

**TRADITIONAL COSTUMES AND THEIR RELEVANCE
AS CULTURAL SYMBOLS TO FILM MAKING IN GHANA
ASANTE CASE STUDY**

by

Vicentia Koteitsoo Akwetey (Mrs.) B.A (Hons) Art., P.G.C.E.

**A Thesis submitted to the Department of General Art Studies,
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

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in
(African Art and Culture)**

Faculty of Fine Art, College of Art and Social Sciences

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Mphil thesis is my own work. It has never been submitted to any other university for a degree. Wherever references to some author's works or informant's information are made in this thesis, due acknowledgements are made.

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Student's Name	Signature	Date
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Certified by

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Supervisor	Signature	Date
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Head of Department	Signature	Date
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ABSTRACT

Fifty years after the independence of Ghana, the Ghanaian film makers have not adopted a particular Ghana national costume by which the characters in Ghanaian films can be identified as Ghanaians. As a result of this, the Ghanaian screen has been overtaken by the Nigerian film. This is partly due to the fact that most Ghanaians can identify Nigerian characters in terms of costume, make-up and manner of behaviour in the Nigerian film; while to a large extent, they strangely lack that affinity with the characters in the current Ghanaian video productions on the Ghanaian screen. As a possible solution, the study proposed Asante traditional costumes as relevant cultural symbols that could be the premise for the development of creative costumes for characterization in Ghanaian filmmaking. This is based on the assumption that Asante culture is representative of Ghanaian culture and therefore its popular traditional costumes are recognised as Ghanaian cultural symbols. It is also evident that the creation of a Ghanaian cultural identity on the film screen would make a bold political and cultural statement which would project Ghana on the world scene and yield economic benefits. The investigation has identified Asante traditional costumes, established reasons for similarities and differences between their symbolism and those of the other Ghanaian cultures. It has also critically analysed Asante traditional costumes to determine their level of relevance in creating a Ghanaian cultural identity for characters in filmmaking. The cultural orientation of filmmakers has been explored to determine their perception on the issue of representation and cultural identity in filmmaking in this country. These objectives have been achieved in the thesis by largely employing the qualitative research approach.

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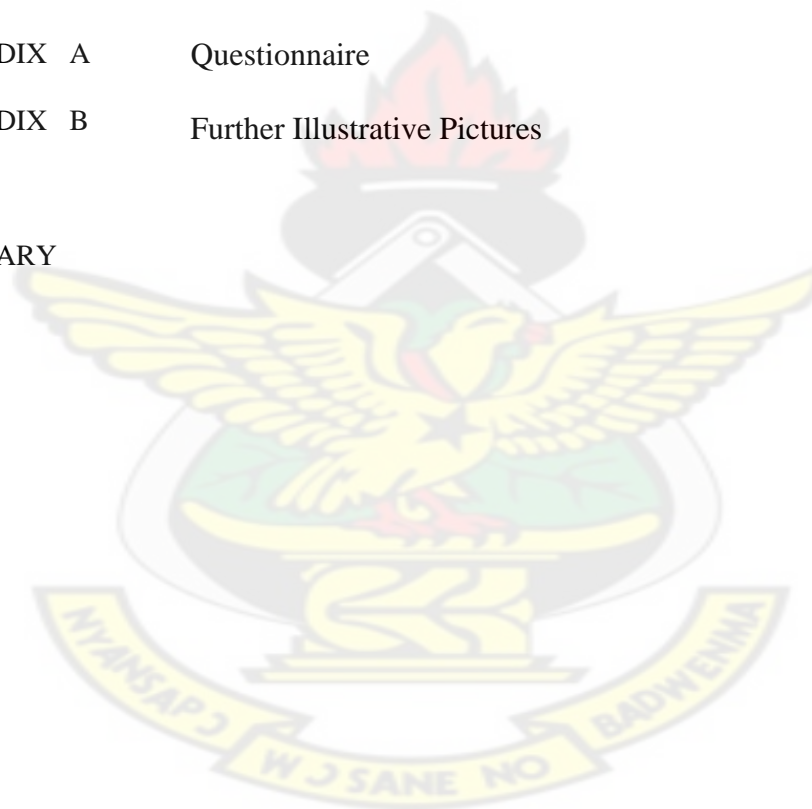
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Since the beginning of this millennium, the Ghanaian screen has been overtaken by the Nigerian film which seems to have effectively ‘flooded off’ what little remnant there was of the Ghanaian film. If there is a preference for the Nigerian film over the Ghanaian film today, it is partly due to the fact that while most Ghanaians can easily identify with the Nigerian look (in terms of costume, make-up, mannerisms of the actors/actresses) and the story line on the TV screen, they strangely lack that affinity with the Ghanaian film because of the absence of an established identity, especially in the costuming of the characters. The apparent non- existence of or lack of identity in the Ghanaian film is an issue that has been debated by various categories of people. To the film trainer, the question of cultural identity (in the films produced in Ghana and currently showing on the screens) is actually the focal point in the wider search for an ‘African character’ on our contemporary Film and Television screens. What makes any person easily identifiable in terms of country of origin in his/her outward petulance is determined first of all by the dressing and then perhaps the diction especially where the English language is concerned. In Film and Television, the African Film Designer, for example must make all efforts not to cause any visual ambiguity to the audience and therefore has the responsibility in collaboration with the Director to present a culturally authentic character who would be easily recognised as such on the African Screen.

Although there will be some discussions on filmmaking, the emphasis of the research is on costume, cultural identity, and representation in film from the film designer and specifically from the costume designer's point of view.

The focus of this research is on the relevance of popular Asante traditional costumes in cultural symbolism, to filmmaking in Ghana. In other words, it will address the extent to which popular Asante traditional costumes have influenced the 'look' or national identity of the Ghanaian to date and how this can further be developed in creative costuming for filmmaking, in order to create an established cultural identity for the Ghanaian Film. The research will therefore explore the perception of filmmakers, trainers and film students about Ghanaian cultural identity, to determine their level of awareness in the representation of cultural identity in the Ghanaian film.

In his speech at the matriculation ceremony of the 2004 freshmen of the National Film and Television Institute, Reverend Dr. Chris Tsui Hesse, a prominent Ghanaian cinematographer, made a profound statement to the effect that "...most of the characters in our films are cast in the same Hollywood mould. We therefore need to consciously create an African character in order to make the necessary impact...." The usual refrain to this statement, often framed in the form of a question by most Film and Television trainers is "What is an African character?" In making reference to the "African character", Rev. Dr. Hesse is implying that the 'look' of the actor/actress which constitutes the costume, make-up and manner of behaviour on the film or television screen, should reflect aspects of Ghanaian culture which would naturally be African.

Throughout the history of Ghana, (as pertains everywhere) various political eras have ushered in their theories and the attendant changes in perception, attitude and

behaviour, which have influenced the mode of dressing and determined the 'look' of a Ghanaian. The advent of Ghana's independence from the British (fifty years ago) in 1957 saw the projection of a new cultural identity in the costume of the first President, Dr Kwame Nkrumah. He was usually depicted in the Asante *Kente* and the tunic, which somehow became a symbol of Ghanaian national identity. This was later picked up by Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia *et cetera*, who identified with Nkrumah's Pan Africanism. He also introduced the wearing of the smock as a national costume and popularised the Chinese tunic of Chairman Mao Tse Tsung (the communist suit – which later developed into the Ghanaian 'Political suit') along with his communist ideals. Currently, some of the dress shirts men wear are developed from the structure of the Political suit jacket with trimmings from either *Adinkra* or *Kente* fabrics.

As a result of the Ghanaian cultural identity established by Nkrumah's costume, for a long time – since the 1950s till quite recently – most photograph albums of individual families and national institutions reveal that Ghanaians who travelled abroad, carried along an Asante *kente* as a national costume (see Plate1:1). Most couples, who chose to be married by ordinance or in church in traditional costume either locally or internationally, often chose Asante *Kente* irrespective of their particular ethnic origin. The photograph in Plate1:2, depicts the wedding in New York of Mr Jack Kuntoh (a Ghanaian diplomat from the Eastern Region) who married Miss Matilda Quaison-Sackey (a Fante). Everybody in the picture is dressed in an Asante *Kente* cloth. Again, most Ghanaians who had their secondary education from the early 1950s to the late 1970s and attended boarding schools, usually carried Asante *Kente* cloths and *ahenema* sandals in their trunks to be worn for special occasions.

Two main reasons account for the choice of Asante culture for this study. As a culture, Asante has historically and largely resisted cultural change and obstinately held on to many of its cultural traditions for a considerable length of time. This is evident in the interesting observations made by two foreign writers within the span of almost two centuries. British colonial Captain Bowdich, (Bowdich cited in Abayie Boaten, 1993), reporting on his mission to Kumasi in 1817 vividly describes in detail the splendour, magnificence and wealth displayed in the regalia and costumes of the chiefs and people at the celebration of the *Akwasidae Kɛsɛɛ*. Festival (held every five years in Kumasi).

Many years later, Beckwith and Fisher (2000) (American researchers) arrived at the Silver Jubilee celebration of the late *Otumfuo* Opoku Ware II in August 1995 and commented on the sheer magnificence of the golden heritage of Asantes. They described what they saw as the most extravagant collection of golden regalia to be seen anywhere. In fact they captured in photography, the sheer magnificence of Asante golden heritage as expressed in *Otumfuo's* costume and the Golden Stool. It is interesting to note that after almost two hundred years since Bowdich commented on Asante traditions expressed in the *Akwasidae Kɛsɛɛ*, the Festival continues to elicit the same response from foreigners.

Still on Asante's resistance to cultural change, Anene and Brown (1966) argue that the history of the relationship between Asantes and Fantes (two dominant factions in the history of Ghana) epitomises two significant themes in the modern history of Africa; resistance to the European type of development in the case of Asantes and the adaptation to the same type of development in the case of Fantes. This also meant that whilst

Asantes refused to compromise on the integrity of their institutions and were prepared to fight to protect them, the Fante on the other hand showed much greater readiness to accept the process of acculturation. It reflected in their attitude towards Christianity, which resulted in the early establishment of schools (to continue the process of acculturation) in Fanteland and the delay in doing the same in *Asanteman*–Asanteland.

Buah's (1998) history of Ghana, also mentions Asante's enormous wealth as a factor that helped to develop the empire into one of the greatest in Africa to the extent that it currently stands out as the leading custodian of Ghana's rich cultural heritage.

The uniqueness of Asante as a choice also stems from the fact that the components of its culture seem to be representative of most of the components of the other sub-cultures in Ghana. It is common knowledge in Ghana that Asante itself was a created kingdom that assimilated the cultures and symbols of other people into a new unified whole that is, a synthesis. In their days of expansionist glory, Asantes fought wars and expanded their area of influence as far North as the Mossis in current Burkina Faso, as far east as Dahome (currently the Republic of Benin), far west as to the Ivory Coast and far south as Fanteland in the present day Ghana (Wilks1996). Although there were forays in Accra, (which resulted in a treaty of peaceful co-existence among the two cultures), Reindorf (cited in Daily Graphic, 2003) and oral tradition have mentioned that the *densinkran* (the close cropped or shorn head and dyed) hairstyle of Asante royals and elderly women in mourning is an important reminder of the defeat of Asantes at the Katamanso battle, which also prevented a total conquest of the Ga.

As has been observed earlier, most of what is known today as the nation's rich cultural heritage is associated with the Asante culture. This is not to negate what other ethnic groups have to offer culturally. On the contrary, while most ethnic groups in Ghana have a somewhat pure culture, Asante culture could best be described as that of unity in diversity. This has historical connotations, which need to be traced to the very traditions of origin of Asantes.

According to the Fuller (1968) tradition, some Asantes have claimed that their ancestors descended directly from heaven and settled at Asiakwa in the Kibi district of the Gold Coast (a claim he has difficulty agreeing with). He seems more comfortable with the second account of the origin of Asantes in his discussion that

...the more sensible portion of the community believe that their forebears came down from the north. Indeed, this is the generally accepted theory, and is supported by the fact that until recent times a curious connection existed between the Ashanti Royal Family and that of BONA [sic], a town to the north of BONTUKU, on the FRENCH IVORY COAST [sic].

Dr Osei Agemang- an Art historian and a lecturer at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), whose father is an Akyem, clarifies Fuller's position with his assertion that it is the people of Akyem Abuakwa who claim to have descended from the sky in a brass bowl connected with a metal chain (personal communication).

Another tradition of origin is the popular Asantemanso legend often told by all field resource persons – which traces the forebears of Asante to a hole underground at Esumeja near Asantemanso. This has been disproved by Prof. Ivor Wilks (1996), who perceives this and the former legends concerning “the descent from heaven” as imagery, and therefore not to be taken literally. He further advances an argument concerning the origin of Asante, the dominant culture in Ghana.



Plate 1:1

Foreign Service officials at the Ghana High Commission in London, dressed in National costume for a Diplomatic function in the 1970s (Pictures by courtesy of Mrs. Victoria Sackey)



Plate 1: 2.

Mr & Mrs Jack Kuntoh's wedding in New York. Everyone in the picture is dressed in 'National costume' (Pictures by courtesy of Miss Sarah Kuntoh).

In his discussion on the Denkyira war and its significance in the formation of the Asante Confederacy, Wilks (1996) argues that at the time of the war, Ntim Gyakari was defeated by a coalition of smaller states; Kumasi, Dwaben, Nsuta, Bekwai, Mampong *et cetera* rather than an already consolidated Asante confederacy. He further explains that the historical significance of the Asante-Denkyira war was more in the reason for the coalition, which gave birth to the name Asante. They came together to fight and defeat the Denkyira hence the name *ɔsa nti fo* meaning – those who came together “because of war”– which then became Asante, the name of the new union. At the filming of the *Golden Stool* (2000), (which portrays among other things, the funeral celebration of the late *Asantehene Otumfuo* Opoku Ware II) the museum curator recounted a similar account of the origin of Asantes.

Reverend Samson Banning (2001) relates yet another tradition of the origin of Asantes. According to him, on their journey from Egypt, the *Ka* people were together as they were constantly chased by nephilims. At a point in time, a section of the group separated from the main group and were referred to as *fā atew won ho fo* which became *Fantefo* (Fantes)–meaning the break away group. The separated group in turn referred to their kinsmen who refused to go their way as *Asoa antefo* literally meaning stubborn people - currently known as *Asantefo* (Asantes). This position is at variance with Wilks’s or any other account of Asante origins and might be worth further investigation. The extent of Asante power at the height of its reign could probably explain the extent to which its culture assimilated other cultures all over the country and beyond. The geographical extent of Greater Asante in the early nineteenth century as Kwami Arhin (cited in Wilks, 1996) describes it, “...extended not only over all of present day Ghana

with the exception of the far North West but also over large parts of what is now the Côte d’Ivoire and smaller parts of what is now the Togo.”

Professor Mawere Opoku (an Asante royal and a renowned Scholar who was a field resource person) has attributed the cohesive and strong Asante culture to the fact that although other states were conquered and brought under the umbrella of the Golden Stool, they were not treated as slaves. On the other hand they were given the freedom to become citizens of *Asanteman* by not having anyone refer to another’s origin or question it. Fuller’s (1968) account of Asante history, states a similar point of view that

...owing presumably to the wise statesmanship of ANOTCHWI, [sic] all conquered tribes were given full rights as Asante citizens and beyond certain obligations of tribute which were imposed on them, they experienced no interference at the hands of their conquerors. By this enlightened policy, erstwhile enemies became friends.

According to both oral tradition and recorded history, most of what are currently acknowledged as Asante arts which make up the rich cultural heritage, are actually the result of skills they acquired from the various states and ethnic groups Asante conquered at one point or the other during their ‘empire days’.

Abayie Boaten (1993) writes about the importation of the *Batakari* with the talismans (which the *Asantehene* wears as Commander-in-Chief of the Asante army immediately after his installation ceremony) from the Muslim scholars who came to stay in Asante during the reign of Nana Bonsu Panin (1800-1824) to record the royal court chronicles. It is also common knowledge that Asante paramount chiefs and most traditional warriors (especially down south) wear the *Batakari* with talismans (see Plates 1:3-1:5).

According to Swithenbank (1969), Adansis (builders) brought the technology of building to Asantes. The popular *Adinkra* cloth which has become synonymous with Asante culture has its origin associated with an Ivorian (Gyaman) chief named *Adinkra*, after whom the cloth was named. He was said to have angered the *Asantehene* Nana Bonsu Panin by making a copy of the Golden stool for himself. This led to the invasion of Gyaman and his subsequent capture and murder (Rattray, 1959). Another

It has also been stated by Tufuo and Donkor (1969) that when Bono Manso was conquered by *Asante*, the:

“... Bono “intelligentsia” –the craftsmen, goldsmiths, weavers, carvers, musicians, the organisers of the great market which was visited annually by the caravans from North Africa- went into captivity at Kumasi, the capital of Asante, to teach the king and his court the civilized ways of life....”

Indeed it would be worth investigating the origin of the *Kente* cloth. Both Ewes and Asantes have claimed to be the originators of the cloth. On the other hand, Rattray (1959) believes the northern ethnic groups might probably be the originators of the cloth.

Another interesting fabric worth mentioning is the Appliquéd cloth (which is a common feature of *Asantehene*'s wardrobe), which originates from the Republic of Benin (Trowel, 1960). It is also known in Akan as *Akunintam* (Great men's cloth). These are a few of the acculturated symbols and art forms of Asante culture which indeed partially reflect the culture of Ghana.

Currently, Asantes are located in the Forest Belt of the Ashanti Region in Ghana with Kumasi as the capital city (see Fig. 1:1). Their land covers 24,390 square miles (approximately 10.2% of the land area of Ghana), with a population of about 3,612,950



Plate 1:3

Plates 1:3 & 1:4 depict Asante Paramount chiefs dressed in *Batakarikesee* during the installation ceremony of Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II (Pictures from the film *Golden Stool* (2000))



Plate 1:4



Plate 1:5

Some warriors of the *Ga* traditional area at the durbar grounds during the inauguration of the Greater Accra Regional House of Chiefs in 1989. All the warriors and their commanders (*Asafobii* and *Asafoiatsemei*) are dressed in traditional army costumes i.e. *Batakari* with talismans. (Picture purchased from Information Services Dept.)

export products such as cocoa, oil palm, tobacco, cashew, to mention a few, in the agricultural sector of the country's economy. The land is also rich with large deposits of minerals such as gold, bauxite *et cetera* which are also major foreign exchange earners for Ghana. Irrespective of the fact that Asantes are traditionally mostly farmers and traders, they currently dominate the Private Sector in most business and economic ventures. The interesting observation is that over the years they have retained most of the traditional strip weaving and printing techniques in the design and manufacture of the *Kente*, *Adinkra*, *Akunintam* and *Kuntunkuni* cloths among other crafts such as metal casting, wood carving, gold smithing, sandal making *et cetera*. These have been developed by Ghanaians into very interesting concepts for costume design that will be discussed in detail in Chapter five.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Currently, the Ghanaian Film industry has lost its cultural identity. It seems most of the current 'filmmakers' do not do adequate planning for their films. They are primarily preoccupied with the profit margin of their video productions and therefore regard any budgetary request for Art Direction (which constitutes the visual content of the film) and specifically for costumes, as an extreme source of 'financial irritation'. To most of them, the issue constitutes the simplistic transposition of every day characters on to the screen, wearing Western European and American clothes (normal street wear or work clothes) which ironically happen to be the by-product of cultural influences from North American and Latin American Soap Operas currently showing on the Ghanaian

Television screens. This also questions their perception with regard to Ghanaian cultural orientation. The films of these ‘filmmakers’ therefore end up being poor copies of nothing in particular since the ‘look’ of the characters is ‘ambivalent’, without any defined identities and the settings equally have no character. In fact by their look, most of such characters could fit in any of the Anglophone capital city settings on the African continent.

The ‘untutored filmmaker’ is seemingly unaware of the fact that the costuming of characters in the Latin American soap operas has been thoughtfully and skilfully designed to look attractively authentic for economic benefit. Yet in the same token these same Soap Operas are an imitation of the ‘Hollywood image’. This image refers to Hollywood as the epitome of the film industry, (the American film industry) both in terms of its overall look, story value and commercial benefit.

Moreover, there is a seeming unconscious state from which Ghanaian filmmakers need to wake up in order to observe the modern developments and normal use of the Ghanaian traditional fabrics and costumes such as *Kente*, *Adinkra et cetera* for formal and informal wear and their unique possibilities for representation of characters for Ghanaian filmmaking.

The current research therefore, hopes to fill the academic vacuum created by the lack of information on costume and characterisation which would help establish a Ghanaian cultural identity for filmmaking and attempt to provide information that would correct the misrepresentation of cultural symbols in film; especially in the area of Asante or Ghanaian traditional costumes.



Fig. 1:1
Regional Map of Ghana with the Ashanti Region marked out in yellow.

correct the misrepresentation of cultural symbols in film; especially in the area of Asante or Ghanaian traditional costumes.

1.3 Objectives

This research aims at:

- Identifying popular traditional costumes used by Asantes and their symbolism in Asante culture.
- Establishing the reasons for the similarities and dissimilarities in the symbolism of traditional costumes used by other cultures and those of Asantes in Ghana.
- Exploring the cultural orientation of Ghanaian filmmakers and their perception of cultural identity and representation in the Ghanaian film.
- Critically analysing the traditional costumes of Asante to determine their level of relevance in establishing the cultural identity of characters for filmmaking in Ghana.

1.4 Importance of the Study

The research findings will:

- provide Film and Television students in training and practitioners in the Film and TV industry with relevant data on designing appropriate costumes and creating characters that will help create a Ghanaian look which will establish the much needed cultural identity for the Ghanaian film.
- stimulate further research in other related areas which could clearly define a Ghanaian cultural and national identity.
- benefit the general public, scholars and anyone who is interested in this particular field of study.

1.5 Hypothesis

Asante traditional costumes are relevant as cultural symbols for film making in Ghana

1.6 Study Questions

- What constitutes traditional costumes in Asante culture?
- How has the 'look' or 'national identity' of the Ghanaian been influenced by Asante traditional costumes?
- What is the cultural orientation of the Ghanaian filmmaker?
- How do Ghanaian filmmakers perceive cultural identity and representation in film?
- How relevant are Asante traditional costumes in creating and establishing the cultural identity of characters in the Ghanaian film?

1.7 Definitions

- Target audience : an identifiable group of persons for whom a specific audio visual message is designed or packaged.
- Character : the created personality we imagine to exist within the world of the film.
- Tunic : a short or long sleeved shirt without cuffs, with a round neck, traditionally worn by men in the coastal regions of Ghana and West Africa.
- Costume : all the clothing and accessories worn by an actor or actress to play the role of a specific character in a film.
- Make-up : all materials- powder, liquid, grease foundations *etcetera* and hair that are applied to the hair, face and body of the artiste to create the appropriate 'look' for the specific character's role in the film.

- Characterization : the process of creating and assigning a role to a fictional personality in a film.
- Cinematographer : the one who interprets the ideas and emotions of the film story into visual images on the screen.
- Artiste : an actor or actress on a film set.
- Film Designer : the one who visually interprets film story, therefore the artist who creates the look of the film- designs appropriate sets, costumes and make-up for the characters before the camera takes a shot.
- Smock : a woven loose wide hip or knee length robe with a round neck and large loose sleeves, worn by the men in the northern and upper regions of Ghana.
- Representation : production of the meaning of the concepts in our mind.
- Chinese tunic Long- sleeved jacket with a high neck or without a collar popularised by the Chinese Communist leader, Chairman Mao Tse Tsung.
- Political suit Short- sleeved jacket with or without a lapel worn with a pair of trousers, used by Ghanaian men for work and introduced by Dr Kwame Nkrumah.
- Nephilims : fallen angels perceived as evil spirits.
- Set : a created environment within which the performers enact the scenes of a film story.
- Appliquéd cloth : plain cloth patterned loosely with animal and other symbolic shapes cut out of colourful cotton cloth. The textile design technique originated from The Republic of Benin (Dahomey) and is worn by chiefs and royals.
- Script : the film story.

Mantle	: Egyptian word for the draped cloth.
Chlamys	: Greek word for the draped cloth.
Toga	: Roman word for the draped cloth worn by men.
Enstoolment	: the culmination of the installation process when the seat of authority (over his people) is handed over to the newly sworn-in chief or queen mother.
Outdooring	: the presentation of a newly installed chief to the public.
Cinematèque	: film viewing facility.

1.8 Scope of work

The focus will be on the extent or otherwise of the relevance of Asante traditional costumes as cultural symbols, to filmmaking in Ghana. The research will be conducted from the film designer and more specifically, the costume designer's point of view.

- The discussion of cultural symbolism in this study would be limited to the areas of colour, costumes and gestures that relate to the movement of clothes on the body to communicate a message.
- The areas of symbolism would be discussed from the focal point of Asante traditional costumes in comparison to those of the various sub-cultures in Ghana and touch on a few universal examples.
- The use of the word **film** in the study will encompass the audio visual medium in forms such as cinema, film, video and television.

1.9 Limitations of the study

- Much as the researcher would have liked to use this opportunity to research into and document other related areas of film, the study had to be limited to the current scope as stated due to constraints of logistics (money, transportation, availability of resources and resource persons) and time.

1:10 Assumptions.

It is assumed that

- Asante culture is representative of Ghanaian culture.
- Asante traditional costumes are recognised Ghanaian cultural symbols.
- The creation and establishment of a Ghanaian cultural identity on the film screen would make a bold cultural and political statement that would project Ghana on the global scene and yield economic benefits.

1.11 Organisation of Chapters

The study is divided into six chapters.

- Chapter One introduces the subject and gives the philosophical and historical back ground to the study. It also states the objective, hypothesis, importance, scope and limitations of the study.
- Chapter Two reviews all related available literature on the study under the heading: Film, traditional costumes and the character.
- Chapter Three discusses the Research Design and its implementation in the study.
- Chapter Four is devoted to Cultural Symbolism and Identity in Film in two parts. Part One describes Symbolism in Asante culture under the sub headings; personality, colour, clothes and gestures that relate to movement of clothes on the body to communicate a message. It also does a comparative study of the symbolism in *Asante* traditional costumes and those of the other cultures in the country.

- Part Two discusses Cultural Identity and the Ghanaian Film by exploring the cultural orientation of Ghanaian filmmakers and their perception about cultural identity.
- Chapter Five analyses the Ghanaian ‘look’ or National Identity from the Independence era to date in relation to *Asante* traditional costumes and looks at its role in costume designing and characterisation to establish a Ghanaian identity for film making.
- Chapter Six concludes all the discussions and suggests recommendations.

1.12 Summary of Discussion

From the discussion so far, it has been observed that currently the Ghanaian film Industry has no identity, partly due to the lack of an established cultural identity in the in the costuming of characters in the films currently shown on our film and Television screens. As a result of this, the Nigerian movies in which the characters seem to have maintained some tenets of Nigerian culture in the ‘look’ and dialogue of the characters seem to have gained more popularity.

It was noted that Asante *Kente* cloth and the short sleeved tunic, were established after Independence by Dr Kwame Nkrumah as Ghanaian national costume. It was used by Ghanaian Diplomats and recognised internationally and locally as a Ghanaian cultural identity which even became an African identity in the broader context.

It is also evident that both foreigners and Ghanaians, who wrote about Asantes from various points of view, unanimously highlight three basic issues. Primarily, Asante kingdom was a force to reckon with. Secondly, due to the cohesion and power, they fought and annexed many other states and assimilated their people, wealth, skills and culture into their own which further made them a colonial force to reckon with. Finally,

they were able to resist British colonialism for a considerable length of time which enabled them to maintain the tenets of their cultural institutions and heritage even to this day.

As a result of these, Asante culture which is largely reflected in the celebration of the *Adae Kɛsɛɛ* festival, has held on to most of its tenets at least from 1817 to date. Due to its authenticity and historic nature and also for the fact that it resisted British civilization for a long time, Asante culture has been recognised in world history. This reinforces the dominance of Asante culture which is also perceived as representative of Ghanaian culture.

It was also realised that most of the textiles and other cultural symbols of Asante are a synthesis of symbols acquired from most of the other cultures in Ghana and are therefore partially representative of Ghanaian culture. This makes Asante culture a unique choice for the study of the relevance of its traditional costumes in cultural symbolism to filmmaking in Ghana.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the symbolism of Asante textiles have been studied extensively in both the Ghanaian and the African context by Rattray, Blier, Arthur and Rowe *et cetera*, the subject is usually approached outside the specific context of traditional costumes. In much the same way, the sort of literature which exists on traditional costumes is scanty and is usually treated in addition to some other aspects of Akan or Ghanaian culture.

Again, whilst most researches have been conducted and many books have been written on film, very little exists on Africa and for that matter Ghana. Apart from the Pan African Film Festival (FESPACO), which has highlighted African film and culture, and has therefore led to the production of some literature on African film, most of the existing literature focuses on specific areas, which usually concern the European and American society and culture.

2.1 Rationale

The review of all related and available literature on the current subject would help the current researcher to:

- Know what areas have been covered and what is yet to be covered in order to know how to contribute to the growth of knowledge by filling in the vacuum.
- Understand and use the relevant terminology in writing this thesis.
- Compare and contrast the content of the literature review and that of the field work in order to have a more scholarly result.

In order to do an effective literature review, the focus will be on: Film, Traditional clothes and the Character.

2.2 Film, Traditional clothes and the Character.

It is common knowledge in most semi-literate societies such as pertains in Ghana that film (the audio visual medium) has become a vital medium of mass communication due to its subtle but powerful influence on the human mind. However, the extent of this influence is yet to be fully exploited for the development of our societies. In their discussion on film, R. Johnson and J. Bone see it as “...an analysis of the obvious. It helps us to see something that has always been there and to see it in a new way” (Johnson & Bone, 1978). From their point of view, film is a representation or repackaging of reality, which affords its target audience the chance to pay more attention to issues in life which are normally taken for granted.

J. R. Dominick’s (1975) analysis of the mass media mentions the social function the media performs in the transmission of values, as being very vital to society. He discusses how the mass media refers to ways in which an individual comes to adopt the behaviour and values of society. According to him, all that we read in the print media, listen to on Radio, watch on the Television, Film and Video screens are a portrayal of society, which serve as a learning process, through role models that we observe and imitate in order to know how people are supposed to act, and what values are important.

It is obvious that of all the mass media mentioned, film has the best advantage of fulfilling this function in a society such as ours. The extensive and all-embracing nature

of film is excellently expressed in Raymond Durnat's (1976) description of the style of cinema as "a *potpourri* of art form, sharing elements in common with each other but weaving them into a pattern of its own." In other words, film uses the flexibility and realism of the novel, the composition of images in colour as in painting; shapes, structure, and tensions both in space and in time as in music- that is, the cinema combines elements from various arts into its own synthesis. Again as Durnat puts it, "...the film adds words to pictures, to music...."

It is this very composition of all the elements in film that gives it an edge over other communication media. J. R. Glessing and William White, (1973) commenting on the moral influence of the audio visual media on the minds of people, believe that "television is the greatest communication mechanism ever to be designed and operated by man...." They see it as a force that exerts a lot of influence on the human mind through the constant bombardment of information, opinion, moral values and aesthetic taste. In their opinion, "...it cannot be a neutral influence. Every minute of television programming - commercial, entertainment, news - teaches us something new"

Also it is this very influence that film exerts on the human mind that P. A.V. Ansah (1991) (a renowned scholar of Mass Communication) expatiates in his paper on the use of the audio visual medium as a tool for national development. He describes film as a major tool for socialisation. He further observes that film enables us to be sensitive to the cultural expectations (values and aspirations) of other members of the society; this process in turn helps in the building of cultural institutions and traditions and the

transmission of the cultural heritage by documenting the culture and the people's way of life.

It also provides an excellent premise for the cross-cultural understanding mentioned by G. F. K. Arthur and R. Rowe (2001) in their study of Akan Cultural Symbols. According to them, the art of a particular people can and does reveal ever changing human images and attitudes and therefore the awareness of a people's art, visual and cultural symbols can become an important medium for cross-cultural understanding.

This therefore presupposes that the film maker must be knowledgeable about the cultural milieu of his target audience in order to create on the screen, characters that are authentic by their very look and actions. This means that "the role models", according to Dominic (1975), through whom the message or cultural value is transmitted, must look credible and 'presentable'. In other words, the audience must be able to identify with the character as in having an affinity with him/her, believe in him/her, in order to be able to understand his or her message and actions on the screen.

It is important to note at this point that in film, the visual message; which consists of the sets where the action takes place; costumes -clothes and accessories; and make-up - the hair, face and body of the artiste; account for about seventy percent of the work done; and it becomes very necessary therefore to be specific and authentic as far as the content of the visual statement is concerned.

In respect of this, Durgnat (1976) states clearly that dress may establish character in ways about which the *script* remains silent. He illustrates this with a description of Richard Fleischer's film *The Big Gamble* (1960) in which the Irish adventurer Stephen

Boyd brings his new French bride (Juliet Greco) back to his puritanical family.

...she wears a black leather coat, a tightly moulded red dress, and a white flower in her buttonhole. The coat suggests she's knocked roughly around the world. The tightly moulded red dress suggests promiscuity (as when in Victor Fleming's *Gone with the Wind* (1939) Rhett, thinking Scarlet has slept with Ashley, makes her go to Melanie's party, wearing a red dress.) And the white flower says she is pure at heart.

Here, it must be noted that Durgnat never discusses the style of clothes in isolation from the colours. He interprets red as pertaining to promiscuity in the European and American culture, as far as costume is concerned. This is in direct contrast to what pertains in some Ghanaian traditional contexts as clearly stated by Archbishop Peter Sarpong (1991). In his discussion on some social aspects of Akan culture in Ghana, red is associated with war, anger and death and is therefore used in costumes for such occasions by most cultures in Ghana. It is apparent that the importance of symbolism in terms of colour and details in style and manner of wearing costumes in the various cultures cannot be underestimated, since it largely affects the interpretation of the costume the character wears and the role he/she plays in the film.

Elaborating on the above mentioned subject, Christine Biney (1985) observes in her study on the influence of contemporary culture on Ghanaian costumes that people from a particular geographical area and climate, who share the same values and philosophy, may homogenize these into one whole, which may be reflected in their indigenous costume, and which may be representative of their identity. She also mentions that the detail in cultural differences is portrayed in a people's own special means of expression through their style of dressing which becomes their costume; in that we can identify and count as many cultures or groups of people as there are various costumes and styles. This

then means that by their traditional costumes, ethnic groups such as Asantes, Ewes, Dagombas, Gas, Fantes *et cetera* (which are also cultures within a main culture) can be identified.

In the same vein, P. Bohannan (1993) mentions a vital aspect of symbolism in his discussion on culture. According to him, people who generally come from the same climate and may even wear the same clothes or fabrics may differ in detail as to how the clothes hang and drape. A classic example is the draped cloth – discussed in Katherine L’Engle’s (1959) work on ancient Mediterranean costumes – which was worn by the Sumerians, Babylonians, Egyptians and later by the Greeks and Romans. The various people had different names for the draped cloth. It was the *mantle* or *drape* to the Egyptians, the *chlamys* to the Greeks and the *toga* to the Romans. In fact even in scholarly circles, some English and American writers are still known to refer to the Ghanaian cloth as the *Toga* (Roman Version). The illustration in Figure 2:1 depicts an ancient Greek philosopher in his *chlamys* (cloth) only, seated on a box. If it were not for the curly hair he could be mistaken for an Asante elderly man. Thomas Hope (1962) has explained the meaning of the *chlamys*, mantle or cloak as a sign of austerity to the Greeks. The Roman orator in Fig.2:2 is depicted wearing a *toga* with a tunic underneath.

Coming home to Africa, Richard Martin’s illustration in Fig.2:3 depicts a Ghanaian, Zairian, Kenyan, Ethiopian, South African and Nigerian - all wearing cloths (Martin, 1993). Some wear them with the tunic, while others do without them. It is noted that even among those cultures who do not wear the tunic in addition to the cloth, the ways of wearing the cloth differ. This is because although they are all black people, there are differences in details of culture, which have to do with the physical location and

psychological environment. These elements represent minute but very distinct and vital differences in the ways of wearing the traditional cloth, which immediately establish the cultural identity of an individual at a glance. They are also the very minute but important details of symbolism in any culture, which the filmmaker needs to know and employ in establishing the cultural identity of the character on the screen.

It is on this premise that Chris Nweke (1988), commenting on the film *Cobra Verde* (1987) complains about the “obscene” misrepresentation of cultural symbols as seen in a typical Asante Royal costume, which a chief wears, whilst sitting in court in a Sahelian architectural style of palace. Although Werner Herzog – the German film director – is reported as unsuccessfully attempting to explain away the mistake, the fact still remains that the costume was certainly not appropriate for the setting. The character was therefore out of place in the setting.

A similar example was rather successfully executed in the film known as *Coming to America* (1988). Although the director picked symbols from various parts of Africa, the overall effect was that of cultural harmony. The audiences in Africa are aware of some amount of exaggeration in the costumes – especially at the wedding ceremony of Hakeem (the prince) – but there is no symbolic misrepresentation and therefore no conflict of symbols.

On the other hand, Ghanaians who watched *Cobra Verde* were not comfortable with the Chief’s character because historically, no Asante Chief would sit comfortably in a Dagomba or Mossi palace, since the latter are reported to have been a vassal state to Asantes in their era of “expansionist glory”.

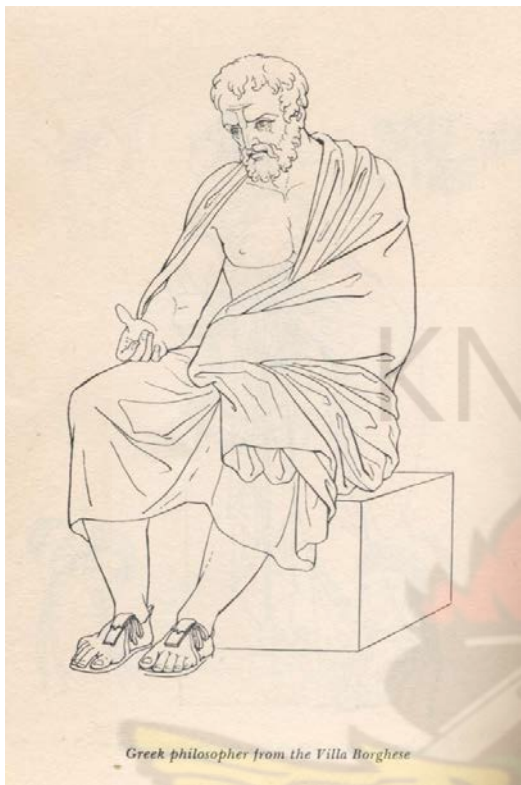


Fig.2:1



Fig. 2:2

(Pictures from Costumes of the Greeks and Romans)

It therefore becomes a serious misrepresentation of a culture, when traditional costumes, which happen to be one of the vital symbols of any culture, are misused in a film. It can only provoke wrong sentiments and non-identification with the character, resulting in the non-achievement of any meaningful communication.

From another angle, an analysis of the various reviews of Kwaw Ansah -the foremost Ghanaian filmmaker's two films- *Love Brewed in the African Pot* (1981) and *Heritage Africa* (1988) provide an interesting visual representation of Anene's & Brown's (1966) discussion on the "two significant themes in modern African History" – adaptation to European type of development on one hand and resistance to the same type of development on the other hand.

The two films portray the colonised Ghanaian or African (since the experiences of the characters are common throughout the continent) who despises and sells his heritage respectively only to be rudely woken up to the awareness of his African identity. This is evidenced by the mannerism, setting, costumes and make-up of Bosomfield's character as a District Commissioner in *Heritage Africa*, and that of Kofi Appiah (the colonial servant) in *Love Brewed in the African Pot*.

In graphic terms Vincent Canby (1981), writing for the *New York Times*, described the Appiah family in the film *Love Brewed in an African Pot* as a typical middle class family whose members are doing their "level genteel best" to carry on the traditions of the now departed white colonials. He further explains how this has been portrayed in the film by stating that Kofi Appiah, the father, a prosperous businessman has installed his family in a comfortable suburban bungalow, drives a Volkswagen, wears a dark suit and



Fig.2:3
Africans from Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Zaire, Ethiopia and South Africa wearing cloth in different ways (Picture from **World Book Encyclopaedia**).

white shirt to the office and lays down the firm law to his devoted wife and his somewhat sceptical children.

Klevator Abo (cited in *West Africa Magazine* 1989), reporting on FESPACO '89 (the 1989 edition of the Pan African Film Festival) and the award winning film *Heritage Africa* - (Grand Prix - *Etalon Yennenga*), comments on how Kofi Bucknor (best male actor in the film) portrays "the anglicised and alienated African colonial District Commissioner on a long and tragic road to rediscovery of his cultural heritage" In Bosomfield's portrayal of the alienated African, his only claim to African ancestry was in his black skin and features. As already stated, his speech and mannerism, costume and make-up for the best part of the film was an exact imitation of his colonial bosses. Like his counterpart Kofi Appiah in *Love Brewed in an African Pot*, Bosomfield only wakes up to his true identity after disaster strikes and they are both brought to the awareness of their identity by characters dressed in a Ghanaian traditional style and who symbolise African cultural heritage.

In his speech, Dr. Joe Abbey (cited in Daily Graphic, 1988), the then Ghana High Commissioner in Britain remarked at the premiere of the film in London that "*Heritage Africa's* lesson is quite clear. A person or a whole people could be laid to waste culturally, through mindless imposition or assimilation of alien values". Abbey's comment gives credence to the strong moral influence of film on the human mind that was discussed by Glessing and White. It is also a clear indication of how successful the filmmaker has been in communicating his message to the target audience. The following

reviews give further credence to how the medium of film has been used to bring Africans to the realisation of who they are what they have and could be.

The *Liberian Sunday People* (1981) reports that the film “*Love Brewed in an African Pot*” can be “an eye opener for several of us - Africans who will like to portray an authentic culture to eventually win the respect of the entire world”

West Africa Magazine (1981) writes concerning *Love Brewed in the African Pot* (1981) that “...some Africans who came from other countries who were at the premiere commented on how true the film was to African life and how much they recognized, because their experience had been similar”

India News (the newspaper of the Indian High Commission in Ghana) (1981) states how “the jury commended Kwaw Ansah’s attempt to discover a national and cultural identity. In India, *Love Brewed in an African Pot* won the special award of Silver Peacock at the 8th International Film Festival at New Delhi.

Indeed if the screening of a film, set in the colonial era is able to engage the minds of people and draw them in to the vivid reality of colonialism and its resultant effect of alienating a people from their culture, then we need to consider the position of Ault *et al* (1985) in their comment on the moral influence exerted by film. In fact they strongly state their opinion in the form of a warning to the effect that “... film is probably the most powerful propaganda medium yet devised. As a consequence, its potential for aiding or injuring civilization is enormous”. They see film as a double-edged sword that can cut both ways that is, good or bad, due to the control it exerts over the human mind.

It goes without saying that the film maker who understands cultural symbolism,

could easily employ this experience to either reinforce his own cultural heritage, thereby helping to create a cultural identity, or impose it on another people, as in the case of the “American dream”, which was propagated all over the world by Hollywood.

Long before Ghanaians started making their recent feature films in the early 1980s, they had a cinema going public which was very used to the American film. Its impact was such that to this day, in spite of the recent World Trade Centre disaster which occurred on 11th September 2001, it is common knowledge that most Ghanaians think America is ‘paradise’ on earth. The American trainer’s shoes, the baggy shorts, and trousers, the over-sized ‘T’ shirt (sweat shirt) and the baseball cap are the eternal American fashion. America is still perceived as the land of opportunities to the extent that some Ghanaians and probably half the world’s population yearn to set foot on American soil. These items of clothing (put together) constitute one of many dress fashions that have been etched on the minds of people (throughout the world) as an American cultural identity, which has also brought huge economic gains to that country.

It has been made possible through the skilful, deliberate and enticingly authentic manner in which Hollywood has projected the American dream image and culture as all in all, through the creation of believable characters on the screen whose mannerism, actions and words are perceived as truthful and therefore consumed as such. This could be cited as an example of the propaganda nature of films that Ault *et al* warned about, as stated earlier on. Unfortunately, the untutored filmmaker - who is ignorant of his own rich cultural symbol system or for that matter that of another, will find it most difficult to communicate meaningfully let alone make that bold cultural statement that would bring in its wake political and economic emancipation.

2.3 Summary of Discussion

It has been observed that film is a unique art form and a very powerful medium of communication, due largely to the nature of its composition. If visual images are powerful on their own, then the audio-visual in motion can have a very powerful impact on the senses of the individual, which gives it a great potential to either aid or destroy according to the message and its packaging.

Again, it is noted that in order for any communication to take place, the message must be understood by, and meaningful to, the target audience. This presupposes that the target audience must understand the symbolism of the images on the screen. The filmmaker equally needs to understand the cultural background of the target audience, in order not to create any conflict in the cultural symbols used on the screen, so far as the setting, costumes and actions of the characters in the film are concerned. It is also very important that the audience identifies the characters, in order to identify with them and empathise with the roles being played by them. In other words, the audience must first of all recognise who the character is, what he is and what he stands for, that is his/her cultural identity, his/her social status *et cetera* which should be obviously stated at a glance by his/her costume against the appropriate setting. It is after this initial acceptance that the audience can comfortably listen to what the character has to say, and disagree or agree with his or her role and message. Any message packaged outside this context or principle, could easily be misinterpreted and misunderstood, resulting in wrong communication.

It was also observed that various cultures express their own unique identity in their indigenous costumes which in turn becomes their cultural identity. This means that by

their traditional costumes, it is possible to identify one culture from another. At the same time it is important to note that there are further details in the symbolism of colour, drape of the cloth, manner of wearing it and the type of accessories used that further differentiate one culture from another. It is details such as these that the film maker needs to know in order to be able to do effective characterisation for the film screen.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction and Research Design

This study involves on one hand, an investigation of the extent to which popular Asante traditional costumes have influenced the ‘look’ or national identity of the Ghanaian from 1957 to date and on the other hand, the representation, non-representation or possible representation of this in the Ghanaian film. Since the process will involve interaction with filmmakers specifically (and selected Ghanaians in general) on the field, to explore their perceptions concerning the subject of the study, the Qualitative Research Procedure would be largely employed.

3.2 Researcher’s Role

My perception of cultural symbolism (in the area of costume) and its representation in the Ghanaian film has been shaped by my personal experiences. As a lecturer in Art Direction since 1985 at the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) I have worked with various students and have had the opportunity to observe and study the effect of the training offered at the Institute on its alumni film directors and the challenges they face on the field concerning cultural identity and representation in the Ghanaian film.

I have also been in professional practice in the Film Industry since 1987 as a costume designer, make-up artist, set designer and also as an art director and production designer for films such as *Heritage Africa*, (1988) *Sankofa*, (1992) *Crossroads of People*, *Crossroads of Trade*, (1995) *Holby City*. *Tuesday’s Child* (2005) among others.

I have had the opportunity of working with very creative and culturally conscious film producers and directors such as Kwaw Ansah, Haille Gerima, Emma Turner *et cetera* whose works have demanded thorough research into periods and contemporary costumes specifically and representation of Ghanaian cultural symbols generally in filmmaking.

I believe this understanding of the context and role enhances my awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to the many challenges, and issues concerned in exploring the perceptions of filmmakers and Ghanaians on the subject of the study. Particular attention will be paid to the influence of Asante traditional costumes on the Ghanaian cultural identity since the advent of independence till now and the possibilities for costume design and characterisation for representation of cultural identity in Ghanaian filmmaking.

Due to previous experience of working closely with very creative and professional film directors and producers such as the culturally conscious Kwaw Ansah, certain biases will be brought to this study which will shape the perception of collected data and the interpretation of my experiences. In spite of this, every effort will be made to ensure objectivity.

This research commences with the perspective that the Ghanaian film has currently lost its identity especially in the costuming of characters although the Ghanaian has always expressed his or her national identity in costume (the most popular medium) whenever necessary, since Independence. It questions the cultural orientation of the current generation of film directors and producers and their perception of Ghanaian cultural identity and representation in film.

3.3 Data collection

Setting

This study was conducted mainly in the Greater Accra and Ashanti Regions. The main locations were the Campus of the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) Accra and Kumasi in the Ashanti Region. Other locations are:

Informant location

TV Africa.

Information Services Department,

TV3 and GAMA Film Company.

Building and Strengthening Church International (Kokomlemle).

Bukom (suburb in Accra)

Chorkor (" " " ")

Pokuase Mantse's Palace.

Centre for National Culture –Kumasi.

Manhyia Palace, Kumasi.

Bonwere.

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi.

University of Ghana, Legon.

Data Facilities

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology main Library.

College of Art Library, KNUST, Kumasi.

African Cinema Research and Documentation Centre (NAFTI)

National Film and Television Institute, Library

Du Bois Centre Library.

Institute of African Studies Library.

Ghana Institute of Journalism Library.

Internet

Actors

The informants in this study are :

The staff and students of the National Film and Television Institute.

Film professionals at GAMA film company.

Film professionals at TV Africa.

Some private film producers and directors.

Selected members of Building and Strengthening Church.

Cultural officers at the Kumasi Cultural centre.

Some scholars in Academia.

Selected residents of Bukom and Chorkor

Some chiefs,

Some traditional priests,

Some commanders of traditional army.

Events

The focus of this study will be Asante traditional costumes and the perceptions and meanings attached to these costumes, the colours and the style of wearing them as expressed by the appropriate informants for various events such as the following:.

Asante Cultural Events and Festivals as well as other cultural events (in Ghana).

Asante Funerals Celebrations and (other funerals in Ghana).

National Events and Celebrations.

Marriage Ceremonies.

Graduation ceremonies

Church Services

Wedding Ceremonies.

Workshops and Seminars.

Particular attention will be paid to any influences of Asante traditional costumes on the clothing of Ghanaians for social, cultural and national events for the past fifty years and the representation or non representation of these in Ghanaian filmmaking.

3. 4 Ethical Considerations

Since the Researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the informants the following safeguards were employed to protect the informant's rights:

- The research objectives were articulated verbally and in writing so that they were clearly understood by the informant (including a description of how data would be used).
- The informants were informed of all data collection devices and activities.
- Verbatim transcriptions and written interpretations were made available to the informants.

3. 5 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection consisted of four main strategies: interviews, observation, documents and visual /audio visual materials. These were further classified under Primary and Secondary Data.

Primary Data

- This included one on one (face to face or telephone) interviews with selected film makers (professional and non professional), lecturers at the National film and Television Institute, cultural officers at the Kumasi Cultural Centre, some traditional priests, selected scholars in Academia who constituted the authority base for the study.
- Three broad-based interviews were conducted. Both written and oral responses were elicited from respondents appropriately. The entire staff and students of the National Film and Television Institute, selected members of the Researcher's church, Building and Strengthening Church International. Film professionals at TV Africa and TV3 were interviewed either face to face or on telephone. The interview comprised one directed question to NAFTI staff, students and film makers concerning the identity of a Ghanaian and one open question to the respondents just described, as well as selected members of the Researcher's church (see Appendix A) on costumes and fabrics that represent Ghanaian cultural symbols. The third interview question sought from respondents (comprising Asantes and non-Asantes), their perception of Asantes.

- Participant observation was made to obtain some data. The Researcher went on location to film some of the events listed in 3.3. She attended the events as a participant or watched the live transmission of such events on the local TV networks. In all of these, observations were noted, photographs were taken where permitted and these formed the basis for some of the interviews with selected informants.

Secondary Data

- This includes still photographs and literature sourced from magazines, journals, textbooks, newspapers, scholarly papers, e-books, e-journals. This data was obtained from the list of library Facilities in 3.3.
- Audio visual material – film and video coverage of the events listed in 3.3.

3. 6 Treatment of Data

- Raw data from primary and secondary sources were transcribed, viewed, crosschecked, categorised into the appropriate segments, analysed, and interpreted. Conclusions were drawn and regularly reviewed and validated by current events.

3. 7 Specific treatment of Data for each objective

Objective 1:

Identify the traditional costumes used by Asantes and the symbolism of these costumes in Asante culture.

Data needed

These include the history of Asanteman, symbolism in Asante culture, Festivals of Asantes, traditional costumes of Asante and their uses. Others are funeral celebrations in Asante, colour symbolism in Asante, Akan cultural symbols as well as photographs, illustrations, film and video productions on Asantes.

Location of Data

Data were obtained from the following sources: Some chiefs, cultural officers, traditional priests, staff and students of the National Film and Television Institute Accra, scholars in academia, Asante cultural festivals and events, funeral celebrations and film locations. Other relevant data were sourced from the Information Services Photo Section, library facilities (listed in 3.3), films from the National Film and Television Institute, relevant TV programmes screened on the local network and the internet.

Data collection strategy

The Researcher engaged in the following activities:

- Interview selected authorities just mentioned.
- Attend the events listed under section 3.3 as an observer or a participant.
- Study available photographs at the Information Services Department and those from individual albums.
- Interview Asante and non- Asante staff and students of NAFTI on their perceptions of Asantes as a people.
- View selected videos, films and Television programs relevant to the subject of the study.

- Study literature from the library facilities listed under section 3.3.

Treatment of Data

Response from interviews conducted, and observations from field work, provided information that was categorised analysed and interpreted under the listed segments in Part One of Chapter Four. Information on the following sub-topics also provided answers to three of the research questions in Chapter One.

4.2 Symbolism in Asante traditional costumes.

4.3 Asante personality and colour.

4.4 Colour symbolism in Asante traditional costumes

4.5 Asante traditional costumes and gestures.

Conclusions were drawn.

Objective 2:

Establish the reasons for the similarities and dissimilarities in the symbolism of traditional costumes used by other sub-cultures and those of Asantes in Ghana.

Data needed

The information needed for the fulfilment of this objective comprise the history of Ghanaian culture, symbolism in Ghanaian culture, Cultural festivals of Ghana, traditional costumes of Ghana and their uses, funeral celebrations in Ghana, colour symbolism in Ghanaian culture, Akan cultural symbols, photographs, illustrations, film and video productions on Ghanaian culture.

Location of Data

Data were obtained from the following sources: The Researcher's processed data for Objective 1, some chiefs, some traditional priests; some traditional army heads (*Asafohenfo/Asafoiatsemei*) cultural officers, scholars in academia, Ga, Fante and Ewe cultural festivals and events, funeral celebrations and film locations. Other relevant data were sourced from the Information Services Photo Section, Individual photo albums, library facilities (listed in 3.3), films from the National Film and Television Institute, relevant TV programs screened on the local network and the internet.

Data collection strategy

The Researcher interviewed selected authorities just mentioned, attended events listed above as an observer or a participant, studied available photographs at the Information Services Department and viewed selected videos, films and Television programs relevant to the subject of the study. The Researcher also studied literature from the library facilities listed in 3.3.

Treatment of Data

- Responses from interviews conducted, and observations from field work, provided information that will be categorised for a comparative analysis of symbolism in Asante traditional costumes and those of the other cultures in Ghana.
- Classified Data were interpreted and regularly reviewed for verification. Conclusions were drawn in order to establish reasons for similarities and differences in symbolism of the said traditional costumes. This was done in the same segments in Part One of Chapter Four listed under Objective 1.

- Information gathered, answered two of the research questions in Chapter One.

Objective 3:

Critically analyse the traditional costumes of Asante to determine their level of relevance in establishing the cultural identity of characters for filmmaking in Ghana.

Data needed

The data for writing this section included the history of Ghanaian culture, symbolism in Ghanaian culture, cultural festivals of Ghana, traditional costumes of Ghana and their uses, funeral celebration in Ghana, colour symbolism in Ghanaian culture, Ghanaian cultural symbols, photographs, illustrations, film and video productions on Ghanaian culture.

Location of Data

Data were obtained from the following sources: film producers and directors (professional and non-professional) film professionals, staff and students of the National Film and Television Institute, selected members of the researcher's church. Processed data for objectives 1 and 2, National Events and Celebrations – from 1957 to date. Marriage ceremonies, graduation ceremonies, wedding ceremonies, workshops and Seminars, church services, work places/offices.

Data collection strategy

The Researcher interviewed selected informants just mentioned, attended events listed above as an observer or a participant, studied available photographs from the Information Services Department and those from individual albums. She viewed

selected videos, films and television programs relevant to the subject of the study. The Researcher also studied literature from the libraries listed in 3.3.

In order to explore the perception of filmmakers, professional and non-professional and film students, were interviewed on the subject of the Ghanaian identity;

- The first interview sought to find from respondents their perception of who a Ghanaian is. Two hundred and seventy people were interviewed. These comprised two hundred and twenty five members of staff and students of the National film and Television Institute; forty-five film professionals from TV Africa, TV3 and selected NAFTI alumni and ten video Producers and non-professional filmmakers.
- The second interview presents three hundred and fifty respondents with a choice of items from which they have to select those that represent Ghanaian cultural symbols locally and internationally. The items are *Kente*, *Adinkra*, Northern smock, and others (Batik, tie dye, African print) These interviewees were made up of the two hundred and seventy respondents from the first interview plus seventy selected members from the researcher's church representing various professions and age groups (students from Junior and senior high schools, young and middle aged professionals and artisans, elderly and old people).
- Apart from film students and lecturers who answered and returned the questionnaire sheets after lectures the same day, the other responses were obtained from telephone or face to face interviews for effective data collection.

Treatment of Data

Response from interviews conducted from field work provided information that was categorised for analysis and interpretation in Part Two of Chapter four under the Segment on Cultural Identity and the Ghanaian film with the following sub sections:

- Who is telling the story?
- Whose story is it?
- What stories are we telling?

Data collected from observation of events listed in 3.3, documents, visual/audio visual materials provided information for an analysis of the look of the Ghanaian from 1957 to date. It also provided information for a critical analysis of the influence of Asante traditional costumes on the national/cultural identity of the Ghanaian in Chapter Five under the segment on The Ghanaian Identity with the following sub topics:

- 5.1 Pre- colonial era.
- 5.2 Colonial Period
- 5.3 Post- Colonial era
- 5.4 The Ghanaian look and the Film Industry

Further data collected addressed the rest of the research questions in Chapter One and either verified or disproved the Assumptions of the study.

Information gathered was analysed, interpreted and conclusions drawn. Suggested look of characters have been recommended for costume design and characterisation for filmmaking.

3.8 Reporting the Findings

The results of the study have been presented in the descriptive and narrative form. A lot of illustrations have been used since the study is centred on the visual interpretation of the character. The recommendations are also presented vividly to make the necessary impact.

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CHAPTER FOUR

CULTURAL SYMBOLISM AND IDENTITY IN FILM

The significance of symbolism in any culture cannot be emphasised enough since it is the language through which the filmmaker shares his or her thoughts and ideas in the communication process, with the target audience. In this sense, film is an illusion (a two dimensional representation of reality on the screen), which of necessity, demands the use of symbols that stand for the meanings the filmmaker wishes to communicate.

Stuart Hall's (2001) discourse on representation describes the said symbols as composed of such elements as sound, words, notes, gestures, expressions and clothes which are all part of our natural and material world. He elaborates on these languages as the elements that derive from spoken language–sound, written language–words, musical language–notes on a scale, language of the body–physical gesture, fashion industry–clothing, the language of facial expression–ways of arranging one's features, *et cetera*. It is in their function of constructing meaning and transmitting it that they operate as symbols that stand for the meanings we wish to convey.

The various languages just mentioned by Hall, are the vehicles employed by filmmaking to convey meaning in the representation of reality. In Hall's words, they function as signs which stand for or represent the filmmakers' concepts, ideas and feelings in such a way as to enable the target audience to 'read', decode or interpret their meaning in roughly the same way as the filmmaker does.

It presupposes that the filmmaker has not only learned the conventions of his or her own culture thereby becoming a member of that culture – having unconsciously

internalized the codes, which allows him to express certain concepts and ideas through their systems of representation, (writing, speech , gesture, visualization and so on) and to interpret ideas which are communicated to them using the same systems – but should be equally learned in the conventions and codes of the culture of his target audience in order to create the appropriate identities for authentic characters on the screen, who would express the filmmaker’s concepts and ideas meaningfully.

The first part of this chapter is devoted to symbolism in Asante traditional costumes. It discusses representation through the language of traditional costumes under such elements as: personality, colour, gestures (style and drape of cloth) specifically in Asante sub – culture and generally in Ghanaian culture.

Part II examines the representation of cultural identity in Ghanaian filmmaking.



PART ONE

4.1 Symbolism in Asante traditional costumes

In order to fully appreciate the symbolism of traditional costumes in Asante culture, it may be necessary to understand the Asante personality, and the people. The study of a people can never be done successfully without understanding or having an insight into their thought patterns. It is necessary to know how they think, and how they perceive life. It is these attitudes that determine their actions and interactions which would equally be meaningless, unless we understand what makes them a specific group. The interactions of a people are said to be based on a system of cultural symbolism, which G. N. Gordon (1993) supports with the explanation that:

...almost every society known to man has evolved a rich symbol system whereby at first glance, strange objects and odd types of behaviour appear to the outside observer to have irrational meaning, and seem to evoke odd unwarranted cognitions and emotions. Upon examination however, each symbol system reflects a specific cultural logic, and every symbolism functions to communicate between members of the culture in much the same way as, but in a much more subtle manner, than conversational language.

According to Gordon, Edward T. Hall's (cited in Gordon, 1993) study on communication reveals that people have a way of assuming speaking distance, gestures and other non-verbal means –such as the style of wearing clothes along with the colours – to show respect, social status, and also communicate other messages to another person, or group of people. The study also examines these systems of representation in terms of colour, clothes and gestures that have to do with ways of wearing clothes such as removing or moving parts of clothing on the body, specifically in Asante traditional

culture, in comparison to what pertains in the other sub-cultures in Ghana and generally elsewhere.

It would probably be difficult to totally isolate these three areas of symbolism since the human being is always clothed (even in nudity) in some sort of colours and usually moves parts of the body that is, gestures - in the communication process. We also know that whatever fabric is used for making clothes; be it cotton, flax, silk *et cetera*, may have to be dyed to some sort of colour, which also has its social significance.

4.2 Asante Personality and Colour

Over the years, various categories of people have described Asantes in various ways. Bowdich, Ellis and other writers, though amazed at the type of culture they beheld in 1817, perceived them as bloodthirsty savages due to the excessive human sacrifice they witnessed publicly (Bowdich cited in Abayie-Boaten, 1993). From the time of Rattray to date, Asantes have been perceived as brave warriors, a tenacious people, a people with a rich cultural heritage, a people with a soul *et cetera*. These descriptions have been given by both foreign and Ghanaian writers. An interview conducted by the Researcher on (a) the perception of Asantes (staff and students of NAFTI) about themselves *vis a vis* (b) the perception of non -Asantes about Asantes, produced the following results.

In category (a), all the respondents agreed that (Asantes) love power, recognition and measure success according to the material wealth of the individual. They are also exhibitionists (in every sense of the word) who like to “live large” like Yorubas (from

Nigeria) and Americans, that is, show off their wealth and power; they would therefore do any work that can earn them the above results.

Respondents in category (b) perceive Asantes as conspicuous, extravagant and very colourful in language and clothing, *et cetera*, hard working, with a sense of superiority complex and ethnic pride that borders on arrogance. They also have a strong sense of belonging to their culture and would do anything to maintain their status in the family, clan and the society at large; an extremely materialistic people who value money above everything else since it can buy them power.

Tufuo and Donkor (1969) summarise the love of power in the Asante proverb: “*Yee ton tumi a ton wo ni kɔtɔ na wonsa nyākã a wobenyã kwan a wonamso begye no*”. This means that if power is for sale, sell your mother to obtain it because once you have the power you can always buy her back. It seems that both Asantes and non-Asantes who were interviewed, agree on the Asante’s innate sense of pride in his hard won cultural heritage which also reflects in the love of power, wealth, recognition and the exhibitionist tendencies expressed in speech and mannerism as well as clothing and housing. These are some of the character traits that have formed the basis of the Asante stereotype and by which people generally determine who is and who is not an Asante.

Apart from these perceptions about Asantes, there is that category of writers who report proudly and glowingly about their people’s history and culture that is, the enthusiast. E. K Braffi (1984) (Psychic and traditional healers Association) spearheads this group. He has been singled out because of his unusual treatment of Asante, albeit from a rather biased point of view. His book focuses on the esoteric aspect of Asante

culture. He examines the mystical realm of *Asanteman*, which according to him pervades or better still forms the basis of the Asante personality which he explains by delving into the esoteric meaning of the red colour which Asantes prefer. He also states that the mystical colour of *Asanteman* is red. He perceives red as linked to the planet Mars, which he associates with aggression, accidents, wars, strife and also the heat of the sun. He then compares the aggressive, warlike nature of Asantes to their link with the planet Mars and therefore the attachment to the red colour.

It may be noted – and this is common knowledge – that the flag of the Asante Kotoko Football Club with the porcupine *ƙƙƙƙ* as its emblem is usually, graphically represented in red. It is also common knowledge that Asantes in general are somehow associated with red. Most football loving Ghanaians are aware of the fact that Kumasi Asante Kotoko Football Club favours red as the mainstay of their sportswear. This point of view has been commented on by William Akueteh Darkey (a football historian and Ga traditionalist) who states that the red jersey belonged to an old football club- Standfast (of Accra) and that it was this club that gave the red jersey to Asante Kotoko (Personal communication). All other sources who have concurred with this position are generally based on hearsay; which is yet to be substantiated.

The Researcher and some others were therefore rather intrigued to learn from Nana Obiri Yeboah *et al*, (Cultural officer and field resource person) that the official colours of *Asanteman* are yellow, green and black: the colours of the flag hoisted on *Asantehene's* Rolls Royce anytime he rides in it (Personal communication). At the burial of the late *Asantehene*, Otumfuor Opoku Ware II, the *Asanteman* flag was used to drape

his casket; as portrayed in the film *Journey of a King* (1999). The meaning and explanation given for the colours of the flag suggest a rather detached and a more economic aspect of *Asanteman*. According to Obiri Yeboah, the colours simply mean “a rich black man living in the forest”. *Osikani bibini a ɔte kwaɛmu*. This of course economically describes the Asante.

In fact Braffi (1984) presents a divergent view in explaining the esoteric meaning of the three main colours of *Asanteman* flag. According to him, green is supposed to be:

...the King of all colours. It has soothing, restful influence, preserving the eyesight, quieting the nervous system. This fact accounts for the good eyesight of our farmers who usually work on the green fields of nature. It is the colour attributed to the Zodiacal sign cancer; and its ruler is the planet Moon.

This assertion is yet to be substantiated scientifically. In Braffi’s opinion, the black colour “... is the colour of morality, humility and mourning. The black garments of the clergy imply the hope of inner spiritual resurrection through service to God”. Could it be that the idea of the traditional black habit of the Roman Catholic nuns, the choir robes in the church and the gowns of academia were derived from the above philosophy? Finally, he comments on yellow as indicative of “...the highest spiritual intellect and has an inspiration, illuminating effect upon the mental faculties”. Unfortunately, Braffi’s angle is rather out of the ordinary and would therefore have required a more in-depth explanation, which has not been made available.

An interview with Prof. Apenahier (A clinical psychologist and a field resource person) suggests similar connotations to Braffi’s position. He states that those who often lean towards red in their clothing are rather talkative, loud, informal, and non-conformist

and they tend to exaggerate. It is common knowledge that Asantes are neither a submissive, quiet nor timid people. Their traits mentioned, lean towards Apenahier and Braffi's theory on personality (Personal communication).

4.3 Colour symbolism in Asante traditional costumes.

Despite the symbolism of the colours in the *Asanteman* flag explained by the field informants including Braffi on another dimension, those same colours assume different dimensions when applied to traditional costumes. Sarpong (1991) explains yellow as generally symbolising wealth and riches; which is similar in meaning to Obiri Yeboah's definition of yellow in the *Asanteman* flag – rich man. Black in traditional clothes on the other hand, signifies mourning in *Asanteman* which is so perceived throughout other Ghanaian cultures and in most cultures of the world. This symbolism of course differs from that of the black in the *Asanteman* flag as explained by Obiri Yeboah, although it partially tallies with Braffi's definition of black in so far as it pertains to mourning. Concerning the colour green, Sarpong (1991) explains it to mean prosperity and fertility of the land as generally inferred in Ghanaian culture. Obiri Yeboah's definition though, seems to limit green to a specific geographical location that is, the forest. From another angle, the forest could as the prosperity and fertility of the land.

On the subject of traditional costumes, Nana Obiri Yeboah again mentions that Asantes have two categories of colour in their traditional costumes; the gay and the sombre. It is vital to note that the classification of these colours is based on the occasions for which they are used. The gay category consists of yellow, green, blue, black and

white or a combination of these. The second category of colours is made up of brilliant red (*kordjan*), brick red (*kobene*), dark brown (*kuntunkuni*) and black (*brissi*). The latter category of colours in clothes is used during serious formal occasions like court sessions, funerals, installation and enstoolment processes for a chief and for war, (in the olden days). The gay colours are used for all festive occasions – thanksgiving durbars, outdoorings, puberty and initiation rites, and festivals *et cetera*.

It has been observed that on entering Kumasi – the capital of *Asanteman* (Asanteland) – one is confronted with a lot of sombre colours. Many of the inhabitants are seen wearing brick reds, browns and blacks; which give the impression of perpetual mourning. The Researcher made this observation, when she first entered the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi to study in 1975. After a long break away from Kumasi, that is, from 1981 to 1996, the same observation was again made. Ten years later in 2006 the same situation prevailed.

Although the latter instance is not as intense as the former, it is obvious that Asantes in Kumasi still generally dress in sombre colours. Obiri Yeboah and Adjei (cultural officers at the Kumasi Cultural Centre) explain this phenomenon to mean that since people are related to each other and one funeral generally overlaps another – because of the eighth, fourteenth, fortieth and eightieth day celebrations – people tend to look like they are perpetually mourning the dead (Personal communication). Prof. Mawere Opoku also explained the sombre colours to mean that the true and cultured *Asante* is taught to allow his character to precede his clothing. According to him, true and cultured *Asantes* usually dress in a rather sober manner (Personal communication).

On the contrary, down south in Accra, one notices that most *Asantes* dress in a manner that has nothing much to do with sobriety: in fact it is rather the exact opposite, which is more in line with their personality, as explained earlier. Miss Sarah Kuntoh, (a filmmaker, and colleague lecturer) who travelled a lot in diplomatic circles during her childhood and teenage years, somehow agrees with the just mentioned observation. She states that most *Asantes* she met at various functions in Western Europe and America in the 1970's and 1980s usually dressed in dark colours such as black, navy blue, dark brown and other colours such as red, wine or a combination of these colours, irrespective of their generally dark complexion. The extravagance is usually in their use of jewellery and the type of fabric, which is usually conspicuously expensive (Personal communication).

Although *Asantes* generally wear black and red costumes for funerals, it was stated by Nana Obiri Yeboah, and Prof. Mawere Opoku (field resource persons) that *Asantes* usually wear red for all funerals (Personal communication). The bereaved family traditionally attire themselves in predominantly red cloths or red over black cloth. It is that which distinguishes them from other mourners at the funeral grounds (see Plates 4:1& 4:2). It is also the symbol of *enibre* - trouble, anger, and desperation as already mentioned by Sarpong in Chapter Two.

It is interesting to note that among the cultures in the South that is, Gas, Ewes and Fantes, quite the contrary prevails –with regard to the use of red for funerals. It has been observed from various funerals attended, especially those of distant relations and friends of the current writer, that red is generally worn for funerals when a royal person such as

a chief of any rank, or anyone from the royal family dies. This point is illustrated in Plates 4:3-4:5 which depict the funeral celebration of *Togbe* Adeladza, the late *Awoemefia* of the Anlo traditional area.

There have been opposing views by resource persons from the Ga traditional Area, challenging Asantes that they were not the first to use the red colour. According to *Asafoiatse* Obeene of Gbawe (from the Asere clan of Ga Mashí Traditional Area), the red colour originally belonged to the Ga. They use red costumes for funerals and Asantes, rather generally favour browns and black. This position is supported by Mrs Florence Ahinee Apenahier, (A Ga royal from *Mantse* Okaikoi's lineage of the Asere clan) who claims that the red colour specifically belongs to the Asere clan of the Ga Mashi traditional area and that its use in costumes signifies the same meaning as in *enibre*, which in Ga is thus expressed – *hiɲmèi tsuu sane* or serious trouble, danger. A third field source, Dr Josiah-Ayeh a member of the Ga Dangme Council, supports Apenahier's Asere claim (Personal communication). According to these resource persons, this position also accounts for the wearing of red costumes by members of the funeral procession as they trot after the corpse, to the burial grounds: a common feature among Ga fisher folk from Bukom and Chorkor *et cetera*. Moreover, at the recent funeral celebration (especially the burial procession) of the late Ga Mantse Nii Amugi II, all Gas wore red clothes or used red items of clothing as part of their costume. It is a view that may be worth further investigating.



Plate 4:1

Asante women in red and black mourning cloths. The red mourning cloth shows their close relationship to the deceased.



Plate 4:2

Red mourning cloths worn by these family members (men) of the deceased, distinguishes them from the sympathizers at the funeral. (Pictures from Richard Gyimah)

4.4 Traditional costumes of Asante

Traditionally, Asantes are popularly known to have four categories of cloth. There is the woven *kente* cloth, which is said (with some doubt) to have originated from Bonwere, the printed *Adinkra* cloth, the plain *Kobene*, *Kodjan*, *Brissi*, *Kuntunkuni* produced at Ntonsu and the *Akunintam* (Applied cloth) which according to Trowel(1960) –as mentioned in chapter one- originated from the Republic of Benin. Apart from the *kobene*, *kordjan*, *brissi* and *Kuntunkuni*, the other two that is, *Kente* and *Adinkra* could be made in both sombre and gay colours which are worn for appropriate functions (see Plates 4: 6-4:11). The *Akunintam* is gaily patterned and is usually worn by the Asantehene. Of all the cloths mentioned, the only one with controversial origins is the *Kente* cloth. As already mentioned in Chapter One, Rattray (1959) suggests the Northern Region in Ghana as the origin of *Kente* although both Asantes and Ewes have laid claim to ownership of the cloth.

During the filming of a documentary of the *Kente* Festival in January 1998 very interesting observations were made. For a people who are so proud of their culture, have fought for and jealously guarded what they regard as theirs, it was rather bizarre to realise that the ‘ancient grove’ at Bonwere (where Nana Kuragu was supposed to have met Kwaku Ananse who taught him how to weave) was so commonplace. Despite the current deforestation in the country, one would have expected a preserved thicket of trees which normally characterises such sacred groves rather than a mere clearing under a few trees as was the case. To put it mildly in film language it was a set designed probably for the sake of film making as Plate 4:12 depicts the *Kentehene* Nana Kwesi



Plate 4:3 Chief mourners at *Togbe Adladza's* funeral nearly all those seated, are wearing red costumes as they receive condolences at the funeral grounds.



Plate 4:4 The red head and arm bands worn by the attendants seated around the corpse of the *Togbe Adladza* indicates that the funeral is that of a royal.



Plates 4:5 One of the Ewe chiefs dances at the funeral of *Togbe Adladza* (Pictures by courtesy of Mrs Victoria Sackey).

Gyamfi pouring libation at the ancient grove in Bonwere during the *Kente* Festival in 1998.

It was also very interesting to note that all the looms in Bonwere were made from machine sawn timber *vis a vis* a display of very old authentic pieces of *kente* cloth. For an exhibition of its magnitude (three hundred years of a viable cottage industry), one would have expected to see at least, one authentic “rough and ready” loom made from tree branches as observed in Tamale *et cetera* in the northern region and at Adaklu and Kpetoe in the Volta region. Currently, although there are modern ways of weaving, one could still find sixty to eighty year-old-women spinning cotton yarns in the Tamale, Adaklu and Kpetoe traditional areas. It seemingly testifies to the indigenous nature of the weaving industry in the Northern and Volta regions.

This position has further been cemented by the rather paradoxical statement made by Safo Kantanka and Oti Awere in their write up on the origin, discovery and evolution of *Kente*. According to them, the very first strip woven cloth produced from cotton yarn by Nana Kuragu and Nana Ameyaw (originators of *Kente* cloth) was *Gagawuga* (Safo Kantanka & Awere, 1998:9). *Gagawuga* is an *Ewe* word which means, this money is more than yours. Crown Dafeamekpor (an *Anlo* royal and lecturer at the National Film and Television Institute) explains that the word *gagawuga* is also symbolic and could mean comparatively superior value in terms of artistry, money or deity (Personal communication). The point is clear though that Nana Kuragu and Ameyaw may have discovered an already woven cotton strip cloth of the *Ewes*, which they (Asantes) improved upon.

Gaily coloured *Adinkra* and *Akunintam* cloths worn for Festive occasions



Plate 4:6

Mamponghe Nana Osei Bonsu and a queen mother at the thanksgiving celebration of *Otumfuo OseiTutu 11*. Note the gay *Adinkra* cloths they wear. (Captured from the film *The Golden Stool* (2000)).



Plate 4:7



Plate 4:8

Gentlemen dressed in *Adinkra* and *Akunintam* cloths for festive occasions.

(Picture from **Akan Cultural Symbols Project Online**).

Although this may be worth further studying in another context, it is important to note that currently there is a virtual merging of colours (if not pattern of weaving) of both types of *Kente*. The Bonwere weavers have gone beyond their traditional colours and so have the Agotime and Kpetoe weavers. This was evident at the 1998 Bonwere *Kente* Festival and the 2005 Agotime *Kente* Festival. These have been developed into very interesting concepts for costume design that will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

With the advent of modern developments, other fabrics have been imported into *Asante* traditional dress code, though this has not observably changed the style of dressing, especially where royalty is concerned that is, the queen mother's mode of dressing. Most queen mothers, it has been noticed, usually wear lace, brocade, velvet, wax print *et cetera*, under their traditional *kente* top cloth, for both formal and traditional functions (see Plate 4:13). This is hardly so for the men. Apart from the wax print and the velvet cloth, most chiefs usually wear varied types of weaves and colours of the *Kente* cloth for various functions.

The Bonwere festival, which was held in early January 1998, was one occasion when an array of *Kente* weaves, motifs and colours were exhibited. According to the *Kentehene* (head of *Kente* weavers) Nana Akwasi Gyamfi, the Europeans exchanged coloured silk fabrics with gold from Asantes, which they in turn painstakingly undid yarn by yarn, to start making the first colourful silk *kente*. Currently, there is a partial departure from the traditional red, yellow blue/green, yellow, black/pink, yellow, red/black, white and gold combinations to the current violet and green combinations (see Plates 4:14 and 4:15).

Sombre coloured *Adinkra* and *Kuntunkuni* cloth worn during funerals and installation ceremonies.



Plate 4:9

Red and black cloth with *Adinkra* designs for funeral wear.
(Picture from **Akan Cultural Symbols Project Online**).



Plate4:10

Otumfuo Osei Tutu II swears an oath of office (*ntamkeseε*). All the men in the picture either wear *Kuntunkuni* or *Brissi*.

(Captured from the film *The Golden Stool* (2000).



Plate4:11

Otumfuo Osei Tutu II wears an *Adinkra* cloth for one of the installation processes.

4.5 Asante Traditional Costumes and Gestures

As has already been mentioned, the style and drape of the cloth on the body do a lot to give information about the wearer's identity and actions. In other words, the way the cloth is moved, arranged or held around the body is a language. Just as each individual's identity is communicated to the onlooker due to the ethnic and cultural influences that go into determining the specific choice of style, colour *et cetera*, various groups, both ethnic and national, are also identified in much the same way.

Apart from the Fante in the South, most Akan men and specifically Asante men can easily be identified traditionally by the way they wear the cloth. They usually do not wear any tunic under the cloth as the Ga, Ewe or Fante do. It is not surprising to note that with the advent of modern multicultural influences, *Asante* men have jealously stuck to this practice. The obvious reason could be the innate pride of the *Asante* in adhering to cultural traditions that have survived generations of modern influences. Dr Asiama (a lecturer in theatre studies at the University of Ghana, Legon) also gives the version that the Asante man believes he has nothing to hide so he can bare his chest courageously (personal communication).

On the contrary, Kuntoh and Mrs Victoria Sackey (a career diplomat from the 1960s to the mid 1990s) assert that during their stay in Britain they realised that for most formal diplomatic functions, Ghanaian men, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds, that is, Ga, Ewe, Kwahu, Fante, Akyem, Asante *et cetera*, usually wore the traditional cloth (*Kente* or *Adinkra*) with a tunic (see Plates 4:16 and 4:17). According to Sackey



Plate 4:12

The ancient grove at Bonwere with the *Kentehene* (the head of *Kente* weavers) (1998) Nana Akwasi Gyamfi about to pour libation. (Picture from Film Africa).



Plate 4:13

Nana Serwa Nyarko Queen mother of Offinso dressed for a formal occasion at the Kumasi Cultural Centre. Her under cloth is a modern white lace fabric, with the Asante *Kente* cover cloth. (Picture purchased from the Cultural Centre, Kumasi).

and Kuntoh, this was perceived as an unwritten dress code for Ghanaian diplomats abroad (Personal communication). It also confirms the Ghanaian cultural identity that our first President, Dr Kwame Nkrumah established through the dress code, from 1957 to date. The reason for diplomats to wear the tunic with the cloth could also be the temperate climatic conditions that demand covering of the torso as a safety and health precaution.

The *Asantehene* on the other hand, may of necessity wear his cloth without a tunic in or outside Ghana as a symbol of his identity (see Plates 4:18 & 4:19). In spite of this position, we observed an interesting development in March 2006 during a telecast of the Independence Day celebration, at the home of the Ghana High Commissioner in London, which was aired on Ghana Television. The Ghana High Commissioner (who is an Asante) was in a *Kente* cloth without the tunic and so were most Akans who attended the function. There were others who wore the cloth with the tunic. This suggests that most Ghanaian men who went to the function in cloth, consciously or otherwise exhibited the style of wearing the cloth in their specific cultures. The guests could easily be identified by their costumes as suggested in Biney's study. There were chiefs, queen mothers *et cetera* at the function.

Some interesting details observed in the traditional dressing of women, are the manner in which some elderly Asante women drape the second cloth across the shoulder. Whenever they want to portray their indigenous culture in dressing (at Cultural festivals or funerals) it seems many Ghanaian women (young or old) take their cue from the traditional dress code of the elderly women in their respective sub-cultures.



Plate 4:14

The two pictures depict various weaves and colours of *Kente* worn by both young and old men at the Bonwere *Kente* Festival in January 1998.



Plate 4:15

(Pictures from Film Africa Ltd)

Although traditionally, some elderly women in Ghana are known to drape the second cloth across the

shoulder as the men do, there is a distinct difference when they dress to portray their indigenous culture. Specifically, most elderly women from Ga, Fante and Ewe traditional areas usually tie the second cloth across the chest on such occasions.

During funerals, some Asante women revert to their very traditional ways of dressing, especially when they are bereaved (see Plates 4:20&4:21). On such occasions, they wear no *kaba* and the cover cloth is draped across the shoulder. In other words, whatever their status in life may be, whenever they are bereaved, some Asante woman (especially when the funeral is held at their home town) dress traditionally with one cloth worn across the shoulder over the under cloth. An interesting observation is that in the south, especially with Gas, the only time women dress in the 'Asante style' is when a royal family member dies. The daughters and other close female relations may then wear the cloth as Asante royal and elderly women do traditionally.

Most queen mothers in the Ga, Fante, Ewe and other Akan traditional areas also wear the cloth as Asantes do traditionally, for formal functions. The main difference is noted in their headdress or hairstyle. While the other queen mothers may wear the traditional *aduku / tekua*, turban, the modern wrap or pompadour hairdo, combed out, stretched or permed hairstyle or braided hair with a head dress, Asante queen mothers always have the shorn / close cropped and dyed hair style (*densinkran*) which clearly distinguishes them from other women, be they Asantes or otherwise (see Plates 4:22-



Plate 4:16

Ghanaian Foreign Service officials in Ghanaian traditional attires for a formal function at the Ghana Mission in Denmark. Mr Jack Kuntoh, the acting Ambassador (who is an Akyem) wears a *Kente* cloth with a tunic on both occasions.



Plate 4:17

(Pictures by courtesy of Miss Sarah Kuntoh).

4:25). The only exception being the elderly women in their menopause or those from the royal family.

In Asante traditional setting, the status of a woman may be determined from the way she wears the cloth. We learn from Maame Pokuaa, (an elderly woman from Amoamang royal family who dresses women traditionally) that before puberty- from age eight- the young girl could walk around with just a piece of cloth around the waist. At puberty, the debut or *bragoro* ceremony is supposed to initiate her into womanhood and to advertise her to the men who might be interested in marrying her. At this stage she still wears one cloth but her breasts are covered (see Plates 4:26-4:29). Immediately she is married, she begins to use two pieces of cloth. Formally, this way of dressing by a woman immediately communicates to everyone around, that she is married, that is, she puts on one cloth over the under cloth (Personal communication). This mode of dressing is not only confined to *Asanteman*, but also popular throughout the various cultures of Ghana. Today, there are still traces of this traditional dress code in the modern version of cloth wearing styles. According to Osei Agemang, on the other hand, a poor woman married may sometimes be found in the villages wearing a cloth like a girl in the puberty stage (Personal communication).

Just as women have various ways of wearing the cloth, which communicate their status, Asante men also have various ways of putting on the cloth, which are also a “language”. Owusu Ansah’s book introduces different styles of putting on cloths and the meanings assigned to them (see Plates 4:30-4:32). According to him, the style known as *okatakyie* – brave man – is usually worn by chiefs in *Asanteman*. He discusses other



Plate 4:18

Asantehene Otumfuo Opoku Ware II visits the Ghana High Commission in London shortly after his enstoolment in the early 1970's. Otumfuor, his wife and the delegation from Ghana, wear the traditional cloth without the tunic. All the other Ghanaian staff at the High Commission are dressed in their normal European work clothes.



Plate 4:19

Otumfuor Opoku Ware II at a durbar in New York during the African American exhibition on the Asante Kingdom in 1985. Ambassador Gbeho (far left) is the only one in cloth and tunic (Pictures by courtesy of Mrs Victoria Sackey).

styles of wearing the cloth by men such as *mehoyɛɛ* – I am handsome, *yebesi* – it will be washed *et cetera* (Owusu Ansah, 1995). As depicted in the style *yebesi*, the cloth is worn, leaving a part to trail on the ground. In fact, Nketia (an informant who demonstrates various ways of putting on the cloth traditionally, at the Kumasi Cultural Centre) expresses this even more vividly by stating that it means *meyere besi* which literally means that (my wife will wash it). The wearer can afford to wear the cloth in a rather grandiosely careless manner, since he does not have to worry about how it would be washed.

From observation, it may seem that most men who put on the traditional cloth in *Asanteman* generally fashion it after the two styles: *mehoyɛɛ* – I am handsome, and *me bu meho*- I respect myself (see Plate 4:33). These therefore seem to be the most common ways of putting on the cloth by men especially in *Asanteman*. According to Owusu Ansah's illustrations, there seems to be little or no difference between the two styles – *okatakyie* – brave man, and *me bu meho*- I respect myself. It could also suggest the fact that the brave man naturally respects himself or that the man who respects himself is brave but this is not always the case in Asante.

Apart from these examples given, there are other ways of wearing the cloth. For instance most drummers usually wear the cloth tied at the chest, waist or around the neck. *Odomankoma kyerema* (*Otumfuo's* chief drummer, the Divine drummer), explained that his colleague drummers wear the cloth as described in order to secure it firmly around the body, to prevent it from falling off while drumming (Personal communication).



Plate 4:20

The pictures above and below, depict Asante women in various professions, dressed for their mother's funeral (Pictures from Richard Gyimah).



Plate4:21



Plate 4:22

Asante Queen mothers in *densinkran* hair style with their Ewe counterpart dressed in gold Ewe *Kente* with a white headgear at a State function in Accra.

(Picture purchased from Information Services Department, Accra)

There seems to be another angle to the way the cloth is worn, especially by men, which connotes very different meanings. It has been observed that the regular way of putting on the cloth is across one shoulder (see Plate 4:34). It has also been noted and it is common knowledge in *Asanteman* and all over Ghana that when pouring libation, the individual brings down the cloth from the shoulder to mid arm length /level. Mawere Opoku explains this to be an act of reverence in the presence of the ancestral spirits. It is also the only time that an Asante or an Akan chief may withdraw his right foot a little from the right slipper he is wearing since his traditional slippers are symbolic of his status; and their removal being a serious taboo, would automatically influence people to destool him. Plate 4:35 depicts a chief spokesman, pouring libation at the opening ceremony of the Cultural Centre Museum in Kumasi. Although he is not standing straight, it is obvious that the cloth is off his shoulder and his right foot is resting on the right slipper. Nana Obiri Yeboah explains the action to mean that although he is a chief, he is in the presence of higher authorities (the ancestors) and must therefore show reverence by placing his right foot on the slipper (Personal communication).

The only other “personality” or entity who or which is accorded such reverence is the Golden Stool and therefore its occupant – the *Asantehene*. In the film *Coronation of a King*, (1999) the various paramount and divisional chiefs – *Daasebre* Nana Osei Bonsu (*Mampong hene*), *Nana Oduro Numapau* (*Esumejahene*) and other chiefs, are portrayed with their cloths tied on the chests, as they swear the oath of allegiance to *Otumfuo* Osei Tutu II, their new *Asantehene*.



Plate 4:23

A Queenmother from the Akwapem traditional area presents an award at a Film Festival held at NAFTI in 1993. She wears a printed black and white cloth with a black headgear. Her jewellery is mostly gold trinkets with black leather and beads (Picture from NAFTI).



Plate 4:24

A Ga (Sempe) Queen mother wears a brilliant velvet cloth. Her jewellery is mostly bead work and her headdress is gold and black worn over permed hair with an attached pony tail.



Plate4:25

A Ga Queen mother dressed in Asante *Kente* and a headgear of the same cloth as she presents awards at a Film Festival held at the National Film and Television Institute in Accra (Pictures from NAFTI Accra).

It has also been noted in Asante tradition that while women can wear the top cloth across the shoulder when dancing *adowa*, they tie it across the chest in dancing *kete*.

The men on the other hand, tie the cloth across the waist when dancing *kete* and both men and women dance barefooted (see Plate 4:36). Samuel Adjei (a cultural officer at the Kumasi cultural centre and a field resource person) attributes this mode of dressing to the historical background of the *kete* dance. According to him, the *kete* dance originally belonged exclusively to the *Asantehene*. He and his wives entertained themselves by dancing *kete*, which became known as the royal dance. Anyone who wanted to dance this particular dance had to be granted permission by the *Asantehene* before he could do so. Adjei further explains that in the olden days, any subject of *Asanteman* who danced *kete* without permission could face the death penalty. It therefore must be accorded the due respect by tying the cloth at the waist in the case of male dancers, and at the chest for female dancers. In addition to this no jewellery is used by both sexes and they dance barefooted. This is in sharp contrast with *Adowa*, which is danced in full regalia that is, traditional slippers, jewellery *et cetera*, even for the purpose of a funeral (see Plate 4:37 a & b).

At most durbar grounds in Asante, the men who usually surround the *Asantehene* or his Paramount chiefs, wear their cloths either tied at the waist or the neck. In Plate 4:38 it is observed that apart from the two chiefs in the middle, all the other men (sword bearers, umbrella carriers *et cetera*) have their cloths either tied at their waists or the necks. It must be noted that they are all attendants and cannot dress like the chiefs, since they are not of equal ranking with them. On a similar note this could also be attributed to

the functional purpose for tying the cloth in the said fashion, as discussed earlier, since the men are either sword bearers, umbrella or stool carriers as depicted in *Otumfuo Opoku Ware II's* arrival at the durbar grounds in Kumasi (see Plate 4:39).

The wearing of hats is rather alien in *Asante* traditional culture. What is usually worn by the chief could probably be best described as a headdress. May be the other people who wear anything close to a hat are the *Asantehene's* guard of honour and the executioners who wear an irregularly shaped ceremonial hat virtually on top of their heads. In fact chiefs possess a variety of headdresses or headgears for various occasions. In the films *Journey of a King 1999* (which features the burial and funeral of the late *Otumfuo Opoku Ware II*) we see *Daasebre Oti Boateng II* in brilliant red (*kodjan*) head tie meaning they are in serious trouble (*enibre aba*) whilst the *Mampong hene Daasebre Osei Bonsu II* wears a black head tie, in deep mourning as the caretaker of the funeral.

Contrary to the removal of the hat to show respect in Western European culture, *Asante* chiefs in particular and other chiefs in Ghana, who wear headdresses (head tie, *et cetera*) generally keep them on during funerals, but bare their heads as they approach the dead chief to pay their last respects or to swear the oath of allegiance. As mentioned earlier on, the other gesture of respect is tied to the wearing or removal of slippers. Again, in the films *Journey of a King* and *Farewell to a King* (1970), *Opoku Ware II's* and *Prempeh II's* funerals (respectively), a lot of *Asantes* are portrayed barefooted at the funeral grounds. This gesture – according to Prof Mawere Opoku – symbolises their reverence, respect and abject desolation at the death of a sustainer (Personal communication).



Plate 4:26

Young girls of pre-puberty age playing in a compound, dressed with only pieces of cloth around the waist.



Plate 4:27

The three young women in front are dressed traditionally for their status i.e. they have come of age. The cloth covers their breasts. (Pictures from Film Africa Ltd.)



Plate4:28

Young women sitting in state after been been dressed in Asante traditional clothes at The *Bragoro* Ceremony in 1957 (Picture purchased from Information Services Dept. Accra).



Plate4:29

Maame Pokuaa dressing a young Debutante for her *Bragoro* outdooring (Picture by courtesy of Prof. Mawere Opoku).

On a visit to the current *Asantehene's* palace in the company of Kwaw Ansah (a renowned Film maker and traditionalist) in July 1999, the current writer noted that all visitors to the *Otumfuo* had to approach him at a safe distance and barefooted. In fact they did not go beyond the ten foot distance. This was explained by Obiri Yeboah and confirmed by Kwaw Ansah as an act of respect and reverence to *Otumfuo* Osei Tutu II (Personal communication). According to Kwaw Ansah, it is this same principle of showing respect or reverence on a holy ground or in the presence of a higher authority, which forms the basis of traditional priests and priestesses walking barefooted.

Another interesting detail noted at the *Asantehene's* palace was the fact that anyone who wore slippers had to take them off as a sign of respect; but those who wore full shoes were allowed to keep the shoes on. A similar observation was made by the Researcher on two other occasions when she visited the *Nai Wulormor* (High Priest of the Ga Mashie traditional area) in January 2001, and the Pokuase Mantse's (chief's) palace in January 2006. In the former case, all visitors to the *Wulormor's* court are given the regulations of the house before the day's sitting starts, which includes taking off the slippers but keeping the shoes on: depending on what the individual wears. At the Pokuase chief's palace it was the same regulation. A visitor either took off the slippers in greeting him or kept his or her shoes on to greet him. At a glance this seems more like a cultural paradox which may probably have been created by colonial rule.

It could be argued that since the Colonial rulers were regarded at some point by the traditional institutions as higher authority it would have been difficult at some stage, to demand certain gestures of reverence and respect (such as removing their shoes in the

presence of chiefs and priests) from a people who disregarded what those institutions stood for and were bent on introducing their own civilization. It seems they somehow succeeded in impressing the people and the traditional authorities of the Gold Coast that wearing of shoes was a sign of respect and reverence in the presence of a higher authority.

On the other hand, Rev. Dr Hesse (Cinematographer and Reverend Minister) states in explanation to the above practice that the full shoe has been accepted over the years as amore dignified way of covering the feet and therefore regarded as part of a respectable dress code. Slippers and half shoes, according to him are more casual and can traverse all manner of rough, dirty and unwholesome terrain. They are therefore less dignifying and disrespectful in the presence of priests, chiefs, priestesses and therefore must be taken off as individuals approach palaces and shrines (Personal communication).

In *Asanteman* however, the occupant of the Golden Stool is usually accorded almost as much reverence as the Stool itself and that could be equated in some degree to the reverence accorded the ancestors. *Nana Obiri Yeboah* (a field resource person) explains that the *Otumfuo* is usually vested with the powers to act as a King, priest and prophet for *Asanteman*, which places him in the category of a high priest. He therefore mediates and does propitiation on behalf of his people especially on *adae* days. This therefore explains why he is approached barefooted, with the cloth down to mid arm or waist level and at a respectable distance (Personal communication).

Apart from the symbolism of these gestures, a very interesting pattern has been observed in the mode of dressing of almost all the southern chiefs in Ghana with the sole



Plate4:30

Okatakyie – Braveman



Plate4:31

Mehoyɛɛ – I am handsome



Plate4:32

Mebemeho – I respect myself



Plate4:33

Yebesi/meyerebesi – It will be washed/
my wife will wash it

(Photographs taken by Researcher, based on Owusu Ansah’s cloth wearing styles).

exception of Anlo chiefs who wear the traditional cloth with tunic and the hat (*Togbenya*) (see Plate 4:40). All the southern chiefs Ga, Dangbe, Nzema, Fante *et cetera*, wear the cloth the Asante way that is, without a tunic, for all functions. The difference though, lies in the type of cloth worn. Asantes use more of the *Kente* and *Adinkra* cloths for formal traditional functions, while the Gas and Fantes use more of the velvet and *appliqué* cloths. The Ewes on the other hand, have their own version of the *Kente* cloth with their colour combinations (see Plates 4:42-4:43). In fact one wonders whether Asante legendary military prowess and its attendant cultural dominance could have had any influence on this mode of dressing for royalty down south just described.

It is how these gestures discussed, relate to the wearing of costumes of various colours and what they symbolise which distinguish the traditional clothes of one ethnic group from another, and especially Asantes from any other ethnic group. It is also these very elements that inform the filmmaker's creative choices in the representation of symbols (in the characterisation of the Artistes) that his target audience can identify with. As discussed in Chapter Two, the film *Coming to America* (1988) was well researched especially concerning the use of African symbols. There was creative and thoughtful selection of symbols and icons that represent West, East, Central and Southern Africa in the costumes, props and setting provided for King Geoffrey Jaffer and his family as well as the characters in the palace. The appropriate uses of dialogue, music, sound effects were additional symbols that established the cultural identity of the Kingdom of Zumunda as African. In the same vein, the Ghanaian filmmaker could creatively make use of the knowledge of these details in the symbolisms discussed by



Plate 4:34

Nana Obiri Yeboah, an Administrative Officer at the Kumasi Cultural Centre delivering a speech at the inauguration of the Museum. He wears a cloth – along with the other dignitaries on the stage – in the regular manner, across the shoulder.



Plate 4:35

A chief spokesman pours libation at the Kumasi Cultural Centre for the inauguration to begin. His cloth has been pulled off the left shoulder and his right foot rests on top of the right slipper in reverence to the ancestors in whose presence he believes to stand (Pictures purchased from the Cultural Centre, Kumasi).

selecting icons and symbols from various cultures that would establish a Ghanaian cultural identity or to create the necessary distinctions that would establish various sub-cultural identities in the look and sound of the films made in Ghana.

KNUST



PART TWO

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND THE GHANAIAAN FILM

The details of symbolism in traditional costumes just discussed in Part One of this Chapter, constitute the filmmaker's premise for creating cultural nuances in the representation of characters, to establish a cultural identity in the look of both Period and Contemporary films. It is the seeming absence of this look and sound in the broader context of costume, make-up, set design and manner of behaviour as well as dialogue and music *et cetera* in the films of the Ghanaian Directors and Producers that has become an issue for discussion.

This segment on Cultural Identity therefore explores the perception of film practitioners, trainers and film students concerning the Ghanaian identity and the implications for representation of characters on the Ghanaian film screen. The discussion poses these questions:

- a. Who is telling the story?
- b. Whose story is it?
- c. What story is being told?

4:6 Who is telling the story?

In order to have a balanced discussion on cultural identity and representation in the Ghanaian film, it is imperative to know who the filmmaker is, his cultural identity and his perception of Ghanaian culture. Unfortunately, most film and video critics (such as

journalists who review and critique works of filmmakers in the *Graphic Show biz*, *The Mirror*, *Spectator et cetera*), usually take the filmmaker's cultural identity and his perception of Ghanaian culture for granted. A typical example is illustrated in the 8th and 15th February (2007) editions of *Graphic Show biz* which feature reviews of the film *Run Baby Run* (2007), directed by Emmanuel Apea and produced by Revelle Films. In both editions, the reviews concentrate on the story, (which is set in the drug trafficking world of London and Ghana) lineup of Artistes, (Kofi Bucknor of *Heritage Africa* fame, Kodjo Dadson – *Love Brewed....* and Rama Brew *et cetera*) the quality of acting and the marketing strategies and future sequels planned for the film.

As usual, the critique is based on the assumption that the filmmaker is a Ghanaian for the simple fact that he resides in or outside the country and is born to parents of a Ghanaian ancestry (which is the legal requirement demanded by the country's constitution) (Constitution, 1992). The assessment is often silent (with the sole exception of Kwaw Ansah's films) on the filmmaker's appreciable knowledge about and understanding of, not only Ghanaian cultural values but more importantly, his ability to identify with these in such basic expressions as language (at least, the mother tongue), clothing, food and manner of behaviour *et cetera*.

As already mentioned in Chapter Two, and again at the beginning of this Chapter, it is the film maker's ability to understand and appreciate the cultural values of the target audience that makes it possible to skillfully and creatively transpose such values into characterisation in areas such as costume, setting, mannerism, dialogue, music (the look and sound of the film) on the screen. This also means that the filmmaker cannot make

the assumption that his Ghanaian ancestry and his residence in Ghana can guarantee automatic knowledge of Ghanaian cultural values. Whatever cultural values he/she has internalised, will naturally reflect in the identity represented by his/her characters on the screen. This leads to the crucial question. Who then is a Ghanaian?

When film students, lecturers, filmmakers (270 respondents) were asked this question, it was a very insightful experience. One hundred and sixty-two respondents (representing 60% of the total number), attempted to answer the question. 11.1% made up of the level 100 students chose not to respond and offered no spontaneous reasons or excuses, which in itself was a message. Fifty-four people, representing 10% of the respondents, sought refuge in the purely legal definition which defines a Ghanaian by geographical boundaries and ancestry. Eighty-one respondents – 30% of the total number – responded thoughtfully and meaningfully by including the cultural consciousness of the individual. Twenty-seven people, representing 10% of the respondents, responded clinically: their words did not carry any personal conviction. 28.9% made up of seventy-eight respondents are yet to return the written responses with excuses and promises to do so. This research was conducted between late October and November 2006 and it set a rethinking process in motion which resulted in lively group discussions at the National Film and Television Institute. At TV Africa (where interviews were also conducted), it resulted in a discussion of the question on the *Saturday Next Generation* Programme on TV. An examination of the results of the above interviews discussed revealed three distinct categories of Ghanaians that would serve as general classifiers for the purpose of this discussion.

The first category is the Ghanaian born to parents of Ghanaian ancestry, in or outside the country, who has come to terms with his/her identity as a Ghanaian and therefore identifies with the basic cultural values expressed in language, food, clothing and manner of behaviour *et cetera*. This person is at ease with himself or herself and may wear any costume (Ghanaian or otherwise), speak any language as and when necessary since his or her 'Ghanaian identity' is already inherent and therefore announces his/her identity ahead of him. He/she is a 'Ghanaian world citizen'.

The second individual who has the same ancestry as the first is yet to come to terms with his Ghanaian identity. In fact he may have woken up to the effects and machinations of colonialism and the world system and swings all the way to one end of the continuum back to his roots to either stay there or swing all the way to the other end of the continuum lambasting his fellow Ghanaian or African for his supposed woes. He suffers from erratic identity crisis. Such a person is at the point of transition (a location some never leave). He/ she chooses to identify with Rastafarianism and other ancient black civilizations in food, language, clothing and manner of behaviour. The other end of the continuum is expressed in perpetual senseless agitation which becomes irrelevant due to the entrenched position assumed, regardless of the passage of times and seasons. This character has refused to move on and therefore loses his sense of time. He/she dresses in 1970's fashion in the 90's. He / She may speak any language as well as his/her mother tongue. He/She is the lone soldier fighting the world's battles at the crossroads of life.

The third person who is also of the same ancestry as the first and the second category of Ghanaian is the proverbial 'world citizen'. He/she is the product of mass

production. In fact he/she is a baby of the current global village. A product of technology without any roots. This character speaks English (very well or haphazardly) and does not identify with any of the Ghanaian cultural values as expressed in language, food, clothing and manner of behaviour. In fact he/ she wears mass produced clothing all the time and is very comfortable with the *status quo*. He/she does not want to know anything about identity: eats drinks and sleeps media – radio, television and the internet. This is the universal nondescript character. In fact in another sense he/she is an imitation of his/her creator “the observer of the African”. Unfortunately many filmmakers (young and old) are in the last category which leads to the next question.

4:7 Whose story is it?

When the Ghanaian filmmaker who is culturally conscious decides to tell his or anybody’s story, there would be some level of effort to represent characters with the appropriate cultural identities. He/she would therefore insist on exercising some control over the look of the characters since they would give meaning to his thoughts and imaginations. Such film and Video Producers and Directors usually discuss the style of costumes, colour scheme, fabrics, hair, face and body of the actors and actresses in their stories at various stages of planning of the production. These discussions are held with various members of the crew – Designers, Director of Photography *et cetera* at group levels (production meetings) and on individual basis. They only relax when they are sure that the Designers on the production can creatively interpret their characters visually. Designers worth their reputation would confer with their Film Directors in order to capture what they visualise so they can in turn creatively express this visually. These

Film Directors and Producers would equally devote time to the set design, dialogue, music, sound effects and editing. In film production, this is regarded as part of the standard procedure which is universally acknowledged. This process demands commitment, time and research. Unfortunately, these are three vital commodities that many Ghanaian filmmakers either do not want to know about or pretend do not exist. They usually delude themselves that the story can carry itself through just dialogue, any music and visual effects, forgetting that even the Concert Party (our local interactive theatre) has its own style of production which is adhered to.

From the Researcher's own experience and those of her past students on productions, most Ghanaian Film Producers and Directors prefer asking Artistes to provide their own costumes (which subtly limits the creativity of the Designer and takes away partial control over the look of the character). Gradually the story begins to lose some credibility and authenticity on the screen since the selection of the actor or actress's wardrobe for the film is decided from the limited selection he or she can afford to present on location. In such situations, some Artistes begin to assume control over their acting on set, suggesting how an action should correspond with the dialogue or arrogantly acting as they please. At this stage, the Film Director is not in total control of the story. He/she is supposed to direct the Artistes (in order to elicit the appropriate responses from them) and not the other way round. The story subtly becomes that of the Artiste and not the film Director.

A particularly unfortunate experience which illustrates this point occurred on a location for the shooting of the film *Child at Six thirty* (1994), where the current writer had to ask the Director of the film to delete her name from the film credits for no work

done. There was inappropriate casting of the lead character (probably for reasons other than her acting ability) and she refused to dress and be made-up according to the look of her character (the role she plays in the film). This is partly because she was allowed to bring her own costumes on set and had her hair styled without consultation with the Designer. The Film Director could not control her and she eventually acted as she pleased. The tragic fact is that this film was produced by the erstwhile Ghana Film Industry Corporation with a crew led by a professionally trained Film Director who had seemingly traded his professionalism for the short cut process used by the non-professional, profit margin seeking producers.

Jim Awindor (A Film Director and lecturer at the National film and Television Institute) agrees with the Researcher that most filmmakers believe that the advent of Digital Technology can replace professionalism in film making. According to him, most of the early films that were produced on celluloid at the Ghana Film Industry Corporation, followed the standard procedure for filmmaking discussed, since the technology for filmmaking at that time made it virtually impossible to do otherwise (Personal communication). Although digital technology has made it possible for the film crew to easily detect any mistakes and make the necessary amends before leaving the set, it is no excuse for less professionalism nor does it replace the standard procedure for filmmaking as some Ghanaian producers currently assume.

In this sense, apart from NAFTI films which are produced by film students in training and therefore follow the standard procedure, Kwaw Ansah's films are the only examples of films that have been made according to the universal standard and are internationally acknowledged as well produced. He is an example of a Ghanaian who is

culturally conscious and who has not only learned the Art of filmmaking but also appreciates its powerful nature as a tool for acculturation. His award-winning films *Heritage Africa* and *Love Brewed in an African Pot* which were shot on celluloid are still regarded as classic films in world Cinema and African Cinema categories. This is because his story can be identified as Ghanaian (and in a broader context African) and which is produced according to the universal standard of filmmaking.

It is interesting to note that digital technology has not in anyway lessened the professional standard and creativity of Kwaw Ansah's films. His video production, *Crossroads of People, Crossroads of trade* (1995), also won the best Documentary Prize at the Pan African film festival in Ouagadougou in 1995. Every film professional in this country is equally aware that he is one of the most creative film directors anyone can wish for on location. Whilst he has absolute control over his story (knowing exactly what and how he wants to communicate to the target audience) and he insists on best practice in every aspect of the production, he allows every member of the crew the freedom to creatively contribute to the successful production of the film. On his location, the Design department usually has absolute control and custody over all costumes, make-up and set properties since he insists on acquiring his costumes and props for the production.

Artistes are known to have made comments (in the presence of the Researcher) to the effect that on Kwaw Ansah's film set one is so well catered for, that one does not really mind how much money one earns at the end of the shoot. Even when he is calling the shots, he relates so well to the Crew and Artistes that everyone relaxes and gives off their best.

Kwaw Ansah would not tolerate any person, attitude or behaviour that would interfere with the smooth running of the production. On location for the film *Heritage Africa*, he earned everybody's respect by firing one of the English actors who found himself on the next available flight to London when he was caught attempting to bully some Ghanaian actors on the set. On that same production, he fired the Production Manger for sub-standard performance.

Contrary to the usual excuse of lack of finances and facilities that some past students of NAFTI and local video producers generally offer for the current sub-standard quality of filmmaking, Kwaw Ansah has always taken pains and time to look for creative alternative solutions to production challenges and expects the same of both Artistes and Crew.

According to Kuntoh, (among others), Kwaw Ansah is the Editor's Director: since he takes enough shots on location to cover any unforeseen problems at post production level (Personal communication). Rev. Dr Chris Tsui Hesse, Amishadai Sackitey and the current writer (who have worked on his films), assert that Kwaw Ansah is the Designer and Camera man's director since he is also a fine Artist who understands what goes into the design, construction and representation of visual symbols on the screen (Personal communication). He is also a musician and so understands what to expect from the sound department as stated by many sound men who have worked on his film productions. To top it all he is a shrewd business man as known by all who have come into contact with him. In spite of all these qualities which allow him to tell his story creatively, Kwaw Ansah does not attempt to take on unnecessary responsibilities on productions as other producers do. He realises that with the right calibre of people

around him he can direct them to successfully tell his story in images and sound on the screen. It is therefore hardly surprising that his films win awards at films Festivals and that *Heritage Africa* (1988) won the OAU award, the Black Peoples of the World award as well as the Grand Prix (*Etallon Yennenga*) at FESPACO '89. The theme of the story (liberation struggle) is recognised as typically African in the world of cinema.

The uses of dialogue, music, sound and visual effects are all typically Ghanaian even though it is a period film set in the immediate Pre-independence Ghana (late 1940's to early 1950's). Bosomfield's character had been created with such creativity and cultural consciousness that Ghanaians of various generations and social statuses can identify with him as a civil servant, lecturer, grandfather, politician, father *etcetera*. In other words, the character is very real to life. Even though Kwaw Ansah was born in 1941 and was quite young in the 1940's he recently told this Researcher that he was (and still is) a very observant person who took an active interest in his surroundings (Personal communication). It is against this background that he embarked on a thorough research in defining Bosomfield's character. Such characters schooled at Achimota College, Mfantsipim School *et cetera*, went for further at universities such as Cambridge and Oxford in the United Kingdom. On their return to Ghana, these became the elites of society. In real life, some of these are Fantes like Quaison-Sackey, whose Ghanaian name is Kwesi Sekyi and who through education, anglicised the name to Quaison-Sackey. Kwaw Ansah created his own elite club (cronies of Bosomfield) with such names as the Forbisons, Steele-Dadzies, Kusi-DaCostas, Kuntu-Blanksons, Degraft-Pendletons *et cetera*. Every detail of their characterisation was well researched and

portrayed in their speech, mannerism, costumes, make-ups and setting which were an imitation of the lifestyle of their colonial masters.

Although most Ghanaians who watched *Heritage Africa* were aware of the incorporation of Ghana's struggle for independence in the film, Kwaw Ansah's lead characters bear no physical resemblance to Casely Hayford, Gbedemah *et cetera*. On the other hand, they expose the treachery of the Ghanaian Politician. Essien and Allotey Pappoe (who are colleagues of Akromah in the struggle) betray their leader to the colonial Governor. In his portrayal of these characters, the Film Director creatively uses the known symbols of language and manner of behaviour to create the struggle scene and intricately weaves his own message. Contrary to the representation of images to communicate the agitation for independence, the character of Kwame Akromah bears little resemblance to the vivid personality of Kwame Nkrumah. According to Kwaw Ansah, Akromah is his creation of a leader who has faith in his people and who believes in giving Bosomfield (a fellow Ghanaian) a chance to prove himself as a worthy advocate of his people. The Director also explains that his exposure of the treachery of Essien and Allotey Pappoe is to express the fact that not all agitators are genuine (Personal communication). It is interesting to note that in costuming Akromah, the film Director uses a mixture of the symbols that signify the freedom fighter (the smock which was used by Nkrumah) and the African print shirt which portrays the character's cultural consciousness.

As a person, Kwaw Ansah has a passion for the liberation of the Ghanaian mind and his story is motivated by this passion for the Ghanaian to be aware of who he is, what he has and what he is capable of achieving by himself. *Heritage Africa* in his words is his

contribution to the struggle to liberate the mind of the Ghanaian and the African (Personal communication).

In Kwaw Ansah's portrayal of the African heritage (heirloom), anyone who was a custodian of the *kuduo* (casket that symbolises the heritage) was costumed in a dignified manner. Kwaw Bosomefi (the ancestor after whom Bosomfield was named), is portrayed in the film as a brave warrior who fought on to death to capture and hand over the heritage to Kwesi Atta Bosomefi who symbolises the next generation. Both Kwaw and Kwesi Atta Bosomefi were costumed in the traditional battledress (smock with the talismans) riding on a horse and battling till the ancestor retrieved the casket from the serpent. Bosomfield's mother was portrayed in a rich velvet cloth when she visited her son to hand over the golden heritage. Although she was never formally educated she was portrayed in dignified traditional clothes. At the end of the film when Bosomfield struggles in the dream world between life and death he wears the battle dress as he retrieves the casket (the heritage he sold) from the Governor and attempts to hand it over to his mother. On the whole, *Heritage Africa* is a slightly complex story which has been handled professionally and creatively without losing its cultural relevance for which it is internationally acclaimed.

It is evident that Kwaw Ansah is not only a culturally conscious Ghanaian but also a film Director with a message that he desires to share with his Ghanaian and African target audience whom he identifies with. His use of carefully and creatively selected symbols that represent his thoughts and ideas on the screen shows his level of understanding and appreciation of the cultural codes of his target audience. The depth of

his understanding and mastery of his profession and the culture of his target audience are also exhibited in how the target audience identify with his story as theirs.

4:8 What story is being told?

Incidentally, many of the current videos produced by private non-professional filmmakers as well as some of the professional filmmakers seem to have nothing to say to the audience and therefore appear to have no real stories. Most of what is seen on the screen is made up of various life situations somehow put together and allowed to be driven uncontrollably by the artistes simply because they identify with and easily get involved to the point of being carried away by these situations. What these producers and directors do not seem to be aware of is the fact that life situations happen within real life space that is entirely different from the created illusion of life space in screen reality which is conceived, skilfully and creatively designed to represent life. Excessive shouting, weeping and screaming which characterise the Ghanaian video films and may work for the theatre, becomes melodramatic and do not work for filmmaking. This is because while the actors need to overemphasize their actions in order to get their message across to the theatre audience, the film or television screen brings the actors closer to the audience (by the camera lens). Films work on the screen because they follow the principles of creating an illusion of reality. The filmmaker must therefore work according to the codes of filmmaking in terms of the structure of the story, the right calibre of artistes with the appropriate diction and voice who can bring the story to life, colour, camera angles, shot sizes, editing techniques, framing in relation to aspect ratio (screen dimensions), appropriate costumes and props (symbols and icons that can

represent the ideas and thoughts that the film director wishes to transmit to the target audience). The question is when we have filmmakers whose identity fall within the category of the 'universal non-descript character' (the global citizen who resides in Ghana) what stories will they tell?

A study of the dialogue, diction, mannerism, setting, costume and make-up of the artistes on the TV serial *Home Sweet Home* (which has been aired on Television for a while) and directed by Emmanuel Appea is a typical example. The TV serial is so full of icons and symbols of American culture that the whole series could have been lifted from American situation comedies such as *Cosby Show*, *In the house* or virtually any street in New York and yet one wonders whether it will even work on the American screen since it is still only an imitation of their situation comedy. On the other hand, this is hardly surprising to anyone who is acquainted with the series Director. He can only project on the screen, the cultural values he has internalised since he has not learned how to communicate in the language of the target audience.

His feature-length film *Run Baby Run* (earlier discussed in this Chapter), is another typical but very unfortunate example. The Film Director is reported to have remarked at the première, according to Graphic Show Biz (2007) that his film marked the return of professional filmmaking in Ghana and that the film would hit the world scene. Instead of running the film on the Ghanaian screen for a while for the necessary critical assessment, he entered it (for screening category) at the just-ended Pan African film festival at Ouagadougou (26th Feb.-3rd March 2007). The delegation from NAFTI at the festival remarked that those who went to watch the film started walking out of the theatre five to ten minutes into the film. This is a clear indication that the film did not

portray what the audience expected to see. The film director was said to have abandoned the festival by dawn the next day. It is rather unfortunate that he had to learn the hard way.

The other end of the continuum is represented by Samuel Nyamekye's films which are similar (in structure) to the local Concert Party. Although he is fond of putting together real life situations which are driven by the artistes as discussed earlier, he also makes use of local folk tales like *Aku Sika et cetera* as themes for his film story; and his use of music, especially in the film *Kumasi Nyonko* (2004) has been described by Film and TV lecturers such as Kuntoh as very interesting (Personal communication). His problem though is that just as most local producers, he refuses to employ the services of professionals and as a result, he tells another kind of story other than what he intended. Everyday themes, which could have been properly structured into film stories and packaged creatively and professionally within our cultural context that could be some form of change agents, are rather rubbish and ridiculed by unprofessional handling of 'local stars' such as Egya Koo, Nana Ama Mc Brown, *et cetera*..

Nyamekye's case is a mild example of the desperate measures currently adopted by most Ghanaian film and video Producers and Directors (replicating the Nigerian film) in an equally desperate bid for higher profit margins. When the current writer interviewed some of these filmmakers, most of them stated that the Nigerian stories seem to be more economically viable. The irony is that most of the Nigerian films are also poor copies of the Hollywood movies, but these are the stories being told.

Santo and Judas, a local serial (in Akan language) represents another local genre with a lot of potential, but the stories have no useful messages. In fact the stories have no

decent heroes that would encourage the target audience to rise above the level of low esteem and mediocrity to achieve excellence through honest and smart work. The serial usually promotes the achievement of success through all manner of dishonest means. Other TV serials that also promote dishonesty are *Kejetia* and *Dada Boat*. These are every day life situations that could be structured into very good stories with characters that attempt to and eventually achieve success through honest means in spite of the seeming dishonesty that surrounds us. Ironically, they are some of the productions in which the artistes are to a large extent able to identify with and express their characters' role with some authenticity. This could be attributed to the use of local language for the dialogue which is a step in the right direction.

A rather worrying trend noted in the Ghanaian film (and the African film in general) is that the characterisation is usually very effective only in the rural setting of the stories. The costumes, make-up, set design and interpretation of the character's role are very authentic at that point. On the contrary when the characters move to the urban/city setting, they seem to lose their identity in costuming and setting. Although this primarily has to do with the lack of creative and professional Art direction in the area of Costume and Set Design, the problem is more of the film director's perception which only accepts images of enlightened Africans as European and American in look, setting, sound and manner of behaviour. In a subtle manner this only promotes and projects the colonial agenda which is rather unfortunate considering the powerful nature of filmmaking and the possibilities for liberating the minds of not only Ghanaians but Africans across the board.

Another hard fact is that in Ghana, those with finances mistakenly believe that they can equally direct their own films. What they probably do not know is that the best way to safeguard their money in filmmaking, is to primarily employ the three vital commodities of standard filmmaking: that is commitment, time, research and to hire a professional and creative crew to produce the film. That way, their stories can be told creatively and professionally on the screen within the appropriate cultural context and contemporary relevance. These are the calibre of films which Ghanaians will perceive as national assets that can be proudly exhibited locally and internationally and which would also be economically viable.

4:9 Summary of Discussion

From the discussion, it is evident that the importance of symbolism to the filmmaker cannot be underestimated since it functions as signs which stand for or represent the filmmaker's concepts, ideas and feelings in the appropriate manner that enables the target audience to interpret their meaning in quite the same way as the filmmaker does. It is therefore necessary for the filmmaker to understand and appreciate the cultural codes of the target audience.

It was observed that *Asantes* are a people with a somewhat aggressive and colourful personality which is reflected in their competitive nature and extravagant attitude towards life as well as their peculiar attachment to the red colour.

On the subject of clothing, it was realised that *Asantes* have four main traditional textiles which form the basis of their costumes. There is the strip woven *Kente* cloth, the hand printed or stamped *Adinkra* cloth, *Akunintam*(the appliquéd cloth) and the plain

cotton cloth in colours such brilliant red *kogyan*, brick red *kobene*, dark brown *kuntunkuni* and black *brissi*. The *Kente* and *Adinkra* cloths are made in gay and sombre colours and of varied patterns which are worn for gay/festive and serious /formal occasions appropriately.

It is evident that *Asantes* are quite conservative in their cultural traditions which vividly reflect in their traditional costumes. It is also noted from the discussion that *Asante* culture to some extent has influenced chieftaincy costumes and regalia in most sub-cultures of Ghana that is, from mid-Volta all the way to the coastal regions with the sole exception of the *Anlo* traditional area. Although there may be some similarities in gestures such as removal of sandals and bringing down the cloth as a sign of respect/reverence in the presence of chiefs, traditional priests, and the ancestors, there are distinct dissimilarities in the details of accessories in the costume and make-up of *Asante* queen mothers and the queen mothers of the other cultures in the country. It is deduced from the discussion that in Diplomatic or International circles, *Kente* and *Adinkra* cloths are recognised by Ghanaians (irrespective of their sub-culture) and non-Ghanaians, as a Ghanaian cultural identity.

Little details such as these are the vital similarities and differences that constitute the working knowledge every film maker needs to have in cultural symbolism in order to create and establish the cultural identity of his characters on the screen. It is also these very areas of symbolism which distinguish one culture from another as well as one sub-culture from the other. In drawing these distinctions, similarities are also established in the other cultures which result in a definition of unique cultural identity within the

context of the major cultural or national identity as evidenced in the traditional costumes discussed.

In the same vein, it is the colours chosen for the clothes and the manner of wearing them that communicate to the audience or onlooker, the cultural identity of an individual or group of people. At various state functions, we are able to identify various chiefs and their delegations merely from their costumes before they say a word. Similarly on the film screen, traditional costume immediately identifies and establishes the character's role without any dialogue.

It is also evident from the discussion that most film critics take the cultural identity and the perception of filmmakers in Ghana for granted. In the classification that followed, three categories of Ghanaians were identified: the culturally conscious individual who has come to terms with his identity as a Ghanaian and identifies with the culture in language, food and clothing *et cetera*. The second category defines the individual who is at the point of transition and has just woken up to who he is. The third category describes the individual who is a product of the Global village. Such a person wants nothing to do with Ghanaian culture as expressed in food, language, manner of behaviour or clothing. He thinks, eats and drinks Radio, Television and the Internet. It was realised that many of the Ghanaian film and video producers and directors are in the last category.

Another observation made is the fact that most of the films produced by these Directors are sub-standard due to unprofessional practices. Apart from the films made by NAFTI students, those of Kwaw Ansah seem to be the only productions that have been

acclaimed internationally as well produced as well as culturally relevant and have won awards. Finally, it was revealed that the best way for financiers to produce creative, professional films that are culturally relevant and economically viable is to commit not only money but also time, research and a creative and professional crew to work on the film project.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE GHANAIAAN IDENTITY

In recent times more than any other, Ghanaians have been called upon to demonstrate their sense of nationalism and culture. This has created a new sense of awareness concerning the projection of a Ghanaian cultural identity in the most popular medium, which is the look in terms of clothing – costume and make-up. This Chapter discusses what constitutes the Ghanaian look or national/cultural identity from 1957 to date under the various political regimes and analyses the influence of Asante traditional costumes on this look. It also examines the Ghanaian look and the lack of identity in the film industry. In order to have a better understanding of the discussion, the study briefly looks at the pre-colonial and the colonial period and the attendant ‘look’ of the people of this land.

The subject is discussed under the following sub-topics.

- the Pre-Colonial Era
- the Colonial Era
- the Post-Colonial Era
- the Ghanaian look and the Film industry.

5:1 Pre-Colonial Era

This describes the period well before initial contact with the Europeans and a time when the people of this land developed their own culture and civilisation and maintained their own national institutions. Buah (1998) states that these were the same people who

mastered their land and later developed trade and commerce with European merchants as equal partners. The period was characterised by what Ghanaians now refer to as their traditional costume, which for the sake of this study is referred to as the ‘purely traditional look’. This look or manner of dressing does not necessarily describe daily wear but rather occasional wear. The study looks at the manner in which women and men as well as traditional Priests generally dress for occasions.

Probably due to the tropical climatic conditions in the country, all women dressed in cloths without a blouse (see Plates 5:1-5:6). In all of these pictures, the women (especially those from the coastal regions and the Krobos) wear beads around the neck and the wrist. The hairstyles range from the low-cut and bushy punk hairdo of the Asante women to the *Tekua* and *Oduku*-like hairdo of the Fante and Ga women with the tall straw hats of the *Dipo* dancers. The Akan men in the hinterland (Asante, Kwahu, Akyem *et cetera*) on the other hand, put on cloths without the tunic as already discussed and depicted throughout Chapter four. Men from the coastal cultures (Ga-Dangbe, Ewe, Fante) put on cloths with the tunic. Kwaw Ansah explains that since men from the coastal cultures usually wear the traditional tunic and the local loose calf or knee length pants, (*buba* and *twakoto* or *ada sāā*) in Ga, when they need to dress up they wear the cloth with the tunic and pants (Personal communication). This is the main distinguishing factor between the traditional costume of men from the coastal ethnic groups and those from the hinterland (see Plates 5:7-5:8).

Apart from other costumes which they wear, most traditional priests of the land, wear the Northern smock. These are often in the natural colour of unbleached cotton or *Kuntunkuni* (dark brown). In 1998 the current writer took a snap shot of a smock which

belongs to a *Tigali* priest at a shrine at Bonwere (see Plate 5:9). The word *Tigali* is a bastardised form of the original word *Tinganə* (pronounced *Tinganeh*) which in Dagbanle (language of the Dagombas in Northern Ghana) means the earth deity. This costume which is decorated with cowries is also reminiscent of the *Batakarikεεε* (the battle dress of chiefs and traditional army commanders) earlier discussed in Chapter One. It is also a *Kuntunkuni* smock with amulets and talismans stitched on, that constitute a protective force and which was also introduced by Moslems from the Northern part of Ghana to Asanteland as already mentioned in Chapter One. These smocks are used by traditional priests as ceremonial wear and are perceived as powerful symbols. The other costume is the Arabian or Malian long robe with the loose long sleeves often worn by the Osu *Wulormō* (spiritual ruler) Nii Gbelenfo (death is weeping). He wears this with the head gear and uses the proverbial walking stick. The *Nai Wulormō* (High Priest of the Ga traditional Area) is depicted in Plate 5:10 wearing such a robe with the white hat and straw for a neck lace as he pours libation at the Osu Castle in 1957. It is important to note that the current modern developments of the Northern smock and *Agbada* take their roots from these pre-colonial traditional costumes.

It is common knowledge that before the colonisation process began the people of this land had a way of dressing which was based on their philosophy, cultural values and the physical environment which developed the custom of making and wearing clothes. Currently, there are purely indigenous cloth weaving, dyeing, printing and bead making methods which reflect generations of usage by the people and are therefore evident of indigenous textile and bead industries.

Women from various sub-cultures in Ghana dressed traditionally
The pre-colonial look



Plate5:1
Ga women dressed traditionally for the Independence Day celebration in March 1957
(Picture purchased from Information Services Dept.)



Plate5:2
Women dressed traditionally at church in the film *Heritage Africa*.
(Picture captured from the film).



Plate5:3
Traditionally dressed delegation of Asante women and girls at funeral of an in-law.
(Pictures from **Religion and Art of Asante**)



Plate5:4
Traditionally dressed Asante women and young girls in a *Bragoro* procession



Plate 5:6
Traditionally dressed men and women at the marriage ceremony of Aba Appiah in the film *Love Brewed in the African Pot*.
(Pictures captured from the two films respectively).



Plate 5:5
A Fante bride dressed traditionally for her wedding ceremony in the film *Crossroads of trade Crossroads of People*.

In fact some of the early designs used by the English textile Printing Companies were culled from the indigenous tie dye and print motifs (see Plate 5:11). This is to say that in spite of the heat which determined the scanty covering for our bodies, we perhaps wore decent, beautiful cloths and dressed majestically when the occasion demanded it as already depicted from Plates 5:1 onwards.

As a nation, the people of this land are still very close to the natural way of doing things although their perceptions and attitudes do not allow them to appreciate and make good use of what they have. This means that to a large extent Ghanaians are currently living with their history, which makes it very easy for Ghanaian film makers to conduct a thorough research into the indigenous clothing and textile industry for a variety of options for costume designing and meaningful characterisation for our films.

Currently most Ghanaians may be found in the purely traditional style of dressing at festivals, funerals, formal traditional ceremonies and in chieftaincy institutions *et cetera*. It is vital to note at this point that the idea of this discussion is neither to advocate a backward step in cultural development nor to restrict the filmmaker to the production of epic films based on the ancient past, but rather to have a cultural premise from which can be sourced, a variety of unique ideas for the visual content of films, which will make the much needed bold cultural statement on the global scene.

5.2 Colonial Era

This was the period when the Asante kingdom and the various states lost their independence and were annexed either by force or by various treaties under the British imperial system. It was therefore an era characterised by a typical European influence on

costume, setting and manners which reflected in the attitude and behaviour of the formally educated Ghanaian. As a result of colonialism, the “educated Ghanaian” (the colonial servant) became a “darker version” of the “white” colonial master, imitating his dressing, speech and mannerism while discarding his own cultural roots. Ironically while this created a subtle class system, it coexisted with the purely traditional look which we never really lost. In the film *Love brewed in the African pot* (1981) Kwaw Ansah juxtaposes Kofi Appiah’s colonised character against the traditionally costumed characters who represent his extended family. This distinction has been made visually possible on the screen through the costume, make-up and manner of behaviour of the characters as well as their setting. It is also an era characterised by the European suit, (trousers, shirt and jacket) with shoes, a tie and a hat (see Plate 5:12). The ladies wore the frock or dress with various hats and the high, block or low heeled shoes, holding various handbags. The film *Heritage Africa* (1988) which is set in Pre-Independence Ghana, portrays the cronies of Bosomfield (the enslaved District Commissioner in the late 1940s to early 1950s) in such ‘colonial’ costumes and “affected mannerisms” at his luncheon party and the dance scenes respectively (see Plates 5:13-5:15).

An interesting development in this period was the introduction of the *kaba* shirt (traditional blouse) to the wardrobe of the women in this country. These were fashioned after the style of the European ladies frock of the period (see Plates 5:16-5:18). The interesting point which is clearly visible in Plate 5:16 is the fact that even in the colonial era, the people of this land managed not only to maintain the traditional wear but to incorporate it in the European fashion of the times. This is evident in the pictures on the facing page. The lady in the yellow frock and white hat has introduced strips of *Kente* in

the flared skirt of her European frock. The ladies dressed in *Kente* and African print in Plate 51:4, have also incorporated the colonial fashion of the time in the (off-shoulder) cape and the (sweetheart) neck line of their white blouses. It seems apparent that this parallel in the fashion of our traditional costumes and the Western European clothing has prevailed in varying degrees since then to contemporary times.

5.3 The Post-Colonial Era

This period began with what Buah (1998) describes as the re-gaining of independence on the 6th of March 1957 (exactly fifty years ago), through “the first overthrow of European colonial rule in ‘the black world’”. As already mentioned, this era saw the first conscious effort at the national level to create a cultural identity through costume in the form of the national attire associated with the first Ghanaian president Dr Kwame Nkrumah. He did not just tout the ideals of nationalism and Pan-Africanism but he further brought the nation together by his dress code. He popularised the smock from the Northern and Upper regional cultures and wore the Asante *Kente* with the tunic (see Plates 5:19-5:22). By so doing he identified with all the sub-cultures of the nation thus forging a national unity.

The *Asante Kente* and the woven smock became the National Costume of Ghana without any rancour during Dr Nkrumah’s regime. This is due to the fact that most of the other cultures in the coastal area wore the *Asante Kente* with the tunic, which was their national identity for a long time as already discussed in Chapters One and Four. It is also common knowledge that due to Nkrumah’s achievement before and after Independence,



Plate 5:7
The manner in which these Asante chiefs wear the cloth without the tunic symbolises Akan men from the hinterland as well as men from the northern part of the Volta Region in Ghana.
(Picture from Researcher's library)



Plate5:8
These traditional priests are dressed in the manner of the men from the coastal belt of the country (cloth with the tunic).
(Picture purchased from the Information Services Dept.)



Plate5:9
The *Kuntunkuni* Smock of the *Tigali* (*Tengaanə*) priest from Bonwere.
(Picture from Film Africa)



Plate 5:11
Sample of early English wax Print design from the indigenous tie dye motifs
(Photograph taken by Researcher).



Plate5:10
Nai Worlumor (High Priest of the Ga traditional Area in the long white robe with a long straw necklace and white hat, pouring libation in 1957 at the Osu castle and the Independence Square respectively (Pictures Purchased from the Information Services Dept. and captured from the film *Freedom for Ghana*).

the popularity of *Kente* and the woven smock spread throughout Africa and the Diaspora. This observation has been confirmed by Blier (1998) in her study of the Royal Arts of Africa. According to her, during the Nkrumah regime, *Kente* assumed a Pan-African identity.

Another unique fact was that the popular *Kente* weaves have the national colours which make the cloth assume a Ghanaian identity rather than that of a specific sub-culture. In fact the red, gold, green and black *Kente* colour combination was woven with various designs that made them a delightful property to own. It is important to note that internationally and in sub regional circles, the use of the Asante *Kente* cloth as costume has been associated with the people of this land from time immemorial. In spite of the fact that there have been claims from the Ewe (as already discussed in Chapters one and four) as originators of *Kente* and according to Dr Osei Agyemang (2007) – an Art historian and lecturer at KNUST - some writers claim *Kente* originates from Mali or that the people of Bonwere who allegedly were the first to weave *Kente* in the Asante kingdom, were said to have come from Denkyira, it is also common knowledge that *Kente* as a cloth has always been perceived as belonging to and therefore associated with Asante culture (Personal communication). Irrespective of who may have been the originator of the cloth, it is again common knowledge that it was adopted by the Asante Kingdom and was accepted by both Ghanaians and non-Ghanaians alike as an Asante and a Ghanaian cultural symbol respectively.

The results of an interview conducted by the current writer (in January 2007) on fabrics and costumes that are perceived as Ghanaian Cultural symbols, revealed

interesting results which still confirm the popularity of *Kente* as a universally acknowledged Ghanaian cultural symbol (irrespective of age, gender or class *et cetera*). Out of three hundred and fifty respondents (film students, film professionals, church members from all walks of life). The results are presented in a statistical data in Table 1.

Hundred percent (representing all 350 respondents) perceive *Kente* as a universally acknowledged Ghanaian cultural symbol. Eighty percent (representing 250 respondents) perceive *Adinkra* in addition to *Kente* as Ghanaian cultural symbols. Seventy percent (representing 210 respondents) perceive *Kente*, *Adinkra* and the Northern smock as cultural symbols and their response indicated that most of the motifs in the local batiks and even some of the machine printed textiles are based on *Adinkra* symbols. Thirty percent (representing 105 respondents) included Batik and Tie dye fabrics as national cultural symbols.

It is also important to mention the third costume the first Ghanaian President popularised in Ghana and the rest of Africa: the communist suit, out of which developed the political suit and other modern variations (see Plates 5:23&5:24). The Post-Colonial era is again characterised by the *Adinkra* cloth which is also perceived by some Ghanaians in this country and those abroad as Ghanaian national identity. Although this is used as costume for both sexes by all the cloth wearing sub-cultures in Ghana, it is also perceived as an Asante cultural symbol probably because they were the first to popularise the symbols particularly in the indigenous textile industry. Throughout the discussion, we find pictures of various diplomats and other dignitaries in *Adinkra* cloths as depicted in Chapter 4.



Plate5:12

Researcher's father (seated) in the late 1930's.
Note the Western European costume and make-up.
(Picture from the Researcher's library).



Plate5:13



Plate 5:14

Bosomfield hosts a luncheon party at his residence for his cronies in both pictures
(Note the colonial costume, make-up, mannerism and the setting)



Plate 5:15

Bosomfield and his cronies at the Dance in their European fashionable tail coats and gowns (All three pictures were captured from the film *Heritage Africa*).

In fact the *Adinkra* symbols have been used since time immemorial to date in designing jewellery, millinery, footwear, fabrics for making clothings for various categories of people and to be precise it permeates every aspect of the Ghanaian life.

It is significant to note that this era has also been characterised by military coup d'états and various regimes that have to some extent affected the look of the Ghanaian. The overthrow of Nkrumah's government in 1966 ushered in the first military regime of the National Liberation Council (1966-69). During this regime as well as its counterparts from 1972-1979(Supreme Military Council), June1979-December1979 (Armed Forces Revolutionary Council), the national identity took on a military look. Heads of State and their officials attended all functions in military uniform (see Plates5:25 -5:27).

The Second Republic from 1969-1972 brought a slight change in the identity established by Nkrumah. Although as a president Dr Busia, on occasions wore the *kente* cloth with the tunic, most of his ministers of state like J.H. Mensah, *et cetera* wore the *Kente* cloth without the tunic just as the *Asantes* do. The smock was relegated to the background and the European suit became more fashionable.

In fact at the inauguration of the second Republic, the ceremonial President (Mr Akuffo Addo) looked very European (see Plates 5:28&5:29). In spite of this Ghanaians still maintained *Kente* and *Adinkra* as the national costume locally and internationally as depicted in Chapter Three.

It is interesting to note that Dr Liman's inauguration as president of the Third Republic of Ghana marked a unique come back in the use of costume as a unifying symbol of national identity. He wore a three piece *agbada* with a hat made from *Kente*

(see Plate 5:30). This is reminiscent of Nkrumah's attempt to unite the nation through costume. He also reintroduced the smock which he usually wore for functions. Unfortunately his administration had barely had time to settle down in their nine- month period when the 31st December bloodless coup d'etat ushered in the return of the Rawlings' regime.

Probably the most profound changes in the Ghanaian identity happened with the advent of the Rawlings regime. The 1966 and 1972 *coup d'etats* may have torn the political and economic fabric of the nation; but the 1979 revolution shook the very core of the nation's foundation thus overturning whatever *status quo* existed at the time. The second coming of Rawlings' after the brief Liman regime on December 31st 1981 ushered in the PNDC (Provisional National Defence Council) era which lasted till 1991. Although Rawlings was from the military he surrounded himself with former student leaders with scientific socialist ideals (which encouraged collective wealth and property ownership).

These Government officials in their early days perceived everything "Western European and American as" as capitalist (which encourages individual generation of wealth and property ownership and therefore creates clearly defined classes of poverty and wealth). According to Victoria Sackey (who was with the Ghana Permanent Mission to the United Nations at the time), some of these Government officials dressed in tie dye *joromi* embroidered shirts with worn out trousers and sandals, when they travelled to meet the International Donor Communities on behalf of the nation. Although their costumes later transformed to include designer wears such as



Plate 5:16

Young Ghanaian ladies in colonial style *kaba* shirt (blouse) and cloths in March 1957. Note the European cut blouses and the hairdo.



Plate5:17

Note the colonial European fashion in style of clothes and the hair styles in the picture. (Pictures captured from the film *Freedom for Ghana* (1957)).



Plate 5:18

Note the colonial European fashion in style of clothes, hand bags and hats in the picture.

Armani suits and Gucci shoes, a trend was set in motion that established and promoted Ghanaian traditional wears for twenty years running. On his part, Jerry Rawlings as a Head of State always wore various military attires as Commander-in-chief whenever he appeared in public for the ten year regime of the PNDC.

During the era, the December 31st Women's Movement spearheaded by the former first lady Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings led the Ghanaian women on an emancipation and empowerment march which saw women boldly going to work in their traditional slit and *kaba* with half metre puffed, shoulder padded sleeves and stylish head gears to match (see Plates 5:31-5:33). Suddenly the Ewe *Kente* and the Northern woven cloths of various designs and colours became very popular since the women's movement cut across the board and the representation of cultural look ranged from the traditional through colonial to the emancipated look at various seminars and workshops. In fact it was during this era that the indigenous tie-dye and batik industry was reintroduced as a means of empowering women to be economically viable and as development partners in the home and the nation at large.

As a result, Ghanaian men and women started wearing African and Western styled costumes made from tie-dye, batik and the African print fabrics to all functions both in and outside the country. The *Kente* strip and stole became very popular since most women usually had one of these as part of their costume which also symbolises their Ghanaian identity. This was the 'look' of the Ghanaian from the late 1980's till 2000. This also spread to neighbouring West Africa and even to the whole of Africa. *Kente* printed fabrics were introduced during this period although the colour combinations were too bold to be fully patronised.



Plate5: 19
Nkrumah in *Kente* and tunic as he chats with Sir Arden Clarke at the Independence celebration in 1957.



Plate5:20
Nkrumah in the Northern smock and the European shirt as he makes his freedom speech.

(Pictures captured from the film *Freedom for Ghana*).



Plate5:21
Nkrumah in *Kente* at his inauguration as President of Ghana. (Picture purchased from Information services Dept.).



Plate5:22
Nkrumah and colleagues wearing smocks at a Party rally. (Picture from Mmofra Foundation).

It was at this same time that the local fabrics were nicknamed “*Adzoa Yankey*” and “*Woehyia wonua*” by traders from Kumasi. This was as a result of sour grapes from woven Asante *Kente*, *Adinkra*, Dutch and English wax cloth sellers who had lost patronage of their wares to the booming local fabric industry. The interesting point to note is that the Ghanaian men have never ceased patronising the local fabrics. They use them for making shirts in various styles such as the Chinese long and short sleeved tunic, the Safari jacket, the long and short sleeved European shirts and the traditional round neck, short sleeved tunic (see Plates 5:34-5:39).

From the year 1992 – 2000 Ghana experienced another definite era of national identity in the area of costume. When President Rawlings assumed leadership of the constitutional government, he reverted not only to the civilian rule but also traditional costume. As depicted in the discussion he wore the *Kente* cloth in the national colours along with his vice presidents on both inaugurations in 1992 and 1996 (see Plate 5:40-5:42). At the *Akwasidae kɛsɛɛ* festival in 1995, he even wore the *Kente* cloth (the Asante style) without the tunic to the Grand Durbar.

He popularised the traditional smock which he wore on various occasions and reintroduced Nkrumah’s fashion trend of wearing the smock over the European shirt. He further developed it by wearing the smock over the long sleeved European shirt with a tie to boot. This fashion spread through the Fourth Republican Parliament, the church and formal functions.

President Rawlings also popularised the three piece *agbada* which he wore majestically in various versions on various occasions. The climax of this was during the visit of President Bill Clinton and his wife to Ghana in April 1998 (see Plates 5:43-5:44).

It is rather interesting to note that ex-President Rawlings in his regime was criticised for improper wearing of the smock that is, wearing the European shirt underneath the Northern woven smock. It is quite clear from Plates 5:20 & 5:22 that Nkrumah had already introduced this fashion trend which Jerry Rawlings may have decided to identify himself with. During this same period, Nkrumah's communist suit was further developed with various African accents which were used not only in Ghana, but throughout West Africa and even beyond (see Plates 5:45-5:47).

The current Fourth Republic of President Kufuor reflects a paradox in the expression of national identity in costume. Although he wore the traditional Asante *Kente* cloth for the 2001 and 2005 inauguration ceremonies in the typical Asante fashion as depicted in the following Plates 5:48-5:4, his public appearances are characterised by the Western European suit or the plain linen long-sleeved dress shirts. His entourage on trips outside the country usually wear the European suit. In fact apart from the women (who are very few) who wear the traditional slit and *kaba* and some men in the minority party who wear two piece *agbada*, Chinese suit and the traditional smock; members of the majority in Parliament usually use the Western European suit as their costume. It is usually in church, at funerals and at the inauguration of Parliament that current Government officials can be seen in Ghanaian traditional clothes.

At the Golden Jubilee celebration of Ghana's Independence, on 6th March 2007, President Kufuor surprised most Ghanaians by wearing the Western European suit. Some have explained that he needed to wear a bullet proof jacket which would have been inappropriate with the Asante style of wearing the traditional cloth.



Plate5:23

Nkrumah in the long sleeved communist suit at the unveiling of his statue
(Picture from Mmofra Foundation)



Plate5:24

Nkrumah and family arrive from a trip. His wife, Fathia wears *Kente*. He wears the short-sleeved Political suit.

(Picture purchased from Information Services Dept.).

The apparent anomaly seems to have been compensated for, by the exhibition of Ghanaian culture by the President and his entourage when he recently dined at Buckingham Palace at the invitation of the Queen of England (Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II).

At the same time, for a Government that is supposedly touting the trade initiative in African textiles, it is doing very little as a role model to project the Ghanaian identity, as exemplified in Government statement that suggests the wearing of local and African print costumes to work only on Fridays. It is equally interesting to note that many young ladies between the ages of fifteen and twenty- two currently have wardrobes that boast of only scanty flimsy scraps of clothing and figure hugging trousers that pass for daily wear. Most working women now wear the imported European skirt or trouser suit. Some young men from age 15-22 still fancy the eternal American 'hip life look' with baggy shorts, trousers and gym shoes, wearing earrings and dreadlocks or braided hair. This is the 'look' of many young Ghanaians (a lot of whom belong to the universal non-descript category of Ghanaians discussed in Chapter Four).

It is therefore amazing to note that in spite of insufficient enthusiasm from Government concerning the patronage of Ghanaian fabrics and costumes, and the proliferation of imported European and American clothes on the local market, most Ghanaians have still managed to retain various aspects of Ghanaian culture in their costume. This is usually reserved for seminars and workshops, graduation ceremonies, weddings, church services and other formal occasions internally and externally. These are also expressed in the use of the local batik and tie dye and printed fabric, as well as



Plate5:25
Col. Baidoo (former Ashanti Regional Commissioner) attends a festival at *Asanteman* in a military attire.



Plate5:26
Brigadier Mensah Woode in a military uniform, receives the address from *Togbe Adladza* at the *Hogbetsotso* festival

(Pictures purchased from Information Services Department).



Plate5:27
Head of State Lt. Jerry Rawlings attends the Golden Jubilee celebration of *Asanteman* (1985 in Kumasi) with his colleagues in military uniforms.
(Captured from the film *Asante, the latent Kingdom*)

woven and printed *Kente* and *Adinkra* cloth for the making of men's shirts and jackets as earlier mentioned, slit and modern *kaba* styles for women *et cetera* that are used for formal, informal and wears (see Plates 5:50-5:51).

In fact it has been observed with much interest that there is a conscious effort at developing a bold fashion statement with the *Kente* and *Adinkra* cloths. As mentioned earlier in Chapter One, there are amazing new woven *Kente* cloths which have merged patterns and colour schemes of both Bonwere and Agotime Kpetoe *Kente* and resulted in the evolution of new patterns and colour schemes which interestingly still manage to retain the essence of *Kente* (see Plates 5:52-5:57). Secondly, since Akosombo Textiles limited started the print version of the *Kente* cloths, (in very interesting colour combinations), it has become more accessible to a larger portion of the Ghanaian society. Marriage ceremonies, members of various choral groups have *kente* costumes as part of their wardrobes or accents of this in their uniforms. To top it all, the Ghana fiftieth anniversary cloth was designed mainly with *Adinkra* symbols and *Kente* patterns which have re-established them as symbols of Ghanaian identity.

From the observations made on the dress code of our presidents and their officials since independence and its attendant influence on the Ghanaian look, it has become evident that the *Asante Kente*, the *Adinkra* cloths and the Smock have become symbols of Ghanaian cultural identity internally and externally. The issue at stake is how to creatively and skilfully transpose this look into the characters on our screens.

5.4 The Ghanaian look and the film industry.

From the discussion so far, it has become obvious through the various political regimes that Ghanaians have still managed to maintain some tenets of their cultural traditions in their costumes as and when necessary. Currently, Ghanaians are very proud of and equally quick at showing off their cultural identity at both local and international functions. The problem though is that the filmmakers have largely failed to transpose this aspect of the Ghanaian identity into characterisation and costuming for the film and television screens.

Some filmmakers have argued that the pioneering Ghanaian films had the Ghanaian identity. According to Ms Kuntoh (a colleague filmmaker and lecturer at the National Film and Television Institute), independent filmmakers like Kwaw Ansah with his *Love Brewed in the African Pot*(1981) and *Heritage Africa*(1988) clearly established a Ghanaian identity with not only the look of the characters but the entire look and sound of the two feature films. As explicitly stated in the review of the two films in Chapter Two, the audiences who watched the films were in no doubt about their Ghanaian identity. In fact most of the non-Ghanaian Africans, who were at the Premiere, could identify with the films and were proud to be associated with them. Ms Kuntoh further states that even some films that were co-produced with German film companies like *Juju* (1986) and *The Road to Kukurantumi* (1983) had accents of Ghanaian culture which gave them a Ghanaian identity. According to her, the Ghanaian film lost its identity not necessarily with the advent of video technology, but rather with the proliferation of video features in the mid 1980's by non-professional filmmakers. The second reason she



Plate 5:28



Plate 5:29

Mr Edward Akuffo Addo (the ex-ceremonial President, in the picture above, looking very “English”) and Dr K.A Busia (the Prime Minister, in the picture below, dressed in *Kente* and tunic) arriving at the inauguration of the Second Republic of Ghana. Note their costumes.

(Pictures purchased from the Information Services Dept)



Plate 5:30

Dr Hilla Liman (President of the third Republic) at the inauguration of the Third Republic of Ghana.

(Pictures purchased from the Information Services Dept.

assigns for the great loss of identity of the Ghanaian film is the absence of an academic course in African cinema which would have afforded student filmmakers the chance to study films made by Africans, for a more balanced perception (Personal communication). Much as the reasons stated by Miss Kuntoh are true, they actually reflect the effect of fundamental issues that have to do with the inception and operation of the erstwhile Ghana Film Industry and the general perception of the trainers at the National Film and Television Institute as well as filmmakers who were trained at the Institute.

Manthia Diawara (1992) (a renowned film scholar) presents a very comprehensive background study to the dilemma of the identity crisis of the Ghanaian film in his discussion on the culture and politics of African cinema. In Diawara's survey of Black African cinema, he suggests three main reasons for the state of affairs in the Anglophone African film industry. According to him, British colonialism was "strictly business and never succeeded or tried assimilation, which was linked to French economic colonialism."

Secondly, film was not a priority of developing African countries. The Anglophone countries directed their energies towards more pressing problems. Also, just like their former British authority, "they were more pragmatic and practical...accepting few documentaries ...with reality e.g. hard facts, and probably shunning fiction" He finally observes that the Anglophone Africans have not been exposed to film culture. In other words, the French embassies had *cinemathèque* in their colonies where people could watch and discuss films - a situation the British were obviously not interested in.

Diawara again suggests the just mentioned observations as the very reasons that account for the malnourished state of the film industry in Ghana - a country that inherited a film unit with a tradition for making mainly a narrative style of fiction and short documentaries. Examples of these were *Jaguar* (1957) (highlife), *The Boy Kumasenu* (1952) (city life), *Freedom for Ghana* (1957). After independence in 1957, Kwame Nkrumah, (the first president of Ghana) nationalised film production and built the most sophisticated infrastructure of film production in Africa, including editing studios, 16mm and 35mm processing laboratories. Diawara (1992) sums it up by stating that “with GFIC alone, Ghana is better equipped than all other West African states; and is capable of turning out more than twelve *features* a year” During Nkrumah’s regime from 1957-1966, foreign directors utilised these facilities to make several newsreel documentaries and propaganda films in the Ghana Film Industry Corporation studios. With such facilities, it is rather unfortunate that succeeding Ghanaian directors who came to work at the industry could hardly make any impact. Diawara described the state of the industry, till 1966, in the following words:

According to the foremost authority on African film, Paulin S. Vieyra, when Aryeetey took it over, the Ghana Film Industry Corporation had ‘equipment capable of completing a dozen feature films a year’... Aryeetey himself boasted, ‘In Ghana we possess the best cinematographic infrastructure in tropical Africa’. The Ghana film industry could also draw upon the expertise of Ghanaian technicians trained in Accra and London, and there were already ten Ghanaian film directors. Despite this potential technical reservoir, Ghana has produced only twenty since 1966, out of which fewer than ten are features



Plate5:31
A lady executive at work, dressed in a slit and a *kaba* with large puffed sleeves and a headgear.
(Picture from Researcher's Library).



Plate5:31b
Lady in an African print slit and a *kaba* with a *Kente* stole over her shoulder and a headgear at a workshop in Accra.
(Picture from NAFTI).



Plate5:32
Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings dressed in a slit and a *kaba* in African print with huge sleeves and the ever present *Kente* strip.



Plate5:33
Ghanaian ladies on a trip to Malaysia. They maintain a Ghanaian identity in their hairstyle, slits and *kabas* in African prints and *Kente* stoles.

(Pictures are from the Researcher's Library).

Unfortunately the situation has not changed in any appreciable way for the better. Unlike the Francophone African countries whose governments' policies encourage and sponsor film productions, the case in Ghana is different. Succeeding governments to date do not seem to have shifted from the function of film established during the Nkrumah regime. There have been one or two breakthroughs with King Ampaw's *Juju* (1986), *Kukurantumi* (1983) and *African Timber*; (1989) but these were co-produced with Germans and were still slanted toward the European's perception of Africans.

The only true independent effort in Ghanaian film making has been pioneered by Kwaw Ansah, with his *Love brewed in the African pot* (1981) and *Heritage Africa* (1988) both of which were shot on *celluloid*. These were productions funded wholly by Ghanaians, shot by ninety percent Ghanaians with mostly Ghanaian equipment and tailored for the Ghanaian and African cinema going public. In fact his work is one of a kind in African cinema and certainly the only film maker in Ghana who has absolute control over the look and sound of his work and who truly has produced a "Ghanaian film" that has been acclaimed internationally.

It is very interesting and rather paradoxical to realise that those West African countries such as Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso *et cetera* who were "culturally assimilated" by the French should end up creating 'African characters' on their screen, and yet those who were supposedly only colonised economically could not have the power of imagination to do so as the Ghanaian case reveals.

It is also obvious from the works of creative Film Directors such as Ousmane Sembene, Idrissa Ouedraogo, Souleman Cissé and Sheik Omar Sissoko *et cetera* that while the Francophone Africans were sponsored to film schools in France to study the

Art of filmmaking and specifically film directing, the Ghanaians were mostly trained expertly in the technique of filmmaking and Television production (in Britain, Canada, Polland *et cetera*) with more emphasis on documentary and newsreel probably with the aim of creating a reservoir of expertise in film and television production for any foreign filmmaker or TV Producer who may want to produce a film in Africa. It has become apparent (from twenty years in professional practice) that in spite of the sub-standard filmmaking by non professional Producers and Directors, Ghana has a fine crop of professional film crew who can and do work with the fussiest film producers and directors in the world and yet find it difficult to produce their own “Ghanaian” feature films. The irony is that some of these very technicians who were trained by the British were further fine-tuned by the German Friederich Ebert Foundation as technical support for the Television component of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation. These were the core of trainers who started film and TV training at the National film and Television Institute in Ghana.

From twenty years’ observation of the Film and TV industry and trainers, it seems three schools of thought have emerged concerning the dilemma of characterisation for filmmaking in Ghana. On the one hand, there is what constitutes the founding members and early professionals of film and television training and industry in Ghana. These are professionals whose perceptions have been shaped and moulded in European and American film making philosophies and techniques. Unfortunately they also happen to be among the privileged generation of Ghanaians who had been brought up with the appropriate cultural values which they unconsciously traded off through their film training process.



Plate 5:34
A local tie dye version of Nkrumah's communist suit.



Plate5:35
A contemporary short-sleeved Batik shirt



Plate5:36
A contemporary long-sleeved Batik shirt



Plate5:37
A Short sleeved Batik shirt buttoned through.



Plate5:38
A Safari jacket made from fabric with Adinkra designs.



Plate5:39
A Tie dyed short sleeved, round neck tunic.

(Photographs taken by Researcher).

Currently, they are in their mid-sixties to mid-seventies. These are the teachers who shaped the perception of the current generation of filmmakers.

On the other hand there is the new school that constitutes a younger generation of free thinkers who seemingly have no cultural identity – these are professionals who have been trained in the universal film making technique and philosophy, without any conscious African or Ghanaian cultural orientation. Consequently they are caught in a web. Whilst they have inherited the technique of film making, they lack the necessary materials such as the cultural background needed, to shape the new mould, that is, to create Ghanaian characters for their stories. Unfortunately these filmmakers, who are currently in their early 30s to 50s, have been constantly bombarded with the Hollywood type of characters on their film and television screens since their teenage period. They are the students of the ‘founding professionals’. It may seem that this generation has been faithfully and rather unconsciously disciplined by the old school members (their mentors and trainers) who seem rather baffled by the result of their faithful handiwork. Most of the film directors among this generation are in the category of the universal nondescript character (described in Chapter Four) who has no cultural identity.

In between these two, is the third school of thought that believes that the audio visual medium is the “in thing” and they must therefore make money out of it by any means. These are the non-professional film makers, who are strictly businessmen with a profit margin as their only goal. These non-professional “filmmakers” are the main producers and directors of what we may see on the film screen as Ghanaian video features currently.

Some of these are people who were associated with professional filmmakers on two or three productions out of which they believed they had gained enough experience, knowledge and skill to start producing and directing their own films. With the influx of digital technology, the video camera has become very accessible to people who unfortunately believe that ownership of the camera and a computer automatically makes one a filmmaker. They took the Ghanaian screens by storm with the advent of video technology in Ghana from the late 1980's till the year 2000 when the more aggressive Nigerian businessmen with their equally more entertaining Nigerian movies flooded them off the screen.

The Nigerian films have stayed this long on our screens – not necessarily because of any technical finesse (which is sadly lacking in their productions) – but rather that most Ghanaians can identify with the stories which are basically African experiences, and specifically with the characters, due to the aspects of Nigerian culture that are retained in the costuming of the characters, their mannerism and language on the screen, in spite of the theatrical melodrama approach to their film making.

Currently there is an attempt of some sort by these non-professional video producers to produce a Ghanaian look on the screen by costuming all the characters in bright *kente* cloths as if every one in the chief's palace were at a grand durbar or ceremony. This is what is portrayed in the video production *Abebrese* that was recently shown on the local TV screen. Due to lack of knowledge, creativity and the skill in costuming the characters appropriately, the effect on the screen could be likened to the work of an untutored street artist as opposed to the professional artist's work.



Plate5:40
 Former President Rawlings (who is an Ewe) wears a *Kente* cloth (Asante weave and colour combination) with a green tunic for the Fourth Republic Swearing-in Ceremony.



Plate5:41
 Former Vice President Prof. Atta Mills (a Fante) wears a white tunic for the 1996 Swearing-in Ceremony. Former President Rawlings looks on in his yellow tunic.



Plate5:43
 Ex-President Rawlings dressed in a version of the three piece *Agbada* with *kente* accents during the Clintons' visit in 1998.



Plate5:42
 Ex-President Rawlings at the durbar grounds of the *Addae Kesse* festival in 1995, dressed for the occasion in Asante *Kente* without the tunic.



Plate5:44
 Ex-President Rawlings in a Smock with a long-sleeved shirt and a tie with ex- President Bill Clinton and their wives in *Kente*.



(Pictures purchased from the Information Services Department).

It is on this premise that the discussion in this chapter calls attention to the fact that film makers need to take a second look at the way we dress as Ghanaians. There is the need to focus on the Ghanaian look in the informal and occasional wears, in order to pick some of the unique developments in the modern design and use of *Kente*, *Adinkra* and the smock, that could be a further inspiration for costuming and characterisation to achieve a ‘Ghanaian look’ on the film and TV screens.

5.5 Summary of Discussion.

It has become quite evident from the discussion that in spite of the influence of various political eras (from the pre colonial era to date) on the look of the Ghanaian, there has been an effort to maintain a cultural identity which is proudly shown off in various modern versions of the costumes of both men and women whenever possible.

It is also very obvious that *Kente*, *Adinkra*, and the traditional smock have been developed with very creative modern variations in colour, style and fabric that have become very popular locally and internationally but none of these has been successfully transferred on to the film and television screen to establish a Ghanaian identity.

From the discussion, it was realised that the reasons that have been assigned for this failure are primarily, the focus of the British in setting up the film unit in Ghana. Unlike the French, the British were more interested in documenting the life of the people and producing news reels rather than instilling a film culture in the Ghanaians. They therefore ended up training people mostly in the craft of filmmaking rather than the Art of it so that foreign film directors and producers can have an excellent crew to work with.

Local Fabric versions of Nkrumah's communist suit.



Plate 5:45
A Batik version of a communist suit jacket as a formal wear.



Plate5:46
A short-sleeved political suit jacket (style) made from a screen-printed fabric with *Adinkra* designs.



Plate 5:47
A Jacket with a Chinese collar made from an African print. (Photographs taken by Researcher).

Secondly, most of the early craftsmen who were trained abroad somehow sacrificed their cultural orientation in exchange for the universal technique of filmmaking which they later passed on to their students when they became the pioneers of film training at the National Film and Television Institute.

It is evident that these students have become fine film and TV craftsmen without any cultural orientation that will help them to create the Ghanaian identity on the screen. Unfortunately they have more or less been “muscle” off the scene by the Ghanaian non-professional filmmakers and their even more aggressive Nigerian counterparts who seem to have found a hungry Ghanaian audience who identify with the “look” of the Nigerian characters in spite of some technical flaws such as bad sound recording, discontinuity, and excessive use of visual effects in their film.

The final reason assigned for the failure to create an identity for the Ghanaian film is the lack of orientation or a course module in African Cinema. This would give film students the chance to study the work of African filmmakers in order to have a balanced perception.

The discussion finally calls the attention of filmmakers to focus on the modern developments of the traditional costumes as prevails in Ghanaian current fashion trends in clothing for men and women as a possible premise for Costume Design and characterisation for filmmaking.



Plate5:48
President Kufuor dressed in a *Kente* cloth the (Asante style)
at his inauguration in 2001.



Plate5:49
President Kufuor dressed in a *Kente* cloth (the Asante style)
at his inauguration in 2005.
(Pictures from Ovation Magazine)

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This project started off with the problem statement that the Ghanaian film has currently lost its identity and identified the lack of an established cultural identity in costuming of characters as a major contributing factor to the problem. In search of a possible solution, Asante traditional costumes were proposed as relevant cultural symbols for film making in Ghana. This was based on the assumptions that Asante culture is representative of Ghanaian culture; that popular Asante traditional costumes are recognised as Ghanaian cultural symbols and therefore the creation and establishment of a Ghanaian cultural identity in filmmaking would make a bold cultural and political statement which would project Ghana on the world scene and yield lots of benefits.

In respect of this, the thesis has discussed what constitutes Asante traditional costumes and has identified popular Asante traditional costumes. It has also established the reasons for similarities and differences between the symbolism of Asante traditional costumes and those of the other Ghanaian cultures. The thesis has critically analysed the influence of Asante traditional costumes on the look or national identity of the Ghanaian and has assessed their level of relevance in creating a cultural identity for characters in filmmaking. It has in addition, explored the cultural orientation of Ghanaian filmmakers and examined their perceptions on the issue of representation and cultural identity in filmmaking.

After investigating the issues raised above, the thesis has brought out some interesting revelations about Ghanaian cultural symbolism in clothing and its

representation in real life on one hand and in filmmaking on the other hand. Consequently, the study has concluded that since the cultural symbols that have been associated with Asantes were acquired through assimilation from other Ghanaian sub-cultures into a synthesis, that synthesis is largely representative of Ghanaian culture, of which Asantes have been faithful custodians to date; that the look or national identity of a Ghanaian has been largely influenced by Asante traditional costumes since the advent of Ghana's independence in 1957, when Dr Kwame Nkrumah (the first President of Ghana) established a Ghanaian cultural identity through his dress code (Asante *Kente* and the tunic). It is deduced from the study that in spite of the subsequent military regimes, almost all the civilian leaders have at least kept the tradition of wearing *Kente* at their inaugural ceremonies and that despite the popularity of the local fabrics and the African print during the Rawlings era, the *Kente* and *Adinkra* accents were ever present as Ghanaian identity symbols which have not only survived but developed and improved in various dimensions till now.

The study has also concluded that *Kente* and *Adinkra* are recognised Ghanaian cultural symbols locally and internationally and for that matter, their relevance for filmmaking in contemporary times cannot be underestimated, especially now. It is evident that the recent projection of Ghana on the world scene through the performance of the national football team (the Black Stars) in the 2006 edition of the World Cup has stirred up a renewed sense of nationalism that has seen most Ghanaians yearning to own and identify with Ghanaian national / cultural symbols and icons. The most popular of these apart from the national flag, has been the *Kente* and *Adinkra* cloths which recently culminated in an explosion of unimaginable designs and colour combinations at the

Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Independence of Ghana on the 6th of March 2007(see Plate 5:56). These conclusions about the culture of Asante being representative of Ghanaian culture; that *Kente* and *Adinkra* have been and are recognised Ghanaian cultural symbols, coupled with the statistical data on the facing page, validate the hypothesis of the study which states that “Asante traditional costumes are relevant as cultural symbols for filmmaking in Ghana”.

The conclusions also validate the January 2007 results of interviews conducted by the researcher which revealed that Ghanaians regard in (order of preference) *Kente*, *Adinkra* and the Northern smock as cultural symbols that represent national identity. As seen in Table 1, all the three hundred and fifty people interviewed, concurred with the fact that *Kente* is a symbol of Ghanaian cultural identity. Again as the Table depicts, those who perceive *Kente* as a Ghanaian cultural symbol are two hundred and twenty-five members of staff and students of NAFTI, forty-five film professionals, ten video producers and non-professional filmmakers. Others interviewed included twenty elderly people, ten university graduates, ten university students, ten Artisans and twenty junior and senior secondary school students from the Researcher’s church. As the Table shows, two hundred and fifty of the total number of respondents, agree that *Kente* and *Adinkra* are recognised Ghanaian cultural symbols. A further two hundred and ten of the respondents chose *Kente*, *Adinkra* and the Northern smock (in order of preference) as Ghanaian cultural symbols.

The interesting point is that the current clothes fashion trend in the country, especially since the 6th of March 2007, corresponds with the results of the interview just described and these further validate the hypothesis of the study. It is obvious that at the

height of the influx of foreign fabrics on the local market, *Kente* and *Adinkra* fabrics have overwhelmingly taken over the clothes fashion in the country. The young and not so young men, women, girls and boys have found appropriate colour schemes in the current explosion of the printed fabrics and are patronising them in contemporary designs for all purposes.

Apart from these conclusions stated above, the comparative analysis of the symbolism of Asante traditional costumes and those of the other Ghanaian cultures, brought out the minute but vital details of similarities and differences in colour, style and manner of wearing traditional costumes that the filmmaker needs to know in characterisation and the representation of cultural nuances on the screen to communicate appropriate messages to the target audience.

Findings

The study has revealed that in most Ghanaian and African films, the characterisation ceases to be authentic whenever the characters move from the rural to the urban/city setting. Most of the characters lose their identity and become nondescript (which reflects the identity and cultural orientation of most filmmakers). This means that most of the current Ghanaian filmmakers are not culturally conscious and therefore find it difficult to transpose images of the contemporary Ghanaian to reflect the cultural identity in the look of the characters on the film screen. This also validates the results of the interview conducted by the researcher (in Chapter Four) which explores the perception of filmmakers and film students concerning cultural identity and representation in film, as well as their cultural orientation. As shown in the statistical data in Table 2, a total

TABLE 1.

STATISTICAL DATA FOR VERIFYING WHETHER KENTE AND ADINKRA
ARE RECOGNISED GHANAIAAN CULTURAL SYMBOLS.

The social Statuses of the People interviewed	Number of Number of Those interviewed	Perception of <i>Kente</i> as a Recognised Ghanaian Cultural symbol	Perception of <i>Kente</i> & <i>Adinkra</i> as Recognised Ghanaian Cultural symbols	Perception of <i>Kente</i> , <i>Adinkra</i> & <i>Smock</i> as Recognised Ghanaian Cultural symbols	Perception of <i>Kente</i> , <i>Adinkra</i> , <i>Smock</i> & tie dye as Recognised Ghanaian Cultural symbols
NAFTI staff and students	225	225	164	133	67
Film Professionals	45	45	35	26	-
Video Producers & Non professional filmmakers	10	10	7	5	3
Elderly People	20	20	13	10	-
University Graduates	10	10	6	5	6
Artisans	10	10	7	7	6
University Students	10	10	6	7	6
Students from Secondary Schools	20	20	12	18	17
Total	350	350	250	210	105
Percentage	100%	100%	80%	70%	30%

number of two hundred and seventy respondents were interviewed as to who a Ghanaian is. They comprised one hundred and fifteen film students, one hundred and ten film lecturers and staff of NAFTI, forty-five film professionals from the industry and ten video Producers and non-professional filmmakers. The results were very insightful. One hundred and sixty-two out of the total number of respondents answered the question with the following break down. Twenty-seven people gave a purely legal definition of geographical boundaries and ancestry, fifty-four responded clinically; their words did not carry any personal conviction, eighty-one answered thoughtfully and meaningfully including the cultural orientation of the individual. Thirty level 100 students out of the outstanding one hundred and eight respondents, refused to return their responses without any reasons or excuses. Seventy-eight are yet to respond with promises and excuses.

The study has therefore concluded that out of the three categories of Ghanaians identified in Chapter Five, seventy percent of Ghanaian filmmakers are in the category of the universal non-descript character (the Global citizen who resides in Ghana). As a result, the characters in their films are unconsciously costumed and set in any available Western European and American clothing and environment found in the city, which only continues to promote the colonial image and life style. In reality, such Ghanaian and African filmmakers are telling their audiences that they can only be like Europeans and Americans in the city and not themselves: in effect, the only way the Ghanaian or African can develop is to look, eat, speak and act like the European and American.

On the contrary, the study reveals that the Ghanaian has travelled far beyond this point in real life. When a people who have been colonised are able to replace the coloniser's fabric with their own traditional fabrics and still able to design and wear

TABLE 2.

STATISTICAL DATA FOR VERIFYING THE IDENTITY OF A GHANAIAIAN

The social Statuses of the People interviewed	Number of Those interviewed	Meaningful & thoughtful Response	Legal Definition	Clinical Response	No Response (with excuses)	No Response (without excuses)
NAFTI Students	115	19	21	10	25	30
NAFTI teaching & non-teaching staff	110	45	19	8	38	-
Film Professionals	45	15	10	7	13	-
Video Producers & Non-professional filmmakers	10	2	5	2	1	-
Total	270	81	54	27	78	30
Percentage	100%	30%	20%	10%	28.9%	11.1%

clothes in the Western European or American fashion, they have come of age. They have become “Ghanaian world citizens” in look (to begin with).

For that matter, the study has concluded that it is the responsibility of the filmmaker to further this process by providing culturally relevant stories with contemporary relevance which will create Ghanaian heroes who achieve excellence through honest and smart work. This will lift the audience from the level of mediocrity to that of high achievement.

Currently the colour combinations and designs of *Kente* and *Adinkra* have travelled beyond any culture be it Asante or Ewe. They reflect how far the Ghanaian has developed in creativity and artistry. In fact the *Kente* and *Adinkra* designs currently in vogue also reflect how far Ghanaians have travelled in unity and diversity. They truly are Ghanaian cultural symbols which can be used by the film maker through Art Direction and specifically costume design in creating characters that will help establish a Ghanaian cultural identity in filmmaking which will also sell the Ghanaian image on the world scene. It is on this premise that the following visuals are recommend as a point of departure for costume design for a Ghanaian look in various situations for various characters.

In April 2000, the researcher initiated a project of developing textile designs from the traditional *Adinkra* symbols for clothing design for both formal wear and smart casual wear to suit all events and occasions. The project is also a possible solution to the issue of costuming, cultural identity and representation for film. The recommendations ahead, include some samples of her original designs that can be used as costumes for various characters in Ghanaian and African filmmaking.

Recommendations

For the purpose of filmmaking, the research recommends the long-sleeved shirt with stylised *Adinkra* designs in Plate 6:1 as costume for male characters in film to be worn for church service, weddings, formal academic events such as congregation, matriculation, evening outings, family gathering as an alternative to the western European and American suits.

The short-sleeved wine shirt with *Adinkra* motifs and khaki trousers in Plate 6:2 is suggested as costume to characterise culturally conscious scholars in academia who wish to portray their contemporary Ghanaian identity.

The *caftan* (loose long dress) in Plate 6:3 can be used for costuming of a character playing the role of a female executive from age 30 – 60 years at home or on a casual visit to a family member or friend's house or to an informal meeting or function. On the other hand when the actress wears a pair of high heeled shoes with the same dress she can achieve a smart casual look for the role of an executive at work, at a cocktail party, church service or any such function in a film.

With high heeled shoes to match, the lady in the contemporary slit and *kaba* with *Adinkra* motifs in Plate 6:4 can be cast in a film to play the role of a lady executive on her way to work. This costume is an alternative to the western European skirt suit and can be used as formal wear in films.

In this costume (Plate 6:5a), the actress could play the character of an executive secretary at work in contemporary *kente* slit and *kaba*. This presents an alternative to the western skirt /trouser suit as well as the skirt and blouse usually portrayed by such characters on the screen.

Recommended look for Ghanaian identity in characterisation for filmmaking

Contemporary wear with *Adinkra* accents for office and informal occasions.
Researcher's original textile designs



Plate 6:1



Plate 6:2



Plate 6:3



Plate 6:4

(Photographs taken by the Researcher)

The long and short sleeved black and white shirts with *kente* design can be used as costumes for characters and film such as self employed business executives and also for functions or events such as business lunch, romantic outing, outdoorings, funerals and office parties.

The former Vice President's costume with *kente* accents in plate 6:7 and the fashionable *kente* dresses of the two young ladies in plate 6:8 can be used as costumes for both male and female characters in scenes that portray formal functions such as weddings, graduation ceremonies, state functions and church services.

Plates 6:9 and 6:10 depict contemporary linen shirts with *adinkra* accent that can be used by make characters in a film to play the role of young up and coming executives in corporate settings attending formal business meetings, weddings graduation ceremonies and church services.

These are recommended alternative costumes that can replace the western European and American suites used as office and formal wear on the film and television screens. The creative use of these costumes for characters on the screen will create and re-enforce the awareness of a contemporary Ghanaian cultural identity that will bring economic benefits to the Ghanaian clothing, textile and fashion industries.

Contemporary wear made from Akosombo Textiles *Kente* motif prints for office and informal occasions.



Plate 6:5a



Plate 6:5b



Plate 6:6

(Photographs taken by the Researcher)

Contemporary wear with *Adinkra* and *Kente* accents for formal occasions.



Plate 6:7



Plate 6:8

(Pictures from Ovation Magazine)



Plate 6:9



Plate 6:10

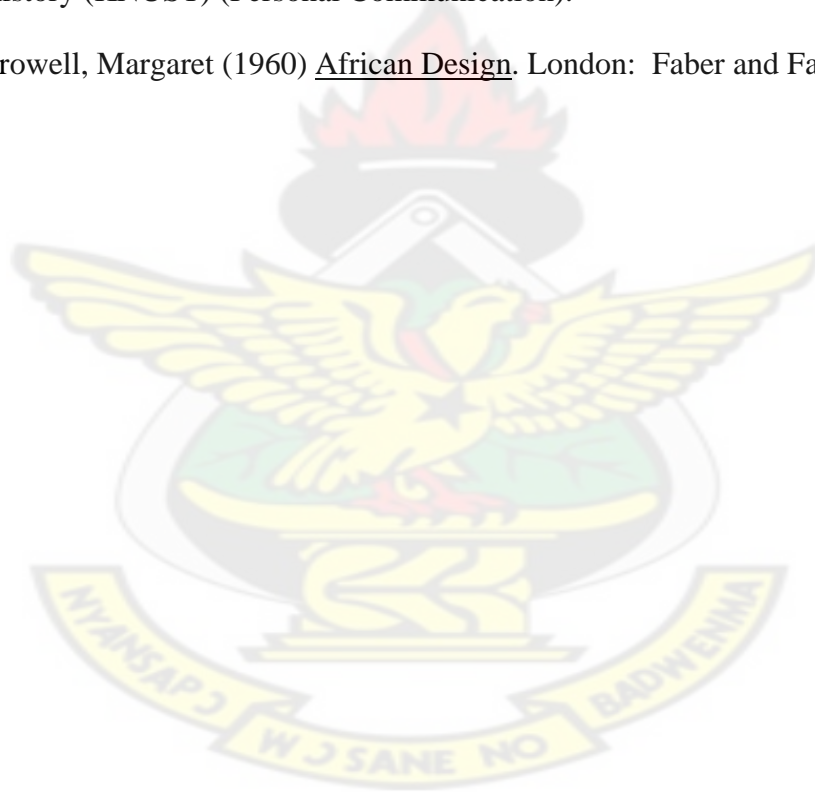
(Photographs taken by the Researcher)

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Appendix A

Sample of interview questions

Who is an Asante?

How do you perceive Asantes?

What do colours symbolise in Asante traditional culture?

What do colours symbolise in Ghanaian traditional culture?

Why are the Ghanaian films not patronised?

Why has the Nigerian film taken over the Ghanaian screens?

What constitutes a Ghanaian film?

Who is a Ghanaian?

What constitutes the look and sound of a Ghanaian film?

What constitutes Asante traditional costumes?

How do you identify a Ghanaian?

What constitutes Ghanaian cultural symbols?

What are some of the universally acknowledged Ghanaian symbols?

Appendix B



Plate 4:36 Kete dancers at function at the Cultural Centre in Kumasi, dancing barefooted and without any jewellery. The cloth is tied at the male dancer's waist and just above the breast for the female dancer (Picture purchased from the Kumasi Cultural Centre.)



Plate 4:37a

Adowa dancers brightly and gorgeously dressed with and without the traditional slippers.



Plates 4:37b (Pictures by courtesy of Nana Obiri Yeboah)



Plate4:38

Nana Oduro Numapau (*Esumejahene*) and his colleague paramount chiefs in full regalia approach the *Asantehene's* guard of honour to pay homage to *Otumfuo* Opoku Ware II at the durbar grounds during the 1995 *Akwasiadae Kɛsɛɛ* celebrations. Only the two chiefs have their cloth across the shoulder. The sword bearers and the umbrella carriers all have their cloth below the chest.



Plate4:39

Otumfuo Opoku Ware II arrives at the durbar grounds. Apart from him, virtually no one wears their cloth across the shoulder in the picture above. Most of the men around him are attendants. (Pictures purchased from Information Services Dept. Accra)



Plate 4:40

Togbe Adeladza presenting his address to Brig. Mensah Wood. The *Awoemefia* of Anlo traditional area, wears cloth with tunic and the (*togbenya*) hat. (Picture purchased Information Services Dept. Accra



Plate4:41

Some weaves and colours of Ewe *Kente* cloths from Agotime Kpetoe
(Pictures from **Agotime *Kente* Festival 2005** online).



Plate 4:42

Some local fabric designs (Batik, tie dye and *kente* print) made into casual and informal wears



Plate 5:50

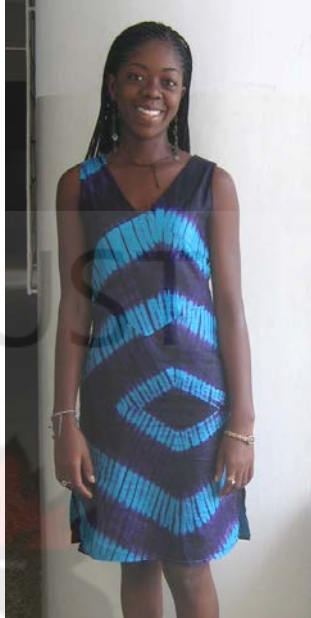


Plate 5:50a



Plate5:50b



Plate5:50c

(Photographs taken by Researcher)

An African print, a Kente print and an Adinkra print made into informal and formal wears.



Plate5:51



Plate5:51a



Plate5:51b

(Photographs taken by Researcher)

Woven and printed *Kente* designed in ladies' contemporary fashions, and mens' dress shirts with *Adrinkra* accents for occasional wears (wedding ceremony).



Plate5:52



Plate5:52a

(Pictures from Ovation Magazine)

The contemporary *Kente* : A merging of Asante and Ewe *Kente* patterns and colour combinations.



Plate5:53
Mrs Baaba Asoma Banda



Plate5:53a



Plate5:53b
Mrs Gifty Afenyi Dadzie
(Member of Council of State)



Plate5:53c
Ms Anne Sekyi

Ladies dressed in contemporary *Kente* designs
at the 2005 inauguration of the Fourth Republic

(Pictures from Ovation Magazine)



Plate5:54



Plate5:54a

Ladies in various *Kente* designs at the Fourth Republic inauguration (left& right) and at a marriage Ceremony (below).



Plate 5:54b

Justice Joyce Branford-Addo (extreme left) seated with family members at the marriage ceremony of her daughter Adoley who is seated on extreme right of picture.

(Pictures from Ovation Magazine)



Plate 5:55

Some members of President Kufuor's family (above & below) in various *Kente* designs at the Fourth Republic Inauguration in January 2005.



Plate 5:55a

(Pictures from Ovation Magazine)



Plate 5:56
Mrs Gladys Asmah and Dr Kwame
Addo Kuffuor



Plate 5:56a
Mr S. K. Bofo and Hon. Hackman
Owusu Agemang

Ministers of state dressed in modern *Kente* at the Fourth Republic inauguration in 2005 and at the Golden Jubilee celebration of Ghana's independence on 6th March 2007.



Plate 5:56b
Ms. Joyce Aryee



Plate 5:56c
Dr and Mrs Kwame Addo Kuffuor

(Pictures from Ovation Magazine)



Plate 5:57

Chiefs and Queen mothers at Ghana @50 celebrations.

Ministers of state and traditional leaders dressed in modern *Kente* and at the Golden Jubilee celebration of Ghana's independence on 6th March, 2007.



Plate 5:57a
Mr Kwamena Bartels



Plate 5:57b
Ms Gloria Akuffo dressed
in gold & white kente



Plate 5:57c
Hon. Frema Opare (far right)

(Pictures from Ovation Magazine)

Glossary

Asante Kente	bright, and multi coloured strip woven cloth with horizontal and vertical motifs which is woven in the Asante region of Ghana.
Ahenema (Twi)	beautifully hand crafted leather slippers originally worn by chiefs and queen mothers in the Asante region of Ghana.
Akwasidae	festival of the Asantes.
Otumfuo	the title of the Asantehene- meaning the almighty.
Adae Kɛsee	the major Asante festival that is celebrated every five years.
Fante	the coastal Akan ethnic group that reside in the central region of Ghana
Fanteland	the stretch of land occupied by the Fantes.
Asanteman	the geographical and cultural boundaries of the Asantes of Ghana
Mossis	one of the ethnic groups from the northern region of Ghana.
Dinsinkran (Twi)	a traditional shorn and dyed hairstyle used by Asante royals in mourning. This is believed to have originated from the defeat suffered by the Asantes at the Katamanso battle- hence the actual word - gyesɛ Nkrãn (except the Gas) which was bastardised as dinsinkran.
Katamanso	a town in Accra north that was an old battle ground for the famous Katamanso war between the Asantes and the Gas and their allies.
Gas	the ethnic group in the Greater Accra region of Ghana.
Asantemanso	legendary place of origin of the Asantes.
Esumeja	legendary place of origin of the Asantes.

Denkyira	one of the Akan ethnic groups in the central region of Ghana.
Kumasi	a sub division of the then Asante Kingdom.
Dwaben	a sub division of the then Asante Kingdom.
Nsuta,	a sub division of the then Asante Kingdom.
Bekwai	a sub division of the then Asante Kingdom.
Mampong	a sub division of the then Asante Kingdom.
ɔsa nti fo (Fanti)	those who came together because of war.
Asoa antefo (Fanti)	the disobedient group.
fa atew won ho fo (Fanti)	the break away group.
Asantefo	those of the Asante ethnic group.
Batakarikɛsee	the traditional war dress with talismans worn by chiefs, chief warriors during festivals and also by the Asantehene during the installation ceremony.
dono drums	an axe shaped handheld drum often used for announcements traditionally.
Kpetoɛ	a town in the mid Volta region in Ghana.
Gagawuga (Ewe)	here is a mightier force, finer artistry or higher value.
Ewe	one of the languages of the Volta region of Ghana.
Toga	Roman word for the draped cloth used in ancient times which is still worn traditionally in West Africa and specifically Ghana
Chlamys	Greek word for the draped cloth as just described.
Dagombas	one of the ethnic groupings in northern Ghana.
Osikani bibini a ɔte Kwaeɛmu. (Twi)	a rich, black man who resides in the forest.

Kobene	brick red or russet coloured cloth worn by Asantes for funerals.
Kuntunkuni	dark brown cloth worn by Asantes for funerals and other traditionally formal occasions.
kordjan (Twi)	brilliant red cloth worn traditionally by royals and also by Asantes for funeral and other occasion.
brissi	jet black cloth worn by Asantes for funerals and installation ceremonies <i>et cetera</i> .
Awoemefia	title of the Paramount chief of the Anlo traditional area in Ghana.
Anlo	the Ewe speaking ethnic group found on the southeastern coast of Ghana.
Asere	one of the clans of the Ga speaking people of Greater Accra.
Ga Mashi	core of the Ga traditional area, situated in Accra central.
hiɲmèi tsuu sane (Ga)	pertaining to serious trouble.
Ga Dangme	the ethnic groups on the south eastern coast of Ghana from Accra to the estuary of the Volta river.
enibre (Twi)	pertaining to anger, seriousness or danger.
Bukom	a coastal suburb of Accra.
Chorkor	a coastal suburb of Accra-Ghana .
Akan	the largest ethnic (Kwa linguistic) group in Ghana
Akyem	one of the Akan speaking ethnic groups in the Eastern region of Ghana
Kwahu	one of the Akan speaking ethnic groups located on the highlands, sandwiched between the Asantes and the Akyems in the eastern region of Ghana.
kaba	the traditional blouse used by women in Ghana as part of the traditional costume (slit and kaba).

