear. In a broader context, they can help to identify individual figures or the narrative theme of an artwork. To be effective, a symbol in a fabric must be widely understood. Even so, few symbols are universal and, when interpreting them in connection with textiles, it is often helpful to consider their cultural context. A peacock in a fabric, for example, may symbolize beauty in China or in Ghana, while in Renaissance allegories; it denotes the sin of pride. They can also represent abstract ideas or concepts. The most

celebrated of these symbols, sometimes depicted in textiles among Africans, is the *Akuaba*, a small wooden carving doll that represents fertility in Ghana



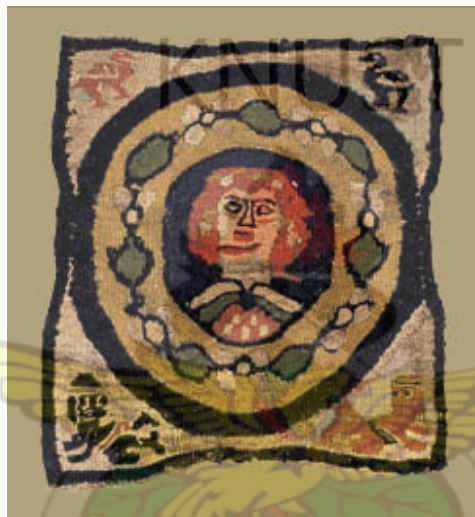
Plate 30; shows the ritual fertility symbol “*Akuaba*” at the background of the spiritual figure *Okomfo* giving the pictorial batik a spiritual dimension. The village scene at the base of the work gives it a traditional setting. -From the catalogue of Batik and Tie-dye Manual book -by Ekow Asmah-2005

Akuaba and other, similar symbols have been interpreted as mother goddesses, related in some way to fertility rites, although their precise meaning must remain speculative. Apart from the human symbolic figure like *Akuaba*, the most common form of early symbol was animal-related; an example is the lion signifying strength.

2.21 Symbolism in ancient Egyptian textiles

The use of animal symbols was far clearer, since most of the gods in ancient Egypt, were associated with creatures. Many were portrayed with animal heads and human bodies,

whereas others were shown entirely in animal form. Horus, the god of the sky, was traditionally linked with the falcon. His eyes were the sun and moon. The same bird was also associated with the sun god, Ra. The latter was usually depicted as a falcon-headed man, wearing a sun disc in his crown, sometimes symbolized simply by a winged solar disc. Below is a Tapestry Square with Female Bust made in wool and linen. (http://www.iub.edu/~iuam/online_modules/coptic/cophome.html)



Plate; 31 shows a square tapestry with a female bust representing the earth goddess *Ge*. The tapestry is made in wool and linen. *From 1999, Indiana University Art Museum*
http://www.iub.edu/~iuam/online_modules/coptic/cophome.html

The imagery is the personifications of the earth goddess *Ge* or the four seasons served as benevolent powers in a household. Many extant textile portraits illustrate a richly dressed woman with pendant earrings and a jeweled diadem, as in the piece shown on plate 31. This bust medallion is framed within by two concentric circles, the inner one a garland of leaves and flowers. The spandrels feature two ducks in the upper corners, which may signify the waters surrounding the earth, with black and red putti below. Without any

specific references to particular goddesses, images such as this bust may simply be associated with abundance and prosperity.

This female personification sports red hair, a green and gold cloak over a red dress and is set within a blue ground. Worked in wool on a linen warp in a tapestry weave technique, this relatively large fragment may have been part of a hanging or furnishing cushion or couch cover. (http://www.iub.edu/~iuam/online_modules/coptic/cophome.html)

Another example of Symbolism in ancient Egyptian textiles is the Eagle made in wool and linen. This red eagle with spread wings and head turned to look backward holds a bejeweled crown in its beak, framing its head like a nimbus. Its collar is encrusted with gems. The eagle belongs to a distinct fifth-century group, of large hangings or curtains. Hangings were an important feature in the decor of the houses of the rich. Their subjects were often allegorical images intended to exalt the interior beauty of the home (http://www.iub.edu/~iuam/online_modules/coptic/eagle.html).

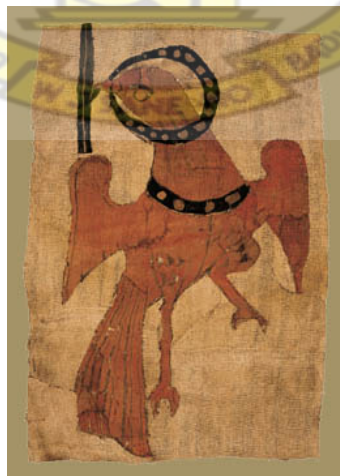


Plate 32: Tapestry-woven bird- the Eagle made in wool and linen.
From 1999, *Indiana University Art Museum*. -
(http://www.iub.edu/~iuam/online_modules/coptic/eagle.html)

The eagle as a symbol holds an important place in various ancient cultures. The Roman legions marched under a standard bearing the image of the Imperial eagle. The body of this madder-dyed tapestry-woven bird was once far more decorative. Traces remain of once-elegant striations on the eagle's neck, wings, and tail-feathers; the thighs were covered with flame like feather markings; the eagle's eye once gazed out at the viewer with an ochre pupil (http://www.iub.edu/~iuam/online_modules/coptic/eagle.html).

2.22 Colour symbolism in textiles

Symbolism of colours in textiles varies from culture to culture. Colours often symbolize different things; different qualities in various cultures and Africa for that matter Asantes are no exception to this disparity when it comes to the different meanings associated with different Colours in textiles (Microsoft ® Encarta ® 2009. © 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation).

Colour is considered one of the most useful and powerful design tools in the production of traditional textiles. People respond to different colours in different ways, and these responses take place on a subconscious, emotional level. It is interesting to realize that many of the Asante concepts of colour relate directly to western associations; others differ radically. White is associated with purity, virtue, joy, and the “spiritual entities [such] as God and spirits of the ancestors,” while black is related to deep feelings of melancholy, the devil, death, and old age. Green symbolizes “newness, fertility, vitality, and primness in growth” while gray is related to ashes and used to personify “blame and various degrees of degradation and shame” (*Antubam, 1963*).

Blue especially indigo, is related to “love [and] womanly tenderness” and calls to mind “early dawn [and] the crescent moon.” Gold in Asante, above all, “stands for royalty... the presence and influence of God in society, and the rule of the king”; it also symbolizes “continuous life... warmth, and controlled fire.” Differences in Asante and western colour associations are most apparent in the uses of red “to symbolize occasions of melancholy such as... any loss through death of a close relative, an act of war, national anger, sudden calamity, boisterousness, violence, a show of dissatisfaction and often considered a sacred colour and represents warning or danger (*Antubam, 1963*).

The death of a baby in Asante is generally wrapped in white and while in the Orient. However, white is the traditional colour for mourning. Asantes generally associate trust, divinity and stability with the blue colour, while purple and gold are often associated with Royalty, wealth and affluence; this can be seen with the various colours which the *Asante* King, *Otumfo* exhibits in every social functions (*Diary of Otumfuo-2005*). *Antubam*, (1963) again states that Purple and yellow, connote the dawn of a new day-illumination-inspiration. Gold, Black, and Green reminiscent of the Asante flag, immediately conveys notions of patriotism and, to some extent, oneness. Green has taken on a very strong connotation as the colour representing ecology and concern for the environment, however, yellow and gold convey meanings associated with money. (The reflection and meaning of the Asante flag is: “The rich black man living in a thick forest”).

2.23 Colour therapy in the context of textile symbolism

Specific colours in textiles have different effects in relation to medicine and emotions as far as *Asante* culture is concerned. These effects are generally experienced in the socio-cultural, religious and medical sectors of the *Asante* culture. Below is an excerpt of a research notes on the effect of colour by Dr. A.L. Marsland (list copied from Biopulse.org). The psychology and therapeutic effect of one wearing the following colours are believed to affect the will and emotions of the user. Below are some examples.

- a). Black: self-confidence, power, strength
- b). Blue: calming, lowers blood pressure, decreases respiration
- c). Green: soothing, relaxing mentally as well as physically, helps those suffering from depression, anxiety, nervousness
- d). Violet: suppresses appetite, provides a peaceful environment, good for migraines
- e). Pink: used in diet therapy as an appetite suppressant, relaxes muscles, relieves tension, soothing
- f). Yellow: energizes, relieves depression, improves memory, and stimulates appetite
- g). Orange: energizes, stimulates appetite and digestive system
- h). Red: stimulates brain wave activity, increases heart rate, respirations and blood pressure.

2.24 Symbolism in Ghanaian textiles

Adinkra symbols have become popular and widely used in the various art forms because of the prominent exposure given to them by some eminent foreign anthropologists and

local artists in the form of documentation. Interestingly, some of the symbols are being modified to suit various purposes and the new ones are designed to add to the existing stock. One of the oldest known *adinkra* cloths acquired in 1817 by Bowdich exhibited in the British museum, consists of nine motifs (Cole/Ross, 1977: 44-45). About a century later Rattray listed fifty three motifs (Rattray, 1927: 265-268). According to Cole and Ross, “there may never have been a rigidly standardized set of designs; new motifs have probably always been introduced periodically. This has escalated in recent years, and words have even been included as designs, a logical extension of the verbal-visual nexus” (Cole and Ross, 1977: 46).

Agbo, (2006), states that one eminent Ghanaian artist who has contributed to the preservation and the promotion of the *adinkra* symbols is Ablade Glover. He has to his credit a chart on the *adinkra* symbols with a collection of sixty *adinkra* symbols with their Akan names and proverbs explained literally in English. Another significant contributor to the promotion of traditional symbols is Kayper-Mensah, who gives a vivid explanation of a collection of *adinkra* symbols through an effective use of short poems. Nana J.V. Owusu- Ansah is also another innovative contributor who designed some new *adinkra* motives. Some of these motifs are nearly retention and a slight modification of the old *Adinkra* symbols.

The assertion by most writers is that Symbolism generally is developed over long periods of time but they degenerate in the course of time. The only way to understand symbolism in textiles is by placing these products from the same regions but from different centuries

side by side. Again the empirical studies conducted revealed that most writers have research on *adinkra* symbols and their meanings but failed to deal comparatively with the state of these symbols over the years. However, they all are with the view that cultural symbolism is the embodiment of the people's culture, philosophy, their cherished truths and values of life.

The weaving by the *Ewe* people of south-eastern Ghana has its own independent history and distinctive styles with even greater diversity of patterns than is found among the Asante according to Picton and Mark (1995). Plate 33 is an example of a figurative *kete* silk and cotton hammock weave of the Ewes.



Plate 33: silk and cotton hammock,
Ewe, Ghana: - Picton and Mack, (1995)

The playing of yarn of more than one colour for the weft-faced areas together with the figurative float patterns of birds, stool, goats and human figures all in abstractions are characteristic of some Ewe weaving.

2.25 Designs

The notion that artists in Africa reproduce fixed ethnic styles is very misleading and outdated. African artists work within a social traditional context that allows for personal innovation. The messages that the cloth send through symbolism can only be understood if there is common knowledge about what these symbols, colours and patterns all mean. This is essentially what constitutes 'culture' (*Clothing in Africa*", Microsoft® Encarta® *Africana Third Edition*. © 1998-2000).

Apart from the use of colour and patterns, most of the designs and motifs used to decorate fabrics have names. Many designs are associated with particular plants, animals, events, or proverbs, and are often used in other crafts, such as house painting, carving, and pottery aside textile fabrics. Others incorporate Arabic scripts, Roman letters and numerals, or line drawings of contemporary objects, such as bicycles and cars. "Traditional" cloth production, in other words, is not only highly varied from place to place but is also influenced by societal and technological change.

The new most popular Zanzibar *kangas* of eastern Tanzania produced in the late nineteenth century had proverbs and other sayings printed at the bottom. Like the traditional woven *Kente* fabric found in Asante, West Africa, Tie and dyeing, cut-pile embroidery, and appliqué are all decorated with geometric designs. Crowe and Washburn, (1992) testify that such patterns, which we would normally call 'geometric' or 'abstract' as opposed to those which we call 'figurative' are commonly found on textiles, as borders or overall areas of decorative embellishment. This is normally true for most

African woven and embroidered designs rather than printed or appliquéd designs, for most African designs are a combination of geometric, abstract, and figurative design patterns sewn on in contrasting fabrics; embroidery with brightly coloured threads, and dyeing.

Asantes and *Ewes* of Ghana use motifs, but those of the Asante tend to be much more abstract and geometric whereas the *Ewe* motifs are more realistic and representational. (Barnard & Adler, 1995) Motifs, including writings, are also used in much greater abundance in *Ewe Kete* cloths and the figurative types of decoration are very distinctive of the *Ewe* style. Quoting Lamb, Barnard & Adler (1995) “one *Ewe* cloth actually contained no less than 74 figurative motifs” (Plate 33).



Plate 34: A *Ewe* figurative *kete* cloth showing various symbolic motifs over a plain green background: - <http://www.adire.clara.net/bogolangallery.htm>

Aso Oke, on the other hand, is a hand woven cloth with its complete diversity of patterns and forms, carry a great sense of respect and prestige in the traditions of the Yoruba, but

have no clear and recognized symbolic identity though, are still very popular in Nigeria and its surrounding nations like Ghana and Togo (Clarke 2002). (Plate 35)



Plate 35: *Aso Oke* women's cloth, woven in the traditional beige colour
(<http://www.adire.clara.net/bogolangallery.htm>)

In Ghana, *Asante Kente* was originally blue and white but with the increase in trade and the demand from a royal tradition which could afford expensive textiles, many more colours became incorporated due to historical changes. Alternatively, cloths sewn from narrow cotton strips were either kept white or dyed reddish brown with a dye obtained from the bark of the *kuntunkuni* tree. The artist then divides the cloth into blocks, and uses stamps made out of calabash shells to decorate the fabric with designs, many of which are associated with proverbs (*Antubam, 1963*).

2.26 African Wax Prints

The cultural heritage of the African past, and the exciting colours and colourful designs of the wax stamped and machine printed cloths are more suggestive of Africa today. The use of *Adinkra* symbols in machine prints are also highly symbolic ceremonial textiles,

(Plate 36). Wax printed cloths and cheaper screen and roller printed imitations have become one of the most widely distributed forms revealing African symbolism in textiles today, produced and worn in almost every country in Sub-Saharan Africa.



Plate 36: *Adinkra* symbols in machine prints: -
(<http://uniquespool.com/cgi-bin/ustorekeeper.pl>)

In the process they have become intricately entangled with the social and political life, despite their external origin. The symbolism attached to the naming of even the seemingly foreign designs has made it categorically African. Therefore, apart from its aesthetic interest, they have provided a new and versatile means of elaborating long standing African interests in the communicative and expressive power of symbolism.



Plate 37: wax print cotton textile, “*Adinkra*” design on
“seersucker” fabric, Vlisco, Netherlands, 1990s. From the art of
African Textiles by Duncan Clarke

Some categories of designs are based on the influence of the Indonesian Batik designs such as complex floral and bird motifs and others dwell on the reproduction of local emblems. A type with a cultural dimension is an imitation of the local hand woven *kente* or decorated textiles. Other designs produced are commemorative cloths depicting kings, individuals, political figures and events. European merchants have rapidly discovered the African customer taste and now produce to satisfy the requirements in terms of quality design and symbols. African societies have long incorporated imported materials, textiles, and styles into their own clothing traditions. Gilfoy, (1988) affirms this by saying that throughout West Africa, weavers have adapted foreign elements to suit their own needs, creating unique motifs to express cultural values. The history of textile trade the world over is full of such examples of adaptability and adjustment that enrich the total cultural sphere.

Today, most independent African countries' domestic textile industries manufacture costly cloths as well as other designs to commemorate holidays or events. Despite their foreign origin they are widely recognized as "African" fabrics. A large proportion of both the urban and international trades in Dutch wax cloths is controlled by women traders all over African cities (Clarke, 2002).

2.27 The socio-cultural implications of textile symbolism

The social significance of cloth in many African societies provides a barren distinction to the abstract economic role, as money, and social role, as body covering. Textiles for everyday use, worn regularly next to the skin in the ritual contexts, take on personal

identity of the wearer as they absorb the secretion of the body. This close tie between the textiles and their owners is a symbolic extension of the day – to – day reality of cloth use, and makes them powerful metaphorical ingredient in a variety of magico-religious practices. For instance, Yoruba herbalists would burn small pieces of hand woven cloth as an ingredient of amulets, while they felt were particularly appropriate for curing barren women or those troubled by persistent miscarriages. These remedies drew symbolic forces from the significance of the cloths which mothers used to carry their babies securely on their back. (Clarke, 1997)

Contemporarily, localized group identity of textile symbolism can be associated with familiar towns, regions or ethnic groups in various countries. These localized patterns of stylistic development make them unique and impact on the notions of personal and group identity. On one hand, it contributes to the development of intra-cultural and socio-economic trade among nations.

Often the wearing of traditional cloths portraying traditional symbols is determined by the nature of the occasion and the social and marital status of the person wearing it, although this may tend to be more the case in the village areas where tradition remains very strong. In Asante tradition the kings specially designed *Kente* cloths are so important that the *Asantehene* has appointed an ‘*Abenasehene*’ whose sole job is to store, maintain and to help the king choose which symbolic cloths to wear on what occasions. Though there are some sacred symbolic cloths that are still reserved for only royal use, many

important dignitaries' commissions' weavers to produce exclusive symbolic designs for specific occasions.

Similarly, in Mali, specially designed mud cloth with specific symbols was used as a spiritual protection during the vulnerable times of a woman's life. In short, what you wear reflects both functional and aesthetic qualities and is certainly true of Africa where there is an incredibly rich symbolic heritage of cultural traditions and customs. Apart from textile cloths being used to dress a living person, specially designed cloths were used for dead corpse and special houses built to mark an event of some significance, or, similarly, a shrine as a symbol of respect and dignity for the god (Mack and Picton, 1995) (Plate 38) The *Annangs* and some parts of *Ibibio* lands traditionally erected shrines for the dead at the time of the ceremonial burial. Among some *Annang-Ibibio* groups, especially the *Afaha*, *Ukana* and *Otoro*, elaborate structures as seen in plate 38, called *Nwomo* were built.



Plate 38: a shrine set up in memory of a deceased chief among the Annang- Ibibio, south eastern Nigeria, displaying an appliqué and patchwork cloth made entirely of imported cotton materials- Picton and Mack, (1995)

The male shrine seen in plate 38 is a tall, rectangular structure of poles and roofing mats, with a pitched roof. Inside the shrine, hangs a special designed symbolic large cloth, made by patchwork and appliqué techniques so that bold geometrical patterns and a central figurative panel depicting philosophical themes were clearly visible. Such a cloth could only be made for an important chief, who had been a member of the major male secret societies, such as *Ekpo* and *Ekong* (a warrior's association).

Other cloths woven with selected proverbial motifs were used as currency, in Zaire; and in Sierra Leone at one time such similar cloths of a particular size could be used for paying court fines (Mack and Picton, 1995).

2.28 Summary on literature reviews and discussions

The strength of Africa's culture and greatness lies in their ability to keep alive in the dark secrecy of symbolism especially in African textiles the treasured truths and ethics of life is an indication that throughout human history, symbols have been used to express ideas, communicate meanings, and convey emotion ([uk.encyclopedia.msn.com/.../Symbolism;_anthropology\).html](http://uk.encyclopedia.msn.com/.../Symbolism;_anthropology).html)); a visual representation of history, philosophy, ethics, and social code of conduct, religious beliefs, political thought and aesthetic principles.

There are no specific book titles that directly address this research on symbolism in Asante traditional textiles, however, there are some related literatures which are

pertinent to the research that address key words and bring to fore the clarity of the topic.

In textiles, symbolism being the use of a unit, motif or design, embodies a deeper meaning than the unit, motif or design themselves are developed over long periods of time but degenerate in the course of time. African symbolism is achieved either by the choice of colour and/or design or symbol used, as well as by the manipulation of designs, symbols, colours and plays with deliberate asymmetries and pattern variations (Clarke 2002) and it is understood by placing products from the same regions but from different centuries side by side.

The use of strips is a chief construction technique, a dominant design element, and a symbolic form in West African, textiles. A mixture of traditional, naturalistic and stylized configurations of symbols dominates most African traditional textiles. The various abstract designs have highly symbolic names dubbed after important personalities, social events and proverbial sayings. Its possession is a symbol of status and wealth in the society-(Wahlman 2001: 29), but many of them have been replaced by modern mechanized designed printed or woven textiles (Clarke 2002).

The technical process of sewing long woven strips together to make larger fabrics usually worn as clothing has moved into the realm of aesthetic preference (Clarke 2002) and many other examples of patchwork occur in the history of African textiles. African textiles are generally drawn from a huge repertoire of known symbols, which

are identified by name, an indication of the society's involvement in its own culture for mutual advancement.

For recognition, important people wear cloths with complex patterns and a great deal of colour. Blue and white designs, were the earliest cloths, made produced with domestic cotton dyed blue from an indigenous indigo plant (Clarke 2002: 17). Large Shapes, Strong contrasting colours are used to enable a person to recognize a pattern in a cloth from a distance and in strong sunlight. African woven fabrics were made from silk, but are now being made with rayon and cotton since about 1947 (Wahlman 2001).

Distinctive styles based upon local traditions of production, availability of materials and dyestuffs, and preferences for particular symbols, patterns, designs, and colours were developed over the centuries, in rug-producing regions of the world. According to Myers (1924) all symbols and patterns in most African rug weaving reflect the pure beauty of numbers, considered to be of divine origin in Islamic doctrine, an embodiments of African philosophy. In inference, Africans are creative and aware of his/her available materials around him/her coupled with a sense of spirituality.

Appliqué/embroidery is also applied on clothing and some ceremonial textiles of the royalty, showing totemic symbols, abstract and proverbial symbols pregnant with philosophical ideologies. Their remarkable exploration of abstract patterning were derived from the natural totemic objects are the subjects of traditional northern smock

that are impregnated with ancient heroic stories signifying virtue and courage. Their creativity and degree of pageantry is embedded in deep seated philosophical ideologies that reflects on their display of natural and abstract objects used in communicating their preserved heroic stories to empower the youth for social advancement.

Batik, mud cloth, *Bogolanfini*, have all become an expression of African identity, a symbol of African culture embedded in secrecy produced using geometric or floral motifs, often religious symbols in specific colours that portrays social status an indication of social hierarchy and order.

Totems used widely by social groups and organizations in the world; are normally reflected in the flags they carry depending on their form and function; flags are intended for use as an emblem or as a kind of signaling device, a symbol of ethnic, national and military identity full of proverbial allusions since ancient times. This is a conjecture of their social identity and their relationship with natural elements that are believed to be helpful for their survival.

Iconographical textiles may be in Christian Symbolism as well as cultural symbolism in Africa. These textile designs are drawn from well-known proverbs, either directly through the incorporation of a written proverb on the cloth, or more commonly by depicting realistic images that refer to aspects of a proverb. Symbolism in Textiles

serves to amplify the subject-matter of textile pictorials in which they appear and help to identify individual figures or the narrative theme of the artwork.

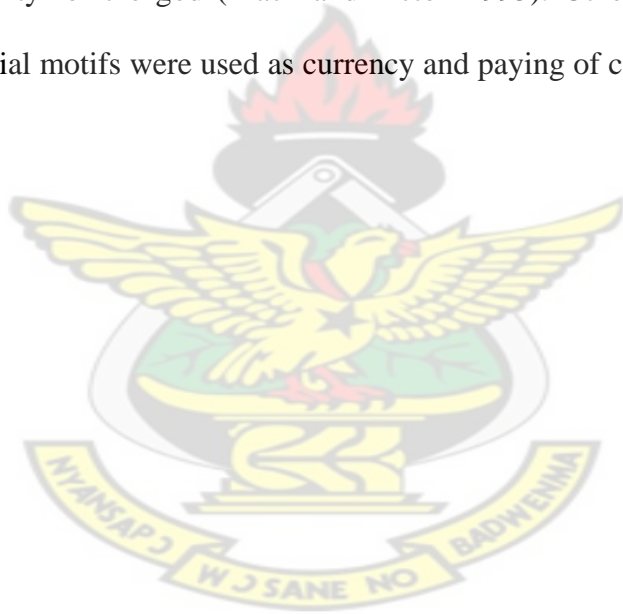
Symbolism of colours in African textiles varies from culture to culture. According to *Antubam*, (1963), colour is considered one of the most useful and powerful design tools in the production of traditional textiles and are responded to differently on a subconscious, emotional level

Adinkra symbols have become popular and widely used in the various art forms because of the prominent exposure given to them by some eminent foreign anthropologists and local artists in the form of documentation. Some of these motifs are nearly retention and a slight modification of the old *Adinkra* symbols and are only understood by the common knowledge they portray. Others incorporate Arabic scripts, Roman letters and numerals, or line drawings of contemporary objects, such as bicycles and cars. "Traditional" cloth production, in other words, is not only highly varied from place to place but is also influenced by "elements of change" be it societal and technological changes.

Wax printed cloths and cheaper screen and roller printed imitations have become one of the most widely distributed forms revealing African symbolism in textiles today, produced and worn in almost every country in Sub-Saharan Africa. The symbolism attached to the naming of even the seemly foreign designs has made it categorically African. African societies have long incorporated imported materials, textiles, and styles into their own clothing traditions. Gilfoy, (1988) affirms this by saying that

throughout West Africa, weavers have adapted foreign elements to suit their own needs, creating unique motifs to express cultural values.

Traditional textiles worn by an individual is a symbolic extension of the day – to – day reality of cloth use, and makes them powerful metaphorical ingredient in a variety of magico-religious practices. Apart from textile cloths being used to dress a living person, specially designed cloths were used for dead corpse and special houses built to mark an event of some significance, or, similarly, a shrine as a symbol of respect and dignity for the god (Mack and Picton 1995). Other cloths woven with selected proverbial motifs were used as currency and paying of court fines (Mack and Picton 1995).



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the research design, the method of research used, the categories of population from which data were collected and the steps used for collecting, assembling and treating the data. It focuses on the following: Research design, Library research, Primary and secondary sources of data, Population for the study, Sampling design, Data analysis plan, Data collecting instruments, Validation of data collecting instruments, Data collecting procedures, Data analyses, presentation and discussion of survey, Summary of empirical studies and discussions

3.2 Research design

The premise for the thesis is that the internal and external pressures on cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles are evident in the current textile production that are seen on the market. The hypothetical statement is that the knowledge and understanding of Asante cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles are a positive means of promoting Asante culture in the world and serve as a way of identifying the people of Asante.

The research design flows directly from the questions being pursued in this thesis. These in turn result from the gaps in knowledge established in the literature review. To re-cap, the questions were:

- a) What aspects of cultural symbolism can be identified in Asante traditional textile culture?

- b) What is the extent of degeneration of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles?
- c) What role does symbolism in Asante traditional textiles play in the promotion of Asante culture?
- d) Will Asante cultural identity be maintained in their traditional textiles in the phase of globalization?
- e) What is the state of royal and local patronage of traditional textile products in Asante?

In order to answer the questions, a research design was needed that would facilitate the collection of enough relevant data. According to Leedy and Ormrod, (2005: 85) research design is a framework or blueprint for conducting the research project. It specifies the details of the procedures necessary for obtaining the information needed to structure or solve the research problem or the conceptualization of the overall organization of the project and the detailed specification of the steps to be carried out

With such a definition, the research design is basically

1. A meticulous set of plan for conducting a research
2. Implemented to find answers to the researcher's questions
3. A response to a series of decisions about how best to answer focused questions
4. More than a research methodology that makes social science scientific.

A detailed plan specification criteria and design for the research included the

Identification of the research problem:

1. What aspects of cultural symbolism can be identified in Asante traditional textile culture?
2. What is the extent of degeneration of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles?
3. What role does symbolism in Asante traditional textiles play in the promotion of Asante culture?
4. Will Asante cultural identity be maintained in their traditional textiles in the phase of globalization?
5. What is the state of royal and local patronage of traditional textile products in Asante?

What it seeks to achieve

1. To locate, identify, collate, describe, evaluate and utilize effectively and efficiently every available documented and undocumented material identified for the promotion and enhancement of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles
2. Aimed at rediscovering the purity of Asante cultural symbolism and the appreciation of traditional textile in the society by engaging a representational population identified within its society all with the aim of recapturing its vibrancy and the promotion of Asante cultural symbolism towards national development to regain the Asante textile cultural identity.
3. To research into various aspects of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles to reinforce the nation's capacity for change and development by looking at the role

it has played in the promotion of the culture, whether real or conceptual, past or present and relate it to contemporary realities.-identified target groups were the local textile producers and selected number of the general public.

4. To review and analyze the problems and challenges faced by traditional and contemporary textile craftsmen in the face of the infiltration of foreign symbolism
5. To put forth some recommendations and proposals for their co-existence with Asante cultural symbolism.

3.2.1 Developing strategies to address the problem

Questionnaires were designed to prove the hypothesis. Interview was adopted i.e. an unstructured, direct, personal interview was conducted on a single respondent to probe and to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings on the topic employed. The line of questioning proceeded from product characteristics to user characteristics. This allowed the researcher to tap into the consumer's network of meanings towards the topic.

The basic approach adopted presumed that the interviewees had understanding of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles that relates to product attributes, its impact, significance, and its relationship to the society. It looked at the type of symbolism that is utilized in Asante traditional textiles, its development and sustenance of its cultural identity.

The methods for developing these questionnaires centered on a one-on-one interview in which the researcher continuously probed with questions such as "Why symbolism is so

important?" several ways were used to structure the interviews to uncover problems and solutions towards fulfilling the hypothesis of the research.

Preference ratings; were used to get respondents to rank alternatives and then asked why Asante symbolism is most preferred to other symbolism. Focusing on different usage of Asante symbolism at different occasions helped to generate more distinctions. For example, respondents were asked why symbolism in Asante traditional textiles is preferred, at social functions, etc.

Projective Techniques where unstructured and indirect forms of questioning that encourages respondents to project their underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings regarding Asante symbolism was used.

In the completion technique adopted, a respondent was required to complete an incomplete situation stimulus, for example the respondents are given incomplete sentences and asked to complete them. The questions asked defined the main variables utilized.

3.3 Research methodology

The Qualitative Research was chosen because the purpose of the study was to give an ethnographic account of the cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles and this required a descriptive presentation of findings. The qualitative research method was used in describing and interpreting the existing symbolism used in traditional textile products. The descriptive method was devoted to the general view of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles and its application in the field of traditional textiles. Data were

collected through questionnaire, interviews, fieldwork, published and unpublished literature were assembled, analyzed and interpreted.

3.3.1 Data collection procedure

To satisfy the objectives of this study, two basic levels of data collection were identified during the preliminary stages of the research and also in the course of the study; (i) interviews done with or without standard questionnaires (see appendix 1). Traditional rulers and family heads, producers of Asante traditional textiles and the general public were randomly selected and provided with the questionnaires, (ii) field visits to selected palaces within the study areas, and traditional textile centres and shops also in the study areas were randomly selected. The interviews were based on structured questionnaire that was personally administered to the respondents. In all cases respondents were informed ahead of schedule. The interviews were conducted at their convenience and each person was given adequate time to answer all questions posed. Some selected social functions and festivals were also attended and at such places, information on issues difficult to address in standard questionnaires was obtained. Occasionally some individuals and groups of people were interviewed.

The Descriptive research method was used to analyse data on the origin of symbolism in the various traditional textile crafts and the state in which this symbolism has reached. Participant observation;—that is, by temporarily becoming or by pretending to become members of the trades being studied were adopted to receive accurate information. Knowledgeable informants were contacted to obtain first-hand information on the

symbolism used in these crafts and its significance. Intensive micro sociological investigations using tape recorders were also adopted. Qualitative (direct) observation of human experiences and achievements were used. Digital cameras and related materials were also used in the project.

3.4 Population for the study

Within this context, the population of the study constituted the Traditional rulers and family heads, producers of Asante traditional textiles and the general public. Attendants of selected palaces, and traditional textile centres and shops, elders recognized by the locality and knowledgeable about Asante traditional symbolism, and traders of these traditional textile products were consulted.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting a sub-group from a population of elements, such as people, objects or events. In the administration of the questionnaire (see Appendix A), the stratified random sampling design was employed. The various groups of people interviewed and traditional textile centres and shops visited were all selected from the Ashanti Region. Among the places resorted for interviews were the Manhyia palace and the Centre for National Culture, Kumasi. The population was divided into six strata of respondents, the Traditional rulers, family heads, producers of Asante traditional textiles, the general public and distributors of these craft products and recognized elders knowledgeable about Asante symbolism.

3.6 Justification of the random stratified sampling method

Owing to the complex nature of the study, a wide range of people, numbering 1216 were contacted. It was just impossible to contact all the people of the population size of 4,282,447 according to mid year population census for 2005 (*Quoted from the Royal Diary 2006, Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II*). Random samples of strata were therefore taken in proportions that each group bore to the population size as a whole. This was done to achieve a fair representation for all the various strata making up the population size. The schematic sampling design gives detailed figures of the population size. Percentages of strata proportions, computer sample size, the actual sample size and figures of respondents.

3.7 Description of data

Response from questionnaire, personal interviews conducted and observations from production sites provided information on the following:

- a. Symbolism in Asante traditional textiles since the seventeenth century.
- b. Significance of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles
- c. The role of symbolism in traditional textiles in the promotion of Asante culture.
- d. To examine the factors of change namely education, religion, and globalization on symbolism in Asante traditional textiles

In addition, interviews were conducted with knowledgeable people on the subject of study and some of the key players are already stated in numbers 3.6 above. Results of the observation were analysed and evaluated. The second data were collected from relevant information obtained from various libraries. Libraries consulted for information were:

- College of Art Library, KNUST, Kumasi
- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Main Library, Kumasi
- British Council Library, Kumasi
- Wesley College Library, Kumasi
- Kumasi Polytechnic Library, Kumasi
- Ashanti Library, Centre for National Culture Kumasi
- University College of Education , Kumasi Campus Library
- Library of the Art Education Section, College of Art. K.N.U.S.T. Internet café
- University of Ghana, Department of African Studies Library, Legon
- The George Padmore Research Library, Accra
- The Balme Library, Legon
- Woeli Publishing Centre, Accra

The researcher also made good use of the Internet.

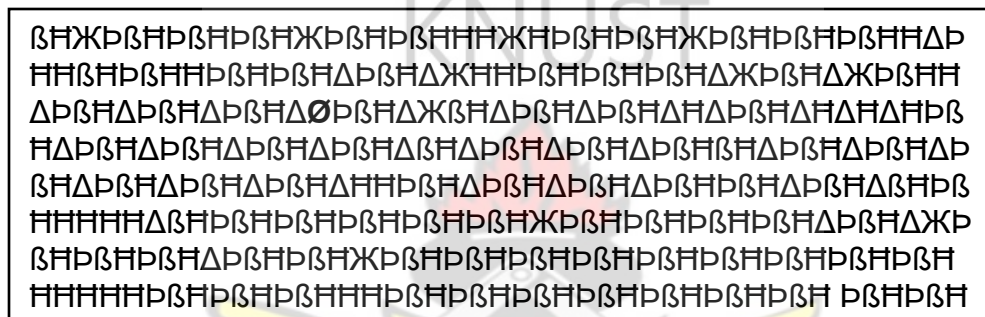
Eighty percent of the total population (1150 persons) targeted by the researcher to administer questionnaires for response, hoping that the response level would be more than thirty percent. Leedy, (2005), asserts that for quality research, at least, thirty percent of the total population for study is a fair representation for an acceptable accuracy of results. Below is a schematic overview of the stratified sampling design:

3.8 Schematic overview of the stratified random sampling design

The components of the selected sample were randomly chosen from the larger population with the assumption that the characteristics of the sample approximate the characteristics

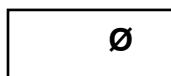
of the total population. Ten traditional rulers targeted, were between the ages of 50 and 85years, 50 family heads were targeted, 310 producers of Asante traditional textiles earmarked, 380 people of the general public were targeted and 340 distributors of these craft products were aimed at and 60 recognized elders knowledgeable about Asante symbolism who were also targeted were between the age of 50 and 85years.

Fig 8; Proportional Stratified Sampling Design

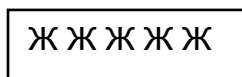


Each symbol represents 10 people Ø = Traditional rulers Ж= Family Heads
Δ= Producers of Asante Traditional Textiles H= General Public Б=
Distributors of Craft Products П= Recognized Knowledgeable Elders

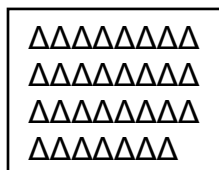
Stratification



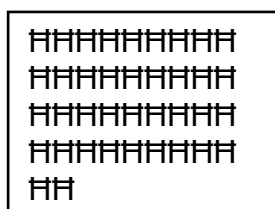
STRATUM.1 Traditional Rulers,



STRATUM.2 Family Heads



STRATUM.3 Producers of Asante Traditional Textiles



STRATUM.4 General Public

1111111111
 1111111111
 1111111111
 1111111111

STRATUM.5 Distributors of Craft Products

11111111

STRATUM.6 Recognized Knowledgeable Elders

POPULATION SIZE

10	50	310	380	340	60
ST.1	ST.2	ST.3	ST.4	ST.5	ST.6

(TOTAL-1150)

ACTUAL SAMPLE SIZE

6	34	250	300	200	10
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(TOTAL-800)

RESPONDENTS

4	10	220	200	100	6
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(Total-640)

Total randomized sample comprising all the strata: 1150

Total number of ACTUAL SAMPLE SIZE: 800

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 640

PERCENTAGE OF DATA EXTRACTED FROM THE STRATIFIED SAMPLE:

$$\frac{640 \times 100}{800}$$

$$= 80\%$$

Table 3-1: Sampling Plan

STRATA	POPULATION SIZE	PROPORTIONAL (%) OF TOTAL POPULATION	COMPUTED SAMPLE SIZE	ACTUAL SAMPLE SIZE	RESPONDENT
Traditional Rulers	10	0.869	6.952	6	4
Family Heads	50	4.347	34.776	34	10
Producers	310	26.956	215.648	250	220
General Public	380	33.043	264.344	300	200
Distributors	340	29.565	236.52	200	100
Recognized Knowledgeable Elders	60	5.217	41.736	10	6
Total	1150	100%	799.976	800	640

3.9 Instruments for data collection

The Triangulation technique of observation, face-to-face oral interview and opinionative approaches were used for the study. The various symbolic tools, and materials translated into textile designs were closely observed. The respondents' concepts and attitudes towards Asante symbolism were recorded through the face-to-face oral interviews. In employing the opinionative approaches, people's views on symbolism and its future were noted. Apart from the interview, the researcher also used questionnaire research tools to collect data.

Interviews

This is the questioning of a person (or a conversation in which information is elicited); or the discussion of something with (somebody) in a formal way for the purpose of an evaluation. This method involves the interviewer and the interviewee. In a face-to-face verbal interaction, the interviewer asks the interviewee certain questions for response. The responses of the interviewee are noted and used later on. The interviewee at this point is given the opportunity of freedom to respond to the questions asked him or her. Strictness imposed on the interviewee does not play a part here. The researcher used the interview method to collect information from some selected traditional rulers, family heads, producers of Asante traditional textiles, general public and distributors of these craft products and recognized elders knowledgeable about Asante symbolism.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire can be described as a list containing a set of questions submitted to people to gain statistical information. Usually questionnaires are set based on research questions set aside by the researcher. Such questionnaire was given to prospective respondents to fill. Interviews were sometimes conducted in the case where respondent can not read and write. In such cases, questions were called out sequentially to the interviewee and the responds to the questions noted exactly as the interviewee communicated. The interviewees were given the opportunity to freely respond to the questions asked. Again strictness imposed on the interviewee does not play a part here. Clarifications were given to respondents on items that were not clear or easy to understand. Where it was impossible to establish physical, face-to-face contact with

respondents, a mailed questionnaire form was used. The essence of the questionnaire was to gather information from the targeted people already indicated.

3.10 Validation of data collecting instruments

Research questions were designed as a source of guidance. It was out of the research questions that the questionnaires mentioned earlier, were prepared. During the preparation of the questionnaires, inputs from the following colleague lecturers were obtained: Dr Amenuke, Dr Agyemang O. A. (supervisor) and Dr Mrs. Glime Olivia., (all experts in art). Also the necessary corrections were made to ensure adequate and reliable guide. The questionnaires were then administered. The questions that were difficult to understand were explained to respondents. Randomly fifty family heads were targeted but thirty-four family heads accepted the questionnaires and only ten returns were received, that is approximately 66.66% return rate. Of the three hundred and ten producers of traditional textiles, two hundred and fifty accepted the questionnaires and two hundred and twenty returns were received that is approximately 29.41% return rate. Three hundred and eighty of the general public was targeted but only three hundred accepted the questionnaires but two hundred returns were received, that is approximately 88% return rate. For the distributors of traditional textiles, three hundred and forty were targeted but only two hundred accepted the questionnaires and one hundred returns were received that is approximately 66.66% return rate. Lastly sixty knowledgeable elders were targeted and only ten accepted the questionnaires and six returns were realized that is approximately 50% return rate. Questionnaires were not administered to six out of the

ten traditional rulers targeted; only four were interviewed by the researcher due to their nature of work to get valid data from them instead of questionnaires.

Copies of questionnaire have been attached at the appendix section.

3.11 Data analysis plan

After assembling information on cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles, data were analyzed and interpreted. The total number of targeted groups was one thousand one hundred and fifty. But the questionnaires were administered to a total of eight hundred persons in Asante with thirty four going to the Family Heads and two hundred and fifty going to producers of Asante traditional textiles. Three hundred of the general public were administered with questionnaires with two hundred going to the Distributors of traditional textiles and ten going to the recognized knowledgeable Elders. Though the four Traditional Rulers were interviewed, the interviews were based on written questions. The return rate, favourable response six hundred and forty divided by questionnaire administered eight hundred multiply by a hundred percent is eighty percent (80%) for the entire target groups. The percentage of the overall responses being six hundred and forty out of the total targeted population of one thousand one hundred and fifty is 55.65%. This is to say that (55.65%) of the total population of the entire target groups responded favourably to the questionnaire Talking about *favorable response* the researcher refers to those questionnaires which received direct answers to the questions posed. Sheets not returned to the researcher, sheets returned but not filled and sheets destroyed by respondents are not included.

Table 3-2: Table showing number of questionnaire administered, favourable responses received, the return rate and the favourable response percentage of the total population.

$$\text{Return rate} = \frac{\text{Favourable responses} \times 100\%}{\text{No. of questionnaire administered}}$$

Target Groups	Population Size	Copies of the Questionnaires administered	Favourable response	Return Rate	Favourable response percentage of total population
Traditional Rulers	10	6	4	66.66%	40%
Family Heads	50	34	10	29.41%	20%
Producers	310	250	220	88%	70.96%
General Public	380	300	200	66.66%	52.63%
Distributors	340	200	100	50%	29.41%
Recognized Knowledgeable Elders	60	10	6	60%	10%
Total	1150	800	640	80%	55.65%

3.12 Data and treatment of data

3.12.1 Types of data

Primary and Secondary data were used.

Primary data

The primary data for this research are direct information from the field, direct observations, responses from interviews and gathering of opinionnaires. The primary data collected were assembled, described, analyzed, synthesized, interpreted, and evaluated;

conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made. Photographs were taken to support claims and concepts were explained.

Secondary data

Secondary data were collected from reference journals, recognized books, internet, brochures and other publications related to the topic. Data collected from secondary sources were assembled, analyzed and reviewed.

3.13 Specific treatment of data for each objective

For the purpose of analysis in this methodology, the objectives of this thesis presented earlier on page ten, need to be reiterated hereunder.

3.14 Objective one

The first objective is:

- To identify and describe the cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles since the seventeenth century.

3.15 Data needed for the first objective

Data needed and therefore studied included

- a) Asante symbolism,
- b) Colour Symbolism, in Asante textiles
- c) The various Asante traditional symbolisms produced since 1700 (formation of Asante kingdom) to date.

- d) Description and interpretations of the various traditional textile productions that adapt these symbolism
- e) And adaptation of other cultural symbolisms into Asante traditional textile production.

3.16 Location of data of the objective

The data were found in renowned libraries in Ashanti, Greater Accra and Central Regions of Ghana.(refer to chapter 1) In the Ashanti Region, recognized elders knowledgeable about Asante cultural symbolism within the study areas, as well as some lecturers in the college of art and social science were consulted for pertinent information.

3.17 Means of obtaining the data

In addition to interviews, observations, administration of questionnaires and library researches already mentioned, which required a lot of travelling from one city to the other, and from one town to the other, and which necessitated movements to palaces, offices and people's houses, an audio tape was used to collect data. Wherever interviewees became uncomfortable with tape recordings, the researcher jotted the information with the aid of pens and notebooks.

3.18 Criteria for admissibility of the data

The information obtained from the relevant libraries in the country were confirmed by knowledgeable elders identified and were accepted for the research.

3.19 Criteria for validity

The data were cross-checked with the help of resource persons, books and other literary sources including the internet knowledgeable about Asante symbolism.

3.20 Processing of data

The data assembled in a descriptive form, were analyzed, interpreted and conclusion drawn. Photographs, tables, maps, etc were employed to illustrate and substantiate the data.

3.21 Objective two

The second objective is:

- To examine the significance of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles.

3.22 Data needed for the second objective

Data studied for the second objective included

- a) Symbolism as an emblem of wealth, political and religious power, in Asante
- b) The important roles traditional textiles play in the economic, social and cultural development of Asante and
- c) The extent to which factors of change- including education, religion, and globalization has influenced Asante symbols.

3.23 Location of data for the second objective

The data were obtained from the same locations as stated in connection with the first objective. More data were collected from Legon Balme library, Cape Coast main Libraries, Winneba main libraries, K.N.U.ST main libraries and other relevant libraries in the country.

3.24 Means of obtaining the data for the second objective

The researcher travelled through the various major towns in Ashanti Region of Ghana to seek the data from the various categories of interviewees already indicated in the previous sections. The interviews were based on structured questionnaires personally administered by the researcher. An audio tape was used in recording some of the data, and photographs were taken.

3.25 Criteria for admissibility of the data for the second objective

The information obtained from resource persons, literature and the internet about Asante symbolism and confirmed by the traditional rulers and textile lecturers of KUNST were accepted for this thesis.

3.26 Criteria for validity

The data obtained were cross checked with recognized elders knowledgeable about Asante symbolism before they were included in this work.

3.27 Treatment of data for the second objective

The verbal data were transcribed into text, assembled in a descriptive form, analyzed, interpreted and conclusion drawn. Photographs were attached.

3.28 Objective three

- To survey the role of symbolism in traditional textiles in the promotion of Asante culture.

3.29 Data needed for achieving the third objective

Information elicited comprised:

Data obtained for objective 1 and objective 2 were the data needed for objective 3.

3.30 Location of data for the third objective

The information was obtained from the same categories of informants and libraries as well.

3.31 Means of obtaining the data for the third objective

Data were sought through interviews, questionnaires, literary sources and the internet.

3.32 Criteria for admissibility of the data to achieve the third objective

Only information obtained from the Traditional rulers, family heads, producers of Asante traditional textiles and confirmed by elders knowledgeable about Asante symbolism were used.

3.33 Criteria for validity of data on the third objective

The data collected were cross checked with the recognized elders knowledgeable about Asante symbolism.

3.34 Treatment of data on the third objective

The data were transcribed into text, assembled in a descriptive form, analyzed, interpreted and conclusion drawn. Photographs were taken for illustrations.

3.35 Objective four

- To examine the factors of change namely literal education, religion and globalization on symbolism in Asante traditional textiles.

3.36 Data needed for the fulfillment of the fourth objective

Data obtained for objectives 1, 2 and 3 were the data needed for objective 4.

3.37 Treatment of data for achieving the fourth objective

The verbal data were transcribed into text, assembled in a descriptive form, assessed, analyzed, and interpreted. The findings were noted, summary and recommendations were made and a conclusion was drawn.

3.4 Data analyses, presentation and discussion of survey

To ascertain the extent of change on cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles and the role it has played in Asante's culture over the years, a survey was conducted.

The data collected have been analyzed under the following subheadings: Analyses which give details about the Traditional Rulers under cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles, analyses which give details on the Family Heads and analyses which give details on Textile Producers, analyses which give details on the General Public, analyses which give details on Distributors and analyses which give details on the Recognized Knowledgeable Elders.

3.4.1 Traditional rulers

The following tables show the characteristics of the data collected from Traditional Rulers in relation to their age, gender, position and years of service.

Table 3-3: Age

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
40-55	1	25	25	25
56-70	3	75	75	100
Total	4	100	100	-----

Table 3-3 shows that out of a total number of four respondents, one representing 25% is between the ages of 40 and 55 years. The respondents from 56 to 70 years are three; they represent 75%.

The gender representation of the Traditional Rulers was as seen in the table below.

Table 3-4: Gender

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	2	50	50	50
Female	2	50	50	100
Total	4	100	100	-----

Table 3-4 shows that out of a total number of four respondents two representing 50% were males. The female respondents were two; and represent 50%.

Below shows the position of the Traditional Rulers

Table 3-5: Position of Traditional Rulers

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Chiefs	2	50	50	50
Queen Mothers	2	50	50	100
Total	4	100	100	-----

Table 3-5 shows that out of a total number of four respondents two representing 50% were Chiefs. The other two respondents, representing 50% were Queen Mothers.

Table 3-6: How long have you been a Traditional Ruler?

Traditional Ruler	Years of Service	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Chiefs	5-20 years	2	50	50	50
Queen Mothers	5-10 years	2	50	50	100
	Total	4	100	100	----

Table 3-6 shows that out of a total number of four respondents, two chiefs representing 50% had served for 5 to 20 years. Two queen mother's representing 50% had also served from 5 to 10 years.

From the table above it could be deduced that the chiefs have been in leadership position for a long time and therefore known a lot about Asante history and its symbolism. The two queen mother's appreciably understand Asante culture and its symbolism due to their long years of service.

A total of four traditional rulers and 10 family heads were interviewed. Two of them were chiefs, two queen mothers and the 10 family heads were all males from the ages of 45 to 75 years. For the Traditional Rulers their ages ranged from 56 to 70 years and 40 to 55 years. Three of them were University graduates, and one a second cycle education graduate. Traditional rulers interviewed had ruled for varied number of years. Two of them had been chiefs for over 20 years. The queen mothers had ruled for 10 and 5 years respectively, while the family heads had had between 5 and 10 years of leadership. The

chiefs and queen mothers interviewed said they had their family weavers and printers who produced their traditional cloths.

Notwithstanding that they bought other traditional fabrics from other sources. All the traditional rulers interviewed affirmed that they inherited some traditional textile products. Asked whether they wear special traditional cloths with traditional symbols, only one of them answered that he wore the symbolic cloth of the clan being the *cyoko* clan. This special traditional cloth is used on specific occasions such as durbars and festivals. He claimed that the traditional cloth with his clan totem and symbols were proverbial and as such different from those of other traditional rulers or ethnic groups.

Interestingly all the traditional rulers could mention and give the significance of so many Asante traditional symbols. Among them were ‘*Ohene aniwa*’ (symbol of vigilance and wariness), ‘*osrane nsoromma*’ (symbol of faithfulness and fondness), ‘*fihankra*’ (symbol of security and safety), ‘*sunsum*’ (symbol of spirituality), etc. the traditional rulers explained that some were restricted to a selected few because of their social status this affirms the fact indicated by Rattray (1959) that a symbol like ‘*Aban*’ (referring to a two-storied house, a castle) was formerly worn solely by the king of Asante.

To be able to understand the meaning of the symbols, one has to undergo cultural learning, said all the traditional rulers. Commenting on the trend of designs, 97% of the traditional rulers said that even though traditional symbols such as ‘*Adinkra*’ are still produced, the qualities of the products have degenerated partly due to the modifications

of these symbols and the quality of fabrics used for printing. 3% of them gave no comment. They claimed that the fabric used for printing is often the light machine woven fabrics dyed with foreign dyes instead of the traditional woven and dyed fabrics. Some *adinkra* cloths as they observe are poorly printed with contradicting symbols without understanding the combinations of the symbols. They sum up by saying that the present day traditional textiles lack the delicacy of former times. Some of the chiefs were of the view that this has come about as a result of financial difficulties and lack of understanding of the symbols. Regarding the financial difficulties, the chiefs explained that they were due to the constant devaluation trend of the Ghana cedi, which is reflected in the price of raw materials, which in the long run affects the quality of products.

3.4.2 Family heads

The following tables show the characteristics of the data collected from Family Heads in relation to their age, gender, position and years of service.

Table 3-7: Age

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
45-55	4	40	40	40
60-75	6	60	60	100
Total	10	100	100	---

Table 3-7 shows that out of a total number of ten respondents four representing 40% were between the ages of 45 and 55 years. Six representing 60% were between the ages of 60 and 75 years.

The gender representation the Family Heads were all males as shown in the table below.

Table 3-8: Gender

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	10	100	100	100
Total	10	100	100	----

Table 3-8 shows a total number of ten respondents, representing 100%, all were males.

Below shows the position of the Family Heads

Table 3-9: Position of Family heads

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Family Heads	10	100	100	100
Total	10	100	100	----

Table 3-9 shows that out of a total number of ten respondents, all the ten representing 100% were Family Heads.

Table 3-10: The number of years they had been Family Heads

	Years of Service	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Family Heads	5-10 years	10	100	100	100
	Total	10	100	100	---

Table 3-10 shows that out of a total number of ten respondents, all the family heads representing 100% had served for 5 to 10 years.

From the table above it could be deduced that the family heads had been in leadership positions for a long time and therefore were conversant with Asante symbolism and history.

The following tables show the characteristics of the data collected for Recognized Knowledgeable Elders in relation to their age, gender, position and years of service.

Table 3-11: Age

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
40-55	2	33.33	33.33	33.33
56-76	4	66.67	66.67	100
Total	6	100	100	----

Table 3-11 shows that out of a total number of six respondents, two representing 33.33% are between the ages of 40 and 55 years. Four representing 66.67% were between the ages of 56 and 76 years.

The gender representation for Recognized Knowledgeable Elders was as seen in the table below.

Table 3 -12: Gender

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	5	83.33	83.33	83.33
Female	1	16.67	16.67	100
Total	6	100	100	-----

Table 3-12 shows that out of a total number of six respondents, five representing 83.33% were males. One representing 16.67% was a female.

Below shows the position of the Recognized Knowledgeable Elders

Table 3-13: Position of Recognized Knowledgeable Elders

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Lecturer	2	33.33	33.33	33.33
Palace Curator	1	16.67	16.67	50
Research fellow	2	33.33	33.33	83.33
Director of culture	1	16.67	16.67	100
Total	6	100	100	----

Table 3-13 shows that out of a total number of six respondents, two representing 33.33% were lecturers. One representing 16.67% was a Palace Curator in the *Manhyia* Palace of Kumasi, two representing 33.33% were research fellows at KNUST, and one representing 16.67% was a director of culture at Centre for National Culture Kumasi.

Table 3-14: *How long have you been in this position?*

	Years of Service	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Lecturer	8-16 years	2	33.33	33.33	33.33
Palace curator	10 years	1	16.67	16.67	50
Research fellow	5-10 years	2	33.33	33.33	83.33
Director of culture	8 years	1	16.67	16.67	100
	Total	6	100	100	---

Table 3-14 shows that out of a total number of six respondents, two lecturers of KNUST representing 33.33% had served for 8 to 16 years. One palace curator representing 16.67% had also served for 10 years. Two research fellows representing 33.33% had served for 5 to 10 years. One director of culture representing 16.67% had also served for 8 years.

From the table above it could be deduced that the recognized knowledgeable elders by virtue of their position and their long years of service have a lot to offer about Asante cultural symbolism and its trend of development.

3.4.3 General public

The following tables also show the characteristics of the data collected from the general public in relation to their age, gender, position and years of service.

Table 3-15: Age

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
18-29	50	25	25	25
30-49	47	23.5	23.5	48.5
50-69	80	40	40	88.5
70-90	23	11.5	11.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	----

Table 3-15 shows that out of a total number of two hundred respondents, fifty representing 25% were between the ages of 18 and 29. Forty-seven representing 23.5% were between the ages of 30 and 49, eighty representing 40% were between the ages of 50 and 69, and twenty-three representing 11.5% were also between the ages of 70 and 90.

The gender representation for the General Public was as seen in the table below.

Table 3-16: Gender

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	60	30	30	30
Female	140	70	70	100
Total	200	100	100	----

Table 3-16 shows that out of a total number of two hundred respondents, sixty representing 30% were males. One hundred and forty representing 70% were females.

Below shows the position of the General Public

Table 3-17: Position of the General Public

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Private Employee	30	15	15	15
Government Employee	86	43	43	58
Self-Employee	10	5	5	63
Unemployed	10	5	5	68
Student	56	28	28	96
Palace Employee	8	4	4	100
Total	200	100	100	----

Table 3-17 shows that out of a total number of two hundred respondents, thirty representing 15% were private employees; eighty-six representing 43% were government employees; ten representing 5% were self employees; ten representing 5% were unemployed; fifty-six representing 28% were students and eight representing 4% were palace employees.

Table 3-18: How long have you been in this status?

General Public	No. of Years	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Private Employees	5-20 years	30	15	15	15
Government Employees	4-13 years	86	43	43	58
Self-Employees	1-8 years	10	5	5	63
Unemployed	1-5 years	10	5	5	68
Students	1-6 years	56	28	28	96
Palace Employees	2-10 years	8	4	4	100
	Total	200	100	100	----

Table 3-18 shows that out of a total number of two hundred respondents, thirty private employees representing 15% had served for 5 to 20 years. Eighty-six government employees representing 43% had also served from 4 to 13 years. Ten self-employees representing 5% had been in service for 1 to 8 years. Ten unemployed representing 5% had been in that status for 1 to 5 years. Fifty-six students representing 28% had been students for 1 to 6 years. Eight palace employees representing 4% had also served between 2 to 10 years.

From the table above it could be deduced that the selected public are in a position to comment on cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles due to their duration of

interaction with Asante culture. The eight palace employees by virtue of their position do understand Asante culture due to their long years of service at the *Manhyia* palace.

3.4.4 The general public

The general public was sampled from *Kentenkrono*, *Ayigya*, *Bomso*, KNUST Campus and *Atonsu*. A total of 200 individuals were randomly selected from these towns. Seventy percent of the sampled individuals were females and 30% males. Most of the females interviewed were between the ages of 25 and 60, while the males were between the ages of 30 and 65. The females were mostly traders. Forty percent of the females interviewed had had education up to the second cycle level, thirty-five percent the first cycle level and the rest no basic education. The males were also mostly self-employed and a few being teachers.

The sampled individuals of the general public understood symbolism in traditional textiles as prints with *adinkra* symbols used for activities such as dancing, festivals and funeral celebrations. Thirty percent of them understood symbolism in traditional textiles as any traditional symbolic cloth used for special activities, while the rest could not give any proper definition of symbolism in traditional textiles. When the respondents were asked to list some traditional textiles where such traditional symbols were used, the *adinkra* cloth and *Kente* were considered the most familiar. Traditional *Ntoma fufuo* referring to all-white cotton woven cloths, formally were a prominent traditional fabric for ritual activities in Asante. But according to the interviewees from the general public, the production of traditional *ntoma fufuo* has declined by 70%. Thirty percent of the

sampled public attributed the decline to Christianity, while 60% attributed it to western influence and education. Urbanization and rural urban migration was also considered by 10% of the respondents as responsible for the decline.

A traditional cloth refers to a fabric which is peculiar to or characteristic of a certain district, country, or ethnic group, retaining strong elements of the culture from which it originates. It is usually a visible symbolic expression of the belief system, customs or way of life of a particular group of people that changes within a specified period of time. At the time of interviewing the general public, 96% of the sampled individual wore machine printed, machine woven fabrics. Traditional cloth is also greatly varied according to the lifestyles of the people and their cultural contacts. Answering the question of whether a person's ethnic group could be known from the type of traditional cloth she or he wears, 60% of the interviewees said "yes". The reason given was that Asantes normally use mostly *adinkra* and *Kente* cloths without a jumper while non-Asantes prefers using *Kente* with a jumper top.

There are many reasons, which account for the use of particular traditional symbols. This is because symbols seek to convey messages. The message may lay emphasis on power or wealth. Some are also social in content, conveying a moral message to society. Even though significant numbers of males interviewed were familiar with a great number of traditional symbols, most of them did not know the meanings of the symbols. The symbols, which all the sampled individuals knew about, were '*Gye Nyame*'. One striking feature the public commented on was the trend in the use of symbols of late. Eighty

percent of the interviewees were of the view that the youth of today wear traditional fabrics with symbols they do not understand but appreciate aesthetically due to their popularity.

3.4.5 Distributors

The following tables also show the characteristics of the data collected from the distributors of Asante traditional textiles in relation to their age, gender, position and years of trade.

Table 3-19: Age

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
25-49	80	80	80	80
50-70	20	20	20	100
Total	100	100.0	100.0	---

Table 3-19 shows that out of a total number of one hundred respondents, eighty representing 80% were between the ages of 25 and 49. Twenty representing 20% were between the ages of 50 and 70.

The gender representation for the Distributors was as seen in the table below.

Table 3-20 shows that out of a total number of one hundred respondents, sixty representing 60% were males. Forty representing 40% were females.

Table 3-20: Gender

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	60	60	60	60
Female	40	40	40	100
Total	100	100	100	-----

Below shows the position of the Distributors

Table 3-21: Position of the Distributors

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
<i>Kente</i> Retailers	26	26	26	26
<i>Kente/Adinkra</i> Retailers	16	16	16	42
<i>Adinkra</i> Retailers	11	11	11	53
Batik/Tie-dye Retailers	9	9	9	62
Appliqué/ <i>Kente/Adinkra</i> Retailers	20	20	20	82
Embroidery/ <i>Adinkra/Kente</i> Retailers	18	18	18	100
Total	100	100	100	

Table 3-21 shows that out of a total number of one hundred respondents, twenty-six representing 26% were *Kente* Retailers; sixteen representing 16% were *Kente/Adinkra* Retailers. Eleven representing 11% were *Adinkra* Retailers. Nine representing 9% were Batik/Tie-Dye Retailers. Twenty representing 20% were Appliqué/*Kente/Adinkra* Retailers. Eighteen representing 18% were Embroidery/*Adinkra/Kente* Retailers.

Table 3-22: How long have you been a Traditional Textile Trader?

General Public	No. of Years	Respondents	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<i>Kente</i> Retailers	5-25 years	26	26	26	26
<i>Kente/Adinkra</i> Retailers	3-15 years	16	16	16	42
<i>Adinkra</i> Retailers	2-12 years	11	11	11	53
Batik/Tie-Dye Retailers	1-9 years	9	9	9	62
Appliqué/ <i>Kente/Adinkra</i> Retailers	1-16 years	20	20	20	82
Embroidery/ <i>Adinkra/Kente</i> Retailers	2-20 years	18	18	18	100
	Total	100	100	100	

Table 3-22 shows that out of a total number of one hundred respondents, twenty-six *Kente* Retailers representing 26% had served for 5 to 25 years. Sixteen *Kente/Adinkra* Retailers representing 16% had also served between 3 to 15 years. Eleven *Adinkra*

Retailers representing 11% had been in the service for 2 to 12 years. Nine Batik/Tie-Dye Retailers representing 9% had also been in the service for one to nine years. Twenty Appliqué/*Kente*/*Adinkra* Retailers representing 20% had served for one to 16 years. Eighteen representing 18% had also served between 2 to 20 years.

From the table above it could be deduced that the selected distributors are in the position to comment on cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles and progress achieved in the trade due to their duration of marketing these products. With the exception of batik/tie-dye and *adinkra* retailers all other retailers deal with more than two textile products.

3.4.6 Textile Producers

The following tables also show the characteristics of the data collected from producers in relation to their age, gender, position and years of production.

Table 3-23: Age

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
12-24	10	4.55	4.55	4,55
25-35	44	20	20	24.55
36-46	100	45.45	45.45	70
47-57	56	25.45	25.45	95.45
58-78	10	4.55	4.55	100
Total	220	100.0	100.0	----

Table 3-23 shows that out of a total number of two hundred and twenty respondents, ten representing 4.55% were between the ages of 12 and 24. Forty-four representing 20% were between the ages of 25 and 35. One-hundred representing 45.45% were between the ages of 36 and 46. Fifty-six representing 25.45% were between the ages of 47 and 57. Ten representing 4.55% were between the ages of 58 and 78.

The gender representation for the overall Producers was as seen in the table below.

Table 3-24: Gender

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	172	78.18	78.18	78.18
Female	48	21.82	21.82	100
Total	220	100	100	

Table 3-24 shows that out of a total number of two-hundred and twenty respondents, one-hundred and seventy-two representing 78.18% were males. Forty eight representing 21.82% were females.

The following tables show the gender results of data collected from contemporary traditional textile producers.

Table 3-25: Gender

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Males	35	44.30	44.30	44.30
Females	44	55.70	55.70	100.0
Total	79	100.0	100.0	----

Table 3-25 shows that out of a total number of seventy nine respondents, thirty five representing 44.30% were males. Forty four representing 55.70% were females.

This points out that a lot of the contemporary craftsmen are females with a moderate size being males. Again it can be said that female contemporary craftsmen are also capable of becoming traditional textile producers.

The following tables show the gender results of data collected from traditional textile producers.

Table 3-26: Gender

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Males	137	97.16	97.16	97.16
Females	4	2.84	2.84	100.0
Total	141	100.0	100.0	----

Table 3-26 shows that out of a total number of one hundred and forty one respondents, one hundred and thirty seven representing 97.16% were males. Four representing 2.84% were females.

This points out that most traditional craftsmen are males with a few being females. Again it can be said that breaking the traditional norm of male dominated craft will take a while. The research indicates that the first woman allowed to sit on the traditional loom was an educated lady around the 80's.

Below shows the type of Producers

Table 3-27: Type of Producers

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
<i>Kente</i> Weavers	100	45.45	45.45	45.45
<i>Adinkra</i> Printers	42	19.09	19.09	64.54
Screen Printers	30	13.64	13.64	78.18
Batik/Tie-dye Producers	20	9.09	9.09	87.27
Appliqué Printers	10	4.55	4.55	91.82
Embroidery Producers	18	8.18	8.18	100
Total	220	100	100	----

Table 3-27 shows that out of a total number of two hundred and twenty respondents, one hundred representing 45.45% were *Kente* weavers. Forty-two representing 19.09% were *Adinkra* printers. Thirty representing 13.64% were Screen printers. Twenty representing

9.09% were Batik/Tie-Dye producers. Ten representing 4.55% were Appliqué/producers. Eighteen representing 8.18% were Embroidery/producers.

Table 3-28: How long have you been a Traditional Textile Producer?

	No. of Years	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
<i>Kente</i> Weaver	2-25 years	100	45.45	45.45	45.45
<i>Adinkra</i> Printer	5-20 years	42	19.09	19.09	64.54
Screen Printer	1-10 years	30	13.64	13.64	78.18
Batik/Tie-Dye Producer	1-9 years	20	9.09	9.09	87.27
Appliqué Producer	1-14 years	10	4.55	4.55	91.82
Embroidery Producer	1-20 years	18	8.18	8.18	100
	Total	220	100	100	

Table 3-28 shows that out of a total number of two hundred and twenty respondents, one hundred *Kente* weavers representing 45.45% had served for 2 to 25 years. Forty-two *Adinkra* printers representing 19.09% had also served between 5 to 20 years. Thirty Screen printers representing 13.64% had been in service for 1 to 10 years. Twenty Batik/Tie-Dye producers representing 9.09% had also been in service for 1 to 9 years. Ten Appliqué producers representing 4.55% had served for 1 to 14 years. Eighteen representing 8.18% had also served from 1 to 20 years.

From the table above it could be deduced that the selected producers are in the position to comment on cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles and progress achieved in their line of production due to their duration of production of these products. With the exception of *Kente* weavers and *adinkra* printers all other producers recorded a year of service.

Table 3-29: Give suggestions as to what cultural custodians, government and non-governmental organizations should do to help the industry?

	Respondents	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Help promote traditional textiles on a larger scale for export	14	6.36	6.36	6.36
Create traditional textile related job opportunities for the youth	6	2.73	2.73	9.09
Provide materials and equipments for mass production	66	30	30	39.09
Organize workshops for craftsmen to meet international expectations	34	15.45	15.45	54.54
Invest more into traditional textile-related vocations for the youth	52	23.64	23.64	78.18
Establish more production centres	8	3.64	3.64	81.82
Add traditional textiles vocations to their budget	12	5.45	5.45	87.27
Introduce traditional textile programmes in all teacher training institutions	28	12.73	12.73	100.0
Total	220	100.0	100.0	----

Table 3-29 shows that out of a total number of two hundred and twenty respondents, fourteen representing 6.36% said they should help promote traditional textiles on a larger scale for export. Six representing 2.73% said they should Create traditional textile related job opportunities for the youth. Sixty six representing 30% said they should Provide materials and equipments for mass production. Thirty Four representing 15.45% said they should organize workshops for craftsmen to meet international expectations. Fifty two representing 23.64% said they should invest more into traditional textile-related vocations for the youth. Eight representing 3.64% said they should establish more production centres for producers. Twelve representing 5.45% said they should add traditional textile vocations to their budget. Twenty eight representing 12.73% said they should introduce traditional textile programmes in all teacher training institutions.

The table above illustrates that most producers desire to produce on a larger scale for export after apprenticeship training but due to circumstances beyond their control they are unable to achieve their desired goals. An indication that seed money for beginners is hard to come by and related job opportunities are absent. The Loans, tools, materials and equipments to work as well as financial and technical support are not adequate; not enough production centres have been established and international expectations are bleak since there are no organized workshops geared towards international trade and market standards.

3.4.7 Sample area

A total of 220 Asante textile producers (141 being traditional and 79 contemporary) were interviewed. They were sampled from and around Kumasi. The sampling of producers took place in the following towns; *Ntonso*, *Bonwire*; and in the following quarters of Kumasi: *Asokwa*, *Bomso* and *Bantom* (centre for National Culture Kumasi). The towns and quarters were selected on the basis of proximity and as centres of Asante traditional cloth production.

3.4.8 The producers (traditional and contemporary textile producers)

All the 220 textile producer (consisting of both traditional and contemporary producers) interviewed were Ghanaians. They were mostly males as in the former Asante Empire when the profession was regarded completely as a male occupation buttressed by several myths, legends and beliefs. The 44 females in the profession were among the contemporary producers. Ten out of the 220 producers interviewed were below 24 years of age. The majority (200) was between the ages of 25 and 57. The remaining ten were 58 years and above. About one-third of the traditional producers interviewed had had formal education to some extent.

3.4.9 Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship has been the main system of training Asante traditional textile producers. Therefore all the 220 producers whom the researcher interviewed had undergone apprenticeship. The majority of them were trained by their relatives. Those trained in this system took over the family profession when their trainers grew old or died. The old

system of training only relatives has nowadays become slackened. Therefore non-relatives are these days apprenticed to other family members. Training of relative still persists to some extent especially in *Bonwire* and *Ntonso*. What has probably changed is the system of marriage by the craftsmen. In former times family members of the profession intermarried. This is however, no more the case. The craftsmen surveyed had an average of four apprentices each.

After apprenticeship, one may set up one's own workshop to continue with the acquired profession until death. It was therefore learnt by the researcher that out of the 220 textile producers interviewed by him, 80 had worked for 35 years, while the rest had worked between five and twenty years

3.4.10 Products

The craftsmen produce an array of textile products including a variety of *adinkra* cloths, *Kente*, appliqué cloths, batik and tie-dye, embroidery *kuntunkuni* and *birisi*, depending on what a customer requires and can afford. Acquisition of textile raw materials in Asante, especially yarns for *Kente* production, is all from retailers in the Kumasi central market. Consequently all the craftsmen interviewed were registered members of the craftsmen association of the Ashanti Region. Most of the plain fabrics used for making *Adinkra*, *kobene*, *kuntunkuni*, *birisi* and other cloths, except *Kente* are bought from Accra and Tema. Formerly, all the talented craftsmen worked for the traditional rulers and Kings who heavily patronized their products. The elevated status of the *Asantehene* was for

instance reflected in his garments produced. Presently as indicated by all the craftsmen interviewed, their products are patronized by the general public.

3.4.11 Product designs

Asante traditional textiles as an aspect of Asante culture, are dynamic and ever changing. Unfortunately, there is an absence of knowledge on the historical genesis of Asante traditional textile symbolism. Reports in literature indicate that in the past, on the approach of the annual ‘*odwira*’ festival, the *Asantehene* issued an order to *Bonwire hene* to produce a new *Kente* designed cloth for some traditional rulers and for his personal use. This does not erase the fact that evidence of antique *Kente* is found all over Asante especially at *Bonwire*.

Nonetheless, in all traditional textiles there is a strong evidence of stylistic continuity and striking resemblance between present day traditional textile designs and those produced a generation ago, and beyond. Present day traditional symbolisms and those produced in the eighteenth century in Asante are common in today’s traditional textiles. The symbolisms as already stated were often formed from interpretations of the visual environment, events or based on proverbs. ‘*Adinkra*’ symbols are vivid examples of these creative thoughts. Some of the symbols obviously were also influenced by the examples of Islamic religion, originating from the signs and symbols of the Tuareg Arabs not only in the area of embroidery (*Kyerematen*, 1964 : 16 and *Kwami*, 1994 : 10) but also in the formation of *adinkra* symbols like ‘*Mmra Krado*’, ‘*Pepeni amma yɛahu Kramo*’, and so on.

A close observation of the recorded *adinkra* symbols by Rattray (1959: 267), reveals a certain level of mystical influence especially on a symbol like the ‘*Akoma*’, (the heart) with a cross in the centre. Obviously the probable introduction to such a symbol would have been their engagement with the Muslim merchants whose connections extended across the Sahara to North Africa and beyond. It is not surprising from the foregoing background information that all the textile producers interviewed asserted that there has not been any tremendous change in the type of symbols they use. With the exception of few symbols, the same symbols as it were are being reproduced or modified (Appendix II) in different ways for different products. The adoption of the western way of life has also influenced the designs of traditional textile products. The craftsmen pointed out that western influence has affected the quality and quantity of some products on the market, even though some traditional designs are still followed. Commenting on the quality of traditional textile products on the market, all the craftsmen interviewed said there are a lot of inferior products made of either poor quality yarns or fabrics which are believed to be imported from neighboring countries.

3.4.12 Beliefs and legends

Although, an author such as Meyerowitz, (1952), has elaborated several myths, legends and beliefs surrounding especially the *Kente* profession, almost sixteen of the traditional craftsmen could recount such beliefs. All of them however, shared of the belief that *Kente* weaving is still men’s occupation and women who dare to weave *Kente* turn to be barren with time. Asked whether they performed any rituals whatsoever, before working on any product, all the craftsmen answered no but do offer a prayer; unlike the present day

traditional textile producers, those of the past performed rituals before they began to work. As recounted by Gerard (1980), the craftsmen purified themselves by washing all over, purified their instruments by offering sacrifices and abstained from sexual relations for some time. They then recited a prayer as they broke an egg to the loom or working premises. These and other sacrifices were made to ensure successful products. The traditional craftsmen of the past were accorded a lot of privileges. They were, and are considered as “wives” of the king of Asante and accorded special privileges restricted to chiefs and queen mothers. They were also accorded a royal burial when they died. Answering the questionnaires on the type of privileges the present day traditional craftsmen enjoy in the society, respondents said they had no special place in the society with the exception of few artisans who work for the king.

3.4.13 The contemporary craftsmen

All the contemporary craftsmen interviewed were located in Asante. Interestingly 55% of them were females. This contradicts the old belief that it was a taboo for a female to be a *Kente* weaver or an *adinkra printer*. These craftsmen are young university graduates, aged between 25 and 45 years, trained at the College of Art, and social science, (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi). Unlike the traditional craftsmen, the present-day craftsmen interviewed have worked for between five and twelve years. They employ modern techniques; for instance, instead of the calabash prints, screen prints are used by the traditional craftsmen, the present-day practitioners use sewing machines, broadlooms, foreign dyes and paste for their works. The present-

day craftsmen also use computers and electronic gadgets instead of manual tools as done by the past traditional craftsmen.

The present-day craftsmen produce traditional textile products similar to those of their traditional counterparts. In addition they also produce fashionable items like flying ties, priestly shawls, *Kente* hair bands, and imitate *nwomu* strip bands both on the broadloom and the traditional looms. The present-day craftsmen's ability to produce a unique array of traditional textile items can be attributed to the standard of education and to their exposure to effect yet less labour intensive modern methods, which enable them to innovate and create new ideas and designs. Unlike the traditional craftsmen who tend to be conservative, the present-day craftsmen are able to combine and synthesize traditional symbols on the computer into some innovative ideas to produce designs that suit international markets.

3.4.14 Production constraints

All the craftsmen complained of poor, inferior working conditions. They listed insufficient working space, limited looms and its accessories, working tables, and uncomfortable working instruments as some of the production handicaps. The unstable price of raw materials was also another serious production constraint.

3.5 Summary of empirical studies and discussions

Traditional textile symbolism is readily identified in Asante culture and that Asantes have a cultural identity embedded in their traditional textiles. The cultural identity of Asante

textiles can be maintained in the face of known factors of change namely education, Christianity, and globalization on symbolism in Asante traditional textiles

By observation and questioning, it is clear that symbolism in Asante traditional textiles has taken on a new face and yearns for attention to arrest the abuse and misinterpretations of some Asante cultural symbols used in traditional textiles. It was also realized that the extent of influence on Asante traditional textiles is compromising the authenticity of the symbolism in Asante traditional textiles in terms of form, style, interpretation and execution of these symbols and needs a critical look at the symbols used in the production of Asante traditional textiles.

Affirmatively there has been no remarkable loss of local patronage especially as regards chiefs but on the other hand, there has been a marked improvement on the quality of Asante traditional textile in the way the symbols and colours are used and printed and by the way such fabrics are sometimes utilized as the research indicated. From the research local patronage is increasing especially with *nwomu*, *Kente* and *adinkra* cloths made washable with foreign print paste but there seems to be no control on the usage of colour, symbols and design; however, the rule that no weaver should reproduce designs meant for *Otumfuo's* wardrobe is still enforced. Technologically the execution of symbolism is improving as a result of the adaptation of foreign techniques especially on adinkra cloth production

Some available documented and undocumented material identified on cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles were located, identified, collated, evaluated, utilized and described, effectively in chapter four of this thesis. Aimed at rediscovering the purity of Asante cultural symbolism and the appreciation of traditional textile in the society, a representational population were identified within its society and engaged to find a way of recapturing the vibrancy of Asante cultural symbolism towards the promotion of Asante cultural, and ultimately to regain the Asante textile cultural identity.

Various aspects of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles and the role it has played in the promotion of the culture, were identified and discussed in chapter four of this thesis. As already mentioned the identified target groups were the local textile producers and selected number of the general public.

After reviewing and analyzing the gathered data, it was observed that there were pertinent problems and challenges facing traditional and contemporary textile craftsmen in the face of globalization. Some recommendations and proposals for their co-existence were discussed in chapter six.

CHAPTER FOUR

METAPHORIC INTERPRETATIONS ON CULTURAL SYMBOLISM

4.1 Overview

Chapter four focuses on the metaphoric interpretations of cultural symbolism identified and used in Asante traditional textiles. It throws light on the root meanings of these symbols to better understand the philosophy shrouded in these symbols. This is to help prevent the misinterpretations and misrepresentations of some symbols parading the traditional textile industry. *Kwami* asserts that the motifs are indiscriminately employed both in and outside Ghana, not only for their aesthetic appeal but also for their interpretive meanings (*Kwami*, 1994: 11). The forms of these symbols are being twisted or corrupted day by day by those who use them to propagate their own ideologies different from the original concepts or interpretations of such symbols.

4.2 *Adinkra* symbols

The first principal symbolism worth dealing with is those used for the *Adinkra* cloth which invariably is used for other Asante traditional textiles. 52 out of the 73 symbols realized would be discussed (Appendix II). Each of the motifs that make up the corpus of *Adinkra* symbolism has a name and meaning derived either from a proverb, a historical event, human attitude, animal behaviour, plant life, forms and shapes of inanimate and man-made objects (*Fosu*, 1993: 45). These are graphically rendered in stylized geometric shapes. The names given to these symbols indicate their significance. In most cases the meanings are associated with the day-to-day activities of the society and may be categorized as follows: aesthetics, ethics, human relations and religious concepts (*Kwami*, 1994: 10). In its totality, *Adinkra* symbolism is a visual representation of social thought

relating to the history, philosophy and religious beliefs of the Akan people of Ghana and Cote' d'Ivoire. The first symbol worth considering is the *funtunfunefu-denkyemfunefu* as shown below.

Funtunfunefu-Denkyemfunefu:

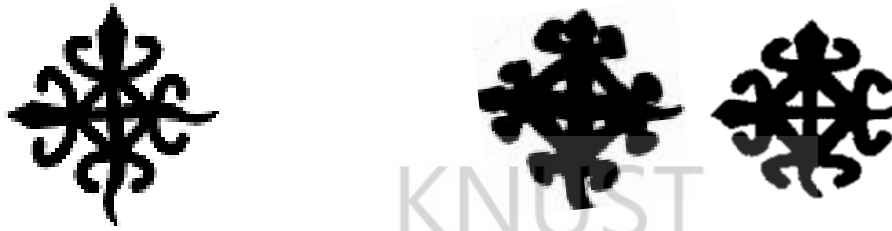


Fig 9; Original Symbol of *funtunfunefu-denkyemfunefu* (Rattray, 1959: 265)

Fig 9a; Stylized Versions of *funtunfunefu-denkyemfunefu*

Name/Theme: *Funtunfunefu-Denkyemfunefu*/ symbol of unity in diversity

Proverb: *Funtufunefu, denkyemfunefu, won efuru bom, nso woredidi a na woreko*

Literal Translation; The Siamese crocodiles have one stomach yet they fight over food when eating (Glover, 1969).

Meaning: *Denkyem* refers to crocodile, '*efuru*' refers to stomach, and therefore the two means the stomach of a crocodile. In this symbol, the Siamese reptiles are joined together and share a common belly yet they fight over food while eating. The philosophy is that the society or a nation has one destiny yet everybody tries to make history- (Osei, 2002: 113). The symbol maintains its meaning even when used alone on an *Adinkra* fabric; it only changes slightly when used with other related symbols which carry almost the same philosophy.

Background: The ruling system in the Akan societies are such that the chief governs with selected sub-chiefs or leaders of the communities whose duty is to offer pragmatic counsel to aid the chief to make wise conclusive decisions relating to a matter being discussed for effective governance (Osei, 2002: 124-126). On such occasions, the exchanges of different opinions do occur indicating a struggle of ideas as if to persuade one another to accept the thought of the other.

The process of such engagement is likened to the eating habit of the Siamese crocodile. The stomach of the crocodile is likened to a common purpose and goal, as in democratic governance, where divergent views are expressed and well debated to formulate good policies. The principle of people “disagreeing to agree” applies in this case. This symbol signifies the unification of people of different cultural settings for achieving common objectives despite their divergent views and opinions about the way of life.

Moral Values: This symbol of "Siamese crocodiles" represents democracy and unity in diversity, oneness of humanity in spite of cultural differences. This symbol is a reminder that infighting and ethnic conflict are harmful to society, especially all those who engage in it. It therefore encourages oneness of purpose.

Originator: *Papa Dwoben*, an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Tutu I* the founder of the Asante kingdom, who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1695-1719).

Idea Development: The first symbolic representation shown above is the original form. This symbol is the idea of Siamese crocodile twins who have the same stomach into which they eat and yet quarrel over food they eat.

The next symbol is the Talons of a Fierce Hunter the eagle also derived from part of an animal.

Kcdee Mcwere Wa



Fig 10; Symbol A- *Kcdee mcwere wa*



Fig 10a; Symbol B-*Nkotimsefuopua*

Name/Theme: *Kcdee mcwere wa* (Talons of an eagle)

Literal Translation: *Kcdee*- “Eagle”, *mcwere wa*- “talons”

Symbol A- *Kcdee mcwere wa*

Meaning: *Kcdee*- refers to an ‘eagle’ and it signifies the courageous ruler of the air “talons” also signify the strength and tenacity of the eagle. Therefore the eagle’s talons mean the strength and tenacity of the courageous ruler of the air (Glover, 1969).

Symbol B-*Nkotimsefuopua*

This type of symbol is sometimes mistaken for ‘symbol A’ because of the similarities but *Nkotimsefuopua* is a type of fashioned hair style dressed on certain attendants of a Queen

Mother of Asante [name unknown]. (Rattray, 1959: 265) This symbol is often used in conjunction with other symbols for the production of most *adinkra* prints. Example is shown in the plate 39 below



Plate 39: shows *Nkotimsefuopua* alongside three new *adinkra* symbols: - photograph from the catalogue of cultures by **Ekow Asmah- 2006**

Background: The flying eagle a Fierce Hunter are charismatic birds, aerial acrobats, swooping down and catching fish at the surface with their powerful talons, and returning to their perch to eat or may carry the fish to a feeding place on land before devouring it. Eagles hunt only during the day; by night, they sit on their nests or perch in some other high place. Eagles are symbolic and ornamental figures used as tribal or national emblems since ancient times; regarded as a symbol of courage and power because of its large size, superb aerial skills, and the inaccessibility of many of its nest sites, in wild and mountainous country. In Asante myths the eagle is associated with the ruler of the air because of its ability to see clearly way high in the sky. It is also part of the emblem of the Asante. The eagle is the totem for the *Dyoko* clan. *Dyoko* is the royal clan for the *Asante* Chiefs (*Asantehene*).

Moral Values: There is an *Akan* adage, which can be explained to mean-“the eagle takes a thing by force; it shows it to you and takes it away”. A man in authority or a ruler must be courageous and fearless when his administration is transparent to all. He must be able to carry his vision and his people to the highest pinnacle of endeavour or life. It is a symbol of courage and power and might. The talons of the eagle can be destructive sometimes whenever there is resistance to its ambitions.

Originator: *Agya Manu* an indigene of Asante-*Ntonso* is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Tutu I* the founder of the Asante kingdom, who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1695-1719).

Idea Development: The development of this symbol was based on the curved claws of the eagle. Before breeding each year, they go through a courtship ritual that sometimes includes locking talons in mid air, and spiralling and cart wheeling together as they fall toward the ground. The claws have been intertwined to form this design.

Sankcfa [positive reversion]



Fig 11; Three variations of *Sankcfa* labeled A, B, C.



Fig 11a; stylized versions of *Sankcfa*

Name/Theme: *Sankcfa* /Reversion

Proverb: ‘*Se wo were firi a wɔsan kɔfa a yennkyi.*’

Literal Translation: ‘It is not a taboo to return to take back what you forgot.’ Or turn back and fetch it (Rattray 1959: 265).

Meaning: *San kɔ fa* is the short form of this proverbial word. *San* means ‘return’, *kɔ*, means ‘go’ and *fa* means ‘take’. *Sankɔfa* therefore means, ‘Return and take’. The proverb seeks to dwell on the wisdom in acquiring knowledge and wealth from the past to improve upon the security of the next generation in every endeavour of life. The *Sankɔfa* labeled A is the original and initial symbol based on the characteristics of the *sankɔfa* bird. The *Sankɔfa* labeled (B & C) are all innovations and the stylized version is a recent version of the symbol. This symbol is also commonly used in conjunction with other symbols for the production of most *adinkra* prints as shown in the plate 11b below



Plate 40: shows *Sankɔfa* alongside three other *adinkra* symbols: - photograph from the catalogue of cultures by **Ekow Asmah- 2006**- unpublished

Background: For their graceful movements in water, birds have been the subject of many poems, fairy tales, legends, religious customs, and literature. Feathers have been used for ornamental and ritual purposes by nearly all cultures and for warm clothing.

Birdsongs and calls have inspired tribal religious chants as well as orchestral compositions. In Hindu mythology, a bird god, Garuda (“the devourer”) hatches from one of two eggs laid by Vinata, his wife which is incubated for 1,000 years.

His two main roles are as a devourer of *nagas* (snake-like demons) and as the mount of the supreme god and protector of the world, Vishnu. In symbolic terms, Garuda represents the ascent from the material plane to higher spiritual awareness. In popular belief, Garuda protects against snakes and devours all evil things. (*Microsoft Encarta 2009* © 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation) In the same vain *Sankofa* represent the utilization of past knowledge and wealth to protect and preserves the life of the next generation.

The *Sankofa* bird is a tropical freshwater wetlands sedentary wading bird that inhabits muddy shores of wooded ponds, marshes and wet woodlands, and on inland ponds, lakes, and rivers. The unique nests are made of vegetation such as grass and reeds, lined with softer material or sometimes in a small ground depression, lined with pebbles, shells, or grass.; the eggs usually number from two to three, are sometimes laid on sandbars along rivers, and the parent, before leaving the nest, completely covers the eggs or chicks with sand to protect them against extreme heat. The eggs or the newly-hatched chicks when threatened are carried on their parents’ backs held with their hooked beaks to safety.

With few exceptions, birds' eyes are on the sides of their heads rather than in the front as human eyes are. Birds therefore have poor depth perception, but they can see a larger portion of their surroundings without turning their heads. This swimming bird tend to have excellent insulating properties of hard, water-repellent body feathers, (beneath

which lies a dense coat of short, fluffy feathers) called down that enable it to swim or float on the water surface. Particularly intriguing has been the ability of this creature to perform complicated tasks—weave a web, build a nest, with slender, hooked beaks; long, flexible necks, carry their eggs across rivers, sing a song, find a home, or capture food—at just the right time despite the obvious destructions. *Sankɔfa* will defend their eggs fiercely when threatened, and will retract its head and spread its wings to frighten any aggressor. (Nana Kwaku Duah II, 2007 chief of *Tewobaabi*- Ashanti)

Metaphorically the *Sankɔfa* bird is carrying the next generation of life in the form of an egg through unfriendly environment as it crosses the river with intense determination by putting its own life on the line just to recover and preserve the next generation. In all religion wisdom is likened to life, for by wisdom a king rules and gain favour with his subjects. The Asante's will go to every length to obtain and acquire wisdom no wonder they were able to assemble the best brains of craftsmen all around its territories.

The believe that there is no shame in utilizing the wisdom of the past when forgotten is an understatement in that the philosophy that was routed in the culture of the people of Asante strive to attain wisdom from both the past and the present with passion. To frown, ignore and neglect ones cultural heritage of importance is to ignore the basic wisdom or wealth for survival. When citizens fail to decipher the wisdom of their traditional practices they turn to abandon their culture for foreign cultures. If one does not know the value of what he or she possesses, others who see the wisdom in it will adopt it and call it their own. Some people however, have recognized the importance of taking relevant cultural values useful for contemporary living. It is believed that progress is based on the right application of positive aspects of the past values.

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Kwaku Duah II*, 2007 chief of *Tewobaabi- Ashanti*) The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Tutu Kwame*, more commonly known as *Nana Osei Bonsu*, (1804-1824).

Idea Development: This symbol has been developed from the idea of a turned wader bird with its slender, hooked beaks; long, flexible necks, carry its eggs. The original form is the first symbol on the right shown above.

Moral Value: This symbol teaches the wisdom in learning from the past cultures, to help improve the future. It also teaches people to decipher, cherish and value the wisdom in their culture and avoid its negative adulteration. This is a symbol of positive reversion and revival.

Dwennimmen [Symbol of Strength]



Fig 12; Original symbol of *Dwennimmen*



Fig 12a; Shows three Stylized versions of *Dwennimmen*

Name/Theme: *Dwenini aben*/Humility, Strength

Proverb: ‘*Dwenini ahooden ne n’aben; wopan n’aben a na woayi no, awie no.*’

Literal Translation: The strength of the ram lies in its horns, once they are plucked off, then it is caught in a trap.

Meaning: *Dwenini* refers to a ‘ram’ and it signifies humility. *Aben* also refers to Horns it also signifies strength. Therefore ram’s horn means humility and strength (Rattray: 267). This symbol is also commonly used in conjunction with other symbols for the production of most *adinkra* prints (Plate 41 below)



Plate 41: shows *Dwennimmen* alongside three new *adinkra* symbols: -
photograph from the catalogue of cultures by **Ekow Asmah- 2006**

Background: The ram is noted for its strength when it is fighting its adversaries. Rams fight by butting each other with their horns. Although these blows are powerful, the males have strong horns and thick skulls and so (as in much intra-specific aggression) the opponents are not injured. It is also noted for its persistence in fighting and the open show of physical superiority of one animal till its opponent gives in, or its horns are broken. Despite the ram’s tenacity, it submits itself humbly for slaughter. Large bands are grazed on the open range under the control of shepherds portraying the submissiveness and humility of rams. Sheep are used for ceremonies and other sacrificial purposes, because they are considered to be very peaceful and innocent animals. Unlike goats which are naughty and mischievous. The symbol signifies modesty but toughness in the character and nature of people.

The ram are even-toed, hoofed animals (artiodactyls). They are cud-chewing animals (ruminants) with the upper incisor teeth missing and with a four-chambered stomach. They have paired hollow, un-branched horns that are not shed. The horns of the adult male, or ram, are massive and spirally curved. The horns of the adult female, or ewe, are short and only slightly curved. Besides providing pelts and wool for clothing and carpets, meat in the form of lamb and mutton, and milk for drinking and cheese making, sheep are used to a limited extent as pack animals, and the wild species are hunted as game.

Moral value: The symbol stresses humility in every aspect of life, to learn and acquire knowledge. It discourages people from being arrogant but rather humble in order to accomplish all their endeavors. This is a symbol of humility and strength.

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* an indigene of *Asante-Ntonso* is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Tutu Kwame*, more commonly known as *Nana Osei Bonsu*, (1804-1824).

Idea development: This also known as *dwaninintoasoɔ*. It is made out of the horns of the male sheep. The first symbol among the two is the original

Akokɔnan [Symbol of nurture]



Fig 13; Original symbol of *Akokɔnan*



Fig 13a; three stylized versions of *akokɔnan*

Name/Theme: *Akokɔ nan* /Nurture

Proverb: *Akokɔ nan tia ne ba,na enkum no*

Literal Translation: The hen's leg treads on its chicks but it does not kill them.

Meaning: *Akokɔ* means fowl *nan* refers to leg. *Akokɔ nan* therefore means the hens legs.

This signifies the love and care of a parent, guardian, teacher and people in authority. *Tia ba* means treads on chick. This signifies the scolding, reprimanding and other forms of punishments which reforms rather than harm a person. The proverb portrays the proactive, corrective, patient and loving nature of mothers and guardians for their children and wards. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols.

Background: The chicken was one of the first domestic animals to be mentioned in recorded history. It is referred to in many folktales of the Akans and can be found in almost every home in Asante. The Asante's considered chickens sacred to their gods and are used for many rituals and ceremonies. In the 1900s, the high-priced chicken was a luxury dish in many homes in Asante. Today, however, it is a popular form of meat owing in part to the skill with which poultry farmers around the country have adopted systems of intensive chicken or broiler farming. The male chickens are called cockerels or cocks; females, especially those more than a year old, are known as hens; domestic fowl is adapted for living on the ground, where it finds its natural foods, consisting chiefly of worms, insects, seeds, and green vegetation. The feet, usually four-toed with claws, are adapted for scratching the earth.

The males have bony growths called spurs on their legs. The large, heavy body and short wings make most breeds incapable of flying except for short distances. The hen in scratching the ground in search of food, occasionally steps on its chicks, however its feet does not harm or kill them. Children are reprimanded, scolded and disciplined when they go wrong. These punishments are corrective measures which reform children.

Moral Value: The symbol teaches the importance of nurturing children, but warns against pampering them so much. It urges the enforcement of discipline in all aspects of life. It also suggests showing some degree of mercy to offenders instead of capital punishment. This is a symbol of discipline and nurturing.

Originator: The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu*, (1804-1824). Source of information – curator at the *Prempeh II* museum at the Centre for National Culture Kumasi, 1989

Idea Development: The symbol was developed from the hind leg of the hen.

Denkyem Da Nsuo Mu [Symbol of adaptability]



Fig 14; Original Symbol of *Denkyem Da Nsuo Mu*



Fig 14a; Three stylized Versions of *Denkyem Da Nsuo Mu*

Name/Theme: *Denkyem Da Nsuo Mu* /Adaptability

Proverb: *Denkyem da nsuo mu nso wonhome nsuo, ohome mframa.*

Literal Translation; The crocodile lives in water but it doesn't breathe water it breaths air.

Meaning: The crocodile can live both in water and on land. The symbol shows that one can adapt to varied conditions and situations in life. (Glover, 1969) This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloths. (See plate 42).



Plate 42: shows *Denkyem Da Nsuo Mu* alongside *Nhwimu adinkra* symbol of an *adinkra* print: - photograph- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah- 2006

Background: The crocodile is a large reptile which lives in rivers and other water bodies; it has a good appetite for meat. They are revered animals by many communities because of their amphibious nature and physical strength and also because of the potency of their bile's as poison for hunting and other purposes. Crocodile eggs are used for food in some parts of Asante.

The skin is highly valued for leather, and the extract from the musk glands is used in the manufacture of perfumes. They are adaptable to environmental changes. The adaptable, opportunistic crocodiles do not disrupt the ecosystem and displace other animals provided they are not attacked. They are interdependent creatures within the physical

environment they occupy. Their interactions among other animals are often subtle, and the integration of their roles is tight for mutual survival.

Moral Value: The proverb advises and encourages people to adapt and adjust to new situations and changing circumstances. It encourages people to the way of life of the people amongst whom they find themselves. In a special sense it is warning not to look down on the culture of others but rather adjust oneself to fit into that of others. This is a symbol of adaptability.

Originator: *Agya Kwadwo Nsiah* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Opoku Ware I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1719-1750).

Idea development: This producer was inspired by the crocodile to produce this design.

Bese Saka

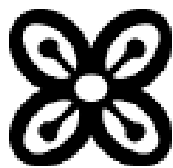


Fig 15; Original Symbol of *bese saka*



Fig 15a; Two Stylized versions of *bese saka*

Name/Theme: *Bese saka* (Bunch of cola nuts)

Literal Translation: “*Bese*” means “Cola nut” “*saka*” means bunch.

Meaning: it is the food for the weary, the food for greatness, a stimulant for power and achievements (Glover, 1969). This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols.

Background: cola nuts is a one-seeded fruit, are about 2.5 cm (1 in) long, developed from a compound ovary, that has external walls hardened to a woody consistency, and that is indehiscent. They have a mottled brown or reddish-grey colour, the taste of the fresh seeds is bitter, but as the nuts age and they become slightly aromatic. The seeds contain caffeine, tannin, and theo-bromine, and are used extensively in the manufacture of cola drinks. Cola nut is enjoyed by chewing and purposely for its stimulating effect, making you active. It is mostly patronized and used by the farmers mostly from the Northern tribes of Ghana. It is also served to visitors as they welcome them to their homes to refresh their strength and to accept them into their fold. This magical and mysterious seed used by most people could not have evaded the attention of the Asantes.

Moral Value: They have learnt that the road to achievement is sometimes bitter but it turns to strengthen one's life for great success. Little achievements give strength for one to carry on even when tiredness sets in. It is a symbol of power and wealth.

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* an indigene of *Asante-Ntonso* is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Opoku Ware I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1719-1750).

Idea development: This motive was developed from the cross section of a cola nut. It is like twins found in one womb. Conception of power or achievement in life is the element

of strength and hard work. Like twins constituting two different people, are conceived by the same parents, almost at the same time.

Nyame Dua [Symbol of worship]



Fig 16; Original symbol of *Nyame Dua*

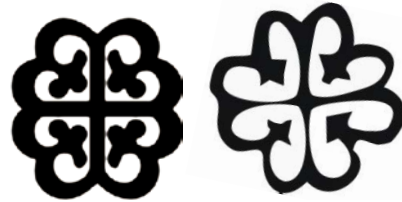


Fig 16a; A stylized Version of *Nyame Dua*

Name/Theme: *Nyame Dua*/ Symbol of Worship

Literal Translation: God's tree.

Meaning: *Nyame* refers to God, who is the Almighty and the Supreme Being. *Dua* also refers to tree and this signifies the altar or the place of worship of God. This also represents the shrine, church, mosque and other sacred places of worship. (Glover, 1969) This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols. (Plate 43)



Plate 43: shows *Nyame dua* as the main symbol with *fihankra* as the background pattern in full drop arrangement produced by the researcher: - from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006

Background: *Nyame dua* is a three-pronged stake which is erected in courtyards and in front of homes. A small earthenware pot, calabash or a brass basin filled with water and herbs is placed between the forked stake for purification and cleansing rites. Prayer is occasionally said; using actual words, and also through libation pouring alcoholic drink, water, or the sprinkling of foods. This serves as a reunion with God and the ancestors. In the past every house hold had ‘*Nyame dua*’ which protected the family, warded off bad omen and evil forces. It serves as a place of worship or an altar to God. It also signifies the presence and the protection of God.

Moral Value: The symbol urges people to acknowledge the presence and protection of God, and also worship and venerate him in sincerity. This is a symbol of worship and veneration.

Originator: *komfo Anokye* the high priest of the Asante kingdom is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Tutu I* the founder of the Asante kingdom, who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1695-1719).

Idea development: This design is from the tree that is known as ‘*Nyame dua*’. The formation of its branches as it always following each other cumulated the development of the symbol. The stem has the ability to procreate like a parent with the various brunches being able to support and carry objects of worship just as the family takes care of its children.

Aya [Symbol of defiance]



Fig 17; Original
Symbol of *Afa*



Fig 17a; Five Stylized version of *Afa*

Name/Theme: *Aya*/Defiance

Meaning: *Aya* refers to the fern; the word also means ‘I am not afraid of you’, ‘I am independent of you’, and the wearer may imply this by wearing it (Rattray, 1959: 265).

This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth alongside other *adinkra* symbols. (See plate 44)



Plate 44: shows *Aya* in an *adinkra* cloth within an *Nhwimu*
symbol in full drop formation: - from the catalogue of cultures
by Ekow Asmah -2006 - unpublished

Background: It is a hardy plant with thin evergreen leaves, which has the ability to withstand almost all weather conditions and soil types. Ferns are among the oldest land plants. They mostly grow in damp, shady places, although certain species grow on dry ground or rocks. Some ferns, in fact, grow only in rocky places—in fissures and crevices

of cliff faces and boulders. Others grow as air plants, on trees. No matter where one finds itself one should be able to survive and blossom in all facets of life

This symbol points out the ups and downs of life. The survival of mankind requires strong-will to face challenges and vicissitudes of life. Lack of strong will and endurance in difficult situations exposes a person's vulnerability, which could be capitalized on by their opponents. Knowing the meaning of this symbol motivates one to will the power to overcome challenges. The symbol signifies endurance and defiance of difficulties in all aspects of human endeavors.

Moral Values: The symbol teaches that life is full of uncertainties. However, one must persevere. It teaches a sense of adaptability in any condition.

It also encourages individuals and nations to be independent, self reliant and resourceful. This is a symbol of defiance and endurance.

Originator: *Kwadwo Maanu* an indigene of Asante-Asokwa is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Kwadwo I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1764-1777).

Idea Development: This is symbolic of the fern which can be found around as a parasitic plant on the palm tree, dry ground and rocky places. It can be found with another plant known as *Sensam* which is gathered a lot around the palm tree. Unlike *sensam*, the fern is able to survive and climb up to progress.

Wawa Aba [Symbol of Hardness]



Fig 18; Original Symbol of *Wawa Aba*

Name/Theme: *Wawa Aba*/Hardness

Literal Translation: The seed of *Wawa* tree (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: *Wawa* is a type of tropical rainforest tree of immense economic importance. It is therefore likened to the successful person, venture or event. *Aba* refers to the seed of the *Wawa* tree. This is also likened to the difficulties and problems which are associated with life. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols.

Background: the *Wawa* seed has a very hard outer covering. This tough shell is however broken by the tender germinating seedling. It later defies the vagaries of tropical weather and grows into a big economic tree. It is a fact that a strong sense of purpose is not easily overcome or hindered by obstacles.

Moral Value: The symbol reminds one that challenges and difficulties are inevitable. It therefore encourages perseverance even in the face of difficulty. The symbol teaches people that it takes an individual with a high tenacity of purpose to withstand life's odds to succeed. This is a symbol of hardness.

Originator: *Opanin Dwaben* an indigene of Asante-*Dwaben*. The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu*, (1804-1824).

Idea Development: This is developed from the idea of a seed of the *Wawa* tree.

Kontire ne Akwamu



Fig 19; Original Symbol of *Kontire ne Akwamu*

Name/Theme: *Kontire ne Akwamu*/symbol of collaboration

Literal Translation: *Kontire ne Akwamu* (they are the two elders of state representing the two clans of state) They are two divisions in a state. Their function has culminated in the proverb “*Tikro nko agyina*” meaning “Two heads are better than one”. It emphasizes on the need for democracy in governance and consensus decision (Glover, 1969). This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloths with other *adinkra* symbols.

Background: The philosophy and the knowledge of the society is revealed here as they begin to identify the existence of two basic entity around them namely male/female, darkness/light, day/night, sea, river/land, etc. For the world or society to exist peacefully, the two basic entities must dwell in harmony though identifiably each entity is unique in itself. The society develops as they learn to utilize the advantages or the positives of the

two entities. Wisdom they say is not in the mind of one person or a group of persons so they learn to accommodate each grouping, *Asafo* companies, clans and various trade groupings in the society. By these revelations came the symbolic representations of these two entities namely the *Kontire* and the *Akwamu* as the two minds of the society or the state. Among the element of design being lines and space reflected in the symbol gives an idea of the artist knowledge in the use of the various elements of design.

Originator: *Papa Nsiah* an indigene of Asante-*Ntonso* is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Opoku Ware I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1719-1750).

Idea Development: This symbol was produced from both vertical and horizontal lines and space. Fences serve its purpose of protecting the family compound. The need to employ both the vertical and horizontal structures normally made of bamboo stripes for building such wall defense is to protect the in mates.

Eban



Fig 20; Original Symbol of *Eban*



Fig 20a; A Stylized version of *Eban*

Name/Theme: *Eban*/symbol of security and protection

Literal Translation: *Eban* means fence. It shows how some homes are fenced.

It is a symbol of protection (Glover, 1969).

Idea Development: This symbol was produced from the idea of crossed sticks that forms a fence. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols.

Background: in a typical village setting arranged and tied-up wooden sticks are used as *Eban* (fence) or barriers to any enterprise like a house, garden or farm, pig or domestic animal rearing arena. Fences are made to ward off stray animals and also to identify ones boundary. The socio-economic activities of every community most often is reflected in the work of the artisans and the fence metaphorically state the activities associated with fences.

Moral value: any valuable assets must be well protected no matter how trivial or important in life it may be.

Originator: *Opanin Kwadwo Maanu* an indigene of Asante-*Ntonso* is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Opoku Ware I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1719-1750).

Anibere Enso Gya



Fig 21; Original Symbol of *Anibere Enso Gya*

Name/Theme: *Anibere enso gya, anka mani abere Koo*/symbol of restraint

Literal Translation: (Seriousness does not show in a fierce some eye else, you'll see my eyes all red)

Meaning: It shows how life has never been easy, "Life is war". "Life is seriousness". "Life is determination". (Glover, 1969)

Moral value: Despite the challenges of life, one should be able to handle difficulties and forge ahead in life. It is a symbol of struggle in life. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols.

Background: Unlike pain that the body expresses by one's facial expression, seriousness is a matter of one's attitude and not a body expression or reaction. Seriousness like attitude is a germ compared to a crystal diamond whose value is always realized when it is used and not when it is looked at. So is life if it must be worthwhile. A meaningful life is not seen in the eye or on the outward appearance of a person but what one does with the quality invested within by God. The symbol was derived from the diamond reflections when one looks in to a crystal diamond. In life one has to utilize his/her potentials if he/she has to win or succeed hence life is war. The value or the potential within is always confronted with the fears within and what overcomes the fears or obstacles is the ability of one to utilize with determination the potential within thus life is practical and not a wishful thinking.

Originator: *Opanin Yaw Dadee* an indigene of *Asante-Bantama* is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of

its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Opoku Ware I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1719-1750).

Idea development: This symbol is a graphical representation produced by the reflection of a crystal diamond. Depicting the eyes, are the shapes and spaces images produced from the diamond.

Nhwimu



Fig 22; Original Symbol of *Nhwimu*

Name/Theme: *Nhwimu* /symbol of planning

Literal Translation: Crossing

It shows the divisions done on a plain cloth, before stamping of the *adinkra* motif. It is mostly done with *Duafe* (wooden comb)

Meaning: It depicts the divisions that exist in life. This symbolizes adroitness and precision (Glover, 1969). This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols. (Plate 45)



Plate 45: shows *Nhwimu* symbol interchanged with other five blocks of *adinkra* symbols: - from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006 - unpublished

Background: Raising plants and animals and governing their breeding to produce features of value to people—is a characteristic of the human species, and one in a series of cultural advances that have permitted people to gain a measure of control over the forces of nature. Apart from the knowledge of keeping ones boundary in farming that is characterized in the Asante farming community, their method of farming is also revealed in this symbol. The extensive cultivation of plants to yield food, feed, or fibre; to provide medicinal or industrial ingredients; or to grow ornamental products was a major occupation of the Asante community. Their method of farming was mixed farming; the combination of growing various crops and rearing livestock on one farm divided from each crop or stock with a wooden fence. It is the arrangement and use of these wooden fences that culminated into the above symbol. The habit of separating various units in designing with streaks of lines even in the production of *Ntiamu* in an *Adinkra* cloth is an evidence of such knowledge.

Moral value: the symbol advises people to always plan their lives thoughtfully and with foresight in relation to what they will need to equip themselves for effective living. This is a symbol of planning (*Owusu Ansah*, 2008)

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* a master artisan and an indigene of Asante-*Ntonso* is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Opoku Ware I* (1719-1750).

Idea Development: This symbol has been developed from diagonal lines or rectangular lines. It creates a diamond shape in which the symbols are stamped during the production of ‘*ntiamu*’

Nsoroma (Star)



Fig 23; Original symbol of *Nsoroma*



Fig 23a; A Stylized Version of *Nsoroma*

Name/Theme: *Nsoroma*- star

Literal Translation: a child of the sky

That is a star referring to the saying in Akan; “*Oba Nyankon soroma te Nyame so na nte ne ho so*”. ‘Like the star, the child of the Supreme Being, I rest with God and do not depend on myself’ (Rattray, 1959: 267).

Meaning: It therefore symbolizes guardianship. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols. (See plate 46)



Plate 46: shows stylized *Nsoroma* symbol interchanged with other blocks of *adinkra* symbols: - from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006 - unpublished

KNUST

Background: The belief system of the people refers to faith in a divinely created order of the world, agreement with which is the means of salvation for a community and thus for each individual who has a role in that community and this necessitated the need to understand the guardian and the elements of the universe. This curiosity of the ancestors concerning day and night and the Sun, Moon, and stars led eventually to the observation and realization, that the heavenly bodies appear to move in a regular manner that is useful in defining times (for planting and harvesting crops and for religious celebrations) and directions to find bearings and positions on long trading journeys by the human shadow it creates. They believed that celestial events, especially the planetary motions, were connected with their own fortunes. This belief, encouraged the development of mathematical schemes for predicting the planetary motions, but has no scientific basis.

To the ancestors the sky showed many regularities of behaviour. The bright Sun, which divided day from night, rose every morning from one direction, the east, moved steadily across the sky during the day, and set in a nearly opposite direction, the west. At night the stars could be seen to follow a similar course, seeming to rotate in permanent groupings.

Observation of the stars indicates that the stars appear in the west after sunset or in the east before sunrise showing that the relative position of the Sun among the stars changes gradually.

As culture developed, a coherent and orderly picture of the world caused them to attribute this intelligence to a supreme being other than their own. The more people appreciate the complexity of the universe, the more they marvel at the intelligence behind it and so began to formulate a mature conception of the Deity as a being who excels in wisdom and power and is immeasurably greater than a mere mortal. Thus, contemplating the wonder of his own bodily structure, the psalmist in the Bible wrote, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it” (Psalms 139:6).

The community binds itself to this pattern as its rule of life consisting of three elements—the creed, the code, and the cult. Creed is faith in the revealed pattern and in the divine intelligence that gave it. Code is the divinely sanctioned and authorized system of human laws and morals comprising the rules of active participation in society. Cult is the ritual of worship, or symbolic acts, whereby the community brings its mind into accord with the mind of God, either by ceremonial dances, documentations or dramatic re-enactments of the deeds of God, or by sacrificial meals held in common between God and his people. Based on such philosophy, the artist within the community eventually documented these celestial images to capture the sentiment of the people

Originator: *Opanin Yaw Duodu* an indigene of *Asante-Ntonso* is believed to have adopted the symbol from a Muslim merchant (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at

Ntonso). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Opoku Ware I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1719-1750).

Idea Development: This symbol was produced from the idea of the stars that shine brightly in the sky. This reminds mankind of God's protection.

Moral value: the symbol reminds people to regard God as their father. It again gives a sense of confidence and total reliability in God (*Owusu Ansah*, 2008).

Pagya



Fig 24; Original Symbol of *Pagya*

KNUST



Plate 24a; A Stylized version of *Pagya*

Name/Theme: *Pagya* (Strike fire)

Literal Translation: “*Pa* “Strike”, “*gya*” “fire”

There is also a traditional gun known by that name.

Meaning: to strike fire [with a flint]. (Rattray, 1959: 267) It is a symbol of gunners, bravery and war. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols

Background; Philosophical and speculative understanding of myth, such as that of the Asante, raises the question of the interrelationship of fire and society. Religion do relate to fire as a divine or sacred element from which it cannot always be distinguished. Fires

are believed to embody the sacred gift of light from the Fire Gods. They signify an illumination of the human spirit. Children enjoyed the illumination of borne fire under moon light as they drum, play and listen to folktales administered by the elders of the family. To urinate into a fire is an abomination punishable by the fire gods.

The flame itself may be the object of adoration, or it may be regarded as the material manifestation of a divinity or fire spirit. Blacksmiths were considered as the medicine men and the custodian of the mysteries of fire god and were revered in the society. Armour, weapons, jewellery and other farm implements were made by using fire. Despite the helpful nature of fire artisans have witnessed the devastating effect of uncontrolled fire destroying a whole village in the dry seasons and the firepower of the white man's gun. The same up of such knowledge is embodied in the above symbol in question.

Originator: *Opanin Diatuo* an indigene of Asante-Kumawu is believed to have copied the symbol from a Danish merchant as result of their trade links (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Opoku Ware I* (1719-1750).

Idea Development: This symbol was developed from the shape of the lighter used by the colonial people of the Gold Coast. It is also in the shape of a traditional gun. The symbol is put on the top of umbrellas of the chiefs of the Asante Kingdom who are symbolic of war.

Moral value: this symbol signifies the state of being a man with all manly qualities. The symbol encourages men to be agents of change in all aspects of the communities in which they live. This is a symbol of manhood and militancy (*Owusu Ansah, 2008*).

Several of the symbols in the *adinkra* cloths record social changes that have been brought about by both external and internal factors. Below are examples of such symbols

Bi-Nnka-Bi [Symbol of Harmony]



Fig 25; Original Symbol of *Bi nnka bi*



Fig 25a; Three Stylized Versions of *Bi nnka bi*

Name/Theme: *Bi nnka bi*/ Harmony

Proverb: *Obi nnka obi*.

Literal Translation: Bite not one another (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: *Obi* means ‘someone’ – a ‘nation’ or a tribe and ‘*nnka*’ means ‘bite not’ which also signifies the avoidance of conflict among people and groups. The proverb therefore means that one should avoid strife for peaceful co-existence to prevail. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols

Background: The chicken is one of the first domestic animals to be mentioned in recorded history. Fowls are depicted in Babylonian carvings and are mentioned by early Greek writers. The Romans considered chickens sacred to Mars, their god of war. Since ancient times the cockerel has been a symbol of courage. In Christian religious art, the crowing cock has symbolized the Resurrection of Christ. One category is the game fowl, still bred in some areas for cockfighting.

Fowls fight in ways that are programmed by their genes—usually over some scarce resource. This kind of aggression exists because cockerels have very similar needs and therefore find themselves in direct competition with one another for food, mates, and dwelling space. It is a daily spectacle that cockerel attacks, or fights by wrestle, kick, and occasionally bites; and steers one another though they may live in the same house. In the same regard humans do fight and quarrel everyday in the same family compound. Such cycle of social menace exerted strain on the wisdom of the council of elders within the community.

The resultant of these verdicts that culminated out of such disputes brought a vital realization that the sins of the fathers always were carried unto the children's children in one way or the other in almost every case. Though Asante's were people of war, to live at peace with one another was the wisest option to every member of each family. Hence this proverbial symbol '*Obi nnka obi*' a perfect reminder that the peak of retribution is upon the tail of every member of the community and therefore very imperative that each member of the society must live at peace with one another.

The proverb came about as a result of the evil intentions and deeds perpetrated by people against each other. For a society to thrive in all sectors of life, it must deal with discord, conflict, wrangle, dissent, clash, dispute, and difference of opinion, quarrel, argument, misunderstanding, confusion, dismay, panic, alarm, disorder and the likes. It is the duty of culture to cave out the philosophy of oneness where everyone desires the good of others, the need for agreement, accord, concord, synchronization, congruence, coordination, and coherence. The knowledge of Asantes coming from the same source and the need to guard the society from infiltrators is an ideology that is held in high

esteem. Hence this symbolic idea to synthesis and blends or melds the families and society into one gel or coagulates.

Moral Value: The proverb cautions against gossiping, backbiting, provocation, cheating and other social vices which bring conflict in society. It also encourages people to be fair and courteous to each other for peaceful co-existence. This is a symbol of peace and harmony (*Owusu Ansah, 2008*).

Originator: *Papa Dwaben* an indigene of Asante-*Ntonso* is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Tutu I* the founder of the Asante kingdom, who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1695-1719).

Idea Development: The symbol evolved from the heads of two cockerels on each other's trail showing three serrated combs, wattles and a beak on each of the cockerel. In adults of both sexes the head is decorated with wattles (see plate 47) below



Plate 47: shows the serrated comb, wattles and a beak of a cockerel

The beak and a naked, fleshy crest, called the comb, at the top of the head. The comb is more prominent in the male and is variously shaped in the different breeds and varieties. The typical comb is single, serrated, and relatively large, either erect or drooping. A variation is the rose comb, with three rows of tubercles merging in a rearward-pointing

spike. Plumage of various fowls ranges in colour through white, grey, yellow, blue, red, brown, and black.

Fofoo [Symbol of jealousy]



Fig 26; Original Symbol of *Fofoo*

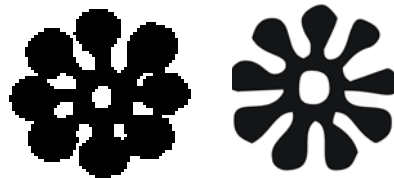


Fig 26a; A Stylized Version of *Fofoo*

Name/Theme: *Fofoo*/jealousy

Proverb: *Se nea fofoo pe ne se gyinantwi aba bidie*

Literal Translation: ‘What the yellow-flowered *fofoo* plant wants is that the *gyinantwi* seeds should turn black’ also refers to those who wish others various forms of misfortune. This is a well-known Asante saying. One of the cotton cloth designs bears the same name. The *fofo*, the botanical name of which is *Bidens pilosa*, has a small yellow flower, which when it drops its petals, turns into a black spiky seed. This is a desire of a jealous person (Rattray, 1959: 266). This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols

Background: The crave to be envious, covetous, resentful, green with envy, green-eyed, bitter results in tragedy when an attempt is made to conceal mischief as they find themselves in an uncomfortable situation. Jealousy, covetousness, hatred and greediness have established deep roots in society. Obsessed by the people are achievements of neighbors. This is common even with friends and close relations. Such people wish misfortune on their friends and others undermine the efforts of other people. To pretend

to love and admire a person only to stab him/her at the back, to be found to be unstable at all times. Having admirable principles, beliefs but doing the opposite.

Moral Value: The philosophy of the symbol teaches people to be content with what they have. However, warns against malevolence, jealousy, covetousness, hatred and greediness, because they are all root of evil against humanity.

Originator: *Papa Dwaben* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Tutu I* the founder of the Asante kingdom, who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1695-1719).

Idea Developed: It is believed that this symbol was conceived from the idea of the arrangement of petals of a *Bidens pilosa* plant.

cwc-foro-adobj [Symbol of Diligence]



Fig 27; Original symbol of *cwc-foro-adobj*



Fig 27a; A Version of *cwc-foro-adobj*

Name/Theme: *cwc-foro-adobj* /Diligence.

Proverb: *cwc-foro-adobj*

Literal Translation: A snake climbs the raffia palm (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: *cwɔ* which means snake refers to abilities and other subtleties. ‘*Foro*’ which means ‘climb’ refers to accomplishments. ‘*adobj*’ which means a raffia palm tree also refers to difficulties. One needs great effort and determination to accomplish set goals and overcome all challenges as clearly portrayed by the philosophy underlying this proverb. It is possibility for one to perform the unusual or the impossible. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols

Background: It is normally difficult for snakes to climb very smooth backed trees, more so thorny trees. However, snakes are able to climb the thorny raffia palm tree with tact, patience and diligence. It conveys admiration for people who accomplish unusual and impossible feats.

Moral value: The proverb encourages people to be persistent and diligent in all they do to achieve success. The proverb extols steadfastness, prudence and the practical application of wisdom. This is a symbol of diligence.

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* an indigene of Asante-*Ntonso* is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Opoku Ware I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1719-1750).

Idea Development: This symbol is developed from a snake climbing a palm tree. It signifies determination. Just as difficult as it is for the snake to climb the palm tree yet prevails, so it is for people to achieve the best of laurels and still lose it.

Hwemudua [Symbol of Examination]



Fig 28; Original Symbol of *Hwemudua*



Fig 28a; Two Stylized Versions of *Hwemudua*

Name/theme: *Hwemudua*/Examination

Proverb: *So wohwehwe mu a, ena wohu mu; So wopusu mu a, ena wote ne pampan.*

Literal Translation: When you examine it, its content will be known and when you shake it well, you will know its smell (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: ‘*Hwe mu*’ means look in and ‘*dua*’ refers to a stick. It therefore means the stick which is used in looking into something; that is the measuring stick. ‘*Hwemudua*’ therefore signifies the critical examination of things. This symbol is used as a sign of certification for the production of African prints.

Background: Standard is basically a set of detailed technical guidelines used as a means of establishing uniformity in any facet of life or product development depicting a level of quality or excellence that is accepted as the norm or by which actual attainments are judged. Though designed by the Ghana Standard Board the Asante have had such concept.

Formally standard setting in Asante was a formal process in which specifications are drafted by a cooperative group or committee after an intensive study of existing methods, approaches, and technological trends and developments of a product. The proposed

standards are later ratified or approved by a recognized craft council and are adopted over time by consensus as products based on the standards become increasingly prevalent in the market.

The philosophy of this symbol finds practical expression in all aspects of one's life. To be particularly inclusive of all elements treating all individual parts to result in a conclusive holistic body is the work of anyone who wants successes. Unfortunately, high quality standards have given way to mediocrity in all aspects of life. *Hwemudua* tries to bring to fore the defects inherent in the way people do things and suggests corrective measures to take for perfection.

Moral Values: The symbol serves as a check on mediocrity of things and also in the abilities of people. It actually evaluates the way things are done to raise standards. The symbol insists on thorough examination of all aspects of human life in order to achieve perfection. This is a symbol of examination, perfection and quality control.

Originator: Ghana Standard Board is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Owusu Ansah Mamhyia* Palace Attaché to Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Kumasi, 2006) and later adopted by the artisans of *Ntonso*. The year of its origination is 1973 just around the time of its establishment.

Idea Development: the whole symbol (constituting the length and breadth of the symbol) lies within a perfect square with the letter 'T' projecting into a 'U' shaped base represent the key to unlock the air tight cover of the 'U' box in which contains the precious germs to be examined. The base of the box has a horizontal bar that gives the box its stability a form that reflects the attainment of perfection.

Owuo Atwediε [Symbol of Mortality]



Fig 29; Original Symbol of *Owuo atwediε*



Fig 29a; A Stylized Version of *Owuo atwediε*

Name/Theme: *Owuo atwediε*/mortality

Proverb; *Owuo atwediε, obaako mforo.*

Literal Translation: ‘Death’s ladder is not climbed by one person alone’ (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: *Owuo* refers to death; *atwediε* refers to ladder *obaako* means one person does not climb’. Death ladder, one person does not climb. Death is portrayed as a necessary end or journey which every person will undertake. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols

Background: Both natural and accidental deaths are unavoidable phenomena. Even the strong, powerful, influential and wealthy people succumb to death. It is believed that only people who lead righteous and exemplary lives become ancestors after death. It is realized that misfortunes can befall any person anywhere and anytime. Death involves a complete change in the status of a living entity —the loss of its essential characteristics into a spiritual entity. Ideas about death vary with different cultures and in different era In Asante societies, death has traditionally been seen as the departure or transition of the soul from the body or physical world into a spiritual world. In spite of the wide variation

in funerary practices in Ghana, four major symbolic elements frequently recur in Asante. The first is colour symbolism. The association of black with death is a cultural philosophy; the use of black clothes to represent death is widely understood. A second feature is the treatment of the hair of the mourners, which is often shaved as a sign of grief or, conversely, is allowed to grow to emphasize dishevelment as a symbol of sorrow. Another broad usage is the inclusion of noisy festivities and drumming at funerals. Finally, several routine techniques for processing the dead body are employed in Asante culture.

Moral Value: The symbol reflects the uncompromising nature of death: a necessary and an ultimate end of mankind on earth. It also unearths man's vulnerability to misfortunes in life and therefore the need for preparedness and alertness. It encourages people to be modest, because death is no respecter of persons. It also fulfils the promise of life after death and ancestor ship in particular. This is a symbol of the mortality of mankind.

Originator: *Opanin Kwadwo Maanu* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have adopted the symbol among many others found alongside the trophies brought from Gyaman in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1804-1823).

Idea development: This symbol was designed from the ladder. It is symbolic of the fact that death is unavoidable

Ese ne Tekerema [Symbol of Friendship]



Fig 30; Original Symbol of *Ese ne tekerema*



Fig 30a; A Stylized Version of *Ese ne tekerema*

Name/Theme: *Ese ne tekerema*/Friendship

Proverb: '*Ese ne tekerema mmpo ko*'

Literal Translation: The teeth and the tongue even fight (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: *Ese* refers to the teeth, *tekerema* refers to tongue, *mmpo ko* means even fight. *Ese* symbolizes the masculinity and toughness of man and *tekerema* the tenderness of a female. The proverb means that, the essence of marriage is for couples to coexist and complement each other despite occasional squabbles. This is also likened to other human relationships. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols

Background: The Teeth are hard, calcified structures, attached to the upper and lower jaws of vertebrates and of a few lower animals, and used primarily for mastication. The Tongue, is a muscular organ in the mouth, the primary organ of taste and important in the formation of speech and in the chewing and swallowing of food. The teeth and the tongue are both located in the mouth. They play very important but different interdependent roles in the eating process. The teeth sometimes accidentally bite the tongue during chewing.

The situation is often referred to as a fight between the two. However, they still live together peacefully.

Moral Value: the proverb advises couples to complement each other in all aspects of marriage. It also encourages harmony and interdependence among people. It acknowledges that there will be disagreements in every human relationship. This is a symbol of friendship and interdependence.

Originator: *Agya Kwadwo Maanu* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have adopted the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at Ntonso). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to have been first used during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1804-1823).

Idea development: This has been developed from the teeth and the tongue .which stay together but fight always.

Kramo Bone Ammayaanhu Kramo Pa [Symbol of Hypocrisy]



Fig 31; Original Symbol of *Kramo bone*



Fig 31a; Two Stylized versions of *Kramo bone*

Name/Theme: *Kramo bone*/hypocrisy

Proverb: *Kramo bone amma yeanhu kramo papa.*

Literal Translation: The bad Muslim has made it difficult for one to recognize a good one (Glover, 1969).

Meaning: *Kramo* means Muslim; *bone* means bad, *amma yeanhu* means did not let us see, *Kramo papa* means a good Moslem. *Kramo bone* signifies the good and pretentious and hypocritical nature of some people. The proverb therefore means that people show appearances which do not show their real character. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols (Plate 48).



Plate 48: shows *Kramo Bone Ammayannhu Kramo Pa* symbol arranged in a full drop formation with other *adinkra* symbols: - from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006 - unpublished

Background: Islam is one of the major world religions which literally means or understood to mean “surrender or submission to God”. One who has thus surrendered is a Muslim. Muslims are noted to be very fervent and regular about their prayers. However, not all praying Muslims are devout and some take praying as a way just to cover up their misdeeds. In the same way people behave under the pretence of friendship in order to satisfy their evil and selfish motives. It is therefore difficult to form opinions about people and also judge their behavior by mere physical appearance. Such symbol can be

found in the Asantehene's war smock indicating that concealment is one of the war tactics required in battles.

Moral Value: The proverb brings to light the pretence, concealment and deceptive nature of humans. It therefore warns one not to take the behavior of people at face value, else one could be disappointed. It also reminds people to be discerning when dealing with others. This is a symbol of hypocrisy and deceit.

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have adopted the symbol among many others found alongside the trophies brought from Gyaman in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at Ntonso). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* (1804-1823).

Idea Development: This symbol has been developed from lines and curves influenced by the Muslim religion.

Ohene Tuo [Symbol of Defense]



Fig 32; Original Symbol of *Ohene tuo*

Fig 32a; Two Stylized Versions of *Ohene tuo*

Name/theme: *Ohene tuo*/ Defense

Literal Translation: The king's gun (Rattray, 1959: 267)

Meaning: *Ohene* refers to the chief and this signifies the authority and sovereignty a nation has to govern itself without the interference of its domain by outside forces. *Tuo* refers to a gun this also signifies power, strength and protection. It means guarding against harmful eventualities and defending a particular area, ideas, beliefs or persons. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth with other *adinkra* symbols

Background: Some symbols point to selective borrowing of ideas from other societies and one of such is the *Etuo* (gun). This has been incorporated not only in the language, but also into important political as well as funeral rituals of the Asante. When the king-elect takes the oath of office he is given the *ohene tuo ne akofena* (king's gun and sword) which he wields and fires to demonstrate his ability to honor his responsibility as the military commander-in-chief to ensure protection, security, and peace in the society. The gun salute also serves "as an important means of announcing the event of death and the journey of the deceased to both the living and the dead, near and far" (Nketia, 1969: 144).

During funerals the gun is fired in the morning to signal the beginning of the funeral, and is fired again in the evening to mark the end of the funeral for the day. The distribution of court art and ammunitions of war was an important element in the maintenance of central power. The key symbol of royal and chiefly authority at all levels in Asante was first and foremost the stool, and secondly the chief's gun and the sword. Guns were introduced into West Africa by the European slave traders. The power of guns fascinated the chiefs. The guns were then battered for, by the chiefs to protect themselves and their tribes against the attacks of the enemy and also against other insurgents. The

king's personal guns were richly adorned with gold and silver decorations on the butt. These were used by their personal bodyguards. Guns were later used for hunting and also for firing during funerals of chiefs, *Asafo* dances and festivals as stated above.

Moral Value: The symbol signifies warding off and fighting against the enemy attacks. It encourages citizens to support, protect and defend their leaders in authority and their nation's sovereignty. This is a symbol of defense and military power.

Originator: *Otumfuo Osei Tutu I* is believed to have first adopted the symbol as a royal symbol among many others (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during his reign as the ruler of Ashanti kingdom from (1701-1717).

Idea Development: This was derived from the personal gun of *Otumfuo Osei Tutu I*.

Akoban [Symbol of Loyalty]



Fig 33; Original Symbol of Akoben



Fig 33a; Three Stylized Version of Akoben

Name/Theme: *Akoban/Loyalty*

Proverb: *Akoban no bo a, ena yehunu barima*

Literal Translation: A man is seen when the war horn is blown (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: *Akoban* means war-horn, *no bo a*, means when blown, *ena yehunu*, means then we see, *barima* means man. *Ako* refers to war and *aben* refers to horn. *Ako* signifies any national tasks which require devotion, dedication bravery and loyal response from citizens. *Aben* also signifies courage and strength with which ones nation is upheld and defended. It also means a call to duty. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints like the batik print shown below in plate 49.



Plate 49: shows stylized *Akoban* symbol arranged in a full drop formation with an alternating colour blocks at the background: - from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006 - unpublished

Background: It is a wind musical instrument developed by the Asante's and consisting of an antelope's or deer's horn, with the smaller end flattened to form a mouthpiece. The *Akoban* normally can produce only two tones; thus, as a purely musical instrument, it is very limited. In ancient times it was used as a signalling instrument in various wars, ceremonies and rituals, most notably in religious rites conducted by the Chief priest. The *Akoban* is still used by Asantes in the *Akwasi die* celebrations to convey messages, recount history, recite proverbs and sing praises of rulers and distinguished persons. It was also used to signal an alarm to summon warriors to battle.

Moral Value: The proverb connotes alertness and readiness to serve a good cause. It urges people to be ready at all times to serve their nations even in times of war. It also

stresses the need for loyalty to one's nation. This is a symbol of loyalty, devotion and service.

Originator: *Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu I* is believed to have first adopted the symbol as a royal symbol among many others (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during his reign as the ruler of Ashanti kingdom from (1701-1717).

Idea development: This was derived from the local war horn that was developed by the *Asantehene*. The prototype was first instructed by his majesty to be placed on top of umbrellas of chiefs like the *Adum hene*, *Asokwa hene*, and *Breman hene*. These were chiefs who were brave to proclaim war and be successful.

Ntesie/ Ma Te [Symbol of Wisdom]



Fig 34; Original Symbol of *Ma te*



Fig 34a; A Stylized Version of *Ma te*

Name/Theme: *Ma te*/Wisdom

Meaning: *Ma te* means 'I have heard what you have said and kept it' (Rattray, 1959).

Proverb: *Nyansa bo mu nne, mate mesie*

Literal Translation: In the depth of wisdom abounds knowledge and thought.

Meaning: ‘*Ma te*’ means I have heard, ‘*mesie*’ means to keep, or hide. Together ‘I have heard and kept it’. The proverb must be thoughtfully weighed before acting on them. There is wisdom in keeping quiet over some issues one hears and sees. It is said that ‘silence is golden and it pays to be a good listener’. This symbol signifies the need to imbibe knowledge prudently. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints like the *konkonte* print shown below in plate 50.



Plate 50: shows *Ntesie/ Ma Te* symbol arranged with other motifs in a green colour background: - from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah -2006* - unpublished

Background: The Asantes in their wisdom established a royal council, consisting of a collective body of advisers to the chief. The Council was established to enhance and coordinate economic and political cooperation, as well as strengthen democratic development for the benefit of all and sundry. The adage “*etere kro nkɔ egyina*” also reveals the concept of collective decision in matters of state in that one mind is not allowed to take decisions. With wisdom, one has the ability to make sensible decisions and judgments based on personal accumulated knowledge of life or of a sphere of activity that has been gained through experience. Some information when put in the public

domain can cause panic or hurt people. Loose talk, gossip and rumor mongering show immaturity. People who indulge in them are frowned upon.

Moral Value: The symbol teaches the importance of meditating on information received prudently to gain wisdom and knowledge. It stresses the importance of keeping secrets and also advises people to ponder over issues before taking a decision on it, and warns against gossiping and rumor mongering. This is a symbol of wisdom, prudence and knowledge.

Originator: *Opanin Dwaben* an indigene of Asante- *Ntonso* is believed to have first adopted the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* (1804-1823).

Idea development: the four circles are a representation of men of wisdom joining their deliberation together to produce a collective instrument for direction through the decision body of four. The dots within each circle are a representation of the accumulated knowledge achieved over the years. This can be a borrowed concept of the adage “*etere kro nkɔ egyina*” meaning one head does not make major decisions.

Nyame Nnwu na Mawu [Symbol of Immortality]



Fig 35; Original Symbol of *Nyame nnwu na mawu*



Fig 35a; A Stylized Version of *Nyame nnwu na mawu*

Name/Theme: *Nyame nnwu na mawu*/immortality

Proverb: ‘*Nyame nnwu na mawu*’

Literal Translation: May *Nyame*/God die before I die or God never dies, therefore I cannot die (Rattray, 1959: 267)

Meaning: *Nyame* refers to God, *nnwu* means dies not and *na mawu* means for me to die. This proverb signifies the immortality of man’s soul which is believed to be part of God’s. After death the soul returns to God and stays perpetually, because God never dies. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: It is believed that the ‘*Okra*’ (soul) is part of God’s soul given to mankind. This gives man life; and at death, the *okra* which is immortal returns to God. Because the *okra* is part of God, it can only die when God himself is dead. However since God cannot die, the *okra* can also not die. Immortality is an unending existence of the soul after physical death. The doctrine of immortality is common to Asante culture; however, it takes various forms, ranging from ultimate extinction of the soul to its final survival and the resurrection of the body by the Christians or the ultimate absorption of the soul into the “universal spirit” after death by the natives of Asante. In Asante religion, entrance to immortal life is dependent on the results of divine examination of the merits of an individual's life by the gods.

Moral Value: The proverb stresses the belief in life after death and the need to lead exemplary lives to attain an ancestral status after death. It encourages people to set targets for themselves and achieve them. This is a symbol of immortality or perpetual existence.

Originator: *komfo Anokye* the high priest of the Asante kingdom is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Tutu I* the founder of the Asante kingdom, who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1695-1719).

Pempamsie [Symbol of Precaution]



Fig 36; Original Symbol of *Pempamsie*



Fig 36a; A Stylized Version of *Pempamsie*

Name/Theme: *Pempamsie*

Literal Translation: Sew it for preservation (Glover, 1969).

Meaning: *Pempamsie* means sew and keep or preserve. This literally means to sew and keep something e.g. a cloth, for preservation and readiness for any emergency. This therefore means that planning and preparedness is essential in all aspects of life. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints (Plate 51).



Plate 51: shows *Pempamsie* symbol on a strip of white *kente* arranged with other *adinkra* symbols on different strips: - from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006 - unpublished

Background: ‘*aboso*’ is a long narrow tube-like stripe of cloth normally sewn by mothers or elderly women for the purpose of keeping their valuable or precious jewels and tied around their waist and concealed with a waist cloth. The tube-like stripe is sewn exactly at the middle and the two ends left open to receive the precious objects after which the two ends are tied together at the waist. The appearance of this piece when used almost looks like the symbol ‘*Pempamsie*’. The sewn leather parchment that contains the mysterious parcel of *Okomfo Anokye* supposedly protecting the unifying powers of the Asante kingdom kept at the Prempeh II museum of the centre for national culture Kumasi is a typical example of ‘*Pempamsie*’ in another sense.

History has it that the day the parchment when opened will be the beginning of the kingdoms disintegration. The symbol also means conserving to await a day of need that may come at anytime. So one must anticipate and plan against such unforeseen situations.

The knowledge of the life style of the individual within the society culminated the need for such preservation as a corrective measure to avoid unwarranted human intrusion of possible derailment of one’s objectives. Sometimes people live careless and unplanned lives, ending in mishaps and misfortunes. (*Opanin Adjei*, - 2007 Director of Centre for National Culture – Kumasi)

Moral Value: The symbol calls for foresight, precaution, and preparedness at all times. It also encourages careful planning. However, it warns against procrastination. This is a symbol of precaution and readiness suggested by *Opanin Adjei*, 2007.

Originator: *komfo Anokye* the high priest of the Asante kingdom is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of

its origination is unknown but it is believed to have been be an artist from the king's palace- Asante, during the reign of *Nana Osei Tutu I* the founder of the Asante kingdom, who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1695-1719).

Idea development: the symbol was derived from the appearance of the '*abosoɔ*' when in use. One can easily observe the black belt that seems to divide the two symmetrical forms of the '*Pempamsie*' symbol shown above.

Nkɔnsɔnkɔnsɔn [Symbol of Relationship]



Fig 37; Original Symbol of *nkɔnsɔnkɔnsɔn*



Fig 37a; Stylized Version of *nkɔnsɔnkɔnsɔn*

Name/Theme: *nkɔnsɔnkɔnsɔn* /unity, relationship

Proverb: '*Yetoatoa mu se nkɔnsɔnkɔnsɔn, nkwa mu a yetoa mu, owuo mu a, yetoa mu, abusua mu nnte da.*'

Literal Translation: We are linked together like a chain; we are linked in life, we are linked in death, men who share a common blood relation never break away (Inter-linked) from one another (Glover, 1969).

Meaning: *Nkɔnsɔnkɔnsɔn* refers to a chain and it signifies the strong bond between people of common lineage which is difficult to break. The unity of a community can be realized if citizens (including the ancestors) see themselves as responsible to each other. This realization binds communities together. The symbol portrays unity, responsibility

and interdependence. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: It is believed that this current life is merely one link in a chain of lives that extends far into the past and projects far into the future. The point of origin of this chain is believed to be from God (*Nyame*). The process of our involvement in the universe—the chain of births and death referred to as the cycle of life is believed to be collective responsibility of the entire systems of the universe.

The strength of a chain is dependent on the individual metal rings linked together. When one unit becomes weak, it causes a break in the chain. This signifies the belief that the collective interest and responsibility of each entity of the universe work hand-in-hand with the ancestors constantly to protect and enhance the well-being of the living to maintain a healthy chain.

Moral Value: The symbol encourages the veneration of the ancestors in order for them to keep in touch with the living. It stresses the strength in unity and the interdependence on one another. This is a symbol of unity and human relations *Opanin Adjei, 2007*.

Originator: *Kofi Manu* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have adopted the symbol among many others found alongside the trophies brought from Gyaman in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1804-1823).

Idea Development: the symbol was derived from the chains of justice also known as ‘*Abankaba*’. It was developed from the shape of the chains used to lock up slaves which is known today as handcuffs.

Ohene Aniwa [Symbol of Vigilance]



Fig 38; Original Symbol of *Ohene Aniwa*

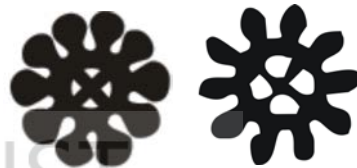


Fig 38a; Stylized Versions of *Ohene Aniwa*

Name/Theme: Ohene aniwa/Vigilance

Meaning: ‘in the king’s little eyes’, i.e. in his favour (Rattray, 1959: 267).

Proverb: ‘*Ohene aniwa ye mienu pe, nso ohunu babiara*’

Literal Translation: The king’s eyes are only two, yet he sees everywhere (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: ‘*Ohene*’ refers to the king or chief *aniwa* also refers to the eyes, *ye mienu pe* means the two only, *nso ohu babiara* mean he sees everywhere (the king’s eyes). *Ohene* signifies the leadership of a group of people or people representing them. ‘*Aniwa*’ also signifies the various citizens who are loyalists and sympathizers of persons in authority. This means that people in authority have quick and easy access to information. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: The set-up of the traditional ruling system is positioned within the community in such a way as to enable the chiefs to know and understand what goes on within its borders. Traditionally, kings have many sub-chiefs, personal attendants and wives. All these people are a great source of inspiration to the king. It is therefore believed that nothing can be hidden from a king. This is because the king has many informants [eyes].

Moral Values: The symbol teaches the need for wariness and vigilance in order not to be taken off guard. It also serves as a warning to those who indulge in dubious and clandestine activities to desist from them. This is a symbol of vigilance and wariness.

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* an indigene of *Asante-Ntonso* is believed to have adopted the symbol among many others found alongside the trophies brought from Gyaman in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* (1804-1823).

Idea development: the central circle with an X within the middle of the symbol, represent the eye of the king and the little dots around the centre circle represent the eyes of the king's informants. In this case the small eyes are connected to the bigger eye in the centre signifying the trust/favour and intimate relationship the king has with his informants.

Sunsum [Symbol of Spirituality]



Fig 39; Original Symbol of *Sunsum*

Name/Theme: *Sunsum*/spirituality

Literal Translation: The Spirit (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: '*Sunsum* refers to the spirit. It is the non material element or the spiritual part of a person, without which he seizes to exist physically. However, it is believed that the soul lives on after death. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: The Soul in which the spirit resides is believed to be the immaterial element that, together with the material body, constitutes the human individual. In general, the soul is conceived as an inner, vital, and spiritual principle, the source of all bodily functions and particularly of mental activities. In Asante culture there is a belief in some kind of soul that can exist apart from the body. In the Akan myth human being is formed from the blood (*mogya*) of the mother and the spirit (*sunsum/ntoro*) of the father (God).

The mother-child bond is regarded as biological and the father-child bond is regarded as spiritual one. Every child before it is born receives the *sunsum* which is a small indestructible part of the ‘*oboadee*’ the creator. It is believed to return to the creator after the death. ‘*Sunsum*’ is noted to mould a child’s individual personality or character. It is believed that the soul exists forever because of its spiritual and God-linked nature.

Moral Value: The symbol reminds people of the spiritual element inherent in them, which must be rekindled and purified, through prayers, sacrifices and libation offered to the Supreme Being. This is a symbol of spirituality.

Originator: *Agya Kwadwo Maanu* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have adopted the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to have been first used during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* (1804-1823).

Idea Development: This is an imaginary design that is made out of a continuous curves and lines that has no beginning or an end. This is due to the eternal sacredness and meaning attached to the endless circle.

Dame-Dame [Symbol of Intelligence]



Fig 40; Original Symbol of *Dame-Dame*



Fig 40a; A Stylized Version of *Dame-Dame*

Name/Theme: *Dame-Dame*/Intelligence

Literal Translation: Draught-Draught

Meaning: *Dame* refers to a chess board game for two players. It is a game that is very mind tasking. This symbol signifies the power of the mind to reason and solve problems intelligently and positively. This is a symbol of craftiness and intelligence (Glover, 1969). This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: The game of draught is another popular traditional game apart from 'ware.' It is played by all kinds of persons including women and children. It is a norm for players to engage each other in insults and other derogatory remarks while playing. This is done to distract the concentration of ones opponent. The game can be so addictive to the extent that people do not work, but play all day long. It is believed that only lazy and irresponsible people devote all their time and energy to playing the game. It is therefore unwise for respectable people to engage in the game with commoners.

Moral Values: This symbol encourages exercising of the brain to keep it alert all the time. It also stresses the need to take sound and reasonable decisions. It however warns against the association with deviants. This is a symbol of intelligence and ingenuity.

Originator: *Papa Nsiah* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Tutu I* the founder of the Asante kingdom, who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1695-1719).

Idea Development: this symbol is derived from the local chess board.

Akofena [Symbol of Authority]



Fig 41; Original Symbol of *Akofena*



Fig 41a; A Stylized Version of *Akofena*

Name/Theme: *Akofena*/Authority

Meaning: war sword or ceremonial sword connoting authority or legitimized authority of a ruler (Glover, 1969).

Proverb: *Akofena kunini ko a, woboafena kye no safohene*

Literal Translation: The retiring great warriors always have a royal sword of rest, and they are always set up as warrior-chief.

Meaning: ‘Ako’ means war, *afena* also means sword [war sword or ceremonial sword] this symbol signifies the power and authority vested in chieftaincy. It symbolizes the gallantry and the loyalty of warriors who protect a particular chieftain. It is also used as a state sword. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints (Plate 52).



Plate 52: shows a screen printing fabric with *Akofena* symbol arranged alternately with *Kwatakye Atiko* symbol in a black and white colour background: - Ekow Asmah -2006 - unpublished

Background: Authority is the power to enforce obedience. Authority is expressed in many forms. There are legal, military, familial, and organizational variations in the rules, sanctions, and symbols of authority. The symbol also conveys the message that authority is legitimate power. It is known to be the symbol of unity of a community and the authority of its head. State sword bearers *afenasoafo* carry the *afena*, before the chief, whenever he appears in public meetings. The *akofena* is used by the chief when taking the oath of office during his installation as a chief; it is also used by his elders when swearing the oath of allegiance to him. See example in plate 9 below. Furthermore, a similar *Akofena* is used as a badge of credence by those who go on the ruler's errands.



Plate 53: A State Sword being used by *Otumfuo* during his installation Royal Diary 2006, *Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II*

Moral Value: The symbol advises people to honor and show loyalty to their leaders. It also encourages statesmanship and gallantry. This is a symbol of authority and recognition of gallantry.

Originator: *Kofi Maanu* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Tutu I* the founder of the Asante kingdom, who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1695-1719).

Idea Development: It was developed from two of the state swords; the *akofena* used for the installation of chiefs found in the palace.

Mmusuyidee [Symbol of Sanctity]



Fig 42: Original Symbol of *Mmusuyidee*



Fig 42a; Stylized Versions of *Mmusuyidee*

Name/Theme: *Mmusuyidee*/Sanctity

Meaning: literal translation; something to remove evil (Rattray, 1959: 267).

Proverb: ‘*Kra pa te se okra, okyiri fi.*’

Literal Translation: The good soul is like a cat, it abhors filth.

Meaning: *Mmusu* means ill luck or curse, *yi* means to remove, *adee* means a thing or an agent. *Mmusuyidee* therefore means the agent which is used to remove ill luck or curses.

This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: Something considered so serious a legal infraction was tried and dealt with severely. The infringement (an offence affecting the community) might be atoned for by a sacrifice upon the ancestral stools or upon the shrines of the gods to placate both categories of spiritual powers. Otherwise, they might inflict calamities on the living. Various items and specially prepared foods (*eto* – mashed yam in palm oil and boiled

eggs, coins, cowries and cola nuts) etc. are used as sacrifices and purification and cleansing. This is also performed occasionally, to ward off evil powers and thoughts and also bring about good men, uprightness and sanctity of man.

Cats are popular as a household pet, highly valued in Asante especially in the royal families because of their ability to keep down the rodent population in the home (killing mice, rats and snakes). Nearly all domestic cat has retractile claws; keen hearing and smell; remarkable night vision; and a compact, muscular, and highly supple body. Cats with their admirable qualities in addition possess an excellent memory and exhibit considerable aptitude for learning by observation and experience.

It is believed that naturally and spiritually the cat marks its territory by scratching and scenting trees or other objects; cats are generally feared, so revered and loved because of their nocturnal habits, they are believed to consort with the spiritual world. They are believed to ensure many children for a family, and have the ability to propitiate, atone and remove evil to avert the death of any member of the family. It is said that a cloth with this design stamped upon it lay beside the sleeping couch of the king of Asante, and every morning when he rose he placed his left foot upon it three times with the hope of averting any evil that may come his way (Rattray, 1959: 266).

Moral Value: This symbol encourages regular request for good omen from God. It also stresses the need for confession and repentance of one's sins. This is a symbol of good fortune and sanctity.

Originator: *Papa Kwadwo Maanu* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have adopted this mystical symbol among many others found alongside the trophies brought

from Gyaman in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* (1804-1823).

Idea development: the object of reference to this creation is believed to be the cross with its four ends representing the barrier that repel every evil in the cultural context. It is a symbol put in the palanquin of the queen mother of Asante known as *Ohemaa papa* for protection.

Duafe [Symbol of Beauty]



Fig 43; Original Symbol of *Duafe*



Fig 43a; A Stylized Version of *Duafe*

Name/theme: *Duafe*/Beauty

Literal Translation: the wooden comb (Rattray, 1959: 265).

Meaning: *Dua* refers to wood, *afe* also refers to comb. This is carved intricately with the *sese* wood. This symbol signifies patience, prudence, fondness for cleanliness and beauty in women. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: Wooden combs were mostly used by women for combing and plaiting their hair. It is one of the most cherished household items. One important item or article

required for puberty rites of girls is the comb – *Duafe* (a gift provided by the fiancé in Asante) along with other items such as beads, cloth, sandals, stools, mirror, Shea-butter, perfume, etc. The ‘*dansinkran*, is a hair style that leaves a perceptible hair-line dividing the blackened hair from the rest of the body. This is done traditionally to the Asante adult women, especially the queen mother and a puberty rite neophyte to distinguish them from the girls. The *duafe* helps in combing this hair style which adds to the beauty of a woman.

Moral Value: the symbol encourages people to look their best all the time and also make personal hygiene part of them. This is a symbol of womanhood, beauty and cleanliness.

Originator: *Papa Kwadwo Maanu* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have adopted this mystical symbol among many others found alongside the trophies brought from Gyaman in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at Ntonso). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* (1804-1823).

Idea development: This is made of lines and an oval shape at the top which symbolizes feminism thus a symbol of beauty.

Hye-Wo Nnhye [Symbol of Endurance]



Fig 44; Original Symbol *Hye-Wo nnhye*



Fig 44a; A Stylized version of *Hye-Wo nnhye*

Literal Translation: ‘if they burn you, you will not be burned’ (Rattray, 1959: 267).

Meaning: ‘Hye’ means burn, *wo nnhye* means you do not burn. (That which cannot be burnt or fireproof) This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: Dance often occurs at rites of passage, when an individual passes from one role to another. Thus, birth, initiation, graduation, marriage, succession to political office, and death may be marked by dancing at gatherings, pageants, festivals, spectacles, or ceremonies. Dance may also be a form of worship, a means of honouring ancestors, a way of propitiating the gods, or a method to effect magic or healing but the emphasis here is on the endurance of the performer.

Besides giving physical pleasure, dancing often had a psychological and magical dimension. The traditional priest drew on these benefits, used dancing to help patients to express themselves and effectively relate to others. The fetish priest in a state of trance, interpreted as possessed by spirits, uses dance as a means to perform feats of strength, danger, or endurance, such as walking on hot coals. In Asante, witch doctors were said to have danced in a state of trance in an attempt to heal others physically or emotionally.

Priests are seen as enlightened, powerful and influential people who play very vital roles in the religious and socio-political lives of communities. During ceremonies and other sessions the possessed ‘*okomfo*’ performs a series of dances referred to as ‘*akom*’, in Asante accompanied by drumming and singing. The ground on which the dance is performed is sprinkled with white clay powder – ‘*hyire*’ by the priest’s attendant. Some

traditional priests performed their dance (fire dance) through bonfire purposely set for the occasion.

Because they are fire proof, they dance without burning their body. In the same way, some people are associated to this symbol when they become hardened to hurt, and hardship through long exposure and endurance. It also connotes the ability of an individual to walk through catastrophic situations and still come out untouched or unhurt. To be hardened such that one can go through every situation whether spiritually or physically without being affected. This pattern is said to be imprinted on the king of Asante's pillow (Rattray, 1959: 267)

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* an indigene of *Asante-Ntonso* is believed to have adopted this mystical symbol among many others found alongside the trophies brought from Gyaman in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1804-1823).

Moral Value: This symbol signifies that one can overcome and withstand pain and other hardships when toughened. It could sometimes be an expression of resignation. This is a symbol of imperishability and endurance.

Idea development: this was formed using the design elements of lines and ovals to express an imaginary concept. There are four lines representing the evil hand joined at each sides of the oval (representing the victim) in the middle; trying to crash in on the

oval in the centre of the motif but to no avail. The four lines coming out of the oval indicate that a man's worse enemy comes from his own household.

Mpuannum [Symbol of Dignity]



Fig 45; Original Symbol of *Mpuannum*



Fig 45a; Two Stylized Versions of *Mpuannum*

Name/Theme: *Mpuannum*/Old age, Dignity

Literal Translation: 'Five tufts of hair' (Rattray, 1959: 265)

Meaning: '*Mpua* refers to tuft of hair, *annum* means five. *Mpuannum* therefore means five tufts of hair. This is a hair style created in such a way that there are braids or tufts of hair left on the head. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: Hairdressing, arranging or otherwise altering the hair for enhanced beauty, for practicality, or to indicate status is an art of the past as reflected by this symbol. The process may involve cutting, plucking, curling, braiding, bleaching, dyeing, powdering, oiling, or adding false hair (such as a wig or fall) or ornaments. Hairstyles have played an important part in the cultural identity of men and women in Asante.

Traditionally, one's social status especially in the royal household was symbolized by hair style. Most Asante royal women wear a hair style known as '*dansinkran*' that leaves

a distinct hair line dividing the soot blackened head from the rest of the body. Maid servants of the queen mother, kept varied hair styles. Some of them are ‘*Borodobetem*’ worn by the tail switch bearers, *Mpuannum* also forms the centre motive in the hair style of the aged female stool bearers and attendants of the queen mother’s court.

Moral Value: The symbol signifies the respect accorded the elderly because of their wisdom, wide experience and ability to forecast and to counsel the inexperienced. This is a symbol of old age and dignity.

Originator: *Agya Kwadwo Maanu* an indigene of Asante-*Ntonso* is believed to have adopted the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to have been first used during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1804-1823).

Motive Development: This symbol is made of five equal circles in all. It symbolizes togetherness as the chief always sits with his elder or cabinet to take decisions. The symbol was made from *Apekyie*, shell water.

Epa [Symbol of Slavery]



Fig 46; Original Symbol of *Epa*

Name/Theme: *Epa*/slavery

Meaning: *Epa* literally refers to Handcuffs

Proverb: ‘*Onii a, ne pa da wonsa, akowa nne wo*’. *Ono na woda no*.

Literal Translation: You are a slave to him whose handcuffs you wear. He is the one you serve

Meaning: The proverb signifies a mark of total servitude for subjects, that is, a sign of complete ownership for the captor or an authority. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: The institution of slavery existed in Asante, and the involuntary human servitude, was practiced across the length and breadth of Ghana. Many Asante societies recognized slaves merely as property, but others saw them as dependants who eventually might be integrated into the families of slave owners. Still other societies allowed slaves to attain positions of military or administrative power. Most often, both slave owners and slaves were of different ethnic groups.

Traditional Asante practices of slavery were altered by the Arabs and Europeans who bought millions of slaves in West, Central, and East Africa and sent them to Europe. These two overlapping waves of transcontinental slave trading made the slave trade central to the economies of many African states and threatened many more Africans with enslavement. In Asante, most slavery resulted from wars.

Warfare was not the only reason for the practice of slavery in Asante. In many Asante societies, slavery represented one of the few methods of producing wealth. Land was typically held communally by villages or large clans and was allotted to families according to their need and the amount of land a family needed was determined by the

number of labourers that family could marshal to work the land. To increase production, a family had to invest in more slaves and therefore Asante societies conducted slave raids on distant villages. Slaves, taken in battle or in slave raids, were cut off from their kin; however, viewed as dependants over time, they became identified as members of their owners' extended families and, after several generations, reintegrated into the new web of kinship.

In addition to agricultural work, female slaves carried out other economic functions, such as trading, cotton spinning and dyeing. They also performed domestic chores, such as preparing food, washing clothes, cleaning and some served in the royal palace. Asante captains and influential men kept female slaves as wives or concubines, and these women stood as symbols of male wealth. Ordinary male slaves typically farmed and craftsmen captured were attached to sub chiefs who supervised them to work for the *Otumfuo* as weavers, potters, goldsmiths, construction, and metal workers. They also served as soldiers and confidants of high palace officials.

The definitive characteristics of slaves are as follows: their labour or services are obtained through force; their physical beings are regarded as the property of another person, their owner; and they are entirely subject to their owner's will. Hand, neck and foot cuffs were introduced as a result of the slave trade. They were used in securing, safeguarding and for easy transportation of slaves from the slave markets from the hinter lands to the coast by slave traders. Cuffs later became popular among the chiefs and other law enforcement agencies in arresting offenders of the law. Anyone who is cuffed becomes a slave and captive of the captor.

Moral Value: The proverb reminds offenders of the uncompromising nature of the law. It however, totally discourages and abhors all forms of physical, socio-economic and mental slavery. This is a symbol of captivity and slavery.

Originator: This symbol was produced by *Opanin Kojo Nsiah* an indigene of Asante-*Ntonso* is believed to have adopted the symbol during the era of the slave trade in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1804-1823).

Idea Development: This was developed from the ‘*Apa*’ on which cocoa is dried on (wooden structure)

Akoma [Symbol of Patience]



Fig 47; Original Symbol of *Akoma*

Fig 47a; Stylized Versions of *Akoma*

Name/Theme: *Akoma*/Patience

Literal Translation: ‘Have a heart or take a heart’ (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: ‘*Nya*’ means to have or to acquire. ‘*Akoma*’ refers to the heart. *Akoma* – take heart, that is be patient. A person is said to be patient if that person is able to stay calm

and not to react to any negative situations or the ability to endure waiting, delay, or provocation without becoming annoyed or upset, or to persevere calmly when faced with difficulties. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints



Plate 54: shows a trail of a bridal dress decorated with *akoma* and other *adinkra* symbols exhibiting the dexterity of the use of *adinkra* symbols: - from the catalogue of cultures 2006 unpublished by Ekow Asmah

Background: The place of the heart is the source and centre of emotional life, where the deepest and sincerest feelings are located and where a person is most vulnerable to pain. The heart is believed to be responsible for a person's emotions, for example anger, hatred, love, joy, grief, etc. A person is said to have a heart in his stomach when that person is very tolerant. Patience is said to be the best medicine given to us by the creator and society demands that everyone must have the capacity for waiting: the ability to endure waiting, delay, or provocation without becoming annoyed or upset or to persevere calmly when faced with difficulties.

Moral Value: The proverb teaches the importance of tolerance in the face of provocation. It also stresses the need for patience in the accomplishment of difficult tasks in life. One must be careful not to offend others by one's presumptuousness. Patience,

tact and skills are needed in dealing with people, especially those in authority. This is one of the mystic symbols adopted by the Asantes to denote patience and tolerance.

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* an indigene of *Asante-Ntonso* is believed to have adopted this mystical symbol among many others found alongside the trophies brought from Gyaman in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* (1804-1823).

Idea development: It is a replica of the shape of the human heart.

Gyawu Atiko [Symbol of Valor]



Fig 48; Original symbol of *Gyawu Atiko*



Fig 48a; A Stylized Version of *Kwatakye Atiko*

Name/Theme: *Gyawu Atiko*/ Valour

Literal Translation: the back of *Gyawu*'s head (Rattray, 1959: 265)

Meaning: *Gyawu* was a brave and self confident sub-chief of *Bantama* who at the annual *Odwira* ceremony was said to have had his hair shaved in this fashion; '*atiko*' refers to the hind head (back side of the head). *Gyawu atiko* therefore means the hind head of *Gyawu*. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints (Plate 55)



Plate 55: shows *Gyawu atiko* with zigzag linear netting pattern at the background of an African print: - photograph from the catalogue of cultures- 2006 unpublished by *Ekow Asmah*

Background: valor or courage is a virtue required by every society in any man, especially in the face of war or battle. The chief warrior of Asante being the chief of Bantama was identified as custom demanded to shave this symbol on its head. Hair-do is a very important form of art. A person's social status especially in the royal palace was symbolically shown in his or her hair-do. Some of the hair styles were; *Nhwete*, worn by treasury bag bearers, *tipa*, *suame* or *nkwondwa soafopuaa* worn by stool bearers, *Nkwantanan* worn by key bearers and *topi* worn by porters of the chief's palanquin. Shaved hair strands were not discarded but stacked in a crack of a wall so that, should one die far away from home, the funeral rites may be performed using the kept shaved hair strands. This symbol was a hair style shaved at the back of the Bantama chief's head. *Kwatakye* was also a war captain of one of the Asante kings; at the *Odwira* ceremony he is said to have cut his hair after the fashion shown in fig 41a which is often mistaken for *Gyawu Atiko* (Rattray, 1959: 267).

Moral Value: The symbol encourages people to affirm their belief in their ability to undertake difficult tasks where others express doubt. It also urges people to be a little adventurous. This is a symbol of valour.

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* an indigene of Asante-*Ntonso* is believed to have first adopted the symbol by reason of its use by Nana Gyawu in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* (1804-1823).

Idea development: the concept of this symbol is not well known but it seems to suggest that it is a symbol derived from the royal oath of secrecy that says ‘even in death we will not be separated’ and therefore if a king dies his loyal subjects are willing to die with him. This symbol *Gyawu Atiko* was drawn on the head of *Nana Amankwaatia –Bantama hene* (the chief of *Bantama*) after he had escaped at the time that he was to be beheaded.

Csrane ne Nsoroma [Symbol of faithfulness]



Fig 49; original symbol of *Csrane Nsoroma*



Fig 49a; Three Stylized Versions of *Csrane Nsoroma*

Name/Theme: *Csrane ne nsoromma*/Faithfulness (Glover, 1969).

Proverb: ‘*Se nsoromma (kyekye) pe aware a, Csrane na obe ware no*’.

Literal Translation: If the star likes marriage, then it is surely the moon that it will be married to.

Meaning: *Csrane* refers to the moon, and this suggests the accommodating and receptive nature of a woman. ‘*Nsoromma*’ refers to the star; this also suggests love and protective

nature of a man. The two fused together signifies marriage of convenience co-operation and inter – dependence. ‘*Csrane ne nsoromma*’ – the moon and the star also symbolizes the co-operation and union between families, married couples and society as a whole. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: Marriage is a social institution uniting a man and a woman in special forms of mutual dependence, often for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family. Marriage as a contract between a man and a woman has existed since ancient times. As a social practice, entered into through a social custom, it reflects the purposes, character, and expectations of the society in which it is found. In the same regard, the star and the moon faithfully move together in the firmament at all times. Observing the beauty of such relationship in the firmament, society’s expectation in marriage is to see man and woman emulating such harmony. The Asante’s believe in the femininity of the *Csrane* and the masculinity of the *Nsoromma*, which is regarded as the son of God. It is believed that the two are a couple who coexists in the firmament.

Moral Value: This symbol teaches the importance of fidelity and fondness, which are necessary as far as marriage and friendship are concerned. This is a symbol of faithfulness and fondness.

Originator: *Opanin Yaw Duodu* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have adopted the symbol from a Muslim merchant (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at Ntonso). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Opoku Ware I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1719-1750).

Idea Development: This is a replica of the moon and star in the firmament.

Sepow [Symbol of Freedom]



Fig 50; Original Symbol of *Sepow*

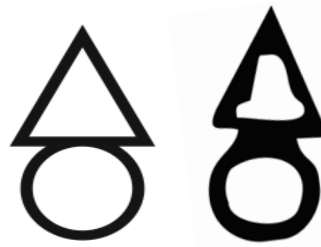


Fig 50a; A Stylized Version of *Sepow*

Name/Theme: *Sepow*/Freedom

Literal Translation: The executioner's knife (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: '*Sepow*' refers to a knife which was used in beheading offenders of the king. *Abrafoo* which refers to executioners were exclusive attendants of the king. They were specialized in the act of 'chopping off' the heads of people who break certain taboos and also offender of the king. This symbol signifies the denial of a person to speak or express his or her mind. It also signifies the various forms of human rights abuses in our society. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: Asante's practiced several forms of human sacrifice. This sacrificial knife was used extensively as a weapon with a strong single-edged blade made of a triangular shaped iron honed to razor-sharpness. The back of the blade, which was straight for most of its length, tapered in a triangular fashion towards the point. The wooden handle, carved in the form of a bowing figure, inlaid with different coloured fragments of shells. The functions of its user called *Abrafoo* included divination execution and warning as well as performing sacrifices and conducting rituals at religious festivals. Asante executioners silenced their captives by thrusting the '*sepow*' through their cheeks to

prevent him invoking a curse on the king before beheading them (Rattray, 1959 p. 266). This is done to silence the prisoners from invoking curses on the king and their captors.

Moral Value: The symbol ironically encourages the freedom of speech and all forms of human rights issues which promote freedom and dignity to humanity. It strongly abhors authorities gagging people to prevent them from expressing their opinion. It however warns against deformation and sensationalism which produces strong feelings of anger among people. This is a symbol of freedom of speech with caution.

Originator: *Papa Dwaben* an indigene of Asante-*Ntonso* is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Osei Tutu I* (1695-1719).

Idea development: This is made of a triangle and a circle and a replica of the head of the executioner's blade. The triangle is usually referred to as the male signifying bravery and the circle sacredness.

Gye Nyame [Symbol of Supremacy]



Fig 51; Original Symbol Gye Nyame

Fig 51a; A Stylized Version of Gye Nyame

Name/Theme: *Gye Nyame*/Supremacy

Meaning; ‘except God [I fear none]’ (Rattray, 1959: 267)

Proverb: ‘*Abodee yi firi tete, obi nnte ase a, onim n’ahyease, obi nntena ase nnkosi nawie ye gye nyame*’.

Literal Translation: ‘This creation originated from the distant past; no living person knows its beginning. No one will live till its end except God’.

Meaning: *Gye* means except, *Nyame* means God. God is regarded as the creator and ruler of the world and humanity; therefore he must be revered and worshiped. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth (see plate 56)



Plate 56: shows *Gye Nyame* with an embroidery pattern by its side along with other adinkra symbols: - photograph from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah- 2006

Background: Asante religion is traditionally centered around *Nyame*, the supreme creator God, and his many “children”, the *abosom*. These were powers in nature and were served by priests. God is placed above all other lesser gods, deities and ancestors. God is the great grandfather – grandmother (*Nana Nyame*). Some attributes of God are *Odomankoma*, *Oboadee* – the creator. All grace giver and *Onyankopon* – the Great Ancestor. In certain cases he is regarded as the over-lord of all, who should not be approached directly. Because of God’s supremacy, all requests are rooted through the lesser gods by their priests and priestesses who serve as intermediaries to him.

Moral Value: The symbol reflects the supremacy, power and dominion of God over all situations and creations. He is therefore regarded as the immortal omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. This is a symbol of supremacy of God.

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have adopted the symbol from a Muslim merchant (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the reign of *Nana Opoku Ware I* (1719-1750).

Idea development: the two arms of the symbol one facing the heavens and the other facing the earth are a representation of the claim of ownership as the creator of heaven and earth. The stem of the symbol is slanted diagonally at an angle of 45° supported by seven projections a representation of the perfection of God 'Nyame' to be in control of his creation. It is said that this symbol was created because of *Opanin's* problems with some of his brothers who were threatening him with death at that time. He therefore stated that only God could kill him and affirmed it visually with this symbol.

Mmara Krado [Symbol of Justice]



Fig 52; Original Symbol of *mmara krado*



Fig 52a; A Stylized Version of *mmara krado*

Name/Theme: *Mmara krado*/Justice and Authority

Literal Translation: The padlock of the law (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: *Mmara* refers to the law that is the rule or set of rules for good behavior, be it moral, religious or emotional. *Krado* refers to padlock, it symbolizes authority. This means the supreme authority vested in someone to fasten or hold in check other people's behavior, for the good of society. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: The *krado* has a small detachable lock with a movable semicircular bar at the top, the free end of which is usually passed through a hasp or hand and then locked shut. This was normally used by the law enforcement agent of the British government and therefore suggests the society's involvement with the natives. The universe is governed by statutes, natural and spiritual laws. Every community is guided by laws and regulations. This is done to protect and shape the conduct of its citizens to bring about sanity. The Akan practice of oath swearing gives credence to the concept of law and justice. This practice consists of forbidden words among a clan, which is invoked in demand of justice. Punishment is meted out to offenders if found culpable, by both authorities and the ancestors.

Moral Value: This symbol signifies supreme authority, justice, and equality of everybody before the law. The symbol stresses the importance of enforcing and abiding by rules and regulations in order to bring sanity in all communities. This is a symbol of authority and justice.

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have adopted the symbol among many others found alongside the trophies brought from

Gyaman in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* (1804-1823).

Idea development: This has been developed from two semicircles hinged together by a pin at both ends to complete the circle. Within the locked semi-circle is an image of a crucifix probably indicating the need for the guilty to transform.

Nyame Biribi wo Soro [Symbol of Hope]



Fig 53; Original Symbol of *Nyame biribi wo soro*



Fig 53a; A Stylized Version of *Nyame biribi wo soro*

Name/Theme: *Nyame biribi wo soro*/Hope

Proverb: '*Nyame biribi wo soro, ma no me ka me nsa.*

Literal Translation: 'O God, something is in heaven, let it come into my hand' (Rattray, 1959: 267).

Meaning: *Nyame* refers to God, *biribi wo soro* means something is in heaven, *ma mensa nka* means let me have it. '*Biribi*' in the proverb signifies God's benevolence, mercy, blessings and all the good things which promote the well being of a person. '*Soro*' also signifies a source of opportunities and prospects which abound for advancement for every aspect of our life. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloths and other traditional prints

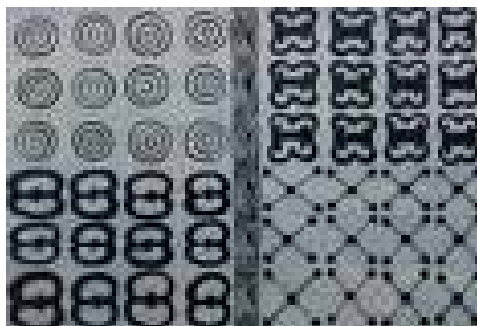


Plate 57: shows *Nyame biribi wo soro* symbol arranged in a block combined with other *adinkra* symbols in a similar block arrangement: - from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* - 2006 - unpublished

KNUST

Background: Confidence, expectation, optimism, anticipation, faith, determination, hopefulness are virtues that a person requires to gain the favour of God. This suggests the supremacy of God to be the provider of mankind just as He provides rain for all, so can He also make provision for all who needs His blessings. The proverb emphasizes the belief in the heaven (sky) as God's dwelling place. God's abode therefore, is believed to have all the blessings that he offers to those who fervently request for them. There is therefore the belief that God is good and has the ability to answer prayers. This pattern was stamped on paper and hung above the lintel of a door in the palace. The king of Asante used to touch this lintel, then his forehead, then his breast, repeating these words three times (Rattray, 1959: 266)

Moral Value: The proverb encourages the requisition of favors from God through prayers and faithfulness. It also stresses the need for people to be optimistic and positive minded. This is a symbol of hope.

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have adopted the symbol among many others found alongside the trophies brought from

Gyaman in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1804-1823).

Idea development: It is also known as '*nkatehono*'. This symbol was developed from the groundnut that can still be found in its shell.

Nsaa [Symbol of quality]



Fig 54; Original Symbol



Fig 54a; A Stylized Version of *Nsaa*

Name/Theme: *Nsaa*/Quality, Durability

Proverb: '*Nea onim nsaa, na oto nea ago.*'

Literal Translation: He who knows *nsaa* is the one that even buys the weak and old one. (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: *Nea onim* means he who knows, *nsaa* refers to a cloth, *na oto* means who buys, *nea ago* means that which is weak. This proverb draws the significance of aiming at good quality and durability rather than quantity. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: *Nsaa* is a high quality blanket like cloth. It is intricately woven with tough and coarse camel hair. It was traded by the nomadic Fulani people. It is very expensive

and therefore mostly bought by chiefs and wealthy people. It is used in covering the inside of a chief's palanquin and the 'black stools'. Because of its high quality and durability, people were willing to buy it, even the old and used ones. In the olden days, it was prestigious to possess an '*nsaa*'. This cloth is said to be full of interesting Arabic symbols among them are the two different symbols shown above representing the same name.

Moral Value: The proverb advises people to make quality and durability a hallmark, and avoid mediocrity in their productivity. It also encourages people to patronize high quality goods. This is a symbol of a taste for good quality and durability.

Originator: *Papa Dwaben* an indigene of *Asante-Ntonso* is believed to have adopted the symbol from a Muslim merchant (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* (1804-1823).

Idea development; this is a conceptual symbol that uses lines as an element of design. It is believed that this symbol was derived from one of the many symbols in the *nsaa* cloth.

Fihankra [Symbol of security]



Fig 55; Original Symbol of *fihankra*



Fig 55a; A Stylized Version of *fihankra*

Name/Theme: *Fihankra*/Security

Literal Translation: Compound or courtyard house or the circular house (Rattray, 1959: 267)

Meaning: ‘*Fie*’ refers to the home or house, ‘*hankra*’ also refers to a compound or courtyard. *Fihankra* therefore means a compound house or courtyard house. This symbol reflects security, safety, solidarity and communality enjoyed in the company of family members who live in a compound house. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: This symbol shows a vivid imagery of what goes into the construction of a house apart from the emphasis of security, safety, solidarity and communality enjoyed as a family house. *Fihankra* normally has one main entrance, which serves also as an exit. This is to prevent possible attacks from hostile persons and wild animals. It is constructed with mud plastered onto supporting wooden frames; a process known as the ‘wattle and daub’.

Asante architecture in the eighteenth century is not only elaborate in terms of function and building technology. It also presents, as a reflection of the people and their spirit of independence, a variety of forms and design principles that encode expressive messages to observers. Different symbols are used as base relief or plinths and walls. They may be used to give a honeycomb effect or serve as screen walls providing openings for ventilation while at the same time serving as protection against visual intrusion.

The *fihankra* (compound house) style of building consists of a central quadrangle which is enclosed on all four sides with rooms. The multi-room rectangular building with an open courtyard found in Asante houses, as captured by the *fihankra* symbol, marks the

Asante concept of private and public space. The Asante *fihankra* building used as a home demarcates between the *fie* (inside, private) and *abonten* (outside, public). The concept of *fihankra* reinforces the idea of close family ties and unity.

The *fihankra* symbolizes protection, security and spirituality. When one enters the house, the open courtyard (*adiwo* in *Twi*) represents the public space within the house. This open courtyard has multiple uses. It is usually surrounded by a verandah where guests may be received. A bigger group of guests will usually be received in the *dampan*. The *dampan* (literally, empty room) is semi-private and has multiple uses: from receiving guests, and holding court to laying the dead in state during funerals. Then, there are the private rooms: living room, bed rooms, bathrooms, etc. There is also the kitchen, which very often extends into the open courtyard. In a big Asante house, there is the women's quarters (*mmaa mu*) which will have its own open courtyard and a number of private rooms. The kitchen and the bathrooms will usually be in these quarters. In the Asantehene's Palace the women's quarters is called *Hia* or *Hyia*. The Asante house is not only well ventilated; it is resilient and can withstand the hazards of storms, rainfall and



Fig 56; showing *mframadan* symbol

the tropical hot weather. This is encoded in the symbol *mframadan* - well ventilated or breezy house shown below.

Fihankra symbol depicts the Asante family house which is rectangular in shape and has a central courtyard. It is a symbol of protection, security and spirituality. The open courtyard within the house serves as the center of activities in the household. The Asante home is shared by all members of the extended family. Therefore, the concept of *fihankra* reinforces the idea of close family ties and unity.

Moral value: The symbol stresses the need for people to live together and serve as each other's keeper. It also fosters cordial relationship and a sense of security among families. This is a symbol of security and safety (Nana Owusu Ansah, 2006).

Originator: *Opanin Yaw Duodu* a native of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have adopted the symbol for his taste for architecture in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu*-2007 a Master Artisan at Ntonso). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1804-1823).

Idea development: The four separate outer arch's represent the circular building and the square like shape trapped within also represent the courtyard commonly associated with compound house in Asante. This is symbolic of a compound house which is not far from the original built by rich cocoa producers who built these houses to shelter their families.

Adinkrahene (Symbol of Greatness)



Fig 57; Original Symbol of *Adinkrahene*

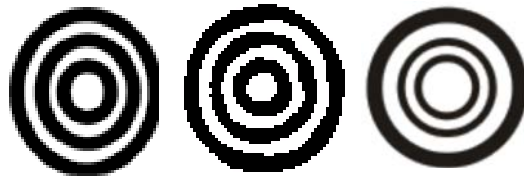


Fig 57a; A Stylized Version of *Adinkrahene*

Name/ Theme: *Adinkrahene*/Greatness

Literal Translation; ‘The King of *Adinkra*’: and ‘chief’ of all these *Adinkra* designs
(Rattray, 1959: 266)

Meaning: *Adinkrahene* denoting the ‘spiritual rulers of the entire universe

It means the embodiment of all creative wisdom. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints (see plate 58)



Plate 58: shows *Adinkrahene* symbol combined with *fihankra* symbols: - from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006 - unpublished

Background: This symbol is noted to have played an inspiring role in designing other symbols. This reason makes the symbol the greatest among all symbols; King of the

entire *adinkra* symbol. In Akan traditional symbolism, God's creative wisdom manifests or becomes visible, in man through its activities and is often expresses in terms of 'or associated with the 'circle' which is known to be the symbol of totality or holiness. The *adinkrahene* is a cosmological symbol made up of three circles, an inner smaller circle being the central focus of the universe followed by a slightly bigger one and then the last enclosed circle.

The central circle is a representation of the spiritual energy or force of God the supreme being of the universe while the next or middle circle represents the spiritual energy of the ancestors, the king or the lesser gods; the outer circle is the representation of the life force of man, animals and any living creature. This divine order is a replica of the architectural structural arrangement of a basic Asante family house where animals are kept in the outer enclosure followed by the children's room with the parents residing in the inner room.

The Asantes have a long history of cultural achievement. The Asante's performed elaborate ceremonies marking funerals and other life passages because Asante religion believes in afterlife, reincarnation, sacrifice, spirit and ancestor worship. Asante spiritual beliefs combine ancestor worship and animism, the belief that all things have spirits. Such conceptual bases cause Asante women to decorate clothes with needlework or embroidered symbols and patterns to attract friendly spirits and ward off unfriendly ones. The belief in the existence of souls is an important social consequence that reinforces moral obligations and serves as a guiding principle in the life of the Asante.

Like the *adinkrahene* the mandala is a cosmological complex geometric diagram or pictorial design usually enclosed in a circle, representing the entire universe and used as an aid to meditation in Hindu and Buddhist rituals. Nothing is known about *adinkrahene* being used as a guide to meditation but the concept of giving birth to policies emanates from the inner chamber of the king's court before it is released to sub chiefs for the consumption of its subjects. Each element within the mandala represents the universe pictorially, and so the worshipper imaginatively “enters” the mandala, focusing successively on each of its stages as he approaches the centre in the course of his meditation (*Microsoft® Encarta® 2007 © 1993-2006 Microsoft Corporation*).

In the same notion Art and other aspects of Asante culture, stimulate the intellect, emotions, and spirit, of mankind. Enable them to spend time in contemplation, to seek to know their relationships and commitment to nature they so easily admire and questions the meaning of life and the function of the society they live in.

All the three circles are the embodiment of the belief system of the Asante's. The Supreme Being (representing the inner circle) is generally seen as operating on a large scale, as the one concerned with the world as a whole and with life in its entirety, while the lesser gods (representing the second circle) function mostly on a smaller scale, and are best understood as “forces of nature”. If served properly they will protect the hunter/man, (representing the outer circle) and guard the rivers and the highways, and help their devotees to fulfill their destinies the relationship between them being one of reciprocity and interdependence denoting a sense of fusion between the human and its ancestors or the lesser gods. The services the ancestors offer, expresses all that is morally desirable and appropriate in social relations in that good conduct has ancestral authority

and support which is evident from the sanction of exclusion from the ancestral tomb imposed for the more serious violations of acceptable behaviour. The ancestors exercise influence over almost every aspect of life, including the production of staple foods such as rice, and the provision of efficacious medicine.

Moral value: The symbol urges the need for people to adapt a mutual respectful responsibility between them, the Supreme Being, and the lesser gods as they learn to play inspiring and leadership role in maintaining nature in a balance. This is a symbol of greatness, charisma, accomplishment and leadership.

Originator: *Basanahene* of Asante is believed to have adopted the symbol among many others found alongside the trophies brought from Gyaman in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* (1804-1823).

Idea development: it is said that the *Basanahene* discovered this symbol from the then Gyaaman chief called *Kofi Adinkra*. It is made of sacred confined circles symbol representing the spiritual forces in the universe.

Akoma Ntoaso (Symbol of Understanding, Agreement)



Fig 58; Original Symbol of *Akoma Ntoaso*

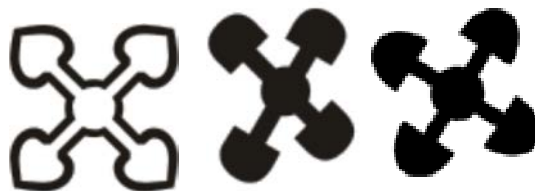


Fig 58a; A Stylized Version of *Akoma Ntoaso*

Name/Theme: *Akoma Ntoaso*/ Understanding, Agreement.

Literal Translation: linked heart (Glover, 1969)

Meaning: *Akoma*- heart, *ntoaso*- linkage, linked hearts. This signifies a formal or informal decisions-agreement that people have reached together about something of importance. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: This symbol signifies understanding and agreement, which fosters togetherness between towns, institutions, married couples, friends and other relations. The configuration and unification of Asante towns that resulted in the creation of an Asante kingdom in 1701 by the first *Asantehene* (king), Osei Tutu I, and his spiritual adviser *Komfo Anokye* arose as a result of the tyrannical rule of *Ntim Kakarii* the king of the Denkyira kingdom who toppled the then reign of the Adanse kingdom. The provincial towns that made up the configuration are Asumagya, Bekwae, Dwaben, Edweso, Kokofu, and Mampong and their rulers were made *amanhene*. The *Asantehene* occupies the supreme stool, the *sika dwa* or Golden Stool, which is said to have appeared from the sky at the foundation of the kingdom, and which is held to embody the *sunsum* (national soul) of the Asante people.

Paradoxically the length and breath of the entire kingdom is represented by the four hearts of the *Akoma Ntoaso* symbol and their link to the circle in the centre signifies the fusion of the hearts, mind and soul of the Asante people into one national soul (*kra/sunsum*). The highly respected *Asantehene* then becomes the pivotal role as a cultural focal point for Asante identity. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the

Asante extended their territories and became one of the most powerful kingdoms in sub-Saharan Africa. Its influence covered most of present-day Ghana and extended into the modern Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Togo.

Moral value: The proverb advises institutions, couples, friends and business partners to avoid going contrary to the agreement entered into. Fair play should prominently feature in agreements which avoid disputes. It also encourages people to enter into agreements in order for them to facilitate commitment and development. This is a symbol of understanding and agreement.

Originator: *Papa Dwaben* an indigene of Asante-Ntonso is believed to have originated the symbol (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at Ntonso). The year of its origination is unknown but it is believed to be during the later reign of *Nana Osei Tutu I* the founder of the Asante kingdom, who ruled Ashanti kingdom from (1695-1719).

Idea development: This was developed from several reproductions of the heart. Being patient renders many benefits as described above. It is made of four heart shaped form put together, supported by lines, and a circle.

Nkyimkyim (Symbol of Toughness, Adaptability or Versatility, usefulness, Resoluteness and resourcefulness)



Fig 59; Original Symbol of *Nkyimkyim*



Fig 59a; A Stylized Version of *Nkyimkyim*

Name /Theme: *Nkyimkyim*/Versatility.

Literal Translation: the twisted pattern or ‘Twists and turns’ or ‘zigzagged’ from the proverbial expression: *Obra kwan ye nkyinkyimie*; meaning the course of life is full of twisting, ups and downs, and zigzags (Rattray, 1959: 265).

Meaning: *Kyim* means to ‘twist’. This literally means, to turn oneself around in all aspects of life. This symbol signifies the ability of a person to adjust and withstand difficult situations, and also to take initiatives and play many important roles, and be able to learn new skills quickly and easily. This symbol emphasizes the need for critical assessment and reassessment of one's situation in life. This symbol is also used for the production of *adinkra* cloth and other traditional prints

Background: the Asantes are mostly farmers who daily trek from their homes to the farmlands and normally the foot path is always winding or not straight. This is due to the fact that the paving of the initial path avoided thick bushes, big trees, huge rocks and any obstacles that can easily be avoided to preserve time and energy along the way. As a result the foot path is always unavoidably zigzag. The philosophy is that the path of life is not always straight in that one should always appraise and reappraise a situation before taking the necessary initiative to avoid certain obstacles in life in order to preserve energy to attain maximum goals. Some people are normally reluctant and sometimes even refuse to take any form of initiative or persevere, for fear of failure or the unknown. The behaviour or the movement of a running water or rain water on the ground emphasis and speaks volume of the need to adapt such philosophy by man.

Moral value: The symbol encourages people to take bold and productive initiative. It challenges people to develop their managerial and entrepreneurial skills and venture into various undertakings for the benefit of themselves and society. It also encourages people to confront or take up bad situations and make them better. It also urges people to also be optimistic in life. This is a symbol of initiative, dynamism and versatility.

Originator: *Opanin Kofi Maanu* an indigene of *Asante-Ntonso* is believed to have adopted the symbol among many others found alongside the trophies brought from Gyaman in the early part of the nineteenth century (*Nana Agya Bedu-2007* a Master Artisan at *Ntonso*). The year of its origination is unknown but its philosophy is believed to have been propounded during the reign of *Nana Osei Bonsu I* (1804-1823).

Idea development: This symbol has been made out of Zigzag lines derived from the farm foot path to depict twists and turns.

4.3 Totems as symbol for traditional textile prints

The term totem comes from a North American Indian language and it has been widely used to refer especially to objects of the animal and vegetable kingdoms which are held to be in a special relationship with a particular group of people or with individuals in a society. Totemism may be defined as a relationship that is supposed to exist between a person or a group of persons and an animal or object or a group of animals or objects.

Every lineage has specific symbols and totems that they are identified with and these totems are usually animals that have qualities that they would like to be identified with.

Totemism is probably one of the most difficult religious phenomena to explain intelligibly. No single hypothesis is likely to serve adequately as an explanation of all the institutions which have been labeled totemism as these institutions are very varied. The beliefs and practices which are called totemism fall on the border line between the notion of power in object, or magic, and the idea of a personalized spirit in things or religion. The Akans and to be precise the Asante's have eight different totems for each clan which sometimes are seen on fabrics like the African print in plate 79 below.

4.3.1 The eight totems of the Akan clan

Very often the nature of a clan is portrayed by the nature of its totem.

The Akan society recognizes eight "*abusua*" that is clans and they are as follows.

1. The *Ayokoo* { *Oyoko* } -

According to *Nana Osei Kwadwo II* ex-Bekwaihene the *Bona – Nkoran* were the founders of *Adubbiase* and *Mamponten*. They migrated from La Cote D'Ivoire. *Ayokoo* is the clan which later captured leadership in the *Kwaman* and gave birth to the Ashanti Kingdom. *Oyoko* is the royal clan for the Ashanti chiefs. The *Oyoko* clan founded the states of *Nsuta*, *Juaben*, *Kokofu*, *Bekwai* and *Kumasi*. The head town is *Kumasi* and their totem is the falcon {*Asansa*}, which means patience {*Abotare*} the character of the clan can be likened to the nature of its totem. The falcon symbolizes mightiness. Like the powerful feet of the long, curved, sharp talons creature, the *Oyoko*'s are said to be strong spiritually and physically in life's endeavour. Characteristically as the birds rise above and swoop down on their prey, seize and hold it, tearing it into pieces with the beak, so

are the abilities of the clan in war and reasoning. Fig., 60 shows the falcon perched on a stool.



Fig 60; shows the totemic symbol of the *Oyoko* clan: -
illustration by the Researcher- 2006

2. The Asona – Crow [Kwakwadebi]

Rev. Agyeman Dua for African Studies Archives at *Manhyia*, 2006 stated that the *Asona* are a people who arrived from many places in the West African sub-region. Some claim to have moved with the founder of the *Bono* kingdoms, having migrated from *Kankyeabo* with the *Asakyin*. Their head town is *Kyebi* and their totem is crow symbolizing humility and peace. The common crow is an omnivorous and opportunistic feeder, taking advantage of almost any food it can find. If food is abundant, they hide away excess food in caches, which it can later use during the lean season. Crows are among the most intelligent and adaptable of birds, and are sometimes migratory, but often they are resident all the year round and able to thrive near human settlements. Their ability to adapt to all conditions and to plan effectively for the future taking advantage of every situation that comes their way makes them parallel to the crow in character. Below is an example of the totemic symbol of the *Asona* clan.



Fig 61; Shows the totemic symbol of the *Asona* clan: -
illustration by the Researcher- 2006

3. The *Aduana* { *Aberade* }

The *Aduana* - *Aberade* {with their sub clans of *Amoakare*, *Atwea*, *Abira*, *Onyaya* and *Adaa*} claim to have co-founded the *Bono* kingdoms. About their origin, a section claims they descended from heaven at *Asumegya*, per a golden chain. Because of their big numbers and to make room for their convenience, they relaxed their taboo against marriage among clan members. Their head town is *Domaa* and their totem is dog that is {*Okraman*} and its meaning is Adroitness skill {*Ahoahare*} and also symbolizes support and service to mankind.

Dogs *Aduana* clan are said to be very responsive, enduring, and skillful in every endeavour. Like the dog having powerful acceleration and the ability to maintain running speed *Aduana*'s excel in almost every business because of their inquisitive nature and their unbroken bonds they have with the members of the clan. No doubt dogs have highly developed physical coordination and flexibility of behaviour, and extended parent-offspring bonds. Dogs have highly developed senses of smell and hearing, enabling them to hunt by night as well as in the daytime.

They leap into the air to locate their prey by sound and smell and then pounce on it. Dogs are essentially carnivorous, but also eat fruit and other vegetable matter to tide them through periods when prey is scarce. Such character reflects in the life of the *Aduana*'s as they turn to be crafty, fearless and adaptable in all situations (Rev. Agyeman Dua for African Studies Archives at *Manhyia*, 2006). Below is an example of the totemic symbol of the *Aduana* clan.



Fig 62; shows the totemic symbol of the *Aduana* clan: - illustration by the Researcher- 2006

4. The *Agona* \ *Anona* clan

The *Agona*'s claim to have arrived around the middle of the 16th Century as refugees from Mande. They settled in *Bono Manso* and became a sub clan of the *Anona* in 1580; however they migrated and founded their own kingdom based on *Ntumtumbé Apeanyase*. Osei Tutu is one of their ancestors. Their head town is *Dankyira* and their totem is parrot {*akoo*}. It symbolizes persuasiveness eloquence {*anotee*}. Most tropical parrots walk awkwardly on the ground, but are excellent climbers, often using their bills to pull themselves up to a higher branch. The ability of many parrots to imitate the human voice and other sounds is one reason for their popularity as pets. Aside its beauty, Parrots

are said to be as “intelligent” as porpoises and primates. Most *Agona`s* are not afraid of heights, they are achievers, persuasive and have the skilful art of communication (Rev. *Agyeman Dua* for African Studies Archives at *Manhyia*, 2006). Below is an example of the totemic symbol of the *Agona* clan.



Fig 63; shows the totemic symbol of the *Agona* clan: - illustration by the Researcher-2006

5. The *Asenee* \ *Aboade* clan

Rev. *Agyeman Dua* for African Studies Archives at *Manhyia*, (2006) further states that the *Asenee* had their original home in far away Mossi country. Another section claims to have arrived in *Bono* from Mande when *Akumfi Ameyaw I* was King and was given the *Ayaase* stool. Other *Asenee* settlement was *Dompoase*, *Amokom*, *Nkoranza* and *Assin Atandanso*. Their head town is *Amakom* and their totem is bat {*ampan*} or leopard {*osebo*} which symbolizes aggressiveness {*marimasem*}. Bats are the only mammals capable of prolonging their flight, and, unlike birds, they can fly at relatively low speeds

with extreme maneuverability. The thin membrane and elongated bones of the wing allow bats this unique flight capability.

Most bats are insectivorous and are able to catch their prey in flight or to seek out stationary insects on foliage or other surfaces. At least some bats supplement their diets with small fish, which are caught as the flying bats drag their enlarged feet and claws just beneath the water surface. Being nocturnal gives bats many advantages, such as greatly reduced competition for insects and other food, substantial freedom from attack, and protection from overheating and dehydration, to which bats are especially liable because of their enormous skin area relative to their size. With such character traits like the bats *Aboade* clan is slow but sure in every issues of life because of their extreme maneuverable, predictable abilities. Uniquely they have the tendency to develop at one location or business without changing its stand or venturing into an unfamiliar territory. Below is an example of the totemic symbol of the *Aboade* clan.

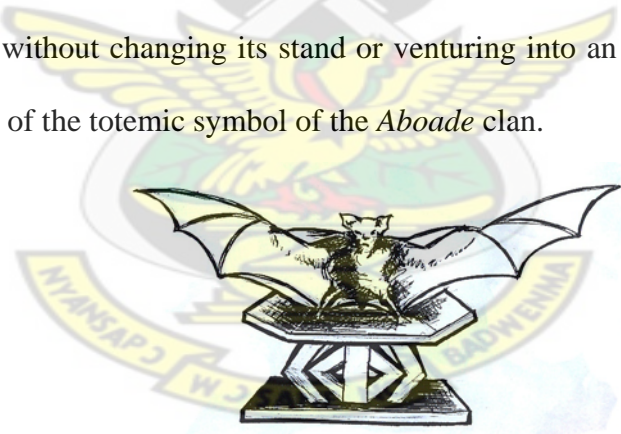


Fig 64; Shows the totemic symbol of the *Aboade* clan: -
illustration by the Researcher- 2006

6. The *Bretuo* | *Tena* clan

Rev. Agyeman Dua, (2006) restated that the *Bretuo* claims to have co-founded the *Bono Manso* kingdom and their leader, *Otumfuo Osei Kofi* cut the sword for the establishment of the settlement. The *Tena* on the other hand, attributed their migration to forced labour

their *Dankyira* overlord {*Boa Amponsem*} subjected them, to fell heavy silk cotton trees and carve doors or gates for the royal wives. The next stop of the two clans was *Adukoro* near *Bekwai* where they separated for each to found a kingdom, the *Bretuo* at *Mampong* {*Asante*} and the *Tena* at *Abene* {*Kwawu*}. Their head town is *Asante Mampong* and their totem is leopard {*Osebo*} which means aggressiveness {*marimase*}.

To the leopard, trees serve as resting place, hunting ground, and place for storing food. High above the ground, leopards can ambush terrestrial prey and, dragging it back up behind them, keep it out of scavengers' reach. Leopards hunt alone and at night, focusing on smaller animals that are less desirable to competitive predators such as lions, hyenas, and tigers. The leopard is an agile climber and will often stalk monkeys in the trees. It hunts mainly at night. When game is scarce, a leopard will eat field mice, fruit, porcupines, or baboons. Craftiness, unpredictability, agility and aggressiveness are the characteristics of the *Bretuo* clan a reflection of the character of the leopard. Below is an example of the totemic symbol of the *Bretuo* clan.



Fig 65; Shows the totemic symbol of the *Bretuo* clan: - illustration by the Researcher- 2006

7. The *Ekoona* clan

The first *Ekoona* group claims to have arrived from Mande and settled in *Bono* around 1550. These were the founders of the *Techiman* city state. Yet another section claims they came out of a hole at *Bugyeikrom* near *Kokofu*. Their settlement was *Fomena* and *Bonsam* was their deity and it is not uncommon even in our time, to see its image {rough shaped stones} in front of many *Ahemfie* on which blood sacrifices are performed. Their head town is *Adanse Asokore* and their totem is buffalo {*ekoona*} it means diligence, or conscientiousness. It is also a symbol of strength and the clans can be found at *Asokore*, *Otikorom*, *Sekyere* and *Kwaman*. (Nana Abayie Ntori Nimpa II, *Kwamanhene*, 2006)

Except for old, solitary bulls, bulls congregate in large herds to search for food or water. The roar of rutting bulls, audible at nearly 5 km (3 mi), is heard most often in the mating season, when bulls go looking for cows and try to ward off rivals. Breeding bulls have little time to eat and lose more than 90 kg (200 lb) during the mating season. The African buffalo is frequently cited as the most dangerous of all African species of big game if aroused. *Ekoona* clan exhibited a life of sacrifice and gained a reputation for bravery in most of Asante battles. They are diligent and excel even in the face of difficulties. Below is an example of the totemic symbol of the *Ekoona* clan.



Fig 66; Shows the totemic symbol of the *Ekoona* clan: -
illustration by the Researcher- 2006

8. The Asakyiri clan

According to Rev. Agyeman Dua, (2006) the *Asakyiri* claim to have arrived through *Kankyeabo* in Cote D'Ivoire after they had been driven out by Moslem people from their original home beyond the Niger { Timbuktu} where they had founded the *Bondu* kingdom was *Akerekyere* and had their capital at *Fomase*. It was during the reigns of the kingdom that *Dankyira* emerged. Their head town is *Akrokyere* and totem is vulture {*pete*} and it means ubiquitous {*kyinkyin*} and kind {*ayameye*}. Vultures are not early risers. They wait for the sun to warm the ground, creating updrafts on which it can soar. Its bald head and neck are adapted to sticking its head into carcasses. The nescience nature of the *Asakyiri* clan coupled with its inquisitiveness is always aggravated when they smell foul; they are mostly found everywhere in the community though they find it hard to initiate personal projects. Below is an example of the totemic symbol of the *Asakyiri* clan.

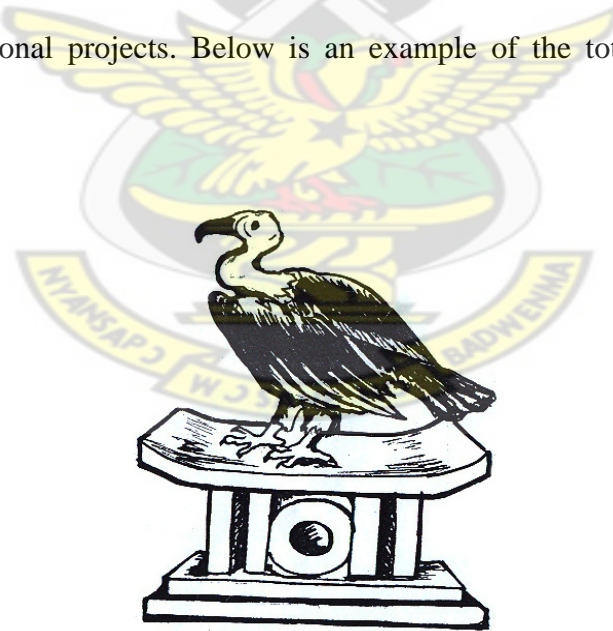


Fig 67; Shows the totemic symbol of the *Asakyiri* clan: -
illustration by the Researcher- 2006

4.3.2 Animal totems as symbols for traditional textile prints

Earlier Ancestors of the Asante's understood the relationship between man, animals and the entire universe and found inspiration in the creation of most symbols used today in Asante (see plate 59).



Plate 59: shows a totemic symbol in the form of a leopard rendered in batik: - from the catalogue of cultures 2006, unpublished by *Ekow Asmah*

Though humans may be considered as the greatest and most important in this relationship, they never lose the fact that they are part of the physical and the spiritual world and therefore had respect for nature. They recognized the power of the animal spirits by wearing skins, masks, mimicking, and singing praise, praying to specific animals and using them as totemic symbols. This knowledge allowed them to remain linked to the animal as they used them as totemic symbols and accepted the power and lessons they offer, in life, and in death. A reminder that all animals were sisters, brothers, and cousins and most importantly teachers and friends; a believe they cherished and held in high esteemed that man is an animal with spirit.

The Natural Power of animal totems has not been lost. By understanding such connections they still held on to the power and the knowledge that aided them to the art of healing, medicine, for the body and the spirit. For what was will always be and such culture cannot be wrong. Animal Totem comes to offer us power and wisdom as we learn to communicate with it, with respect, trust, and understanding. It is believed that each animal has its own special power and message, for each animal has a powerful spirit and an inherent skill. Mistakenly people often think of animals as non-spiritual, uncultured, and less intelligent than humans. Some people do not even think animals have Spirit but the Asante's do and reflect these symbolically on cloth.

4.3.3 Types of totems in Asante

Totems can be classified as Life Totem, a Journey Totem, Shadow Totem, or a Message Totem. All totems are powerful but the meaning that the totem brings will vary depending on the type of totem being used.

Life Long Animal Totem works throughout the entire life or until it is no longer needed. It is always used for its power and connectivity. The Life Totem generally reflects the inner spiritual nature of the user usually referred to as the Spirit totem. An example of Life Totem is the dog or the cat which is considered as a spiritual animal since it is believed to have the ability to see beyond the physical. [<http://www.weboflife.co.uk>].

Journey Animal Totem reflects a period of a day, weeks, months, or even years. Such animal totems appear in life to guide the path of a people and may slip in and out of one's

life over the course of the journey. An example is the pigeon known to use the Sun as its compass. [<http://www.weboflife.co.uk>].

A Message Animal Totem usually brings self growth, spiritual message, or a cautionary warning. It is often a wakeup call or slap in the face. It may bring an unusual experience making it very powerful at that time and very impartial. It has the ability to cause a delay in one's life just to avoid an impending accident. An example of such an animal totem is the monkey that has the usual set of gestures and sounds to express emotional states and social needs, but they also have a four-word predator vocabulary: a specific call alerts the troop to airborne predators, one to four-legged predators such as leopards, another to snakes, and one to other apes. [<http://www.weboflife.co.uk>].

Shadow Animal Totem initially has the ability to exhibit its great power through tests the user to come out of fear before allowing the user to manifest its spiritual powers. Shadow Totem often represents inner fears that must be overcome. The goal of using a Shadow Totem is to learn the lessons it brings and incorporate that animal into one's life. If one is scared by something over and over then the expected lesson that animal brings has not been learnt yet. An example is the elephant and the lion.

4.3.4 The Porcupine as a symbol for traditional textile prints

One of the important icons of the Asantes found in the Asante crest is the porcupine (also found in the flag of Asante *kotoko* F, C); the life of an Asante is likened to most of the ways of this forest mammal. The porcupine is one of the most successful animals on Earth, having adapted successfully to a multitude of different environments. [So are the abilities of the Asante to adapt and survive in different environments]. They can live in

almost every habitat; breed under cold areas, and at the hottest and driest of areas. Some rarely set foot on the ground, and others glide from treetop to treetop like the flying squirrels. Whilst others, spend their entire lives in an underground network of burrows, practically they never see the light of day. [This shows the evasiveness of the Asante life and the ability to survive under odd situations]. Their Mothers give birth to around 4-7 babies which unusually, will be suckled by any female in the group which happens to be producing milk. [In the same way, any Asante father or mother can parent anyone's child since they consider themselves as a big family-caring for one another].

Porcupines are one of the more unusual-looking rodents, because of their armoury of spines and quills. When the porcupine is being aggressive, these are raised on end and often rattled to warn off predators or rivals. If a quill penetrates the skin, it can become detached and remain in the wound, causing it to become septic. Such injury could prove fatal for an inquisitive lion or leopard. [This shows how deadly and persuasive they can be even in battle; they cannot be stopped and are very deadly as the porcupine-(like the proverbial saying- *wo kum apem a apem baba*;-when you kill a thousand a thousand will rise to replace them]. (Source: Griffin, Steve. "Young Life watch". Life watch magazine. Zoological Society of London [<http://www.weboflife.co.uk>]. Spring 1998)

One of the reasons for the success of porcupines is that they are highly adaptable and able to exploit nearly every new situation to their advantage. [In the same way one cannot under estimate the potentials of an Asante in any endeavour].

4.5 The image of Horn as a symbol for traditional textile prints

Another icon sometimes featured on Asante traditional textile prints is the local horn really a bone cornette made from the horn of an African ox/sheep. It has six finger holes to aid playing notes between partials of the closed horn

The horn is the ritual instrument of the ancient and modern Asante, among the many Asante cultural instruments to have survived until now. Of martial origin, the animal horn was a priestly instrument in *Okomfo Anokye's* times. According to oral history, two different forms of horns were used in traditional ceremonies: one made of sheep horn or ram's horn, ornamented with red cloth band, was sounded at every *akwasi dae* during the 42 Day; one made of elephant husk with white cloth band ornamentation was sounded on every festive occasion.

The ancient kings of Asante had a special horn which was sounded only at midnight at the market place only on special occasions. This horn produces a very soft strain which makes every living person or creature in the town to shudder at its sound. On hearing this midnight horn, babies bury their heads between their mother's breasts, everything else seizes, and even cocks are expected to postpone their crows till dawn. This when done signifies that the king is all powerful or a king is dead and that everyone should keep quiet and sleep. The horn is also used to sing the king's praises when he is relaxing. The *asokwafoo* is the generic name for all horn-blowers. Among the horns in Asante, is the *Akoban* (war horn).

This is a wind instrument used to call people in times of wars. It is a symbol of war and service to one's nation. Apart from its liturgical uses the horn was closely connected

with magical symbolism. Its blast is believed to have destroyed spiritual rivals and during battles horn blowers sounded a powerful war cry to instill fear into the hearts of the enemy while priests blew what was known as the victory sound. Historically the horn has also served in a number of popular usages: it was sounded during rites to bring rain, in the event of local disasters, and so on. In modern times these symbols have found its way as a symbol into Asante traditional textiles.

Another important symbolism in Asante that finds its replica among *adinkra* symbols is the state sword often used to swear oaths during installations of chiefs. An example is shown below:



Fig 68; A State Sword being used by *Otumfuo* during his installation: - illustration by the Researcher- 2006

The sword (*afena*) is one of the staffs of office given to the traditional ruler that is the chief on coronation. In many traditional communities, newly installed chiefs swear by the traditional state sword which symbolically represents justice and defense. Swords originated as implement for domestic, hunting, farming and military purposes, but later assumed certain social ritual functions. The military sword later became a state sword because of its involvement in oath swearing function on the battlefield.

According to *Nana Ofori Agyeman II, Adansehene*, (2006) the earlier mention of state swords in Asante were in the beginning of the sixteenth century. A powerful ruler of

Adanse known as *Awirade Basa* attempted to unite *Adanse* consisting of several independent city states; *Fomena*, *Ayaase*, *Edubiase*, *Akrokyere*, among others into a loose confederation. He created a very powerful mystical sword, the *Afenakwa* which was likened to the *sasatia* of *Dankyira* or the golden stool of Asante a symbol or an embodiment of *Adanse* unity. The sword was held in time of peace. Other swords of different geometric shapes, forms, designs, were then developed to reflect their ceremonial purposes and philosophical beliefs.

One is the Snake-shaped sword with single or double broad blades often in relief of impressionistic figure representations or abstract motifs often used on traditional textiles. In one example, both the handle and the blade are designed in open relief and intricate geometric patterns derived from repertoire of the Akan symbolic representation of the integrated male and female triangles denoting unity set between the two identically simplified version of the symbol of humility. Below is an example of (*afena*) the sword used in an *adinkra* cloth (see plate 60).



Plate 60: shows the use of *afena* combined with *adinkrahene* with an elaborate background block design in half drop formation a characteristic of recent design technique of most adinkra cloths:- from the catalogue of cultures 2006 by *Ekow Asmah* - unpublished

4.5 The chief's spokespersons' staff tops as symbols for traditional textile prints

In Asante society it is not proper for a chief to address his subjects directly. In the same way, it is an act of disrespect for any person to address him directly. The spokesperson is, therefore, the officer of the court through whom all statements to and from the chief are addressed. As a sign of his office, he bears a staff which has a proverbial symbol at the top. The spokespersons staff symbols vary with each clan. The nature of any symbol depends on the attitudes and general outlook on the clan. However, most of them are in the form of human beings, animals and fruits. Below are some common examples used in Asante traditional textiles:



Plate 61: shows the symbolic spokesman's staff in both pictures normally displayed at traditional durbars, made in batik: - photograph from Centre for National Culture Kumasi - 2007

Figurative symbols

Three human heads carved together. This reminds us that one head cannot go into counsel (*'etsie kro enko egina'*) and that it is improper for one person to take decisions for a whole society.

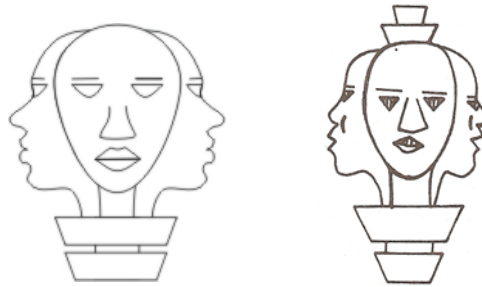


Fig 69; A Figurative symbol of the proverb *etsie kro enko egina*: - illustration by the Researcher- 2006

A hand holding an egg: This represents a warning to the people who are in authority. It indicates that power is as delicate as an egg: when held too tightly, it may break; it may fall and break when held too loosely. This shows that a person in authority needs to be firm and consistent, but sympathetic. See the figure 70 below.



Fig 70; A Figurative Proverbial symbol of a hand holding an egg: - illustration by the Researcher- 2006

A pineapple: The pineapple is plucked and eaten only when it is ripe, otherwise it can be sour. This indicates that, whatever has to be done should be done at the appropriate time. Things done in the rush are often not done rightly.



Fig 71; A Figurative Symbol of a reaped pineapple: - *illustration by the Researcher- 2006*

Usually these figures are carved in wood and plated in either gold or silver or printed on a fabric. Frequently, the animals or objects used as linguist staff symbols are totems of the clans and groups who use them.

4.6 Tattoos as symbols for traditional textile prints

Tattoos are used as symbols of identification in the Asante society. They are mostly made on skins of human beings and animals. On the human skin, names were tattooed to serve as identification mostly in the rural communities. For instance, tattoos were used to trace the roots of strangers who have lost their way home. Tattoos were also used to classify people in terms of social status. Examples are servants, royals, soldiers etc. Individuals used their own symbols or icons to differentiate them from other tattoos. With time tattoo symbols have found their way into traditional African prints.

Tattooing has been practiced worldwide. Some indigenous people of Asante traditionally wore facial tattoos. Today one can find only few Asante's with facial tattoos but its symbols are now being used in Asante traditional textiles. Tattooing was widespread among Akan peoples and among certain ethnic groups in the Akans of Ghana and

similarly among the Makonde's of Mozambique. The art of tattooing continues to be popular among many people or class of Asante society.

4.6.1 Tattoo symbols and designs on clothes, and fashion

Tattoo symbols used for designing Clothing (as a subject) though not firmly identified in Asante tradition finds its existence in Asante and draw its inspiration from the rich history and extraordinary range of designs, patterns and symbols from tattooing around the countryside. Perhaps the closely related cloth associated with these symbols is the wooden prints, waxed prints and some traditionally produced batik and *Akunintam* cloths. These designs can be used to create the very latest in tattoo clothes, apparel and decorative items in the fashion industry. Examples are shown in plate 62 below



Plate 62: shows certain common features of tattoo symbols or adopted for African prints: - - photographs *from* (http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

Traditionally, Asante tattoos were specific motifs that were laid down in a variety of set patterns. The face and other parts of the body contained angles, zigzag and straight lines with an occasional circle, diamond, dot, or animal figure similar to that of Kente designs (see fig; 72 below).



Fig 72; shows variety of symbols used in almost every part of the human body based on the interpretations given to the symbols at a particular section of the body.

http://www.vanishingtattoo.com/makonde_tattoos.htm

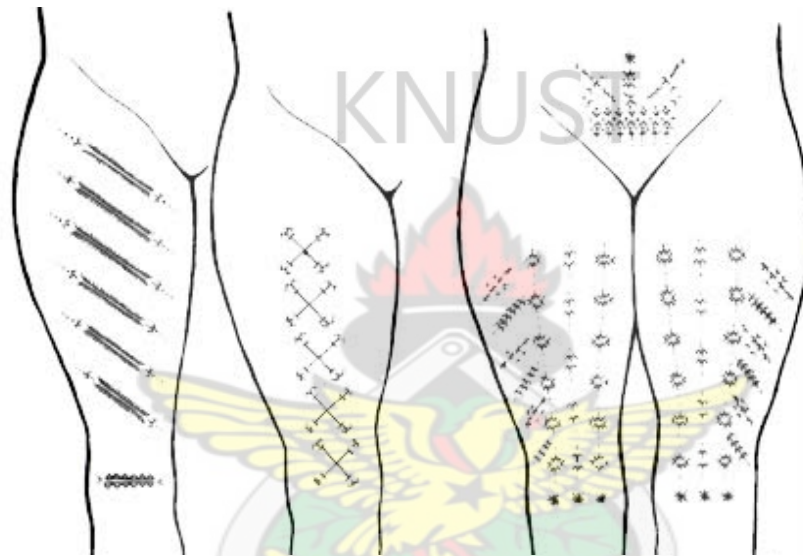


Fig 73; showing lineal markings and symmetrical symbols in the thigh regions normally repeated on both thighs

www.africanholocaust.net/news_ah/africanmarriageritual.html

"Deep angles" mark nearly all tattooed men and women mostly around the facial area above the mouth and across the cheeks and nose. Elaborate back tattooing comprised palm frond motifs. For the Asante's tattooing had diverse functions ranging from the personal need to display, to the promotion of group cohesion (e.g., initiation, rite of passage; see fig x shown above), and to other more esoteric magico-religious principles (as shown below in fig 74).



Fig 74; Showing erotic magico-religious prophylactic designs at the pelvic section of the female body aimed at coursing harm to any foreign intruder that attempts to have sex with the married woman. (http://www.vanishingtattoo.com/makonde_tattoos.htm)

4.6.2 Tattoo Motifs

It was characterized by a series of elaborate geometrical patterns, consisting of repeated triangular motifs, bands, and areas of solid black (see fig; 75).

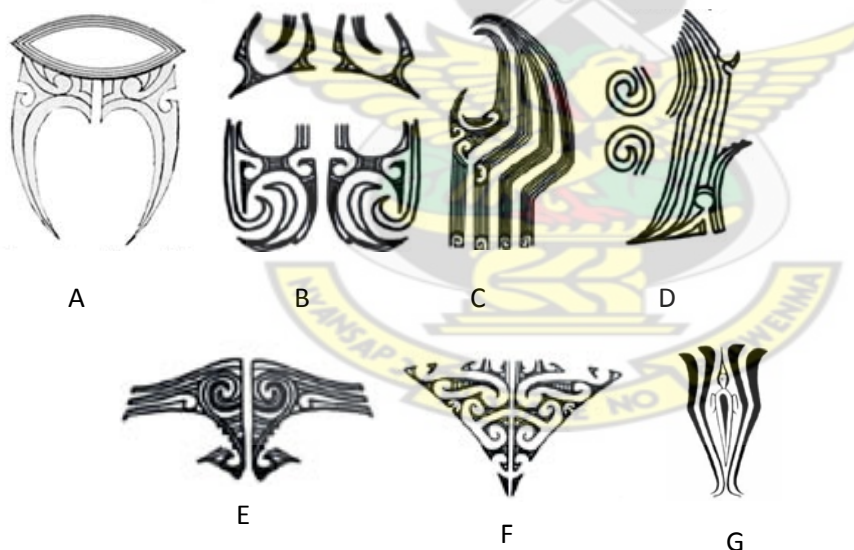


Fig 75; Shows some facial symbols:-A&B done around the chin and the upper part of the chin, C done at the forehead, D done at the cheek and nostril, E done on the nose, F&G done at the center forehead (www.africanholocaust.net/peopleofafrica.html)

4.7 Symbols in machine prints

Over the years, there are specific proverbial symbols that have been used in machine printed cloths and these have come to stay not only in Asante but the entire country

though the proverbial language comes from Asante. Wax and non-wax prints in Ghana can be traced back to the famous Javanese batiks that came to West Africa through various ways such as European traders, particularly the Dutch from the seventeenth century or West African soldiers that served in Indonesia between 1810 and 1862. They are now produced in factories in Europe, Japan and several West African countries. Even though the wax and non-wax prints are machine-made, they have evolved from the indigenous hand-made textile industry of West Africa specifically the Akans of the Asante kingdom the centre of indigenous cloth production in Ghana.

Akan wax and non-wax clothing just like the Asante *Kente* is known for its colorful and distinctive designs. But few people take time to examine the symbolic significance of the Akan clothing. The wax and non-wax prints function as language or as a facilitator of the spoken or written word. Just as red stands for danger, among the Asante's, the messages one conveys in the print cloth one wears are likely to say something about one's identity, beliefs, or set of values. The wax and non-wax print cloths are also used indexically for religious themes, renowned individuals, historical occasions, popular songs and religious hymns, and everyday situations. They are also used to state proverbs and metaphors.

Some wax and non-wax prints combine written proverbs with visual forms to express certain Akan beliefs, values, and social relations. Sometimes it is simply the visual form on the cloth that elicits the spoken proverb. Besides using the surface of the cloth to convey messages, either through written or representational imagery, Asante woman's dress designers also shape the garment itself to convey some messages. The manner in which the cloth is worn can also be used for very expressive communication

Clothing and coiffure have close links to social status and identity of the Asante woman. The Asante woman's clothing consists of a top (*kaba*), a bottom wrap-around or long skirt (*asee ntoma*), and a middle piece (*finimfini or abosoo*) that may be used to carry a baby on the back by the child-bearing woman. The three pieces worn together signify the age or marital status of the woman. The top and the bottom pieces are worn by a young woman or teenager.

The following are some machine printed cloths that have these symbolic meanings.

1. *Ahweneepa nkasa* – From the proverb: *Ahwenee pa nkasa*. Literal translation: Precious beads make no noise. That is, empty barrels make the most noise. A good person needs not blow his/her own horns. This infers that any genuine person who is pretty does not talk much, does not have pride and has a good character. One does not boast of what she has or capable of doing. The motifs in one of the cloth samples have beads chained together on a strand supposedly at the waist of a beautiful woman representing the inner beauty and character of a woman of virtue. This cloth can be worn on several occasions depending on the color. The other sample has little fresh leaves and flowers connected to each other by stem strands forming a chain of green leaves and buds of flowers that depicts the silent beauty and resourceful life of the forest upon which nature depend on for survival. This reflects the same concept as the first sample that the resourcefulness of one is more profitable than the noise of empty barrels –un-resourceful person (Plate; 63).



Plate 63: shows two types of clothes are all referred to as *Ahweneepa nkasa* from http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm

2. *Owuo atwedee baako nfro* – Everyone will climb the ladder of death. “*Obiaa be wu*” is another name for this cloth. The main motifs in this cloth are ladders which indicate that every individual, no matter his or her achievements will die. The ladder represents the passage from life to death. This cloth also comes in various colors which can be worn on all occasion (see plate 64).



Plate 64: the concept of the adinkra symbol ‘*Owuo adwedee baako nfro*’ is used for this cloth from (http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

3. *Afie abusua twa wa, esini abontin su dee* – If someone close to you for instance a relative, hurts you, it’s more painful than when an outsider hurts you. The motifs represent many gravels, those which are compact represent the close relations whiles the ones apart represent outsiders (Plate; 65). This cloth can be worn occasionally depending on the colour.



Plate 65: shows the symbolic design of *Afie abusua twa wa, esini abontin su dee* from http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm

4. Duakoro gye mframa ebu – It literally means that a single tree cannot stand the force of the wind. Two heads are better than one. The motifs represent a forest life consisting of trees and birds. This particular color of cloth which comes in green and brown emphasizes vegetation. They also come in different colors which are worn occasionally.



Plate 66: showing the proverbial symbol *Duakoro gye mframa ebu* from http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm

5. Akɔdaa bɔ nwa na ɔmmɔ akyekyedeɛ – It literally means that a cough of a child can never be compared to that of an adult (referred to as tortoise). As a child, one has to do what is within one's strength and not assume the responsibility of an adult. The background design in this cloth represents the texture on the shell of the tortoise. There are also harmless insects and animals used as motifs, like the butterfly and the snail

floating in the cloth. They also come in different colors worn on several occasions (Plate 67).



Plate 67: shows the proverbial symbols *Akcdaa bc nwa na cmmc akyekyedee* from (http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

6. *Akyekyedee akyi* – It literally means the back of a tortoise.

The main motif in the cloth depicts the design at the back of a shell of a tortoise. The other motifs serve as background pattern that bind the main motif and the plain background. This cloth comes in different colors worn occasionally (Plate 68).

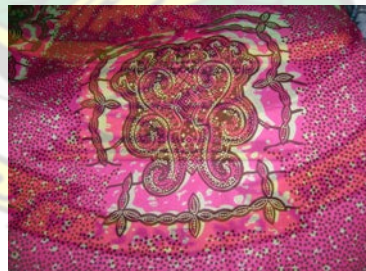


Plate 68: shows the proverbial symbol *Akyekyedee akyi* from (http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

7. *Wuni sika a, ntwaa block* – From the expression: *Wo nni sika wonntwa* blocks. Or, *Yebisa wo fie woasi, nnye wo sika dodo a wo wo.*

Literal translation: You do not build a block house if you do not have money. Or, we ask to be shown one's house, not how much wealth one has acquired. Meaning if you don't

have enough resources, you don't embark on a project that involves a lot of resources. The motifs are bricks laid on each other. From the research made so far, the common colors are this particular one and one made in blue-black and white (Plate 69).



Plate 69: showing the proverbial symbol *Wuni sika a, ntwā* block from (http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

8. *Anibere a enso gya* – Or, *Enye obiara a ne bo afu na omuna*.

Literal translation: No matter how flaming red one's eyes may be, fire is not sparked in one's eyes. Or, every frowned face does not necessarily depict anger. No matter how serious you are, your eyes can't spark fire. The motifs represent some features of the eye, which include eye lashes, eye veins and pupil within alternate squares. Another version is the cloth design on the right with alternating squares of red spots and diagonal blue lines also forming alternate squares within the entire design pattern. There are various colors of this cloth which can be worn on different occasions (Plate 70).

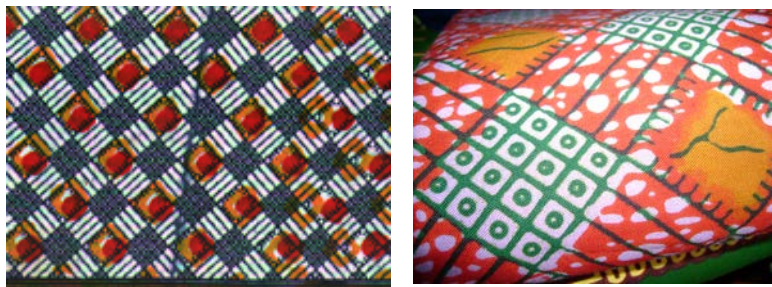


Plate 70: showing *Anibere a enso gya* cloth from (http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

9. *Kumi ne tu \ sika tu se anomaa* – From the maxim: *Sika tu se anommaa*.

Literal translation: Money flies like a bird. Money not properly handled will be lost. Bad investment decisions will cause one to lose one's money. If you have money and you don't spend it wisely, you will end up losing it all. The main design in the cloth is a bird and the other linear designs give the cloth an aesthetic appeal. The bird represents flight. This color is very common but are different colors worn depending on the occasion.

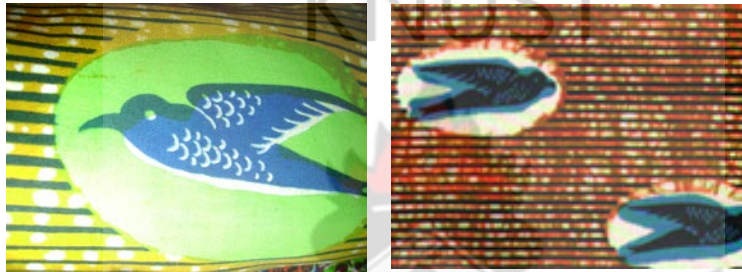


Plate 71: showing two types of *Kumi ne tu \ sika tu se anomaa* from (http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

10. *Okun pa* - good husband from the expression: *okun pa ho ye na*. Literal translation: a good husband is hard to come by. The motifs are rare leaves floating on a seer sucker background design. This particular color is common and it can be worn during funerals.

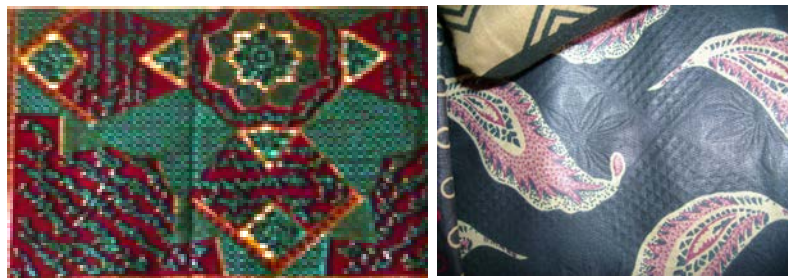


Plate 72: showing two types of *Okun pa* from (http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

11. Enyiwa – My lover should come and look at me. The main design in the cloth that has a philosophical meaning is the eye. It represents the sensory organ responsible for sight so the eye in the cloth is representing the eye of the lover. The other designs serve as background designs that bind the main design and the plain background. It comes in different colors worn on several occasions.



Plate 73: showing *Enyiwa* from
(http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

12. Odehyee Kyiniie – A royal Umbrella; Symbol of Authority, Legitimacy, Protection and Security from the Expression: *Nea Kyiniie Si Ne So Ne Ohene*.

Literal Translation: He who has an umbrella over his head is the king. The main motif of this cloth is the king's umbrella parceled with a ribbon at the tail end of the umbrella. This signifies leadership, authority and control of a head within a clan, family or a nation meant for people in the helm of affairs.



Plate 74: shows the main symbol of *Odehyee Kyinii* from (http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

13. *Nipa tire nye bofere* - the human mind is not like the papaya fruit From the proverb:
nipa tire nye bofere na yeapaa mu ahwe dea ewo mu.

Literal translation: the human mind is not like the *papaya* fruit to be split open to see what is on the inside. Meaning one cannot predict what one can do or who he/she is in the face of difficulty or pressure. Our elders say the mind of any human is full of darkness and this has been depicted with vertical pillars and an oval representing the human mind with black inlay in both the vertical and the oval forms arranged over a pink background.



Plate 75: shows the cloth design *Nipa tire nye bofere* from (http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

14. Nkrumah pencil Literal translation: Nkrumah's pencil, meaning the pencil of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. From 1958 to about 1964, Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana had a penchant to use his pen to sign deportation and detention orders as a method

of controlling political opponents. Some political opponents had resorted to violence and several unsuccessful attempts were made on his life by his political opponents. His pen was, therefore, considered mightier than the sword. This cloth was named Nkrumah pencil (or Nkrumah pen) to obliquely reflect the political reality of those times.

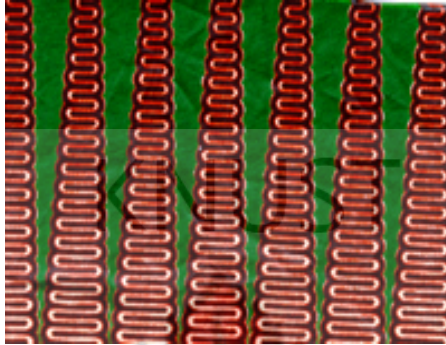


Plate 76: showing the design Nkrumah pencil from
(http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

15. *Ano hunu* – Empty barrels make the most noise. The motifs in this cloth relates to nature because it has a star, leaves and the design of waves of the sea.



Plate 77: showing the cloth design *Ano hunu* from
(http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

16. *Yaw Donko* – This cloth was named after *Yaw Donko* the designer and a former employee at Ghana Textile Prints (GTP) who died in the 1960s in the process of making

the cloth. Though there are motifs in the cloth no one has any idea why the late *Yaw Donko* chose those motifs.



Plate 78: showing the cloth design *Yaw Donko*- from
(http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

Of all clans' totems, it is only the *Oyoko* clan that has its totem printed into a fabric. This fabric is called *Ohene ko nkran*. There are two main versions of this cloth, the red one is for funerals and the white one for other occasions. The main design in both cloths, are an umbrella with two elephants underneath it and a falcon sitting on a traditional stool below the elephants. These are surrounded by smaller traditional stools. Much information was not received on why these motifs were used in the making of this cloth.



Plate 79: showing the cloth design *Ohene ko nkran*- from
(http://www.africawithin.com/akan/akan_cloths1.htm)

Asante *Kente* cloths as a symbol and some motifs used in *Kente*

4.8 Asante *Kente* cloths

The *Kente* cloth is woven on a narrow horizontal loom. The cloth is woven in narrow strips (called *ntomaban*) that are about 3-5 centimeters wide and about 2-3 yards long. Several strips are sewn together to make a wider piece of cloth for both men and women. A man's cloth may contain up to 24 strips and measure about 2x2.7 yards. The woman's two-piece cloth may contain 8-12 strips in each piece. The largest known *Kente* cloth, measuring about 4X7 yards, is the piece Ghana presented to the United Nations in 1960. This cloth is called *tikoro nko agyina* - one head does not constitute a council; from (http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/kentecloth_samples.html- website).

The Asante weaver refers to *kente* as *nwentoma* (woven cloth) to distinguish it from the factory-made cloth (*ntoma*) and the *adinkra* cloth that is stamped (*ntiamu ntoma*) by the block-print technique. The *nwentoma* is of various categories: *ahwepan* (plain weave); *topreko* (plain weave with simple weft inlays); and *faprenu* (double weave technique that covers the warp threads); from the book *Asante Kente*-by *Asmah*-(2006)

According to Robinson (1973: 122) a design depends both on the weave of the fabric and the arrangement of the warp and the weft yarns. The warp threads of Asante *Kente* are laid in such fashion to give a name and meaning to the cloth. At the same time, the weft designs or motifs are each given a name and meaning. The names and meanings reflect Asante and other Akan beliefs, historical events, social and political organization in the Akan society, or may be named after all manner of people. Hundreds of designs have

been introduced but the fact remains that the designs are very intricate and therefore not even the machines of the twentieth century technology have been able to weave one.

Basically the various patterns in the *Kente* cloth can be conveniently divided into four groups.

- *Babadua* group
- *Nwɔto* (*nwotua*) group
- *ɛkyɛm* (*Achem*) group
- *Adwin* group

These patterns are produced mainly with the *Asanan* heddles.

Babadua

There are four types of *babadua* patterns. These are:

- *Babadua hene*
- *Babadua dɔnkɔ*
- *Ama Serwa*
- *ɔbuɔ fa-dadaɛ fa*

The *babadua* pattern is an all shuttle, all *asanan* weave made up of the combination of blue or green, red, yellow and black with the usual small white strips which separate one pattern from the other, all in a horizontal line order. It is the most colorful artistic aspect of the *Kente* cloth. The *babaduahene* is always designed on the selvedge called *Kyeretire* in Asante (literally known as head) and is made up of the following combination of colors red, blue, yellow and black or red, green, yellow and black.

Babadua *ḍnkɔ* is composed of yellow, red and green and appears in “*Nnua Ntoma*” (*Kente* cloth with plain weave originally produced for only slaves). *Ama Serwa babadua* is also made up of a combination of *babadua* and *nwɔtoa* patterns a distinguish feature that first appeared in the first woven cloth for the queen mother *Nana Ama Serwa*.

ɔbuɔfa – dadeɛ fa babadua cloth earned its name from the fact that part of the pattern has a black strip followed immediately by a strip of green. The black represents the iron while the green represents the stone that signifies the labour of a farmer. The name *babadua* was borrowed from a plant, which resembles the bamboo branch in all respects which symbolizes firmness. (Iddan, 1980)

The plant is traditionally used for the construction of fences, thatch roof frames and gates at the divinities shrine. It is also used in house construction. The horizontal arrangement of traditional *babadua* sticks on deities shrine gate resemble *babadua* hence the similarity in the name. The use of this motif at the edge of the woven cloth gives tensile strength to the cloth and prevents unraveling or fraying. This is a technical innovation in Asante weaving (Iddan of Centre for National Culture, Kumasi, 1980).

In the past, before an *asafo* (the militia) went to war, it is said that a pile of *babadua* was placed on top of a dug-out for a number of the *asafo* members to stand on the pile as an oracle to determine whether they have enough fighting men. If the pile did not break, then it signified that they had enough fighting men. If it did break then it signified that there were not enough men to fight and so more men needed to be employed to fight (Agya Badu of *Bonwire*, 2000). *Babadua* was used in constructing barricades during war,

because it was particularly strong and resilient. *Babadua* is therefore a symbol of strength, toughness, firmness, resiliency, power and superiority

When silk or rayon threads are used in weaving the pattern it is called *Babadua*. When cotton is used the pattern is known as “*BANKUO*” (Agya Badu of *Bonwire*, 2000). Nowadays, this distinction is not made because whether cotton or silk it is still known as *Babadua* (See examples in Plate 80). In view of these ideas, a person who wears a *babadua* cloth seems to portray that he is strong, tough, resilient and superior to his fellow men. However, the wearer of the cloth may not know that his cloth is communicating these manly qualities to observers. It is only those who know the meaning of the *babadua* cloth that understand the language of the cloth.



Plate 80: Various types of *Babadua*- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah- 2006 unpublished

***Nwotoa* (snail shell)**

The *nwotoa* pattern is stereotyped. That is, it has no variation either in the number and type of colors or in the arrangement of colors. The traditional colors are red and yellow which interchange in a very attractive manner. (Plate 81) The *Nwotoa* design always runs alongside the *babadua* pattern at the selvedge alongside (*Kyeretie*) of the *Kente* cloth. It can also sometimes be found in the main body of the *Kente* cloth.

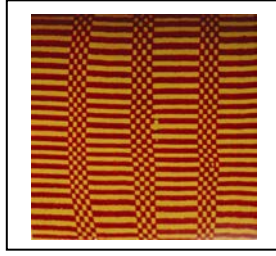


Plate 81: *Nwotua*- from the catalogue of cultures
by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

***ɛkyem* (shields)**

The *ɛkyem* pattern somewhat resembles the *nwotoa* pattern in both appearance and arrangement. A careful observer can however notice the difference after a second look. The difference lies in the fact that whereas the *nwotoa* pattern completely envelopes the entire warp threads in the area, the *ɛkyem* pattern covers only part of the warp thread.

Besides, the *ɛkyem* pattern can be made to comprise not only of the traditional *nwotoa* colours of red and yellow but also any other colors such as green, blue, black and even purple. (Below are some examples of *ɛkyem* patterns in Plate 82). When an *ɛkyem* pattern is produced by operating an *asanan* heddle followed by the operation of a single *asatia* heddle in that order then the pattern is known as “*ɛkyem to preko*”. But when the pattern is produced by operating an *asanan* heddle followed by the operation of the two *asatia* heddles in succession then the pattern is known as “*ɛkyem to prenu*”

There are three types of *ɛkyem*.

- *Babadua ɛkyem* or *babadua Ama Serwaa(ɛkyem)*

- *ɛkyɛm hunu*
- *ɛkyɛm sika*

ɛkyɛm sika is deployed at the beginning and the end of the strip of *Kente*. *Babadua ɛkyɛm* is woven as an imitation of *babadua*. The *ɛkyɛm hunu* is the plain *ɛkyɛm* and *ɛkyɛm Ama Serwa* is an imitation of the *babadua Ama Serwaa* (Iddan of Centre for National Culture, Kumasi, 1980).

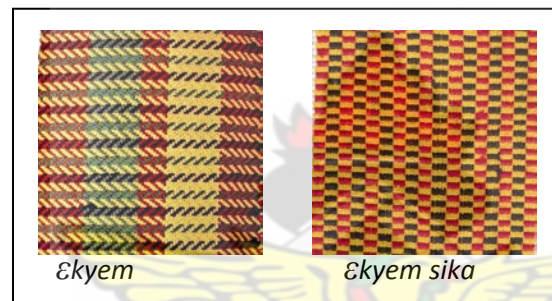


Plate 82: *ɛkyɛm* designs- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* - 2006 unpublished

Adwin or edwin

The *adwin* group contains by far the largest number of patterns in the *Kente* cloth. These patterns are said to be the most difficult to weave. The pattern is completely filled with weft floats that almost cover all the warp threads. The elegance of the pattern lies in the skillful use of several wefts to fill up the warp threads. This level of perfection is associated with the master weaver and the pattern, in the past, was worn by the royalty.

Below is a list of some of the outstanding patterns. (See Plate 83 for some examples)

- *Nkwadum Asa*
- *Nkyemfre*
- *Apremo*
- *Fa hia Kɔtwere Agyeman*
- *Nkyimkyim*
- *Nsatia*
- *Kaw*
- *Kaw mframa-Dan*
- *Ntabon*
- *Chene aforu-hyen*
- *Mpua akron*
- *Mpua num*
- *Mpua Akyerema nsa*
- *ɔhene Akanfo*
- *Mampam se*
- *Onanka tiri*
- *Abusua Kuruwa*
- *Amaku wɔ*
- *Sekan Moa*



The word *adwin* means design and rightly has this enviable name, for of all the patterns in the *Kente* cloth the *adwins* are the only ones which the weaver actually creates with his fingers instead of using the shuttle.



Plate 83: Various types of Adwin- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

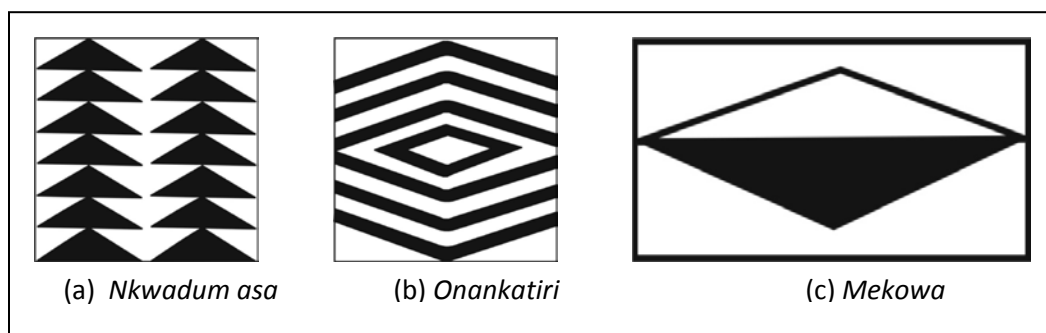


Fig. 76: Various types of Adwin in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

4.8.1 Colour as a symbol in *Kente*

In the early years before the introduction of coloured yarns, previously the known yarn in use in *Bonwire* was white yarn, since the industry had to spin its own white cotton for weaving. Later, other colors such as gold color, red color and black were rapped from *dua sika*, *dubuma* and *kasee* respectively. Also *dua broni* is a typical example of a tree bark, which gave a yellow color for the white yarn; *Antubam*, *Kofi* (1963).

Later, during the trans-Saharan trade, the weavers in *Bonwire* untied the strands of a scarf known as “*edabcwo*” and used them as yarns for weaving. Other colours now derived include blue, pink, violet and green, literally known as *kua*, *nsankane*, *kobre*, and *apotobibri* respectively. The Asante community relates the understanding of colour to their everyday life and nature. For example

Red

The red colour literally known as *keckcc* or *kccgyan* symbolizes blood that flows through humans and also seriousness in the people’s everyday life. The concept of the red colour in the *Kente* industry is interpreted as life as anyone with blood flowing in him/her has life and hence there is a sort of seriousness in the life of *Kente* wearers.

Yellow/Gold

The yellow colour in the *Kente* fabric industry depicts the wealth and rich culture of Asante. Gold stands for royalty, the presence and influence of God in society and the rule of the king. It also symbolizes continuous life, warmth and controlled fire *Antubam*, *Kofi* (1963). This is reflected in the colour of the Ashanti flag being yellow, gold, black and green. Like the yellow colour in *Kente*, the yellow in the flag depicts the wealth of Asante. An example is the “*sika*

futuro” fabric with yellow dominating it. In the natural phenomenon yellow is represented by chicken fat or gold dust and the wearer of such cloth is expected to depict such traits.

Green

Green in the natural sense represents the evergreen forest of Asante where nature depends on it for its sustenance. Philosophically the green represents newness, vitality, fertility, and primness in growth *Antubam, Kofi* (1963).

Black

Black in association with life refers to the vice or negative aspect of man. Black is synonymous with sadness, old age, sorrow, grief, deep feelings of melancholy or even anger, violence and death *Antubam, Kofi* (1963).. Since these traits are part of human existence, man must endure or face them with inner strength to overcome them. The philosophy that it portrays, gives an indication of the painful departure in death; it is therefore not surprising that black cloths are normally used for funeral ceremonies.

White

White in association with nature symbolizes white cotton, egg shell, white clay (kaolin) and the spiritual entities such as God and the deified spirits of the ancestors. It also represents the purity of life and the joy life brings to man. Philosophically it represents the boundary between two worlds thus the spirit and the human world. It represents a transition and it takes the purity of the soul to be able to see the two worlds at the same time *Antubam, Kofi* (1963).

Therefore the purity of the soul is represented by the white color. It is for this reason that traditionally the beginning of any Kente unit design is expected to start with white and end with white, which is an indication that true life is born out of innocence, purity and love.

This can be supported with the fact that in Ghana a new born baby is out-dressed in a white cloth and the death of the aged is celebrated with white cloths by siblings of the aged. It is at this time of funeral celebration that white cloths are worn to bid farewell to the dead.

Blue

Blue in nature is associated with the colour of the sky and it symbolizes love, female tenderness, serene appearance and the rule of a queen. Psychologically it gives a sense of care, tenderness, peace and dignity. *Kente* designed with a massive blue colour reflects the dignity, tenderness and love that one exhibits (Iddan, Centre for National Culture Kumasi-1980).

Other colours

Other coloured yarns, now in use, include cream, pink, violet and lemon. These are not traditional colours but they also play a part in *Kente* weaving designs and they also represent diversity in human character and life desires.

4.8.2 Naming of *Kente* a symbolic entity

The naming of *Kente* can be grouped in three categories. They are

Influence by color

Types of unit designs and strip combination used

Events, Proverbial sayings, Personalities and clan

4.8.3 The influence of color in the naming of *Kente* cloth

Colour as a symbol plays an important role in the naming of *Kente* cloths. An example is the *sika futuro* cloth, which is basically golden yellow both in warp and weft creation. It is interpreted as a symbol of family relations, responsibility and hard work. In the Asante and other Akan extended family system, the attraction of financial success to blood relations can sometimes be overwhelming.

The next example is *Oyokoman* which is basically identified by the background colours comprising red, yellow and green. The third example is *Mmɛɛda* also identified by the background colour of broader strips of blue and tiny strips of white. (See examples in Plate 61). The symbolism is expressed in the name they bare as a result of the colours and its arrangement used for its production.



Plate 84: Some of the cloths influenced and identified by its colour – *from the catalogue of cultures* by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

4.8.4 Types of unit designs and strip combination used

Basically, the philosophical character of the fabric woven has a direct bearing on the unit of the design used for the body of the cloth; and this in turn determines the name of the *Kente* fabric. An

example is *Akyempem* where the body of the cloth comprises the *mpuanum* unit design. When *nkyimkyim* unit designs is added to the same body of the *akyempem* cloth the name changes to *Fatia Fata Nkrumah*. In 1958, Helena Ritz Fathia, an Egyptian Coptic and relative of President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt was married to Dr. *Kwame Nkrumah* the first Prime Minister and later President of Ghana in March 6, 1957, after ten years of campaigning for Ghanaian independence (Plate 85).

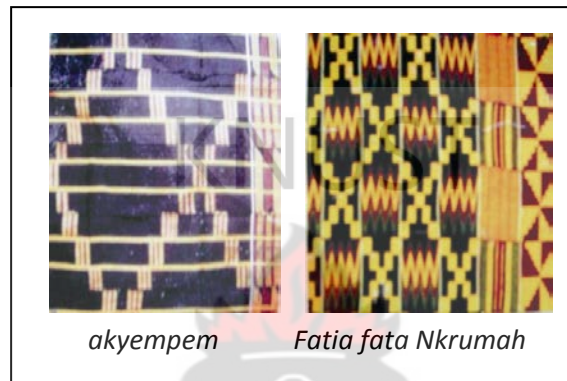


Plate 85: Examples of cloth that is named after the pattern -
from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006
unpublished

Other examples are the creation of *Adwinasa* which has its body comprising almost all the unit designs in combination with plain weave. Unlike the *Adwini si Adwini so* which has no plain weave and the creation is solely done by picking using the *asanan* heddles. (See Plate 86)

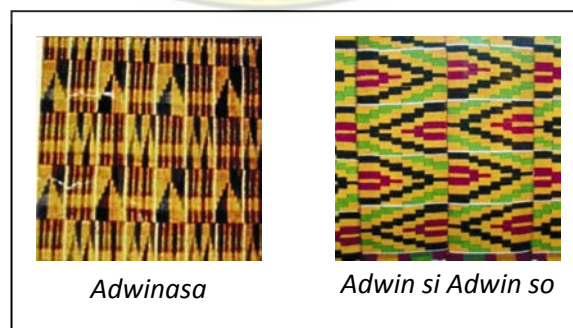


Plate 86: Examples of cloth that is named after the pattern
- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006
unpublished

4.8.5 Events, Proverbial, Personalities and Clan

(i) Event

Naming of *Kente* can be associated with events. An example is the *Ohene aforo hyen*, (literally meaning, the king has boarded the ship). This was an event where the then King of Asante *Nana Prempeh I* (1888-1931) was taken to Seychelles Island after his capture by the British colonial masters in 1888 (*Osei*, 2002: 157). (Plate 87 below)

Another example is *Daakye ye siree* literally meaning joy will definitely come after long suffering which was named after the event when President Kuffour came into power after long years in opposition. Ghana was in search of a leader that could transform a revolutionary establishment into a progressive, forward in match with the political, economic and social advancement. Ghanaians therefore abandoned the old establishment for a new one by voting President Kuffour into power in the December 2000 elections. Upon his assumption into office he was presented with a sample of this cloth- *Daakye ye siree*. President John Agyekum Kufuor, came into office with academic credentials and experiences unmatched in Ghana's History (<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features>).



Plate 87: A cloth named after an event (the embarkment of king *Prempeh I* of a ship bound for Seychelles) - from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

(ii) Proverbial

Proverbs are also used in naming. Examples are;

Papa ye nko ekyiri literally meaning good deeds are often forgotten with time. In other words, people remember bad deeds rather than the good deeds because of the emotional hurt it brings to the individual. (See Plate 88)

Boafo ye na literally means helpers are scarce. In other words ,in times of hardship and difficulties lack of resources do not enable people to offer a helping hand, simply because the compassion one need to forgo his/her asset in order to help one in need is absent.



Plate 88: Proverbially named cloth- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006

Wu foro dua pa a na ye pia wo; this literally means a person is always helped when his deeds are beneficial to another party thus to the individual and the community as a whole. (Plate 88 above)

Another name of a motif is *ɔbaakofoɔ mmu man* - One person does not rule a nation. This is a symbol of participatory democracy, warning against dictatorial rule, and plurality of ideas embodied in the proverb: *ɔbakofɔ mmu ɔman*. (Literal translation: one person does not rule a

nation.) this belief of Asantes, and other Akans is that democratic rule requires consultation, open discussion, consensus building, and coalition formation. The use of the queen mother as a co-ruler and the council of state or council of elders are examples of Asante forms of participatory democracy symbolized by the design of a cloth whose picture is shown below.

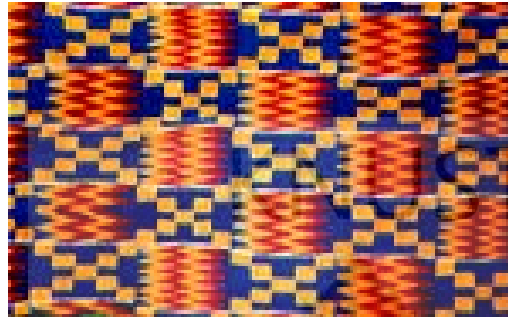


Plate 89: Name derived from the Proverb *Obaakofoo mmu man*- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006

(iii) Personalities

Kente is sometimes named after great personalities. Examples are *Fatia fata Nkrumah* literally meaning *Fatia* befits *Nkrumah*. *Fatia* was the wife of Dr. *Kwame Nkrumah*, the first president of Ghana and because of her extraordinary beauty and position as the first lady this particular *Kente* as shown in Plate 90 was named after her. This cloth is a Symbol of marital relationships, unity, participatory democracy, and warning against dictatorial rule this cloth commemorates the marriage between Kwame Nkrumah and *Fathia* of Egypt. *Nkrumah* was the first prime minister and president of Ghana. As Nkrumah sought to promote continental African unity, he married an Egyptian as a gesture of his desire to unite the Arab North Africa and the black sub-Saharan Africa. The marriage was not only between two individuals, but was also a marriage between nations.

When *Nkrumah's* government was overthrown by the military in 1966, the cloth's name was changed back to its original name of *obaakofo mmu oman* - one person does not rule a nation as a metaphorical comment on his dictatorial rule. As Nkrumah's legacy is being rehabilitated, it is now more popular to hear people refer to the cloth as *Fathia fata Nkrumah*



Plate 90: A personality named cloth- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006 unpublished

There is another cloth called *Ohemaa aba Ghana*; (literally meaning the queen has come to Ghana) referring to the first visit of Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain. Due to her position and influence among the commonwealth countries, this *Kente* was named after her. *Kuffour yere* is a cloth named after the wife of *Kuffour*, Mrs. Theresa *Kuffour* because of her personality as the first lady of Ghana.

(iv) Cloths named after Clans and Emblems

Sample 1

Oyokoman; this refers to the clan of *Oyoko* from which the kings of Asante come. Due to the importance of this clan in the Asante kingdom, the cloth in Plate 68 was named after it.



Plate 91: *Oyokoman*, Name derived from a clan called name *Oyoko*- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006

Sample 2

Name of motif: *Oyokoman na gya da mu*

Interpretation: – literally meaning there is crisis in the *oyoko* nation

This cloth is a symbol of internal conflicts, warning against internal strife, need for unity in diversity and reconciliation. The name of this cloth commemorates a civil war between two factions of the *Oyoko* royal family, after the death of *King Osei Tutu*, the founder of the Asante Kingdom. One faction was headed by *Opoku Ware* who later became the successor in 1720 and the other by *Dako*.

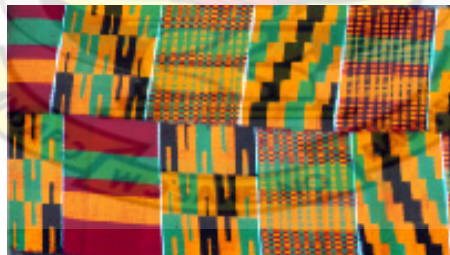


Plate 92: Name derived from Clan and Event- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006 unpublished

4.8.6 Motifs, and their symbolic meanings

Sample 1

Name of motif: *Afafanto*

Interpretation: literally meaning a butterfly. It tenderly and gracefully flutters round the palm wine pot but cannot drink any. The qualities of the butterfly are depicted in the *Kente* motif, portraying the tenderness, gracefulness, self control and beauty of butterflies. (See Fig. 77 and Plate 93)

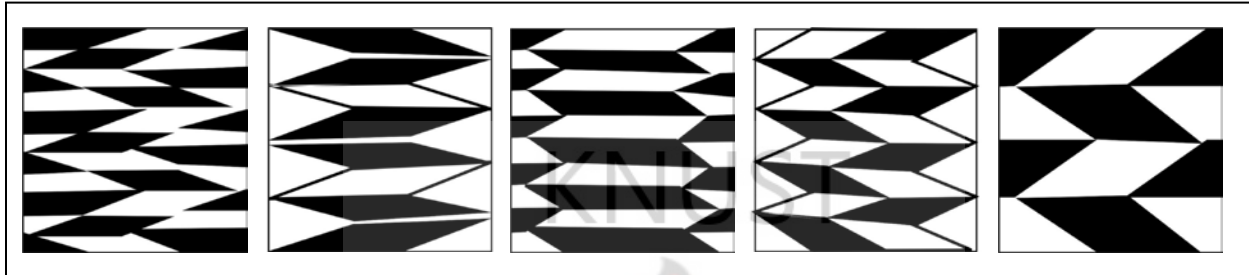


Fig. 77: some *Afafanto* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures
by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

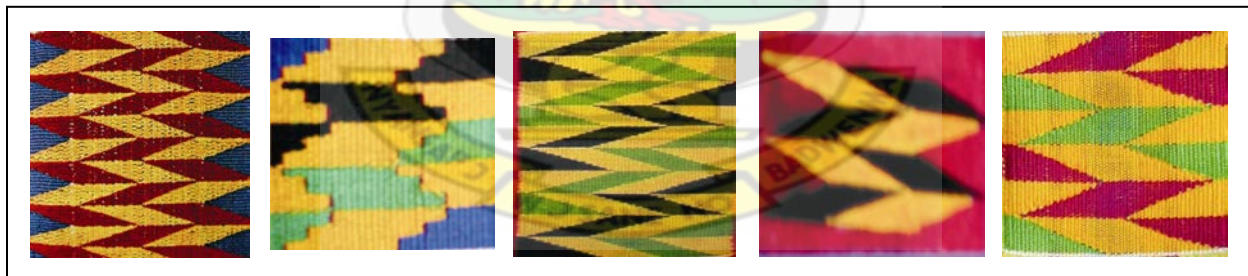


Plate 93: *Afafanto* motifs in colour- from the catalogue of cultures
by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 2

Name of motif: *Nkyimkyim*

Interpretation: meaning zigzag, life is not always smooth as a straight line. Prudent living is a balance between a zig and a zag hence the symbol of a zigzag in *Kente*. (See Fig. 78 and Plate 94)



Fig. 78: *Nkyimkyim* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

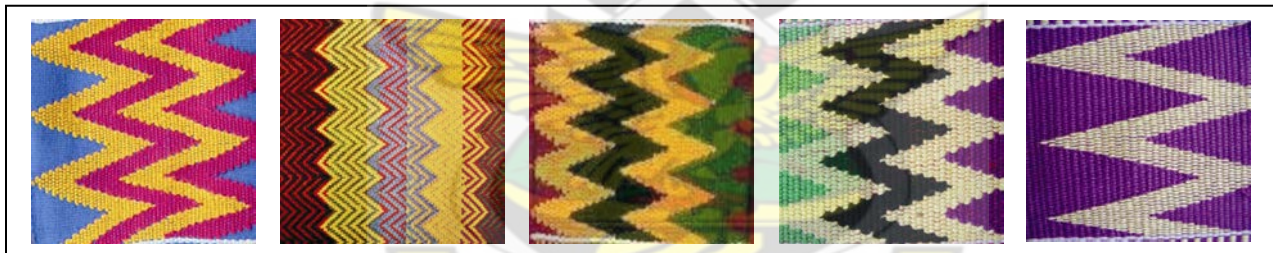


Plate 94: *Nkyimkyim* motifs in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006 unpublished

Sample 3

Name of motif: *Nkyemfre*

Interpretation: literally meaning a pot shed. A broken pot is still useful in other ways; an example is those for medicinal purposes. A pot shed also reminds the society of its past thus history, recycle ability and healing. (See Fig. 79 and Plate 95) Symbol of experience, knowledge,

service, antiquity, time, heirloom, and rarity from the proverb: *nkyemfere se odaa ho akye, na onipa a onwene no nso nye den?*

Literal translation: the potsherd claims it has been around from time immemorial; what about the potter who molded it?

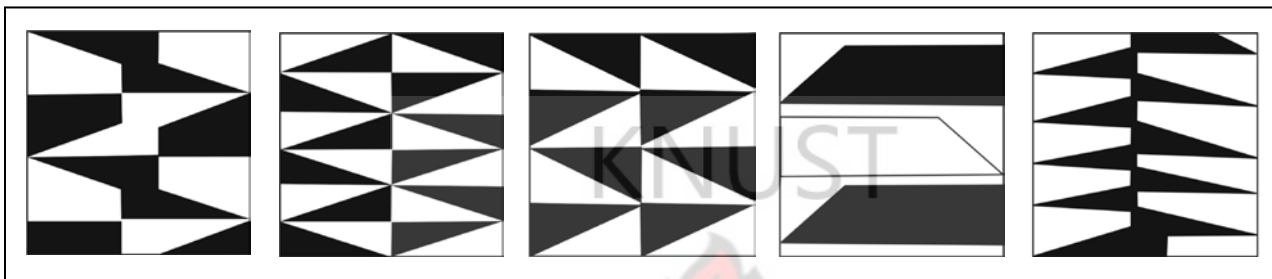


Fig. 79: *Nkyemfre* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished



Plate 95: *Nkyemfre* motifs in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006 unpublished

Sample 4

Name of motif: *Asennua or cross*

Interpretation: it symbolizes two aspects of life; the female and male essence of life, crossroads in life situations and cooperation. It also depicts the crucifix. (See Fig 80)

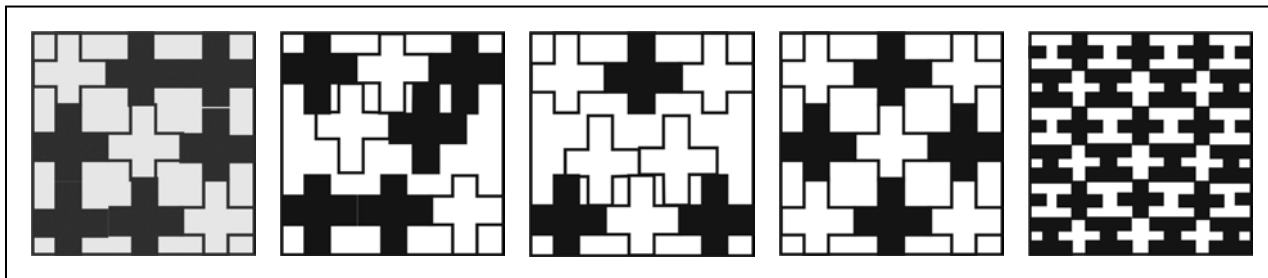


Fig. 80: Cross motifs in Black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* -2006 unpublished

Sample 5

Name of motif: *Afa*

Interpretation: this is known as the bellow used by blacksmith. It is very vital to the smith's efficiency. The smith, the fire and the bellow need each other for success. The *afa* therefore symbolizes cooperation, efficiency and industry. (See Fig 81 and Plate 96)

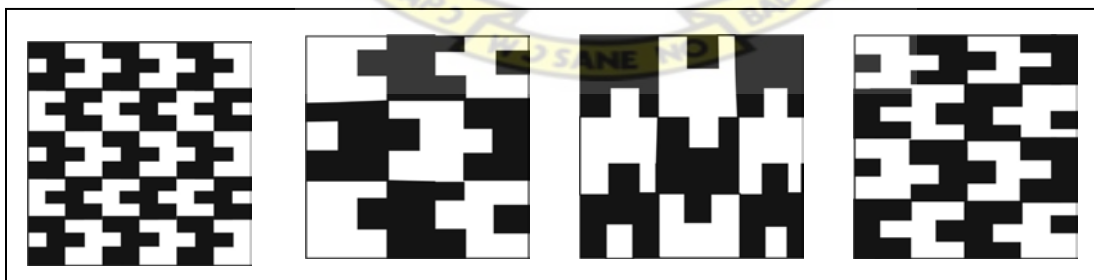


Fig. 81: *Afa* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished



Plate 96: *Afa* motif in colour- *from the catalogue of cultures* by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 6

Name of motif: *Sekan*

Interpretation: Inspired by the practical utility of knives. Symbolizing; practicality, efficiency, productivity and craftsmanship. This also symbolizes the sharpness of the mind. (See Plate 97)

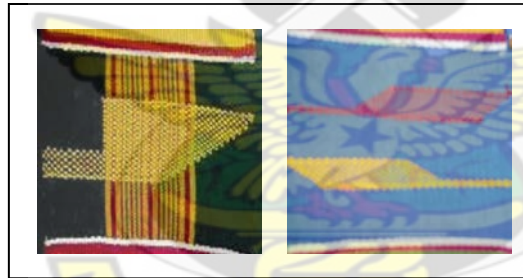


Plate 97: *Sekan* motifs in colour- *from the catalogue of cultures* by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 7

Name of motif: *Apremuo*

Interpretation: literally means cannons. This symbolizes the defense and history of Ashanti's resistance against European colonial wars (shown in Fig 82 and Plate 98).

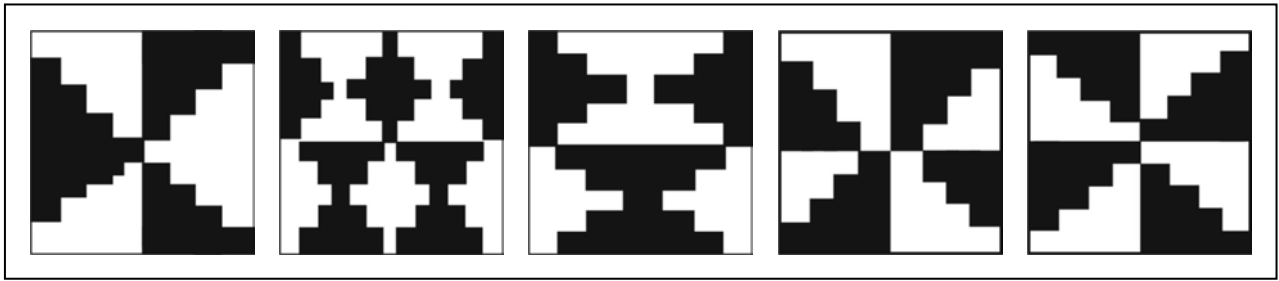


Fig. 82: *Apremuo motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished*

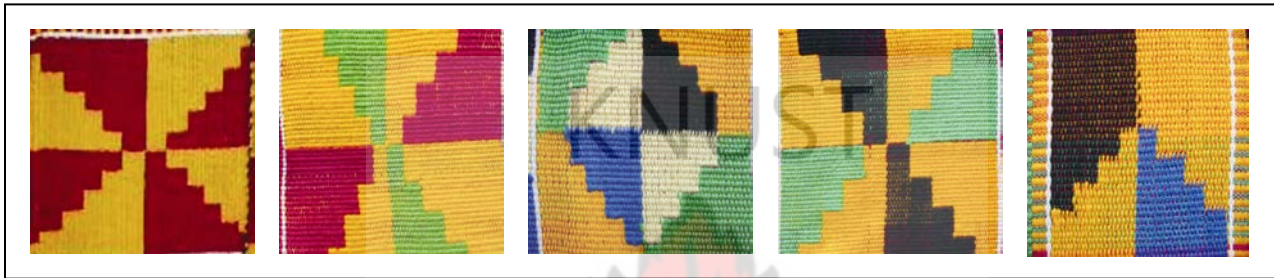


Plate 98: *Apremu motifs in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished*

Sample 8

Name of motif: *Fa hia kotwere Agyeman*

Interpretation: literally meaning lean your poverty on *agyeman*. This symbolizes; hope faith, sharing and benevolence (Shown in Fig. 83 and Plate 99). Some people have interpreted the meaning of this motif in such manner suggesting that there was a particular *Asantehene* (king of the Asante Empire) called *agyeman* who was so benevolent that he took care of the poor. *agyeman* is an appellation of every *Asantehene*, and benevolence is socially expected of every *Asantehene* hence, the benevolence of the king is also indicated by the expression *esen kese a ogye adidi dodoo* - the big pot that feeds many.

This motif rather represents the rise of the bureaucracy in Asante in the 19th century. Several men chose to serve in the king's court rather than stay poor as village farmers. Very soon some of these bureaucrats in the king's court became rich to the extent that some were vying for stool positions. There is another *Kente* cloth called *wonya wo ho a, wonye dehyee* - you may be rich, but you are not a royal, which puts these pretenders to the stool in their proper place.



Fig. 83; *Fa hia kotweere Agyemang* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

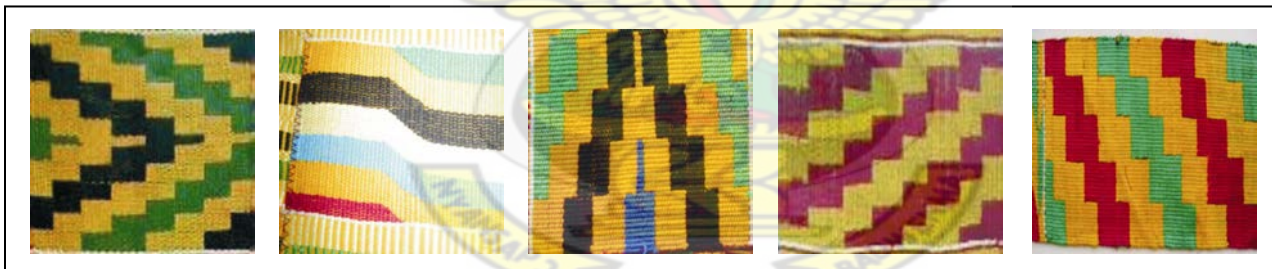


Plate 99: *Fa hia kotweere Agyemang* motifs in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 9

Name of motif: *Akwadum asa*

Interpretation: an interpretation of empty gun powder pouch. According to *Agya Kankam*, 2006 it symbolizes emergency, critical need, resourcefulness and perseverance. (Fig. 84 and Plate 100)

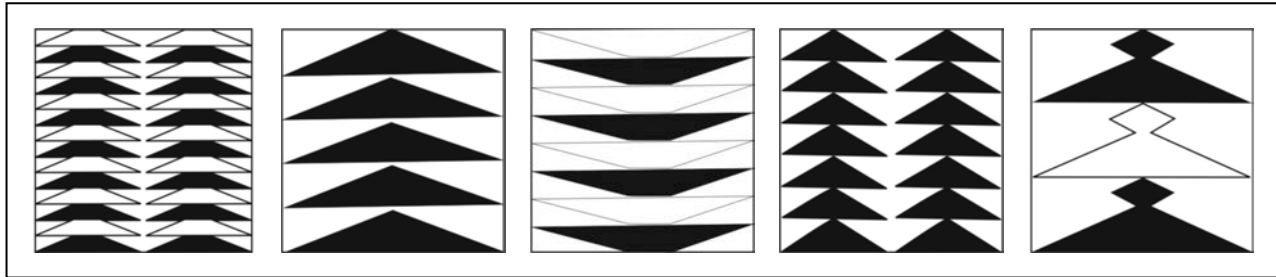


Fig. 84: *Akwadum asa* motifs in black and white- *from the catalogue of cultures* by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

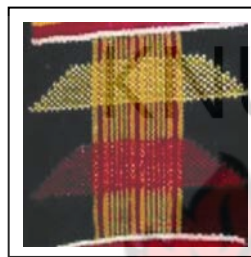


Plate 100: *Akwadum asa* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 10

Name of motif: *Ntabon*

Interpretation: literally meaning paddle. The name was inspired by the practical utility of paddle. A boat can only move by a united action of oarsmen. The *ntabon* symbolizes unity, perseverance, and achievement. (See Fig. 85 and Plate 101)

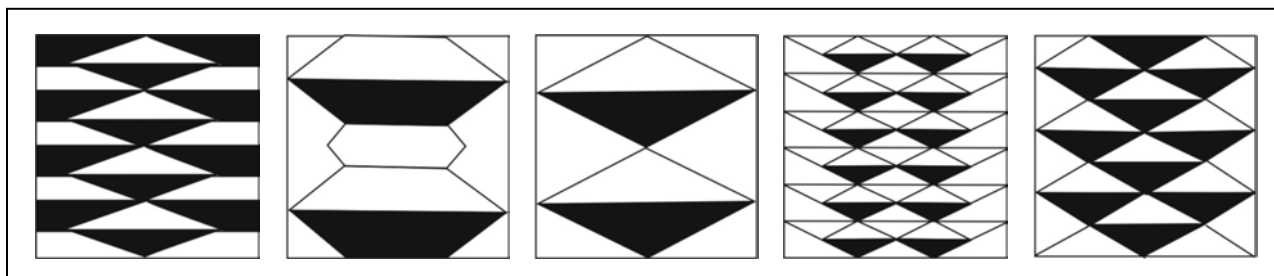


Fig. 85: *Ntabon* motifs in black and white- *from the catalogue of cultures* by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

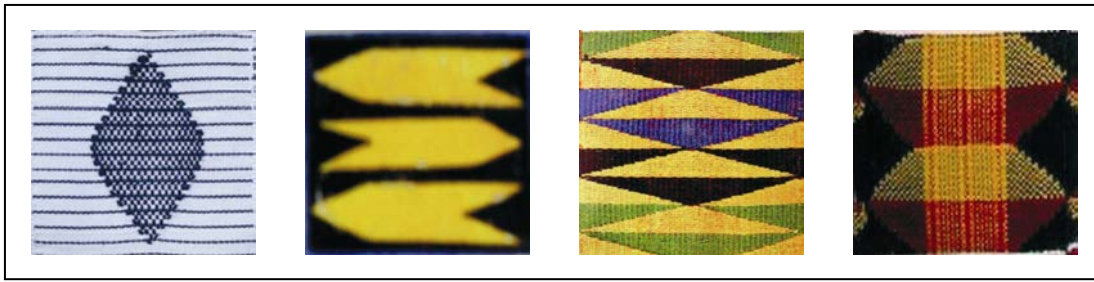


Plate 101: *Ntabon* motifs in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 11

Name of motif: *Mpaboa*

Interpretation: has the resemblance of wooden bathroom sandals designed for chiefs during the olden days hence the name *mpaboa*. (See Fig. 86)



Fig. 86: *Mpaboa* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 12

Name of motif: *Kaw*

Interpretation: this is a symbol of a centipede. Inspired by its physical characteristics and its numerous legs symbolizes; uniqueness. (Fig. 87 and Plate 102)

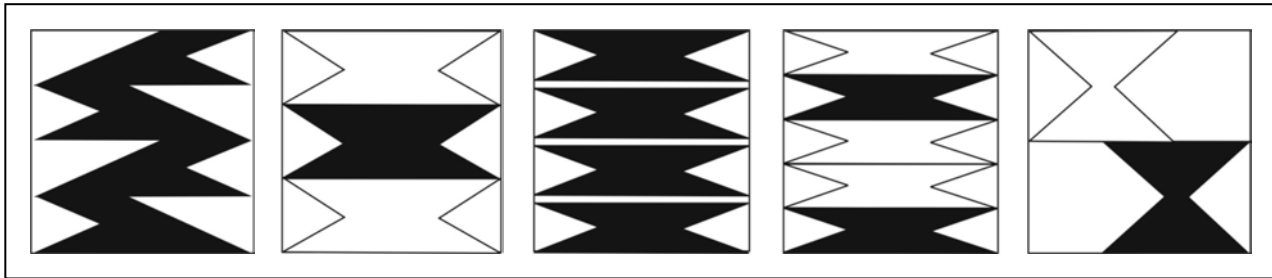


Fig. 87: *Kaw* motifs in Black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished



Plate 102: *Kaw* motifs in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 13

Name of motif: Ekye

Interpretation: means a hat and inspired by the social uses of hats. There is a saying that the knee never takes the hat when the head is present. It symbolizes; status and responsibility. (Fig.

88 and Plate 103)

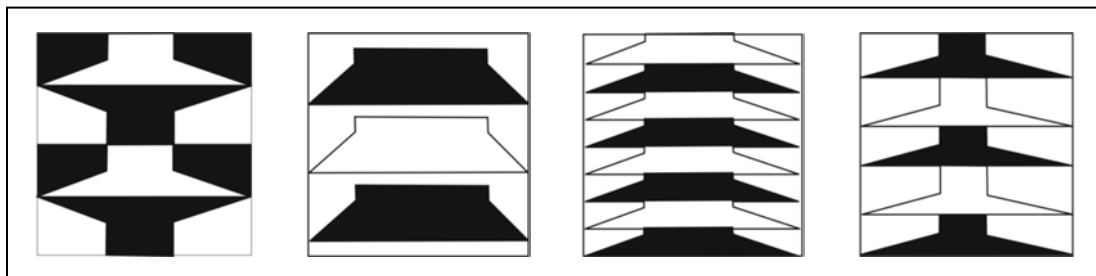


Fig. 88: *Ekye* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished



Plate 103: *Ekye* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 14

Name of motif: *Akyekyedia akyi*

Interpretation: it literally refers to the back of a tortoise probably inspired by the image of diamond seen at the back of the tortoise hence the name of the motif. (Fig. 89 and Plate 104)

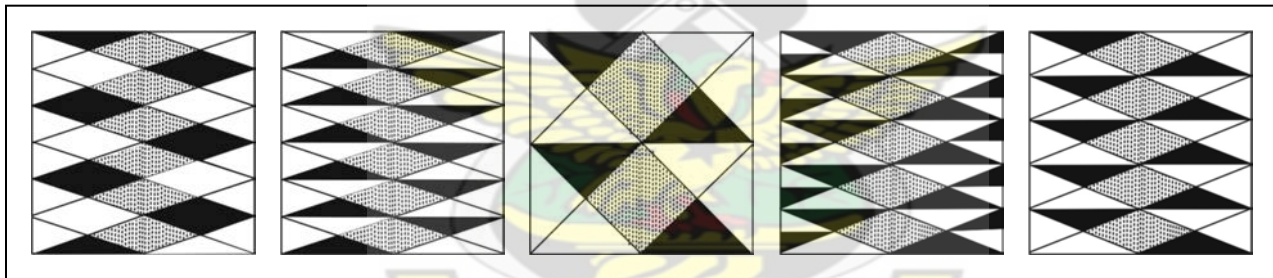


Fig. 89: *Akyekyedia akyi* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished



Plate 104: *Akyekyedia akyi* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 15

Name of motif: *Nserewa*

Interpretation: the shape looks like a formation of chained beads or cowries

used by fetish around their arms and ankles hence the name *Nserewa*. (See Fig. 90)

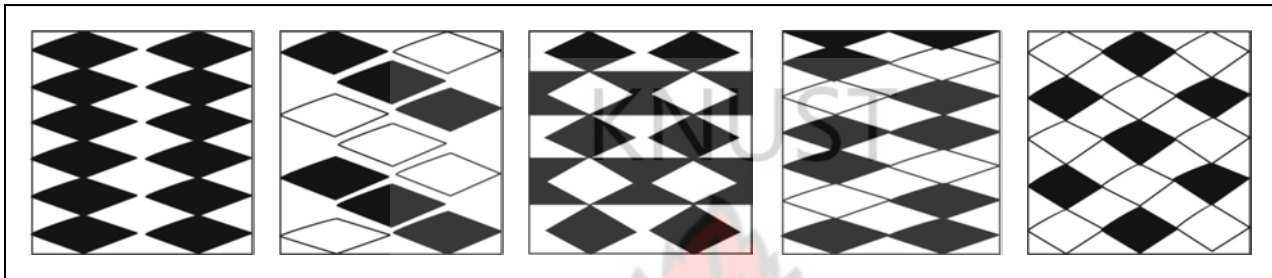


Fig. 90: *Nserewa* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 16

Name of motif: *Sika mpaboa*

Interpretation: the motif is derived from the top of the native sandals normally worn by royals and chiefs of Ashanti hence the name *Sika mpaboa*. (See Fig. 91)

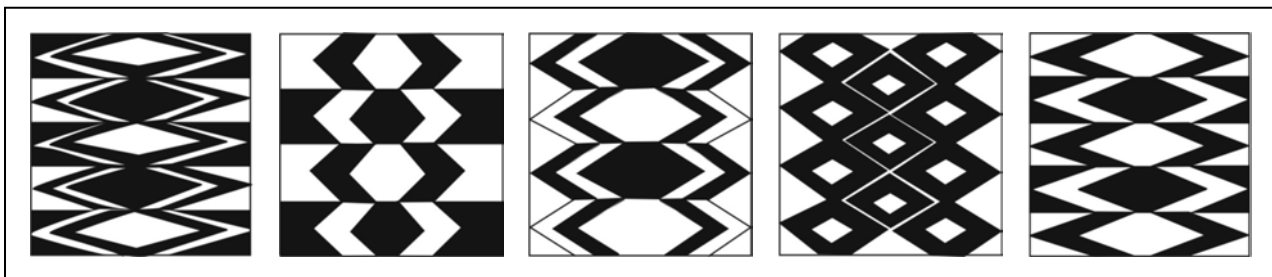


Fig. 91: *Sika Mpaboa* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 17

Name of motif: *Atweremansa*

Interpretation: represents three heavenly stars. A set of three things symbolizes; wholeness, perfection, love and affection. A star symbolizes female aspect of life and cosmic. (Refer to Plate 105)

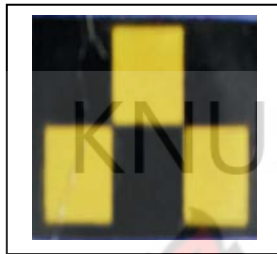


Plate 105: *Atweremansa* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 18

Name of motif: *Mpuannum*

Interpretation: symbolizes five tuft haircuts of the royal attendants. One head cannot institute a jury, justice and Collective responsibility. (Refer to Fig 106 and Plate 92)

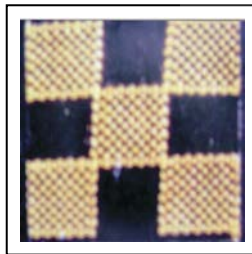


Plate 106: *Mpuannum* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

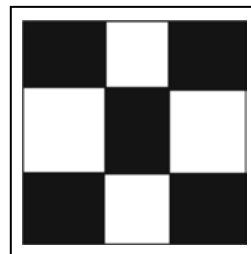


Fig. 92: *Mpuannum* motif in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 19

Name of motif: *Mpuankron*

Interpretation: A hair cut given to the king's guards and attendants. This Symbolizes Loyalty, service, sense of duty and democracy (See Plate 107)

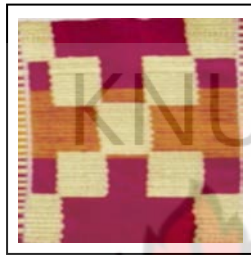


Plate 107: *Mpuankron* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 20

Name of motif: *Nsoroma*

Interpretation: meaning a star. It symbolizes brightness female essence of life, faithfulness and affection (Plate 108)



Plate 108: *Nsoroma* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 21

Name of motif: *Aninto nwi*

Interpretation: eyebrows enhance facial appearance and give unique personality to an individual, symbolize beauty, enhancement, elegance and uniqueness (Refer to Plate 109)



Plate 109: *Aninto nwi* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 22

Name of motif: *Damedame*

Interpretation: inspired by the cheque board game usually painted in black and white Symbolizes wisdom, balance in life, strategy and intelligence. (Plate 110)

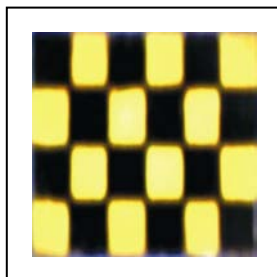


Plate 110: *Damedame* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 23

Name of motif: *Gye Nyame*

Interpretation: means except God. This expresses the belief in one Supreme Being that one should fear nothing except God. This is a Symbol of attributes of God as Omnipotent, omniscience and omnipresence. It is one of the significant symbols among the Adinkra symbols normally used to produce flying ties. (Plate 111)

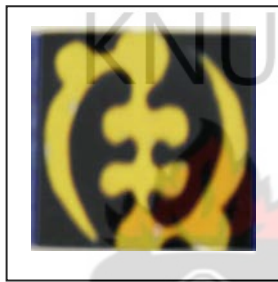


Plate 111: *Gye Nyame* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 24

Name of motif: *Atwedie*

Interpretation: meaning a ladder which is a means of achieving greater heights. It is also attributed to human mortality which affects all. This symbolizes human mortality perseverance and advancement. (Shown in Plate 112)



Plate 112: *Atwedie* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 25

Name of motif: *Afe*

Interpretation: a comb is a tool for grooming and enhancing the physical appearance of a person. Symbolizes; perfection, beauty, love, caring nature and prudence. (See Plate 113)

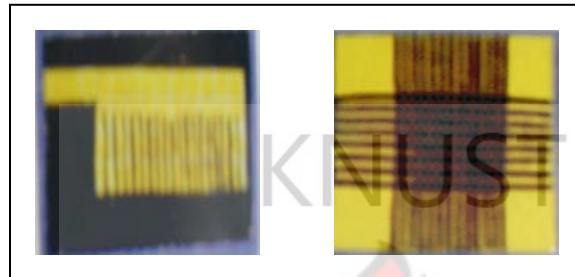


Plate 113: *Afe* motif in colour- *from the catalogue of cultures* by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 26

Name of motif: *nsoromma* - stars

Interpretation: the stars symbolize life giving, growth, and divine power. Inspired by the divine and cosmic powers is associated with it (See Plate 114) as symbol of dependency on God, hope, high expectation, and power of the people from the proverb: *Nyankonsoromma na oman wo no na nnye osrane*. Or, *Oba nyankonsoromma me te Nyame so na mennte me ho so*. Literal translation: The state belongs to the people and not to the king. The stars represent the people and are contrasted with the moon (*osrane*), representing the king. The people are always there though kings may come and go. This cloth is an example of *kente fufuo* ("white" *kente*) in the Akan color scheme.

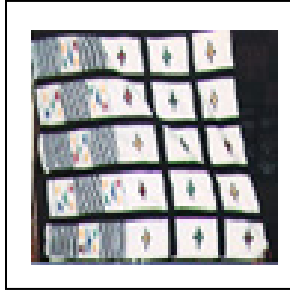


Plate 114: *nsormma*-star motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 27

Name of motif: *Nsat ea*

Interpretation: fingers are human tools for practical expression of human thought. This is a symbol of practicality, dignity of labor and creativity. (Plate 115)



Plate 115: *Nsatea* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 28

Name of motif: *Nkofo*

Interpretation: one of the Asante royals' functionaries is titled *nkofehene* (Chief of *nkofo*) responsible for important aspects of royal duties. This symbolizes service and loyalty. (See Plate 116)

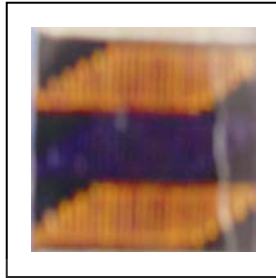


Plate 116: *Nkofo* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 29

Name of motif: *Puduo*

Interpretation: a glass receptacle for storing family ritual substances and precious ornaments. This symbolizes heritage, family unity and continuity. (Shown in Plate 117)



Plate 117: *Puduo* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 30

Name of motif: *kosan*

Interpretation: literally meaning go and return. Going forward and backward through one's life journey results in a balance. Symbolizes balance caution and prudence. (Refer to Plate 118)

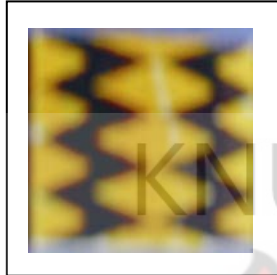


Plate 118: *Kosan* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 31

Name of motif: *Owo fro abe*

Interpretation: literally meaning the snake climbs palm tree. Without legs the snake cleverly zigzags to reach the top. This symbolizes ingenuity, outstanding and cleverness. (See Plate 119)



Plate 119: *Owo fro abe* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 32

Name of motif: *Abusua kro ye*

Interpretation: portrays family unity, the stylized image of the family consist of various heights but in unity. This is a symbol of love unity and peace. (Refer to Plate 120)

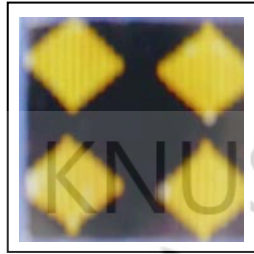


Plate 120: *Abusua kro ye* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 33

Name of motif: *Nsafoasa*

Interpretation: a set of three keys, a set of three things symbolizes a wish for wholeness, perfection in life situation and affection. Entering into ones destiny (See Plate 121)

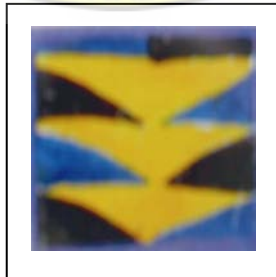


Plate 121: *Nsafoasa* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 34

Name of motif: *Adwa*

Interpretation: symbolically meaning have a seat if you are gossiping about me. Sense of warning also could mean hospitality. (See Plate 122)

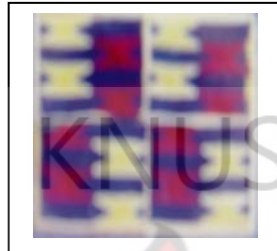


Plate 122: *Adwa* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 35

Name of motif: *Donno*

Interpretation: motif inspired by the shape of drum used by traditional drummers. Symbolizes; praise, adoration and oral history. (See Plate 123)

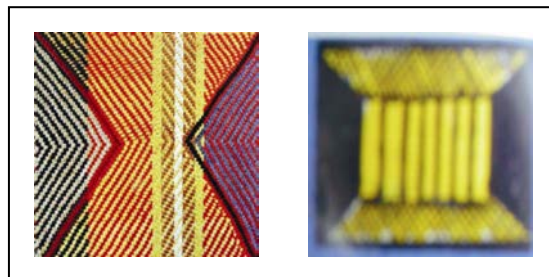


Plate 123: *Donno* motifs in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 36

Name of motif: *Adwene*

Interpretation: a name of a fish. Fishes are always available in spite of its maximum consumption Symbolizes sustenance and reliance. (See Fig 93)

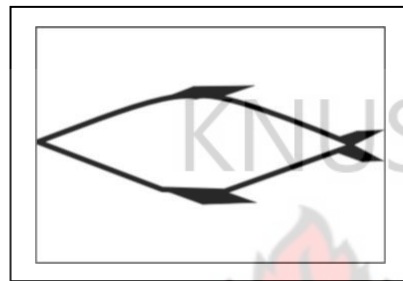


Fig. 93: *Adwene* motif in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 37

Name of motif: *Makowa*

Interpretation: literally meaning little pepper. This was inspired by the physical appearance and uses of red and yellow hot pepper. This symbolizes effectiveness, potency and greatness in spite of its size. (See Plate 124)

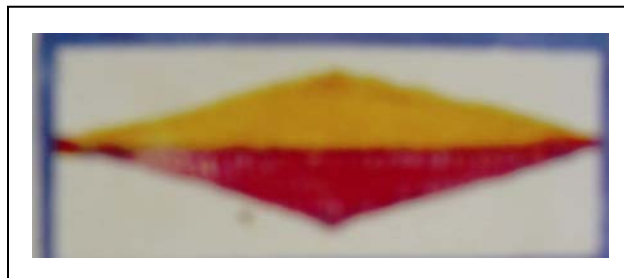


Plate 124: *Makowa* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 38

Name of motif: *Babaduahene*

Interpretation: the king of all *babadua* (a plant) noted for medicinal and ritual purposes. This symbolizes growth, healing and spiritual protection. (See Plate 125)



Plate 125: *Babaduahene* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 39

Name of motif: *Nwotoa*

Interpretation: literally meaning snail shells. This was inspired by the texture on the snail shell thus black, brown and yellow short vertical strips in horizontal rows. This symbolizes endurance and self containment. (Plate 126)

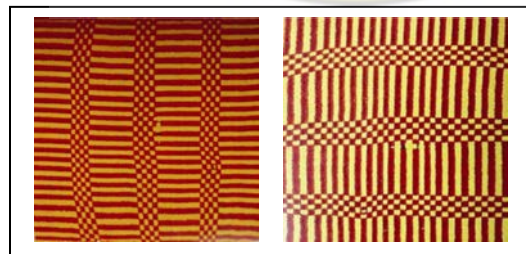


Plate 126: *Nwotoa* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 40

Name of motif: *ɛkyem*

Interpretation: meaning a ceremonial shield. This represents a Symbol of bravery and heroic deeds, glorious accomplishment. From the proverb: *ɛkyem tete a eka ne mmeramu*. Literal translation: when a shield wears out, the framework still remains. The good deeds of people live after them. Commemorates Asante military prowess and a sense of social vigilance. A symbol of political and spiritual defense (See Plate 127)



Plate 127: *ɛkyem* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 41

Name of motif: *Akoko baatan*

Interpretation: *akokobaatan* - mother hen

Signifies the tender care of a loving mother, indicating that no matter what the mother hen does to its chicks it does not kill them. (See Fig. 94 and Plate 128) This symbolizes welfare, protection, motherliness, parental care, or parental discipline, and tenderness

From the proverbs: *akoko baatan tia ne ba so a, onku no.* also, *akoko baatan na onim dea ne mma bedi.*

Literal translation: when the hen steps on her chicks with its feet, she does not mean to kill them. That is, parental admonition is not intended to harm the child, but to correct the child. Also, the good mother knows what her children will eat. A good mother does not only feed her children food alone, she also feeds them with love, affection, warmth, tenderness and care.



Fig. 94: *Akoko baatan* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished



Plate 128: *Akoko baatan* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 42

Name of motif: *kuduo*

Interpretation: (refer to Fig 95 and Plate 129)

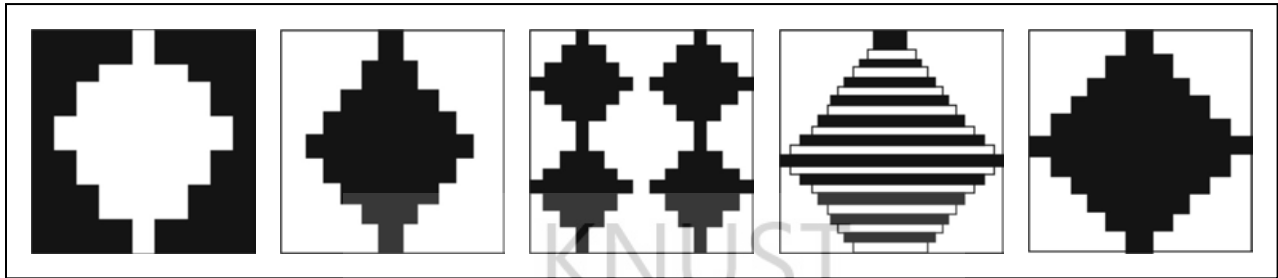


Fig. 95: *kuduo* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished



Plate 129: *Kuduo* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 43

Name of motif: *Mmodwewa*

Interpretation: refer to Fig 96 and Plate 130)

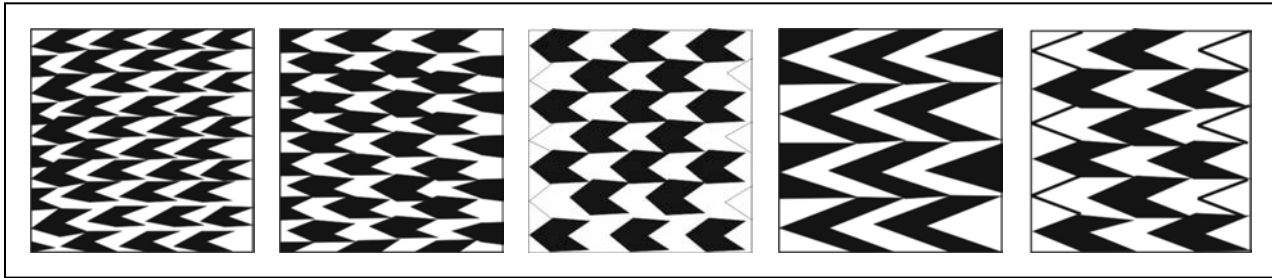


Fig. 96: *Mmodwewa* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished



Plate 130: *Mmodwewa* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 44

Name of motif: *Ntetesuo*

Interpretation: (refer to Fig 97)

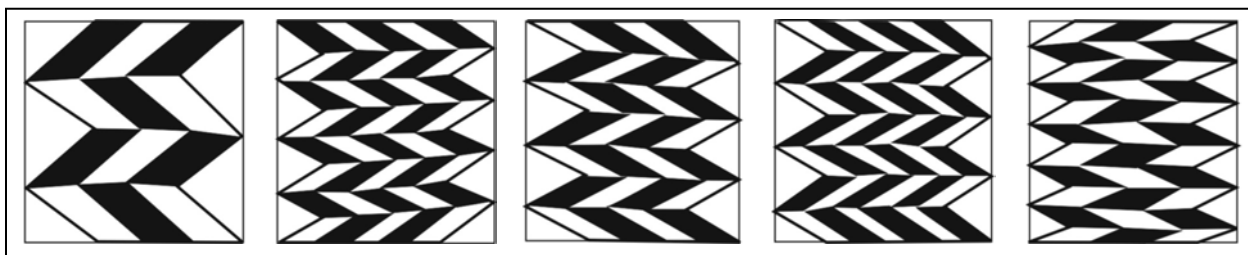


Fig. 97: *Ntetesuo* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 45

Name of motif: *Achimota nsafoa*

Interpretation: - *Achimota* keys, a Symbol of knowledge, unity in diversity, and harmony. The motif commemorates the *Achimota* School and college which was opened in 1927 in Accra. The motif represents the logo of *Achimota* - the black and white keys of the piano. One can make melody on either the black or white keys of the piano, but one can make harmony by playing together both the black and white keys of the piano. (Fig 98 and Plate 131)

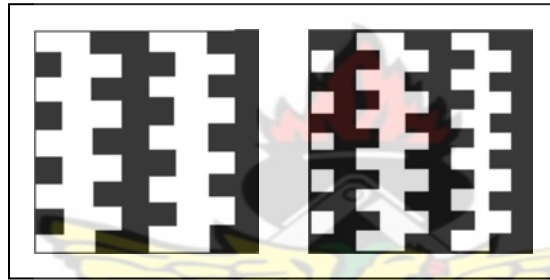


Fig. 98: *Achimota nsafoa* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished



Plate 131: *Achimota nsafoa* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 46

Name of motif: *Adofowa awaa mu*

Interpretation: (See Fig 99 and Plate 132)

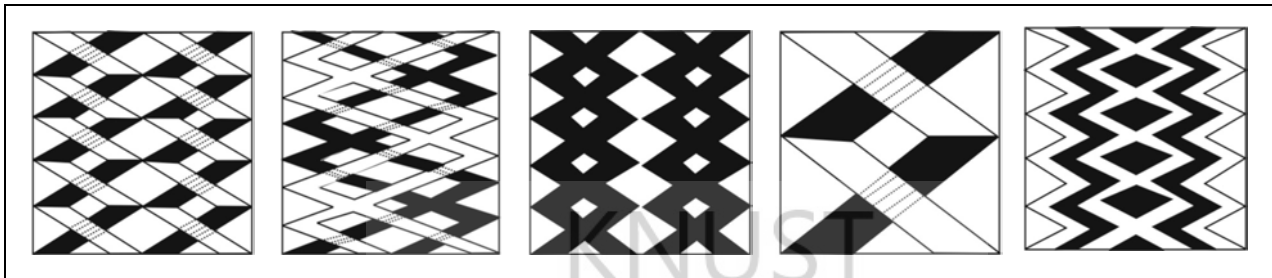


Fig. 99: *Adofowa awaa mu* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished



Plate 132: *Adofowa awa mu* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006 unpublished

Sample 47

Name of motif: *Aban*

Interpretation: this means government, nation, and the highest authority. This symbolizes control, responsibility, purpose and direction. (See Fig 100 and Plate 133)

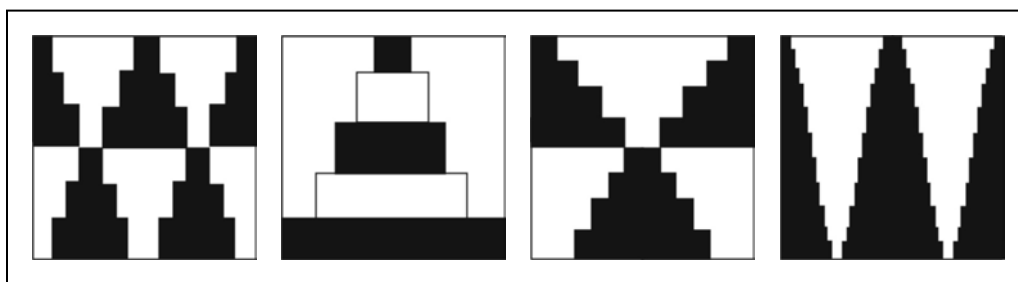


Fig. 100: *Aban* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished



Plate 133: *Aban* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

Sample 48

Name of motif: *Nankatire*

From the proverb: *meso annini mentumi a, wose menkofa nanka tire mmo kahyire.* Literal translation: I cannot even carry the python, yet you are asking me to use the puff adder's head as the carrying pad; it takes wisdom to achieve the impossible

Interpretation: refers to the head of a snake called *nanka* and this symbolizes subtlety, cleverness and wisdom. The snake is said to cleverly climb to the top of Palm tree in seconds. There is wisdom in the head of *nanka*. (See Fig 101 and Plate 134)

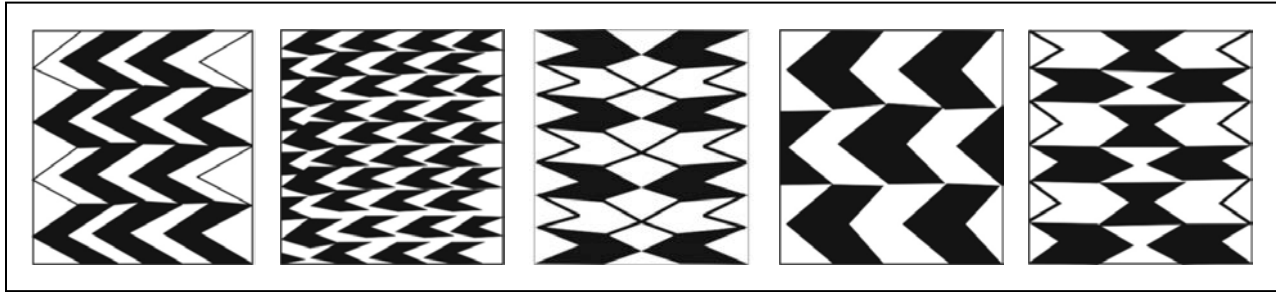


Fig. 101: *Nankatire* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

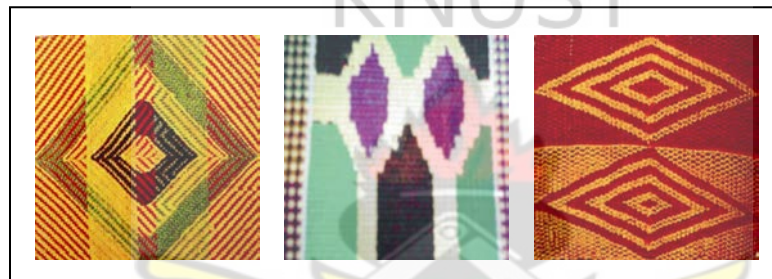


Plate 134: *Nankatire* motif in colour- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah*-2006 unpublished

See Appendix I for a full detailed comprehensive compilation of motifs and design cloth for the designing of *Kente*.

4.9 Samples of *Adinkra* cloths

The following are some pictures of *Adinkra* cloths made at “*Ntonso*”. The red and black cloth has the *Adinkra* symbols, “*Mpuannum*” (Traditional Fashionable hair style), and “*Eban*” (Fence, representing safety, security and love) dominating with other background designs. The black cloth on the right also has other *Adinkra* symbols like “*Ntiesie* or *Mate Masie*” (I have heard and kept it) (Plate 135).



Plate 135: showing funeral clothes with *Adinkra* symbols: - from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah* – 2006 unpublished

Chene kc hia - the king is gone to the harem. From the expression: *ohene ko hia*.

Literal translation: the king is gone to the harem. The harem is the quarters for the king's wives. This cloth symbolizes some aspects of gender relations not only between the king and his wives, but also in the Asante society. When the king visits the harem, he goes to his favourite wife. However some arrangements are made for determining which wife has sexual visitation rights for a certain period of time.

In a typical Akan *fihiya* or *fihankra*, there is the women's section (*mmaa mu*). That is where the hearth (*bukya*) is. Therefore, in one sense the cloth symbolizes not only sexuality, but also warmth and food (Plate 136).



Plate 136: shows the *Adinkra* cloth, *Chene kc hia* From G. F. Kojo Arthur and Robert Rowe – 1998-2006

(<http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/akanclothintro.htm>)

M'akoma mu tɔfe - my sweetheart

This is a Symbol of love, affection. From the expression: *m'akoma mu tɔfe*.

Literal translation: my sweetheart (Plate 137).



Plate 137: shows the Adinkra cloth *M'akoma mu tɔfe* From G. F. Kojo Arthur and Robert Rowe – 1998-2006 website

Kontonkrowi - rainbow

From the proverb: *kontonkrowi, eda amansan nyinaa kon mu.*

Literal translation: the rainbow encircles all nations.

This symbol is used politically to depict the encompassing nature of the powers of the king in the Asante and other Akan societies. When used in funeral situations the cloth with its symbolism points out the inevitability of death for every person, young and old, royal and commoner (Plate 138).



Plate 138: shows the Adinkra cloth *Kontonkrowi* From G. F. Kojo Arthur and Robert Rowe – 1998-2006 website

Kwasiada adinkra may have for the background the white colour or any bright color except red. Such a cloth may be worn on any happy or joyous occasion (Plate 139).



Plate 139: shows *Kwasiada adinkra* cloth From G. F. Kojo Arthur and Robert Rowe – 1998-2006
(<http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/akanclothintro.htm>)

Afe bi ye asan – Some years are full of misery. This design seems to be the distortion of the *Adinkra* symbol *Nyamedua* (God's Tree) or/and *Dweninmmen* (Ram's Horn) (Plate 140).

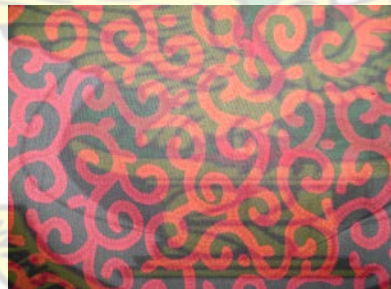


Plate 140: shows the *Adinkra* cloth *Afe bi ye asan* From G. F. Kojo Arthur and Robert Rowe – 1998-2006
(<http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/akanclothintro.htm>)

4.10 Summary of symbolism in Asante traditional textile discussed

Some selected symbols found in Asante traditional textile clothes and the decorative techniques applied to imprint these symbols by weaving, block (*Adinkra*), screen or batik-printing, dyeing, appliqué, embroidery, quilting, patchwork, drawing, stenciling and printing methods were

identified and discussed. Cloths identified are the *Kente*, *adinkra* cloths, *birisi*, *nwomu*, batik, quilt and the appliqué known among the Asantes as *okunintama* (the cloth for the great), flags and banners normally designed for funerals, joyful occasions, such as festival, durbars, outdoorings of children, puberty and initiation rites and marriage ceremonies etc.

Each of the motifs graphically rendered in stylized geometric shapes make up the corpus of *Adinkra* symbolism; its name and meaning derived either from a proverb, a historical event, human attitude, animal behaviour, plant life, forms and shapes of inanimate and man-made objects (Fosu 1993: 45), and the names given to these symbols indicate their significance.

The documentary assertions that the motifs are indiscriminately employed both in and outside Ghana, not only for their aesthetic appeal but also for their interpretive meanings (Kwami, 1994: 11) were affirmative; and that the root meanings and philosophies and forms of these symbols are being twisted or corrupted day by day by those who use them to propagate their own ideologies different from the original concepts or interpretations of such symbols. For these reasons some selected *adinkra* symbols were discussed with the aim of bring out its true meaning, literal translation, background, philosophy and its idea development.

The symbols selected were *Funtunfunefu-Denkyemfunefu*, *Kcdej mcwew wa*, *Nkotimsefuopua*, *Sankcfa*, *Dwennimmen*, *Akokc nan*, *Denkyem Da Nsuo Mu*, *bese saka*, *Nyame Dua*, *Afa*, *Wawa*, *Aba*, *Kontire ne Akwamu*, *Eban*, *Anibere Enso Gya*, *Nhwimu*, *Nsoroma*, *Pagya*, *Bi nnka bi*, *Fofoo*, *cwc-foro-adobj*, *Hwemudua*, *Owuo Atwedie*, *Ese ne tekerema*, *Kramo bone amma yeanhu*, *kramo papa*, *Chene tuo*, *Akoban*, *Ma te*, *Nyame nnwu na mawu*, *Pempamsie*, *Nkonsonkonson*, *Chene Aniwa*, *Sunsum*, *Dame-Dame*, *Akofena*, *Mmusuyidee*, *Duafe*, *Hye-Wo nhye*, *Mpuanum*, *Epa*, *Akoma*, *Gyawu Atiko*, *Kwatakye Atiko*, *Csrane Nsoroma*, *Sepow*, *Gye Nyame*, *mmara*

krado, Nyame biribi wo soro, Nsaa, fihankra, mframadan, Adinkra' hene, Akoma Ntoaso, and Nkyimkyim,

Precisely eight different totems for each clan of Asantes used for flags, banners and sometimes seen on African printed fabrics (see plate 79) were identified and discussed; consisting of *Ayokoo, Asona, Aduana, Agona, Asenee \ Aboade, Bretuo \ Tena, Ekoona, and Asakyiri*. Animal totems, the horn, the sword (*afena*), the chiefs Spokespersons' staff tops, and tattoos were also recognized as symbols for traditional textile prints. Other specific proverbial symbols that are used in machine printed cloths were also identified and treated. Various *Kente*, their motifs and their symbolic meanings and *adinkra* printed fabrics were identified and treated.



CHAPTER FIVE

THE IMPACT OF SYMBOLISM ON ASANTE TEXTILES

5.1 The significance of Asante traditional textile symbolism

Chapter five deals with the important role traditional textile symbolism plays in the economic, social and other cultural developments in Asante, traditional textiles as an emblem of wealth, political and religious power; and the factors of change namely education, Christianity, urbanization and foreign culture that contribute positively or negatively on symbolism in Asante traditional textiles to determine the cultural status of traditional textile symbolism in Asante culture.

5.2 The important role traditional textile symbolism plays in the economic, social and cultural development of Asante

5.2.1 Appliqué

Appliqué is the word used to describe the process of adding further materials to an already woven textile base. The term is normally applied to the laying on or simply sewing one small piece of cloth unto a larger cloth but include such supplementary materials as beads, shells, metals, jewellery, animal fur and bundles of medicine according to Picton and Mack, 1995. Traditionally the known appliqué products in Asante include “*Okunin Ntoma*” or “*Akunintam*,” umbrellas, flags, and “*batakari kese*” and the waist cloth invented by *Okomfo Anokye* according to (Picton and Mack, 1995, 171) plate 141 shown below.



Plate 141: “Appliqué waist Cloth” executed in imported fabrics, Okomfo Anokye’s invention, Captain R. P. Wild, 1935, Collection, From African Textiles by Picton, John and John Mark

5.2.2 Economic Development

In line with the new technologies, Asante has become one of the main tourist destinations in Africa. Many tourists come to the country because of its holistic cultural resources and experiences and associated souvenir products or cultural artifacts. Appliquéd items have been well patronized by the international market. Since the 1990s their direct and striking imagery has also made them highly collectable outside Ghana. Traditional textile goods are among the most important forms of tourist attraction in Asante and the trade has been very popular among the Asante youth. Traditional textile goods such as the *Adinkra* cloth, *Okunin Ntoma* and the *Kente* cloth have gradually become part of the most important cloths used by African Americans, as a result of a very significant trade between the two countries.

Antiques of *Asafo* flags alongside those of *Fantes* are very expensive in countries like the United Kingdom, therefore many tourists prefer to buy them directly from the locals; this has in turn generated a lot of income for the craftsmen. When a producer 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 to produce a magnificent work of art. This trade has really provided jobs for many illiterates in the society. (http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/kentecloth_samples.html)

Umbrellas with appliquéd designs are the second most sought after in this category, the umbrellas have traditional symbols appliquéd on them which represent the power of its user. Other items such as the “*Okunin Ntoma*” and the “*Batakari Kese*” are not allowed to be made by any artist except for the king’s own specialized artists known as “court artists”.

5.2.3 Social development

Appliquéd items communicate a lot about the social status of its user. Whether it is an umbrella, *Okunin Ntoma*, *batakari kese* or Asafo flag, the colours and the constituent symbols of that particular appliquéd item evoke complex concepts that relate to social and political organization, beliefs and attitudes, moral and ethical issues about the self and one's responsibilities, knowledge and education. Asantes have several thousand proverbs some of which are used in *Akunintam*. This visual 'vocabulary' allows different groups to 'read' the messages in these cloths. Generally drawn from a huge repertoire of known patterns, the designs used by the cloth designers are the same as those used on other forms of Akan art.



Plate 142: Nana Otumfuo Osei Tutu II in two varieties of Appliqué cloth depicting various traditional symbols- From the 5th Anniversary Celebration Magazine Otumfuo Osei Tutu II *Asantehene* 1999-2004

Like Europeans, the general literate communities in Asante use appliqué cloths. Most of the appliquéd items mentioned above are used for very important social functions including durbars, festivals, and other ceremonies.

The umbrella used by a particular chief may show his political status. There is an Akan proverb which says that “*kyiniye bi sini kyiniye bi*” this literally means that some umbrellas are greater than others; this expression emphasizes the fact that some chiefs are greater than other chiefs.

For instance, a chief who uses an umbrella with a lion appliquéd symbol is considered to be greater than a chief who uses an umbrella with a bird symbol. At a durbar a lower ranking chief would not be allowed to use an umbrella which is superior to that of the Asante king. The colours of a particular umbrella also communicate a great deal of information to the people. For instance if a chief uses an umbrella with a white

background it shows that the chief is in a jubilant mood but if he uses an umbrella with a red background it shows that the chief is mourning. In Asante the umbrella is normally held by another individual known as the “*kyiniyehene*” meaning the chief of umbrellas.

The *Asafo* flag is another appliquéd item which has really influenced the social system of the Asante society. *Asafo* literally means war people. *Asafo* companies originated several centuries ago among Asantes as military organizations. Of the various artworks and regalia used in Asante *Asafo* performances, the most important are the flags, (see plate 143-144) which is made in appliqué.

According to Microsoft Encarta, 2009 a Flag is a light piece of cloth, usually rectangular in shape, but vary in size, colour, and design, and intended for use as emblems or as a kind of signalling device. Flags are most commonly displayed hanging free from a staff, pole, or rope, to which they are attached along one edge. Depending on their form and function, flags are variously known as standards, banners, ensigns, or pennants. Flags have been used as symbols of ethnic, national, and military identity since ancient times. 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.” Flags were used to indicate the presence of an important personage on various occasions—for example, before a battle, at a tournament, or during a ceremony. Nobility flags bore the personal insignia of the owner as inferred by Picton and Mack, 1995 p. 169. With the formation of national states national flags became the dominant type of standard.

Such was the use of Flags in Asante, used for identification, or to distinguish governmental subdivisions, officials, agencies, and services; military units; and various other types of organizations and institutions. *António Martins, 2005* quoting from (http://flagspot.net/flags/gh_asaf2.html#eleph-website) affirms this by saying that Asafo companies in Asante were also differentiated by the different symbolic colours of headgear and hairstyles worn by members, with exclusive appellations, and emblems.

He further reiterated that other units within the main divisions included *afonasofoo* (the carriers of spears and shields), *sumankwafoo* (the herbalists and medicine men), and the *asokwafo* (heralds). He concluded that *Asafo* companies existed in all the *Akan* states which include Asante and that the national *asafo* in Asante was commanded by the *Asantehene*, but two generals, the *kurontire* and *akwamu*, were the military leaders. According to him, the *Fantse* went a step further by incorporating some European customs and symbols in their *Asafo* companies. Some flags convey information, and serves as trophies of achievement. As Picton and Mack, 1995, p. 169 gathered in Africa they are associated with prestige and social position

Examples of Appliqué Asafo Flags, banners and waist cloth



Plate 143: “Siamese Crocodiles and moon” company flag showing motifs of Asante and their affiliation with the British flag



Plate 144: “Elephant and Palm Trees” company flag showing totems of Asante and their affiliation with the British flag

Today's flags usually reflecting the symbolic theme that collectively contributes to the heritage of the state are commissioned for several reasons; for the installation of a “*Safohene*” (head of an Asafo subgroup) or for the replace an old flag.

In Asante Asafo flags, imagery of animals and their associated qualities are metaphors for human traits and relationships. For example, the antelope may signify wisdom, humility, or docility. The cock symbolizes pride, the bush dog implies wealth, and vultures represent filth and disregard. The crow is to be detested, and the cat is considered a thief. Interpretations may vary depending on the combination of motifs and the historical incident to be illuminated.

Asantes also display flags during ceremonies such as festivals and durbars. The flags often have the symbol of a porcupine signifying the ability of the Asantes to protect themselves against enemies.

The “*Batakari Kese*” which literally means “*great smock*” is worn by the Asante king during wars, installation and funerals of preceding kings and chiefs. The smock woven with hand spun cotton yarns is additionally sown with leather talismans unto the background cloth. Asantes believe that this smock symbolizes power and protection; therefore it is one of the most respected regalia of the king that spiritually help the *Asantehene* to exert his authority on the society. However there are other talismanic war garments worn by warriors during wars that are almost like that of the *batakari kese* shown below.



Plate 145: *Otumfuo Osei Tutu II in Batakari Kese during His installation as Chief- from the 5th Anniversary Celebration Magazine Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Asantehene 1999-2004*



Plate 146: An Asante Talismanic war garment showing various motifs used- (<http://www.tulsalibrary.org/suburbanacres/cloth.php>)

The *batakari kese* is a special costume only worn by the *Asantehene* and major chiefs during their installation, when their role as aggressive military leaders is emphasized. According to McLeod (1981:148), they are also worn during funeral rituals of other chiefs to stress the scarcely controlled anger and violence which follow a leader's death. Unlike other costumes and regalia of the *Asantehene* which are displayed in the Manhyia museum, *Asantehene's batakari kese* is not displayed in the museum because of how sacred it is to the Asante kingdom however, McLeod, (1981:148) states that one of such *batakari* is now in the British Museum's collection.

The talismans sometimes with an embossed *adinkra* symbols are believed to have special powers which protect the Asante king and also signify his authority. The symbols by its use communicates the societal believe in the philosophy of its culture. These cosmological beliefs of Asantes have been maintained through the wearing of the *batakari kese* by the Asante king as Bowdich, (1819) indicates. To show the power and

authority the chief asserts on his people he is carried in a special palanquin with an umbrella placed over him during festivals. In addition to other materials used, the palanquin is wrapped in a special coloured cloth that relates to the occasion.

The “*Okunin Ntoma*” is one important art piece that constitutes a symbolic code of the sum total of knowledge, fundamental beliefs, and service towards the sacred gods; among other symbols used in the cloth include the *Adwa* (stool) representing the soul of the society and the *akofena* (state swords) sometimes used in the cloth, symbolizing the power and authority the chiefs and king exerts on the people. The *Okunin Ntoma* with its symbols has played a significant part in furthering the organization of social, cultural, economic and political life in the Asante society; this is evident from an analysis of the colour background as well as the constituent symbols that are incorporated in the design of the cloth. (http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/kentecloth_samples.html). Dr. Mantuba-Ngoma, a Zairian anthropologist affirms the multi-functionality of symbolic cloth as offering practical, aesthetic and communicative functions; (Mark, 1994:9).

“*Okunin Ntoma*” is the cloth of the great men or cloth for the brave. They are worn during sacred ceremonies and rituals by chiefs and kings whose ancestors played an instrumental role in the wars of the past. For example the symbols worn on such occasions usually expressed the qualities he or she has attained. As is the custom, each cloth is designed for specific occasions and therefore conveys distinct messages. Although the appliqué cloth is very popular among Asante people, the *Okunin Ntoma* is not allowed to be worn by ordinary people.

As part of cultural exhibitions and spectacles of royal regalia to underpin systems of authority, the imagery in the “*Okunin Ntoma*” also comes from Pictograms and ideograms. The *Okunin Ntoma* of the *Asantehene* is not allowed to be copied by any other chief. In the past, if it was copied by another chief, a death penalty would be imposed on him. This helps to maintain discipline among the various sub chiefs of the Asante and gives a clear-cut difference in the ranking of chiefs in the society.

The symbols used in the cloth are themes encoded in the texts of proverbs, aphorisms and other verbal expressions related to the state. These symbols communicate a lot about the status of the chief in the society, events of the state and cultural achievements. Some symbols used include: “*kotoko*” (porcupine) which symbolizes the strength or ability of the Asante kingdom to protect itself. The lion or tiger symbolizes bravery; the chameleon symbolizes dishonesty, the palm symbolizing comfort and power.

The cosmic elements like the stars, moon or half moon are also used. These elements are thought to exert mysterious beneficent influence not only over many of the operations of agriculture, but over the affairs of every-day life as well. Hence there arose the belief in the value of the crescent-shape depicted in the *akunin toma*; the half-moon symbol is the one most commonly used signifying command over every living creature. The moon especially has indeed always been considered the most influential of the heavenly bodies by reason of her rapid motion and nearness to the earth; and the Asantes of old, whether in forecasting future events or in giving advice as to proper times and seasons for

transaction of business affairs, first ascertained whether or not the moon was well featured.

But the use of these symbols, although so ancient, is by no means obsolete; it has been linked to the rhythms of life and to nature's cycles: water, rain, and fertility. The moon has also been regarded as controlling menstruation the very word menstruation means 'moon change'. Asantes believes that menstruation comes with the new moon and that only then can women become pregnant. In Asante, oval shapes represent femininity and beauty, a half circle symbolizes fertility, a cross means piety, and an arrow signifies new life. Moon and star symbols are also common Adinkra motifs, representing love, loyalty, and harmony. (Steven J. Salm, Toyin Falola – 2002)

The colours used for the background may also be symbolic. They may speak a lot about the mood or state in which the chief is, for example if the chief is in mourning the background of the cloth is either red or black. The appliqué cloth ("*Okunin Ntoma*") is usually worn by the chief during a funeral to signify that the chief is mourning.



Plate 147: *Otumfuo Osei Tutu II* in *Okunin Ntoma* showing some metaphoric symbols-from the 5th Anniversary Celebration Magazine *Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Asantehene 1999-2004*

It is also worn by the chief during the one week celebration of the death of his kin. Symbolism is a vital part of the various appliquéd art works in the Asante community; the symbols are metaphors which give information of the social structure and system of Asante and other *Akan* communities, therefore helping the people to maintain the social structure of their society.

5.2.4 Cultural development

Majority of the symbols used in the *Okunin Ntoma* are a collection of Asante traditional symbols known as *adinkra* symbols. Generally drawn from a huge repertoire of known patterns, the designs used by the cloth designers are the same as those used on other forms of Asante art. The craft involves embroidering and stitching of small pieces of coloured cloth with motifs of cosmic elements, animals and other objects. They sometimes use only the embroidery technique to design the cloth whose example is shown below.

Asantes have several thousand proverbs some of which are used in *Okunin Ntoma* and these patterns have names and meanings derived from the various genres of Akan oral literature that helped in promoting Asante cultural identity to people of other nationalities.



Plate 148: *Otumfuo Osei Tutu II in Embroidered nwomu Clothes showing some traditional symbols- from the 5th Anniversary Celebration Magazine Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Asantehene 1999-2004*

The symbols are said to objectify the proverbs, folk-tales, myth, folksongs, rituals, customs and beliefs of the ethnic groups' involved and even wider West African society. In essence, the artworks are seen as representations of social thought ranging from history and philosophy to religious beliefs and practices, therefore the sale of these craftworks to foreigners is an embodiment of Asante culture and civilization as specified by Rattray, (1959: 265).

5.2.5 Symbology as an element of magic and safety

The connection between textiles -- clothing in particular -- and a sense of safety that Asante traditional textiles portray, is quiet intriguing. The question is, can traditional cloths make you feel safe in an uncertain, even a terrifying, world? Since humans began to dress, elements of magic and power have been integrated into their clothing's to repel negative energy and the "evil eye," and have also been structured for safety and sometimes inscribed or marked with elaborate symbols to add protection to the

clothing's. Rattray indicates that a cloth with the *musuyidie* (literary meaning something to remove evil) design stamped upon it is laid beside the sleeping couch of *Asantehene* who places his left foot upon it every morning he wakes up from bed, and the design *Hye wo nhye* (literary meaning they desire you to be burnt but you'll not, bet burnt) imprinted on the king's pillow is an indication of their belief in magical powers (Rattray 1959:266-267).

The Asante use of these garments can only be understood in the context of their ideas about mystical power for special purposes (for personal or village protection, to catch witches or to bring wealth. According to McLeod (1981:148), a number of garments/smocks exist covered with writings in Arabic, or a degenerate copy of Arabic and with what may be protective cabalistic designs on them. There is no doubt that there was also powerful magic associated with symbolic pieced embroidered, appliquéd and drawn/printed clothing; Asante traditional textile culture sometimes depicts embroidered talismans and added stones, coins or other objects imbued with meaning. Surprisingly, it is not just the embellishments but also the placement of the cloths, on the body or in the environment that worked magic. A lot of this textile symbology is probably lost to us now, but the incredible detail and mastery of these pieces can still be appreciated for its practicality as well as creativity.

Today, Asante traditional clothing designers still create beautiful and elegant handcrafted clothing that is centered on the concept of safety, protection and esthetics by contrasting soft and sturdy fabrics with clean, geometric patterns and detailed craftsmanship; they marry comfort with high design to create pieces that please not only the viewer, but the

wearer as well. Through exaggerated embroidery, appliquéd and woven clothes, printed cloths produced by hand with meticulous eye for colour and texture, with the aim of providing protection from the dangers and perils of everyday modern living are particularly associated with chiefs and people in authority. An example of such cloths is shown below



Plate 149: Magical Quoranic Inscriptions: A cotton shirting drawn and painted with magical designs of Islamic inspiration, collected amongst the Asante, Ghana- – from African Textiles- Picton & Mack- 1995

Whether this imperative and purposefulness of ascribing magical powers to what they wear was helping the economy of the state is a question for debate but it is worth preserving and honoring these traditions by keeping their language and integrity alive through documentation. Traditional Asante textile designs now inspire modern African artists who use materials other than woven silk or cotton to create new art that portray past weaving traditions while reflecting the present. This startling juxtaposition between the past and present in thinking about textile symbolism is sweeping across African fashion world.

Asante textiles, ancient or contemporary, created from locally produced cotton yarns or foreign ones, are more than just rhythmically busy designs in bright colours but are patterns or symbols often suggesting moral stories and proverbial wisdom through evocative visual patterns though some twenty-first century variations on traditional Asante textiles have less clearly informative story lines.

5.3 The Adinkra Cloth and its Economic role

Traditional textile is a job creation venture. The science of the production of goods and services and commercial activities is one attribution of the important role traditional textile plays. Delving into any department of this field is an income generation endeavor. The adinkra cloth has become a nationwide commodity and a valuable traditional industrial asset which provides employment to a large number of people. The traditional textile industry that produces the *adinkra* cloth makes use of a great deal of labour supply, depending on the processes used, including men, women and even children who help and learn informally the production processes.

The *adinkra* dye prepared for dyeing and stamping the cloth is done by some females in the society. It was and still is males that stamp the motifs on the cloth and this is purely division of labour. It is a taboo for a woman to ever stamp motifs on the *adinkra* cloth if she is in her menstrual period. It appears that more recognition is given to the stamping more than the dyeing. This is probably why it is only women who do the dyeing.

The *adinkra* cloths are printed by the block-print or screen-print technique. The blocks (stamps) are carved from *apakyiwa* (gourd or calabash). The carved symbol is used to design the cloth. In the olden days, a wooden comb-like tool known as the ‘*duafe*’ was used in creating lines to make way for printing.



Plate 150: Shows the stamp called ‘*otumfuo wuo ye ya*’, being used designed and carved by John Kofi Nsiah of *Ntonso* to commemorate the passing away of *Otumfuo Opoku Ware II*, the late *Asantehene*.



Plate 151: Shows the use of *duafe* & the screen printing technique in *adinkra* printing

However owing to technology, the photographic method of printing has made this easier and the latter has paved way for the screen printing method which gives employment to the youth generating a lot of income to individuals and to the society as a whole. The marketing of *adinkra* cloth is done by both male and females. However, more females than males market these clothes. The cloth may be ordered directly from a producer or from a sales man or woman. In the villages or urban centres, males/females hawk the clothes. A customer may either buy on credit or pay outright. Business entrepreneurs have also established shops in brisk marketing centres such as the arts centre in Accra and Kumasi where *adinkra* and *Kente* clothes are sold. Just like any other consumer goods, usually, the clothes are less expensive when purchased directly from the producer.

Major exporters in this region trade the goods to other countries especially to the Ghanaian nationals in foreign countries. Thus exportation of the *adinkra* cloth provides foreign income indirectly to the society. Apart from farming which is the main occupation of the people of *Ntonso*, most youth engage in selling of the cloth but the farming women comfortably combine this trade with their occupational farming.

The uniqueness of *adinkra* cloths has lent itself to the rapid changes in the fashion industry. Due to the different kinds of symbols that are printed in different colours of cloth, it is worn during both funeral ceremonies and other festive occasions like Sunday services, thanksgiving ceremonies and other happy occasions. More intensive use of this textile products have contributed to an increasing demand of the *adinkra* cloth which is sometimes combined with other fabrics in fashion designing making it grow in high demand.

The functional aspect of the cloth has generated a societal demand that has resulted into its popularity not only in Ghana but outside its shores. Today, certain established Non governmental organizations help in exporting the outstanding products of the producers.

Below are some exportable *adinkra* products screened with wash-fast printing paste.



Plate 152: Samples of Adinkra Funeral Cloth showing some Adinkra motifs-from catalogue of culture by Ekow Asamah-unpublished

5.3.1 The Social role of *adinkra* symbols

The motifs in *adinkra* cloths are closely associated with daily activities with the names reflecting their meanings. *Adinkra* makes use of totems and symbols to address social issues and cankers. The choices of a particular cloth correspond with the relative mood of the individual. The proper usage of the *adinkra* cloth is to convey specific messages from the wearer as *Fosu*, (1993) seems to suggest. A design combination of two or more motifs conveys a particular message. Similarly, a design of a single motif also carries a different message.

Designs like “*owuo see fie*” (death destroys the household), *owuo atwedie baako nfo* (the ladder of death will be climbed by all), are all social realities that the society is always reminded of as these symbols are used. *Gye Nyame* literally means except God signifies God’s Omnipotence in the society. *Nyamedua* which literally mean Gods tree is regarded as an altar of God signifying God’s presence everywhere and every time. The cloth gives

the insight of Gods presence in the people's worship, and the wearer portrays such impression. The social significance of the *adinkra* cloth transcends ethnic, cultural and national boundaries

Clothing; socially, this includes the *adinkra* cloth being used on the human body as an adornment. Both men and women wear the cloth on several occasions for different purposes as stated above. There are four types of *Adinkra* cloth classified according to the background on which the patterns are stamped. They are "*mpakyiwa*" (plain background type) "*nhwimu*" (linear markings type), the *Kente* strip type and the "*nwomu*" (embroidery type). Apart from classification using the symbols, another classification is based on the background colouration.

When the background is coloured reddish-brown; it is called '*kuntunkuni*' a dark burnt sienna cloth signifies a prolonged feeling of melancholy. '*Brisi*', a completely black or indigo cloth, implies a passing grief or extended memory of the loss by death of a dear one. When it is brilliant red, it is known as '*kobene*' a vermillion red cloth. Below are pictorial examples of the above stated cloths



Plate 153: *kuntunkuni*



Plate 154: *kobene*



Plate 155: *Brisi*

All pictures from the catalogue of culture- 2006 by *Ekow Asmah*- unpublished

Apart from these colours, any other is regarded as fancy, for instance the white background cloth is used for happy occasions such as birthdays, thanksgiving ceremonies, weddings, engagements, naming ceremonies and Christmas festivities, Easter and many others. From the day a baby is initiated into the society through the naming ceremony, the *adinkra* cloth plays a vital role in its life cycle until death. During the naming ceremony, members present, clad themselves in the white *adinkra* cloth with symbols such as ‘*nyame nwu na ma wu*’ to mean the perpetual stay of this child on earth.

During puberty rites when the child is being initiated into adulthood, the *adinkra* cloth and *Kente* once again are used in its bright colours and this elegance is again exhibited during marriage ceremonies. Finally when a person dies then the *kuntunkuni*, *kobene* and *brisi* earlier on talked about are worn to express grief and bid farewell to the dead. On the occasion of a funeral, symbols such as ‘*owuo atwedie baako mfo*’, is seen in the funeral cloth to mean that anyone in the society is capable of dying.

Sometimes it is specially designed to suit the status of selected people in the society such as chiefs, queen mothers and warriors. Today, due to modernization, the youth sometimes use the cloth for foot wares of diverse kinds that make it easier to wear other than the indigenous ‘*ahenema*’ sandals that are worn to match the *adinkra* cloth. Hand bags and other accessories such as hats and headgears are made with *adinkra* cloths. The *adinkra* cloth which used to be a cloth for funerals only is used as a decorating material to enrich the interiors of rooms. It is sometimes used as wall hangings, curtains, chair back and soft coverings especially for seats. It may also be used as coverings for pouffes, hand rest etc.

5.3.2 Its cultural links

The *adinkra* cloth is a cotton fabric stamped with symbolic motifs an old traditional art form that dates back to over 150 years. It is also believed that the first *Adinkra* designs may have been taken from motifs found under the golden leaf of the *Gyaman* stool (*Kyerematen*, 1964). Ross/and Gerrard, (1983:8) suggest that the patterns may be designs which were borrowed from Amulet signs of the Tuaregs and other Northern Moslems. The stamping of the designs with wooden blocks could also be traced through Arabs to Persians and Indians who traded with foreign merchants. The centre for *Adinkra* cloth production is *Ntonso*, a town northeast of Kumasi in the *Kwabre* District of Ashanti-Region of Ghana. It is relatively simpler to produce and more affordable.

In preserving the history of the society, the *adinkra* cloth is seen to play a very important role in the cultural development of the society. By reason of the use of the *adinkra* symbols, the cloth portrays the belief system of the society, preserves the rich culture, its historic events and unveils the political power in the society.

A symbol like *Kontire ne Akwamu* (these are elders of state) enshrined in a cloth, depicts the two divisions in a state. “*Tikro nko agyina*” (meaning “two heads are better than one”), emphasizes the need for democracy in governance and consensus decision.

Chiefs, elders of state, Queen mothers and other prominent people in society adorn themselves in rich *adinkra* emblems during special occasions and are accorded greater respect and honour. They are easily distinguished from the ordinary people in the society.

As a result of that, their humble qualities in the *adinkra* clothes are easily noticed and emulated in society.



Plate 156: Nana Otumfuo Osei Tutu II in Adinkra cloth showing some Adinkra symbols- from the 5th Anniversary Celebration Magazine Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Asantehene 1999-2004

Ntiamoa (1971) says that, culture depends on symbols. Without symbols there will be no culture and the identity of the symbols would be lost. If all culture depends on symbols then *adinkra* symbols must not be left to posterity but rather picked on the philosophies they inhibit and repackage them. When durbars are organized to install a chief or queen mother, members of the society adorn themselves in the *adinkra* cloth to commemorate the festive occasion; the type of *adinkra* cloth one wears shows one's status in the society promotes respect and may distinguish the chief or rich from the ordinary person.

5.3.3 Religious aspect of *Adinkra* symbols

The symbols in traditional *adinkra* cloths in their own way promote and educate people about the existence of God and helps mankind know his maker and worship him as a

matter of duty. *Gye Nyame, Nyame ye Ohene* and the likes are typical examples of symbols used. There is a saying in *Akan* that goes like, “*Obo Nyankon soroma te Nyame na ontenehoso*”. (The star is located in the heavens and held by God to guard man). This wise saying has been designed into a symbol which when printed in a fabric reminds Asantes of God’s protection and guardianship.

Some symbols of Asante *adinkra* textiles criticize people who behave under the pretence of friendship in order to satisfy their evil and selfish motives. These symbolic proverbs bring to light the pretence, concealment and deceptive nature of humans as they relate to God and man. It therefore warns one not to take the behavior of people at the face value, else one could be disappointed. It also reminds people to be discerning when dealing with others. By this education, evil deeds are supposedly discarded and real love, favourable strength built among its citizens.

Traditional *adinkra* clothes encoded with the kingdom’s cultural beliefs and practices reveal the belief in life after death and the need to lead exemplary lives to attain an ancestral status after death. This encourages both the young and the old to set targets for themselves by living a modest lifestyle and ensuring that peace and tranquility is promoted in the society (*Fosu, 1993, Opoku, 1978*).

Some *Adinkra* symbols in clothes are used to teach the importance of nurturing children, but warn against pampering them. The symbols that indicate children are to be reprimanded, scolded and disciplined when they go wrong; are a corrective measure

employed to reform children. *Kwami*, (1994:11) reaffirms this notion by saying that proverbial symbols serve as prescriptions for action or act as judgment in times of moral lapses. Some urge the enforcement of discipline in all aspects of life as well as showing some degree of mercy to offenders instead of capital punishment. This helps shape each and every individual in the society to give his or her best to the development of human character in the society.

5.4 Contribution of *Kente* and *adinkra* symbols to national development

The export of symbolic items like *Kente* and *Adinkra* in the form of garments, hats and bowties to Europe, the Americas, Asia and other African countries earn much needed foreign exchange for the government and private entrepreneurs and also promotes/encourage tourism in Ghana. The earnings from the export and taxes paid by entrepreneurs to the nation's coffers in turns support infrastructural development no matter how little it may be.

Adinkra symbols, *Kente* designs portray and promote the Asante culture internationally. These indeed are catalysts to tourism which bring inconvertible currency for imports and development. It is now very common to see many African-Americans who visit Asante and other parts of Ghana cad in *Kente* and some *Adinkra* clothing's.

5.4.1 Political aspect *adinkra* and *Kente* symbols

Some *adinkra* and *Kente* symbols stress the importance of democracy in all aspects of life. The use of these symbolic clothing's during political festivities even as gifts to

political figures who visit the country is an indication of their importance to international solidarity and nation building (Clarke, 2002:68). Understanding of a symbol like *Ohene Tuo* designed in a cloth and presented to an aggrieved party cautions, admonishes and helps in the unification of intra-cultural activities for achieving common objectives despite their divergent views and opinions between two parties.

The administration of the Asante chieftaincy institution can never do away with symbols as a means of communication because its dealing with its citizens is oftentimes shrouded in secrecy. It is therefore expected that those close to the institution becomes conversant with the cultural values of the kingdom. *Adinkra* symbols at hand sometimes signals an alarm to summon warriors to battle. It encourages Citizens to support, protect and defend their leaders in authority and their national identity.

5.5 Traditional textiles or cloths as an emblem of wealth, political and religious power

A traditional cloth refers to a fabric which is peculiar to or characteristic of a certain district, country, or ethnic group; retaining strong elements of the culture from which it originates. It is usually a visible symbolic expression of the belief system, customs or way of life of a particular group of people that changes within a specified period of time. For instance, the *Kente* a traditional cloth mainly peculiar to Asantes, maintained its use and character over a period of time but it experiences imitations in form as well as its uses. *Kente* is still worn during durbars and other ceremonies like installation of chiefs, funerals etc as part of Asante culture or custom. The cultural practices of the Asante

handed down from their ancestors have not changed considerably and the *Kente* associated with these practices has seen little changes; rather its uses have been modified to be abreast with modern needs.

The story of *Kente* is not anything new to many Asantes and other Ghanaians as it has been the major traditional cloth of Asantes. *Kente* may be regarded as the icon of African cultural heritage around the world. It is adored, respected and internationally recognized due to its dazzling, multicolored patterns of bright colors, geometric shapes, bold designs and ingenious nature. It is a royal and sacred cloth worn mainly in times of extreme importance. *Kente* was the cloth of kings and chiefs. Over time, the use of *Kente* has become more widespread, however its importance has remained and it is held in high esteem in the Asante family and the entire country of Ghana.

There are certain features that contribute to the quality of a traditional cloth (*Kente*). These features make the cloth expensive and give it the status as an emblem of wealth. These features include; compactness of weave due to the quality and multiple yarns used (yarns differ in quality e.g. cotton yarns, nylon yarns, etc)

5.6 Types of traditional symbolic cloths

There are many traditional cloths that are highly regarded as emblems of wealth, political and religious power (Picton and Mack, 1995:11). In order of tradition and value, 1) weaves, 2) traditional prints, 3) embroidery, 4) dyeing, 5) batik, and 6) industrial prints represent the six types of cloth Asante's use to create clothing. Among the exclusive ones

by name are the *Kente* cloth, *mwuomu*, *ntiamu* and *Okunin Ntoma*, batiks, industrial machine prints.

Although Asantes use various types of fabrics to create clothing as mentioned above, the woven fabric is the oldest, most valuable and the most time consuming to produce. Weaving represents a tradition that passes down from father to son and from uncle to nephew. Distinctively *Kente* is a woven colourful fabric of gold, yellow, red, black, green, and blue yarns.

The complexity of the weave, the colour, and the type of thread used, determine the value of the fabric. Of significance, to Asantes are the uses of handspun threads that enhance the value of the fabric and create an ancestral link to culture. As a result of modern day technology, many of the traditional fabrics are now woven with machine spun yarns on hand powered looms. However, the traditional hand spun yarns for weaving remains alive and well today, especially in many Asante villages like *Adanwomase* and the northern part of Ghana.

Aso oke, a ceremonial cloth of the Yoruba, (Clarke, 2002:94) are now woven in Asante and has three main designs: a dark blue indigo dyed cloth, a brown cloth woven with traditionally spun silk yarn; and one, woven with European silk. A cloth made completely of silk is rare. Strips of silk cloth are communally used as decorations for indigo dyed cloth. Kuba raffia, the traditional cloth of the Kuba kingdom, Kasai region, Zaire, (Clarke, 2002: 46) now remains an example of a tradition of raffia weaving used

normally by traditional priests throughout Asante however with the exception of *aso oke* the kuba cloth is devoid of Asante traditional symbols but their symbolism as fabric of wealth and of religion respectively is of value to Asante. To Clarke, (2002:96), these clothes are central to the social, religious, political, economic and cultural life of the complex and sophisticated communities in which they are woven; and the centrality is partly due to the didactic nature of Asante symbols.

Batiks, tie-dye, screen printing and wax prints are more commonly used today in the creation of African clothing. Asantes use them not just for everyday wear, but also for creating clothes for special ceremonies and events. The quality of the fabric and the complexity of the design differentiate everyday wear from formal wear. In Clarke's (2002:112) own words

“the heritage of the African past, the vibrant colours and flamboyant designs of wax-printing cloths are more evocative of the African of today. Wax printed cloth and cheaper roller-printed imitations have become one of the most widely distributed forms of African textiles today, produced and worn in almost every country in sub-Saharan Africa. In the process they have become intricately entwined with local social and political life despite their external origin and factory production.”

In effect, with the ever growing dynamism of culture wax prints have become interwoven into the socio-cultural, religious and political frame work of the economy of sub-Saharan Africa. The incorporation and imitation of traditional symbols and philosophy into today's wax prints are evident with these examples shown below.



Plate 157: Wax cotton print titled “staff of kingship” based on an Asante royal sword captured by the British in the Anglo-Asante wars, Printer-Haarlem Cotton Company



Plate 158: Wax cotton print, titled “*Metewosoa na masore*” Adinkra cloth design on ‘seersucker’ fabric; GTMC, African print, 2000s.-from catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-unpublished

5.7 Resist dyeing fabrics

These fabrics have evolved and found its way into Asante traditional textiles with intricate *adinkra* symbols especially in batiks and konkonte prints and sometimes sewn into shirts, skirts and tops, ‘*bubu*’ as souvenirs that reflect Asante culture. These fabrics can now be found in all craft shops in Asante and worn to all occasions. Some examples of such fabric with *adinkra* symbols are shown below.



Plate 159: A batik fabric with some *Adinkra* symbols-from catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-unpublished



Plate 160: A Batik Pictorial showing some *Adinkra* symbols at the base-from catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-unpublished

5.8 Designs in the cloth

The design found in a particular cloth as well as the wearer also gives the cloth its significance either aesthetically or functionally. All traditional symbols like *adinkra* carry messages expressed in philosophy, and concept that communicate not only to the wearer but also to both people in authority as well as common observers. Preserved *adinkra* cloth with such motifs as *Bese Saka* which literally means a bunch of cola nuts, signifies affluence and power; *mframadan*, which means fortitude or readiness to face vicissitudes of life; also symbolizes excellence and elegance. *Nkruma Kεεε* also symbolizes greatness and such combinations of symbols can be used exclusively for kings. Golfof, (1988: 37-38) in 1825, describes the clothing of the *Asantehene* during an *awukudae* ceremony, that the large white cotton cloth which partly covered the *Asantehene's* shoulder, was studded all over with Arabic writings in various coloured inks, and of a most brilliant well-formed character indicating that phonographic symbols (letter writings) were used in some cloth production.. A recent development is the incorporation of phonographic symbols (letters) in Twi or English, in the *adinkra* cloth symbols as shown by the examples below.



Fig: 102: Phonographic symbols in Twi and English
From G. F. Kojo Arthur and Robert Rowe – 1998-2006 website
(<http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/akanclothintro.htm>)

Designs which have an educational significance are also enduringly popular. The “Alphabet” design popular for many decades are an even more explicit example of phonographic symbols and this practice seems to be catching on in the designing of wax prints. An example is shown below



Plate 161: A contemporary Ghanaian version of the long established “Alphabet” wax print design-from African textiles by Clarke - 2002

Throughout West Africa according to Gilfoy, (1988:42), weavers apart from the traditional elements, adapted foreign symbolic elements to suit their own needs, creating unique motifs to express cultural values. The history of textile trade the world over is full of such examples of adaptability and adjustment that enrich the total cultural sphere he added.

5.9 Traditional symbolic cloths as emblems of wealth

Asante traditional clothing is known for its colourful fabrics and distinctive designs. Rattray, (1959) states that yellow in a cloth connotes wealth, prosperity of the traditional political system. The colourful clothes of Asante first became a sign of wealth during the period of the trans-Saharan trade when traders used strip cloth as a form of currency

according to Rattray (1959). Picton and Mack (1995) affirm this by saying that the gift of textiles is a means by which social relationships are created and maintained. Picton and Mack (1995) further state that cloths were woven specifically for use as currency not only in the Gold Coast but in Zaire and Sierra Leone as well. Asante traditional cloths are also marketable commodities and have been the subject of extensive trade within and beyond the continent of Africa.

Rattray further states that the development of trade with the world established a ruling class in Africa, which in turn developed a need for luxurious items. The quality and colour of Asante textiles became an expression of wealth, affluence and knowledge in societies and also an indication of social hierarchy. *Owusu-Ansah*, (2008) also states that among the bridal dowry during marriage, *Kente* was an indication that the bride is worth more than gold. The development of *Kente* cloth in Asante illustrates how the use of cloth differentiated people by status as fine *Kente* cloth symbolized wealth, authority and leadership.

5.10 Colour as a symbol of royalty and social status

Some of the symbolic colours that may be associated with wealth in a traditional cloth include yellow, gold, orange, etc. Gold in this case described as a symbol of royalty, continuous life, the rule of a king, and most importantly the prosperity of an individual and that of the state is quite a dominant colour in the traditional cloth. Traditional cloths woven in such colours are very expensive and anyone seen in such a cloth is considered as wealthy, hence the expression, “symbol of wealth”. Picton and Mack, (1995: 11) share

in this notion that particular colours or decorative embellishments or shapes of garment may have cultural value such that the wearer is immediately associated with the possession of great wealth or status.

Among Asantes, according to McLeod, (1981) the king is the most respected figure in the community. He is perceived as the commander of the whole community. He also serves as a correspondent between subjects and their ancestors. As his peculiarity is, so the cloth that he wears, which is very much different from the rest of his subjects. Bright colours are worn to signify his wealth and position as the king. The cloth is specially made for him and he is the only one that should wear that kind of cloth; an example is plate 128.

5.11 Colour symbolism as an emblem of political power

The red in a traditional *Kente* cloth connotes passion, the passion of political determination, struggle, and defense. Asantes also believe that red holds protective powers. In the days of war, when warriors were going for war in the defense of their society, red head bands were used. This was believed to instill power and also to express their grievances in whatever situation that confronted them as indicated by Rattray, (1959). He reiterates that yellow in a cloth represents fertility and vitality. The colour therefore signifies the wealth of that traditional political system.

Rattray, (1959) and Nana Owusu-Ansah, (2008) affirm that the colour black denotes seriousness and a union with ancestors. It implies spiritual awareness. Affirming this Golfey, (1988: 37) recount that during *awukudae* ceremonies, the *Asantehene* ritually

provides food to the blackened stools believed to house ancestral spirits in order to ensure the well-being of the Asante nation. The green found in the *Kente* cloth also signifies the renewal and growth in the political system of the traditional societies. The blue represents the presence of God and His omnipotence. This is a significance of the authority and power of the traditional rulers which is given to them by God to exercise thereby, says *Nana Owusu-Ansah*, (2008). It can therefore be said that the traditional colours used within the traditional *Kente* cloth has political connotations as the various colours used in the weaving holds considerable significance as an emblem of political power.

5.11.1 Colours of cloths and its significance

The clothing that is mostly used by the traditional priest is symbolic in every sense. They do not use every colour of cloth in their worship. Colours used are believed to have spiritual significance and powers. For instance, a priest or priestess going to make a sacrifice to the gods after a victory in war, or any other joyous situation, will not be seen wearing a black or red cloth but pure white, a symbol of purity and gratitude. This is because white color is the symbol of purity and cleanliness so on such occasion a white cloth is used. McLeod (1981: 149) summarizes this by saying that light-coloured cloths such as white, yellow-gold, and cream are considered to be of good omen, associated with innocence and joy.

If a traditional priest or worshiper wears a red or black coloured cloth, different connotations may be given to it. There might be either an outbreak of some disease or a pandemic in the society that demands sacrifices to be made by the priest to avert the

situation. White cloths that sometimes contain a little blue are worn by chiefs when making sacrifices to the ancestral stools to solicit the ancestors' assistance. The red coloured cloth is meant for close blood relation, anger, aggression, war, violence, riot, danger, calamity and the life force.

These colour symbolisms direct the traditional worshiper on what needs to be done to be accepted by the gods on any occasion (*Nana Owusu-Ansah, 2008*). Then again, a traditional worshiper in a black cloth also connotes illumination and power with the ancestral world. According to tradition, black, blue and indigo represents death and darkness. All these interpretations agree very well with the ideologies and philosophies of Asante culture (*Nana Owusu-Ansah, 2008*).



Plate 162: *Asantehene* in one of his royal *Kente* cloths- from the 5th Anniversary Celebration Magazine *Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Asantehene* 1999-2004

Such cloths are worn by prominent people or even kings as a result of this carefulness and appropriate designs and colours used to produce them. A cloth produced by a master weaver will definitely be expensive and consequently only the rich can afford. In the



Plate 163: A chief and his entourage in colourful *Kente* cloths, from G. F. Kojo Arthur and Robert Rowe – 1998-2006 website (<http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/akanclothintro.htm>)

festival of Asantes or in a durbar of chiefs, there is always a cultural display of traditional cloth in very bright expressive colours like gold and yellows which are symbols that connote wealth in Asante.

5.12 Kente as an emblem of wealth

The amounts of energy and dexterity put into the production of Kente have made it a highly priced good that makes the poor difficult to afford. When in a stole form, its affordability is manageable by many people and appreciated when the full cloth is wrapped over the body. Interestingly, such large *Kente* cloths are purchased by wealthy

people. For instance, the full cloth is sold at 100 Ghana cedis for plain weave (female cloth) and that of the male at 200 Ghana cedis. For a design weave, the cloth costs about 200 Ghana cedis (for a female one) and 400-600 Ghana cedis for male cloth depending on the quality of weave. The *Kente* weave *Sika futoro*, which literally means "gold dust," symbolizes wealth. Before the use of coins and paper money as medium of exchange, the *Kente sika futoro* was likened to gold dust, and was both used as a medium of exchange among Asantes and was therefore considered as a symbol of wealth and prosperity affirmed by *Nana Owusu-Ansah*, (2008). The predominant use of intricately textured patterns in yellow, orange and red replicates the visual characteristic of gold dust. The *Kente, Sika Futoro*, a cloth for chiefs, Queens and royals, symbolizes the wealth, elegance, and honorable achievements of the chief and the kingdom.

5.13 As emblem of religious power

Emblem of religious power refers to a special visual symbolic designs or objects that represent spiritual authority.

5.13.1 Performance of rites

Asante traditional religion is characterized by rituals in the veneration of ancestral spirits. Ritual is a form of communication in its own right. Rituals involve performance and symbolic bodily action displayed in a tangible, visible way. They have the power to focus experience and thus function to intensify the sense of the sacred. It can be as simple as bowing one's head before a man, chanting a certain phrase, or removing footwear so says

McLeod, (1981). Rituals reveal the sacred through specific symbolic actions and objects, including procession, but all these are never done without the use of traditional clothing.

It is said that, your appearance determines the sort of person you are. Through the use of clothing's, it is therefore not difficult to identify a king from his subject, a priest from his congregation and any other groupings. A kind of cloth may be worn by many people, but how a traditional priest might wear it would make him come out very different from all others. That is, the manner in which the cloth may be worn speaks volumes of the kind of authority and power of that priest or the individual as Rattray, (1959) recalled. For instance, the upper parts of the body may be left bare and the lower parts covered in a way that is acceptable to the gods or in a way that is expressive for a chief. Golfoy, (1988: 38) recalls that the power of the ruler also extended to important spirit shrines. In *Bono* north of Kumasi, *Kente* cloths are still used to dress altars for spirits thus exhibiting the spiritual significance of *Kente*.

5.13.2 Occasional cloth

The attractive symbolic patterns of traditional clothing have widened their usage to cover other occasions like festivals, customary rites traditional worship, among others. In Asante traditional worship, there are quite a number of occasions which are observed. These occasions demand certain kinds of cloths and symbols for that event. For instance, when a traditional priest is pouring libation in expression of gratitude to his ancestors, ceremonial cloths are used. Textiles are not only used to clothe the living, obviously, but also the dead as well as providing clothing for the manifestations of the world of the dead

(Picton and Mack, (1995: 13). Here too colour is likely to be of significance and certain kinds of textiles may be produced specifically for such purposes. The colour of the cloth normally used in Asante for such occasions ironically is white probably paying their last respect to the deceased.

5.14 Kente as an emblem of political power

As political power, a traditional cloth is widely used in the political institutions of Asante and the rest of the world- be it chieftaincy, national political institution or western politics. The *Kente*, like other Asante or *Akan* artworks, has been used to inscribe political statements upon the corridors of power and a form of political commentary suggests Clarke, (2002). The largest known Kente cloth, measuring about 3.7x6.4 metres, is the piece Ghana presented to the United Nations when Ghana joined this world organization in 1960. This cloth is called *tikoro nko agyina* - one head does not constitute a council. This was to state that Ghana was taking its legitimate place in the new world order ushered in by the wave of decolonization that was sweeping through Asia, Africa and other colonized territories (Kojo Arthur and Robert Rowe - 1998-2001- from (http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/kentecloth_samples.html- website).

The *Kente* cloth is worn by some leading political figures of Ghana. In the past certain designs were specifically made to be worn by the royals. In the early nineteenth century rising economic prosperity made it possible for non-royals to begin to demand for what were worn by the royals. This has given rise to innovations that identify the royals from those who are not; example is the *Kente* cloth called *wonya wo ho a, wonye dehyee* - you

may be rich, but you are not of a royal descent. Apparently this cloth is exclusively worn by the royals to distinguish themselves from the emerging class of rich traders. During his inauguration as President of Ghana in January 2001, Mr. J. A. Kufuor wore a Kente cloth called *dako yesere* - We will smile one day exclusively designed for his inauguration (Kojo Arthur and Robert Rowe 1998-2001) from:

(http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/kentecloth_samples.html- website)

Clarke, (2002: 71) records that the first president, Kwame Nkrumah after Ghana's independence in 1957 adopted the wearing of *Kente* and other locally woven cloths as a visual symbol of his commitment to cultural nationalism and Pan-African unity. The *Kente* weft design called *fahia kotwere Agyeman* encodes the rise of bureaucracy at the Asante royal court. The use of *Kente* has become widespread; however its importance has remained and held in high esteem in the Asante family and the entire country. Duplication of some *Kente* cloths have been the order of the day and therefore the chiefs especially the *Asantehene*, exclusively continue to employ special weavers to create new designs that convey their supremacy as chiefs of Asante and the custodians of Asante culture.

Apart from the exclusive *Kente* weaves for the *Asantehene*, other varieties of *Kente* patterns have been invented, which convey political concepts. For example the *Obaakofoo Mmu Man* (one person does not rule a nation) pattern symbolizes democratic rule. It manifest's the Asante and other *Akan* system of governance based on participatory democracy and warns against autocratic rule. The nine squares in this type of *Kente*

represent *Mpuankron* (nine tufts of hair) a ceremonial hair cut of some royal functionaries who help rulers make decisions (Steven J. Salm, Toyin Falola – 2002: 88).

5.14.1 Kente, an emblem for special religious occasions

Religious activities such as Muslim service, Sunday church service, Easter and Christmas festivities have become drafted activities in Asante culture. *Kente* has become indispensable in religious activities. It is obvious to note that in most churches *Kente* pieces are used to decorate some vantage points on the walls especially the area where the pastor stands to preach. *Kente* stoles are used by most women during church service or religious gathering. This they wrap around their necks or are placed on their shoulders. In response to Vice-President *Alu Mahama's* advocate for traditional wear on Friday which was instituted in 2007, most Asante Muslims wear *Kente* shirts to the Friday congregational prayer.

5.15 Symbolisms in Asante traditional textiles; and the factors of change namely education, religion, and globalization

Traditional textiles play a major role in reflecting the cultures from which they came. They are simultaneously personal, societal, religious and political, and they are valuable vehicles for the spread of ideas from one culture to another (Gilfoy, 1988:11); which is an indication that this marketable commodity is liable to change as various cultures engage in cross cultural trade.

Before the invasion of the external factors of change, Asante enjoyed a very harmonious educative symbolic culture. The communicative spirit of *Kente* as a symbol of Asante cultural identity, brought about an act of honesty, respect, honour, and loyalty which highly had a positive impact on the society. Values including attitudes, behavior, habits and beliefs were deeply felt in the lives of the people. One of the ethnic groups that upholds and gives great respect to their symbols is Asantes. This has led to their rich culture reflecting in all artworks and more particularly in the production of traditional textiles.

Pre-independence (before 1957) came the exploitation and the integration of the traditional textile designs of *Adinkra* symbols with the ornamental and arabesque designs. But the twenty-first century (post-independence) has also come with its own style and modernization. The competition between the use of traditional textiles and the western or imported textiles of late is keen. Asante traditional textiles symbolism has been considerably affected by foreign influence. These factors of change among other are Education, Christianity, Urbanization and foreign culture.

5.15.1 Social education and the factors of change

The *Adinkra* cloth is one important coded symbolic artifact that exhibits some aspects of the culture of Asante. The *Adinkra* cloth has played a significant role in furthering the organization of social and political life in the Asante society. For instance, in the past, the final royal funereal rites were marked by wearing specially designed *adinkra* mourning cloths. Today *adinkra* is used for all funerals irrespective of the rank of the deceased

person. Though in the Asante tradition, the significance of *adinkra* is to bid farewell to the spirit of the dead, varieties of *Adinkra* cloths have been produced and worn for other occasions like durbars, festivals, naming ceremonies, and church activities depending on the symbols and the background colour used.

This development has been welcomed in the social structure of the community, in that, the symbols continue to educate the society irrespective of their use provided the symbols that are employed befit the particular occasion which demands the use of *Adinkra* cloths. However, several of these symbols are now being combined and used irrespective of the messages they carry across, probably due to ignorance on the part of today's producers, or the desire to bring innovations and more creativity.

Several of the symbols in the *adinkra* cloths record social changes i.e. specific technological developments and historical events that led to particular changes or factors that influenced the direction of such changes as a result of external and internal factors. Examples, are the *aban* (castle, fortress), *Apremo* (Canon), *kurontire ne akwamu* (council of state), *ohene tuo* (the king's gun), UAC *nkanea* (UAC lights), *kookoo dua* (cocoa tree), and *sedee or serewa* (cowrie shell) are all symbols recorded to educate and remind the general public of such historical events in the society. To the Asantes, *aban* (castle, fortress), reminds them of the seat of colonial government during the British rule 1664-1920s and the take over of *kumase* around 1900- 01 after the famous *Yaa Asantewaa* and the Asante-British War of 1900-01 in which the Asantes were defeated; and then of course the *Osu* castle being the seat of government for the republic of Ghana since 1957

to date. *Apremo* (canon) is a symbol of resistance against foreign domination, superior military strategy. This motif represents the superior military strategy with which Asantes and *Akwamu* defeated the Europeans who had superior arms. An *Asantehene* is said to have remarked: "The white man brought his canon to the bush but the bush was stronger than the canon."(Kojo Arthur and Robert Rowe - 1998-2001) from the website (http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/kentecloth_samples.html)

Etuo (gun), though foreign, has been incorporated into important political as well as funereal rituals of the Asante. By way of education, when the king-elect takes the oath of office in Asante, he is given the *ohene tuo ne akofena* (king's gun and sword) which he wields and fires to demonstrate his ability to honor his responsibility as the military commander-in-chief to ensure protection, security, and peace of the society. In the case of a royal funeral, the king's gun is fired in the morning to signal the beginning of the funeral, and is fired again in the evening to mark the end of the funeral for the day. (Nketia, 1969: 144) affirms this by saying that the *ohene tuo* "is an important means of announcing the event of death and the journey of the deceased to both the living and the dead, near and far."

The word "cedi" is derived from the *Akan* word *sedee or serewa* (cowrie shell) found among the *Adinkra* symbols. Cowrie shells were the most popular currency in Asante and mostly accepted for barter trade. Cowrie shells were also used as currency in foreign exchange transactions before the arrival of the Europeans. Later, many were brought in by Dutch and English traders through the Coast ports of West Africa.

Apart from being used as currency, cowries were used in many other ways. One use was as special-purpose currency: payments for fines, divination, funerals, initiation into secret societies and as decoration: on clothing, drums, divining chains, headdresses, ritual masks and furniture, and in games and in computation. History has it that the *Asantehene* and his treasurers kept accurate accounts balancing in every twenty days with the aid of cowries shell to tally their sums. (<http://www.mbad.org/cowrie.htm>)

For traditional veneration, the cowry shells surround the waist, the crown of the dancer and on clothing, drums, divining chains, headdresses, ritual masks and furniture. The diviner equipment in Asante included four cowries shell in which he rolls out and examines their positions to predict the most favorable remedy. Considered as a magic agent, a talisman of fertility and in some cases as currency in foreign exchange, cowry shells was believed to possess mystical qualities, valued for their durability, and used as burial offering, fortune telling, and as talisman in rite of Passage. In a particular ceremonial occasion's cowries shell are required for payments during funerals and initiation into secret societies. Cowries were also used as a sign of wealth, prestige, especially on royal thrones, and as adornment, crowns, beadwork on musical instruments.

Beginning in the twentieth century as cowries depreciated in value, it became too expensive to transport them from one market to the next. As such actual transitions for high-valued items were carried out in gold dust, kola nuts, salt, iron, copper, brass, livestock, etc .By no means did cowry shells disappear after the British government introduced coinage. Cowry shells are still an integral part of daily life in many villages of Asante although the use of it as ordinary currency has been discouraged or outlawed.

Today the cowry shell is used in perhaps the same ways as our ancestor have used them, they can be found in contemporary jewelry, clothing, hairstyles, contemporary art, etc.

(<http://www.mbad.org/cowrie.htm>)

Regarding the *Kente* cloth, apart from its aesthetic quality, it has symbols that communicate the value of its figurative and communicative quality to the general public. The colours and woven patterns in *Kente* also have symbolic significances that reflect the ideology of the society. Names given to various *Kente* designs have proverbial meanings and wise sayings. They are also used to mark events in the lives of some important personalities in the society.

5.15.2 Religion as a factor of change

Before the independence of Ghana, Christians rejected many indigenous symbols, customs and beliefs. They described the whole culture as “fetishistic”. This has continued to this era because most of the symbols in Asante traditional textiles have pictures of masks, animals, totems and other symbols that are a bit weird. Some Christians have the belief that these weird symbols are used by “pagans” in their worship so they prefer foreign textiles materials.

Though most of the textile materials used in sewing clothing for the clergy or for decorating the church are imported, Christianity today, has incorporated much of Asante traditional textiles into this religion, in that, some traditional symbols that relate to the attributes of God has been introduced alongside *Kente* symbols. Examples of these

symbols used by Christians are *Gye Nyame*, *Adwenasa*, *Obi nnka obi*, *Akoma* etc. With the advent of Christianity, most of these Asante textile symbols have been modified by the use of various element and principles of design to make them aesthetically beautiful. Most of the new symbols now introduced into *adinkra* symbolism reveal religious ideology. (Appendix II)

5.15.3 Education as a factor of change

Indicatively whiles indigenous art forms express ethnic values, ideals, beliefs, attitudes and philosophies in excellent details and free styles, modern art emphasizes the aesthetic value of formalized style. Education led to the establishment of schools where new ideas, techniques in the application of new materials and equipment were taught. Formal education has influenced the principles of traditional designing through the formal organization of elements of art such as lines, shape, form, texture, space and colour according to the principles of balance, variety, rhythm, harmony, proportion, scale etc.

Today, people want to receive knowledge through the formal way (learning in the classroom) as against informal education. Most of the knowledge they receive in textiles in the classroom today, influence students to produce foreign designed materials with little or no taste for the traditional symbols. This tends to develop interest in modern designs to the detriment of Asante symbolism in Asante traditional textiles.

The *Adinkra* symbols are rendered with computer programming for diverse alterations of these symbols. In meeting the so called “international standards”, different forms of

Adinkra symbols have been modified, distorted and experimented upon using foreign designs as the modernization standard. Modern designers, who are manipulating the *Adinkra* symbols in the context of modern standards, must not forget the fact *Adinkra* symbols address Asante cosmology, political beliefs, social organization and ideology.

If these symbols will be used as they are without alterations, modernization may be an instrument to advance the course of traditional symbolism. Indigenous artists on the other hand do not alter or make modifications of the symbols they use, but with formal education, some modern artists modify the original symbols and come out with something new by putting the various elements and principles of design together. The result is the distortions of the symbols we see in our fabric prints today.

Changes are seen in the type of colours employed, the method of printing adapted and the diversity of fabrics used. The printing medium is a black foreign printing paste instead of the traditional *adinkra duro*, the method adapted is the screen printing instead of block printing and the fabrics used for printing is any cellulosic fabric of all shades of colours.

A good finish is what attracts people to a work of art. In the classroom, artists are taught how to finish their work to attract customers to buy them. On the contrary, most wayside Asante textile producers frown on that because they see them as a waste of time, energy and materials. As a result, designs of fabrics normally bleed due to the use of poor quality dye/prints and lack of accuracy due to the manual way of printing; and therefore buyers prefer foreign textile goods to that of traditionally produced textiles.

Although education has influenced symbolism negatively, these traditional symbols have also influenced education positively. This is due to the fact that these symbols have been introduced in the manufacture of machine prints. Textile producers have now seen the need to incorporate these symbols in their works to portray African identity and also to meet the needs of tourists who patronize textile goods portraying traditional symbols.

The negative influence is seen in the fact that the educated for a long time prefer to wear only the formal suites designed by the Western designers with their own fabric to the office (Osei, 2002:117). This can be said that, our contact with the Western countries took away a little part of us. Again it can also be said that because education was introduced by the Western countries, prescribed uniforms were all made from printed materials introduced by them thereby sidelining their own traditional textile cloths to the background.

Another negative effect that education brings to bear on Asante traditional textiles is the unfriendly competition foreign designs have brought. Western designs look so simple and pleasing to the eye, while traditional designs are complex, complicated and difficult to understand. Therefore the youth of today prefer to go in for the enticing western clothes.

The influx of foreign culture has promoted urbanization. This has had a very strong repelling impact on the Asante community. Education until recently dwelt on foreign concepts of fashion even in interior decoration and so most of our interior designers

worked using foreign fabrics and its accessories to produce Western styles for the communities' consumption. Appreciation and utilization of traditional textiles were very low especially in the urban and municipal communities of Asante.

Dyeing is no longer done with the understanding of traditional symbolism. Instead colours are selected based on its aesthetic appeal; fashion is designed regardless of its traditional philosophy. Colours are selected without thinking of their traditional meaning. Combinations of symbols are made regardless of their interpretations; Choice of fabrics is made regardless of the occasion. Production is based solely on the interest of the buyer instead of the weaver. *Kente* weaving is no different. No traditional laid down notion is made in relation to the production of textile weaves as known to Asantes. The traditional symbolic concept is gradually fading away due to the introduction of foreign concepts of designing. This sad phenomenon is weakening the cultural heritage of the society and the symbolic philosophy that should guide the youth of the society is being eroded resulting in less or no impact to the life of the people in the community.

5.15.4 Globalization as a factor of change

Urbanization an element of globalization is defined as the shift of population from the rural areas to cities and the resulting growth of urban areas. Urbanization therefore can be said to have caused more harm to the traditional symbols than any other reason. The argument is that the older generation, who are skilful in the production of traditional textiles, keeps on dwindling since the youth have been migrating from the villages to the cities in search of white colour jobs which are unavailable. The effect is that the future

prospects of Asante traditional symbolism look gloomy since a handful of labour force is left in the countryside to produce the various traditional clothes, train and sustain the Asante indigenous textile industry that uses Asante traditional symbols.

More often than not, people tend to throw away their rich culture especially in the area of dressing when they move to the cities. This is so because people in the rural areas, value their culture which ultimately affects their way of dressing. Customarily it is expected that every Asante would wear *Adinkra* cloth during funerals but some Asantes staying in the cities do not really care of what they wear for funerals; ignore indigenous Asante symbolic fabrics and go in for machine printed fabrics, shirts and suits, as the survey reveals.

A positive influence of traditional symbolism on modernization, especially in the urban areas, is the introduction of clan designed cloths. The machine printed *oyoko* cloth shown below is sometimes seen at funerals and other joyous ceremonies depending on the background colour of the cloth. This exhibition of patriotism to ones rich cultural values is rarely seen in the urban towns. The cloth has the symbol of the falcon standing on a stool. At each side is one elephant sheltered under an umbrella. It also has the symbol of small stools encased with some elements of design as lines; dot, shapes etc. It also demonstrates balance, unity, variety, contrast, and harmony. Most of the Asante traditional symbols used in the olden days have been altered a little in shape. Some parts of the symbols have been taken off and some elements and principles of design introduced to make the design artistically beautiful to suit modern taste.



Plate 164: A Machine printed *Oyoko* Clan Cloth showing the various traditional symbols. (Kojo Arthur and Robert Rowe - 1998-2001) from the website (http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/kentecloth_samples.html)

The art of producing traditional clothes was formally handed down from father to children most often making it a family business. This makes it difficult for others outside the family cycle to learn textile-making until now when it has been introduced into the western educational setting. Due to economic difficulty most of Asante population depend on second hand clothing which is much cheaper and affordable thereby ignoring traditional clothes (Osei, 2002:117). Other factors that are affecting the Asante traditional textile is the expensive nature of the cloths produced like the ‘*Kente*’ and “*Ntiamu*” compared to foreign clothes. This is because it is labour intensive to produce our local textiles.

Another area which the traditional textiles is losing its advantage to the foreign textiles is the fact that most traditional textiles produced for funerals are in the earth colours (red, brown, black) and so makes its use very limited. Moreover, it can also be said that because the West is more urbanized and has the mechanism to produce more, they

produce enough to meet the growing demands of their society at a faster rate as compared to the slower pace some traditional textiles like *Kente* and *ntiamu* cloths are produced.

Another very important issue is the duplication and imitation of the original designs of the traditional textiles by the Western countries. This affects the sale of the Asante traditional textiles since the prices of the ones produced by the West using these designs are lower, as compared to the prices of the ones produced locally. This is due to the fact that most of the fibres and materials used for the production of Asante traditional textiles are imported from the West and so makes their production expensive.

In Ghana, the population of the youth outweighs that of the old age. Most of the youth patronize foreign clothes because of low price, quality and comfort. On the contrary these Asante traditional textiles are quite expensive. Although the government of Ghana has advised that Ghanaian clothes should be worn by Ghanaian workers on Fridays, most people do not comply with it. Others put on African wear but decide to combine it with foreign materials like jeans

Under interior decoration, most Asantes have decorated their rooms with foreign textile materials. Hardly will one see an Asante whose curtains have these Asante traditional symbols. Also, during weddings, adoring ceremonies, engagements and funerals, people often use foreign materials to decorate the venue; this shows a clear indication of their preference. However, some machine-printed fabrics made in foreign countries exhibit Asante traditional symbols. In this case, various elements and principles of design are

added to enhance the beauty of the cloth. An example is *aniwa* (love should come and look at me) and *Akyekyedikyi* (the back of a tortoise) as shown below respectively. Such fabrics are normally used for joyous occasions.



Plate 165: Traditional Proverbial Symbols in Machine Printed Fabrics."(Kojo Arthur and Robert Rowe - 1998-2001) from the website (http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/kentecloth_samples.html)

The ideology of traditional symbols have infiltrated into the production of machine designed print positively awakening the promotion of the rich Asante cultural symbolism using modern technology. Although these changes have influenced symbolism in Asante traditional textile, the change is not that significant because the majority of Asante traditional textiles that are in high demand abroad are produced manually here in Asante. Asante's in the United Kingdom have festivals like the *Kente* and *adinkra* festival during which, various designs and symbols of *Kente* and *adinkra* are exhibited to sell the rich symbolism of Asante traditional textiles

In some instances, foreign dyeing processes have replaced local dyeing processes especially in the towns of Asante. It is a well known phenomenon that locally produced

dyes are still used in dyeing *kuntunkuni*, *kobene* and *brisi* but its patronage is phasing out because of its low fastness to washing as compared to foreign dyes. These days it does not matter the nature of the cloth, whether it is black, red or brown, and regardless of its symbols, it can be used for any funeral ceremony. The “*Kaba* and *slet*” considered in terms of modesty on the part of women and the putting on of cloth highly cherished by men have all been negatively influenced by foreign culture. It is not surprising that men and women now wear shirts and pairs of trousers to funerals without a feeling of guilt. Traditional symbols used for printing traditional cloths are selected on their aesthetic merits instead of the philosophies they portray; once they appeal to buyers including tourists.

Kente weaving, the pride of Asante, has suffered the same fate as the other traditional fabrics. The introduction of new technology is gradually declining the prestige of *Kente*. Its symbols are being imitated in machine prints and even produced in foreign countries and imported into Ghana by its own citizens. Asante traditional textiles have undergone tremendous influence yet still surviving through time due to the persistence of Asante cultural institutions that have maintained their stand on the use and preservation of this prestigious heritage. Other major factors that have contributed to the survival of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles are that the Christian churches are beginning to embrace the indigenous culture and are utilizing their symbolic concept for Christian worship. Consequently, Asante traditional textiles and the use of Asante traditional symbols have somehow become an integral part of Christian worship today.

Art schools and colleges are modifying their curricula to incorporate Asante cultural heritage of this noble kingdom. Nevertheless the effect is deeply felt and realized in the everyday life of the people. As to how long these preserved heritage would be able to withstand the magnitude of the above discussed influences on the symbolism in Asante traditional textiles is yet to be told.

5.16 Summary on the impact of symbolism in Asante textiles

Chapter five dealt with the important role traditional textile symbolism plays in the economic, social and cultural development of Asante, traditional textiles as an emblem of wealth, political and religious power; and the factors of change namely education, Christianity, urbanization and foreign culture that contribute positively or negatively on symbolism in Asante traditional textiles to determine the cultural status of traditional textile symbolism in Asante culture.

Appliqué as a traditional textile cloth displays a number of symbols that promotes economic, development of Asante. Appliquéd items have been well patronized by the international market since 1990s and their direct and striking imagery have made them highly collectable outside Ghana. Delving into any department of *Adinkra* Cloth production is an income generation endeavor. *Adinkra* cloth has become a nationwide commodity and a valuable traditional industrial asset which also provides employment to a large number of people.

Socially, appliquéd items communicate a lot about the social status of its user. Whether it is an umbrella, *Okunin Ntoma*, *batakari kese* or Asafo flag, the colours and the constituent symbols of that particular appliquéd item evoke complex concepts that relate to social and political organization, beliefs and attitudes, moral and ethical issues about the self and one's responsibilities, knowledge and education. The choices of a particular cloth correspond with the relative mood of the individual in that *Adinkra* also makes use of totems and symbols to address social issues and cankers. The message is that without symbols culture would be incomplete and the identity of the symbols would be lost. If all culture depends on symbols then *adinkra* symbols must not be left to posterity but rather utilize the philosophies they inhibit and repackage them.

Religiously *adinkra* clothes encoded with the kingdom's cultural practices reveal the belief in life after death and the need to lead exemplary lives to attain an ancestral status after death. The export of symbolic items like *Kente* and *Adinkra* in the form of garments, hats and bowties to Europe, the Americas, Asia and other African countries earn much needed foreign exchange for the government and private entrepreneurs and also promotes/encourage tourism in Ghana a form of contribution to national development. insistently, the use of these symbolic clothing's during political festivities and even as gifts to political figures who visit the country is an indication of their importance to international solidarity and nation building (Clarke, 2002:68).

Kente may be regarded as the icon of African cultural heritage around the world. It is adored, respected and internationally recognized due to its dazzling, multicolored patterns

of bright colors, geometric shapes, bold designs and ingenious nature. In deed it is a royal and sacred cloth worn mainly in times of extreme importance. *Kente*, like other Asante or *Akan* artworks, has been used to inscribe political statements upon the corridors of power and a form of political commentary suggests Clarke, (2002). The largest known *Kente* cloth, measuring about 3.7 x 6.4 metres, is the piece Ghana presented to the United Nations when Ghana joined this world organization in 1960.

Imageries of Asante *Asafo* flags, waist cloth and banners reveal animals that connote their associated qualities a metaphor for human traits and relationships. Culturally, Asantes have several thousand proverbs some of which are used in *Okunin Ntoma* and these patterns have names and meanings derived from the various genres of *Akan* oral literature that helped in promoting Asante cultural identity to people of other nationalities.

Since humans began to dress, elements of magic and power have been an integral part of human clothing's that presumably repels negative energy or the "evil eye," structured for safety and sometimes inscribed or marked with elaborate symbols to add protection to the wearer such is the worth of traditional textiles as an element of magic and safety.

In order of tradition and value, the category of traditional symbolic cloths is as follows;

1) weaves, 2) traditional prints, 3) embroidery, 4) dyeing, 5) batik, and 6) industrial prints

Among the exclusive ones by name are the *Kente* cloth, *mwuomu*, *ntiamu* and *Okunin Ntoma*, batiks, industrial machine prints.

According to Rattray (1959), these colourful traditional symbolic cloths became an emblem of wealth during the period of the trans-Saharan trade when traders used strip cloth as a form of currency. Picton and Mack (1995) affirm this by saying that the gift of textiles is a means by which social relationships are created and maintained. By this, such colours inexpensive cloths earned the expression, “symbol of wealth”. The amount of energy and dexterity put into the production of *Kente* has made it a highly priced good that makes the poor difficult to afford. The *Kente* weave *Sika futoro*, which literally means "gold dust," symbolizes wealth. Picton and Mack, (1995: 11) share in this notion that particular colours or decorative embellishments or shapes of garment may have cultural value such that the wearer is immediately associated with the possession of great wealth or status.

As regards colour symbolism as an emblem of political power, Rattray, (1959) and *Nana Owusu-Ansah*, (2008) agree that the colour black denotes seriousness and a union with ancestors. It implies spiritual awareness. Affirming this Golfof, (1988: 37) recount that during *awukudae* ceremonies, the *Asantehene* ritually provides food to the blackened stools believed to house ancestral spirits in order to ensure the well-being of the Asante nation. The green found in the *Kente* cloth also signifies the renewal and growth in the political system of the traditional societies.

Generally, colours used are believed to have spiritual significance and powers. For instance, a priest or priestess going to make a sacrifice to the gods after a victory in war, or any other joyous situation, will not be seen wearing a black or red cloth but pure white,

a symbol of purity and gratitude. This is because white color is the symbol of purity and cleanliness so on such occasion a white cloth is used.

Rituals reveal the sacred through specific symbolic actions and objects, including procession, but all these are never done without the use of traditional clothing. Gilfoy, (1988: 38) recalls that the power of the ruler also extended to important spirit shrines. In *Bono* north of Kumasi, *Kente* cloths are still used to dress altars for spirits thus exhibiting the spiritual significance of *Kente* an emblem of religious power. *Kente* has become indispensable in religious activities. It is interesting to note that in most churches *Kente* pieces are used to decorate some vantage points on the walls especially the area where the pastor stands to preach. *Kente* stoles are used by most women during church service or religious gathering.

Traditional textiles play a major role in reflecting the cultures from which they came. They are simultaneously personal, societal, religious and political, and they are valuable vehicles for the spread of ideas from one culture to another says Gilfoy, (1988:11); which is an indication that this marketable commodity is liable to change as various cultures engage in cross cultural trade. Today *adinkra* is used for all funerals irrespective of the rank of the deceased person. Again, *adinkra* symbols in the *adinkra* cloths record social changes i.e. specific technological developments and historical events that led to particular changes or factors that influenced the direction of such changes as a result of external and internal factors. Though most of the textile materials used in sewing clothing for the clergy or for decorating the church are imported, Christianity today, has

incorporated much of Asante traditional textiles into this religion, in that, some traditional symbols that relate to the attributes of God has been introduced alongside *Kente* symbols. Consequently, the use of Asante traditional symbols have somehow become an integral part of Christian worship today.

As regards education, most of the knowledge students receive in textiles in the classroom today, encourages students to produce foreign designed fabrics with little or no taste for the traditional symbols. They tend to develop interest in modern designs to the detriment of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles. The *Adinkra* symbols are rendered with computer programming for diverse alterations.

Customarily it is expected that every Asante would wear *Adinkra* cloth during funerals but due to urbanization some Asantes staying in the cities do not really care of what they wear for funerals; ignore indigenous Asante symbolic fabrics and go in for foreign printed fabrics, shirts and suits, as the survey reveals.

Hardly will one see an Asante whose curtains have these Asante traditional symbols. During weddings, adoring ceremonies, engagements and funerals, people often use foreign materials to decorate the venue; this shows a clear indication of their preference. Positively using modern technology, the ideology of traditional symbols have infiltrated into the production of machine designed prints, awakening the promotion of the rich Asante cultural symbolism.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

This thesis is a study of the cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles and the significance of Asante textiles in her culture. The study examines the cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles in the past and present and the role of traditional textile in the preservation, presentation and promotion of Asante culture and makes recommendations for its sustenance.

To prove or disprove the hypothesis that the knowledge and understanding and application of Asante cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles are a positive means of promoting Asante culture in the world even in the phase of external influences and they serve as a way of identifying the people of Asante, the research adopted the qualitative method and used mainly the interviews and questionnaire approach as its research tools. The primary data collected was field work among custodians of Asante culture, producers of Asante traditional textiles, distributors of traditional textiles and knowledgeable elders of Asante traditional textiles. Consumers of these products were also interviewed. The data collected were assembled, analyzed and discussed.

Symbolism forms an important aspect of Asante traditional textiles. Its uniqueness of exhibiting Asante identity reflects in their traditional textile culture and many traditional textile products and designs. This thesis traces some paths through complex and still largely un-researched history of Asante traditional textile artistry. It explores some of the ways in which traditional textiles have been and remains important in Asante societies,

prominent among them are the *Ntonso*, *Bonwire*, *Adanwomase*, *Wonoo* and Centre for National Culture, Kumasi traditional textile products.

It introduces some of the major symbols and symbolic fabrics that have flourished since the seventeenth to the twenty-first century, those which are both cherished in their local context and increasingly sought after by collectors and museums worldwide. It looks at the sources of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles and brings out the philosophies of this symbolism. Notable traditional fabrics that often differ between those made for local use - usually replete with hidden meanings or local proverbs - allowing locals to make particular statements with their costume – and those fabrics produced for overseas markets which tend to use more 'sanitized' symbology. The study brings to light the various changes and misinterpretations of Asante cultural symbolism and projects the true meanings of some selected indigenous cultural symbols used in Asante traditional textiles.

Finally, the pictures displayed demonstrate the understanding of the usage of traditional symbols in Asante traditional textiles and the projections it brings to social development. Especially the role it has played in the promotion of the culture, relating it to contemporary realities and demands of change which is an essential factor for development and progress.

The study also reviews and analyses the problems and challenges faced by traditional and contemporary textile craftsmen in the face of the infiltration of foreign symbolism to

assess the extent of its influence on Asante traditional textiles and puts forth recommendations and proposals for their co-existence with Asante cultural symbolism.

The findings project these facts that the Asante traditional textile production is culturally and symbolically motivated

- That with encouragement the Asante traditional textile producer will not completely set aside their cultural symbolism and replace it with foreign symbolism, and
- That the authenticity of Asante symbolism in traditional textiles will be sustained in the face of the enticing contemporary textile symbolism,

Indeed the knowledge and understanding of Asante cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles are a positive means of promoting Asante culture in the world and serve as a way of identifying the people of Asante. This affirms the adage that the strength of the people's culture and greatness lies in their ability to keep alive in the dark secrecy of symbolism the cherished truths and values of life.

6.2 Conclusions

Sequel to the objectives of this thesis, the researcher has successfully identified the cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles since the inception of the Asante kingdom in the seventeenth century; he has also examined the significance of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles, surveyed the role of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles in the promotion of Asante culture, and has shown that literary education, Christianity, and other foreign cultural elements, as well as urbanization,

acting as agents of change, have brought modifications and innovations into the symbolism in Asante traditional textiles. By this, the researcher has been able to answer all the research questions outlined in chapter one.

Traditional textiles have been and continue to be extremely important to many societies in Asante as they still reflect much of the social customs, culture and traditions of Asantes. Some selected cloths were examined to help unearth their significance in the society and the world at large. Asantes possesses an exceptionally long heritage of communicating their worldview through rituals and textiles. Beliefs concerning the social and religious foundations of Asante life have been woven into textiles, for many years.

Asantes wove cloths for functional everyday use, but they also embellished cloth with meaningful geometric symbols, abstract designs, and complex symbolic figures representing the mythological ideas of the society to the world. And this clearly supports the hypothesis that the knowledge, and understanding and application of Asante cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles are a positive means of promoting Asante culture in the world even in the phase of external influences and they serve as a way of identifying the people of Asante

If this thesis would be made accessible to educational institutions or made into an educational textbook for educational institutions, awareness would be created to preserve and present Asante symbolism in its true cultural context – serving as a corrective measure to avert misrepresentations. The central chapters focus on six traditional textiles

in particular – the *Kente* cloth, the *adinkra* cloth, embroidery cloth, appliqué cloth, batik cloth, and the African prints which have become part of Asante textile culture. These six textiles were chosen based on the hypothesis that they have debatably become the best known, not only in Ghana, but also throughout the world. The research confirms this to be true, due in part to the extensive global marketing of Asante traditional textiles in recent decades (Clarke, 2002: 64) and to the undeniable popularity of Asante traditional textiles in a variety of international markets.

It was discovered that there have indeed been changes in perception and meaning of these symbols first among the Asantes where the symbolic cloths are inextricably linked to their cultures and secondly, among the international community where the meaning and identity of the cloths vary. The vast array of textile symbols in Asante and its significance and utilization is just as varied and different as its application. Some Asante traditional symbols had certainly been collected and catalogued extensively, but there remains a vast array of traditional symbols yet to be catalogued. And this is an untapped area where other researchers can explore in addition to researching into the evolution of *adinkra* and *Kente* as worthy for further investigation.

The significance and potential of traditional textile producers in promoting further the Asante culture was made obvious. It is evident that certain factors essential for the full realization of their contribution are lacking. Problems and challenges facing the profession in a fast changing environment have been identified and suggestions put forth.

It is believed that the full potential of the profession can be realized when these suggestions translate into reality.

In conclusion, it can be said that Asante clothes have broad potentials for teaching many things: history, mathematics—in putting together of geometrically fitting patterns; language arts—how cloths are used to communicate certain messages as well as tell stories and weave poems, science and technology—textile technology and invention, the science of dyes: natural and synthetic fibers and dye; culture—the use of symbols in cloth designs to commemorate significant events in the life of a family, community or society; and organizational structures of art—elements of art and principles of design and how they affect the overall beauty of the cloth.

(<http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/outreach.htm>)

6.2.1 Testing the hypothesis

The thesis has also concluded by testing the hypothesis that the knowledge, and understanding and application of Asante cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles are a positive means of promoting Asante culture in the world even in the phase of external influences and they serve as a way of identifying the people of Asante, in that without the knowledge, and understanding and application of Asante cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles no meaningful promotion on Asantes culture can be achieved. And in the phase of external influences Asantes identity as a people would be misplaced.

In view of this, it could be posited that peradventure, without Asante cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles, the culture of Asante would not be unique and complete. The craze for Asante traditional textiles by the international communities coupled with the statistical data in the table below approve of this hypothesis that the knowledge, and understanding and application of Asante cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles are a positive means of promoting Asante culture in the world even in the phase of external influences and they serve as a way of identifying the people of Asante. Having been impressed by the people's awareness of the necessity of the hypothesis, a statistical report was compiled to verify the percentage of those who acknowledged the indispensable role the said hypothesis brings to bear on Asante culture, hence the following statistical data:

Table 6-1: Statistical data for testing the hypothesis

The Social statuses of the interviewees	Number of those interviewed	Number of those who gave Affirmative Answers	Number of those who gave Negative Answers	Percentage of those who gave Affirmative Answers	Percentage of those who gave Negative Answers
Traditional Rulers	4	10	-	100%	0%
Family Heads	10	50	-	100%	0%
Producers	220	220	-	100%	0%
General Public	200	200	-	100%	0%
Distributors	100	100	-	100%	0%
Recognized Knowledgeable Elders	6	6	-	100%	0%
Total	640	640	-	100%	0%

As seen in this table, all the 640 interviewees agreed with the efficacy of the hypothesis. It is therefore evident that the percentage of interviewees who believed in the efficacy of the hypothesis is one hundred. Those who considered the hypothesis to be true comprised four traditional rulers, ten family heads, two hundred and twenty textile producers, and two hundred of the general public. Others interviewed included one hundred traditional textile distributors and six recognized knowledgeable elders on Asante cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles.

All those interviewed confirmed the hypothesis to be essential and also agreed that without the knowledge, and understanding and application of Asante cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles, no meaningful promotion of Asante culture would be achieved and that the identity of Asante is tied to its cultural symbolism displayed in its traditional textiles. The thesis has further disclosed that without this identification, nothing would have been attained to differentiate the traditional Asante during their festivity from the non Asante; and that to eliminate Asante symbolism from its traditional textiles is to cage in the philosophy, the strength of Asante's culture and the identity of Asante from the rest of the world.

6.3 Comparison of research findings with literature review

One of the most obvious features of the material culture of Africa is symbolic cloth. Woven textiles, and other fabrics, are available in almost every part of the continent according to Picton and Mack, (1995). From all indications, the selected decorative techniques applied to imprint symbolism either by weaving, block (*adinkra*), screen or batik-printing, dyeing, appliqué, embroidery, quilting, patchwork, drawing, stenciling and

printing methods in Asante textiles can be found in most civilizations including Africa as the literature review suggested. Clothes identified in Asante that display symbolism are the *Kente*, *adinkra* cloths, *birisi*, *nwomu*, batik, quilt and the appliqué known among Asantes as *okunintama* (the cloth for the great), flags and banners normally designed for funerals, joyful occasions, such as festival, durbars, outdoorings of children, puberty and initiation rites and marriage ceremonies etc.

As the adage goes, the strength of Africa's culture and greatness lies in her ability to keep alive in the dark secrecy of symbolism especially in African textiles the treasured truths and ethics of life; is an indication that throughout human history, symbols have been used to express ideas, communicate meanings, and convey emotion ([uk.encyclopedia.msn.com/.../Symbolism; anthropology\).html](http://uk.encyclopedia.msn.com/.../Symbolism;_anthropology).html)); a visual representation of history, philosophy, ethics, and social code of conduct, religious beliefs, political thought and aesthetic principles.

In all traditional textiles of Africa as the literature specified, symbolism being the use of a unit, motif or design, embodies a deeper meaning than the unit, motif or design themselves and these are developed over long periods of time but degenerate in the course of time. The literature further reveals that African symbolism is achieved either by the choice of colour and/or design or symbol used, as well as by the manipulation of designs, symbols, and colours that combine perfectly with deliberate asymmetries and pattern variations (Clarke 2002). In agreement, these assertions were clearly displayed by the traditional textile producers as the researcher visited their production centres.

According to Wahlman (2001), large shapes, strong contrasting colours are used to enable a person to recognize a pattern in a cloth from a distance and in strong sunlight. He further reiterated that African woven fabrics were made from silk, but are now being made with rayon and cotton since about 1947. The studies conducted by the researcher also reveal the use of strong contrasting colours woven with rayon and cotton at the weaving centres. However, silk was seldom used on request.

The research also discloses that each Asante symbol or motif is graphically rendered in stylized geometric shapes that makes up the corpus of *Adinkra* symbolism; its name and meaning is either derived from a proverb, a historical event, human attitude, animal behaviour, plant life, forms and shapes of inanimate and man-made objects as *Fosu* (1993) confirms, and that the names given to these symbols indicate their significance. The empirical studies conducted find these assertions to be true.

Myers (1924) testifies that all symbols and patterns in most African rug weaving reflect the pure beauty of numbers, considered to be of divine origin in Islamic doctrine, an embodiment of African philosophy. In inference, Africans are creative and aware of their available materials around them coupled with a sense of spirituality since every distinctive style is based upon local traditions of production, availability of materials and dyestuffs, and preferences for particular symbols, patterns, designs, and colours as developed over the centuries; and Asante textile producer are no exception to this imagery portrayed at the various traditional textile centre's visited.

Asantes and *Ewes* of Ghana use symbols, but those of the Asante tend to be much more abstract and geometric whereas the *Ewe* motifs are more realistic and representational. Motifs, including writings, and the figurative types of decoration are very distinctive of the *Ewe* style (Barnard & Adler, 1995). Today this assertion no longer holds as the researchers empirical studies revealed, in that the Asante traditional weaver has also introduced realistic and figurative symbols into their main stream of work but on a lower scale.

As noticed in the review of related literature, *Kwami* (1994) has been referred to as stating that the motifs are indiscriminately employed both in and outside Ghana, not only for their aesthetic appeal but also for their interpretive meanings; he further states that the root meanings and philosophies and forms of these symbols are being twisted or corrupted day by day by those who use them to propagate their own ideologies different from the original concepts or interpretations of such symbols. A similar situation is noticed in the present researcher's investigation about symbolism in Asante textiles, in that in Asante, the names and interpretations of some *adinkra* symbols are not only interchanged but misapplied.

For these reasons some selected *adinkra* symbols were identified and discussed with the aim of bringing out their true meanings, literal translations, backgrounds, philosophies and their idea development. The symbols selected were as follows; *Funtunfunefu-Denkyemfunefu*, *Kcdej mcwere wa*, *Nkotimsefuopua*, *SankCfa*, *Dwennimmen*, *Akokc nan*, *Denkyem Da Nsuo Mu*, *bese saka*, *Nyame Dua*, *Afa*, *Wawa Aba*, *Kontire ne Akwamu*,

Eban, Anibere Enso Gya, Nhwimu, Nsoroma, Pagya, Bi nnka bi, Fofoo, CwC-foro-adobj, Hwemudua, Owuo Atwedie, Ese ne tekerema, Kramo bone amma yeanhu kramo papa, Ohene tuo, Akoben, Ma te, Nyame nnwu na mawu, and many among others.

As observed in the review of related literature, symbols of totems are portrayed in the cloths of some ethnic groups including the Fon of Dahomey, (now, the Republic of Benin). Similarly the outcome of the present researcher's investigation has shown that the clans of Asante depict the symbols of their 'totems' in their flags, or banners intended for use as an emblem or as a kind of signaling device. Moreover, both the review of the related literature and the findings of the present researcher reveal that the totemic symbols found in cloths show people's relationships with natural elements that are believed to be helpful for the survival of those who relate to the elements.

Appliqué/embroidery now produced in Asante for ceremonial occasion's shows totemic symbols, abstract and proverbial symbols pregnant with philosophical ideologies. Their remarkable exploration of abstract patterning derived from the natural totemic objects agrees with Abajori, (1998) assertion that the subjects of traditional northern smock are impregnated or embedded in deep seated philosophical ideologies that reflect on their display of natural and abstract objects used in communicating their preserved ancient heroic stories to signify virtue and courage. According to Abajori, (1998), this degree of creativity is to empower the youth for social advancement.

Iconographical textiles can be in Christian Symbolism as well as in African cultural symbolism. In the review of related literature, as readers are aware, it has been pointed out that textile designs may be created from well known proverbs. The present researcher's study of Asante textile symbolism also reveals that Asantes sometimes create their symbols from proverbial icons or more commonly by depicting realistic images that refer to aspects of a proverb. This outcome agrees with Clarke, (2002: 118) assertion that symbolism in textiles serves to amplify the subject-matter of the textile work in which they appear and help to identify the narrative theme of the artwork.

A striking idea recorded in the review of related literature, and which has come out of the research on Asante textile symbolism is that colour is one of the most useful and powerful design tools in the production of traditional textiles which users respond to differently on a subconscious and emotional level.

The study conducted reveals that wax printed cloths and cheaper screen and roller printed *Kente* and *adinkra* imitations have become one of the most widely distributed forms that reveal Asante symbolism in today's textiles, produced and worn in almost every part of Asante. The proverbial names attached to even the seemingly foreign designs have made it categorically African. Gilfoy, (1988) affirms this in the literature review by saying that throughout West Africa, weavers have adapted foreign elements to suit their own needs, creating unique motifs to express cultural values.

Apart from textile cloths being used for magico-religious practices (Mack and Picton 1995), specially designed cloths were used for dead corpse, to build special shrines or houses in memory of the deceased especially among the Annang- Ibibio, south eastern Nigeria to mark an event of some significance; similarly, as a symbol of respect and dignity for the gods, white or *kente* cloths are used as the researchers investigation reveals. Again, both the review of the related literature and the findings of the present researcher also reveal that woven cloths with selected proverbial motifs highly rated by the society were used as currency or payment among certain class of the Asante society (Mack and Picton 1995).

6.4 Research Findings and its contribution to knowledge

Research Findings and its contribution to knowledge are condensed to serve the needs of policymakers / decision makers. The focus of this research was to investigate the symbolism in Asante traditional textiles and the extent of foreign influence since the seventeenth century. Photographs and illustrations were given on some symbols and fabrics to explain the objectives set for this thesis. The objectives examined were (1) to identify the cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles since the seventeenth century, (2) to examine the significance of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles, (3) to survey the role of symbolism in traditional textiles in the promotion of Asante culture, (4) To examine the factors of change namely education, Christianity, urbanization and foreign cultures on symbolism in Asante traditional textiles.

The major findings of the study were as follows:

Types and combinations of symbols used in Asante traditional textiles have undergone changes from traditional symbols to a fusion of non traditional symbols in nature in almost all aspects of Asante traditional textiles. A mixture of traditional, naturalistic and stylized configurations of symbols now dominates the Asante traditional textiles.

Motif-oriented pattern arrangement dominates the organization of symbols due to the emphasis placed on the symbolic character (aesthetics) of individual symbols, although the number of pattern-oriented arrangements has increased in recent years especially with *adinkra* traditional prints. The findings indicate that the concept of design is changing gradually from symbolic to a mixture of symbolic and decorative types.

The use of strips, a form of patchwork, especially woven fabrics like *Kente* is dominant and is recognized as a design element, and a symbolic form in Asante, textiles. Clarke's (2002) observation is that this technical process of sewing long woven strips together to make larger fabrics is as old in West Africa as the weaving tradition and that it has moved into the realm of aesthetic preference rather than choice. This preference may be exclusive to *kente* weaving since most other traditional textiles require larger fabrics in its production.

Mud cloth production and carpet weaving is absent in Asante, rather the production of appliquéd flags, *akuninim ntoma* and banners using totemic symbols for the palace are on going as the research reveals but are produced by few royal artisans when commissioned.

Totemic and iconographic designs have educational significance; according to Clarke (2002), and this type of symbolic designs continues to be produced in most Asante traditional textiles as the festive seasons demand.

All over Africa, visual images and ordinary objects are used symbolically to communicate knowledge, feelings and values. As symbols play such an important role in the African conception of reality, a sound understanding of African patterns of thought and feeling requires an appreciation of the nature and function of symbolism as a medium of communication in African culture. Africa's rich and diverse artistic traditions vividly express a spiritual view of the world.

These symbolic fabrics have flourished from time immemorial with virtually no innovations in their design until now. It is now desirable to face-lift Asante traditional textiles to match the challenges of modern fabric embellishments, and the demands of the international market. Thanks to Glenn Lewis, the first African American who put most of the Asante *adinkra* symbols into real font and made it accessible and available on a Compact Disk Ram for illustration on personal computer for the benefit of textile designers. Modern motifs and patterns seem desirable to enhance traditional textile aesthetic values for the insatiable desires of consumers and sellers. Hand woven fabrics are now decorated with silkscreen traditional motifs and designs to maximize their value. Below are some examples



Plate 166: shows the new trend of *adinkra* prints where almost all the *adinkra* symbols are stylized and the background filled with textures or delicate patterns an imitation of foreign design concepts : - photograph from the catalogue of cultures 2006 unpublished by Ekow Asmah

Commercialization initiatives are the means by which symbolic textile products can have access in the marketplace. This underpins the common view that symbolic textile products are not of any economic use if they are not marketed and commercialized. The road to commercialization is somehow rough and frustrating but with the above suggestion earlier submitted; the promotion of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles will be fully realized.

Asante symbolic motifs now constitute a kind of dictionary that is transmitted from generation to generation. The message are political, social religious, educative, romantic, moral, humorous, or even insolent, a very typical, yet integral part of Asante social culture.

The research findings affirm Fosu's (1993: 45) assertion that each of the motifs used in Asante traditional textiles makes up the corpus of *Adinkra* symbolism that has a name and meaning derived either from a proverb, a historical event, human attitude, animal behaviour, plant life, forms and shapes of inanimate and man-made objects. These are

graphically rendered in stylized geometric shapes. *Kwami*, (1994) assertion that the motifs are indiscriminately employed both in and outside Ghana, not only for their aesthetic appeal but also for their interpretive meanings is entirely true in most *adinkra* craft villages visited in Asante. Most of the root meanings and philosophies of these symbols are being twisted or corrupted by the designers of their block screens, probably either for lack of understanding or simply to propagate their own ideologies different from the original concepts or interpretations of such symbols used.

A new metaphoric rendition of *sankɔfa* and others narrated by *Nana Kwaku Duah II* the chief of *Tewobaabi* exposes these short falls of some *adinkra* philosophies. He gives an in-depth of the wisdom underneath most of the *adinkra* symbols used in this thesis. For example in his assertion on the *sankɔfa* symbol which the author finds intriguing, the *Sankɔfa* bird metaphorically is said to be carrying the next generation of life in the form of an egg through unfriendly environment as it crosses the river with intense determination by putting its own life on the line just to recover and preserve the next generation. Such wisdom needs to be understood by all especially the youth of Ghana for the promotion of the entire nation. He reiterated that the symbol infers that one needs to go to every length to obtain or acquire knowledge and wisdom at all costs if Ghana is to assemble the best brains for national development.

The belief that there is no shame in utilizing the wisdom of the past when forgotten is appropriate in that the philosophy that is rooted in the culture of the people of Asante strives to attain wisdom from both the past and the present with passion; and that to

frown, ignore and neglect one's cultural heritage of importance is to ignore the basic wisdom or wealth for survival. When citizens fail to decipher the wisdom of their traditional practices they turn to abandon their culture for foreign cultures.

The research conducted agrees with the observation of Cole and Ross, and several other writers' documentations of *adinkra* symbols that there may never have been a rigidly standardized set of designs; as the number of new motifs varies periodically. The research shows that this trend has escalated in recent years, bringing about slight alteration of the old *adinkra* symbols that fails to reveal the natural visual expression of knowledge of the *adinkra* symbols as related to the culture of the people. The danger here is that the root meaning and original forms of such symbols would be a thing of the past if not salvaged.

In fact, many new symbols have been developed in recent years ensuring that the Asante tradition is alive and well. Many every day items are made from these symbolic traditional fabrics of Asante and it is as much a part of the culture in the present day as it has ever been. A general trend of the younger generation of Asantes moving especially to Europe and America has also contributed to the spread of the Asante tradition; and now Asante traditional symbols have become synonymous with African culture and heritage and a certain identification with a 'rural African authenticity' Clarke (2002) reiterates. The Researcher realizes that this is marking a significant shift in perception about Africa where now there is a sense of pride and fascination in the culture and heritage of Africa and a desire for many to identify with it.

According to *Antubam* (1963), colour is considered one of the most useful and powerful design tools in the production of traditional textiles. As regards colour symbolism and colour therapy in Asante, people respond to different colours in different ways, and these responses take place on a subconscious, emotional level according to *Antubam*. It is interesting to realize that even in this generation, the concepts of colour in Asante relate directly to western associations; and these effects are generally experienced in the socio-cultural, religious and medical sectors of Asante culture.

One striking misconception realized was the understanding of *ntoma fufuo* (white cloth) in all the production centres visited by the researcher. To them, *ntoma fufuo* refers to any black and white cloth which the researcher finds a bit contradictory even to the name of the cloth *ntoma fufuo*. According to one prominent and knowledgeable chief *Nana Kwaku Duah II* such a misconception is as a result of modern interpretation because of its change of use by the Christian community. In the past pure all-white hand-woven fabrics were produced on the order of traditional priests for ritual purposes. But today, this kind of fabric has largely outlived its purpose. Secondly, though it is a symbolic fabric it is not decorative enough to meet this present change of use as an iconographic thanksgiving cloth required in this modern society of Asante.

The distinctive colourful tones and geometric patterns of Asante textiles have surged into diverse markets in both Asante and abroad – from village marketplaces to airport souvenir shops, exclusive boutiques, mail order catalogs and museums.

It is clear that symbolism in Asante traditional textiles are far more than just beautiful symbols. Although their origins and appearance may differ in many ways, they both undeniably reflect the cultural values of Asante in which they are created. Studying these symbols provides a window into the worlds of Asantes. Not only are aesthetic and cultural values reflected, but so too are significant historical events, religious practices and social structures represented. Some of these traditional symbols remain steadfast where others have evolved or waned in use with time. Each symbol has a fascinating story to tell and is the proof of tremendous artistic expertise that needs to be commended.

The research findings have revealed that the main traditional events and court rituals for which indigenous Asante textiles are produced are not regular experiences in many sale outlets; and that many of them have been replaced by modern mechanized imitational designed printed or woven textiles as Clarke (2002) has suggested. *Kente* as an element of symbolism is tremendously significant in both its traditional context in Asante and now throughout the world. Its status has evolved from being primarily a royal cloth as mentioned earlier to being available to everyone in Asante society who could afford it, to being manufactured and used globally where it is now embraced as a symbol of African pride throughout the world. Today, Africans around the globe preferably wear joined strip *Kente* as a statement of their pride of being Africans and to cultivate a sense of identity (Clarke 2002).

This affirms Ross', (1998) assertion that originally a royal cloth, like *Kente* is increasingly recognized as "African" by peoples of all colours and it has come to

symbolize African identity in the Diaspora. Invariably all the facets of *Kente* including the use of colour, pattern, motifs, types of thread, used, all reflect an elaborate network of Asante values that promote Asante culture. Undoubtedly, *Kente* is produced in larger quantities, exported to more countries, and incorporated into a greater variety of forms than any other form of African art. (<http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu>)

Traditionally Asante symbolism mirrors the culture of Asante as they are incorporated into fabrics and used during religious ceremonies, rites of passage and as part of other important cultural events, it has widespread significance for many Asantes. Used in both rural and urban locales, symbolism in Asante traditional textiles is perceived in similar or completely different ways depending on the village, ethnic groups or perception of the artist who used it. The functions of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles are inextricably linked most often than not to Asante culture with its symbols referring from mythological subjects to proverbs to historical and political events.

How the international communities have come to view and embrace symbolism in Asante traditional textiles, including *Kente* and *adinkra* cloths, reflects a definitive change in attitude about Africa, her people and her art. Asante symbolic fabrics that were at one time considered primitive and uninteresting have now entered the catwalks of the major fashion centres of the world and the designs of the fabrics are being reproduced in factories in many parts of the globe. This is a very encouraging sign for the survival of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles.



Plate 167: shows the new trend of *adinkra* African prints where the *adinkra* symbols are married with an imitation of *Kente* woven patterns arranged in half-drop with no textures or foreign design symbols : - photograph from the catalogue of cultures 2006 unpublished by Ekow Asmah

The research also shows that the demand for African wax prints is ever growing due to increase in population and the need for clothing. This trend has necessitated the incorporation of African, including Asante traditional symbols in their general trend of designing hence its acceptance as a traditional cloth. Examples are shown in plate 167 above;

The exquisite symbolic designs and masterly techniques which characterize Asante traditional textiles hold great economic promise. Yet no matter how encouraging it may be, the reality is that the onslaught of factory-produced imitations of these symbolic traditional cloths is placing economic demands on and bringing detrimental effects to the artisans. Since most of these symbolic fabrics are produced in some of the deprived towns and villages, this is a significant problem.

Though symbolism in Asante traditional textiles has become more associated with African heritage and more generally, multiculturalism, Asante traditional textiles are still a visual representation of Asante history, philosophy, ethics, and social code of conduct, religious beliefs, political thought and aesthetic principles. Despite all these qualities no museum has been built in honour of this symbolic art, no catalog made to promote these indigenous textiles. No library of textiles is established and no permanent exhibition hall created. Such initiative will certainly help to preserve the cultural heritage of Asante textile symbolism as well as promoting indigenous entrepreneurial capabilities. It is time to stop praising foreign museums for exhibiting our traditional textile crafts and other symbolic regalia that Asantes so cherish.

6.5 Research findings

The people of Asante like all other people of Africa are inseparable from their history and culture, for their history is the record of what they did, thought and said embodied in their symbolism; and their culture is the totality of the ideas, concepts and values that characterize their societies rooted in their symbolic textile traditions. Kluckhohn, (1956: 86), affirms this by saying that Africans and for that matter Asantes view, history and culture as a continuum consisting of a past, a present, and a future all inseparably linked together. The sequence is crucial in that the past has a significant role to play in the evolution of the present symbolism, and in turn the present can affect the turns and twists of future symbolism. The role of symbolism in traditional textiles in the expansion of Asante culture has not changed significantly over the centuries.

The traditional technology of traditional textiles, the socio-political roles of symbolism in traditional textiles and the economic drive symbolism given to traditional textiles in the past still survive to some extent in today's Asante culture in spite of the various influences of change namely Education, Christianity, Urbanization and Foreign Culture. The type of symbolism displayed in Asante traditional textiles worn by their rulers during such occasions as enstoolments, durbars and festivals have social, political and religious significances today as they did in the past. Durbars and festivals are not the only traditions of the past that are observed today in which symbolism in traditional textiles continues to assume importance. The significance of symbolism in traditional textiles continues to manifest during puberty rites, marriage and funeral celebrations.

The intermingling of Christian and traditional practices have also promoted Asante symbolism in their traditional textiles. In recent times the traditional requirement to present traditional cloths as part of the bride price during traditional marriages is a welcome event. Even in Christian marriages in today's Asante such phenomenon is welcomed, however, the wearing of suits; a western Christian practice has virtually become the norm. In fact in a state, such as Asante where there has been relative continuity in cultural practices for several centuries as far as certain traditions are concerned and judging from the evidence so far, the role of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles can be said to be indispensable to the growth of Asantes culture and that without such symbolism Asante traditional textiles would not have been a good reflection of its cultural identity.

The principles of using symbols in Asante traditional textiles have not changed, and that no restrictions govern the use of symbols as well as the purpose of the products. The survey conducted at *Ntonso, Bomso, Bonwire, Adanwomase, Wonoo, Asokwa*, and the Centre for National Culture, Kumasi, indicates that the traditional textiles still produced today by the majority of the craftsmen, embody diverse forms of Asante symbols. In fact some of the textile products being worn in Asante are produced by traditional craftsmen who use centuries – old – technology to depict Asante symbols. This is a tribute to the high quality of traditional craftsmanship, a tradition that has been maintained for some 100 to 500 years. Cole's and Ross' publication 'The Arts of Ghana' (1977) testifies to the astonishing work of these traditional craftsmen who employ traditional symbols. Unfortunately these traditional craftsmen are on the average are very old and the fear is that there are not enough apprentices to replace this older generation of craftsmen who will soon pass away.

To save the craft from utter demise, for the continuity of the symbols, the College of Art and social sciences of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and the Centre for National Culture have intensified the production of the cloths, keeping the traditional character of both the cloths and symbols intact. Asante has a long tradition of traditional textile technology. No wonder the largest traditional textile industry in Ghana, depicting the symbols is in the Ashanti Region.

To some extent, some factors, such as technology, urbanization, education, westernization, and the current status of traditional rulers adversely influence the role of

Asante traditional textiles and their symbols. Technological advancement and the use of modern equipment by craftsmen have contributed immensely to the fine-tuning of process, designs and symbols. While this adds some accuracy and beauty to the finished product and also makes it more conforming to international standards, it tends to promote the loss of some important features. The resulting symbol may thus fail to carry or convey the same message that the original symbol carries. The use of particular symbols these days is more of the choice of the consumer than the craftsman. This one-sided choice of symbols has led to the over production of some preferred symbols while others have become disused. For instance ‘*Gye Nyame*’ a symbol with religious connotation is preferred by Christians and non- Christians alike, hence its overuse. One outstanding observation of this study is that in the past nobody except the members of the royal family was privileged to wear traditional textiles portraying particular symbols reserved for chiefs and queen mothers. Presently however, there is no such restriction as to who can wear what type of traditional cloth depicting what symbols. This may be attributed to factors related to the eroding role of traditional rulers as chief custodians of culture, and also to literary education, urbanization, trade liberalization and the current political atmosphere which give people the right of choice and makes it difficult to control production, designing and sales of products.

This state of affairs may have both positive and negative implications on the profession. While it gives every Asante or Ghanaian the right to wear any Asante traditional textile products and also enhances the export drive in traditional textiles, it offsets the preservation objective of Asante culture. Thus some particular types of traditional

symbols that were once considered as a valuable heritage and formed a remarkable part of Asante royal historical culture, are gradually losing their value. Also traditional textiles meant for both domestic and international tourism may all lose their value. Furthermore, symbols used in traditional textiles for ceremonial occasions such as birth, marriage and festivals, which depict the culture of Asante, may all lose their remarkable values.

Interesting evidence gathered through the observation of the present generation is the restriction on the wearing of *okunin ntoma* in public since this type of Asante cloths is meant for men of valour. While some people attribute this to the absence of wars, which was, characteristic of the past and which required victors to be honoured, sometimes with *okunin ntoma*, others feel modernization have a great role to play in this but the truth of the matter is that honour can be given in various forms. Still others advocate that the wearing of 'okunin ntoma' should be worn as a matter of choice depending on the purpose for which it is intended and the type of symbols used if the general public is to enjoy such a fabric. However, this type of cloth has been the preserve of the royals.

One important cultural change observable about the traditional textile vocation with its symbolic significance today is the involvement of women in the production of the textiles as indicated in the survey. Even though this new development is not wholly acceptable to many, its occurrence could not be avoided since it is part of social changes brought about by the influence of education, Christianity and even Asante history. If Yaa Asantewaa could take-up arms in defense and sustenance of Asante, then women ought to be allowed by Asante culture and traditions to exercise whatever legitimate skills God has given

them. This development is very encouraging since creativity and industry are not gender determined.

In fact the evidence that female textile producers using Asante traditional symbols are equal to the task just as their male counterparts, is there for all to see. Even though the numerical strength of female textile producers is low, the quality of their output compares very favorably with those of the male producers. The continued practice of female traditional textile producers without any consequent adverse implications to themselves or their community physically or spiritually, seems to neutralize the old belief that it was a taboo for a female to be a textile producer. This trend of events is in the right direction since it has also opened employment and trade opportunities for females thus solving some of the unemployment problems. This has further given greater educational opportunities to females to enter into our tertiary institutions which will eventually benefit the whole country for it is said that educating a woman means educating a whole nation.

The desire for symbolic traditional textiles particularly *Kente* is more evident in Asante today due to its use as the African identity by the African-Americans. A traditional gift of *Kente* showing Asante traditional symbols to a bride is a welcome gift to keep her fortune bright to remember always. Families in Asante and other parts of Ghana also hoard considerable quantities of Asante traditional textiles bearing Asante symbols, partly as an insurance against bad times.

With the progress made by western education, Islam and Christianity, and the emergence of urbanization and industrialization, changes have taken place in the use of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles but it is difficult to know the extent of such changes whether positive or negative. Symbolism in Asante traditional textiles is rather expanding even among the uneducated and to those who have been exposed to foreign culture.

Alien cultures have forced changes upon symbolism in Asante traditional textiles; as a result of contact with the external world, a new way of perception and a new appraisal of social and ethical consciousness have occurred. Symbols exclusively used for the king is now being used by all. On the positive side, Asante symbolism in traditional textiles has developed propaganda machinery in the form of tourists and foreigners who patronize these goods and use them to promote Asante culture.

Religions, acting as a social force are promoting the significance of some aspects of Asante symbolism as they incorporate them in their form of worship. By this certain attributes and concepts of God embodied in some Asante religious symbols have been adopted by foreign religions operating in Asante and Ghana as a whole, but are often modified, or given new interpretations and significance in the light of the new teachings to suit the theology of these new religions. Since some traditional practices still persist among the Asante society; and revealed in, naming ceremonies, marriage rituals, funeral ceremonies and other rites the use of Asante symbols in clothing will continue in a certain degree.

Moreover, kings and chiefs, the custodians of Asante symbolism, continue to be important in the social order of things as is seen in festivals of arts and culture and national festivals, and as a living testimony of their preference for symbolism in traditional textiles. The new awareness among educationists to retain traditional symbolism by the introduction of traditional textiles and traditional subjects in the school curriculum and in the universities is a step in the right direction. The Radio and television also help in the promotion and preservation of Asante traditional symbolism, as traditional festivals are covered, shown and discussed on the television and in papers.

There is also a global interest in Asante traditional symbolism today. Many European and American universities have separate institutes for the study of Asante traditional textiles and culture. Moreover, African-Americans who are of African origin but whose forebears were taken as slaves to the Americas and West Indies continue to patronize and embrace Asante traditional textiles.

One striking revelation was the use of clan totems as flags and banners by the various clans in Asante which unfortunately the researcher was not permitted to have pictures of them but the mere fact that they do exist confirms the claim that Asantes had war flags and banners. Tattoos seem to be a thing of the past but their appearance on African prints brings to memory its existence of the past among Asante societies.

The other problems are the lack of proper education, lack of sufficient capital and raw materials, inadequacy of technical skills and poor sales promotion and the bad working

conditions of the producers. The issue of poor working conditions is seen more with the traditional craftsmen than with the contemporary craftsmen. The traditional craftsmen's plight is evident in their basic tools and equipment might be a legacy, passed down from generations of ancient craftsmen and therefore may be deemed too important to be disposed off that easily; the fact is that many of such tools and equipment are no more efficient and must be replaced. Unfortunately some of these traditional craftsmen do not have the desire or the capacity to change. Unlike the traditional craftsman, the contemporary craftsman has relatively improved working conditions, which normally comprise a workshop, and a show room, which serve as sales outlets for his products.

6.6 Recommendations

It is clear from the foregoing discussions that Asante traditional textiles portraying Asante traditional symbols have a great potential to contribute to the promotion of Asante culture. The following factors, which are considered as hindering the full realization of the social, cultural and economic benefits of Asante traditional textiles, need to be removed to improve the profession. Traditional textile production in Asante is largely for the local market. Occasionally few orders are sent abroad. Liberalization of the Ghanaian economy has led to the importation of various kinds of low standard textile products that are sold in the open market. These products are sold cheaper and as such compete with and undermine the products of the local textile producers who have put a premium on Asante traditional symbolism.

Financially related problems faced by the craftsmen can be solved by encouraging cooperative ventures or joint venture with other cooperative bodies or even foreign collaborators who will provide finance and marketing. To alleviate the problems involving raw materials and equipment acquisition, schemes should be designed by agencies of government and other parastatals to assist interested traditional textile producers to acquire more efficient tools, material and equipment. Demand for tools and equipment is not strong enough to encourage private businessmen to divert their meager working capital into importation of tools, materials and equipment for textile producers. Taxes on importation of equipment should be reduced or the equipment could be exempted from duty. Materials could also be sold to craftsmen at reduced prices than as is sold on the open market.

Other ways by which these problems can be solved would be for the *Asanteman* council to create an organization to cater for the needs of craftsmen. The council should, besides looking into the welfare of the craftsmen, be responsible for creating a realistic plan or programme that will enhance the role of Asante traditional textiles that will promote Asante symbolism. A special scholarship scheme for instance must be created for children of traditional textile producers as an incentive by the council. Training and refresher courses should also be a requisite for practicing textile producers who desire to portray Asante traditional symbols for the promotion of Asante culture.

The training and refresher courses will help maintain standards technically and assist the craftsmen to keep abreast with production trends. Since this is important, the Asante

Craftsmen's Association in Kumasi should solicit the professional assistance of the National Board of Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) and the Business Advisory Centre (BAC). The NBSSI and BAC, set up by the government, offer consultancy and training to individual businessmen and associations to enable them expand and operate their businesses more effectively. Training by NBSSI includes accounting, marketing, customer relation, costing and improvement in business operation, which the researcher considers very appropriate for enhancing the profession.

Generally, craftsmen of the past enjoyed a special status in the community. For instance they were respected men in society who were seen as fearless and powerful. They also occupied a special area of the town and were even accorded a befitting burial when they died. The same thing must be done today to hold the profession in high esteem. In this regard, the researcher is advising the members of the association to enroll as members of some cultural or traditional bodies; by so doing the image of the profession will be enhanced and the profession will become more attractive.

The living standard of the craftsmen will thus be improved while lifting high the culture of Asante. One other problem of the profession is the negative perception held by the public regarding the integrity and transparency of craftsmen. To restore public interest and precipitate a positive growth of the trade, the craftsmen themselves must avoid dubious transactions with the public and should also avoid exploiting their customers. It would therefore be advisable for all traditional textile producers to be faithful to their

clients by keeping to specifications, time of delivery and calculating the correct amounts to be paid for a particular product to gain the trust of their clients.

What can be done is to educate the youth and also encourage parents perhaps to be vigilant to send their wards to school. The law against child labour should also be vigorously implemented in these areas to ban the young ones from participating in the production of Asante symbolic textiles, and be encouraged to go to school. Humanity as a whole is dynamic. Societies and their use of textiles cannot be static, even though a change may not come in a perceptible form for a long time.

Artisans in the various disciplines of traditional textiles must establish a preservative committee on Asante symbolism, a workers arm formed as an administrative body to supervise and expedite the work of the executive body well-known by the entire workers union and legislatures in the various establishments to lead in the preservation of Asante symbolism. Among other objectives that may be spelt out for the committee must include the alleviation of rural poverty by increasing productivity through the upgrading of the technical skills of master craftsmen, upgrading of production training facilities of master craftsmen artisans, organizing of short term refresher courses for apprentices, organizing of extension outreach programmes for artisans to exchange ideas, exposing of artisans to new or improved technologies and the training of artisans in improved technologies.

A yearly competitions and festivals should be organized for all traditional textile artisans on the effective use of Asante symbolism and successful competitors awarded to motivate

other artisans in that direction; for to ensure the success of a traditional textile industry, creativity needs to be linked to sound business practice.

A regional museum must be built in honour of this symbolic art, to promote these indigenous textiles. A textile library and a permanent indigenous textile exhibition hall must be established and catalogues of this priceless heritage made for its promotion. Such initiative will certainly help to preserve the cultural heritage of Asante textile symbolism as well as promoting indigenous entrepreneurial capabilities. It is time to stop praising foreign museums for exhibiting our traditional textile crafts and other symbolic regalia that Asantes so cherish.



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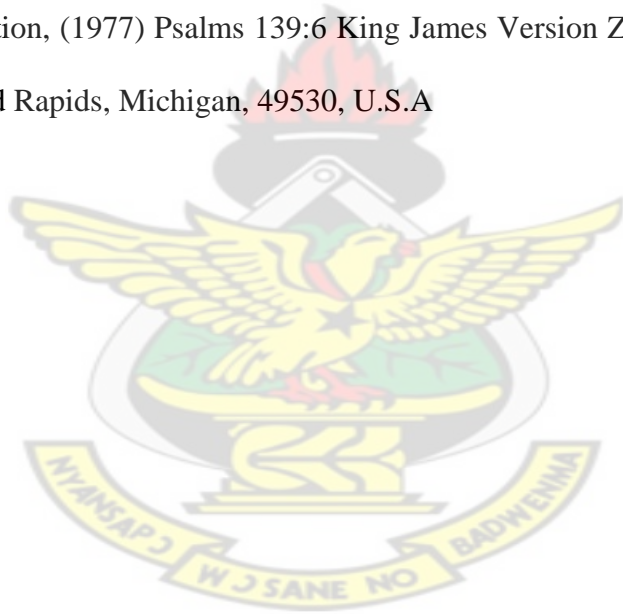
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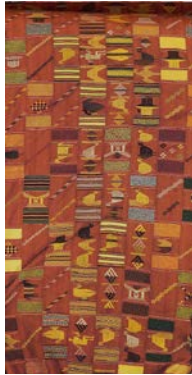
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APPENDIX I



A1: A patterned cotton woven fabric with machine-spun yarn, Ewe, Ghana



A2: A patterned ikat-dyed raphia fabric Sakalava, Madagascar



A3: A patterned royal silk woven fabric with royal colours, Merina, Madagascar



A4: Linear horizontal designed raphia skirt with inscriptions, Betsimisaraka, Madagascar



A5: A patterned cotton woven fabric referred to as Liar's Cloth, Ghana



A6: A plain weave raphia textile structure Kusu, Zaire-Mrs G. Cartwright collection



A7: Linear vertical designed cotton fabric embellished with metal beads, at the base Betsileo, Madagascar



A8: A complex silk textile design weave- Merina, Madagascar



A9: Cotton tent hanging embellished with Islamic inspirations, Egypt



A10: Designed Cotton fabric called kpoikpoi woven with hand spun yarn, Mende or Sherbro, Sierra Leone

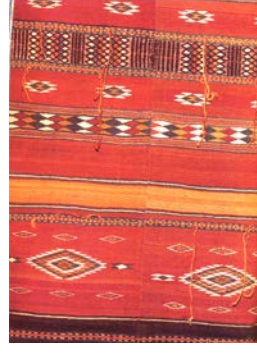
Catalogue A; 1-10: Various kinds of African woven fabrics



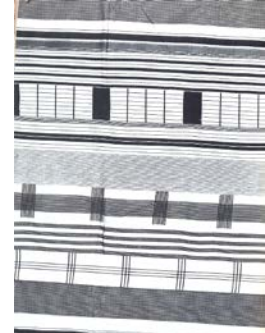
A11: Woollen Tapestry weave tunic, Mzab, Algeria



A12: Ebira, Nigeria cotton & rayon patterned strip cloth



A13: Woollen & cotton woven Tillaberi Niger textile drape



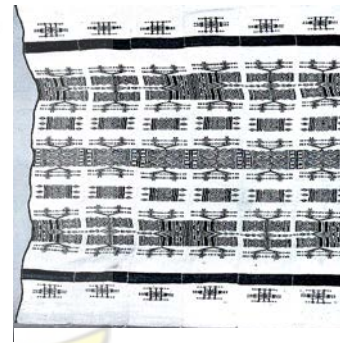
A14: Asante, Ghana cotton strip woven cloth with ten different patterns



A15: Cotton fabric woven with hand spun yarn, Hausa, Nigeria



A16: Ewe, Ghana cotton & silk woven fabric with seven different patterns



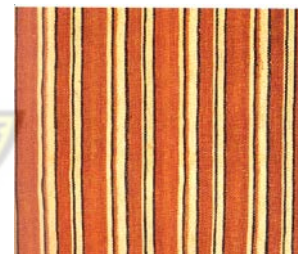
A17: Fulani, Mali woven patterned woollen khasa blanket



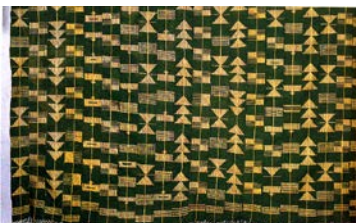
A18: Designed Cotton fabric woven with hand spun yarn, Djerma, Burkina Faso



A19: A patterned cotton woven fabric with machine-spun yarn,



A20: Linear horizontal designed Cotton fabric woven with hand spun yarn, Liberia



A21: A patterned cotton & rayon woven fabric with machine-spun yarn, Ilorin, Yoruba, Nigeria



A22: Designed Cotton hammock woven with hand spun yarn, Mende or Sherbro, Sierra Leone



A23: A patterned cotton woven fabric with machine-spun yarn, Ewe, Ghana



A24: Asante, Bonwire, Ghana
cotton & rayon woven cloth with
different patterns



A25: Asante, Adanwomase
Ghana cotton & silk woven cloth
with ten different patterns



A26: Asante, Ntonso, Ghana cotton
woven cloth with different patterns



A27: A cotton &
rayon patterned woven
fabric, Ewe, Ghana



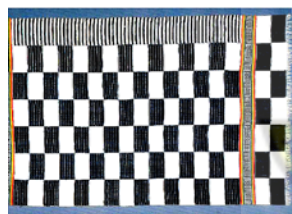
A28: A cotton & rayon
woven fabric, Ewe, Ghana



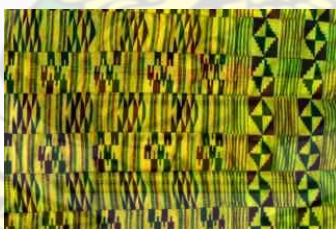
A29: A cotton & silk
woven fabric, Ewe,
Ghana



A30: A patterned cotton
woven fabric with machine-
spun yarn, Ewe, Ghana



A31: Fulani furnishing cotton
woven fabric with machine- spun
yarn, Niger Bend region, Mali



A32: Asante, Wonoo, Ghana
cotton woven cloth with
different patterns



A33: Asante, Ntonso, Ghana cotton
woven cloth with different patterns

Catalogue A; 24-33: Various kinds of African woven fabrics

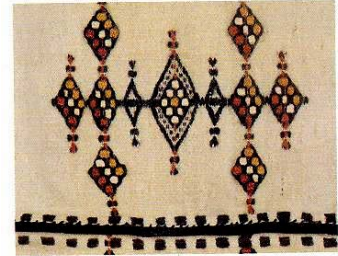
APPENDIX IA: Some African prints



A34: Furnishing cotton designed fabric, Jula people, Cote d'Ivoire



A35: Aso oke women's cloth machine-spun cotton with silk; Ilorin, Nigeria



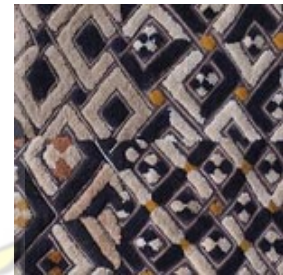
A36: Furnishing wool designed fabric, Fulani people, Mali or Burkina Faso



A37: Cotton plain and tapestry weaves, Mendes, Sierra Leone



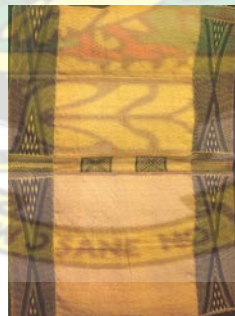
A38: Women's cotton and rayon cloth machine-spun; Yoruba, Nigeria



A39: Intricate designed Kuba raphia fabric, Congo Basin, Zaire



A40: Bogolanfini women's wrapper, mud-dyed hand-woven cloth; Bamana, Mali



A41: Embroidered raphia textiles, Bunda, Zaire



A42: Bogolanfini women's wrapper, mud-dyed hand-woven cloth; Bamana, Mali

Catalogue A; 34-42: Various kinds of African woven fabrics



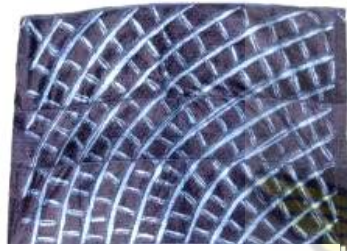
B1: Ntonso, Asante, Ghana, stamped cotton cloth with two alternating *adinkra* designs



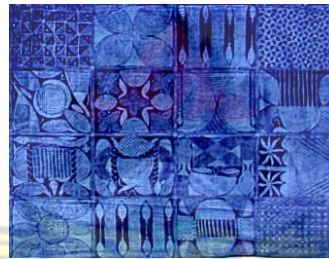
B2: Yoruba, Nigeria adire cloth painted freehand with starch before dyeing, designed cloth referred to as Olokun



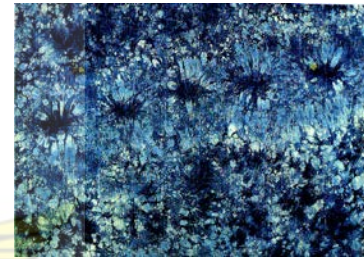
B3: Hand painted design fabric on a plain cotton woven background, Mbuti or Bambuti of central Africa



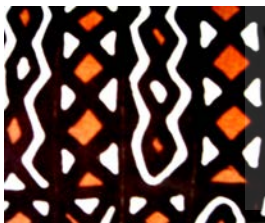
B4: Yoruba, Nigeria adire cloth painted freehand with starch before dyeing, designed cloth referred to as Olokun



B5: Yoruba, Nigeria adire cloth painted freehand with starch before dyeing, designed cloth referred to as Olokun



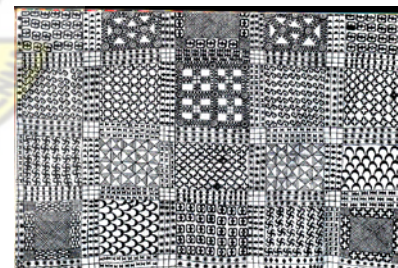
B6: A resisted-dyed cotton woven cloth of marbled effect, Gambia



B7: Bogolanfini women's wrapper, mud-dyed hand-woven cloth; Bamako, Mali

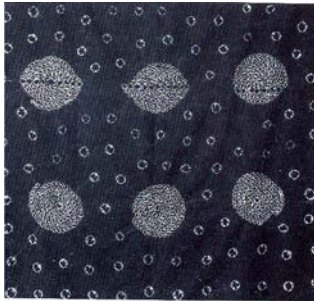


B8: Yoruba, Nigeria adire cloth painted freehand with starch before dyeing, designed cloth referred to as Ibadandun



B9: An *adinkra* cloth, Asante, Ghana collected in 1817 by Mr. T. E. Bowdich

Catalogue B; 1-9: Various kinds of African prints



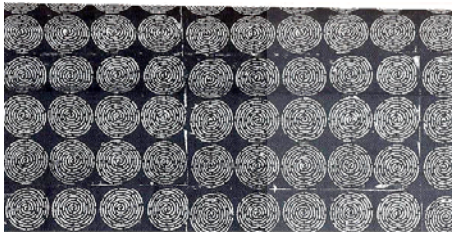
B10: Yoruba, Nigeria adire cloth folded and tied before dyeing



B11: Yoruba, Nigeria adire cloth tie-dyed cotton shirting



B12: Yoruba, Nigeria adire cloth painted freehand with starch before dyeing



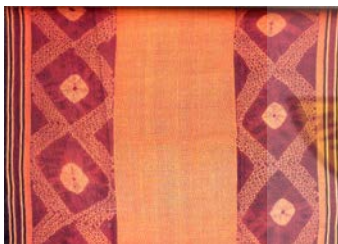
B13: Yoruba, Nigeria adire cloth starch applied through a metal stencil before dyeing, pattern is called spinning



B14: Igbo, Nigeria resist-stitched-dyed cotton fabric



B15: Yoruba, Nigeria stitched and dyed, with small tied circles, the pattern is called 'plantain'



B16: Abakwariga, Nigeria a resist-dyed cotton fabric, this is referred to as Cameroun cloth



B17: Ayt Atta, Morocco a resist-dyed woollen headscarf tied-dyed before dyeing

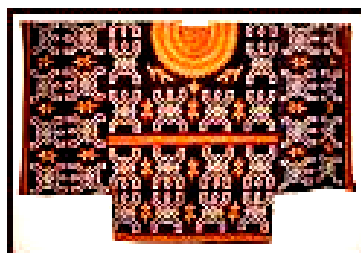


B18: Manyema, Zaire, a resist-tie-dyed raphia cloth dyed using brimstone tree & cam wood

Catalogue B; 10-18: Various kinds of African prints



B19: Cotton appliquéd cloth
“Akunintam,” showing totemic
elements; Asante, Ghana



B20: Appliquéd
embroidered agbada gown;
Kumasi, Ghana



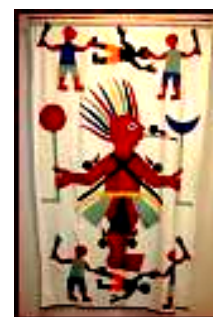
B21: Cotton appliquéd cloth
“Akunintam,” showing totemic
elements; Asante, Ghana



B22: Cotton appliquéd cloth
“Akunintam,” showing
totemic elements; Asante,



B23: Silk appliquéd flag showing
totemic elements; Fante, Ghana



B24: Cotton appliquéd banner,
Fon, Republic of Benin



B25: Appliquéd & patchwork
fabric made of imported cotton
materials for a shrine; Anang-
Ibibio, south-eastern Nigeria



B26: Beaded appliquéd leather
skirt; Iraqw, Tanzania



B27: Cotton patchwork textile
fabric; Ivory Coast, West Africa

Catalogue B; 19-27: Various kinds of Appliqué and Patched works

APPENDIX IB: Some African Embroidered fabrics



C1: Cotton & silk embroidered Hausa gown, Nupe, Nigeria



C2: Embroidered cotton agbada gown, Liberia



C3: Embroidered cotton Hausa trouser, Nupe, Nigeria



C4: Embroidered cotton tunic, western Cameroun



C5: Cotton & silk embroidered Fulani gown, Nupe, Northern Nigeria



C6: Cotton & rayon embroidered Hausa gown, Kumasi, Ghana



C7: Cotton embroidered *adinkra* print cloth, Ntonso Asante, Ghana



C8: Cotton embroidered *adinkra* print cloth, Asokwa, Asante, Ghana

Catalogue C; 1-8: Embroidered fabrics

Catalogue of Asante *Kente* motifs in colour-- from the catalogue of cultures by Ekow Asmah-2006



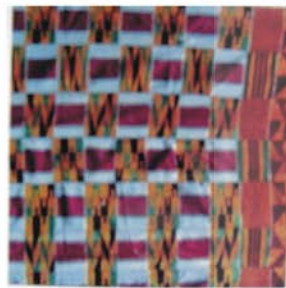
Adwin si adwin so



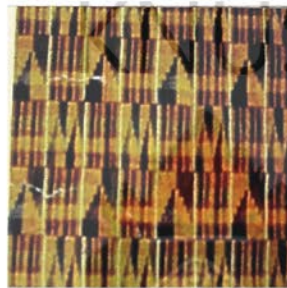
Oyokoman nkyimkyim



Frempomaa



Aberewa ben



Adwinasa



Obaafofo mmu man/
Fatia fata Nkrumah



Oyokoman



Afa adwinasa



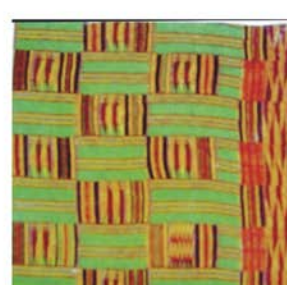
Sika futuro



Adwinasa maban



Apremuo adwinasa

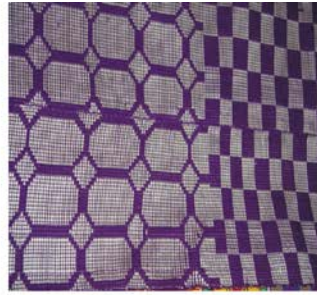


Emaa da

Catalogue D: *Kente* cloths with their motifs



Adwinasa special



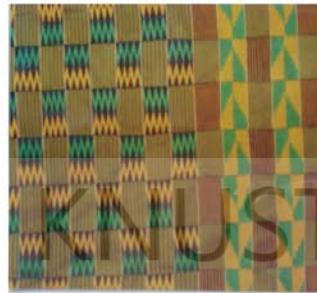
Kente lace



Afoakwa mpuankron



Apea Akobi



Epie akyi



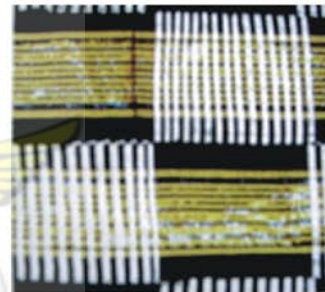
Maban



Adwoa kokoo



Kyeretwie



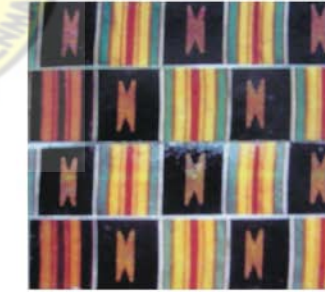
Nkasewa



Agyegyensu



Amankuo



Se wo beka meho asem a ma
me ma wo adwa na tena ase

Catalogue D1: Kente cloths with their motifs



Apremo adwinasa



Nkatoase



Adwin si adwin



Adwin si adwin so



Epie akyi



Fatia fata Nkrumah



Amre Yokoman



Abusua ye dom



Abusua ye dom



Fatia fata Nkrumah



Ododow ase nhye



Adwinasa mauve

Catalogue D2: Kente cloths with their motifs



Breguo ye ya



Abrewa ben



Oyokoman



Akyempem



Adwin si adwin so



Afiebuo eye buna



Akyempem



Akyekyedie akyi



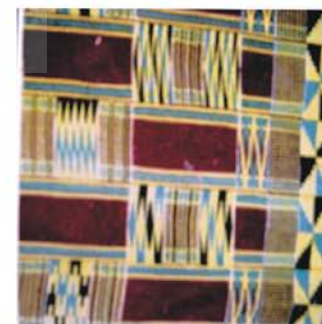
Yaa na ekye



Nyankonton



Sika futuro



Amere oyokoman

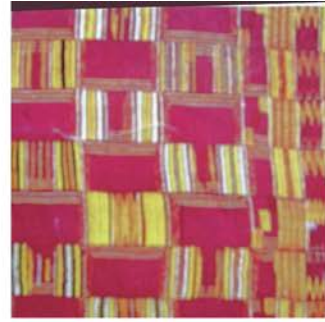
Catalogue D3: *Kente* cloths with their motifs



Fatia fata nkrumah



Abusua ye dom



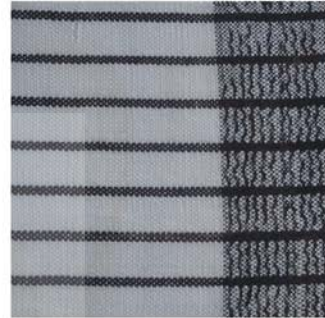
Nkontompo ntoma



Sika ne barima



Agyengyensua



Nkatoasa



Nkum me fie nkosu
abonten



Akroma fufuo



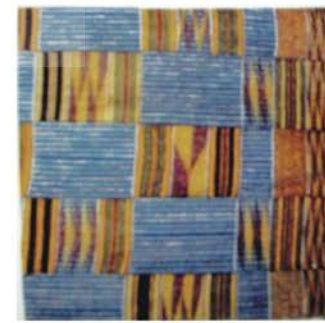
Papa ye nko akyiri



Nkumfia

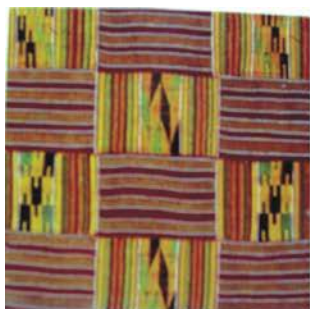


Toku kra toma

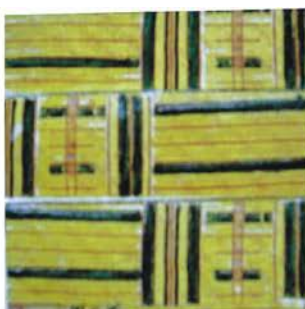


Srafo

Catalogue D4: Kente cloths with their motifs



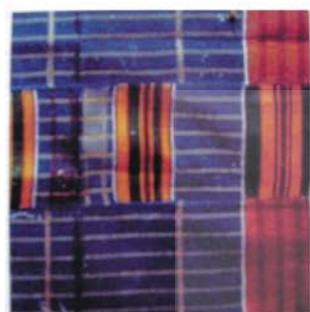
Kyeme



Wofro dua pa a
na yepia wo



Fahia kotwere Agyeman



Apea Akobi



Abusua ye dom



Toku akra ntoma



Aginginsu green



Mmeda or Embada



Frempomaa



Sika fre mogya

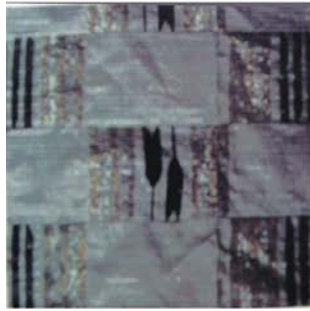


Oyokoman



Akosombo nkanea

Catalogue D5: Kente cloths with their motifs



Kyeretwie



Obi nkye obi kwan mu si



Akyekyede akyi



Ennam menko so



Adwinasa maban



Oyokoman ogya da mu



Ankonam



Afoakwa mpuakron



Ohene afro hyen



Abusua hwete gu nkuruwa



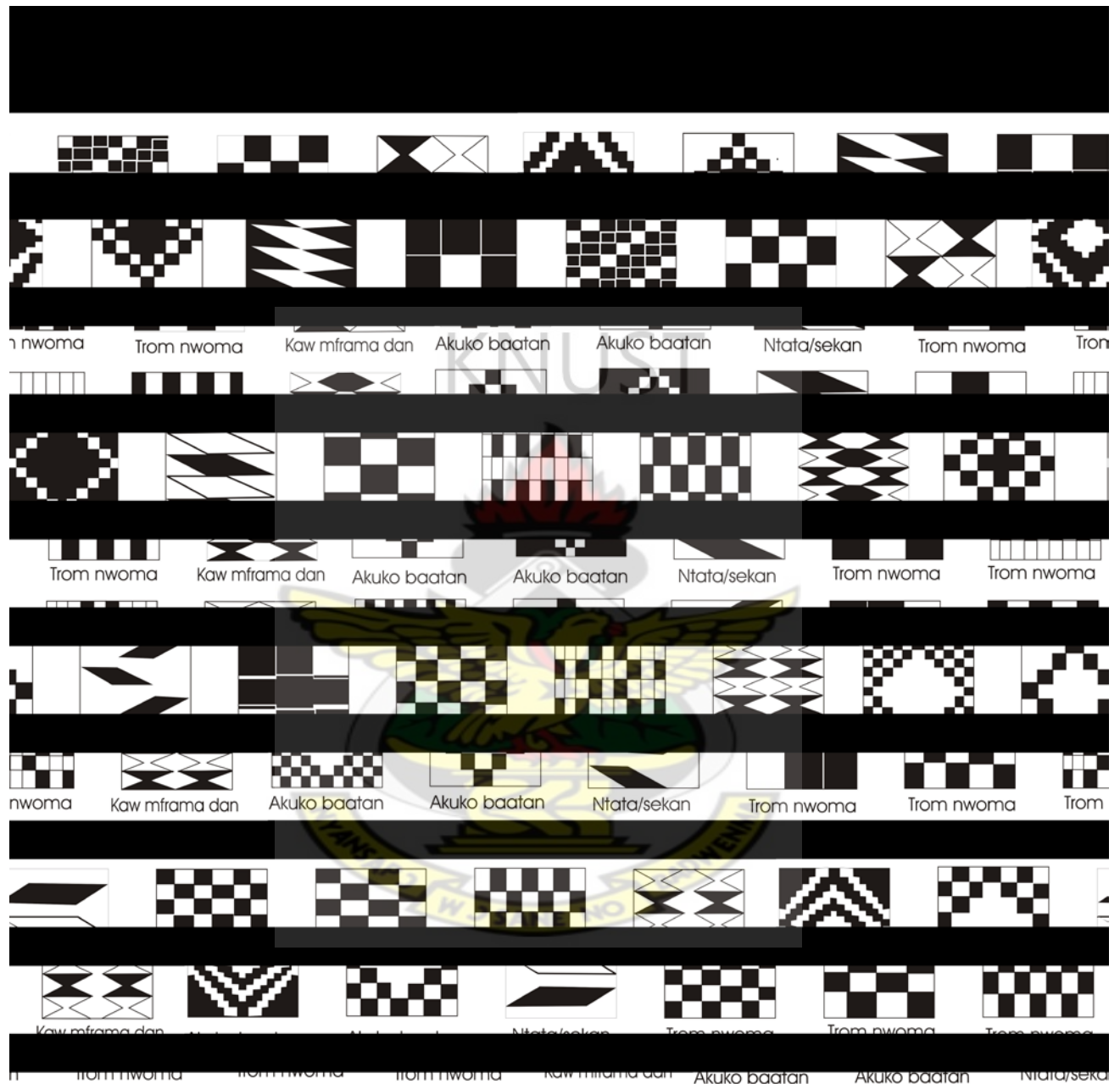
Adwinasa



Sika futuro

Catalogue D6: *Kente cloths with their motifs*

4.25 Catalogue of Asante *Kente* motifs in black and white- from the catalogue of cultures by *Ekow Asmah-2006*



Catalogue of *Kente* motifs in black and white



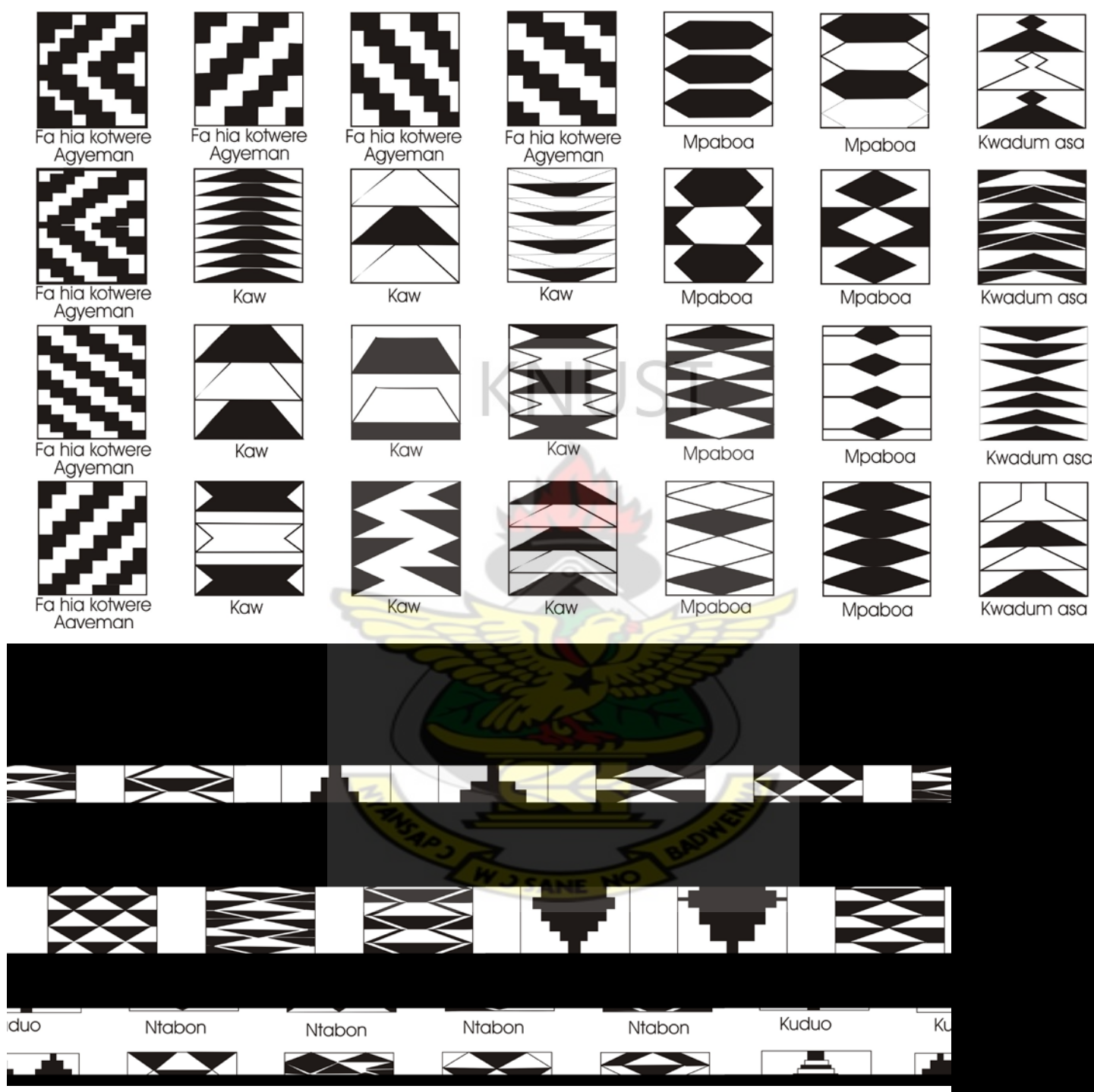
Catalogue of *Kente* motifs in black and white



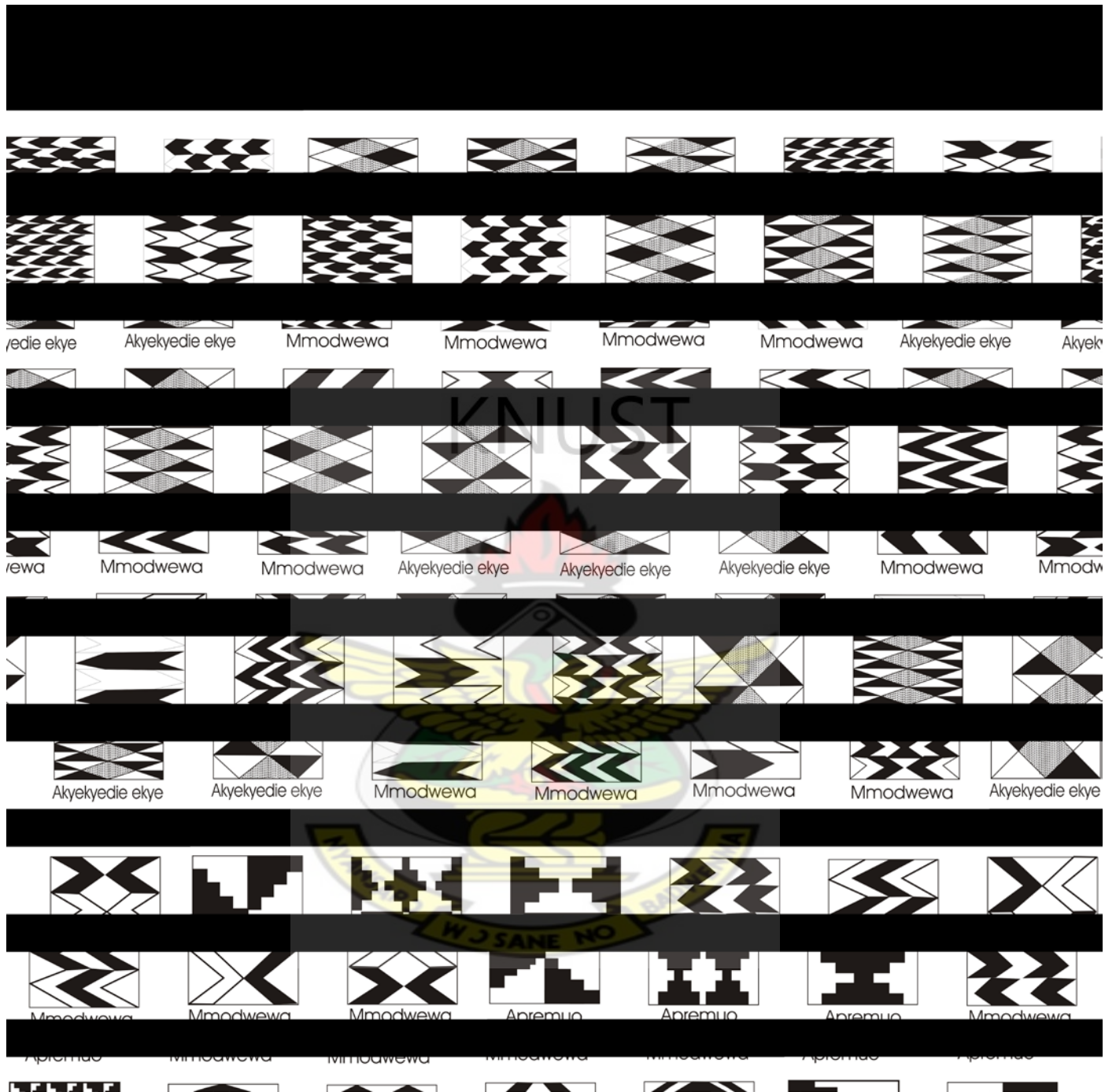
Catalogue of *Kente* motifs in black and white



Catalogue of *Kente* motifs in black and white



Catalogue of *Kente* motifs in black and white










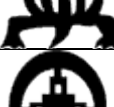
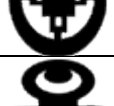

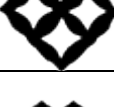



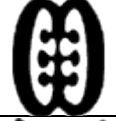


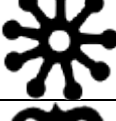




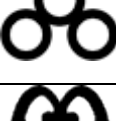
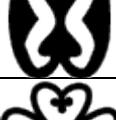
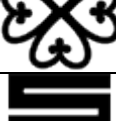

Catalogue of *Kente* motifs in black and white
















Catalogue of *Kente* motifs in black and white

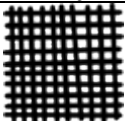
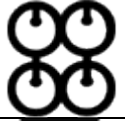






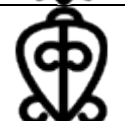


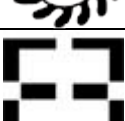
APPENDIX II 17th – 19th Century *Adinkra* Symbols


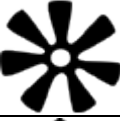






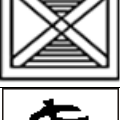


	<i>NSAA</i> refers to a type of hand-woven cloth	<i>NSAA</i> symbol of genuineness, authenticity
	<i>ADINKRAHENE</i> means "chief of <i>adinkra</i> symbols"	<i>ADINKRAHENE</i> symbol of greatness, charisma, leadership
	<i>AKOBEN</i> means "war horn"	<i>AKOBEN</i> symbol of vigilance, wariness
	<i>AKOKCNAN</i> means "the leg of a hen"	<i>AKOKCNAN</i> symbol of mercy, nurturing
	<i>AKOMA</i> means "the heart"	<i>AKOMA</i> symbol of patience & tolerance
	<i>AKOMA NTOASO</i> means "linked hearts"	<i>AKOMA NTOASO</i> symbol of understanding, agreement
	<i>BESE SAKA</i> means "sack of cola nuts"	<i>BESE SAKA</i> symbol of affluence, abundance, unity
	<i>BI NKA BI</i> means "no one should bite the other"	<i>BI NKA BI</i> symbol of peace, harmony
	<i>DJNKYJM</i> means "crocodile"	<i>DJNKYJM</i> symbol of adaptability
	<i>DAME-DAME</i> means "name of a board game"	<i>DAME-DAME</i> symbol of intelligence, ingenuity
	<i>DUAFE</i> means "wooden comb"	<i>DUAFE</i> symbol of beauty, hygiene, feminine qualities
	<i>JBAN</i> means "fence"	<i>JBAN</i> symbol of love, safety, security
	<i>JPA</i> means "handcuffs"	<i>JPA</i> symbol of law, justice, slavery







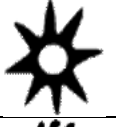





	<i>DWENNIMMEN</i> means "ram's horns"	<i>DWENNIMMEN</i> symbol of humility and strength
	<i>ESE NE TEKREMA</i> means "the teeth and the tongue"	<i>ESE NE TEKREMA</i> symbol of friendship, interdependence
	<i>FIHANKRA</i> means "house/compound"	<i>FIHANKRA</i> symbol of security, safety
	<i>GYE NYAME</i> means "except for God"	<i>GYE NYAME</i> symbol of supremacy of God
	<i>FOFOO</i> means "a yellow-flowered plant"	<i>FOFOO</i> symbol of jealousy, envy
	<i>HYJ WONHYE</i> means "that which cannot be burnt"	<i>HYJ WONHYE</i> symbol of imperishability, endurance
	<i>KWATAKYE ATIKO</i> means "hairstyle of Kwatakye, a war hero"	<i>KWATAKYE ATIKO</i> symbol of bravery, valor
	<i>MATE MASIE</i> means "what I hear, I keep"	<i>MATE MASIE</i> symbol of wisdom, knowledge, prudence
	<i>MMUSUYIDEJ</i> means "that which removes ill luck"	<i>MMUSUYIDEJ</i> symbol of good fortune, sanctity
	<i>MPUANNUM</i> means "five tufts" (of hair)	<i>MPUANNUM</i> symbol of priestly office, loyalty, adroitness
	<i>NKCNSCKNCNSCKN</i> means "chain links"	<i>NKCNSCKNCNSCKN</i> symbol of unity, human relations
	<i>NYAME DUA</i> means "tree of god or altar"	<i>NYAME DUA</i> symbol of God's protection and presence
	<i>NKYINKYIM</i> means "twisting and turns"	<i>NKYINKYIM</i> symbol of initiative, dynamism, versatility











	<i>NSOROMMA</i> means "child of the heavens"	<i>NSOROMMA</i> symbol of guardianship
	<i>NYAME BIRIBI WO SORO</i> means "God is in the heavens for me"	<i>NYAME BIRIBI WO SORO</i> symbol of hope, expectation
	<i>NYAME NNWU NA MAWU</i> means "God never dies, therefore I cannot die"	<i>NYAME NNWU NA MAWU</i> symbol of life after death, immortality
	<i>CSRAM NE NSOROMMA</i> means "the moon and the star"	<i>CSRAM NE NSOROMMA</i> symbol of love, faithfulness, harmony
	<i>OKODEE MMCWERJ</i> means "talons of the eagle"	<i>OKODEE MMCWERJ</i> symbol of bravery, strength
	<i>SANKCFA</i> means "return and get it"	<i>SANKCFA</i> symbol of learning from the past or <i>preserving the wealth of the past</i>
	<i>FUNTUNFUNEFU D J NKYEMFUNEFU</i> means "Siamese crocodiles"	<i>FUNTUNFUNEFU D J NKYEMFUNEFU</i> symbol of democracy, unity in diversity
	<i>KUNTINKANTAN</i> means "puffed up extravagance"	<i>KUNTINKANTAN</i> symbol of arrogance, extravagance
	<i>Nkotimsefuopua</i> Asante version of swastikas means "no need to make the 4 th key, you represent that key" or "a servant of luck"	<i>Nkotimsefuopua</i> symbol of good luck, fortune
	<i>Aya</i> means "fern"	<i>Aya</i> symbol of self-determining, sovereignty, fearless, independent
	<i>Pagya</i> means "Strike fire"	<i>Pagya</i> symbol of gunners, bravery and war
	<i>Kramo bone</i> means "bad Muslim has made it difficult to recognize a good one"	<i>Kramo bone</i> symbol of hypocrisy
	<i>Ohene tuo</i> means "The king's gun"	<i>Ohene tuo</i> symbol of Defense, security, protection, resistance


20th – 21st century Adinkra Symbols






Adinkra symbols	Literal Translation	Name/Interpretation
	<i>'KETE PA'</i> means good bed	<i>'KETE PA'</i> symbol of good marriage
	<i>MEWARE WO</i> means "I shall marry you"	<i>MEWARE WO</i> symbol of commitment, perseverance
	<i>MMERE DANE</i> means "time changes"	<i>MMERE DANE</i> symbol of change, life's dynamics
	<i>MPATAPO</i> "knot of reconciliation"	<i>MPATAPO</i> symbol of peacemaking, reconciliation
	<i>NEA ONNIM NO SUA A, OHU</i> means "he who does not know can know from learning"	<i>NEA ONNIM NO SUA A, OHU</i> symbol of knowledge, life-long education
	<i>NEA OPE SE OBEDI HENE</i> means "he who wants to be king"	<i>NEA OPE SE OBEDI HENE</i> symbol of service, leadership
	<i>NYAME NTI</i> means "by God's grace"	<i>NYAME NTI</i> symbol of faith & trust in God
	<i>NYAME YE CHENE</i> means "God is King"	<i>NYAME YE CHENE</i> symbol of majesty and supremacy of God
	<i>CDC NNYEW FIE KWAN</i> means "love never loses its way home"	<i>CDC NNYEW FIE KWAN</i> symbol of power of love
	<i>ONYANKOPCN ADOM NTI BIRIBIARA BEYE YIE</i> means "By God's grace, all will be well"	<i>ONYANKOPCN ADOM NTI BIRIBIARA BEYE YIE</i> symbol of hope, providence, faith
	<i>SESA WO SUBAN</i> means "I change or transform my life"	<i>SESA WO SUBAN</i> symbol of transformation
	<i>WOFORO DUA PA A</i> means "when you climb a good tree"	<i>WOFORO DUA PA A</i> symbol of support, cooperation



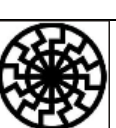

	<i>WO NSA DA MU A</i> means "if your hands are in the dish"	<i>WO NSA DA MU A</i> symbol of democracy, pluralism
	<i>ANANSE NTENTAN</i> means "spider's web"	<i>ANANSE NTENTAN</i> symbol of wisdom, creativity
	<i>ASASE YE DURU</i> means "the Earth has weight"	<i>ASASE YE DURU</i> symbol of divinity of Mother Earth
	<i>BOA ME NA MEMMOA WO</i> means "help me and let me help you"	<i>BOA ME NA MEMMOA WO</i> symbol of cooperation, interdependence
	<i>FAWOHODIE</i> means "independence"	<i>FAWOHODIE</i> symbol of independence, freedom, emancipation
	<i>TAMFO B&Egrave;BRE</i> means "the enemy will stew in his own juice"	<i>TAMFO B&Egrave;BRE</i> symbol of jealousy
	<i>KCDE&grave; MCWER&grave; WA</i> means "Talons of an eagle"	<i>KCDE&grave; MCWER&grave; WA</i> symbol of courage, fearlessness
	<i>HWEMUDUA</i> means "measuring stick"	<i>HWEMUDUA</i> symbol of examination, quality control
	<i>MFRAMADAN</i> means "wind-resistant house"	<i>MFRAMADAN</i> symbol of fortitude, preparedness
	<i>OKUAFO PA</i> means "Good Farmer"	<i>OKUAFO PA</i> symbol of Hard work, entrepreneurship, industry and productivity
	<i>Ohene</i> means "King"	<i>Ohene</i> symbol of Foresight, wisdom

Manipulation of some Adinkra symbols	Literal Translation	Name/Interpretation
	<i>MATE MASIE</i> means “I hear, I keep”	<i>MATE MASIE</i> symbol of wisdom, knowledge, prudence
	<i>MEWARE WO</i> refers “I shall marry you”	<i>MEWARE WO</i> symbol of commitment, perseverance
	<i>SANKOFA</i> means “return and get it”	<i>SANKOFA</i> symbol of learn from the past
	<i>ASASE YE DURU</i> means “the Earth has weight”	<i>ASASE YE DURU</i> symbol of divinity of Mother Earth
	<i>GYE NYAME</i> means “except for God”	<i>GYE NYAME</i> symbol of supremacy of God
	<i>NYAME YE OHENE</i> means “God is King”	<i>NYAME YE OHENE</i> symbol of majesty and supremacy of God
	<i>NSOROMMA</i> means “child of the heavens”	<i>NSOROMMA</i> symbol of Guardianship
	<i>SESA WO SUBAN</i> means “I change or transform my life”	<i>SESA WO SUBAN</i> symbol of transformation
	<i>AYA</i> means “fern”	<i>AYA</i> symbol of endurance, resourcefulness
	<i>NYAME NTI</i> means “by God's grace”	<i>NYAME NTI</i> symbol of faith & trust in God
	<i>BI NKA BI</i> means “no one should bite the other”	<i>BI NKA BI</i> symbol of peace, harmony
	<i>BI NKA BI</i> means “Peace	<i>BI NKA BI</i> symbol of agreement

Innovations of Adinkra Symbols	Literal Translation	Name/Interpretation
	ƆdƆ Nnisuo means “Tear Drops of Love”	ƆdƆ Nnisuo symbol of overwhelmed love
	Ɔbiara Ho Hia means “Everyone is Important”	Ɔbiara Ho Hia symbol of Valuable Service, significance
	Kojo Baiden (rays) means “Cosmos”	Kojo Baiden (rays) symbol of Omnipresence
	Ɔhene (king) means “Foresight”	Ɔhene (king) symbol of wisdom
	Ohene adwa means “The king's stool”	Ohene adwa symbol of State, Chieftaincy
	Adikrahene Tintim means The King's stamp	Adikrahene Tintim symbol of greatness, Royalty.
	Kae me means “remember me”	Kae me symbol of loyalty faithfulness
	Onyakopon aniwa means “God's eye”	Onyakopon aniwa symbol of the Omnipresence of God
	Nya abotere means “be patient”	Nya abotere symbol of patience, calmness.
	Osidan means “the builder”	Osidan symbol of creativity

Misrepresentations of some Adinkra Symbols	Literal Translation	Name/Interpretation
	FOFOO means “yellow – turned black”	FOFOO symbol of jealousy

	<i>OHENE ANIWA</i> means “in the king’s little eyes”	<i>OHENE ANIWA</i> symbol of vigilance
	<i>MPATAPO</i> means “knot of reconciliation”	<i>MPATAPO</i> symbol of peacemaking, reconciliation
	<i>SUNSUM</i> means “the soul”	<i>SUNSUM</i> symbol of spirituality
	<i>KWATAKYE ATIKO</i> means “hairstyle of Kwatakye, a war hero”	<i>KWATAKYE ATIKO</i> symbol of bravery, valour
	<i>GYAWU ATIKO</i> means “Hind head of Gyawu”	<i>GYAWU ATIKO</i> symbol of Self confidence, Valour
	<i>KODEE MOWERE WA</i> means “Talons of an eagle”	<i>KODEE MOWERE WA</i> symbol of Strength, tenacity and courage
	<i>NKOTIMSEFUOPUA</i> means “no need to make the 4 th key, you represent that key” or “a servant of luck”	<i>NKOTIMSEFUOPUA</i> symbol of good luck, fortune

Imitations of Foreign Symbols	Literal Translation	Name/Interpretation
	<i>Swastikas</i> means “good luck”	<i>Swastikas</i> symbol of fortune
	<i>Gye w’ani</i> means “ecstasy” (Occult symbol)	<i>Gye w’ani</i> symbol of excitement, jubilation, orgasm (Malta - swastika – symbol)
	<i>Yie die</i> means “wheel of fortune” (Blacksun - mystic symbol)	<i>Yie die</i> symbol of progress, advancement
	<i>Nkwata nan</i> means crossroad (symbol of British People’s Party)	<i>Nkwata nan</i> symbol of indecision, uncertainty

APPENDIX III

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

KUMASI, COLLEGE OF ART AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, GHANA

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Dear.....

TRADITIONAL SYMBOLISM IN ASANTE TEXTILES

I have the above research project under the supervision of Dr *Osei Agyeman* and I would gratefully appreciate your assistance in answering the attached questionnaire.

Your contribution would help to determine the total usage of cultural symbolism in Asante Traditional Textiles. Most of the questions can be answered by ticking one of the alternative answers supplied. Please, return this questionnaire in the addressed envelope provided to:

- Mr A E Asmah,
College of Art and Social Science, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana

Thank You for kind assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Mr A E Asmah

- Cc: Dr Osei Agyeman,
College of Art and Social Science, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana

QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaire for local textile producers- traditional/contemporary

1. Age..... Sex..... Education.....
2. How long have you been a textile producer.....
3. How did you become a textile producer.....
4. What type of product do you produce most and why.....
5. Who are your target groups and why.....
6. When do you normally get a lot of jobs.....
7. How many apprentices do you have.....
8. What has been the trend of apprenticeship.....
9. Has there been a change in the type of handicraft you produce. Yes.....no.....
Give reason.....
10. How has western cultural symbolism affected your job?
 - a. In terms of the quality of products.....
 - b. Design of product.....
 - c. Outcome of the products.....
 - c. Patronage.....
 - d. Range of products.....
 - e. Nature of products.....
11. Do you know of any risk associated with your job.....
12. Do you know of any myths legend or beliefs surrounding your trade.....

13. Do you perform any rituals before you start your work.....
14. How are you treated by the society? In the past.....
Present.....
15. Do you have any machinery in place that checks the preservation of the use of
a particular products for traditional rulers.....
- 16 How has cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles influence the Asante
culture.....
17. Is Asante cultural symbolism necessary or important to the promotion of Asante
culture
.....
18. What do you think will be the effect of Asante traditional cloth without the use of its
cultural symbolism
19. Is it possible to identify Asante cultural symbolism portrayed in Asante traditional
textiles from the seventeenth century to the present time?
.....
20. Is it difficult to examine the significance of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional
textiles?
21. What role does symbolism in Asante traditional textiles play in the promotion of
Asante culture?
22. What factors influence the change of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles?
.....
23. Has there been any change in Asante cultural symbolism
.....

Thanks for your co-operation

Questionnaire for Traditional rulers /Family Head

1. Age..... Sex..... Education.....
2. How long have you been a traditional ruler?
3. What type of traditional ruler are you?
4. How did you become a ruler.....
5. Who produces your traditional textiles.....
6. Did you inherit any.....
7. Do you wear special or particular textile products.....
8. Has there been a change in the type of local textiles you use in terms of
Design..... quality..... Nature.....
9. What has been the trend in the use of traditional textiles since you became a ruler?
.....
10. On what specific occasion do you use some particular traditional textiles and why
.....
11. In what particular way do the traditional textiles you use differ from that of other
tribe?
12. Can you mention some symbols and designs that are particular to the
Asante.....
13. Do you present generation use or wear these designs and symbols?
Yes.....No.....
14. Do you have any special belief or attribute for using any traditional textile product?
.....
- 16 How has cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles influence the Asante
culture.....
17. Is Asante cultural symbolism necessary or important to the promotion of Asante
culture

.....
18. What do you think will be the effect of Asante traditional cloth without the use of its cultural symbolism

19. Is it possible to identify Asante cultural symbolism portrayed in Asante traditional textiles from the seventeenth century to the present time?

.....
20. Is it difficult to examine the significance of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles?

21. What role does symbolism in Asante traditional textiles play in the promotion of Asante culture?

22. What factors influence the change of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles?

.....
23. Has there been any change in Asante cultural symbolism
.....

Thanks for your co-operation

Questionnaires for the general public/ knowledgeable elders

1. Age..... Sex..... Education.....
2. What is your profession?
3. What is culture?
4. List some specific cultural practices of the Asante you are familiar with.....
.....
5. In which of the cultural practices does traditional textiles play a significant role
.....
6. Can you tell the tribe of a person by the clothing she/he wears? Yes..... no ...
Give examples.....
.....
7. Do you use traditional textiles yourself? Yes..... No.....
Give reasons.....
8. If yes on what occasion do you use such textile products.....
.....
9. Do you prefer some specific designs and symbols? Yes..... no.....
Give reasons.....
10. What other way do you use traditional textiles?
a. Present to love ones.....
b. Way of keeping my wealth.....
c. Others.....
11. How do you value traditional textile products compared to your other belongings?
- 16 How has cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles influence the Asante culture.....

17. Is Asante cultural symbolism necessary or important to the promotion of Asante culture

.....

18. What do you think will be the effect of Asante traditional cloth without the use of its cultural symbolism

19. Is it possible to identify Asante cultural symbolism portrayed in Asante traditional textiles from the seventeenth century to the present time?

.....

20. Is it difficult to examine the significance of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles?

21. What role does symbolism in Asante traditional textiles play in the promotion of Asante culture?

22. What factors influence the change of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles?

.....

23. Has there been any change in Asante cultural symbolism

.....

Thanks for your co-operation

Questionnaire for local textile distributors- traditional/contemporary

1. Age..... Sex..... Education.....
2. How long have you been a textile distributor.....
3. How did you become a textile distributor.....
4. What type of product do you distribute most and why.....
5. Who are your target groups and why.....
6. When do you normally get a lot of patronage.....
7. How many types of products do you have.....
8. What has been the trend of distribution.....
9. Has there been a change in the type of handicraft you distribute. Yes.....no.....
Give reason.....
10. How has western culture affected your distribution?
 - a. In terms of the influx of foreign quality products.....
 - b. Design of product.....
 - c. Patronage.....
 - d. Range of products.....
 - e. Nature of products.....
11. Do you know of any risk associated with your job.....
.....
12. Do you know of any myths legend or beliefs surrounding any product.....
.....
13. Do you perform any rituals before you start before distributing any particular product?
.....
14. How is your patronage? In the past-5-10years ago

Present.....

15. Do you have any machinery in place that checks the preservation of particular product.....

16 As a distributor how has traditional textiles influence the Asante culture.....

.....

16 How has cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles influence the Asante culture.....

17. Is Asante cultural symbolism necessary or important to the promotion of Asante culture

.....

18. What do you think will be the effect of Asante traditional cloth without the use of its cultural symbolism

19. Is it possible to identify Asante cultural symbolism portrayed in Asante traditional textiles from the seventeenth century to the present time?

20. Is it difficult to examine the significance of cultural symbolism in Asante traditional textiles?

21. What role does symbolism in Asante traditional textiles play in the promotion of Asante culture?

22. What factors influence the change of symbolism in Asante traditional textiles?

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23. Has there been any change in Asante cultural symbolism

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Thanks for your co-operation