

**SANKŬFA AND DRAMA: A STUDY OF ADINKRA AND AKAN CLAN  
SYMBOLS IN MODERN GHANAIAN PLAYS**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I, **Daniel Appiah-Adjei** solemnly declare that, this Thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in the published works, identified and duly acknowledged, is my personal original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

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## DEDICATION

*To My Family and those who are fighting for African cultural survival.*

*And*

*To “The towering Wawa Aba of Ghanaian Theatre” Professor Martin Okyere Owusu. I am extremely honored to be counted among your league of students*



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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to explore the use of traditional symbols, especially, the *Sankofa* Theory which means: *it is not forbidden to go into history to validate or reclaim the past*, in its entirety as a conceptual foundation which Ghanaians and other African artists have engaged in their creative representations. Most Ghanaian playwrights, in particular, during the colonial and post-colonial periods, are known to have extensively employed this concept as the main thrust of their creative expressions. Rhetorically, one wonders to what extent the narratives in *Adinkra* symbols of which *Sankofa* is canonical and Akan clan symbols (Totems) have been employed by Ghanaian playwrights. The plays used in this study include; 4 selected plays; *The Legend of Aku Sika* by Martin Owusu, in respect of the reclaiming of Ghanaian folktale as a valid resource for modern theatrical expression, *In the Chest of a Woman* by Efo Kodjo Mawugbe and *The Dilemma of a Ghost* by Ama Ata Aidoo, which espouse the dichotomies of modern and traditional Ghanaian societies and, *Edufa* by Efua Sutherland, a play adapted from the classical Greek play, *Alcestis* by Euripides, which reinforces the commonalities of world views of traditional or primeval societies, however, disparate. The method employed are one-on-one interviews on *Adinkra* and Akan Clan symbols, field notes, field letters, original play production (Death on Trial), essays and memory data. The study, therefore, is largely Qualitative (Content Analysis (CA), ethnographic and phenomenological). The methods are unique to this study as they provide a reflexive analysis document, complemented by recognition of symbolic events that emanate from Akan traditions. Findings from the study reveal several major thematic manifestations of physical objects, social norms and abstract ideas of the Akan traditions and cultural practices. The study also exposes the dramatic elements in the narratives in *Adinkra* and Akan Clan symbols. The final product is an amalgamation of academic and literary writing, profiles, pictorial representations of traditional symbols and narratives.

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## AN OVERVIEW

### **Chapter One: Introduction**

Chapter one introduces the study presented in this dissertation. It states the thesis, scope, objectives, significance, theoretical framework, conceptual framework, and techniques for the collation and analysis of the data.

### **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Chapter Two reviews related literature from related disciplines. The review was mainly based on available literature by some African and world scholars as well as playwrights. This is to support the current continental response to the challenges of finding what constitutes African Drama.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

Chapter Three outlines the methods used for the collation of data and analysis of data.

### **Chapter Four: Findings from the Research**

Chapter Four outlines the findings of the Research conducted. It involves the field research on Akan Clan symbols, Content Analysis of the four selected plays, the production of *Death on Trial* and other relevant findings.

### **Chapter Five: Analysis and Discussions of Study**

Chapter Five deals with the narratives of Adinkra and Akan Clan Symbols in Modern Ghanaian Plays selected.

### **Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations**

The chapter six is dedicated to a summary of the findings of this dissertation, including discoveries, contribution to knowledge and recommendations for contemporary application. The strongest recommendation is that contemporary drama in Ghana stands to gain a great deal of relevance if contemporary playwrights incorporate fundamental values and principles

embedded in our traditional heritage as espoused by the *Sankofa* Theory and, Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

The dialectics of *modernity* and *tradition* in expressing African thought and ideas has been a perennial subject in modern intellectual discourse in relation to African drama. The controversy as to whether the modern man should re-visit the past in order to inform life choices of the present has generated a lot of intellectual discussions in the academic and social circles. In view of this, and considering the pervasive nature of symbols in Ghanaian theatrical culture, the thesis looks at how material and non-material references to traditional symbols have been captured in the content of the selected Ghanaian plays. The philosophical undercurrents and stories around these symbols suggest that drama of various types can be derived from them, and can inspire new creative ideas. My search begins with the assumption that Adinkra symbols and Akan symbols are the main thrust of events in the four Ghanaian plays.

My experience with the *Kyerematen Playhouse*, the resident theatre company of the Centre for National Culture, Kumasi as the Artistic Director, afforded me the opportunity to direct plays by many Ghanaian and Nigerian playwrights as well as my own plays. The cultural resources at the centre, among other things, were an eye opener to the philosophical and intellectual worth of the Akan cosmology and philosophy. Ranging from the exposition to the forms and styles of Local theatre groups, such as *Anokye Players*, *Anokyekrom Concert Party*, *Owuo Mpo Suro* and *Ogyatanaa Drama Group* who used the Akan language in their productions, some indigenous groups, such as *Nwonkrɔ*, *Adowa*, *Ntwiss*, *Asaadua*,



*Kete*, *Adakam* and *traditional Adenkum groups and poets*, featured during the favourite cultural variety entertainment programme, called *Anokyekrom*<sup>1</sup>, were very inspiring.

As a budding artist, then, I was confronted with many questions on playwriting and play-making<sup>2</sup>. I wanted to know why Shakespeare's plays were so significant to the English people. Were they relevant because he placed his plays in the context of the European philosophies and traditions? Did the result of research and knowledge of the histories and environment inform the content of his plays? Or were his plays informed by universal human feelings and thoughts? Similarly, it was fascinating how these universal tendencies were captured in, *Sientie*,<sup>3</sup> an adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone* written in Akan by Owusu Ansah. In my new realization, many questions came up. Some were: What constitutes effective aesthetic communication in respect of plays? What makes a play so important to a people?

In response, there was the need to find out what gave the classical search on various modes of communication, in dramatic presentations. These symbolic communications serve as the promotion and preservation of our cultural heritage which need to reach the present and the future generations. The multiplicities of different levels of communication toward our traditional and cultural orientation seem to endorse what Dewey, (1934) said:

Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, rectifying, and expanding the heritage of values we have received that those that come after may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have received it. (Dewey 1934: 87)

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<sup>1</sup> The weekly cultural variety programme organized by the Cultural Centre. This programme featured traditional and contemporary groups from all over the country. It was abolished in 1992 by the Centre's new administration.

<sup>2</sup> Improvised plays referred to as *Bo wo tirimu ka*. (Imagine in your head and say it)

<sup>3</sup> *Sientie* is an adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*, translated into Twi Language by Mr. E. Owusu Ansah, former Ashanti Regional Minister in the 1970's.

John Dewey's words, when related to the central thesis, *Sankofa*, re-affirms Amu's *Yen ara Asaase ni*<sup>4</sup> (This land is our own) and a portion of the *National Pledge*;"...I promise to hold in high esteem, our heritage won for us through the blood and toils of our fathers..."<sup>5</sup>. These words provide an analogy to the Ghanaian cultural heritage and its transmission from generation to generation. Since playwriting has been known to preserve, transmit and enrich culture, it is not out of place for it to echo Dewey, Amu, Sarpong and Nketia so far as Ghanaian culture is concerned. Culture has been known as the bedrock of civilization and how can I, as a playwright contribute to the development of cultural education in Ghana? Kwesi Brew's *Remembrance* from his collection of poems entitled *Return of No Return And Other Poems* (1995), immediately comes to mind. He wrote:

I remember sometime in the twilight past  
 A sage say almost to himself:  
 Let the people remember  
 Let not their memory wilt  
 At their doorsteps at night  
 Like a flower plucked  
 For the delight of an absent lover  
 Let remembrance be a guide and  
 A constant partner  
 In their lives day and night,  
 For remembrance shall make them whole (Brew, 1995: 10)

Finding myself as a student and at the same time a lecturer at the University of Ghana, I paused and remembered what I had when I was working at the Centre for National Culture, Kumasi. The poem re-emphasised my idea of remembering the past which would teach me what to do in the present to project the newer generation into the future through this thesis.

The theory of remembrance empowers people to reflect on past memories whether good or bad depending on the circumstances. Remembrance seems synonymous to history which

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<sup>4</sup> A patriotic song composed by a Ghanaian ethnomusicologist, Dr Ephraim Amu (First Line)

<sup>5</sup> Ghanaian National Pledge (Line 8)

enjoins us to reflect on past issues to inform our thinking and attitudes. Kobina Sekyi therefore made no mistake when he said:

The people of the old days were wise indeed: if only we would follow the customs they left us a little more, and adopt the ways of other races a little less, we should be as healthy as they were... (Sekyi 1997: 87).

The compelling nature of remembrance, led me to some of the famous *Adinkra* and Akan Clan Symbols. Assessing their philosophical underpinnings, they seemed to pop up in all the plays, poems, music, novels and short stories encountered. The values of all those symbols in their different narratives and meanings began to reflect in my personal life and works. The overarching question that run through my mind as a dramatist was; “To what extent do Akan Symbolic Narratives have implications for Ghanaian Drama?” Pondering over the question for some time, two main ideas cropped up. The first was to explore whether dramatic elements could be derived from these symbols. There was also the need to see how drama on them have been created through their narratives. The second idea was to explore how these symbols have been applied in modern Ghanaian drama. This led to the selection of four Ghanaian plays namely, *Edufa*, by Efua T. Sutherland, *The Legend of Aku Sika*, by Martin O. Owusu, *In the Chest Of A Woman*, by Efo Kojo Mawugbe, and *Dilemma of a Ghost*, by Ama Ata Aidoo. Since these symbols emanate from the practices and traditions of the people, Nketiah was right in advising artists in Ghana by advocating: “Knowing the tradition, continuing the tradition, and creating within the tradition”.<sup>6</sup> Nketiah’s assertion of “knowing the tradition” seems to support my idea of retrieving what I had already observed and experienced and my willingness to share with other scholars.

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<sup>6</sup> A speech Professor Nketia gave when launching a book on Cultural Preservation written by Dr. Elias Asiamah at the Ministry of Information in Accra (2011)

Indeed, one of the *Adinkra* symbols that stood out in constant deliberations for further investigation was the *Sankɔfa* symbol which has the characteristics of embodying all its nominal values and general abstract philosophies of traditional symbols. *Sankɔfa* is a Ghanaian *Adinkra* symbol literally translating to “go back and take it”. Etymologically, *Sankɔfa* comes from the words “san” (return), “kɔ” (go), and “fa” (take). Metaphorically, it is generally interpreted to mean “it is not forbidden to go back and pick what is forgotten” (Se wo were firi na se wosan kɔfa a yenkyiri) in other words “in order to know one’s future, one must understand one’s past”. It is, therefore, not out of place when a researcher makes a move to explore what kind of traditional symbols a playwright has used in his or her plays, as well as ascertaining whether the symbols can be dramatic enough by searching for dramatic elements in their respective narratives.

Contemplating on the *Sankɔfa* phenomenon, I discovered that, *Sankɔfa* as a word is instructive enough. *San-kɔ-fa*, “you, go back and fetch it” This seems to instruct somebody to go back and reclaim something. Indeed, who should go back for it? Are we all prepared to retrieve what we have lost or forgotten? If the answer is yes, then, we all have the duty to search and reflect on the past, the present and the future. Grammatically, the word can be used in a past, a present and future tenses. For example: Mere san akɔ fa (I am going back to fetch it), M’asan akɔ fa (I have gone back for it), Me san akɔ fa e (I went back for it), Me san akɔ fa (I will go back for it). The determination of going back for something has some futuristic tendencies. This means that *Sankɔfa* goes beyond physical movement, it is psychological, spiritual, sociological, and historical. It is humanity. It is time trinity; yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Although, many *Adinkra* symbols have found their way into the vocabulary of universal symbols, perhaps, none is quite as elegant, or as well known as the *Sankɔfa* symbol. The image of the mythological bird with its head bent looking backward. Many writers and

scholars have interpreted and re-interpreted the *Sankofa* symbol in different ways. At times, it can symbolize the idea that, the past can help to guide the future, or the thought that, if a mistake has been made, or something is forgotten, the wrong can be righted, and that one can learn from experience.

Thinking broadly of the *Sankofa* symbol and reflecting on what Nketiah and some other cultural icons have said about it, one can deduce that new *knowledge* depends upon what already exists. Therefore, applying that which already exists for our contemporary use, may suggest that we have duly employed the concept of *Sankofa*.

Justifying my assertion that *Sankofa* as a theory or concept embodies all traditional elements, there seemed to be an indication that it goes beyond the symbol or the image. The artist might have been influenced by the word *Sankofa*, and chosen a bird to represent his thoughts. *Sankofa* can be anything other than a bird with an egg in the mouth which has its visual features facing backwards. My thoughts then, shifted to *playwriting*. “Can there be the *Sankofa* ideology in *playwriting* too? If there is, where can it be found? There was the need to look at some playwrights and their creative works”. Some time was set to search for traditional symbols borrowed either consciously or unconsciously by the playwrights whose works are being used.

In the process, there were a lot of challenges and questions. First came the question; How can all traditional symbols be seen in all modern Ghanaian plays? Second, are we looking at these symbols in their pictorial forms? And the third, perhaps, the most challenging, how do we identify these symbols; in the texts or as performances?

Pondering over these questions, the topic became motivating, and further readings and consultations had to be done.

Finally, the *Sankofa* theory, which perhaps subsumes all other traditional symbols, both abstract and physical emerged. The engagements of any traditional symbols (physical, abstract, philosophical, proverbial etc) have been classified as *Sankofa* in this study. Thus, *Sankofa* is considered as an idea or a theory that can be applied as the foundation for this study. I again, opted for textual analysis of the selected plays, instead of performances on stage. That notwithstanding, there was the need to put up an original play to look at how symbols could be identified at the performance level. As a playwright, one of my plays *Death On Trial* was selected and was performed at the Efua Sutherland Drama Studio at the University of Ghana, Legon from the 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2013.

The play production, presumably, serves as advocacy and doorway for creative writers to realize self-discovery, and cultural awakening, with conscious effort to re-discover their cultural heritage and its application. There is a need to evaluate our creative potentials to respond with enthusiasm, the challenge to retrieve the ornaments of the past as a method for building a creative tradition for the future, as Nketia (1964) aptly said:

As contemporary artists, in society...we must consider the extent to which the traditional “functional” approach to the arts ought to be continued or modified to suit present conditions. We must consider to what extent the art might continue to be developed as an integral part of the cultural life in contemporary Africa, to what extent the communal interest in the arts can be kept alive, to what extent the arts can gain from new modes of presentation without estranging themselves from the community that they serve... (Nketia; 1964: 24)

By this, Nketia encourages the new creative artist to be knowledgeable of his or her environment and traditional modes in order to continue with creativity. Thus, the Ghanaian playwright should endeavour to increase his own knowledge and understanding of the Ghanaian traditions. The challenge to discover what the main characteristics of the tradition are becomes one of the crucial tasks for the playwright. This is what Nketia refers to as, “creative transformation”. It is imperative for the Ghanaian critic to be in the

position, through comparative methods to distinguish between the arts of Ghanaian societies and those of other societies. It is essential to know the symbolic features of Ghanaian music, literature, indigenous traditions, drama, dance and other Ghanaian Arts. As playwrights of the new era, can we boldly claim to have the knowledge of our traditional arts and culture? Indeed, not many of us, who have the desire to write poems, short stories, plays, musical lyrics etc, know our traditions well enough to be able to evaluate them objectively or use them creatively. Perhaps, a few of us are aware of the basis of our traditional semiotics, norms and practices. Perhaps, my upbringing and my formative years have influenced my thoughts to veer towards the traditions of my people; increase my knowledge about traditional techniques, common themes and sources of imagery, symbols and signs, to assess my creative works, and the works of other creative artists.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Though Ghanaian playwrights serve as inspiration for traditional knowledge acquisition, their role in cultural preservation and promotion has not been all-encompassing enough. Most people seem to acknowledge anthropologist, sociologists, visual artists, musicians, dancers, traditional leaders, and other cultural workers for cultural education and other issues. The work of the playwright when analysed provides an effective avenue into the totality of the cultural, religious, social, political, and economic lifestyle of the people in any given society.

To know the development of theatre is to know the development of the human race. As the theatre grows, civilization grows; when it flourishes, humans flourish; and when it is suppressed, people walk in darkness. ...Study theatre of a particular era, and you learn the religious, social, political, and economic influences at that time. You learn the people's desires, ideals, and needs. And perhaps more important, you gain insight into the present from what has gone before. (Averret 1995: 34)

How far modern Ghanaian playwrights have used traditional elements, especially, Adinkra and Akan Clan Symbology in their plays need to be given scholarly investigation and assessment.

In Ghana today, the clarion call of many citizens including highly placed opinion leaders, politicians and academics is “Forward ever (with progress) and backward never”. This slogan has found its head penetrating into schools and colleges as well as the general fabric of our society. Many stories, songs and poems have been composed on this axiom, some being patriotic in nature. From this perspective, the past seems so bleak that there should not be the need to revisit it. However, *Sankofa* as a theory has been known to be on the lips of many, both national and international, due to its importance, but not many have been able to live up to its intended teachings and tenets. *San kɔ fa* (go back and fetch it) has become a very popular cliché in our society, but it seems no conscious efforts is made for the *slogan* to work effectively.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The general objective of this study is to analyze how the *Sankofa* Concept and the narratives of Adinkra and Akan traditional symbols (tangible or intangible), rituals, storytelling, songs, and dances, proverbs, have been used in some Ghanaian plays (Mawugbe’s *In the Chest Of A Woman*, Sutherland’s *Edufa*, Martin Owusu’s *The Legend of Aku Sika* and Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Dilemma of a Ghost*).

### **1.4 Specific objectives**

The study, specifically aims at the following objectives:

1. To examine four modern Ghanaian plays in order to find out the application of *Sankofa* elements in them.



2. To code and interpret the dramatic usage of the identified Adinkra and Akan Clan Totems from the four selected plays.

### **1.5 Research question**

The central question that directs the study is focused on the *Sankofa* Concept in modern Ghanaian drama. Thus, the guiding research question is:

1. To what extent have some modern Ghanaian playwrights applied *Sankofa* as a concept, and the narratives in Adinkra and Akan Traditional symbols in their dramatic works?

### **1.6 Significance of study**

This study has both theoretical and practical significance. It is a symbolic and cultural study of drama in Ghana. It integrates historical, theoretical and analytical approaches, making it a multi disciplinary discussion. At the theoretical level, the study can contribute to deepening the understanding of the use of traditional/cultural representations in plays and also help to identify the dramatic elements in the traditional symbols as great source for contemporary playwriting. It will also contribute to understanding of the narratives in Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols in the plays selected under the study. At the level of practice, the study will generate knowledge to be used as an input to the existing and growing theatre industry in Ghana among scholars, researchers and theatre practitioners. As far as the research process is concerned, this study may inspire the School of Performing Arts, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Arts to fill the gaps as regards modern Ghanaian drama as cultural products and a form of media, in terms of language and identity. This will inspire other researchers to undertake further research on contemporary drama and symbolism along the same lines. The thesis will afford us the

opportunity to provide deeper analysis of Adinkra and Akan clan symbols, in the selected plays and any other modern Ghanaian plays. This will affirm the *Sankofa* influence on both modern drama and traditional drama in practice.

The work may inspire creative writers who will either create dramatic works from the narratives in the Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols or infuse traditional symbols into their plays. Their collective uniqueness of Adinkra and Akan traditional symbols may become critical indicators to engage in profound Ghanaian play analysis and Theatre Studies. The thesis may provide new interest for readers and audiences on Ghanaian heritage and traditional values. It is for these reasons, among others, which include new generational and old ideological differences, that this study is significant.

### **1.7 Justification of the choice of the playwrights**

The journey was very long as my subject led me to explore the use of traditional symbols as already mentioned, in four selected Ghanaian plays namely: *Edufa* by Efua T. Sutherland, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* by Ama Ata Aidoo, *In the chest of a Woman* by Efo Kodjo Mawugbe and *The Legend of Aku Sika* by Martin Okyere Owusu.

All these playwrights are famous in Ghanaian theatre practices and their works have been known both locally and internationally. They are also among many other modern playwrights whose theatrical achievements have become culture phenomena. In histories, theories, hagiographies, and polemics, these playwrights are conferred as much canonical stature, as the four plays which they wrote mentioned above. They are anthologized, quoted, taught, parodied, read and produced constantly and globally.

The selection of the playwrights and their plays becomes historical highlights of our modern theatre. In 1969, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* confirmed the artistic seriousness of the

Ghanaian theatre. It has been a set-book for English Literature for the West African Examination Council (WAEC) for many years. *Edufa* by Sutherland demonstrated one of the *Sankofa* moves beyond the boundaries of Ghana when she based her play on a Greek play, *Alcestris*. *Edufa* has also been used as a set-book for the same purpose as the *Dilemma of a Ghost*. Mawugbe's *In the Chest of a Woman* celebrated an early revolutionary example of realistic style in the emancipation of women. The play has also been chosen for the West African Senior Secondary Schools Examination (WASSSE) from 2010 to the period when this thesis was being written, (2014). Just as historic and folkloric is Martin Owusu's *The Legend of Aku Sika*, written in 1987, a seeming political play woven in the realms of the Traditional Ananse's story.

These four playwrights are vital to modern theatre in Ghana after independence because they are all intellectual figures, artists full of ideas about work, art and culture. All of them have contributed mightily, even when inadvertently to the progressive intellectualization of theatre and directing that is a marked future of our time.

Because her ideas and approach to playwriting which seems to promote only one side of the gender trail, Ama Ata Aidoo's reputation as a theatre intellectual is not well balanced. Nonetheless, it is an international reputation, won by virtue of her unceasingly factual and radical approach to whatever ideas she argues. Particularly in print, Martin Owusu may appear theoretically or philosophically inclined but as one of Ghana's foremost theatre practitioners, he has influenced thousands of cotemporaries through theatre, film and the actors' studio he has managed for a very long time. About Sutherland's intellectual standing, there is no doubt. For decades, her strong analytical-critical faculties have made her one of the foremost dramatists in Ghana. But Sutherland, the playwright-director proposes the same programme as her form, *Anansegoro*, a theatre, with Ghanaian approach of fusing all the performing arts, (music, dance and drama) together in a single

performance. By that she established the traditional Ananse's story, onto the modern stage. Like Brecht, Sutherland's style is concerned with thinking actors, interpretive directors, and audiences awakened to their stake in life.

Finally, Efo Mawugbe could be seen as a pioneer modern Ghanaian theatre intellectual - a researcher-experimenter-theorizer trying to rationalize the theatre's irregular, highly unconscious practices to the scientific age, a post-modernist theatre practitioner. Scholars love to speculate on what might have been achieved had Mawugbe lived as long as Sutherland did. Certainly his early death robbed Ghana and the world of much greatness. His contribution, particularly as a post-modernist dramatist makes him a striking figure in modern Ghanaian theatre.

Furthermore, these playwrights' collective experience of actuality conforming to Etherton's Selection theory (explained below) becomes in time expressions of its social sensibility, and ultimately of its history. Thus each playwright's drama, as a recurring process from actuality to performance stretches backwards and forwards in time beyond the lives of individual dramatists and actors who mediate it.

### **1.8 Definition of key words used in the title**

Terminology and concepts might sometimes lead to polysemy. It is therefore important to explain some of the key words used in the title of the thesis. This exegesis of keywords from the title will offer an understanding of the precise perspective of the study. In this regard, the words in the title which demand brief explanation are: *Sankofa*; Drama; Adinkra symbols, Akan Clan Symbols, and Modern Ghanaian Plays.

***Sankofa***: “*Sankofa* also spelt as *Sankofa* is an Akan word that means go back and fetch it” (Hilliard, 1998: 7). Hilliard (1998) further explained that *Sankofa* is simply the process of knowing and understanding the past, especially the wisdom of our ancestors. African

people cannot possess a deep understanding of the impact of the identity until we have gone back to fetch our history and come to define ourselves as African. Agbo (2011: 25) defined *Sankofa* as “ an Akan word which means We must go back and reclaim our past so we can move forward; so we understand why and how we came to be who we are today.” In other words, it is a symbol of pride in one’s past and culture. In this study, the term is used as an idea which covers the totality of all cultural elements in the Akan cosmology identified in the 4 selected plays and any other play cited.

**Drama:** Drama can be defined as a literary composition that tells a story, usually of human conflict through the use of dialogue and action. It is usually performed by actors in a theatrical setting for the benefit of spectators. Dramatic literature is the text that is composed by playwrights to be spoken by the actors in the theatres. Such performances are usually referred to as plays. The origins of Western drama can be found in ancient Greece, although rich dramatic traditions also flourished in Japanese, Chinese and African cultures. The Greek poet, *Thespis*, is credited with developing the first acting role and thus is considered the father of Western Drama.

In this study, I intend to use the literary text of four modern Ghanaian plays for analysis and interpretation in order to reveal the *Sankofa* concept and the Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols in the plays.

**Adinkra Symbols:** *Adinkra* symbols are pictorial or artistic presentations of values that have stood the Akan people of Ghana in good stead for so long. These symbols are many. They are extensively used to express feelings and sentiments of our present and our past and conditions that one may be undergoing at a particular moment. The authentic Adinkra symbols are about Fifty Two (52) in number. In this study, the researcher did an ethnographic survey on Twenty Six (26) of them, and included their philosophical and

ideological meanings and analysis, as part of Chapter Four of the thesis. They also form part of the *Sankofa* elements identified and coded in the 4 plays.

**The Akan Clan Symbols:** The term Akan is applied to the largest ethnic group in Ghana. Akans constitute about 49.1% of the entire population and inhabit about two-thirds of Ghana's land space, between the Black Volta and the Guinea Coast. They include Akyem, Bono, Akwamu, Denkyira, Fante, Kwawu, Akuapem, Asante and New Dwaben

Akans exhibit vast homogeneity, linguistically and culturally, and these characteristics have served to assimilate their immediate neighbours because of the superior political authority they exercised over them. (Nkansah Kyeremateng, 2010: 26)

**The Clan:** The clan is an important institution in traditional Asante society. It is an extended family composed of those people who trace their lineage back to a common ancestor. This line of descent is traced from the mother's ancestor not the father's. Some clans have thousands of members, but others are much smaller. Proof of membership in a clan is demonstrated by means of a family record, a genealogy which charts the individual's descent, include biographies of individuals, histories of the locality and many other details.

There is an ancestral symbol referred to as a *totem* for every clan. These totems are symbolized by various creatures, particularly animals and it is believed that the spirit and perpetual protection of the individual derives from the power of the totem.

The study provides pictures, summary descriptions and characteristics of the Eight (8) major totems of the Akan people. It is interesting to note that four out of the eight clan totems, Aduana, Bretuo, Ekuoona and Asenee are represented by mammals, (Dog, Leopard, Buffalo, and Bat), respectively, while the other four, Oyokoo, Agona, Asakyiri and Asona are represented by birds, (Eagle, Parrot, Vulture and Crow), respectively.

**Modern Ghanaian Plays:** Modern Ghanaian plays can be classified as plays written by Ghanaians from the 1960's to the present. In our Ghanaian context, playwrights like Efua T. Sutherland, J.C. De Graft, Ama Ata Aidoo just to mention but a few, emerged almost at the same period around the 1960 and 70's. Mohammed Ben Abdallah, Asiedu Yirenkyi, Martin Okyere Owusu, Bill Marshall and others emerged almost at the same period around the 1980's. Likewise, Efo Kojo Mawugbe, Yaw Asare, Daniel Appiah-Adjei, Faustina Brew, Nana Adansi Pipim, and David Asomaning among others are all contemporaries in the 2000's.

In this study, all the plays selected fall within the period referred to as modern Ghanaian Theatre Movement. This has engaged my attention to find out whether the modern plays contain traditional elements. These modern plays chosen for this dissertation include: *Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965) by Ama Ata Aidoo, *Edufa* (1968) by Efua T. Sutherland, *The Legend of Aku Sika* (1989) by Martin Owusu, and *In the Chest of A woman* (2009) by Efo Kodjo Mawugbe.

### **1.9 Definitions of other key words in the thesis**

The following terms in addition to those in the title are important to the study, and are used throughout this dissertation. When possible, citations of sources for the terms have been provided.

**Totems:** The term "totem", refers to vegetables or animals which are revered by individuals, particularly group of people as sacred. A totem can be an animal, a plant or any natural object believed to be ancestrally associated with a clan, of a family as tutelary spirit. In Asante societies, one cannot delineate reverence for nature as a repository of or habitat of unseen spirits which are worshipped as deities. When a deity or spirit is associated with a particular natural object or phenomenon, that object is treated with care

and caution. It is not to be exploited anyhow, but rather, through some laid down procedures and rituals.

**Tradition:** Any cultural product that was created or pursued by the past generation and that, having been accepted and preserved in whole or in part by successive generations, and have maintained by the people to the present. (Gyekye 1997: 221). In this study, tradition becomes the base for all cultural elements. It sums up the *Sankofa* idea.

**African-Centered/Afro-centric:** These terms are often used interchangeably and refer to the thoughts and practices that reflect an African cultural orientation. Goggins (1996:44) contended that, “To be African centered is to construct and use frames of reference, cultural filters and behaviors that are consistent with the philosophies and heritage of African cultures in order to advance the interest of people of African descent” . Afro-centricity is defined as placing the experiences of African people at the center of educational and social inquiry. Specifically, Asante (2003), a major proponent of Afro-centric education, defined Afro-centricity as, “a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives predominate” In this study, some African and for that matter Ghanaian-centred ideas are classified as *Sankofa*. This is what the researcher aspires to find and coded in the selected plays. Africa’s mention is synonymous to the mention of Ghana.

**Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC):** An organization whose main purpose is to preserve and restore African history and culture. According to the ASCAC website (<http://www.ascac.org/index.html>), the organization seeks to operate according to the following principles: *Our purpose is to promote the study of African civilizations for the development of an African world view. Our aim is to build African centered study groups and strengthen existing institutions. Our goal is to provide*



*excellence in all dimensions of our association. Our strategy is to use our accumulated knowledge for the liberation of African people wherever they may be. Our commitment is to the truth. Our achievements and accomplishments will provide the resources necessary for ASCAC to grow and be recognized as a world class African organization.*

(<http://www.ascac.org/purpose.html>)

In this study, the researcher uses his privileged membership of the Association to solicit ideas on Africanness and quotes a lot from members with African studies orientation. The researcher's objectives fall in line with the purpose and objectives of the ASCAC's "to promote the study of African civilizations (Culture) for the development of an African world view ... to build African centered study groups and strengthen existing institutions".

**Education:** Education refers to making the individual whole, providing him with the beliefs, knowledge, and spiritual connection necessary to nurture societal and cultural contributions Shujaa (1998) and Hilliard (1995) further explained that "*Education* refers to a deeper level of understanding and enables learners to interpret the realities around them" (p. 11, emphasis in the original). In this study, *education* has been used to recommend the framework that has been put together for future analysis of plays; highlighting the traditional symbols and how they are used in plays. This is to facilitate the understanding of traditional cultural elements by students and other scholars.

**Ethnic/Cultural Identity Development:** Gay (1985: 49) suggested that "ethnic identity development process is a kind of psychological liberation". In this process, Gay (1985) argued that individuals move through several stages starting with self-denigration and/or ethnic unconsciousness and moving toward ethnic pride and commitment.

In this study, there is a move for individual Ghanaians to be proud of their ethnicity and identity, and to establish the importance of traditional communication through symbols. It emphasizes what the researcher calls “Towards an understanding of our cultural communication through symbols”<sup>77</sup>

**Symbolism:** Symbolism, according to *A Handbook to Literature*, fifth edition by C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon, (1986 36), is “the use of one object to represent or suggest another...”

The Concise Oxford Dictionary states that; a symbol is a thing regarded by general consent as naturally typifying or representing or recalling something by possessor of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought...”

According to Webster’s New Dictionary (1958 68),

a symbol is something that stands for or represent another thing, especially, an object used to represent something abstract, emblem as the dove as a symbol of peace, the cross as the symbol for Christianity...a written or printed mark, letter, abbreviation etc, as in music, mathematics, or chemistry..

In this study, *Symbolism* is being used as the core elements of investigation. It is the representation of ideas from the indigenous communities as being employed by the four playwrights in their plays. Here, it becomes the art of creating images of abstract concepts, or to represent large amounts of information. For example, a heart scratched on the bark of a tree means someone is loved, so also is a carved bird placed within a symbol can represent the connection between the earthly and the heavenly, or a wolf in sheep’s clothing warns of deception. Pictures and images surround us every day, competing for our attention. They tell us about things we could have, do, and avoid. From road signs to computer icons they help us navigate our world. Logos for businesses convey more than just the name – we understand the type of product or service it offers just from the picture;

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<sup>77</sup> The Conference paper the researcher gave during Nketiah’s Feschrift organised by The Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana. November, 2011

the golden arches of MacDonald's are recognized world-wide. Our flag is the symbol of our country. Alphabets are made of symbols that when placed in a certain order, convey information. Pictorial symbols are constructed of shapes and colors that when placed in certain formations convey information in societies.

**Symbology:** is the process of placing images in proper historic context to decode them. Ancient civilizations that did not "write" passed on information orally in mythologies accompanied by symbols. The use and meaning of a symbol can change as cultures are combined by the course of events, and as generations pass. We find the same or similar images across the globe; they have migrated from place to place with the cultures that use them over many thousands of years. The study of these symbols from ancient civilizations has become a science. Asking *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* helps establish historic context when decoding symbols. Knowing when and where a symbol was used is the first step in extracting their meaning. These are going to be assessed from the writings of the four selected Ghanaian playwrights, and how they have used them in their plays.

Again, this study reflects on Michelle Snyder's *Symbology theory* (2011). This applies to Ghanaian traditional symbols from antiquity. We use these symbols for communication, even in these present times.

**Traditional Symbols:** Traditional symbols are pictorials or artistic expressions that represent some traditional knowledge in other forms. These symbols, therefore, induce the mind to correlate the pictorial image to the relevant represented traditional knowledge. As such, the mind situates itself in constant search for meaning and actively explores, processes, and analyzes symbolic content. This undeniably, improves comprehension and retention of information. Some traditional symbols are universally recognized by a group of people, or personally, significant to an individual. A traditional symbols may be used as an identifier, a language of concepts, an iconic representation, express intangible truths,

carry particular meanings, express something unknown, simply to represent something else, pass on stories from generation to generation, convey deeper meaning than words themselves and as a source of connection between members in a group (Lipinsky, 2001)

Traditional symbols are often classified into two main domains: tangibles and intangibles. While the tangibles are considered as material form, intangible symbols are seen as non-material.

In describing the intangible symbols, James Aquandah (2009) considered them as:

...intangible or non-material form: for instance, in terms of language, dialects, philosophical thought, cosmology, morals, and ethics, religious beliefs and rituals, oral traditions, folklore, festivals, political ideas, music and dance, social customs relating to birth, puberty, marriage, family life, work, death etc. (Aquandah, 2009 14)

Peter Kwasi Sarpong (2011: 7) wrote on traditional symbolism as:

Something that stands for a truth or a reality that otherwise is very difficult to conceive in concrete terms. Symbols represent abstract, reality, not concrete things....You cannot have a symbol of tables; but you can have a symbol of obedience... The Asante have their symbols that stand for all kinds of values and concrete realities. We do have symbols for God's power (Gye Nyame), Hope (Biribi wo soro ma me nsa nka), Sanctity (Krapa), Strength (Dwenninmen) Courage (Hye a enhye), Authority (Akofena, afena), Unity (Funtumfunafu ne Denkyemfunafu), Reconciliation, (Mpatabo), Wisdom (Nyansapo, m'ate m'asie)

This study goes beyond what Sarpong has said, because in drama, some concrete things like tables, chairs, buildings and many others can be seen as symbols for communication. Though, traditional symbols have a lot of parallel meanings in other countries and ethnic groups, this study concentrates on Ghanaian traditional symbols, particularly, Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols.

**Proverbs:** Proverbs are short pithy statements or pieces of traditional wisdom, philosophy, or advice which have passed into general use from generation to generation. They are often expressed in metaphor, rhyme or alliteration, and refer to some common human

experience. They are often satirical or mocking in intention. Almost ninety-five percent of traditional proverbs are written in verse. Some of them are contradictory and, in order to better understand them, one should bear in mind that they express the outlook prevailing some centuries ago. Some proverbs present slight grammatical irregularities or are dialectal.

In this thesis, the researcher provides some proverbs based on some of the Adinkra symbols gathered. There is also what the researcher refers to as the authors' proverbial debate which demonstrates the uses of proverbs by the authors of the four plays.

**Semiotics:** Semiotics or semiology, the term used by Pierre and De Saussure respectively involves addressing physical objects in terms of their ability to convey meaning: For Saussure, the sign is more than a means of communication; it comprises the basic fabric of culture. Sausurrean signs do not merely express existing meanings; they are mechanisms by which meaning is created, when relating abstract concepts (Signified) to material object (Signifier). Sign systems provide the structures in which thought occurs, shaping our perception and experiences. In this study, the researcher has provided a lined-up of traditional semiotic expressions derived from the live production of *Death On Trial*.

## **1.10 Scope of Work**

### **1.10.1 Delimitations**

The study is delimited to the manifestations of the philosophical and symbolic narratives of *Sankofa* (Akan Traditional symbols) as applied in the written texts of *The Legend of Aku Sika*, *In the Chest of a Woman*, *Edufa* and *The Dilemma of a Ghost* by Ama Ata Aidoo, and a survey of dramatic themes in some Adinkra and the Akan Clan symbols in eight Head Towns (Manhyia- *Oyoko*, Amakom-*Asinie*, Mampong- *Bretuo*, Dunkwa Nsoaem-

*Agona*, Adansi Akrokyere- *Asakyiri*, Dormaa Ahenkro- *Aduana*, Kyebi- *Asona*) of the clan Totems. In addition, is a *stage* drama production of *Death on Trial* by Daniel Appiah-Adjei.

### 1.11 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical lens through which I view the world comprises two perspectives - *Sankofa* Theory (ST), and Symbolic Interactionism (SI). The collaboration of ST, and SI, with Dramaturgical, forms a theoretical framework that serves as a defining layer of my study. As a researcher using Qualitative methodology, I understand that the lines between theories are sometimes blurred. Therefore, I placed the *Sankofa* Theory first to be supported by the Symbolic Interactionism (Dramaturgy). They form a holistic view of the theoretical underpinnings of my research. It is important to utilize a theoretical perspective that considers the complexities of my profession as a playwright who is interrogating other playwrights on how they have applied Akan traditional symbols in their works. My present duadic theory allows me that flexibility. ST is a theoretical viewpoint that has gained increasing popularity as a critical tool in Ghanaian formal or informal educational practices. *Sankofa* theory began as a means of expression for scholars who were concerned with traditional culture and norms being discarded for alien “modern” ones without due recognition of the positive aspects of the traditional cultural heritage and, the dangers that such action might wreck our heritage. This was extended to educational scholarship with such leaders and scholars as Nkrumah, Dubois, Busia, J.B. Danquah, Nketiah, Sarpong, Antubam and quite recently, Anyidoho, Amiri Bakari, Hillard, Martin Owusu, Takyiwaa Manu, Agyekum, Agbo, and Nana Asaase, just to mention but a few.

“Indeed, after many years of Ghanaian independence, as a people, it seems we have not completely eradicated colonial thinking from our imaginations—we have simply learned

to be more discreet.”<sup>8</sup> Because colonialism has become such an unnoticed part of society, ST seeks to reveal the persistence of mental slavery, in society in general and education in particular, in the hope that unveiling this privileged ideology will provide a forum and means for discussion and positive change.

*Sankofa* theoretical underpinnings consider how cultural identification informs individuals’ views about his/her world. Specifically, *Sankofa* utilizes a Ghanaian-centered worldview that evaluates phenomena, the experiences and perspectives of the Ghanaian person (Asante, 1987: 14).

In this research, the *Sankofa* perspective can be defined as, a dialectical research strategy which aims to help people discover more about their own lives in a culturally relevant way in order to critique their social practice and participate in changing the dominant society (King & Mitchell, 1995: 67). Thus, ST reveals the movement back into tradition in order to improve the present for a better future. Both ST and SI aim to give all Ghanaians the platform from which to research and be researched.

Different aspects of both of these perspectives are warranted because both have validity in educational and social research. ST is necessary because it seeks to reveal the new slavery, even in its simplest form, by “unmasking” the obscurity of mental enslavement. It seeks to expose assumptions that Ghanaian society is becoming more *accepting* of traditionally inclined people. ST reveals the fact that we may be Ghanaians with more alien mentality, other than what we really are. Our Ghanaianess may be only lip-service. What we advocate as Ghanaian drama should be tested by looking for the “Ghanaianess” in them.

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<sup>8</sup> The remarks of a respondent during an interview on 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2014 in Accra

Supporting the *Sankofa* Theory (ST) is Blumer's (1969) Symbolic Interactionism (SI). SI is a necessary component of my theoretical framework because it brings the study of social interaction to the forefront. It also embraces Erving Goffman's Drama model (Dramaturgical) which is an aspect of Symbolic Interactionism (SI) theory. This theory suggests that each of us attempts to "manage our impression" before our audience as if we were performing on stage (Jimmer 2011). It also involves the front stage and the backstage. This espouses the *Sankofa* idea. That, the back stage influences the front stage, just as the front stage influence the back stage. Since people are symbolic creatures, they can interpret and talk about their inner experiences, such as their thoughts or desires, thus enhancing communication and interactions with others.

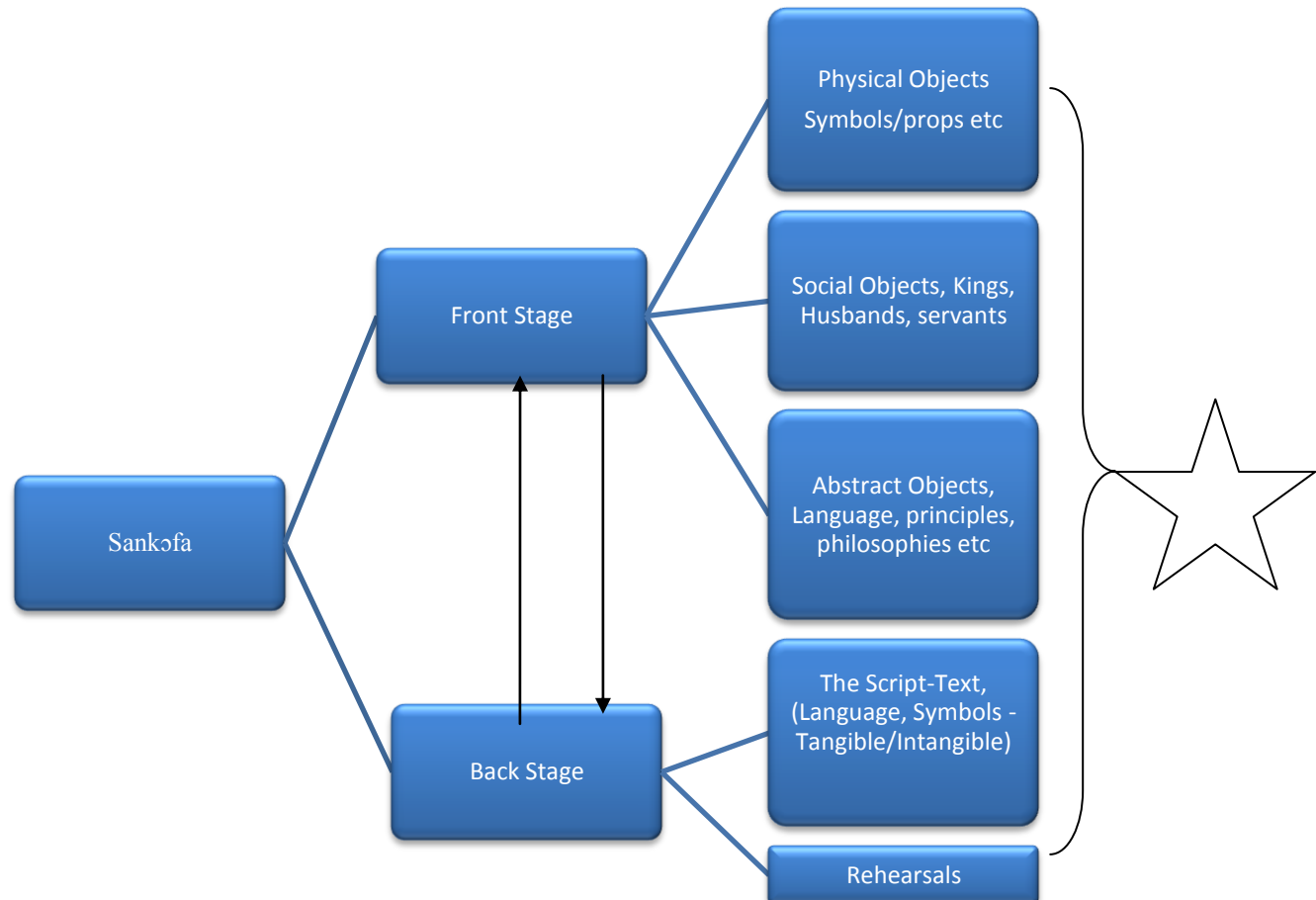
According to Goffman, Front stage draws upon sets, costumes, roles, props, as each person tries to present themselves in their most favorable manner. Back stage is different. It is the region where we are at our most informal, and where we let our guard down. I applied this theory in accordance with the conventions in theatre. In theatre, a lot of important things happen at backstage and what we see at the Front stage is only polished to impress our audiences in the auditorium. One of the cardinal things which are conspicuously missing in Goffman's Back stage elements is the *script* of the playwright. It must be noted that most dramatic performances on any stage are reflections of the scripts which happen to be the major and important resource material for the theatre.

For the play is the theatre's central and enduring core. Live acting is recorded only in the memories of those who experience it. Scenery, lights, and props are struck after the final performances and the playhouses fall into decay, but the script remains to provide an enduring link with the past. (Whiting 1978: XV)

This arguably, conforms to the *Sankofa* concept of going back stage to bring the hidden and forgotten elements to the front stage. Interestingly, what seems raw at the backstage is



reworked to suit the front stage. This theory influenced the researcher to design what he calls: The *Sankofa* Model for theatre.



**Figure 1.1: The *Sankofa* Model for Theatre**

Source: Concept by the Researcher. The “Star” represents the theatre performance.

SI is specifically concerned with how humans make meaning from their social interactions; it studies the relationship between how we view ourselves and others based on the interactions that we have. SI “deals directly with issues such as language, communication, interrelationships and community” (Crotty, 1998: 7-8). Because SI considers language and symbols in its analysis of the world, it adequately links how meanings are made through communication—both verbal and nonverbal. SI operates on

the premises that, human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings those things have for them. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows, and these meanings are handled in, and modified through an interpretive process used by the person dealing with the things he or she encounters. (Blumer 1969: 2). And this is all about the playwright and what he or she does to his/her drama. Some of the symbols provided in this thesis explore my interaction with others as I am forced to interpret how those interactions contributed to my knowledge as a playwright, drama critic and a cultural student. I sought to understand how I utilized these interactions to inform my Ghanaian identity, and the two theories (ST&SI) support each other's convictions. As a qualitative researcher rooted in an epistemology that appreciates the contributions of SI and ethnic-based theories (ST), I have a significant respect for each theoretical stance and the ways they complement each other.

### **1.12 State of Research (Literature Review Conceptualization)**

In the writing of this thesis, my task has been made possible due to the availability of relevant theoretical and other scholarly materials for critical reviews and necessary comments. The dependent and independent variables of the thesis title have therefore, been identified to provide the conceptual framework undergirding this thesis.

Hence, subject matter of this thesis joins the body of work in the past years focusing on indigenous African theatres and performances which have moved beyond the debate raised by Ruth Finnegan who, in the *Oral Literature in Africa* (1970), doubted the 'existence of legitimate native African drama. This has been deliberated upon by many African scholars and the attempt to set up a critical framework out of which Finnegan's assessment on African theatre scholarships has become a matter of exigency. Unfortunately, all efforts by African

scholars in their bid to refute Finnegan's claim, has fallen into the trap of employing the same European structures for drama in describing and classifying African theatres and performances. The tenets earmarked to ascertain what constitutes African drama are still being investigated. Indeed, what has been written about African drama can be also seen as Ghanaian drama. Thus, many of my leanings may capture African drama as a reference point, yet it is Ghana, I am talking about. How far have the works of artists and scholars such as Wole Soyinka, Efua Sutherland, Mohammed ben Abdallah, Ola Rotimi, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, among others, made way for a useful term to describe and analyze African drama?. A close study of their works, among others, suggests and makes claims that African theatre is replete with symbols which I propounded in my MFA thesis in 2000, as *Theatre of symbols*.

Building on existing work done in separate fields of drama and performance studies, this thesis develops specific conceptual framework in relation to the selected plays, the selected Akan traditional symbols (Adinkra and Akan Clan totems), and world drama. The creative sense of the *Sankofa* theory, which seems to subsume all what we call traditional symbols, is very important and generic. I therefore reviewed the related literature using the following pillars:

1. The meanings and interpretations of the *Sankofa* Phenomenon and Drama
2. Symbolic Communication: Drama, Adinkra and Akan Traditional Symbology in Ghana
3. *Sankofa* and the Growth of Modern Ghanaian Drama.

### **1.13 Research Methodology**

In this study, I used the Multi-method qualitative study approach for the data collection; a post-positivist methodology proposed by Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Andrian Thornhill (2012).

#### 1.14 Instruments Used

- Semi-structured questionnaire for One-on-one interview with traditional scholars/custodians on the Akan clan totems in eight head towns in Ghana.
- Putting up a drama performance of an original play *Death On Trial* to strike out the differences of Akan symbolic application on stage and in the text.
- Textual reading (Content Analysis) of four plays to identify and reveal the Adinkra and Akan clan symbols in the plays.

This gave me a much better grasp of the conceptual analysis of the study. It also enhanced credible draw on the valuable data I had collected to complete the main research task:

***Sankofa* and Drama: A study of Adinkra and Akan Clan Symbols in modern Ghanaian Plays.**

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The goal of this Literature Review is to demonstrate familiarity with a body of knowledge and establish credibility. I have managed to review many articles and books by creating a Literature Review Table that provided space for me to identify key concepts, methods, measurements and findings. I made time to list possible articles and books, drafted drafts upon drafts which served as the mantra when writing a Literature Review, and came up with this final Review of related literature, bearing in mind my research question: “To what extent have modern Ghanaian playwrights applied *Sankofa* (Akan Traditional symbols) in their dramatic works?”

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which has been done; and there is no new thing under the sun (Ecclesiastes: 1:9)

The above quotation seems to suggest the way history holds up a mirror to humanity, reflecting the present and future as well as the past, and reflecting human achievement as well as potential. The search for roots and beginnings is really the quest for continuations. (W. Fleming 1986: 1). For how can people know where they are going unless they know where they have been? How can they understand the present until they know the past? The past, in fact, is never really discarded, only expanded, encompassed, and eventually transcended. This is what the *Sankofa* theory which underscores this study stands for.

The human mind works with symbols, not with raw sensory data (Bellman 1977: 8) Indeed, everyone can only respond to sensory data; but man can think and feel, using symbols. Symbols can be combined and recombined into vast complexities of thought and feelings. We can eternalize them so that they may evoke similar complexes of thought and feeling in others. This is what Bellman (1977) calls “The root of human communication”.

Drama as a work of art has a special quality. It generally symbolizes a concept so complex and so closely integrated that what it is, and what it symbolizes become synonymous. Any change results in a change in the nature of the whole thing; its structure is *organic* (Bellman, 1977: 10). According to Bellman, (1977),

...an organism is a living thing; anything that affects one part of it will affect all of it...One experience with a toothache is enough to convince most of us of the physiological truth of this statement. Metaphorically, one may say that a structure is 'organic' when it is so arranged that a change in any part will affect the whole. Art works are supreme examples of organic structures... (Bellman, 1977: 10)

This statement suggests that, every element, including symbols (cultural, physical, social or abstract) used consciously or unconsciously by a playwright in his or her drama forms part of the total communication processes, and that they need to be selected carefully to avoid distortions of the traditional culture.

### **2.1.1 The Meanings and Interpretations of *Sankofa* and Drama**

Although, the word *Sankofa* is an Akan word from Ghana, its philosophical and ideological dispensations cut across borders, ethnicity, race and continents. The thought of going back into history or traditions for creativity does not only pertain to Ghana and for that matter, Africa. In Europe, Asia, America, and Australia, many plays and other creative writings derive their stories and dramatic elements from their traditions and historical events. They dwell on these to inform new directions in their societies.

Drama, like philosophy and science, is concerned with causes and effect. Thus, in reviewing the major styles of Western culture, for example, one should keep in mind the mainstreams of influence. The dynamics of contact and conquest affect both the condition of life and expression in art. Nevertheless, conquest is a double-edged sword. On one side the conquerors stamp their image on the conquered; on the other, the overlords absorb many of the forms and expressions characteristic of the subjugated peoples (Fleming 1986:

15). According to Fleming, Mesopotamia and Egypt developed as self-sufficient, landlocked powers and closed societies that, with little dependence on outside forces, were nurtured from inner reserves. But the Greeks were seafaring folk and, like the Romans after them, had to look beyond their shores for the maritime trade, commercial ventures, and colonization for their survival. (16). The Greeks came in contact with Egyptian and Mesopotamian scientific and artistic traditions and absorbed, refined and transformed them into their own unparalleled achievements. Rome as a culturally diverse country, successfully merged ideas, building methods, ornamental motifs, plastic and pictorial traditions, literary and musical expressions of the Greek, Near Eastern, Egyptian, North Africa, and Etruscan cultures, together with significant contributions of their own. It means that all these cultures borrowed from one another, and this suggests the *Sankofa* idea.

Many theories and definitions have been assigned to *Sankofa* by Scholars, traditionalists, anthropologist, sociologist and artists. In all the definitions, one common factor stands out and that is “going back to claim something that is left behind”.

*Sankofa* is an Akan word that means, "We must go back and reclaim our past so we can move forward; so we understand why and how we came to be who we are today." In other words, it is a symbol of pride in one's past and culture. (Agbo 2011: 14)

At Westing- House High School in the United States of America, a whole unit curriculum has been established called. “*Sankofa*”: The Path to connect the past to the present and the future. Here, students are supposed to identify, describe, evaluate and apply the African cultural values from the past to the present. (Amos 1995: 35). Questioning where students are supposed to identify the cultural values being referred to by the school demands some knowledge of culture. What therefore is culture?

According to Nobles (1985: 54), Culture is a set of shared behaviour and ideas which are symbolic, systematic, cumulative and transmitted from generation to generation. It is the structure of language, customs, knowledge, ideas, and values which provide a people's worldview. It helps to define, detect, create and recreate what is considered good and valuable.<sup>9</sup> Looking back is returning to source, researching, retracting steps, making decisions, and completing the task<sup>10</sup>

Bruce calls *Sankofa* "a realization of spirit and self-self identity, re-definition and vision for one's destiny and collective identity with larger group."<sup>11</sup>

In this modern world, where everything seems to be available and accessed easily, why should we think about *Sankofa* (going back to our roots)? How applicable is this concept to our national development? What are the major problems facing humanity in these precious times that we should clamor for retrogression into the past for solutions? As modern man seems to have answers to all the problems facing mankind, the *Sankofa* concept gives rise to very great differences of opinion and even controversy.

For example, with the struggle of African Americans trying to find their African roots as they clamor about *Sankofa*, (D'Souza 1998: 165), a Black American scholar has a different argument:

The liberation of the man of colour, however, painful, I am obliged to state it: for the black man, there is only one destiny, and it is white...what blacks need to do is to act white...that is to say, abandon idiotic Back-to-Africa schemes and embrace mainstream cultural norms, so that we can effectively compete with other groups

D'souza continues by saying: "There is no self-esteem to be found in Africa or even in dubious ideologies of blackness. Let the sun be proud of its achievement".(1998: 165)

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<sup>9</sup> [Http://www.minspring.com](http://www.minspring.com)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid



By this statement, D'souza vehemently condemns the *Sankofa* idea completely and creates an impression of how fruitless the move to source by the African Americans to Africa would be. D'souza's position has been challenged by some scholars through their works and academic papers.

Awo Mana Asiedu, in her *Returning To The "Motherland", Illusions and Realities: A Study of Aidoo's Dilemma of a Ghost and Onwueme's Legacies/The missing Face* which appeared in the Legon Journal of Humanities (Vol XIX, 2008), does a comparison of the controversies of the *Sankofa* concept. *Returning to the Motherland*, in the introduction, captioned *Africa as the Motherland of all Black people*, she quotes Onwueme

This is where we are, and belong...Son  
Africa...Africa...Our OWN Africa, son...  
It's Africa...Our Africa...  
Africa...Africa...our OWN Africa, son...  
The roots are here...deep down here. Son,  
This is Africa...Africa...our OWN Africa  
Son... (Onwueme 1989: 3)

Those words spoken by Mimi, a character in the play, *Legacies*, is quickly challenged by her seventeen year old son, Uli who retorts:

Stop this mother!  
It's all in your head  
It's all in your mind, mum  
Look around you?  
What do you see?  
Trees, antiques...some old skins, rags, rusty  
Implements and skulls,  
Of- I don't know what...  
No mum! If this is the Africa,  
THEIR AFRICA, I forfeit it with thanks.  
Let whoever will take it  
And keep the change. Mum, we gotta go back to  
The states... (Onwueme, 1989: 3).

Reflecting on the above dialogue between Mother and Son who have travelled from United States of America to Africa, one has the challenge to believe whether our children from the big cities in Ghana do not behave same when they travel to their mother's or father's

villages in rural Ghana. What role are some parents playing in this regard when they have been indoctrinating their children not to go to their villages because the places are full of witches and wizards? How far can we convince our youth to be interested in our traditional culture as depicted by Onwueme in her play? But the balance is brought about when Ida, also a character claims Africa as her own despite being considered as a stranger by the indigenous people...

We are the children of Africa...born in the new world.  
Africa is our land. We do not have to claim any particular  
Land or country because Africa is our nation...before  
The white man came to divide...disperse us. So why must  
We limit ourselves to one country...one state. No! The  
Whole of Africa is our nationality. This is our land. We are  
Children of Africa. We come from here... (Onwueme, 1989: 10)

Ida's assertion reinforces the *Sankofa* ideology to penetrate its tentacles through the youth of today who are reengineering some of the past ideas into new acceptance in Ghana. This can be seen in the new musical releases termed; *hip-life* where old songs are re-arranged to satisfy some of the demands of the modern generation. The highlife music of Nana Kwame Ampadu, Dr. Paa Bobo, Akwasi Ampofo Adjei, Senior Eddie Donkor, Obuoba J. A. Adofo and many others have all been re-produced using the modern beat as a mixture. These have generated new dances known to emanate from traditional dances. According to *Azonto* dance choreographers, the dance is an embodiment of all the traditional dances (Adowa, Kpalongo, Asaadua, Kete etc).<sup>12</sup> In the turn of events, one has to ponder and wonder whether, the rich highlife arrangements may not get lost forever. Is the new method really preserving the old? In my opinion, these new dances are not more appreciable than the traditional ones? The onus lies on us to know the tradition well before we can improve upon it.

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Terry Bright Ofose, a lecturer at the Dance Department of the University of Ghana, Legon (March 2013)

*Sankofa* unlike history is not the past. It is consciousness of the past used for the present purposes. No wonder Mohammed ben Abdallah, a major Ghanaian playwright through his *Abibigorɔ* concept provides some of the vast potentials that must be tapped into, especially, the collaboration with traditional music, mime, dance as well as other established rituals and cult elements in his plays. *Abibigorɔ* as his brain-child, Abdallah, in the context of African theatre displays philosophical understanding that requires intense research and sustained experimentation to create vital bond between the evolving new African Theatre and African spirituality borrowed from the traditional African theatre. This serves as a major contribution of Africa to the world theatre at large.(M.K.Akenoo 2002: 112).

Abdallah demonstrates this in his essay titled *Bobokyikyɛ's lament*, (1999) thus:

All my playwriting so far has been a series of difficult steps towards the realization of the African theatre I envisage. This search has taken me so far into the domains of history, myth, festival, religious ritual and the tale as a literary form”<sup>13</sup>

This is a manifestation of the fact that, Abdallah considers the move into tradition as very consequential. This also adds to the researcher's idea of *Sankofa* as the basis for many creative works.

In *The Fall of Kumbi*, (1989) Abdallah creatively included the Akan Clans as characters in the play. They sang and danced representing the priests of the Seven Clans of Kumbi. One of the clans (Asenee) whose totem is the bat was missing though; Abdalla's conscious attempt to infuse our traditional symbols in his plays is very commendable. He also uses the *Gye Nyame* Symbol as a prop in the play which he points out in a stage instruction and direction. (Abdallah 1989: 90). The Golden stool is also referred to in this play. How many other playwrights have made conscious efforts to include Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols

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<sup>13</sup> Mohammed Ben Abdallah, *Bobokyikyɛ's Lament*, (2000).

in their plays? This is what the study sets out to find.

In the same manner, Efua T. Sutherland, discovering the need to look at her Ghanaian traditions before any meaningful writing could be formulated, said:

I'm on a journey of discovery. I'm discovering my own people. I didn't grow up in rural Ghana - I grew up in Cape Coast with a Christian family. It's a fine family, but there are certain hidden areas of Ghanaian life - important areas of Ghanaian life, that I just wasn't in touch with; in the past four or five years I've made a very concentrated effort to make that untrue. And I feel I know my people now.<sup>14</sup>

Awareness of the social and Akan cultural environment and its deep-set of values enable the contemporary Ghanaian creative artist to find his/her ways into the way of life in his community. The creative writer has reached a period of self-discovery, a period of cultural awakening, when he can make a conscious effort to re-discover his heritage, and evaluate its creative potentials. Creative writers, therefore, respond with enthusiasm, to the challenge to retrieve the ornaments of the past as a method for building a creative tradition for the future.

The pictorial *Sankofa* idea has also attracted the minds of many observers and scholars. There is one school of thought that suggests that, the *Sankofa* Bird with an egg in the mouth looking behind is in motion and at the same time crossing a river. Another school of thought indicates that, the *Bird* is frozen in action after travelling with the neck forward and pausing by turning the neck back to reflect on what is behind. The advocates of this perspective go further to say that the Bird from time to time, looks ahead and looks behind while travelling<sup>15</sup>. They approve of the question by Isidore; (1982) “is the backward look so long and steady as to leave little room for a meaningful forward movement of the

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<sup>14</sup>Efua Sutherland in *Cultural Events in Africa*, no. 42, (1968)

<sup>15</sup> Craftsmen and Women Association: Interview with Ms Esther Idun, Nana Sarfo Kantanka and Co. Centre of National Culture, Kumasi.

individual imagination...?”(Isidore, 1982) Kofi Anyidoho, a scholar and a poet at the University of Ghana sees the bird in flight.

This view of a national tradition in the arts is appropriately captured in the now ubiquitous mythological figure of *Sankofa*: ancient proverbial Akan bird, constantly reaching back into the past even as it flies sky-bound into a future, of great expectations, mindful always that an incautious leap into the future could easily lead to sudden collapse of dreams. (Anyidoho, 2000)

The universality of *Sankofa* cuts across barriers of creed, language, religion, cultures and geographical positions. The playwright is not exempted despite his/her great creative ability. He or she does not create in a vacuum; most of their plays are dependent on some ideas already in existence.

Over the years, many scholars and cultural anthropologist have maintained that *Sankofa* by its nature is to go back into history or to the tradition to reclaim the past and move forward. (Antubam, 1963, Agbo, 2004, Sarpong, 2007, Achampong, 2008 et al) The prominent idea of this thesis, moves beyond that assertion and sees *Sankofa* representing the Time Trinity (Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow). Thus, an interpretation to this would suggest that, creativity is not situated only in the past, one should look ahead, look behind, look up; or North, South, East and West something has been created before this time; and creatively, one can make use of it. *Sankofa... (Go back for it)*: Lassiter (2002) made it clearer:

From the time we are born, all new experiences are viewed through the lens of previous experiences. And those previous experiences help to determine how the new experience will be shaped, interpreted, and understood... (Lassiter, 2002)

Human progress, in this sense, is composed of experience; constant encounters with the world around us from birth to death. These encounters with the natural and cultural environment are what we call experiences which will lead us to progress. These experiences are not completely raw encounters; that is, they don't happen in a vacuum. Progress presupposes the existence of a base with which the *initiator* secures a firm and

solid starting-off point. (Antubam, 1963: 34) This starting point being the lasting values of a people's traditions is embedded in those traditions. These have guided the particular people for survival through the ages, and these are what the new generation seems to ignore or find irrelevant.

In Ghana, Efua Sutherland's idea of "Anansegoro" which has the intention of moving the traditional Ananse Story onto the modern stage, and Ben Abdallah's "Abibigoro" , an extension of the Anansegoro to include music, dance and drama as authentic African drama connote the *Sankofa* movements. These movements still remain a deliberate attempt to respond to the cultural identification and preservation. Many Ghanaian playwrights such as Yaw Asare, Efo Kojo Mawugbe, Victor Yankah and Dzifa Glikpoe have tried their hands on the Anansegoro and Abibigoro with their plays, *Ananse in the Land of idiots*, *In the chest of a Woman*, *Dear Blood*, and *A Knife in the Pocket* respectively. Martin Owusu's *A Bird Called "Go Back For The Answer"* (1973) sums up the *Sankofa* Concept. It is salutary and important to discuss the works of some playwrights. The potency of traditional symbols as a creative source for modern drama has not yet been promoted and this research advocates for that.

Developing principal and critical methods for Drama studies and research has been a principal concern in Ghanaian educational sector. Although, Drama research is closely related to such disciplines as anthropology, psychology, sociology, literature and art history, the field of drama studies has its own concepts, assumptions and issues. Identifying these is not always easy because of the inter-disciplinary nature of the field, and the changing emphases over the past years. Result of doing so; however, is to extend the application of drama studies to other areas of inquiry, where *Sankofa* becomes very canonical.

It is often thought that drama is very easy and that anybody can deal with it without much effort. In the end, many writings and performances leave much to be desired. Distortions of traditional heritage, customs and social life emerge as these plays go unchecked. It is also assumed that playwrights do not research into the materials they employ and that creativity is not scholarship. There is the need, therefore to assess how far playwrights embark on thorough research before they write. Research means *Sankofa*, go back for it. Do our plays help to espouse our histories, philosophies, ideologies and our well being? People engaging in playwriting need to be encouraged to study our traditions and not to see them as only past histories. This is explicitly demonstrated by Welty. He said:

The history of mankind is of compelling significance and interest. The man of today's world is very much what he is because of the urges, the thoughts, and the deeds of the many men who precede him. And man today is involved in the process, consciously or unconsciously, of shaping the world of tomorrow's man. There is a close and vital relationship between the past, the present, and the future. Our ancestors conceived ideas and fostered attitudes which continue substantially to direct our lives and colour our viewpoints; and they set in motion forces which swirl about us, influencing the total fabric of our lives. (Welty 1965: v)

As we too have ideas and attitudes which often modify and expand those inherited from the past, what do we pass on in their emerged and changed form to our descendants? How can we shape and contribute to the future with our dramatic presentations in remembrance, that, just as our ancestors live in us, we shall also live on in our descendants?

### **2.1.2 *Sankofa*: Drama of Other Times and Places**

It has been assumed that the first phase of theatrical and dramatic history began in the sixth century B.C and ended around A.D 500, a period about one thousand years. Despite important differences, the theatres of Greece, Rome and other parts of the world shared some of the same important traits. (Cameron & Gillespie 1989: 217). According to these

writers, Greek, Roman and other playwrights derive their works from their traditional and cultural environment, (Myths, Festivals, Histories, politics and other social issues).

Reflecting on the past and existing plays and events serve as knowledge to the playwright. For centuries the *Poetics* offered the only definition of tragedy available to dramatic critics. Aristotle's ideas concerning dramatic structure established the terms of the debate and were never seriously challenged. Based on his unquestioned authority, critics who discussed tragedy assumed his categories to be valid for all time. A closer look, however, reveals that Aristotle's formal definition excludes many plays which are commonly thought of as tragedies. Not all tragic heroes suffer because of a tragic error, nor does recognition always occur within the tragic plot. Numerous types of drama have developed over the centuries which Aristotle never envisioned; nevertheless most of them take their roots from Aristotle's definition.

Other renowned thinkers besides Aristotle have offered alternative definitions of tragedy. The 19th century philosopher Hegel described the tragic situation as the collision of mutually exclusive but equally legitimate causes: for example, both Antigone and Creon stand for principles – loyalty to family and obedience to the state – which are morally justifiable if taken by themselves, but when these ethical positions conflict, tragedy results for both sides. As Heilman explains, the tragic hero is sometimes caught between "two imperatives, different injunctions, each with its own validity but apparently irreconcilable." To avenge their fathers' deaths, both Orestes and Hamlet must in turn murder another relative, placing them in a moral dilemma with no guiltless options.

Elsewhere, in other parts of the world, the concept of *Sankofa* seems to have been used by many writers. Accordingly, the theatre of the present is not merely a theatre of today's



technique but is also a theatre of plays and techniques from many periods. (Cameron & Gillespe 1989: 214).

Paule Marshal in the United States of America who wrote *Praise song for the Widow*, a novel which takes place in the mid Nineteen.seventies, chronicling the life of Avey Johnson, a sixty-four-year-old African American widow on a physical and emotional journey in the Caribbean Island of Carriacou. Throughout the novel, there are many flashbacks to Avey's earlier life experiences with her late husband, Jerome Johnson, as well as childhood events that reconnect her with her lost cultural roots.

Praise Song is not only about alienation and reaffirmation, but also about the role and the importance of Black women as transmitters and preservers of culture, identity, and heritage.<sup>16</sup> (Thelma Ravell-Pinto 1987: 45)

There is a reference here to the African heritage of Avey Johnson, to which she reconnects during the course of the novel. Through the use of song and remembrances of the past, Avey is able to come to terms with the death of her husband.

Indeed, the prepared audience studies the past to enrich the present, thus the alert and responsive audience member would be knowledgeable about theatre's past and its present.

It is tempting, perhaps, to think of a drama and theatre of the past as filled with people who were somehow different from us; more polite, stuffer, older, stupidier, and less sophisticated, but as a study of the theatre's history will show, they were not all that different. They laughed and wept, applauded and hissed, got bored by bad performances and gave standing ovations to great ones. Arguing that drama neither evolves like a biological organism nor happens by chance, some scholars search for the birth of drama in

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<sup>16</sup> Thelma Ravell-Pinto, *Journal of Black Studies*, 1987

a revolutionary discovery made by a human being, an artist; that the synthesis of many elements already established in the society (dance, music, storytelling, myths etc) would produce a more transcendent of art and thus drama was born.

That notwithstanding, it is very difficult to point out exactly when and how drama began. In this study, it is not so important for the researcher to know its beginnings as to theorize and to argue, about them. I preserve my sense of the extraordinary richness of a great art that will not allow itself to be reduced to simple explanations. I believe that, theatrical and dramatic elements exist in life, and therefore, in all societies.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1923) found the origins of tragedy symbolically represented in the confrontation of Apollo and Dionysus, the Greek gods of order, restraint, and form on the one hand and impulse, instinct, and ecstatic frenzy on the other. The tragic hero is divided "between imperative and impulse, between moral ordinance and unruly passion . . . between law and lust" (Heilman 207)<sup>17</sup>. Dr. Faustus rejects the limits of science and the constraints of theology (just imperatives) to seek diabolic knowledge and power (evil impulse), whereas the Duchess of Malfi disobeys her brothers' command (unjust imperative) to marry a person of lower status (innocent impulse). Both Hegel's and Nietzsche's views are helpful in describing aspects of tragedy not addressed by Aristotle. The playwright gains insight about himself and the world he inhabits.

Throughout history, various authors have shared a similar perspective of the world, what might be called a tragic vision, asking the same questions, although coming to different conclusions. Shakespeare expressed his vision in a different form of drama from Sophocles, but each depicted characters struggling within the limitations of their mortality to find meaning and purpose to human activity.

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted from Larry Brown (2005), *Tragedy After Aristotle*. Larrybrown. homestead.com/index.html.

Consequently, the researcher postulates that, just as Aristotle fell on the classic Greek Tragedians to come up with his definition of tragedy, those who are challenging his (Aristotle's) assertion, also had Aristotle's work as a reference point. The concept of *Sankofa*, therefore is a universal phenomenon and as knowledge for all writers.

Amiri Baraka (1934-2014) expounded upon the essence of the authentically Black theatre, which could be a basis to accentuate the foundation of the African theatre, and for that matter, Ghanaian theatre. Asked what the Black theatre is by Coleman (1971), in an interview, Amiri Barika who died in January, 2014 had this to say:

Black theatre actually deals with the lives of black people. It is a theatre that will commit Black people to their own liberation and instruct them about what they should do and what they should be doing.<sup>18</sup>

Susan Lori Parks (1999) also advocated for the "Tradition of the Next New Thing"

Three traditions are at work simultaneously inside each one of us: The Great Tradition, the Personal Tradition, and the Tradition of the Next New Thing.

These three traditions according to Parks, work to shape us as we live our lives and work our jobs and raise our children and comfort our friends and create our art. While each is separate and distinct, one tradition does not exist in isolation; never one without the others. Each tradition always has the sound of the others within its earshot, the color of the others within its light, the smell of the others within its own intoxicating scent. "What I am writing about here is how these three traditions work within us, how they help and hinder our art making, and specifically, since I am a writer, how they help and hinder our writing. They are as natural to life as breathing and, like the breath, deserve some attention".<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid* p. 1694

<sup>19</sup> Susan Lori Parkes (1999) *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, The Yale School of Drama.

Ultimately, of course, most ideas of theatre arise out of a complex interaction among playwrights, actors, directors, audiences, critics and their immediate cultural situations, as can be seen in August Strindberg's comment on the "modern" way of looking at things that is reflected in characters, plot, and setting of his plays. Commenting on the cultural preponderance at the time when he wrote and produced *The Father* which people criticized as unpleasant, Strindberg like Antonin Artaud expresses sentiments about how light our societies want theatre to be:

The joy of life" is now the slogan of the day. Theatre managers send out orders for nothing but farces, as if the joy of living lay in behaving like a clown and in depicting people as if they were afflicted with St. Vitus's dance or congenial idiocy.<sup>20</sup>

The assertions of Strindberg and Artaud are analogous to our Ghanaian theatrical situation where people seem to clamour for only plays that will cause them to laugh and nothing else. Apparently, almost all performances happening at the National theatre of Ghana which seemingly attract large audiences are in the realms of farce and other high comedies. Like these renowned playwrights, the researcher finds the joy of living in fierce and ruthless struggles of life, and his pleasure as Strindberg puts it. "Comes from learning something from being taught something". His basic concern is to promote the Ghanaian identity through our traditional symbols which stand so unique in our daily communication.

There is to be the need for a life entirely devoted to the preservation of a people's most precious possession – their soul which is their culture. Lori Parkes continued with her assertion of continuity through our search for wisdom from those who have gone before us.

She says:

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid* p. 1667

The Great Tradition is the tradition of the past, those millions of great writers and storysmiths all over the world throughout the ages, weaving their tales and enthralling their audiences.<sup>21</sup>

On the African continent, many playwrights have created plays which are in conformity with complex interaction among other playwrights, actors, directors, audiences, critics and their immediate cultural situations. To mention but a few, Athol Fugard (1932-), a South African playwright wrote plays on South Africa's racial strife that the human situation immediately transcended the politics. *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* remains a particularly powerful statement about the effects of repression on individuals subject to South Africa's laws. What supplies it with haunting mythological power is the way in which it also tackles the problem of individual identity<sup>22</sup>.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, (1938 - ), a playwright from Kenya, wrote plays as a response to a pessimistic look at the rival claims of traditional and Christian religions, public service and private fulfillment in that part of the African continent. He also advocated through his play, *The Black Hermit* on the western part of the African continent in the caution and pessimism with which the African people greet independence. His later play reflects an increase in bitterness, a disgust at official cant, a sense that Uhuru (freedom) has brought nothing to the common people.<sup>23</sup>

In Nigeria, Wole Soyinka (1934) emerged writing plays which demonstrate the cultural and political situation in Nigeria and other African countries. In his works, the conventional forms of Western drama are energized by those of traditional African ritual. As a result, there is an insistence on the ritual origins of all drama, and especially of tragedy. Soyinka's best plays contemplate the "numinous passage" of transition between

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> From Contemporary Dramatists, Third Edition, edited by James Vinson and D L Kirkpatrick (182) Macmillan Publishers Ltd. New York.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid p. 595

life and death, the human and the divine, affirming the mediating power of dance (“the movement of transition”) and music – the art which, for Soyinka, “contains” tragic reality.<sup>24</sup> In all these, Soyinka dwelt on the traditional elements of the Nigerian people.

Oyin Ogumba’s *Traditional Content of the Plays of Wole Soyinka* (1980) brings to the fore most traditional elements in Soyinka’s plays which include *A Dance of the Forest*, *The Lion and the Jewel*, *Kongi’s Harvest*, and *The Swamp Dwellers*. In his paper, Ogumba dwells more on the universal human nature, customs and ideologies of the African, which he sees in the plays of Soyinka. This study looks at the universal human nature, and moves ahead to unearth the hidden wisdom in the traditional symbols in four modern Ghanaian plays.

The *Sankofa* application has been noted to cross barriers of creed. Observations made have proved that drama from the ancient times to the present has borrowed and continues to borrow from traditional sources (Myths, Festivals, and Politics etc). Below is a chart picked from *Theatre A Way of seeing* by Barranger (2002: 34).

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid* p. 739

**Table 2 1: Drama of other times and places**

COUNTRY	DRAMA	POSSIBLE SOURCES
EGYPT	Ritual drama (2750 BC)	Myths of the Old Kingdom
	Abydos Passion Plays(2500-550 BC)	Myths of the Middle and New Kingdoms
GREECE	<i>Oresteia</i> by Aeschylus (525-456 BC)	Dionysus Myths, Persian Wars
	<i>Oedipus the King</i> by Sophocles (496-406 BC)	Theban Myth and Politics
	<i>The Trojan Women</i> by Euripides (480-406 BC)	Theban Myth, Politics and War
	<i>Lysistrata</i> by Aristophanes (448-380 BC)	Wars, Trials and executions
	<i>Poetics</i> (ca. 335-323) by Aristotle (384 – 322 BC)	Greek Playwrights
	<i>New Comedy</i> by Menander (343 – 291 BC)	Hellenistic Cultures
ROME	DRAMA	POSSIBLE SOURCES
	<i>Menaechmi</i> by Plautus (254-184)	The Punic Wars
	<i>Phermio</i> by Terence (190-159 BC)	The Punic Wars
	<i>Art of Poetry</i> by Horrace	<i>The Poetics</i>
	Seneca's Tragedies	Greek Drama
MIDDLE AGES (MEDIEVAL)	<i>Quem Quaeritis</i>	Biblical Source
	<i>Play of Adam,</i>	Oldest Known scriptural drama in the vernacular drawn from the scriptures.
	<i>Second Shepherd Plays</i>	Based on the Bible
RENAISSANCE	DRAMA	SOURCES
	Twelve of Plautus' lost rediscovered	Old Plays
	Roman Drama, written in the academies of Italy	Old Plays
	<i>Everyman</i>	Customs and Morality

### 2.1.3. *Sankofa* as African Renaissance

The *Sankofa* phenomenon is seen as a universal discourse which can be described as what the Western people call the *Renaissance* (Rebirth) or reawakening. This aptly describes what occurred throughout Western Europe during the fifteenth century. There was renewed interest in classical learning and looking toward humanity, rather than solely the church for the salvation of the human race.

In the Middle Ages, theatre already had experienced a rebirth, a change related to religion that spawned the great extensive dramas that spread across wide areas of staging and geography. Now, it was as if specks were removed from humankind's eyes (Cassady, 1997: 72). With the help of the Christian emperors, starting from Constantine (ca. 280 – 337 CE), the Christians eventually took control of the Roman Empire and set about creating a state that persecuted their former persecutors – anyone not a member of the Christian religion, Pagan temples, and statues were destroyed throughout the Roman Empire, and pagan rituals were forbidden on punishment of death (Downs *et al*: 2007). Christian mobs attacked a subsidiary branch of the Library at Alexandria, burning its books and murdering the librarians. Its manuscripts on science, mathematics, astronomy, art, philosophy, and medicine were viewed as worthless pagan gibberish. (William 1998: 298).

One institution the Christians felt was not only obscure but also insulted their beliefs was the Theatre. Saint John Chrysostom (ca. 347-407 CE) called theatre a “plaque” and preached its destruction. In 401 CE, the fifth Council of Carthage decreed excommunication for all who attended the theatre rather than Church on holy days. Later, actors were forbidden from taking sacraments unless they left their profession. And in 438 CE, the Theodosian Code, an update of all Roman law at the time, deprived actors of all rights, even the right to salvation. Soon, the theatre was forced out of existence. (298).

The researcher views this as an analogy to the present state of affairs in Ghana. One cannot lose sight to the fact that Christianity in Ghana and for that matter Africa has caused an elimination of most cultural practices and ideologies. Many traditional groups such as *Nwomkro*, *Adowa*, *Asaadia*, *Kete*, *Akosua Tumtum* and others found in our villages and rural areas have all disintegrated. Those who participate in the activities or join these



groups are sometimes warned on pain of losing their membership in the churches, especially, the Pentecostal and other Charismatic churches. The seeming mental enslavement spearheaded by some Christian doctrines is heavier than the burning of books and manuscripts during the Roman Empire. Ironically, like the prodigal son in the Bible, when the Europeans realized the importance of the past, a new birth of learning (Renaissance) emerged but African *Renaissance* still remains a dilemma. This has been captured by Bruce Gilley (2010) in his; *The End of African Renaissance*. According to Gilley, more than twenty years ago, African leaders and intellectuals proclaimed an African renaissance. The grim days of postcolonial Africa, they said, were over. The end of the Cold War and the growing popular disgust with misrule had created an opportunity for lasting change. In its place would be democracy, development, and peace. “Africa cries out for a new birth. We must, in action, say that there is no obstacle big enough to stop us from bringing about a new African renaissance”. Ex- President Nelson Mandela of South Africa told a meeting of regional leaders in 1994.<sup>25</sup>

As a contribution to self governance, the African renaissance was an attempt to strategize and encounter with modernity after decades of self-destructive ones. While no targets were set, the trends were supposed to be up. (Bruce 2010: 36).

For perhaps a decade or so, they were. But since the early 2000s, the trends in the region have worsened. Today, it is time to admit that the African renaissance is over. Across the 48 countries of sub-Saharan Africa, tyranny, stagnation, and conflict are on the march again. (Bruce 2010: 115)

Meanwhile, the application of the *Sankofa* concept empowered the Europeans to realize their vision in life. They searched for the essential materials left behind and developed

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<sup>25</sup> Elaine Ganley, “Mandela Asks African Renaissance, and Good Government,” Associated Press, June 13, 1994.

with them. Many medieval scholars believed that the Scripture and Aristotle were the total sum of all necessary knowledge.

Among all the ancient Manuscripts that were rediscovered, those of Aristotle had enormous effect on the church. The synthesis of Aristotle's philosophy with the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church was called Aristotelian Scholasticism (William et al: 1997:307)

According to Frank M. Whiting (1978):

What does matter is that people once more became interested in people and living. Once more, they dared believe, as the Greeks had believed long before them, that a healthy body was better than an unhealthy one, that a happy life was more desirable than an unhappy one, that the improvement of one's lot in this life was not a vanity but a virtue, that a person should be free to examine himself, to question authority, to struggle with the restless energy of a Faust - these qualities and others were all a part of the spirit known as *humanism* and are all associated with the term *Renaissance*.

If *Renaissance* refers to the rebirth of interest in the civilization of Greece and Rome, then *Sankofa* should be the rebirth of African and for that matter, Ghanaian Civilization and this will be derived from the arts, particularly, Drama. Balance between power on one hand, and the traditional wisdom, and sense of responsibility that should accompany it, must somehow be restored through the *Sankofa* awareness. Narrow nationalism and blind tribal loyalty lie at the core of present danger, and art can do much to counteract them, for it is universal in nature (Hubert Heffner, 1949: 175). *Sankofa* advocates for our rich cultural values, our philosophies, our identity, our scientific knowledge and our humanity and well-being. To buttress this assertion, Professor Hubert Heffner (1949) wisely observed:

In differentiating himself from other animals, man has invented three great instruments for giving meaning to life – religion, art, and philosophy. Religion is basically, a faith held in the face of the great fearful unknown, and its exercise involves emotional identification. Philosophy is a deliberative and cognitive act, essentially devoid of emotion. Art, which lies midway, between religion and philosophy in giving meaning to life, partakes of the emotional identification of religion and the rational explanation of philosophy. The greatest of the arts is drama in all its forms. (Heffner 1949: 175-177)

During the European Renaissance, the foremost concerns of society shifted to humankind, ancient wisdom, and life in the present. The *Sankofa* concept is like that of the renaissance which borders on individualism and creativity. This led to the emergence of Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and hundreds of other great artists. In a sense, the Renaissance, like the *Sankofa* Concept is in progress, and whether it will eventually end in the destruction or exaltation of African and world humanity seems to the researcher, at this moment of history, to hang in precarious balance.

## **2.2. Symbolic Communication: Drama, Adinkra and Akan Traditional Symbology in Ghana**

Our modern world relies on our ability to communicate with each other. Much of this communication is based on the use of symbols which are classified as images or patterns that are used to convey a certain idea. Some signs and symbols convey meaning so clearly that no words are necessary. They are used by all peoples of the world and all aspects of daily life<sup>26</sup>. Symbols are used as an important part of our communication system. Words are one example of symbols. Symbols that combine several words, such as dialogue in drama are known to save both time and space. But even more important is the fact that the same symbols are noticed and understood immediately.

Signs and symbols have been used since the cave-dweller days. They were and are still important today. Since we live in a fast-paced world, other symbols may often be used in place of words to express ideas and to communicate a message. On television and store windows, one can recognize symbols for food, clothes, medicine, music and other items. Some symbols represent a language of their own, communication without words. A cedi or dollar sign represents money. Even though, one may not see the physical money, one

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<sup>26</sup> Dora Kennedy, Pat Barr-Harrison Na aria Guarrera Wilmethe (1994) *Exploring languages* NTC Publishing group, Lincolnwood, Illinois, USA.

understands what the message is. “All cultures are created and maintained by the use of symbols. The symbols are perceived through our senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell and also by means of extra-sensory perceptions”<sup>27</sup>

In the theatre, a smiling mask stands for comedy, a mask with the corners of the mouth drawn down stands for tragedy. These classic symbols are Greek in origin.

From time immemorial, according to Arch-Bishop Kwasi Sarpong, “man has sought to record ideas and facts in one form of writing or another”<sup>28</sup> Human beings consciously and/or unconsciously employ symbols to:

- Make abstractions more concrete
- Express the transcendent
- Express that which is beyond “words”
- Consciously or unconsciously express that which is hoped for and/or feared
- Make sense of that which seems senseless
- Find meaning in that which seems meaningless
- Reduce that which is awesome or intimidating to more manageable levels
- Gain a message of control over that which seems beyond control
- Give expression to that which is repressed

#### Forms of Symbolic Communication in Drama

Rituals  
Body Language  
Display of dramatic emblems  
Personal surroundings  
Dreams  
Sarcasm  
Comatose Messages  
Religious moments  
Metaphor and Imagery  
Arts

(Sarpong 2002: 54)

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<sup>27</sup>B.K Dogbe (2009) Sources of Cultural Knowledge – cultural objects, sights and sounds and museums

<sup>28</sup>Foreword by Peter Kwasi Sarpong for Peter Achampong’s book *Christian Values in Adnkra Symbols* (2007)

### 2.2.1. Symbolism and Communication in Drama

S. K Langer, in her book, *Philosophy in a New Key*, (1942) made the following observations on symbolic communication:

- Symbolism underlies all human knowing and understanding.
- Preference should be on the concept of symbol to sign.
- Symbols are ... vehicles for the conception of objects
- A symbol is “an instrument of thought,” allowing a person to think about something apart from its immediate presence.
- Key relationship: symbol, object, person.
- Symbols become meaningful in discourse.
- Discursive symbolism are language-based; thought and meaning (proverbs, idioms, figurative speeches etc) and
- Non-discursive symbolism - nonverbal- based emotion and meaning; art, music, dance, Drama etc.

Meanings can be found in both non-discursive and discursive symbolism, and in this thesis, the researcher puts all the suggestions together. This in effect, conforms to Ghanaian modern drama. In Ghanaian drama, every sign has meaning and the potential for multiple meanings. Multiple meanings are socially and culturally influenced. This allows signs to have both denotative and connotative meanings (Langer 1942: 34)

Many scholars, in recent times, have written about methods of communication in Africa and the world at large. Ansu Kyeremeh, (2005); Morrison, (1987), Collatta, (1977). Most of these scholars share a common idea that African people, particularly, in West Africa share their communication orally, face to face and have shown preference for this form of communication. But drama goes beyond the face to face approach. Drama uses all other forms of communication which include among other things, dialogue, monologues, symbols and many others.

Communication, from the Latin *communicare*, means to share. In its true sense, then, communication ought to be a two-way exchange of a human experience. It is a give and take, activity, whereby both or all parties are enriched. (Morrison 2005: 130). Symbolic

communication (physical symbols, such as adinkra of which *Sankofa* is one, clan totems, indexes etc), however, is something quite different. It usually involves a medium of one form or another. There is no sharing, merely a transfer of information. There is a source of the information, and there are unidentified receivers out there somewhere, among the masses (Morrison 2005: 131)

Des Wilson, (2005) discussed various modes of communication in drama which are broadly divided into six classes. Instrumental, (Drums ritual rattles, bell metal gongon etc), Demonstrational (Songs, traditional music, appellations gun-shots, calls etc), Iconographic (objectified beads, calabashes, linguist staffs etc), Extra Mundane (libation, vision, obituary etc), Visual (colour appearance, white cloth, Kente clothes, hair-style, adinkra embossment in clothes etc), Institutional (social, spiritual, marriage, chieftaincy, shrines, masks etc). Indeed, these six classes of symbolic communication run through all the four plays selected.

The researcher views among other things, a move by the various playwrights into the culture and traditions of the people which include all the six classes to beef up their communicative systems through their plays.

### **2.2.2. Semiotics and Signs communication in Drama**

Semiotics is the practical relevance to signs and symbols. It helps us to communicate well as we use gestures, facial expressions, body movements, postures and many others. Semiotic theories become very relevant to both verbal and nonverbal communication situations.

As such, theories on modes of Communication including semiotics, literal, symbolic, metaphoric and proverbial, have been used in many discourses, and heavily utilized in

drama. They all have their roots from Langer's Theory of Symbols, and in view of the peculiarity of this study, the *symbolic communication theory*, which also seems to embody all the others, has been studied as one of the main theoretical orientations for the discussions in this work. The semiotics, metaphor, proverbs, stories etc. are all symbolic elements for communication. Symbolic Communication has been defined by Stan Leroy Wilson (1993) as:

A process involving the sorting, selecting and sharing of symbols in such a way as to help a receiver elicit from his or her own mind a meaning similar to that contained in the mind of the communicator.

Modern day Symbolists and Semioticians, not only study 'signs' – They believe that a sign goes much deeper than that; they study *how meaning is formed*. They study how people first of all interpret a sign, how they then draw on cultural or personal experience to understand a sign. In that sense semiotics is about communication, just as acting is also about communication.

There are three main areas of semiotics; the signs themselves, the way they are organized into systems and the context in which they appear (Leroy 1993: 34). The researcher looks at these in relation to theories and discourses propounded by other scholars.

Peirce (1958) was interested in how we make sense of the world around us and in this sense was less concerned with the linguistic aspect of semiotics pioneered in the early 1900's by the Swiss Professor of Linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure.

Peirce proposed that signs could be defined in three categories; *Icon*, *Index* and *Symbol*. According to Pierce, an Icon – sign, is a sign that resembles something, such as photographs of people. An icon can also be illustrative or diagrammatic, for example a

‘no-smoking’ sign. The Akan Clan totems are mostly Iconic in nature. An Index- sign is a sign where there is a direct link between the sign and the object.

To Ferdinand de Saussure symbols can be divided into two segments these are classified as a ‘signifier’ – the *form* which the sign takes; and the ‘signified’ – the *concept* it represents. For Saussure, a sign is the combination of the two. The sign represents the object, or referent, in the mind of an interpreter. Signs can be verbal (words) or nonverbal (Pierce, 1958).

In his book, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* Charles Morris (1964) argued that people are interpreters of signs and that signs have three main factors that guide interpretation: The *Designative* aspect which directs the interpreter to a particular object, the *Appraisive* aspect highlights object qualities, enabling evaluation, and the *Prescriptive* aspect which directs one to respond in specific ways. Adinkra and some Akan traditional symbols conform to these definitions. They are tuned to these three factors by Morris. They are attractive, valuable and demand response. According to Morris, human action involves signs and meanings in three ways: The perception stage – when the person becomes aware of a sign, the manipulation stage, when the person interprets the sign and decides how to respond to it, and, the consummation stage, where the person responds (Morris, 1964).

These three signs above may be likened to characters in drama which are representations of human beings. Dramatic characters are symbolic. They are action oriented, and denote value systems in the drama.

These also seem to conform to Signs and Symbols as depicted by N.K Dzobo (1984). According to Dzobo, there are three significant features to take into consideration when using symbols in communication. They are; the *Sign*, its *object* and *subject* which/who relates to it



(the sign) and the object or subject signified. With the sign and its object, let us use the example of *smoke* and *fire*. Logically, the smoke and fire are related to form a pair, which has given rise to the proverb "There is no smoke without fire". In any such combination, one of the elements is less important than the other. (Appiah-Adjei 2000) The less important element is more easily recognized than the other element in the pair. In this case, the smoke becomes the sign and the fire becomes the object which is more significant (Dzobo, 1984: 14).

Drama as a symbol of communication, can apply these significant features as proposed by Dzobo. In his *Theatre of Symbols*, (2000), Appiah-Adjei demonstrated this to justify his assertion that African theatre is *Theatre of Symbols*: According to him, The Sign which is more easily available to the audience during theatre productions are the actions by characters, effects, such as lighting, sound, costumes, set, animate object (characters), inanimate objects (props etc). The subject relating to the sign being the story-line, plot, theme etc and the object being signified is the script, scenario, which becomes the most important aspect of the symbol, and incidentally, forms part of the backstage elements.

This arguably, conforms to *Sankofa*, of going back stage to bring the hidden and left behind elements to the front stage. Interestingly, what seems raw at the backstage is reworked to suit the front stage. (See *Sankofa Model for the Theatre* in Chapter One of this thesis).

The idea that we should go back to our roots, reclaim our past, so that, we can build a better present, and future, is inherent in this argument. It is as Nketia puts it "creative transformation of tradition"<sup>29</sup> "Our modern world is full of symbols; they surround us every day." This is a statement from Michelle Snyder's book, *Symbology: Decoding Classic Images*, (2011) which serves as a strong basis for our continually exposed to symbols. In that, we may not really be aware of their ubiquity or, of their effect upon our minds. Symbols that we see every day: corporate logos, religious symbols, uniform insignia, even the very letters

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<sup>29</sup> Personal interview with Emeritus Professor Kwabena Nketia, March, 2012.

which build the words in this sentence, all of these have a rich history and are often interconnected in fascinating ways. With each passing day, knowledge about man's past and symbols grows through constant searching by scholars in every field of learning; but frequently, each new addition to his store of knowledge also deepens the awareness of his ignorance. The more the researcher probes into the prevalence of symbols in the society, the more ignorant he seems to become of the numerous symbols that exist.

Sometimes, we forget that language itself, both written and spoken language is symbolic. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, working on language some 2500 years ago, posited that "spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words" (Stewart & Logan, 1999: 57). Symbols are the replica of the meanings of words, things, actions, emotions, behavior and ideas of people within a particular culture (Agyekum, 2006).

In the same manner, Snyder explains the use of symbols in a more refreshing mood:

Our understanding of today rests upon the foundation of our understanding of yesterday. Understanding symbolism leads to better appreciation of yourself and others. If you are on a quest for enlightenment, deciphering symbols can help you grasp concepts which words cannot express, and become aware of the intelligence and industry of our ancestors. Most classic symbols have roots in astronomical notations of prehistoric cultures that watched the sun and stars, and recorded their movements. They symbolized concepts like yesterday and today, and events like sunrise and sunset, seasons, and years. These ancient images are the ancestors and roots of many symbols still used today.<sup>30</sup>

According to Schroeba (1998: 551) "a symbol is a sign whose connection with its object is purely a matter of convention". We can communicate without words. Such a communication, may involve the use of gestures, or the use of symbols. Every language

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<sup>30</sup> Michelle Snyder, (2011) *Symbology: Decoding Classic Images*, p. 123

may differ from the other, in terms of interpretation of gestures and symbols. In written language, the letters of the alphabet are only lines and curves on a page. And words are an arrangement of letters which by common agreement represent something else. The same four letters (r, a, e, p) mean different things depending on the order in which they are placed; *pear reap, rape*. They set three different imaginative wheels in motion, and signal a response which varies greatly from word to word.

The Ghanaian bears within himself or herself, an almost, infinite capacity for variety, and it is obvious within and without his/her region. Symbolism, therefore, is a key to the philosophy and thoughts to a people. (Agyekum, 2006: 126)

Our modern world relies on our ability to communicate with each other. Despite the new technological approach to communication, much of this communication is based on the use of symbols which are classified as images or patterns that are used to convey ideas.

Some signs and symbols convey meaning so clearly that, no words are necessary to explain them. An example is the symbol of the *heart* which means *love* or *patience*, the cross which represents *Christianity*. They have been used by all peoples of the world, and in all aspects of daily life. Symbols are variously used as important parts of our communication systems. Symbols that combine several words may save both time and space.

Signs and symbols have been used since the days of our fore-fathers. They were and still are important today. Since we live in a fast-paced world, other symbols may often be created in place of words to express ideas and to communicate messages.

### **2.2.3 Adinkra Symbols as communicative Tools in Ghanaian Traditional Culture**

Adinkra as an art form has been in existence for at least two hundred years. In the contemporary culture of Ghana, Adinkra has now evolved into much larger social form of expression and has been incorporated in many levels of artistic formats (Bruce 1998: 230). In Ghana, adinkra symbols and other traditional symbols have been dealt with by numerous artists and writers.

The *Adinkra* symbols as explained in Chapter One of this thesis are pictorial presentations of values that have stood the *Akan* people of Ghana in good stead for so long. These symbols are many. They are extensively used to express feelings and sentiments of the past, the present and the future.

### **2.2.4. Meaning of the word *Adinkra***

The word *Adinkra* comprises three parts. The word *di* means “to make use of” or “to employ” *Nkra* means “message” and ‘*a*’ is the Akan prefix for an abstract noun. (W. Bruce Willis 1998: 29). Together, *di* and *nkra* means “to part, be separated, to leave one another, or to say good bye.” In the word *adinkra*, *nkra* means the message or intelligence that each person (soul) takes with him from God on departing from earth (*okra* is the Twi word for “the soul”) Thus, adinkra implies a message a soul takes along when leaving the earth, hence, the expression; “Saying good-bye to one another when parting”<sup>31</sup>

The *Adinkra* symbols give us insight into how the Akans represent ideas, objects, values and beliefs with symbols. They have become part and parcel of the people’s ceremonial, religious and social activities.

Generally, these symbols are engraved on textiles, pottery, stools and other artifacts to give symbolic communication and meaning.

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<sup>31</sup> Discussions on *Adinkra* with Nana Aboagye Dacosta, the leader of the Adinkra’s Band at Bandstand at the Centre For National Culture, Kumasi on Gye W’ani Programme; 26<sup>th</sup> December, 2013.

### 2.2.5. Historical Sources of Adinkra

History has it that, the symbols were named after a chief in the Gyaaman traditional area in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana by name Nana Kofi Karikari Adinkra during the early Nineteenth Century.

According to the narration, this chief designed a replica of the Golden Stool (Sikadwa Kofi) which was and still is the sole preserve of the Asantehene to occupy. This infuriated the then Asantehene, Nana Osei Bonsu Panyin, who waged war against the Gyaaman people, in 1818, defeated Nana Kofi Adinkra, the chief of the Gyaamans and took his people to Kumasi as captives of war.

These people were great craftsmen who introduced the art of weaving and carving with beautiful patterns embossed on them. The symbols were then named after Nana Adinkra and have been known as *Adinkra* Symbols ever since.

There have been some questions about the authenticity of the King Kofi Adinkra story. One of the most serious questions relates to the earliest recorded Western historical source of information on *Adinkra*. In 1817, a leader of a British mission to Ghana collected an adinkra cloth in Kumase. This was a year earlier than the Asante-Gyaman War in 1818, which seems to contradict the oral account of the Asante who put the introduction of *Adinkra* in 1818.

Thomas E. Bowdich, a member of the mission sent to the Gold Coast by the British government from 1817 – 19 published a book *Mission from Cape Coast to Ashantee* (1819), which was the earliest European account of the Asante people. In this book, he included a large drawing that he had made during his 1817 residency in Kumase. This now famous picture depicting an Akan celebration of Odwira festival in 1817, clearly shows

Akan men wearing cloths rolled at their waist (Kwaha) with small repeating patterns on them.

Mr. Bowdich also collected an Adinkra cloth with nine adinkra symbols stamped on it. According to Willis, this cloth is now in the possession of the Museum of Mankind at the British Museum in London.

It is catalogued as a hand-painted fabric from the Gold Coast area. What is interesting about the cloth is that Mr. Bowdich collected it in the year 1817, a date that can be verified by British records. Because this cloth was collected in 1817, a year before the Asante-Gyaman War of 1818, the oral account of the origin of adinkra that say that adinkra first came to the Asante in 1818 are called to question. (Bruce1998: 30)

This assertion has been re-echoed by Peter Achampong (2008). He argues that, the Adinkra symbols have been associated with the Ashantis for a very long time before the Asante-Gyaaman war.

Some years before this Asante-Gyaamang war, the British had taken some samples of Adinkra symbols from the Ashantis and sent them to British Museum. This shows that the Ashantis had the Adinkra symbols before they took copies of the symbols to Gyaaman. (Achampong 2009: vii)

He further asserts that, since the Gyaaman people themselves migrated from Ashanti during the Ashanti wars; they might have taken some of the Adinkra symbols with them; hence, it may be stated that the Adinkra symbols are basically an Ashanti heritage.

Professor A.K Quarcoo, a leading Ghanaian scholar on Adinkra and a former professor at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon proposed another account of the origin and evolution of Adinkra. Quarcoo theorized that *adinkra* came to the Asante during the defeat of the state of Denkyira in Asante-Denkyira War 1701.

According to Quarcoo as cited by Willis, some oral accounts indicate that in ancient times, adinkra was made for the kings of Denkyira, Takyiman, and Asante by their guild

designers. Quarcoo contended that adinkra may have been introduced to the Akans in 1700s, although, the Asante may not have acquired the technique for making adinkra until the Asante-Gyaman War. Quarcoo states that the son of Nana Kofi Adinkra, Adinkra Apaa, was spared being beheaded, and was forced to show the Asante, the technique to make adinkra (Ibid). Oral accounts say that Adinkra Apaa showed the process to Kwaku Dwaku in Asokwa, a suburb of Kumasi. History lends some credence to Professor Quarcoo's theory because in 1817, when Bowdich collected his cloth, the adinkra process was fully developed. His theory can also be substantiated from the history of the Gyaman people.

According to a respondent, a sub-chief, of the Gyaman Traditional area, the Seventh ruler of the Gyaman people after its founding by Nana Ado Ben, was King Adinkra Panin. He was succeeded by Nana Abo Kofi who reigned from 1720-1746. Nana Abo Kofi was succeeded by Nana Kofi Sono who also reigned from 1746 to 1760. Looking critically at the chronology of the succession, it may suggest that, similarity of the names, King Adinkra Panin and King Kofi Adinkra can create some confusion. To support Quarcoo's theory, one may assert that adinkra may have been introduced to the Asantes during the reign of King Adinkra Panin. But the technique of making adinkra may not have been introduced until the time of King Kofi Adinkra.

Another version has also said that, the symbols got their names from the Akan funeral celebrations. In the Akan traditional areas, during funeral, most funeral clothing are embossed with symbols and that as *Parting* or *saying farewell* to the deceased means *dinkra*, in the *Twi* language, the symbols derive their name from that Akan word.

Others also have indicated that the Akans migrated from the northern part of Africa and that they came from Egypt. The *Nkyinkyin* (wandering) symbol probably serves as the

reference point to the migration. (Achampong 1998 ii) They compare the symbols to Egyptian hieroglyphics and make claim that the symbols emanate from Egypt.

All of the above accounts seem valid. Adinkra symbols therefore have a more diverse background than is ordinarily perceived. It spans the length of African, Ghanaian and Akan history by making allusions to issues related to items of culture.

Adinkra symbols have become popular and widely used in the various art forms because of their prominent exposure by some eminent anthropologists and local artists in the form of documentation. Interestingly, many of the symbols are constantly under modification to suit other purposes. It is therefore, not a surprise as almost all the public and private universities in Ghana have borrowed this cultural heritage as part of their logos and emblems. (See appendix Two)

There is the need to mention some eminent Ghanaian artist and anthropologists who have contributed to the preservation and promotion of the Adinkra symbols through their arts and scholarly works. One of such people is Ablade Glover. He is credited to the chart with a collection of sixty Adinkra symbols with their Akan names and proverbs. Another significant contributor to the promotion of traditional symbols is Kayper-Mensah, who gives a vivid explanation of a collection of Adinkra symbols through an effective use of short poems. J.V Owusu Ansah's innovative way of designing new Adinkra motifs is phenomenal. Kofi Antubam, A.H Agbo and Peter Achampong have also written books on the Adinkra symbols. Peter Achampong wrote on *Christian Values in Adinkra Symbols* (2008) while, Agbo wrote on the *Values of Adinkra Symbols* (2011). The Researcher has also designed a book *Sharing Ideas on Adinkra symbols* where he has used acrostic device to write poems on some Adinkra symbols, using their names.



### 2.2.6. Adinkra symbols as Folk Art

Subjecting Adinkra symbols to a larger concept of material culture, they may be considered as a culture construct, connecting the object they study to other aspect of social life. As Jules David Prown (1921:4) defined material culture: “Material culture is the study through arte-facts of the belief, values, ideas, attitudes and assumptions of a particular community or society at a given time” (p. 4)

A fundamental view of material cultural idea is that objects do not exist in a vacuum made and used by people. Adinkra symbols relate to human values, concerns, needs, and desires both past and present. They may reflect the spirit of an age, the belief of a society or a subgroup, or experience of an individual.

They can embody notions of how to survive in the physical world; (Hye a Wonhye, Aya, Onyame Nwu na Mawu etc.), as indexes of social relations (Boame na memmoa wo, Cdc nyera ne fie kwan, Osram ne Nsroma etc), or be forms of projection that express longings, fantasies, and feelings, thereby helping people to cope or adjust emotionally.

Their use may be wholly instrumental and utilitarian, sensory and aesthetic, or symbolic, or a combination of these. Thus, they are rooted in historical, socio-cultural, and psychological conditions and processes.

Adinkra symbols, like material culture are viewed as links to socio-economic structures and cultural values. To some scholars, they are symbolic expressions (Mayo 1980: 597) Schelereth, 1985:234).

The first published list of Adinkra symbols was made by British anthropologist, Captain Robert Sutherland Rattray, who served in the Gold Coast from 1906 to 1930. He was the first major chronicler of the life and culture of the Asante people. In *Religion and art in*

*Ashanti*, published in 1927, Rattray included a survey of Fifty-three adinkra symbols and their variations. (Bruce 1998: 232). This was perhaps the broadest coverage of the adinkra symbols, until after Ghana gained its independence in 1957. Most of the symbols he catalogued at that time are still in use today.

In 1969, Dr. E Ablade Glover, published *Adinkra Symbolism* a contemporary chart of Adinkra. He includes sixty symbols and versions thereof, with the meaning of each, and in some instances an associated proverb.

In 1971, Rev. Dr. Alfred Kofi Quarcoo published a research paper for the first Commonwealth Universities Conference on the Arts held at the University of Ghana, Legon. In that paper, he included a list of Adinkra symbols. Dr. Quarcoo received so many requests from visitors for more information on the symbols that he expanded the work into a book – *The Language of Adinkra Patterns*, which was published in 1972. The book listed and defined sixty symbols. It was reprinted in 1993 by Sebewie Ventures publication.

In 1974, Thelma Newman included a chapter on Adinkra symbols in her book. *Contemporary African Arts and Crafts*, in which, she shows the adinkra process and includes photographs of the technique and several of the cloths.

In 1976, Albert W. Kaper Mensah, a well-known Ghanaian poet who had worked as a career foreign service officer, wrote *Sankofa -adinkra* Poems. In this volume, he defines sixty-seven symbols and includes a poem and an explanation of the components of each word or word phrase.

Also published in 1976 by the Catholic Book Centre in Accra was *Adinkra Oration* by Angela Christian. In *Adinkra Oration*, Christian lists twenty-seven symbols, their

meanings and symbolisms. For each defined symbol, she includes a corresponding quote from the Bible that expresses a similar thought and sentiment.

In 1978, Dr. Kwaku Ofori-Ansah, a Ghanaian art historian designed a widely distributed chart called *Symbols of Adinkra Cloth – African Symbolism*. In this chart, he lists sixty-four symbols or their variations. The chart explains the meaning of each symbol, gives a brief background of adinkra, and explains adinkra stamping in a simplified form. Ofori-Ansah revised his Chart in 1993 in a second edition, *Meaning of Symbols in Adinkra Cloth*. In the revised edition, he updates the interpretations, included variations of popular symbols, and added seventeen more symbols or variations.

In 1982, Claire Polakoff published *African Textiles and Dyeing Techniques*, which has an extensive chapter on adinkra with photographs, and sketches illustrating the history and the technique of Adinkra. In her work, she identifies over twenty adinkra symbols and variations of her own collection

In 1986, Daniel Mato wrote his Doctoral dissertation, *Clothed in Symbol: The Art of Adinkra Among the Akan of Ghana* for the University of Indiana. He also documented over three hundred symbols with variations, and provided explanation of the adinkra technique and accounts of the evolution of Adinkra.

In 1987, a researcher from La Cote d’Ivoire, G. Niangoran-Bouah, published *The Akan World of Gold Weights and Society*. In his book, Bouah includes information on numerous adinkra symbols as they relate to gold weights and, or Akan Society and Culture.

In 1992, Nana J. V. Owusu Ansah compiled *New Variations of Traditional Motifs*. Owusu-Ansah included 132 recent variations and adaptations of popular symbols that have evolved from the “core symbols” which have existed for many years.

In 1998, Bruce Willis, published a book which he titled; *The Adinkra Dictionary*. In this book, Willis virtually explains the origins of Adinkra, and gives various interpretations and sayings on some of the adinkra symbols. I relied heavily on his work for both literature and interpretations of the Adinkra symbols.

Other writers worth mentioning who have written extensively on Adinkra symbols may include Docea A.G. Fianu whose dissertation *Ghana's Kente and Adinkra: History and Socio-Cultural Significance in a Contemporary Global Economy* was published in 2007. In this work, the author provides a catalogue of adinkra designs and how they are embossed in funeral clothing. She also demonstrates how the designs are made and their socio-economic relevance in Ghana.

George Afrifa Amankwaa's *Non-Verbal Communication For Everyday life* (2008) discusses some aspects of Adinkra symbols which also conform to the earlier writers' pictorial views and meanings of the Adinkra symbols. The writer provides a general understanding of non-verbal communication systems including some signs and symbols in everyday communication. His treatment of some non-verbal communications such as gestures and tactile communication was beneficial to this study.

Peter Achampong's work *Christian Values in Adinkra symbols* (2008) reflects the Biblical connotations of Adinkra symbols. He seems to have been inspired by Angelina Christian (1976), who listed Twenty-Seven Ainkra symbols and correlated them to Biblical Quotations. Like Christian, Achampong assembles about 60 adinkra symbols and relates them to biblical sources and quotations. According to him, the vision of his book is to increase the awareness of readers on the significance and importance of adinkra symbols to a Christian life and to be of immense value to all who are keen in acquiring spiritual inspiration through culture and the symbols (Achampong 2008: ii)

Like Achampong, and Christian, I am exploring the dominant nature and values of Akan traditional symbols from four modern Ghanaian plays. Indeed, how Achampong can claim to have been able to come out with the traditional symbols and for that matter, adinkra symbols from the Bible are not very realistic, but he gave me some food for thought.

Indeed, a lot of people have made various documentations on Adinkra symbols; it seems this study is quite unique, and extremely different from all, as it explores the use of Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols and other traditional symbols which have been classified as *Sankofa* in modern Ghanaian Drama. What keeps all the writers in a common basket is the fact that it explores the link between Adinkra, the Sankofa concept and Ghanaian Drama which also serves as a means of finding ways and to preserve the rich culture of our people in diverse ways.

#### **2.2.7. Akan Clan Symbols, the Family Systems and Drama**

For the purpose of this research, I lean towards the clan symbols of Asante and the Bono and Ahafo of the Akan families for the study. It means that most references and names of symbols are in Asante Twi or Bono.

The selection of these groups emanates from the fact that I belong to both areas. My ancestors migrated from Dwenim in the Brong Ahafo region, and settled at Atwima Gyekye in the Ashanti region. As a researcher, I have taken it upon himself to study both cultures and the similarities are great and easy to identify. Again, the historical underpinnings of the various Akan clan symbols concentrate prominently on Asante and Bono.

### *The Akans*

The name Akan, according to Dolphyne (1988: XI), Stewart (1966:76), and Manoukian (1964: 15), is used to refer to the people who live in most of the coastal and forest areas of Ghana and Ivory Coast. These people share a common culture, which distinguishes them from other ethnic groups in West Africa. The Akan is the largest ethnic group in Ghana. They constitute about 49.1% of the entire population and inhabit about two-thirds of Ghana's land space, between the Black Volta and the Guinea Coast.

Akans exhibit vast homogeneity, linguistically and culturally, and these characteristics have served to assimilate their immediate neighbours because of the superior political authority they exercised over them. (Nkansah Kyeremateng 2010: 26)

The Akan groups are the Adanse, Asante (14.8%), Akuapim, Akwamu, Akyem, Assin, Bono, Dankyira, Fante (9.9%), Gomoa, Kwahu, Sefwi, Twifo and Wassa. There are the Guan, Aowin and Nzima who are considered semi-Akans because of their current cultural practices. Also beyond the borders of Ghana into Cote d'Ivoire are the Anyi and Baule people who maintain strong Akan historical and cultural rites. (K. Nkansah Kyereamaten, 2010)

The term *Akan* has been variously interpreted in many discourses. There are people who would derive it from the Twi word *Kan(e)* (first or foremost) to imply that Akans were the first settlers (aborigines) of Ghana. Those who believe in this derivation stretch to make it a smack of superiority. The superiority complex implication is understood in the Akan expression "*Aninguase mfata Okani ba*" (disgrace does not befit an Akan person)

From a Portuguese source, the superiority complex implication is also underscored in a 15<sup>th</sup> century record quoted by the Portuguese historian and scholar De Faria de Sousa. "The Acanes are the most polite people of that part of Africa" in reference to the Akumu-Akoto Kingdom then situated behind the Elmina. (Kyeremateng 2008: 12) The word

okanni, ordinarily, means a nice refined, well-mannered; a civilized or cultured person. (Danquah 1951: 40)

The traditional Akan person apart from his homeliness is also known for his bravery. He frowns on sycophancy, not only as disgraceful, but also, as ignoble and immoral. (Abayie 2000: 23) Akan society, therefore, esteems and honours its sons and daughters who exhibit bravery, such as Nana Tweneboa Kodua and Nana Yaa Asantewaa whose names are inscribed in letters of gold in Asante history. Nana Tweneboa Kodua, the *Omanhene* (Paramount) chief of the Kumawu Traditional area volunteered to be sacrificed for the Asantes to defeat the People of Denkyira in the Feyiase War. In the same vein, Nana Yaa Asantewaa, the Queen Mother of Ejisu led the Asantes in war against the British in 1900.

As his character, the Akan portrays love for freedom, self-rule, and independence from foreign rule, hence his abandonment of his original home in ancient Ghana. “Their detestation of subjugation and subservience brought them to modern Ghana” (Danquah 1951: 40). The foregoing traits were on show, even in the New World where the Akan slaves were known to lead insurrections against their taskmasters.

#### *Ghanaian Playwrights and Akan Language*

The chief characteristic feature of Akans is their language – Twi with its curious renderings in different European documentations as Cui, Chi, Kyi, Ki, Qui and Tsi. From such renderings emerged terms such as Cuifor (Twifo), Kyi-bi (Kyebi), O-qui-hene (Okyehene) and A-kyi-m (Akyem) to represent Akan states, towns and institutions. (Nkansah Kyeremateng 2008: 64)

Many playwrights in Ghana use the English language for their plays. With the exception of a few playwrights, such as Okyeameba Odoi, *Ntim Gyakari* (1975) Nana Sarfo Kantanka *Ahi Ko* (1993) J.O. Koranteng *Mpuansa Ntiamo* (1971) Osei Kwadwo *Feyiase* and *Siaw*

*Anim*, (1988), E. Owusu Ansah *Sientie* (1975), and an unpublished twi play by Daniel Appiah-Adjei *Frema* (2009) who have used the Akan language in their plays, almost all other playwrights write in English. As Nketia (1964: 61) stated:

....the more difficult problem of ‘meaning’ which may not resolve satisfactorily for some time, the problem of social and moral values of which an artist who wishes to maintain a link with tradition must take cognizance.

Indeed, the Ghanaian playwright finds himself or herself in a complex cultural situation, characterized by a duality of old and new; Ghanaian and non-Ghanaian, Akan and Non-Akan. This duality runs through the organization of our society: there are literates and non-literates, educated and non-educated, urban and rural, industrial and pre-industrial communities (Nketia 1964: 61). One may ask whether playwrights are justifiable to write their plays in English in order to satisfy everyone, or we find it prestigious when our writing is based solely on English Language? In this study, all the plays selected are written in English.

### ***The Clans of the Akans***

The clan is an important institution in traditional Asante society. It is an extended family composed of those people who trace their lineage back to a common ancestor. This line of descent is traced from the mother’s ancestor not the father’s. Some clans have thousands of members, but others are much smaller. (Kyerematen 1996: 40) Proof of membership in a clan is demonstrated by means of a family record, a genealogy which charts the individual’s descent from a common ancestor. These are very elaborate records (written or oral) and they often include biographies of individuals, histories of the locality and many other details.



There are ancestral symbols referred to as *totems* for the Asante clan systems (Sarpong 2000:52) These totems are symbolized by various creatures, particularly animals and it is believed that the spirit and perpetual protection of the individual emanates from the power of the symbolic animal. The term “totem”, refers to vegetables or animals which are revered by individuals, particularly group of people as sacred. A totem can be an animal, a plant or any natural object believed to be ancestrally related to a clan, of a family as tutelary spirit. In Asante societies, one cannot fully delineate reverence for nature as a repository of or habitat of unseen spirits which are worshipped as deities. When a deity or spirit is associated with a particular natural object or phenomenon, that object is treated with care and caution. It is not to be exploited anyhow, but rather, through some laid down procedures and rituals.

Totemites regard their members as brethren, and therefore, act together on all occasions, with common likes and dislikes. Marriage between members is considered a taboo (K. Nkansah Kyeremateng, 2010: 29 - 30)

The totems of individual clans are most of the time seen at entrances of or inside chiefs’ palaces. When the chief sits in state, the linguist (Okyeame) holds the staff (Akyeamepoma) which is carved with the clan’s totem/symbol on top. Totems can also be embossed on stools, foot-rests, clothes, doors and many other places to identify the clans people belong to. And the woman has the family in the traditional Akan cosmology.

Traditionally, the woman occupies a subordinate position to the male in an Asante society. According to them, the ideal wife is the one who is submissive and obedient to the will of the husband. She serves her husband and her family quietly, efficiently and without complaint. When she is the wife of the family head, and the mother of his children, she is an object of respect. Her words and advice on household and other matters are heeded to and often followed. They are very instrumental during marriage and other family rites.

As mentioned, one of the most serious responsibilities borne by an Asante parents is the marriage of their children. Marriage in traditional Asante society is not a private romantic affair between two individuals. It is a family to family affair. It is a family matter of grave concern and importance. Two individuals are being brought together to preserve and continue the family, not merely to satisfy their emotions. Traditionally, the would-be husband and wife have been given little choice in selection of a mate. The Asantes take the view that love should follow the marriage, not to precede it. As a result, the boy and the girl may not see each other before their engagement and sometimes not before their marriage. But because most of the time they both live in small communities or close to each other's villages, they tend to know each other facially and not so intimately.

It is not always easy for parents to find a proper wife for their son or a suitable husband for their daughter. Many social difficulties surround marriage in the Asante societies. There is the question of the right family, the reputation of the family – remember, this is a family matter – and the economic position of the family. The girl must be a hardworking obedient girl. What presents did she receive during her puberty rites? Was she served by the whole community when she was going through the rites? Has she bought for herself some cooking utensils etc? These and many other questions would be asked about the girl or about the boy. There is the question of matching the clans (family) and Totem (nton) of the prospective couple.

### **Character and Indigenous Names in Ghanaian Plays**

In Ghana, we have different ways of naming a child. Among the Akan, the father is responsible for the character (*sunsum*) of the child. This is why it is the father who names the child. A baby is not considered to be a proper human being until it has been named.

(Sarpong 2002: 42). To become a human being, the child has to have a name that identifies him. Without such a name, the child is only *Ɔhɔhɔ* (stranger)

The day on which one is born (*Kra da*) gives one a name (*Kra din*). For example, a male child born on a Sunday is called *Akwasi*. Every day name has an appellation attached to it. That of *Akwasi* is *Bodua*<sup>32</sup>

An interesting but serious element of Akan cultural observance is associated with God and his appointed day on which a child is born, *Krada*. This day is considered sacred. Gradually, the *krada* seems to be eroded from most of the Akan communities. This is happening because; the new medical approach allows Medical doctors to decide when Caesarian Operations should be done on women. A short survey indicates that about 70% delivery from a Kumasi based hospital happen on Fridays and Saturdays<sup>33</sup>, Even in labour, the pregnant woman is likely to wait till Friday or Saturday. Very soon, all male children born within a catchment area would be called *Kofi* or *Kwame* and the female ones would be *Afua* or *Amma*.

The idea of traditional Ghanaian names being considered evil by some modern religious believers, and eminent procedure to stifle promotion of indigenous names needs to be considered. Many are those who change their original names for other ones which supposedly suggest riches and good luck to them. Most of us pick foreign names to replace our names<sup>34</sup>. Indeed, many issues attest to why people are given names such as *Bediako*, *Sika*, *Anto*, *Ahyiakwa* and the rest. Playwrights' choice of names for characters in their plays should not be taken for granted.

Pre-Birth: from conception till the day of birth certain events which occur outside the child's world may suggest certain commemorative names. If fortune smiles on the parents,

<sup>32</sup> Peter K. Sarpong, *People Differ*, p. 108

<sup>33</sup> A team of three led by the researcher to a hospital in Kumasi from March 17 to April 12, 2012

<sup>34</sup> In Kwaw Ansah's *Heritage Africa*, The name Bosomfi was changed to Bosomfield.

the baby can be named *Afriyie* (Good luck), or *Sika* (Cash)<sup>35</sup>. If the opposite is the case, *Ohia* (Poverty), if the birth happens at war time, *Akwanyia*, or *Bediako* (Unhappy coincidence) will suggest itself; if the father/mother passes away before or immediately after birth, it can be named *Anto*. Many also get their names during occasions like Festivals (*Odwira*, *Buronya*, *Ohum*), sacred days (*Adae*, *Fodwoɔ*, *Dapaa*, *Fofie* etc)

The soul name (Krada) is believed to sustain and influence the morals of the person. It is considered to enter the child at birth from God. Each day of the week carries a soul name and appellation<sup>36</sup> as follows:

**Table 2.2: Days and their names for the Akan**

DAY	MALE	APPELLATION	FEMALE	APPELLATION
SUNDAY	Kwasi	Bodua	Akosua/Asi	Adampo
MONDAY	Kwadwo	Okoto	Adwoa	Badwo
TUESDAY	Kwabena	Ebo/Ogyam	Abena/Araba	Kosia
WEDNESDAY	Kwaku	Daaku	Akua	Ekusee
THURSDAY	Yaw	Preko/Kwaw	Yaa	Bosuo
FRIDAY	Kofi/Fiifi	Otuo/Okyini	Afua/Afia	Beefy/Nkoso
SATURDAY	Kwame	Atoapem	Amma	Nyamekye

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. Sarpong

<sup>36</sup> Peter K' Sarpong, K. N. Kyeremateng et al

**Table 2.3: Order of birth for the Akan**

ORDER	MALE	FEMALE
First	Opiesie	Opiesie
Second	Manu	Maanu
Third	Mensa	Maansa
Fourth	Anane/Annan	Anane
Fifth	Num/Anum	Num/Anum
Sixth	Nsia	Nsia
Seventh	Ason/Nsowaa	Nsowaa
Eighth	Botwe	Botwe
Nineth	Nkroma	Nkroma
Tenth	Badu	Badu
Eleventh	Duku	Duku

*Source: The Akans of Ghana by Nkansah Kyeremateng (1996)*

The Asante is governed by standards and commandments which have their sources in religion, environment, experience and traditions. The social ways are for most of the time, of ancient origin. Most Asante people continue to follow old, customary practices in their relations with others. This is especially true in rural Asante communities.

The family in Asante is a basic institution. Within the family, an Asante learns his role in the society, his duties within the clan, his responsibilities, and his obligations.

The immediate traditional Asante family generally consists of the parents, all unmarried children and married sons with their wives and their children. It often includes other persons such as grand-parents and even some distant relatives. This kind of family is referred to as a joint-family because the members join together in eating, worshipping, and holding property. The extended family members like the uncles, mother's sister and

brothers, cousins and the rest may not necessarily live with them in the same house or compound, but they are all classified as members of the family and for that matter, the clan.

In most cases, the oldest male is usually the head of the entire family. He supervises the family property and finances. He, normally, has inherited the headship (Abusua Panin) role from his late uncle or brother. This is so because the inheritance system of the Asantes is summarily matrilineal. (Osei Kwadwo 2011: 28) The family members pool their resources and their income, and the head of the family spends it according to the needs of each, especially during funerals. This is not to say that individuals do not possess personal property. They do. The married men give ‘chop-money’<sup>37</sup> (Akɔnhoma) to their wives to prepare meals for the whole family. Again, the jewelry, clothing and other accessories that a bride receives from her parents and other loved ones during puberty and marriage remain her own property. The male head formally possesses all authority within the family, but he is bound by tradition, custom and public opinion to preserve not to waste the family holdings. He consults with the elders of the family, and he seeks advice from the old lady (aberewatia).<sup>38</sup>

### **2.3. *Sankɔfa* and the Growth of Modern Ghanaian Drama**

The development of Ghanaian drama requires a rediscovery and reactivation of some of the customs, traditions, rituals and ceremonies we have lost. Customs, traditions, rituals and ceremonies are as veins and arteries of the body. Without connectors, there will be a breakdown in continuity. (Achampong 1999: 16). The connectors in this sense, are the creative artists and in particular, playwrights. The belief that, creative artists (playwrights)

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<sup>37</sup> Money given to the wife on daily basis to feed the family.

<sup>38</sup> Nana Osei Bonsu said this during an interview with him at his residence at Ashanti New Town. Nana was the ex-chief of Asonomaso near Asante Mampong. He is a retired teacher, a poet and an author of so many traditional stories.

can restore through their creative expressions, what we have neglected and shunned at our peril has been well noticed by some scholars. The benefits of custom, cultural ceremonies, faith, and ritual that constitute our identity and personality seem to have been discarded.

### **2.3.1. *Sankofa*: Recapturing Extinction of Ghanaian Traditional Arts**

Before the colonial era, there was little written or recorded history in most sub-Saharan Africa. The records were oral or were memorialized in wood, music, dance, drama and art. In the twentieth century, there have been several attempts to catalogue the arts of Ghana through Traditional Festivals, National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC), Drama Festivals, School and Colleges Arts Festivals, and many others.

Above all, the establishment of the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana has played a significant role in recapturing the Arts of Ghana which include the Performing Arts.

A country could be perfectly governed, immensely powerful and without poverty, yet, if it produced nothing of its own in architecture, sculpture, music, dance, drama, painting or books, it would someday pass into the twilight of history, leaving only the traces of a creditable political record ( Arkintonn, 1944; 78)

The Establishment of the School of Performing Arts seems to allay the fears of Booth Arkintonn and some concerned Ghanaian citizens as it continues to provide answers to all that he has outlined. Many Universities in the country have also established theatre arts departments. These include University of Cape Coast, University of Education Winneba, and currently, the Methodist University College, a private University which has begun theatre studies programme (September, 2014). Many believe that theatre promotes development: Kwakye Opong (2013) said:

Theatre and development should be understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means of achieving a satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence. If you build mansions and do not feed the minds of the occupants with good moral conduct and appreciation, bear in mind that, the mansion would sooner or later collapse.<sup>39</sup>

The prevailing socio-political and economic issues in Ghana in relation to the role of the performing Arts signify an indication which fulfils the vision statement of the National Commission on Culture, stated in the Draft Strategic Plan for Culture (2005-2009)

To respect, preserve, harness and use the cultural heritage and resources to develop a united, vibrant and prosperous national community with a distinctive African identity and personality and collective confidence and pride among the comity of nations

The schools of performing arts in Ghana represent our collective national heritage where people from diverse cultural backgrounds are brought together as students to learn our unique cultural features and traditions that give identity, self-respect and pride to the people. The schools therefore are seen to maintain the unique cultural identity and value for the promotion of the integrated national culture, as well as contribute to the overall economic development of the nation<sup>40</sup>. The fulfillment of these avenues revolves around the subjects designed for the programme which could be categorized under four main areas:

1. Developing and implementing subject areas/courses and programmes which promote creativity and sustainability for positive values
2. Preserving, exhibiting and enhancing national heritage
3. Establishing linkages with other sectors to project national identity

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<sup>39</sup> A speech delivered by Dr. Regina Kwakye Opong during the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Theatre of Ghana, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013

<sup>40</sup> Ibid



4. Disseminating through theatrical performances on our cultural values and practices to Ghanaians and the world at large with help of existing media.

Keeping in mind what our culture entails, one may simply establish that, the School of Performing Arts is one of the symbolic roots for all cultural deliberation in the country.

#### *Nkrumah's Dream*

It could be asserted that the thoughts of Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of the Republic of Ghana in the establishment of the Institute of African Studies, the School of Music and Dance, and Drama as part of the University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and The University of Cape Coast, testify his dreams of preserving and promotion of the arts and the cultural heritage of the people of Ghana and Africa as a whole. It is not a surprise therefore as all the public universities in the country have Adinkra symbols as part of their emblems/logos.

Nkrumah spelt out in unambiguous terms what we should do to the body of heritage of our arts and other cultural expressions in his *African Genius* speech, as capturing Africa's glorious past in a reinterpretation of our cultural/artistic, classics, traditional or contemporary.

After years of bitter political struggle for our freedom and independence, our Continent is emerging systematically from colonialism and from the yoke of imperialism. The personality of the African which was stunted in this process can only be retrieved from these ruins if we make a conscious effort to restore Africa's ancient glory. It is only in conditions of total freedom and independence from foreign rule and interferences that the aspirations of our people will see real fulfillment and the African genius find its best expression. (Nkrumah 1965: 5)

According to Nkrumah, the African personality lies in his artistic deliberations. Quoting Nkrumah, Mawere Opoku once said: "You see the African personality clearly in his dance,

music, drama and everything”. With this, Nkrumah envisioned Ghanaian personality as capable of recovery through the arts, not only in symbolic, nor in going back as it were, but bringing them to bear upon the Ghanaian situation through Theatre.

Recapturing the Arts embraces all aspects of national life including:

- Preserving national heritage
- Promoting cultural education within the formal and informal sector
- Providing support for cultural industries
- Intensifying support for cultural tourism
- Empowering students, particularly the youth with traditional skills acquisition and training
- Integrating theatre into relevant aspect of national planning

These are in line with what Atubam (1963) warned:

One only needs to accept the principle of assimilation as an unavoidable vital force in the development of a people to be able to appreciate the point that the Africanness in the new African personality of the twentieth century cannot be expected to remain what it was from creation. It will have to be a new personality or distinctive identity which should be neither Eastern nor Western and yet a growth in the presence of both with its roots deeply entrenched in the soil of the indigenous past of Africa. (Antubam 1963: 22-23).

The *Sankofa* crusade among other things recognizes all civil society groups, business and corporate organizations as stakeholders in the nation’s cultural heritage and seeks their participation in the implementation of their policies and programmes. It is therefore appropriate that maximum co-operation should be given to artists, playwrights, and cultural practitioners, when they embark on research activities. Agencies such as the National House of Chiefs, Regional Coordination Councils, District Assemblies, Religious bodies, other educational institutions, social groups, voluntary associations, NGO’s,

artistic groups, various ministries as well as the media agencies and institutions must help in the cultural research.

The following departments and agencies form part of Government's efforts to recapture the arts and the heritage.

- The Regional and District Centres for National Culture, The National Theatre of Ghana, The National Dance Company, The National Theatre Players, The National Symphony Orchestra, The Ghana Museum and Monument Board, Bureau of Ghana Languages, The Copyright Office, The National Folklore Board, The W.E.B Dubois Memorial Centre for Pan African Culture, Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park, Pan African Writers Association, The Ghana Education Service, Electronic and Print media houses, Film Industries etc, The Ghana Dance Ensemble, Abibigromma, and NAFTI.

It is imperative to note that, certain individuals through their creative activities are also helping to recapture of extinction using the *Sankofa* concept. Mention could be made of playwrights such as Nkrabea Efa Dartey, David Asomaning, Victor Yankah, Nana Adansi Pipim, Uncle Ebo White, and Martin Owusu.

In dance and choreography F. Nii Yartey, Terry Bright Ofose, Asare Newman, Janice Darko and Akua Abloso can be mentioned. For music, mention can be made of Emeritus Professor J.H.K.Nketia, Ken Kafui, Amuah, F. Laing and J. Andoh and many others.<sup>41</sup>

This view of a national tradition in the arts is appropriately captured in the now ubiquitous mythological figure of *Sankofa*: ancient proverbial Akan bird, constantly reaching back into the past even as it flies sky-bound into a future of great expectations, mindful always that an incautious leap into the future could easily lead to a sudden collapse of dreams.<sup>42</sup>

Martin Okyere Owusu in the introduction to *Drama of the Gods: A Study of Seven African Plays* (1983) became a practical advocate of the *Sankofa* advocacy when he wrote:

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<sup>41</sup> This list does not exhaust many others who are practicing serious dramatic and artistic activities in the rural areas of the country.

<sup>42</sup> Kofi Anyidoho Ibid, p. 5

The modern playwright has adopted a new attitude. No longer does he despise the religion and culture of his people; he is ceaselessly searching for meaning in traditional religion and folklore and creating new perspective on his society. He is seeking to preserve the culture and social values of his people, instead of disdaining them. Religion, Myth and rituals have become the most important sources for dramatic writing; a significant number of Modern West African plays are infused with strong elements of myth and rituals which dramatists remold from their cultural environment to suit their thematic purposes. (Owusu 1983: 2)

Wole Soyinka in his book, *Myth, Literature in the African World* emphasized the African world view which he demonstrated in his play, *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) which tackled the colonial attempt to stifle indigenous African belief systems.

Before the independence of Ghana, Kobina Sekyi wrote *The Blinkards*, in 1915 which satirized the Fante nouveaux riches of Cape Coast. Some other playwrights were Ferdinand K. Fiawo *The Fifth Landing Stage*, (1943) and J.B Danquah, *The Third Woman*, (1945). During this period, the Concert Party traditions were also featuring with plays focused on the projections of the Ghanaian Personality and an attempt to find the true Ghanaian theatre.

The playwrights stood firm by using the means of theatre (plays) to address the serious issues on colonisation of the minds of our people. They were conscious of their customs, traditions and the African personality. Mr. Tsiba, a character in Sekyi's *The Blinkards*, confused about the traditional culture and the white man's culture, tells Mrs. Abrofosem, another character in the play, who has been indoctrinating the local people of Cape Coast to follow the white Man's traditions and culture. To explain this, Kobina sek yi uses a character to accentuate this point.

Mr. Tsiba:

Lawyer Onyimdzi, the one who wear English clothes for court and office, and wears native dress when at home and when going to see his friends? I

don't like him. Only when he talk you know he has gone England; he don't do fine things like other men who have gone England. (Sekyi 1918: 75)

Prior to Independence from colonial rule, the National Theatre movement emerged in Ghana to find what would constitute a truly African Theatre underscored by the political wind of change as expressed by the First President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah as the "The African Personality"

This movement during the post independent era influenced Efua Theodora Sutherland who modernized the traditional form of *Anansesem* (spider stories) as a form of modern Ghanaian theatre, which she called *Anansegorɔ*. Mohammed Ben Abdallah, expanding the scope of *Anansegorɔ* to cover the whole of Africa came up with what he calls *Abibigorɔ*. Daniel Appiah-Adjei considering the symbolic nature of African theatre also came up with a form which he calls *Theatre of Symbols*. Have these forms really constituted all we have as the Ghanaian theatre? Do these forms cover the entire truth for the stage? Can they be extended to the traditional forms of theatre such as funerals, marriage, naming ceremonies and many others in the communities? What are the common features that can be seen as a bridge to fill in the widening gaps? What kind of variables in terms of communication do these playwrights use? What are the major communication problems of Ghanaian theatre? How can *Sankɔfa* be applied in our search for the true Ghanaian theatre?

The global methods of expression in dramatic genres and the movements of dramatic cultures in other parts of the world revolve basically around the language within their cultural milieu (English, French, Dutch etc) and as many modern dramatists of Ghanaian origin express themselves in the languages of their colonizing agents, the question of communicating cultural peculiarities associated with African verbal aesthetic canons becomes a dilemma.

This might have prompted some playwrights who wrote plays in the local dialects. Fiawoo, Koranteng, Sarfo, Owusu Ansah, and others. The new trend of Local Ghanaian movies (Ghallywood, Kumawood etc.) seems to be another means to restore the local language.

In recent times, studies by scholars such as Frances Harding, *The Performance Arts in Africa* (2002), Osita Okagbue, *African Theatres and Performances* (2007), Victor Ukaegbu, *The Use of Mask in Igbo Theatre in Nigeria: the Aesthetics of Flexible Performance Traditions*, Mellen, (2007) Mieke Kolk, *Rituals and Ceremonies in Sudan: From Cultural Heritage to Theatre* (2006), and Patrick McNaughton, *A bird Dance Near Saturday City: Sidi Ballo and the Art of west African Masquerade* (2008) so far, are some of the main studies of indigenous oral theatre and performances in Africa. Some of the texts focus less on literary than oral performances; while this thesis focuses mainly on both the literary and the traditional and creates awareness of the controlling nature of traditional symbols in Ghanaian plays.

Turning attention to the children in Ghana who are the eminent future leaders and for whom many thesis and theories pray to reach, one cannot fathom whether the playwrights use their creative expressions to sensitize them on the sustainability of our cultural heritage. I therefore, agree with Anyidoho (2000) who observed in his Book Review on Atukwei Okai's *The Anthill in the Sea: Verses and chants for Children* (1987) featured in Fontomfrom, edited by Kofi Anyidoho and James Gibbs (2000). He wrote:

What is the wisdom in devoting all their energies to prize-winning works to be read by an often detached, sometimes indifferent population in Europe, America and Australia while their own children's psyche is continually fractured by such dangerous nonsense as:

Baa! Baa! Black sheep  
Have you any wool?  
Yes Sir, yes sir  
Three Bags full... (Anyidoho 2000: 373)

Anyidoho (2000) boldly admonished that the next time we watch our children happily

singing such verses on Ghanaian television, in any classroom, at speech and prize-giving programmes, we should pause and reflect on the fate of our children and the “Black Sheep”. From his argument, one can deduce how the children of our land are being indoctrinated and used to propagate the mental enslavement by the “Master” who takes one of the three bags full of wool. He further explains:

There is much racial bigotry and presumption of black inferiority buried within the sugar-coated rhythm of this “innocent” verse ... that is how the foundation is laid for our uncritical acceptance of the ultimate meaning of black sheep – A person considered undesirable or disgraceful by his family or group... (Anyidoho 2000: 373)

Perhaps our children need to be considered in our deliberation of the *Sankofa* concept. We may be right to begin with them. But in Ghana, during the Presidential Elections Petition at the Supreme Court, (2013), it was interesting to hear on the National Television, an intermission tune of the instrumental recordings on the poem, Anyidoho spoke about. (Baah Baah Black Sheep...)

Abdallah, (1990), advocated for the establishment of our democratic dispensation and nation building on a strong cultural exegesis. .” The 31<sup>st</sup> December Revolution will remain incomplete if we fail to anchor it on a dependable cultural base”. He further reflected on how important it is for the nation to have a revised educational system. As the then Chairman of the National Commission on Culture giving a paper during the First Kyerematen Memorial Lectures in Kumasi, he said:

Our school children know more about English recitations and folktales than stories about Dede Okai, or Asebu Amanfi of blessed memory. They still relate imageries about snow and winter while they know little about harmattan...It is therefore the policy of the commission (National Commission on Culture) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Ghanaian culture should be seriously taught as a subject in all elementary schools in the country...(Abdallah, 1991: 5)

According to Aquandah in his article featured in *The Ghana Cultural Magazine, Volume One*, published by The Cultural Initiatives Support Programme (CISP), with the title; *Ghana Culture, National Identity and Development* (2009: 24):

Culture is Lifestyle as manifested by a particular people or society. It is man-made, not genetically inherited. It is evolved for the purpose of living. It is socially taught and learned. It originates as a human response to the local physical and biological environment. Cultural traditions look to the past for their mandate, authority and authenticity as cultural traits are regarded as society's norms handed down the generations.

He further stated that culture is dynamic and is often affected by local and external influences and stimuli. Indeed, as one must give room for these influences which seem to twist the authenticity of culture, it would be a form of disaster when the culture of a people is thrown away completely and in its place a foreign culture reigns.

Our progress beyond the behaviour and actions of the past will be predicated on a freedom that is self-determining. Such a Freedom involves creating a new rationale, a new way of seeing, a new way of thinking, and a new way of doing things (Hill Jr, 1992: 55). Currently, one can claim that our actions, our thinking and values are geared towards Eurocentricism. As victims of Western civilization, we have granted a privileged position to the values and concepts of a civilization which define our traditions as valueless. James Ene Henshaw in *This is Our Chance* (1956) lamented this assertion through a character...

#### BAMBULU

Though the world outside is active, moving and progressing, people are questioning and debating, here in this place, this prison called a village, where silence is the most golden and most abundant of virtues, we move like sheep from day to day, from year to year, doing nothing but worshipping tradition and spitting hate against our enemies. In this prison called Koloro you may be heretic...but never on the rocks of traditional marriage. At any rate, I have stepped into the ring. The die is cast... (Henshaw 1956: 21)



Bambulu is speaking like this because he has imbibed the white man's civilization to the neglect of the African one. But Ngugi (1968) assured the African of his bravery and assertiveness in respecting and retaining his culture;

#### ELDER

Ha! Ha! Ha!  
 We of the Marua tribe are not children.  
 Or foolish either.  
 Do you still believe in what the white man said?  
 He said our medicine was bad, bad...  
 Last month our diviner had a message from God.  
 He had a vision  
 And there he saw the tribe expand...  
 Becoming powerful... (Ngugi 1968: 10)

In a positive mood to reach our cultural ambiance, Perkins, in *Harvesting New Generation: the Positive Development of Black Youth*, (1985) envisaged the characteristics of the new generation of the youth. The researcher borrows his description to illustrate the new youth who in a total acceptance of the *Sankofa* concept would move to the understanding of their Ghanaian and African nature:

**Table 2.4: *Sankofa* Awareness**

BEFORE <i>SANKOFA</i> AWARENESS	AFTER <i>SANKOFA</i> AWARENESS
Confused self-concept	Ghanaian/African self-concept
Cultural incompetence	Cultural competence
Ambivalent behaviour	Positive behaviour
Depreciated character	Transcendental character
Adaptive behaviour	Self-awareness
Confused group loyalty	Group loyalty
Median/Low self-esteem	High self-esteem
Reactionary behaviour	Liberated behaviour

As a people, there is a need for a transformation process; a lost part of our heritage must be restored. If we are to promote the positive development of youth, there should be a transformation model that exclusively addresses their needs. The model must penetrate the foreign norms which permeate the Ghanaian society, so the youth will have the opportunity to maximize their development in spite of its debilitating influence.

Paul Hill Jr. (1992) in his argument of the Old Versus the New Rites of passage declared:

One of the fundamental ways human groups ensure continuity and continuation of their culture over time is to socialize the young in manners of feeling, thinking, believing, and behaving so that they become proficient bearers of the group's culture. The socialization process becomes a prescription for group survival. It incorporates all that has been, all that is, currently is, and mirrors the hope for the future.<sup>43</sup>

The researcher sees Paul Hill, an African American, as an ardent advocate of the *Sankofa* concept with a strong belief in going back into the African rituals, especially, Rites of passage (initiation) for young boys and girls. According to him, the occasion often marks the beginning of acquiring knowledge which is not otherwise accessible to those who do not get the chance to be initiated. It is an awakening new day for the young. They learn to endure hardships. They learn to live with one another. They learn to obey and learn the secrets and mysteries of male-female relationships. Like the Bragoro<sup>44</sup> of the Akans, most traditionalists believe that girls who undergo the puberty rites most often marry well.

That part of our rich African inheritance characterized by traditions of personal mastery and locus of control through the ritualization of social relationships has been lost. But, in assessing our present predicaments, it is only natural that we examine our African origins to determine what it is that should have been saved. Obviously, many worthy elements of our heritage have been lost, stripped away, or simply allowed to wither. The nearest modern equivalent to ancient initiation rites is formal and institutionalized education. Both processes are compulsory. Both try to bend the unruly energies of youth to constructive social purposes. Both attempt to teach

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<sup>43</sup> Hill (1992) *Coming of Age: African American Male Rites-Of-Passage*.

<sup>44</sup> Female initiation rites into adulthood performed in Akan Societies of Ghana.

obedience, discipline, and the basics of proper behaviour. Both express and communicate the central value of the sponsoring culture... ( Hill, 1992: 64)

To authenticate his assertion, Hill provides the differences between what he calls; the old and the new rites.

**Table 2.5: The Rites**

OLD RITES	NEW RITES
Were religious	Are secular
Ran by sun and seasonal time	Operate by clock and calendar, (usually sedentary and behind closed doors)
Centred on concrete experiences	Rely heavily on words, numbers, and abstractions
Were dramatic, intense, forceful, and fast	Are slow, extended, and often vague about ultimate destination
Engendered awe	Commonly produce detachment and boredom
Typically inspired participation in the ongoing history of the culture	Are often holding areas created where youth are isolated from larger cultural reality rather than allowed to experience it
Resulted in an immediate and unmistakable status change	Provide no such direct deliverance into adult roles and status.

It must be said that the new rites are completely not devoid of religious connotations. People are satisfied with what they do and are fully fulfilled in the religious realms. These differences in rites are so similar to those experienced in Ghana. That, as soon as the youth complete their Junior High school examination, the next step is to organise themselves for pictures and parties and that constitutes their being initiated into adulthood.

The old rites, according to Nana Darkowaa, the Queen mother of Mpirim in the Ashanti Region of Ghana are performed and gotten over at a determined place and witnessed by the community as a whole; but the new rites can go on indefinitely (dropping out and

being pushed with several immoral activities) and be severed, perhaps never resulting in general community recognition.<sup>45</sup>

As an observation, the old rites were in the hands of concerned adults who had the interests of the youth at heart; the new rites are frequently monitored by employees whose purpose for being involved is related to his or her financial condition and interest. (A shift in the locus of control from the family to event organizers)

Efua Sutherland in *The Marriage of Anansewa* demonstrates the traditional culture with *Bragoro* (puberty-rites) and other forms of traditional singing. These were exhibited by the elderly women in the play. Ben Abdalla in *The Fall of Kumbi*, also assembles all the eight clans of the Akans. The uncountable number of proverbs fused into most dramas is a sure indication of wresting our cultural heritage from the hands of colonialism.

These trends of knowledge reveal *Sankofa*, which basically demonstrates re-visit of past events. Each scholarly move has been influenced by one event or the other. *Sankofa* has universal tendencies, looking at it from the inception of theatre from the Greek Era, through the Roman, Renaissance, Shakespearean, Medieval and what we call the Modern period.

From many sources of literature, it seems all the plays emanate from some already established sources including myths, history, religion, Festivals, and other social conventions. According to Michael Etherton in his book; *The Development of African Drama* (1982), we need to understand the process of how that which happens, which he has termed *actuality* becomes drama in a performance. Etherton further comments on how the process is not simply one which occurs every time a new play is devised.

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Nana Darkowaa (March, 2013)

It is not merely the conscious techniques of the individual dramatist, although it may seem to have become this in the present time. Rather, it is much more significantly a historical process which stretches through time. (Etherton 1982: 55)

Drama's response unlike a poem, or a song or a melody on a flute is not a response of an individual to an experience involving individual sensibility. Each drama is instead, a corporate and social act reflecting a collective experience.

We have moved from the rural, traditional milieu to the contemporary, urban milieu, both of which are experiencing social change. We have seen growth of traditional performing arts into drama and theatre as a phenomenon which is not easy to define. Drama is a process – a process of realizing a performance, a process of responding to cultural change to make some sense of it – rather than a categorization of parts and a series of limiting definitions... (Etherton 1982:55)

The overall philosophy of *Sankofa*, therefore is, if everything goes to plan, a move forward. This takes place largely through a process of trial and error. Our people create something and then take a step back to try and assess how it looks. With what has been learned, hopefully, the next time something better can be achieved. This gives rise to the proverb: *Se wo were firi na wo san kofa a yenkyiri*. (It is not forbidden to go to the past to retrieve what has been left behind.). Ghanaian playwriting, like any other playwriting in other parts of the world can be termed “re-writing”. There is always the need to re-visit what has been written to improve upon them. Thus, Bible says:

...that says the Lord: Stand by the roads, watch and look for the ancient path, where the good things are, and walk in it (Jeremiah 6:16)

Ashbury, et al (1998) acknowledged that African dramatists have, from the late 1960s or so, been pre-occupied with how drama should be an embodiment of African culture and self-identity, through use of various traditional elements. They list several recurrent themes from Dramas; films, music and dance. They indicate that, one has to overcome the cultural

barrier, so as to understand the African Drama. However, Ashbury et al (78) do not seem to comprehend the nature of African worldview and its cosmology. For they argue that, by incorporating the supernatural element in drama, story-telling, the artists often break codes of reality, often in the form of flashbacks or dream like sequence, creating almost magical or mystical elements which creates a feeling of spirituality.” Ashbury et al, apparently, lack a proper understanding of the African concept of reality. They look at the spirituality as something separate from the totality of the African’s life, as it is the case in Europe, where magic and spirituality are not real, but fantastic. But the African playwright, such as Wole Soyinka, Zulu Sofola, Martin Owusu, Mohammed Ben Abdallah, Daniel Appiah-Adjei, just to mention, but a few, believe in the existence of external bodies as part of our tradition, not to discard and ignore. For the African, the universe is a total amalgamation of the human and natural elements. He believes that a truly indigenous reality should accept that, there is a connection between the dead, the living and the unborn. The three elements embody the reality of the interconnections between the past, the present and the future, and it connects spiritual life with material existence (Wa Thiongo 2000)

Wa Thiongo’s intention is what we call the African worldview. Many African scholars, in particular playwrights, visual artists and filmmakers, have always depicted this view in their works. For example, Lihamba (1983) in describing the nature of African theatre performance said:

The performances ... do not aim at mere imitation of the social reality but desire to attune society to the universe. The approach to performance is cosmological combining both spiritual essence and material matter. Man, the gods, the spirits, the ancestors and nature are seen and made to form a link affected in ritualistic events (1983: 8)

In African drama, we find the cosmological point of view, being clearly depicted in various expressions. Diawara (1992) describes one of the Nigerian plays, *Wedlock of the*

*Gods*. (1982) by Zulu Sofola to have elements, that adhere to the African world views. To represent the people's reality, African dramatic practitioners have always integrated African traditional cultures like folklore, dance, and music in their plays. For example the issue of dance and music performed by griots in Sembene Ousmane's *Xala* (1974), Gaston Kaboré's *Wend Kuuni* (1982), Ben Abdallah's *The Song of A Pharaoh* (2013) adopt traditional storytelling narrative. Moses Olaiya Adejomo (alias Baba Sala) and Chief Hurbert Ogunde also turned to theatre and adopted Yoruba theatrical culture to produce films, just to mention a few.

Martin Owusu's *The Legend of Aku Sika* (1989), Daniel Appiah-Adjei's *Death on Trial* (2013), *Atobra* (2011), and many others follow the same direction of creativity. This situation in African drama has been influenced by the adaptation of African traditional cultural performances. It has also been observed that African countries, which have introduced oral traditions in their drama, have been very successful in the drama industry.

Taking some examples of Ghana, Okyere Darko (2008) stated that:

Considering the success of Akan plays transformed into many other performances, especially, those introduced by the local playhouses, (Anokye Players and Kyerematen Playhouse) resident at the Centre for National Culture, Kumasi, local movies in Ghana, are blooming because, they are always replete of our traditional elements. Akan movies such as *Sika Sunsum*, *Kyeiwaa* and *Kanana* are so popular in other African countries, Film-makers should therefore, seek materials from dramatists and other more popular form of drama including wrestling matches, song, and dance etc.

Africa as a continent is huge and diverse. Its pre-colonial cultures were many and varied, and they persisted as both tribal heritage and individual languages. (Cameron & Gillespie 1989: 380) Africa has always been branded by the West for many centuries as the "Dark Continent (Vaughan 1966), a continent of the uncivilized, wild beasts, savages, cannibals, diseases, primitive and backward people who grow tails and idle away time in the jungle

(Mgbejune 1989). This view gave a justification for big Western powers to carry out their ambitious mission to colonize Africa. Thus, Belgium, Britain, France, and Portugal colonized the African continent economically, politically, socially and culturally. Ashbury (1998) put it this way;

Colonialism was a system of economic, social and cultural control. Its aim was to exploit the economic resource of colonies for the benefit, not of local people but of the colonizer nations (1998: 15).

The colonizers claimed that they were bringing the benefits of civilization to their colonial subjects. But, in reality, whatever was introduced by the colonial system was designed to support the colonization endeavours. The colonized were encouraged to accept their fate, lose confidence in their own culture and internalize a sense of their inferiority to Europeans, as Ngugi Wa Thiong O' (1993) explained:

...the economic and political conquest of Africa was accompanied by cultural subjugation and the imposition of an imperialist cultural tradition...this took the form of destroying peoples' languages, history, dance, education, religious naming systems and all social institutions that were the basis of their self conceptions as a people (Wa Ngugi 1993:3)

When the West colonised Africa they imposed their rule upon the continent. They distorted, disfigured, and destroyed the African way of life and oppressed its people (Fanon 1963). The colonizers introduced their religion and Western education as tools for fulfilling their colonization mission. These two were significant forces and effective weapons for colonization in Africa. Education as "the kind of training of the mind that enables people to make deliberate rational choices played an effective role to enhance colonialism (Wiredu 1980: 2).

The newly established European education placed the colonizers at the centre. The colonized Africans were equipped with education and mentality that considered the



colonialist as superior to the native Africans, which caused the latter to strive to acquire Western social habits (Ukala 2001:29). Those who received this education were made to look up to European cultures, languages and the arts as the measure for their rational civilization and abilities (Wa Thiong'o 1993: 43 - 44) This was a result of the kind of training of the mind they received. Much of what the white men wrote about Africa had no realistic relationship to the favourable conditions obtained in Africa before the advent of the whites. It was the whites who by their atrocious deeds practically destroyed African civilization achieved after many years of hard work. Imagination may try to reconstruct the figure of our losses, but an accurate calculation will remain forever a vain thing because of the extent and magnitude of the destruction. (Osei 1968)

Christian religion was introduced under the subtle notion of helping, “tame Africans and save them from heathenism (Mgbejune 1989:1). Fanon (1963) emphasized that, the dominating power set a mission to civilize and Christianize the primitive and barbarian. He adds, “the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the native that colonialism came to lighten their darkness” (1963: 210). The Christian religion was used to drive the colonized masses into a culture of silence (Mlama 1991). To justify colonialism, colonial masters put it straightforward that, they are the civilizer. For this case, Busia (1962) quotes General Norton de Matos, the colonial Governor of the Portuguese territory of Angola, as saying:

In Africa our objective has been to convert the blacks, to lift them from the moral and material misery they were in when we encountered them, to clothe them, to give them human habitation...  
(Busia 1962: 99 -100)

This is well explained by H.H. Wyatt, in his book *Ethics of Empire* (1897). He emphasizes that:

...to us (the British) and not to others, a certain definite duty has been assigned: to carry light and civilization into the dark place of the world, to touch the mind of Asia and of Africa with the ethical ideals of Europe, to give to thronging millions who would otherwise never know peace and security, these first condition of human advance (Wyatt 1897: 56).

The effect of colonialism was, therefore, the destructions of artistic, creative potentials. For example, Christians burnt works of African artists simply because they “were symbols of witchcraft or grave images of the devil” (Wa Thiong’o 1993: 43) In Ghana, Ephraim Amu was dismissed from Achimota School when he stood in the pulpit to preach with traditional cloth on. Wa Thiong’o adds on that, under colonial rule, the native culture was repressed while through the school system, other imported (Western) traditions were encouraged. French and British literary theatres were introduced with the intention of inculcating European values and attitudes among the colonized (Mloma 1991).

In other words, the theatres introduced by the colonizer served as part of the cultural domination crucial to the colonization process. On the other hand, the colonialist or the Westerners came to Africa, armed with Western science and technology. Asare, (2008) demonstrates the lure of the white man to take the valuable property through Ananse, a symbolic character in his play *Ananse in the Land of Idiots*.

According to Ukadike (1994: 15), the communication technology such as print media (books, newspaper), radio, cinema and television were useful instruments for influencing African minds, so that, they can be well dominated (Busia, 1962: 45). The technological effects were also used to ensure the prolongation of the political, cultural and economic domination. For example, the contents of publications produced by missionary printing presses were carefully chosen, so that, only those messages that were considered suitable by the authorities were allowed to reach the African. The Europeans used all forms of their

technology to gain and maintain possession of the African. They used drama to help them to rule more effectively, and make colonial subjects adopt a European way of life. As it was in the print media, the colonial authority emphasized having the right drama for the African audience.

Therefore, drama chosen for Africans only were produced or screened for the natives (Ukadike 1994: 15). In 1948, a British Institute Conference declared that, the Colonial Drama and Film Units were to produce drama for Africans. This was done under the same grounds and sense of distorting African image and personality. Here Colin Beale, Secretary, Edinburgh House for drama and Visual Aids, affirmed that:

I am convinced that for the African, with his primitive mind, his pitifully meager mental outlook, his lack of general cultural background, his semi and often-total illiteracy, his sense of wonder, and his love of fun, could have an almost immeasurably great future (BFI 1948: 17).

In Fanon's words, the colonial epoch left nothing for Africans to chance. So, drama came to Africa as a potent organ of colonization, it was a powerful tool for indoctrinating Africans into foreign cultures, including alien ideals and aesthetics. The exploited masses of Africa have not always accepted the culture of silence, which was driven into them by the Christian values (Mlama1991). They had evolved a culture of resistance, in order to fight the forces of their exploitation and oppression. It is this culture of resistance, which previously enabled some of them to take up arms and fight against colonial domination. On the other hand, African struggle reversed the colonial way that used to undermine the African. They used technology brought to them by the colonial masters to continue fighting against the domination. Africans started cultural resistance, first through writings, and then, they turned to other means such as technology.

A new thinking awakened in the African people. This new thinking showed itself in various ways; Africans no more thought or talked about things which brought hardships to them, but about things calculated to exterminate all evil forces from Africa. (Osei 1968: 45)

This African resistance resulted from the African realization of the danger that was facing them of losing their culture. Therefore, they were relentlessly determined to renew contact once more with the oldest, and most pre-colonial springs of life of their people (Fanon 1963). This renewal of contact is what Diawara has called “return to the source”, whereby Africans began to search, use and glorify their identity in the past, after realizing that, there was nothing to be ashamed of. And this is one of the foundations of the *Sankofa* phenomenon.

African intellectuals who were well read in European Literature, and grounded in European philosophy, but left out of the colonial power structure, saw the need to identify themselves as Blacks and oppressed people (Obiechina 1990). This was, therefore, the beginning of the anti-colonial movement, which included writers and artists and some political leaders with the aim of restoring confidence in the native culture and traditions (68-69). It was another face of the Nationalist Movements geared towards the ending of colonial domination, and attended by cultural nationalism, aimed at restoring the already spoilt culture, and re-establishing the creative urge of the people. It was the anti-colonial resistance which came forward in its different forms, ranging from armed struggle to intellectual works of artistic creativity. Today, we think of the strong determination of winning back what legitimately belongs to us; (Osei 1968: 29)

The resistance in creative works, according to Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, started with patriotic national traditions. The colonized, through songs, dances, poetry and drama spoke of and reflected people’s real needs as they struggled against appalling work conditions in the

settler-occupied farms. They sang of their hopes and as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1993:44) noted: "...Whether in sculpture, poetry, songs, or dance, the patriotic art looked to the past ..."

Under this situation, the look to the past (*Sankofa*) was the revival of traditional African culture, which was destroyed by the colonizers. African people realized that, the only effective weapon for their liberation from colonial cultural domination was their rich traditions, which the enemy was attempting to destroy. Ukala (1999: 30) stated that, the use of traditional expressions such as songs, dance, poetry and drama "became an integral part of the nationalistic struggle for independence all over Africa."

There were efforts, therefore, by the African intellectuals to use African cultural material in the struggle of all facets against cultural crack. Songs, dances, poetry, drama, and ritual were exploited in African expressions, in their explanation and understanding of the world, in a sensitive participation in the reality which underlie the world<sup>46</sup>. But the struggle still continues as the modern African has constantly refused to see the wisdom in his traditions and culture. The search hitherto has transcended the borders of political struggle, but through the arts as well.

### **2.3.2. Proverbs as symbols of Communication in Akan Culture**

Proverbs are short pithy statements of homely pieces of traditional wisdom, philosophy, or advice which have passed into general use from generation to generation. They are often expressed in metaphor, rhyme or alliteration, and refer to some common human

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<sup>46</sup>

See Banham, B et al (eds) *African theatre playwrights & politics* Johannesburg, Witwatersrand Press 1999

experience. These sayings are often satirical or mocking in intention. The importance of proverbs cannot be under-estimated in every language; in the form of short, easily memorable phrases, they contain a great treasure of folk wisdom.

Proverbial sayings and phraseologies are knotty statements and are viewed as vehicle for communicating and transporting change of behaviour and attitude of people on personal level or among groups in and outside the organization. (Agyemang 2014) "Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (Achebe 1994: 78) Achebe believes that words are prepared by proverbs for consideration and digestion; that proverbs are the basis by which words/conversations are made. Proverbs as old as the beginning of the Akan emergence, are essential part of our culture (Appiah et al., 2007), they are as old as the language of the people and are passed on from generation to generation for centuries. Akans history is traced to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century (Logie 2009: 17) and records of Akan Proverbs shows Missionary- Johann Gottlieb Christaller-1879, Basel Mission-Publishing *Dictionary of the Akan Proverbs*. 3,600 proverbs in a 612 page book: *The Encyclopedia Africana Dictionary of Africana Biography*, (1997: 104). Appiah, Appiah and Agyeman-Duah (2007) *'Bu Me Be: Proverbs of the Akans'* contains over 7000 Akan Proverbs. In the Akan communities, proverbs are amply and largely used during marriage and naming ceremonies, funeral rite celebrations, folkloric music, and are indispensable in diplomatic parleys. They are used to illustrate ideas; package messages reinforce arguments and deliver messages of inspiration, consolation, celebration and advice, associated with the wise, the elderly and the grey-haired. The ability to use proverbs dexterously in social settings is viewed as a symbol of maturity, experience and wisdom. Scholarly application of Proverbs include among others; Folk Psychology *Common sense psychology* (de-Graft Aikins, 2014; Yang, 2012) According to de Graft-Aikins (2014) psychology thrived in the minds, discourses and

relationships of the vast majority of African communities. Others to consider for brevity of space are: *Akan notion of personality*- (Sarfo & Mate-Kole 2014), *Ghanaian emotions expressed through proverbs* (Dzokoto & Adams, 2007), *Ananse Folklore and Psychology*- Gavi (2014), *Old Truths or Fresh Insights?*- Teigen (2001), *Folklore and Risk Taking* – (Weber, Hsee & Sokolowska (1998), *The Use of Proverbs and Hope Fostering among Yorubas*, Ajila (2004) .Proverbial sayings, capable of being applied to a variety of new settings (Teigan 2007: 12), no attempt made so far to unveil the rich principles hidden in the Ghanaian Akan Proverbs, which in the view of the researcher, seems to be the basis for contemporary communication Principles and theatre Values. “*Proverbs are observations, knowledge and wisdom of our fore-fathers*” (Makinde, 1987: 74)

### 2.3.3. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed considerable literature on how different scholars have made contributions towards the understanding of the *Sankofa* concept, and the narratives of Adinkra and Akan clan symbols. These writings are in their own merit, great works on symbols and their contribution to the growth of Drama in Ghana. Within the realms of *Sankofa* in particular, writers such as Nketia, Agbo, Antubam, Anyidoho, Sarpong, Achampong, Armah and many others have made significant contributions to the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the *Sankofa* Concept.

Looking carefully and analyzing what these writers have written on the *Sankofa* idea, one common trend is noticed: *Going back into the past to reclaim what has been left behind*. As much as I agree with them, this study seems to go beyond retromania. The study suggests that *Sankofa* theory is not only going back to reclaim something. It is a process which includes what we call “Time Trinity”; Yesterday, today and tomorrow, and that creativity does not only emanate from the past.

Many scholars have also done extensive works on the Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols. The exercise revealed literature by writers such as Abayie, Ablade Glover, Agbo, Antubam, Willis and books on the symbols. Apart from P. Achampong who wrote on how Adinkra symbols manifest themselves in the Bible, all other writers made their contributions towards the pictorial images of the symbols, their philosophies and meanings.

This study borrows a lot from the established literature by various writers but makes a significant move to unveil the traditional symbols in four Modern Ghanaian plays. With scholarly works on the Akan Clan Totems, this study does not only demonstrate the family systems of the Akan people which have been extensively dealt with in the works of Abayie, Sarpong, Kyeremateng and the rest, it extends into the traits and characteristics of the various animal totems in relation to indigenous characters in the various selected plays.

The review registered some tenets on how the *Sankofa* phenomenon transcends borders and crosses barriers of creed, and ethnicity. Hence, *Sankofa: Drama at different times and places*. It also revealed *Sankofa* as Renaissance, and *Sankofa: Recapturing extinction in Ghanaian art and culture*. Literature on communication through signs and symbols, semiotics, proverbs and other narratives on symbology as a whole were also reviewed in this chapter.

Knowing how critical it is in undertaking any review of literature I took on board the notion that my task was simultaneously about coming to grips with some texts, but also understanding the shape of the field of drama and theatre, and the performing arts as a whole; its collective library, and where a particular text fits in relation to others. It was also important to understand that being a playwright in the field I assembled some inner library, the set of texts that helped me come to grips with key ideas, debates, gaps and blind spots.



While there were some key texts that must be read, there were others which were used under performance practices. The whole world became my library and avenue for the review in this context.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the study's research design. The research is focused on the understanding of how the *Sankofa* concept has influenced modern Ghanaian drama. The study then, looks for Adinkra and Akan Traditional symbols (tangible and intangible) in the published works of Four Ghanaian Playwrights, namely; Efo Kodjo Mawugbe, *In the Chest of a Woman* (2008), Martin Owusu, *The Legend of Aku Sika* (1999), Efua T. Sutherland, *Edufa* (1968), and Ama Ata Aidoo, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965) and how they contribute to the literature and preservation of Ghanaian traditional culture. One may suggest that, modern Ghanaian playwrights have been resorting to the tradition for their creative materials, and this thesis explores the authenticity of that claim, or otherwise.

Indeed, Scholars such as Nketia (1972), Martin Owusu (1983), Ben Abdallah (1982), Kofi Anyidoho & James Gibbs (2000), Hilliard (1998); Lee, Lomotey & Shujaa (1990); Madhubuti & Madhubuti (1994) have argued at different times that, the effective education of the youth of Africa, and for that matter, Ghana has to be grounded in cultural identification. I presume this cultural identification suggests that Ghanaian students and lovers of theatre need to be encouraged to see Ghanaian tradition as a very vital zone for creativity for national development.

##### 3.1.1 Initial Approach to the Research

Reflecting on the guiding research question of the thesis: "To what extent have Adinkra and Akan traditional symbols been applied in *The Legend of Aku Sika*; *In The Chest of a Woman*, *Edufa*, and *Dilemma of a Ghost*?" There was the need to get access to the four Ghanaian plays selected. There was also the need to find the meanings and sources of

traditional symbols, (Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols), all termed as *Sankofa*, and review literature on them. I held series of discussions with my supervisors Professor Martin Okyere Owusu, Dr. Agyemang Ossei, and Dr. Regina Kwakye Opong, and some stakeholders, including, students, art critics, librarians, policy makers, (MTCA, MCTA, NCC, and CNC), traditional authorities, Heads of Akan Clan totems and other colleagues in the research area.

As a requirement of the Departmental Graduate Committee, I presented two seminar papers on the thesis. These seminars engaged the attention of some scholars who shared their ideas and opinions about the research, and made significant inputs.

Since this research centred on two main areas, Content and Ethnography, I had two approaches to design the research project. The content approach was to read and analyze the four selected plays in order to explore the *Sankofa* elements (Traditional cultural product) in the plays, and also to read literature on written works on Adinkra and Akan Clan Totems.

The other approach was to interview purposive respondents with adequate knowledge on the Ghanaian cultural heritage, particularly, those of the Akan ethnicity, on Adinkra symbols and Akan Clan Totems, some theatre practitioners and dramatists to explore the symbols in the communities. Again, there was a need to discover how Akan symbols, particularly, the Clan Totems appear at the performance level on stage rather than in the text.

After an approval to conduct the research has been granted by the Graduate Committee, and having won a scholarship grant from Carnegie NGAA to conduct the ethnographic interview, I designed letters for traditional interviewees, facilitators and others. (See

appendix One) Again; with the guidance from my lead supervisor, I constructed a semi-structured interview guide for my interviews on the Akan Clan Totems., with a detailed interview schedule.

Naturally, the plays selected like most works of drama, are meant to be performed on a stage and witnessed by an audience. The life of drama, is, in fact, so intimately connected to stage performance that a single word *theatre* is often used to refer, both to plays and the place where they are performed and witnessed... (Claus 1974: 14). By the mention of *Sankofa and Drama*, as found in the title of this thesis, many are those who may suspect the study to be a stage based orientation. This is rightly so, as the theatrical nature of plays is immediately evident, largely of dialogue, through which characters speak to one another rather than to us, and communicate with each other rather than with us as readers. By content analysis, the main idea was to read and analyze the plays with the concerns of looking for the various traditional symbols which hitherto are described as *Sankofa* materials in the plays.

Therefore, in reading any of the plays, rather than witnessing it on stage, one has to imagine it as a performance, projecting in our mind's eye, an image of the setting, the props, as well as the movements, gestures, facial expressions, and vocal intonations of the characters. What therefore, would be more appropriate, as the research methodology for this study?

According to Kothari (1992: 76) research methodology refers to a systematic way applied to solve a research problem or question. In this study, the research problem as stipulated in the first chapter draws on the overarching questions; *how do I find the silent language (symbols) in the four selected plays?* The works of the four playwrights initially became a guide which significantly influenced my individual scholarship as a drama critic. I engaged

in constant reading and analyzing of the plays. I also questioned myself;”where do I find the traditional symbols in the Akan communities?” Pondering on all these I discovered that, the research methodology that fitted the study was the Qualitative Research.

### **3.1.2. Qualitative Research**

I employed qualitative research for this study because my work is part artistic which deals with written plays and a stage performance and the other part ethnographic. This is in line with what Experiment Resource (2009) argued, that the primary aim of qualitative research is to provide a complete, detailed artistic description of the subject of a study with the purpose of uncovering prevalent trends and patterns in thought and in opinion. This work also sought to provide an in-depth picture of the clan totems. Using the qualitative research method for this work was appropriate as it provided avenues for the interpretation of historically or culturally significant phenomena. The general basis of the work cannot be realized without in-depth analysis and interpretation of the history and culture of the Akan people.

In this regard, the search for meaning and interpretation of symbols, particularly, Akan Clan symbols offered me the opportunity to isolate and define categories of data during the process of the research. Some questions posed were not difficult for a respondent to answer precisely; because this work tries to illuminate aspects of people’s everyday lives; values participants’ perspectives on their worlds; and often relies on people’s comments as its primary data.

Providing thorough description and interpretations of symbols and social phenomena including their meanings to those who experience it became very useful as it sought to help with the understanding of human behaviour and the underlying reasons and motives that

govern such behavior. It provided insights into the setting of a problem, generating ideas and/ or hypotheses for later research.

As part of the interview, and due to the flexibility of the Qualitative research method, broad questions were asked to help collect verbal data from participants. The method propelled me to produce data freely defined by the subject rather than structured in advance. Qualitative data deals with relative value based on an evaluation of the general character of what we are assessing and it deals with meaning rather than quantities. The data collected was analyzed with emphasis on understanding use of language: The analysis is normally subjective, impressionistic or even diagnostic.

In gathering data, the qualitative researcher may use single individual face to face in-depth interviews, structured and non-structured interviews, consensus focus group interviews and discussions, narratives, documentary content analysis or archival studies and participant and non-participant observation.

A major characteristic of qualitative research is its efforts at in-depth study of a little problem.

Qualitative research shares theoretical assumptions of the interpretative model, which is based on the notion that social reality is created and sustained through the subjective experience of people involved in communication (Morgan 1980: 68). Qualitative researchers are more concerned in their research where they attempt to accurately describe, decode, and interpret the meanings of phenomena occurring in their normal social context (Fryer 1991: 24).

### *Advantages of Qualitative Research to the researcher*

I used qualitative research method in order to gain insight into people's perception of changing attitudes, behaviours, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles with regards to traditional symbols, particularly, the Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols and the *Sankofa* concept. Again these methods and approaches afforded me to gather information from various types of people. The information was treated independently with fairness. Descriptive and art-based aspects of the qualitative method were selected to provide systematic approach to explaining other traditional symbols and their functions in the society and how they form part of the cultural heritage which have been used by the playwrights. It also afforded me the opportunity to use the Multimethod Qualitative Study research propounded by Saunders *et al* (2012) I, therefore, adopted a fully integrated multiple phases; mixing methods as follows:

- interviewing traditional scholars/custodians on the Akan clan totems in eight head towns to ascertain their differences.
  - putting up a drama performance of an original play (Death On Trial) to strike out the differences of symbols application on stage and in the text.
  - reading four plays to identify and reveal the Adinkra and Akan clan symbols in the plays.
1. The flexibility of the multimethod qualitative approach helped me to investigate my own understanding of the *Sankofa* Theory. This is in line with the post-positivist stance which asserts the value of values, passion and politics in research. Research in this mode requires an ability to see the whole picture, to take a distanced view or an overview. But this kind of objectivity is different from 'just the facts', devoid of context – it does not mean judging from nowhere (Eagleton,

2003: 135). It requires a fair degree of passion (Eagleton, 2003: 134) – especially passion for justice and the ability to subject one’s own assumptions to scrutiny. This requires patience, honesty, courage, persistence, imagination, sympathy and self-discipline alongside dialogue and debate.

The post-positivist social researcher assumes a learning role rather than a testing one (cf Agar 1988:12). One of the opportunities posed by this approach was that I recognized the common humanity that connects researchers and the people who participate in them. I regarded myself as someone who was conducting research *among* other people, learning *with* them, rather than conducting research *on* them (cf Wolcott, 1990: 31).

As a post-positivist researcher, I did not see myself as inevitably solving the problems I set out to investigate. In this study, I can answer questions and indicate causes (problem solving), but equally, research can be about problem setting – coming up with the right questions (these may themselves lead to empirical research). This does not mean that I went off conducting research without an idea of what was to be investigated – as Wolcott (1990: 31) puts it, ‘empty-headedness is not the same as open-mindedness’.

While promoting post-positivist approaches we recognise that there are many competing discourses, which give rise to contradictions. We have to embrace these contradictions and the tensions they engender. We examine them rather than try to control or resolve them. That endeavour gives rise to a tension and creative energy that is not always easy to live with.

Post-positivism is not trying to substitute a more secure and firm foundation as an alternative to positivism Lather (1991: 7). Rather, it strives to ‘produce an awareness of the complexity, historical contingency and fragility of the practices that we invent to discover the truth about ourselves’ (cf Lather, 1991: 7). It is thus much more than ‘post’ – it is



actually extra-positivist, because it provides vantage points from outside positivism, from which you can approach research.

Post-positivist research principles emphasize meaning and the creation of new knowledge, and are able to support committed social movements, that is, movements that aspire to change the world and contribute towards social justice. This gave me a much better grasp of the content of my study. It also did much to enhance my credibility, as I was able to draw on the valuable data I had collected to complete my main research task: *Sankofa* and Drama: A study of Adinkra and Akan Clan Symbols in modern Ghanaian plays.

### **3.2 Selection of Data Sources**

#### **3.2.1 Primary Data 1**

Primary sources of data obtained in this study were mainly, (1) interviews and questions asked from some selected theatre practitioners who have had access to the plays, (2) a survey conducted to the eight head-towns of Akan Clan totems and (3) other sources for the other traditional Adinkra symbols.

##### **3.2.1.1 Semi-structured Interview on Clan Totems**

Interviews conducted as part of field research, especially on the Clan Totems, were much unstructured. Field researchers do not create a list of questions to ask about a particular topic, but they learn about a particular context by having informal conversation with people (Stier et al 2008: 45).

In this field research, I stayed in traditional homes (Compound houses) and mingled with the local people. They talked freely with me and I was seen as part of the families. The interviews therefore, were semi-structured. I created a set of questions that were all asked of each respondent. However, additional questions were asked based on the research

questions. This depended on how people answered the questions. In all these, the researcher refrained from talking about himself or his experiences.

I made sure to ask questions separately and waited for a reply and answer before moving on to the next question. I listened carefully to make sure that, the respondent had fully answered the question before moving on to the next question. There were follow ups with probing questions or additional questions before moving on to the next question.

### *Taking Notes*

It was always a good idea to take notes during an interview if one can. And the researcher took notes.

### *Other Aids for Analysis*

In addition to transcribing my audio recordings and notes, I made a record of contextual information which helped me to recall the context and content of the interview and observation as well as informing my interpretation. It also helped me to remember the precise circumstances to which my data related. I relied on various researchers who have suggested ways of recording information and developing reflective ideas to supplement my written-up notes and my categorized data. These researchers include: (Gerstl-pepin & Patrizio 2009; Glazer 1978; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009; Miles & Huberman 1994; Riley 1996; Straus & Corbin 2008). Their suggestions which were fully utilized include:

- Progress or Interim summaries which outlined (1) what I had found so far, (2) what level of confidence I had in my findings and conclusions to date, (3) what I needed to do in order to improve the quality of my data and to seek to substantiate my apparent conclusions, and alternative explanations, and (4) How I sought to achieve the needs identified by the interim analysis.

This became a working document that I modified and continued to refer to, as my research project progressed.

- Transcript Summaries which compressed long statements into briefer ones in which the main sense of what had been said or observed was rephrased in few words (Kvale & Brinkman 2009: 241).
- Self Memo which allowed me to record ideas that occur to me about any aspect of my research, as I think of them. The Self memo emerged when I was (1) writing up interview notes (2) when I was constructing narratives; (3) when I was categorizing data; (4) as I continued to categorize and analyze my data; and (5) when I engaged in writing my research project.
- Research Notebook was used as an alternative approach for recording my ideas about my research. Its purpose was similar to the Self memo, but this was a chronological format which helped me to identify the development of certain ideas (such as proposition and data categories) and the way in which my research had progressed, as well as providing an approach that suited the way in which I liked to cogitate.(Riley 1996: 101)
- Reflective diary or journal was devoted to reflections about my experiences of undertaking the research, what I had learnt from those experiences and how to apply them as the research progressed not to forget the need to develop my competence to further my research. Engaging in forms of reflexivity enabled me to develop greater insights as I explored and analyzed the data.

### **3.2.1.2 Sampling Procedures for *Death on Trial***

In this study, some participants and interviewees were selected from the following areas:

(a) The School of Performing Arts. (b) Some actors/actresses of the play (*Death on Trial*)

from Abibigromma, the Resident Theatre Company of the School of Performing Arts), (c) Some Cast and Crew and audiences of the *Death on Trial*, and (d) some lecturers of the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana, Legon, (d) some traditional and cultural practitioners, and (e) some regional cultural workers.

Sampling was purposive and respondents were experts in the field of theatre, traditional experts in signs and symbols, historians, and some artists of plastic arts form: Twenty (20) short research questions were asked. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling. According to Whitley (1996: 18), in purposive sampling the researcher uses his or her judgment to select the membership of the sample based on the goals of the research. With this technique a sample is built up which enables the researcher to satisfy her or his specific needs. In this study, the researcher purposely looked for the respondents with knowledge on traditional culture and theatre, and those who were willing to be interviewed. A survey interview is an example of a structured interview. Short questions were used to collect primary data. This implies that the respondents were purposively selected for one – on - one interview. The questions were based on both closed and open ended formats. Close-ended questions eased coding of data and simplified the process of data analysis. Close-ended questions were expected to be easy to handle with simple answers. Questions were carefully created based on careful conceptualization and operationalization of variables. Questions were asked exactly as they were worded and not to stray from the interview format.

A total of 104 respondents answered the questions. On the four selected plays, *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, *Edufa*, *In the Chest of a Woman*, and *The Legend of Aku Sika*, twenty (20) respondents were used. Ten (10) selected scholars, cultural icons and practitioners were interviewed on general ideas on *Sankofa* and other Ghanaian traditional symbols. On the clan totems, (Aduana, Asakyiri, Bretuo, Ekoona, Asinie, Agona, Asona and Oyokoo),

eight (8) respondents were interviewed, and on the production of the play, *Death on Trial*, all cast and crew numbering seventy-six (76) were involved in the discussions on Akan traditional symbols. Some relevant and thorough readings and analysis were also done on the works of people who have written on the Adinkra symbols. I visited places where people have used some of the symbols for decoration. I took advantage of chatting with the people. Some of the places included the Asafo Palace in Kumasi, Manhyia Palace Museum, The Shrine of Yaa Asantewaa in Ejisu/Besease, The Centre For National Culture, Kumasi, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, Ntonso and Tewobaabi where Adinkra patterns are designed on funeral and other clothes, and Ahwiaa where the Asante Carving Industry is situated.

Throughout the coding process, I found that the lines between data collection and analysis blurred frequently. When I thought I had coded as much as possible, I located more data from the head towns of the clan totems, and there was the need to code them as well.

These strategies were useful and forced me to become deeply entrenched in the data analysis and interpretation. For instance, the researcher engaged himself in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> Social Sciences Colloquia and an International conference organised by ISSER, (Beyond RIO + 20) where he presented academic papers. He interacted with other scholars who were experienced in data analysis and their contributions helped a lot. As I assigned codes to the text and moved back and forth, I was able to acquaint myself with social science constructs, ideas, and philosophies of the Akan traditional symbols derived from the plays. Using this process, I also identified specific symbolic themes that emerged from the selected works in response to the research question: *To what extent have the Sankofa (Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols) elements been applied in the four Ghanaian plays?*

It is not damaging that a researcher of such a study includes the self. The playwrights whose plays I have selected for this study seem to share some similar interests with me and with one another. As cultural and social educators, we believe that our plays should provide opportunities for *readers to come face to face with our traditional philosophies which I have termed Sankofa*. Our views shared a certain affinity for cultural competency and immersion. I make no claim to have been as adept or informed as they in my scholarship. However, I duly admit that this study began as a personal and scholarly endeavour, and it has continued as such.

### **3.2.2 Primary Data II**

#### **3.2.2.1 The Script and Play-Production: *Death On Trial***

This method was used to briefly ascertain whether Akan traditional symbols are adequately expressed at the performance level vis-a-vis the reading level. *Death on Trial* was produced from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2013 at the Efua Sutherland Drama Studio with financial support by the Directorate of the School of Performing Arts. As a way to complement the content analysis of the four plays, an idea cropped up to produce an original play for analysis at the performance level. The original play selected was one of the researcher's scripts, *Death On Trial*. This play was selected in consultation with the principal supervisor. Indeed, the main objective of the production of the original play was to check how the researcher who is also a playwright perceives Akan traditional symbols in his own play as a text, and as a production.

The production underwent all the procedures earmarked for full-length productions. These include among others, auditioning, casting, rehearsals and finally, the stage production. The play had three full night performances to an audience, that is from Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> to Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2013 at the Efua Sutherland Drama studio, University of Ghana, Legon.

During the production of *Death On Trial*, the director followed some stage directions which depicted traditional symbols in the play and consciously placed them on stage. For example, the traditional way of pounding *Fufu* in a typical Akan community was demonstrated in **Movement Five** of the play. This was meant to demonstrate and perhaps, to preserve the traditional method of preparing the chief meal of the Akans.

In the play, the eight Akan clan totems were exhibited by the forest creatures who gave Bediako the powers to conquer everything including the mortal box (Owuo Apakan) of Death. The combination of the powers of the Akan clans provides extraordinary potent powers to the communities. This is evident through the mask they give to Bediako.

While I feel that my experiences could provide something in the way of social and cultural experience for others, my first thought when considering play-production as a research method was, *Who am I in the cultural field and why do I matter?* I could not afford to let my personal bias cloud the basis for the study. I felt the need to justify my use of methods; I found such justification in the readings of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, (A play within a Play), Brook (1999) Asomaning (2012), Asiamah (2011), Mensah Bonsu,(1986) Epskamp (2005), Bourgault (2005), Bame (2005), Morrison (2005), and others. They have tirelessly written on play productions as a method for research.

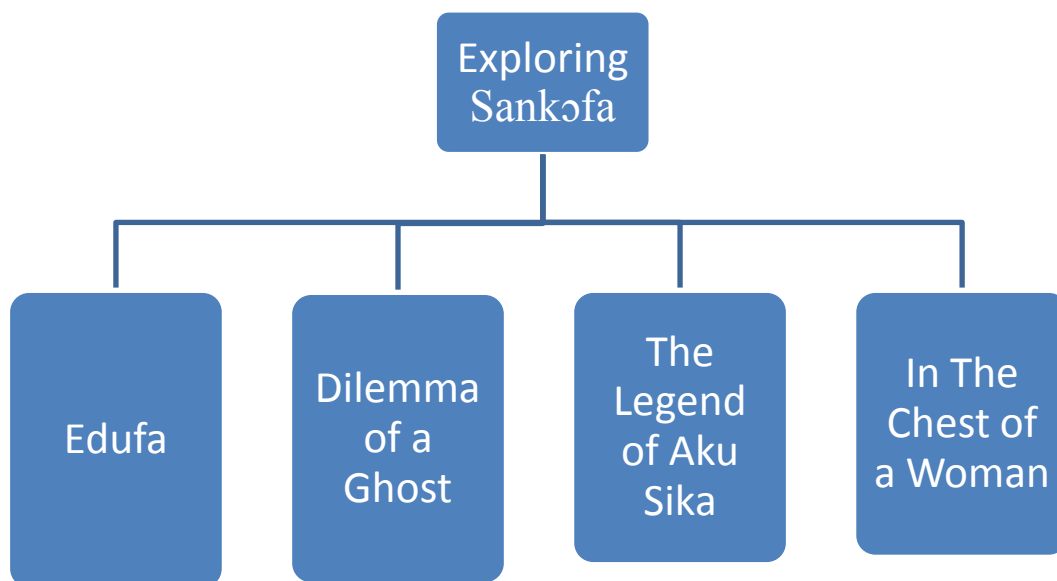
Abdallah (2000) reminded me that play-production does not comprise solely of the researcher's opinions. Instead, those opinions are supported by multiple forms of data and evidence. As an up and coming scholar with a love of literature and a respect for the power of the written word, I combined literature and scholarship, as both are important aspects of this study. Indeed, there are references to the works of scholars who are not necessarily playwrights. These include among others; Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, Kofi Anyidoho, Casely Hayford and Nketiah.

Play-production becomes a viable method of qualitative research because it is a genre that is accessible to those within and outside of the academy; and if researchers seek to positively impact those they research, accessibility must be a priority.

### 3.2.3 Primary Data III

1. *The Legend of Aku Sika* by Martin Okyere Owusu
2. *In the Chest of a Woman* by Efo Kodjo Mawugbe
3. *Edufa* by Efua T. Sutherland
4. *The Dilemma of a Ghost* by Ama Ata Aidoo

### 3.3 Content Analysis (CA)



**Figure 3.1: Exploring *Sankofa***

- a. *Edufa* by Efua T. Sutherland (1968)
- b. *Dilemma of a Ghost* by Ama Ata Aidoo (1965)
- c. *The Legend of Aku Sika* by Martin Okyere Owusu (1997)
- d. *In the chest of a Woman* by Efo Kodjo Mawugbe (2008)



According to Hsieh & Shannon (2005), content analysis has gone through several stages since its initial implementation in research in Scandinavia during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Gaining popularity in the United States in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, content analysis was used as either a quantitative or qualitative method. Later, content analysis was used specifically as a quantitative tool in the communication and behavioral sciences (Nandy & Sarvela, 1997). Recently, the usefulness of content analysis as a tool in qualitative research, specifically health research, has been explored.

Content analysis has been defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Berelson, 1952; Gao, 1996; Krippendorff, 1980; and Weber, 1990). Holsti, (1969) offered a broad definition of content analysis as; "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (14). Under Holsti's definition, the technique of content analysis is not restricted to the domain of textual analysis, but may be applied to other areas such as coding student drawings (Wheelock, Haney, & Bebell, 2000), or coding of actions observed in videotaped studies (Stigler et al, 1999). In order to allow for replication, however, the technique can only be applied to data that are durable in nature.

### **3.4 Secondary Sources for Data**

#### **3.4.1 Documentary Survey**

This method was employed to acquire secondary data through documents, such as books, articles, journals, films etc. In this case, the University of Ghana Balm library and departmental libraries, electronic resource rooms were visited in order to obtain information about the manifestation of the *Sankofa* concept (traditional cultural presentations) in Ghanaian contemporary drama.

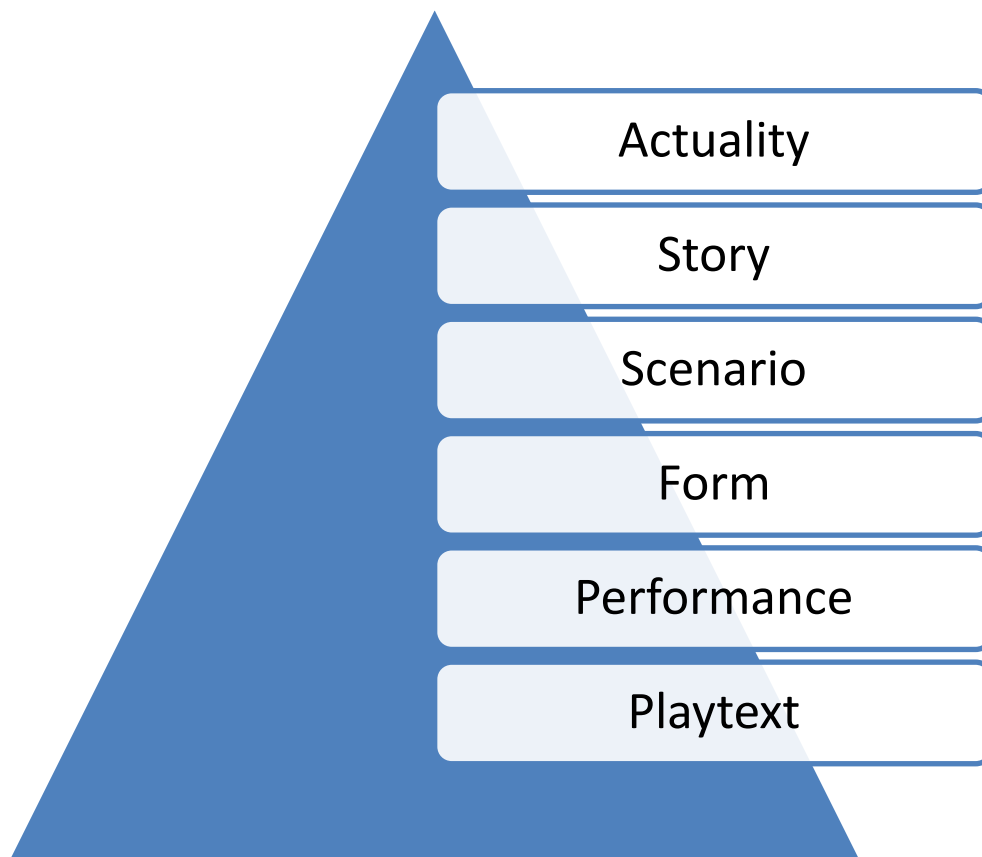
#### **3.5 Methods for Selection of the Plays and the symbols**

The four plays chosen for Content analysis for this study were selected on the basis of the strength of their influence socially and culturally, as well as dramatically. Since theatre is such a community activity, it seemed impossible to separate these areas. While it can be argued that a number of other Ghanaian plays can equally be selected, the chosen four, offer a variety that almost spans the post independent era, as well as accommodating gender (Two male and two female Ghanaian playwrights) and ethnicity; they also arguably happen to be some of the best plays by best Ghanaian known playwrights.

Each play has been introduced by a biographical background of the author, highlighting the importance of the particular play in the playwright's development and critical standing. After a synopsis of the plot, there has also been a short thematic analysis, with explanations of the major characters and symbols, the play's literary style and devices, its historical background, and a summary of its critical reception. The social, cultural and theatrical impact and importance of each play has been conveyed to explain why such works have become canonical and to show how each has helped shape and define Ghanaian drama. There have been suggestions for further reading at the close of each play and a more general bibliography.

In selecting these plays, I kept in mind; (1) the process by which each play was realized by the playwright; (2) the process by which the plays have become great works and (3) the historical process, by which the collective recreation of life as art in the oral tradition, which was previously passed from one generation to the next, has become ironically the individual's depiction of his or her individuality in the new theatre<sup>47</sup>

The schema as propounded by Michael Etherton was borrowed as one of the tests used for the selection. The schema has no other validity than as a formal attempt to situate the process of dramatic composition within the social processes.



**Figure 3.2: The Schema of Michael Etherton**

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid* p 36

*Actuality* is what is to be depicted. It is life, viewed by those who would seek to interpret it to their audience through their art. The first step in the process of transforming life into art, into a drama or play is to cast it in a form of a story.<sup>48</sup>

A *story* involves particularization (a time, a place, characters) and causality (One event leading to another). However, the story itself is not a drama or play. The story which particularizes life now needs to be transformed into a scenario.

A *scenario* gives the story its dramatic impact by its dramatically effective organization of the story's events into scenes which cope with problems of time and space.

Scenario is sometimes referred to as the *plot*, but both the plot and the scenario refer to a part of the process which is specific to the story. The next part of the process is specific to the social or cultural milieu in which the performance of the drama or play will take place; this is the finding of an appropriate form

*Form* requires that the writer takes account of specific performance tradition and particular actor-audience relationships. It involves the decision of what theatre or performance style they are going to use and what performance conventions. It also calls for what language and registers they are going to employ.

*Performance* is the presentation of the dramatic work to an audience. Although, an audience is made up of individuals, the performance of a play usually invokes a collective response. The collective response is not one dimensional; it is either to approve or disapprove a situation in the play.

The Play-text: Individual playwrights can, on the basis of a successful performance, realize a play-text. It is worthy to note that, the researcher after interviewing two of the

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*

playwrights (Ama Ata Aidoo and Martin Owusu) whose plays have been selected with others; they all proved that their plays were performed before the play-texts were realized. It is also on record that, Efua Theodora Sutherland had almost all her plays performed before they were published. Needless to say that, *In the Chest of a woman* which was written in 1982 and got published in 2008 received uncountable number of performances in Ghana and outside Ghana. The play-text is historically, performance in a finalized literary form.

I found it convenient to look at the body of the selected plays in terms of the sources of the stories either through myths, history or fiction and how the *Sankofa* concept has been treated.

Unlike many other art works, these symbols may not be visible, audible or otherwise reproducible, so a certain percentage of my time was inevitably spent in describing them, re-creating and re-interpreting the real or imagined theatrical experience as best as I could. But like any other art works, those approaches and productions offered themselves for criticism. This opportunity led me to discuss individual playwrights' creative ideas and philosophies, to analyze their other works, to recount dramatic anecdotes, and to focus on specific applications of the Akan symbols to every particular play. (The reader will want to have these four plays at hand or freshly in mind) And, because critical treatment can reveal great strengths, these inventions frequently became models – This means models of our times, of historical styles, and of a particular playwright's dramatic style. In addition, this thesis is not meant to be an instruction booklet on the works of the playwrights, but it reveals specific, practical ways of solving problems of obscurity, using the imagination, and self-expression with the research conducted on Akan symbolic communication and their meanings. Have these playwrights gone into the traditional roots for materials in their plays? And have they been successful in dealing with them?

The four plays were not only looked at by actions, verbal beauty and characterization. Visual effects were also considered especially with those proposed by the playwrights. This means that properties, set designs, costumes, sound, lights and many other elements of theatre were valued and verified whether they could also be traced to any of the Akan symbols.

The *Sankofa* concept in this sense embodies all traditional elements employed in the plays by these playwrights.

These have been categorised under the following headings:

1. Symbolic Elements (Adinkra Symbols, Clan Totems etc)
2. Socio-Cultural Elements including Life Cycle
3. Traditional Governance (Inheritance etc)
4. Traditional Religious practices
5. Historical Perspective
6. Traditional Norms and customary practices
7. Language (Proverbs, traditional idioms, imageries etc.)
8. Folklore
9. Indigenous Names

In deriving at the symbols, and how they manifested in the plays, there was no complete deviation from Aristotle's elements of drama in the *Poetics* (330 – 320 B.C) and conventions of playwriting in general. The traditional symbols being explored in the works of the selected playwrights were identified through the following dramatic elements:

**Plot:** This is the framework within which the scope of action of each play occurs. The action and movement in the play begins from the initial entanglement, through rising action climax, falling action and resolution. The plot in itself becomes a symbolic

representation of an episode (Story) In *The Legend of Aku Sika*, the playwright uses a *Prelude* and five (5) *Scenes* to finish the story. In *Edufa*, the play has a *Prelude*, *Acts* and *scenes*. *Legs* are used in *In The Chest of a Woman* and a *Prelude* and *Acts* are used by the playwright of *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. The researcher looked at Stage Directions as provided by the Playwright as another area of identifying the traditional symbols in the plays. These also include mood, atmosphere, tension and pace.

**Character:** A Dramatic character and a real human being are not the same thing. Dramatic character is an invention. The fact that a dramatic character pursues human goals, speaks human words, and embodies human responses means only that the dramatic character is part of a human artistic creation that is about life itself. The playwrights create characters which are symbolic representations of human beings.

**Thought:** (Intellect) refers to the playwright's idea. Like the characters, the play itself should be both specific and general – the story of an individual but with universal appeal. The thought could be traditionally motivated or not. The plays exhibit themes which are very relevant to our present situations. They are focused on human ideologies and most importantly, the Ghanaian life expectations.

**Language:** Language here is taken to mean the words in the text. A more general use of the term occurs when referring to the “language of Drama”, which can include set, lighting, costumes and the other elements that go into making a complete production. However, this exercise looks specifically, at words and how they suggest symbols.

I borne the following principles in mind before looking at language as symbols in the texts:

- Language as a means of communication to an audience/reader
- Language which draws conclusions about themes, issues, character, style, tone,

mood and plot.

Again, I considered how the playwrights were able to sacrifice beauty of language to naturalness of speech, yet the characters do not talk aimlessly as people do in real life, for every word must develop the play. Proverbs, images, metaphors and wise sayings were also considered. The language mostly centred on Ghanaian proverbs, ideas and feelings

**Music:** What is the nature of music and dance suggested by the playwrights in the plays? Are they traditionally motivated in the Ghanaian way, or music and dance from other Western world?

Because the playwright has little control over the spectacle, of his/her play, I followed the stage directions and instructions and explored the possible *Sankofa* elements in them.

The library research which centered on the plays; *In the Chest of a Woman*, *Edufa*, *Dilemma of a Ghost* and *The Legend of Aku Sika.*, a production of an original play, *Death On Trial* and research on Akan Traditional symbols. All the plays were studied having the six element of drama as proposed by Aristotle in mind.

### **3.6 Confidentiality, Ethics, and Trustworthiness**

Ethical issues, regarding research have been a concern since the Nuremberg trials in 1945 (Merriam, 1998). Adhering to ethics in research protects the rights of the participants in data collection and presentation of findings. Thus, prior to beginning the research, initially I obtained written consent from my lead supervisor. This addressed any issues of ethical dilemma prior to granting permission to conduct the study. I also obtained written consent from Chairperson of the Graduate Committee in the Theatre Arts Department of the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon. This process guided me in maintaining the basic ethical considerations as outlined by the University. Because the



majority of my interview data was granted by individual participant, ethical considerations and trustworthiness were just as much a benefit of, and not an impediment to my research. With one main participant, trustworthiness may be easily obtained; but if it is not, issues with data collection and access to information may develop. Merriam (1997) contended that trustworthiness is the extent to which validity and reliability have been accounted for. She wrote:

Thus regardless of the type of research, validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented. (Merriam: 199-200)

While I do understand Merriam's contentions on trustworthiness in qualitative research, I consider trustworthiness, and inaccurate consideration for content analysis of a play; instead, I strive for *researcher responsibility*. Holt (2003) argued that *researcher responsibility* was a better criterion by which to judge play texts. I feel that I demonstrated researcher responsibility during the initial stages of the research and have continued to do so throughout the research. I also had to consider how others would be represented in the text. While the experiences outlined in the study are my experiences, they do not occur without the interaction of others. I hope that using another means to identify others (pseudonyms) for the individuals that appear with me demonstrates my commitment to being ethnographically ethical. On the contrary, while thinking about all these, many of my respondents, especially, those interviewed on the Traditional clan Totems found it a privilege to be included in this study, and they were happy that, the researcher put their names down where necessary.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction


The purpose of this Multi-method approach for data collection under Qualitative Methodology (Mark Saunders et al 2012) including; content analysis of four modern Ghanaian plays, field interview/observation (Adinkra and Akan Clan Totems) and a production of an original play *Death On Trial* was to investigate how some modern Ghanaian playwrights have applied *Sankɔfa* as a concept and the narratives of Adinkra and Akan Traditional symbols in their dramatic works. The four Ghanaian playwrights whose works were used in this study are Efua T. Sutherland, *Edufa*, Ama Ata Aidoo, *The Dilemma of A Ghost*, Martin Owusu, *The Legend of Aku Sika*, and Efo Kodjo Mawugbe *In the Chest of A Woman*. The main objectives were: to examine four modern Ghanaian plays in order to reveal the application of *Sankɔfa* elements (Akan traditional symbols) in them, and to code the dramatic usage of the identified Adinkra and Akan Clan Totems from the four selected plays. This Chapter presents the findings of the research.

In line with the study methodology of which this chapter is an extension, I have categorized the findings under different headings. These include: Findings on ethnographic research on Akan Clan symbols; Findings of Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols in the four plays selected, Identified Proverbs from the plays; Findings from *Death on Trial* and other sub-headings, where necessary.

The question I explored is: *To what extent have some modern Ghanaian playwrights applied Sankɔfa as a concept and the narratives of Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols in their dramatic works?*

## 4.2 Findings on Ethnographic Survey on Akan Clan Symbols.

The following among other things happened during the ethnographic research conducted for this study. Respondents gave total descriptions of the totems representing the various clans and their historical foundations. According to a respondent, the *parrot* is an alert bird with very good temperament. It is very intelligent and has been thought to mimic humans. A bird that can speak the human language is considered to be the link between the worlds of mankind and nature. They serve as a bridge through eloquence to provide understanding for people to live in harmony.

	Name of Clan	Totem	Image	Response to Greeting
2	Agona	A Parrot		Ago Nana (Ago-Na)

### Pic 4.1: The Agona Clan

Short Description

Head Town: Dankyira (Nsoaem)


Some attributes of the Parrot

- Very Alert, Harmonious, Creative, Colourful, Hopeful, Self-reliant, Power of Speech, and Magical

### *Oyoko*

Legend has it that, the Ekoona and the Oyoko were from the same clan. Indeed, they all belonged to the Ekoona clan, until Nana Serwaa and her children defiled the norms of the family by preparing food with the meat of Ekoo (Buffalo). When the family members heard of this abomination, they went to her to enquire. Nana Serwaa led them to her kitchen and showed them the remaining meat of the animal. She emphasized that she and her children and grandchildren were not going to stop

eating that delicacy. This brought about the proverb: Asansa (Akroma) fa adee a ode kyere. (When the hawk takes anything, it shows it to the public). Since then, the Ekoona people despised the other brothers and sisters by teasing them: “Owekoɔ”; “those who eat the meat of Buffalo”<sup>49</sup>.

	Name of Clan	Totem	Image	Response to greeting
8	Oyokoɔ	The Hawk (Akroma)		Adeena

#### **Pic 4.2: The Oyokoɔ Clan**

Short Description


Head Town: Kumasi (Manhyia)

The hawk (called Akroma in Akan) is the Totem of the Oyokoɔ clan, the Royal clan of the Asante Kings. The hawk symbolizes might.

Some attributes of the Hawk

- Focused, Visionary, Defensive, Officious, Bold, Alert, Situational, Communicative, Assertive, yet, some are very gentle

*Aduana*

	Name of Clan	Totem	Image	Response to greeting
1	Aduana	A Dog with fire in the mouth		Adu Nana (Adu_Na)

#### **Pic 4.3: The Aduana clan**

<sup>49</sup> A historical story of the clan told by Nana Sarfo Kantanka on the 5th of December, 2013.

## Short Description

Head Town: Dormaa

The Dog (called Okraman in Akan) is the symbol of the Aduana Clan. It is a symbol of support and service to mankind. As inference of their civilizing mission, Aduanas are credited with bringing fire (that is, introduced food cooking) as depicted in their logo, a dog carrying fire in its mouth.

Loyalty and perseverance is the hallmark of a dog. Throughout history, dogs have been known as protectors and guardians<sup>50</sup>. Their acute hearing and keen sight fore warned their masters of impending danger, and bark to alert. Dogs are also known to be man's best friend. They serve selflessly never asking for their service to be praised. Dogs hold strong energies of unconditional love and teach us its true meaning. Their loyalty is unsurpassed.

The domesticated dog is a faithful companion to man and has the willingness to serve. They are intelligent and very sensitive.

“Kraman de bone kye paa, nanso se odebon ye ni bi reba a wotumi te nenka bo nenkoroofo amanee”<sup>51</sup>

Translation: *A dog carries the habit of forgiveness but it is able to sniff out dangerous people and situations and accurately guide people into safety...*

Psychic gifts have long been associated with the dog because of its ability to detect subtle energy frequencies often unknown to mankind. Legend has it that, the dog, though, through trickery, or even treachery was able to preserve the fire torch from going off by successfully swimming with it and led his masters home safely. The behaviour of the dog often reflects the owner's personality. Through conscious observation, and constant

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<sup>50</sup> Nana Kofi Asare when interviewed on November 5<sup>th</sup> 2013 at Dwenim. The words have been translated from Twi to English.


<sup>51</sup> Ibid

interaction with others, like the dog, somebody from the Aduana clan (Aduanani) can easily anticipate one's next move and take precautions<sup>52</sup>. The dog is a great teacher and can resist people who try to be strange.

### Some attributes of the Dog.

- Loyal, Persevering, Guardian, Protective, Acute hearing, Sharp Eye-sight, Loving, Welcoming Spirit to friends, Faithful, Energetic, Sensitive, Revengeful, and Creative.

### Asakyiri

	Name of Clan	Totem	Image	Response to Greeting
3	Asakyiri	A Vulture (Opete)		Ofori Nana (Ofori-Na)

### Pic 4.4: The Asakyiri Clan

Brief Description

Head Town: Adansi Akrokyere

The Vulture (called Pete in Akan) is the Totem of the Asakyiri Clan and it represents cleanliness.

*Pete se ode ne kwasea repe nnyikyere*: “The vulture says it is being foolish in order to live long” (An Akan proverb)

The vulture is known to be the greatest sanitizer of the society. The vulture exclusively feeds on carrion, and thus, performs a very useful duty by disposing off potential sources


<sup>52</sup> Ibid

of diseases to mankind. It is a symbol of purification and of transformation. As old decayed flesh is removed, new life emerges<sup>53</sup>. That is the vital role this amazing bird plays for the health and well-being of mankind and all other forms of life.<sup>54</sup> Nana Oforiwaa the Obaa Panin of the Asa Kyiri (Asakyir) clan thought about the state of the dead. Instead of leaving them on lonely surfaces for vultures and other beasts to feed upon, as others had done before them, they buried them in graves and placed tools and other man-made objects of value beside them.

#### Some attributes of the Vulture

- Neat, Sensitive to the Environment, Serviceable, Healer, Uniting spirit, and Long life

#### *Asenie*

	Name of Clan	Totem	Image	Response to Greeting
4	Asenie	The Bat (Apan)		Ase Nana (Ase-Na)

#### **Pic 4.5: The Asenie Clan**

Short Description

Head Town: Amakom

The Bat (called Apan) is the Totem of the Asenie Clan and it represents love and peace, adaptability and adjudication

<sup>53</sup>Interview with Madam Akosua Asamoah, at Kumasi on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2013.


<sup>54</sup> A friend jokingly said most Health workers and environmentalists are from the Asakyiri clan.

Studies on bats show that when they are placed in a refrigerator, they can go into instant state of hibernation and come out unharmed when they are warmed, which is unique for a warm blooded mammal. The bat is noted for its ability to adapt to varied situations. They say when you marry a woman from the Asinie clan, she will stay everywhere with you. The bat can navigate through darkness due to its great auditory perception. It is said that people belonging to this clan have the ability to discern hidden messages both from people and from their environment. They are therefore good detectives. A woman from this clan is so adaptive to all conditions.<sup>55</sup>

Some attributes of the Bat

- Adaptive, Balanced, Seer, Change, Bold, Patience, and Strong-willed

*Asona*

	Name of Clan	Totem	Image	Response to Greetings
5	Asona	The Crow (Kwaakwaadebi)		Aso Nana (Aso-Na)

**Pic 4.6: The Asona Clan**

Short Description

Head Town: Kyebi

The Crow (called Kwaakwaadebi in Akan) is the Totem of the Asona clan. It is a symbol of peace, humility but very alert.

<sup>55</sup> Opanin Kofi Nyarko of Amakom Palace, 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2013



“*Se wohunu anoma noa mento ne boɔ ebia na ofiri dodoɔ mu* “(If you see the crow, do not throw a stone at it. May be, it comes from a big crowd)<sup>56</sup>


According to the Asona family, ‘the crow snatches what it wants with correct timing and precision. The clan therefore is referred to as a “go-getter” clan. Crows are sly and often deceptive in their actions. They have been known to build false nests high in tree tops to deceive their predators. The height of their nests gives them the opportunity to watch everything that goes on around them. It is common knowledge that nothing escapes the sight of the crow<sup>57</sup>. As one crow explores something new, others watch closely to see what will happen to it and then learn from the action.

The striking black and white colour of the crow represents creation which says darkness gives birth to day. Significantly, the crow is associated with magic, unseen forces and spiritual strength. Most Akans believe that the Asona clan possesses the powerful witches and wizards in the kingdom.

### Some attributes of the Crow

- Perseverance, Deceptive, Alert, Creative, Magical, Adaptive, Beautiful, and Loving

### *Bretuo*

	Name of Clan	Totem	Image	Response to Greeting
6	Bretuo	The Leopard (ɔsebo)		Etwie Nana (Etwie-Na)

<sup>56</sup> A proverb by Opanin Osei Bonsu at Kyebi 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2013

<sup>57</sup> Ibid

### **Pic 4.7: The Bretuo Clan**

#### Short Description

Head Town: Asante Mampong

The Leopard (called Etwie or Osebo in Akan) is the Totem of the Bretuo Clan. It signifies Bravery

The Leopard belongs to the cat family with beautifully dotted coat and a long dark tail. They say no matter how water washes the skin of the leopard, its lines and dots will still remain. (Krotwiamansa to nsuom mu a ne ho na efo na neho nsensae dee ewo ho daa)<sup>58</sup>

Unlike most cats, the leopard can exist in an area without much water. This gives it an urge for survival in difficult situations.

They are excellent stalkers; silent and inconspicuous hunters. They are able to move in and out without being noticed. Their invisible nature allows them to spy and observe every situation they encounter with clarity. Leopards are territorial and do not allow too many intruders. Because they attack from the back, it is said that those with leopard instincts often have difficulties confronting conflicts head on. They are strong and powerful leapers which enjoins man to leap over obstacles efficiently and gracefully. They can strategize well and negotiate to their advantage because of their calm nature.


Some attributes of the Leopard

- Survival, Silent, Intuitive, Sensitive, Attentive, Secretive, Un-confrontational, and Powerful Leaper

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<sup>58</sup> Nana Ampratwum was too proud to say this proverb when the researcher was chatting with him at Asante Mampong on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, 2013.

*Ekoɔna*

	Name of Clan	Totem	Image	Response to greeting
7	Ekoɔna	The Buffalo (Ekoɔ)		Doku Nana (Doku-Na)

**Pic 4.8:** The Ekoɔna Clan

## Short Description

Head Town: Adansi Asɔkore

The Buffalo (called Ekoɔ in Akan) is the Totem of the Ekoɔna Clan. It is a symbol of Strength and Patience.

The Ekoɔna clan believes that the buffalo is a symbol of abundance and physical strength. Its large head represents exceptional intelligence and their strong bodies keep them firm on earth. They classify themselves as a uniting force between the mundane and ethereal and hold the teachings of right action joined with prayers<sup>59</sup>. The height of their horns from the head piercing into the skies symbolizes the connection of the powers above and the power on earth, and that is higher intelligence. Buffalos possess strong shoulders to carry responsibilities of any kind and the powers from the shoulders and the hump to the hands indicate that whatever they touch or hold unto should succeed<sup>60</sup>. Buffalos provide food for the body and hides for clothing. They can be very dangerous when provoked. At the same time they are very respectful and protective.

## Attributes of the Buffalo

- Patience, Intelligent, Unifier, Enduring, Defensive, Responsible, and Self-conceited

<sup>59</sup>Nana Akua Senya of Asokore. who disclosed the potency of the animal. She told the researcher that, the Buffalo is so patient that those birds make nests in-between its horns.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid

#### 4.2.1. Stratification/coding of Data on Adinkra Symbols and Akan Clan Symbols in the four plays.

#### 4.2.2. The *Sankɔfa* elements in *The Legend of Aku Sika*

##### *Synopsis*

This play espouses the usage of the traditional Storytelling procedure in the theatre. It talks about the traditional approach to marriage and how deformity has engulfed all and sundry. The play brings to the fore how divine intervention saves mankind. The combination of myth and legend coupled with music and dance make it a great choice for analysis. The enstoolment and distoolment of the traditional chief are highlighted in the play. The playwright contends that, individuals living with any deformity must be educated in a special paradigm, to successfully interact with others who may be spiritually and mentally deformed. The playwright seems to suggest that, people spend so much time focusing on the alleged “deficit or pathology hypothesis” that their expectations have been tainted. “The King does not see any deformity in Aku, the orphan who has lost a limb through an accident. This further perpetuates societal hegemony. “Have you ever seen a perfect human being?” The play further explores behavioural styles, parenting, pedagogy and education on socialization, oppression, culture, and the playwright. While the play focuses on a variety of areas related to tradition and culture, it generally offers a potential framework for the African community, as we seek self-determination” as we strive to develop our communities, economically, educationally, spiritually, and politically. The idea of scrutiny, and to make sure that proper examination of things is executed, the play



reveals an *Adinkra* symbol called *Hwemudua* which translates as *measuring rod* for critical examination of any situation.

In the play, the king's wife (Nana Yere) happens to be a Mortal spirit during creation. This spirit is being sent into the world by the Supreme Being to find happiness sealed in a bottle and share with mankind when she finds it. Upon her persistent enquiries to ascertain whether Aku is deformed or not, even if that would cost her, her life, she restores everlasting happiness on Aku, the deformed orphan.

Accordingly, the searching spirit and nature of the woman, and her ability to articulate her views to the astonishment of all and sundry, drives her closer to the *Agona* Clan



Totem; symbolized by the parrot (See Chapter 3 pic3.1) than any of the other seven clans of the Akans. This further explains the Akan Clan totems, and also, to provide some brief descriptions of the philosophical and social attributes of the various totems. This will enable the reader to identify them in relation to characters of the plays. For example in *The Legend of Aku Sika*, the researcher identifies the clan of the King's first wife, (Nanayere), though; the playwright does not state it in his play. This was realized based on the characteristics of the character traits and description of the character in the play. The features and actions were juxtaposed to the story of the *Agona* Clan and the comparison is quite perfect and agreeable. The Character trait of the king's wife corresponds to the destiny read by Fate in the prologue:

### **Supreme Being**

Go my spirit daughter. I release you for four scores years to mortality. Go searching for life's happiness sealed in a bottle

and flung into the ocean. If you find it, when you find it, share it with mankind. Go... (p6)

The historical episode of the *Agona* clan has it that, Nana Ago, the founder of the clan was saved by a number of noise-making parrots when she was being pursued by a murderer. Reaching where the parrots had gathered, she found a strip of gold (Sika Ntweaban) coiled around a palm tree. She did not remove the strip from the palm tree herself and did not keep the gold as her own; she called all the men from her lineage to help uncoil the gold from the palm tree. She then shared the gold among all those present and family members due to her benevolence and sharing spirit<sup>61</sup>.

In *The Legend of Aku Sika*, Nanayere's attempt to search for the truth results in a lasting happiness for the King, Aku and the entire citizenry. And that is the sacrificial spirit of the Agona clan. Notably, it is believed that one of those who belong to this clan is the Legendary, Okomfo Anokye who commanded the Golden Stool (Sikadwa Kofi) from the skies and handed it to the Asante King Osei Tutu.

Okyeame

....If the King is proved a liar; he shall be dethroned in disgrace. If Nanayere Ama is the liar, she will lose her head...  
Nanayere, do you still stand by your charge?

Nanayere:

I do, and if my charge is false, I do not deserve to live (p31)

People from this clan can be very vocal and very noisy and at the same time, very understanding, and extremely quiet depending on the situation.

Okyeame

Nanyere, are you convinced?

Nanayere

---

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Rev. Abena Kuffour at her residence at Wesley College, Kumasi. 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2012

I am, to my shame. Lead me away from here to face my death. (p32)

The play has many *Sankofa* (Traditional) elements which have been coded below. In this play, one can also find traditional elements such as:

- a. Taboos and other customary practices
- b. Chieftaincy (Enstoolment)
- c. Traditional dances and songs (Drums Ensemble)






1. Traditional religious practices in *The Legend of Aku Sika*

- a. How the royal python is ushered into the play (P28: Stage directions)


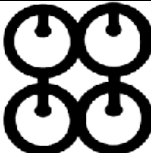




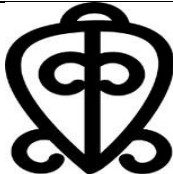



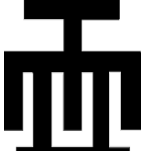
2. Folklore.

- a. Based on traditional Folkloric story. (Aku Sika)<sup>62</sup>


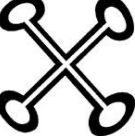
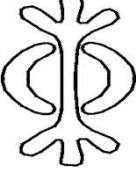

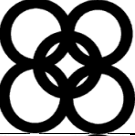
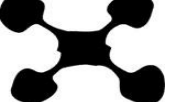




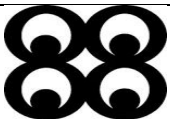
Table 4.1: Traditional Symbols (Adinkra) in The Legend of Aku Sika ‘

ADINKRA SYMBOL	NAME OF SYMBOL	THEME/MEANING	PARTICULARS
	<i>Gye Nyame</i>	God's Supremacy	Prologue (P. 1-2)
	<i>Musuyidee</i>	Sanctity	P1: Prologue, P2: action 1, P3: Stage directions P8: Speech 2
	<i>Nyame Biribi wo soro</i>	Hope	Prologue (p. 1)
	<i>Duafe</i>	Beauty	p. 9: Speech 1 and stage directions
	<i>Akoma</i>	Patience	p. 20: Speech 10


<sup>62</sup> Adwomtofoohene Nana Kwame Ampadu 1<sup>st</sup> used the same Folkloric story for his highlife composition in the 1970's

	<i>Ohene Aniwa</i>	Vigilance	P. 1: Speech.1
	<i>Mere ware wo</i>	Commitment and perseverance	p. 16: Speech 1 P19: 2
	<i>Tamfo bebere</i>	Hatred	P. 30: (Stage directions by the playwright). Speech. 2
	<i>Mpatapo</i>	Reconciliation after strife	P32: Speech. 10,
	<i>Aniberee</i>	Restraint	P17: Speech 3, P18: Speech 3& 17
	<i>Mfofoo</i>	Jealousy	p. 13: Speech.18 and stage instructions
	<i>Ɔɔ Nyera ne fie kwan</i>	Love never gets lost	p. 20: Speech 7
	<i>Akofena</i>	Authority	P. 9: 2 and Stage directions.
	<i>Hye a Wɔnhye</i>	Endurance	P. 32: Speech 8&9
	<i>Akokɔ Nnan</i>	Nurture	P. 32: Speech. 9 & 10
	<i>Hwemudua</i>	Examination	P20: Speech 11, P30: 5, P33: 9



	<i>Akoben</i>	Loyalty/wariness	P20: Speech 2, P21: Speech 3
	<i>Nyame Nwu na mawu</i>	Immortality of God and Human soul	p. 23: Speech 1 p28: Speech 4
	<i>Wawa Aba</i>	Hardiness	P. 16: Speech 1
	<i>Ɔsram ne Nsoroma</i>	Faithfulness	P19: Speech 7, 20: Speech 2
	<i>Kintinkantan</i>	Arrogance	P. 20: Speech. 4&7
	<i>Akoma Ntoasoɔ</i>	Choice and understanding	P25: Speech 4
	<i>Denkyem</i>	Adaptability	P25: Speech 7
	<i>Aya</i>	Defiance	P31: Speech 2 & 4
	<i>Epa</i>	Slavery	P. 31: (stage instructions)
	<i>Donno-nta</i>	Celebration	P32: Speech 10 & stage directions
	<i>Ma'te Masie</i>	Wisdom	P. 29: Speech 7

**Table 4.2:** Traditional Symbols (Totem) in *The Legend of Aku Sika*

TOTEMIC SYMBOL	NAME OF CLAN	CHARACTERISTIC	PARTICULARS
	<i>Agona</i>	The Spirit of Searching	Pp. 9, 13 &14

Indigenous Akan Names in *The Legend of Aku Sika*

1. Aku Sika
2. Yaa Boahemaa
3. Ama Takyiwaaa
4. Okyeame

### 4.2.3. The *Sankofa* elements in *In The Chest of a Woman*

#### *Synopsis*

In the Ebusa Kingdom, a princess, Nana Yaa Kyeretwie is engrossed with the desire to establish a norm which gears towards equality of men and women. She feels that, women in the kingdom are as strong and wise as men and that, leadership skills and qualities are not bestowed on men alone.

*In the Chest of A Woman* deals therefore, with a story which interrogates the relevance and status of women and their quest to assume power and rule as men do. It espouses the belief that power sharing should be equitable and that, what men can do, women can do better. Indeed, Nana Yaa Kyeretwie, does it better than any man as she is able to kill her husband, all the guards who might have sensed the true identity of her daughter being a girl, but has concealed her identity and made her a boy. She is able to cut off the tongue of the Midwife (Matron) who helps her in childbirth as a means to shut her mouth forever and ever. She says she has

begun...

...A wheel of change that shall leave all  
Men convinced that  
In the chest of a woman  
Is not only an extension of breasts  
And a feeble heart  
But a flaming desire to  
Possess and use power! (35-36)

The names attributed to the Royal house to the people of Ebusa Kingdom and the manner in which Yaa Kyeretwie exhibits the love of power push their lineage to the Oyokoo Family. In the Akan family systems, such names like, Kyeretwie, Nana Kwaku Duah, Owusu Agyemang and others are names given to the family of the Ashanti Royalty. The present Asantehene, before ascending the throne was called Kwaku Dua. A former Asantehene was called Osei Kyeretwie, not forgetting, Sir Osei Agyemang Prempeh and the rest. Looking closely at the character traits and attributes of Yaa Kyeretwie in *In the*

*Chest of a Woman* and the family, she belongs to; it is very safe to classify her as a member of the Oyoko family.

*Socio-cultural elements in In the Chest of a Woman*

- a. Customary Marriage (pp. 42, 44, 74). Cousins to marry. The King coercing Ekyaa, his Princess (p. 49)
- b. Taboos (Not to sit on the Judgment stool- p. 90) and other customary practices (Pp. 20, 34) battle strategies (p. 47). The pregnancy of Ekyaa out of wedlock.
- c. Chieftaincy (Enstoolment, Matrilineal Succession) (Pp. 18, 26) Step side (Problems)
- d. Traditional Royal dances, language and songs (Drums Ensemble, Kete, Fontomfrom) (Pp.15, 38, 41, 47)
- e. Traditional Games (Oware, Anansesem) (pp. 1, 57, 61)
- f. Men's cloth wearing. Which type? (P. 5)
- g. Traditional Architecture (Guest Quarters, for women to take care of the Messengers led by the Chief Messenger) (Pp. 9, 25)
- h. Akan Hospitality (P. 9)
- i. Puberty Rites (P. 13)
- j. Festival (P. 40)
- k. Property Transfer (From old to the young at death) (P. 17)
- l. The Traditional debate (Men and women equality) (P. 19)
- m. Personnel in the palace (Executioners, divisional chiefs- Gyaasehene, Akafohene, Ahenkwaa, Abotendomhene, Okyeame) (Pp. 21, 25, 58, 59, 65)
- n. Traditional Medicine (boiled roots of Nim tree to fight fever) (p. 68. )


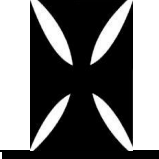
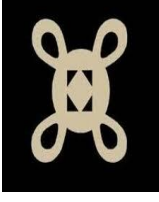






Others




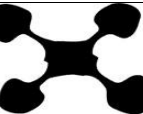


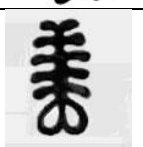




- a. Soliloquy (P.p. 10, 32, 35, 56, 57)
- b. Flash-back (Pp. 15 - 25)
- c. Gossip in society (Female recreational activity) (Leg 2 p. 37)
- d. Concubine (go-between *Mpenantem*) (36)
- e. Eating together from the same table (p. 45) (Food should be tasted, family of cooks)
- f. Communal Labour announced by the Town-crier – hoes, cutlass etc according to men and women and the punishment associated with it (p. 59) The importance of communal labour
- g. Initial stages of pregnancy described. (p. 67, 68) insatiable eating of white-clay.
- h. Clothes worn by the chief and the elders. What Type? (76)


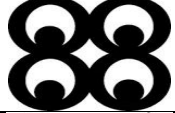
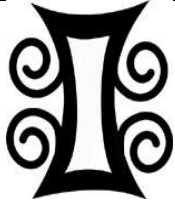



History

- a. Allusion to the bravery of Nana Yaa Asantewaa, the queen-mother of Ejisu (P. 24, 31)


**Table 4.3:** Traditional Symbols (Adinkra) in *In The Chest of a Woman*

ADINKRA SYMBOL	NAME OF SYMBOL	THEME/MEANING	PARTICULARS
	<i>Gye Nyame</i>	God's Supremacy	P39: Speech. 2
	<i>Musuyidee</i>	Sanctity	P14: Speech 3, P16: Speech 2 and Stage directions
	<i>Sunsum</i>	Soul	P17: Speech, 1, P96: Speech. 5 and stage directions
	<i>Duafe</i>	Beauty	P 39: Speech. 4 & 5
	<i>Akoma</i>	Patience	P28: Speech.4
	<i>Mfofoo</i>	Jealousy	P18: Speech. 3 and actions from Speech. 5,6,7,&8
	<i>Akofena</i>	Authority	P18: Speech. 2 and stage directions, P82: Speech 1 and stage directions
	<i>Akoko Nnan</i>	Nurture , (punishment and forgiveness)	P102: Speech 2 - 10-P103: Speech. 1 - 8 and stage instructions
	<i>Mpatapo</i>	Reconciliation after strife	P103: Speech. 1 - 7


	<i>Hwemudua</i>	Examination	The action of the final leg of the play from P76: – P103
	<i>Akoben</i>	Loyalty/wariness	P34: Speech. 3
	<i>Kintinkantan</i>	Arrogance	P74:Speech.2 & 3 and stage instructions
	<i>Akoma Ntoasoɔ</i>	Choice and understanding	P 93:Speech 3
	<i>Denkyem</i>	Adaptability	P25: Speech. 5
	<i>Sesa Wuraban</i>	Persistent to change	P35: Speech 11,
	<i>Aya</i>	Defiance	P. 74: Speech. 1
	<i>Funtumfenefu Denkyemfenefu</i>	Unity in Diversity	P.19: Speech 1 P30;Speech.10 P61: Speech. 5, 7 &8
	<i>Epa</i>	Slavery	P27: Speech 2, 29: 1
	<i>Pempamsie</i>	Precaution	P29: Speech 5
	<i>Dono-tta</i>	Celebration	P103: Stage instructions

	<i>Ɔdo Nyera ne fie kwan</i>	Love never gets lost	P93: Speech. 3
	<i>Mate Masie</i>	Wisdom	P30: Speech 5
	<i>Tamfo bebere</i>	Hatred	P88: Speech 9, and Stage Instructions. P100: Speech 10 and Stage instructions
	<i>Aniberee</i>	Restraint	P10: Speech 4
	<i>Boame na me mmoa wo</i>	Co-operation and inter-dependence	P30: Speech. 2,4 & 6
	<i>Mere ware wo</i>	Commitment and perseverance	P53: Speech 5 & 7, P54: Speech. 2 & 8, P55: Speech. 3



**Table 4.4:** Traditional Game in *In The Chest of a Woman*

TRADITIONAL GAME	NAME	CHARACTERISTIC	PARTICULARS
	<i>Ɔware</i>	Game of Intelligence	P1. Stage Instructions

**Table 4.5:** Linguist Staff in *In The Chest of a Woman*

LINGUIST STAFF	NAME	CHARACTERISTIC	PARTICULARS
	<i>Akyeame Poma</i>	The Spirit of Searching	P.5, 6, 8 (stage Prop)

**Table 4.6:** Traditional Stools in *In The Chest of a Woman*

TRADITIONAL STOOL	NAME	CHARACTERISTIC	PARTICULARS
	<i>Asipim</i>	Kings' Chair of Authority	P80: Speech 3
	<i>Adamadwa</i>	Women's stool	Opening scene.

*Indigenous Akan Names in In The Chest Of A Woman*

1. Yaa Kyiretwie
2. Nana Kwaku Duah II
3. Owusu Agyemang
4. Amma Ekyiaa
5. Okyeame Boateng
6. Okyeame Bonsu
7. Okomfo
8. Abrewanana
9. Nana Opong
10. Ofori
11. Akosua
12. Adwoa



#### 4.2.4. The *Sankofa* elements in *Edufa*

In this play, Efua Sutherland's adaptation of a Greek play, *Alcestis* by Euripides encourages the inclusion of an international/intercultural aspect in playwriting education programs. These dimensions would ensure that playwrights would have ample opportunities to engage their audiences in an "expanded life space". In this space, one would have to question the normal and common occurrences in one's life. This presents an opportunity for audiences to become more aware of themselves and their reactions to interact with people from different cultures other than their own. The universality of the themes in the play exemplifies how mankind belongs to a common ancestry and has similar ideologies and philosophies. The idea of borrowing from the Greek playwright, depicts the *Sankofa* concept in the first place, apart from the numerous *Sankofa* elements (Traditional symbols) found in the play. The play does not simplify the objects of tradition but maintains that, in order for the play to be done successfully in the Ghanaian paradigm, theatre practitioners would have to take into account context, cognition, language, learning and culture, socio-economic status impact, and their own feelings and perceptions.

The researcher, during the content analysis of *Edufa* by Efua T. Sutherland, became interested in the play when he came across a scene where, Edufa exchanges anger with his father, Kankam. Kankam makes mention of one of the traditional symbols which emanates from the father's side (Ntorɔ).

**Edufa:** Father, are you mad?

**Kankam:** (Shocked), *Nyame* above! To say father and call me mad! My *ntorɔ* within you shivers with the shock with it!

**Edufa:** (Awareness that he has violated taboo) You provoked me.

What Sutherland might have left unattended to was the failure to provide the sort of *ntorɔ* Kankam possesses. This could be a playwright's strategy to ask directors, actors, critics and other collaborators to research and find the traditional image of what *ntorɔ* is. Therefore, my search for these features in modern Ghanaian plays becomes very crucial. Accordingly, the *ntorɔ*, which derive their names from river gods include: Bosommuru, Bosompra, Bosomtwe, Bosompo, Bosomafram, Bosmyensu, Bosomakomfo, Bosomakansi, Bosomadi, Bosomsika, Bosomkrete and Bosomadwe. All these *Ntorɔ* have their special days of observance. They are named after River bodies, and animals they are not supposed to eat. They also have their animal totems.

As every Akan belongs to a clan (*abusua*) which is the mother's blood that runs through him or her, so does he or she belong to *Ntorɔ/Ntɔn* system which is the father's spirit that is believed to hold and protect him or her.

It is this spirit that establishes the special bond of relationship between the father and the child; determines his level of intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, and general character (Nkansa Kyeremateng, 2010: 32),

According to the Akan tradition, there are a total of twelve *Ntorɔ/Ntɔn* groups in the Akan system most of which are named after water bodies (big rivers) in Ghana.

Each group has animals from which they derive longevity (*Akyeneboa*) as well as those they are prohibited from eating (*Akyiwadee*), Persons from each *Ntorɔ/Ntɔn* have some common characters as well as special responses when they meet (Nkansah Kyeremateng, 2010: 29)

It is believed that because the modern man has neglected all these rituals and traditional systems as outmoded and unscientific there are numerous diseases and preventable sicknesses that are causing untimely and unnecessary deaths. By going back to these practices, we may avoid so many calamities that are befalling us<sup>63</sup>. This anger seem to go contrary to what the *Ekoɔna* Family totem (See Chpt. 3: pic 3.8) stands for.

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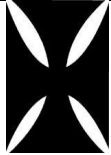



<sup>63</sup> Private conversation





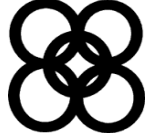
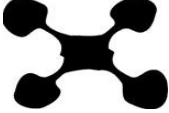
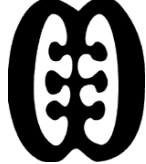



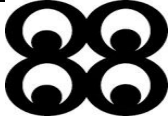

1. Socio-cultural elements in *Edufa*
  - o. Customary Marriage
  - p. Taboos and other customary practices (Beads around Edufa's neck) (p. 54: 1)
  - q. Public Image Protection (p. 20)
  - r. Traditional dances and songs (Pp. 21 stage directions)
2. Traditional religious practices in *Edufa*
  - a. The rituals Performed by Sam,(P35: Speech 2)
  - b. The description of how the diviner performs by Kankam

#### History

- a. Adaptation from the Greek Mythology: *Alcestis*.written by Euripedes

**Table 4.7:** Traditional Symbols (Adinkra) in *Edufa*

ADINKRA SYMBOL	NAME OF SYMBOL	THEME/MEANING	PARTICULARS
	<i>Gye Nyame</i>	God's Supremacy	P. 6: Speech.3 , P16: Speech. 1
	<i>Musuyidee</i>	Sanctity	P4:Speech.1, P5: Speech 4, P6: Speech:5, P7: Speech 6, P14: Speech 4, p22: Speech. 4&5 P24: Speech5
	<i>Nyame Biribi wo soro</i>	Hope	Prologue (p. 1)
	<i>Duafe</i>	Beauty	p. 21: Speech 9
	<i>Akoma</i>	Patience	p. 20: Speech 1

	<i>Jhene Aniwa</i>	Vigilance	P. 1: Speech. 1
	<i>Mfofoo</i>	Jealousy	p. 9: Speech.6
	<i>Akoben</i>	Loyalty/wariness	Pp. 53: Speech. 2
	<i>Ɔsram ne Nsoroma</i>	Faithfulness	P. 10: Speech. 4&5
	<i>Kintinkantan</i>	Arrogance	P. 13 Speech.7 P.16 Speech. 5
	<i>Akoma Ntoasoɔ</i>	Choice and understanding	P. 16. Speech 4
	<i>Ese ne Tekrema</i>	Friendship	P. 12.Speech. 11
	<i>Aya</i>	Defiance	P. 17: Speech. 9
	<i>Epa</i>	Slavery	P. 8: Speech. 9
	<i>Owuo Atwedie</i>	Mortality	Pp.14: Speech 8, 25:Speech.1
	<i>Mate Masie</i>	Wisdom	P. 5, 11Speech. 8
	<i>Hwemudua</i>	Examination	P.10 Speech. 6
TOTEMIC			

SYMBOL	NAME OF CLAN	CHARACTERISTIC	PARTICULARS
Ntorɔ <sup>64</sup>	X	X	P. 16 Speech 6

Indigenous Akan names in *Edufa*

1. Abena
2. Edufa
3. Seguwa
4. Ampoma
5. Kankam
6. Sam

#### 4.2.5. The *Sankɔfa* elements in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

In this play, the playwright focuses on the socialization of the African community. She suggests that, unity is the first step to socialization because without unity, there can be no growth as an African family. In order to become unified, Africans must be identified as members of the African family. Then, Africans must pull their own weight by educating their children within the African socialization paradigm, and engaging in the study about African culture and history. She suggests that there is “No way around serious and disciplined study”. Africans should study individually and in groups, extending the invitation to community members and children. Once we have studied and have gained the knowledge of our ancestors and our vast African traditions, we must rebuild the African family. The mother of Ato, Esi Kom becomes the unifier of the old and new movements in the play. “We thought those who go to school know everything”. The play espouses the ignorance of the educated in the society. This pre-supposes that, we all have to learn something from someone. There is the need for the re-awakening of the African Mind. There is a profound call for Africans to focus on education and socialization while solving their problems of spirituality and identity which create the dilemma of the African child. “Shall I go to Cape Coast, or to Elmina?” The play encourages Africans to understand that,

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<sup>64</sup> Sutherland wrote about Ntorɔ, but she did not specify which type of ntorɔ.

within our diversity there are many shared struggles that must be considered through collective action. Nevertheless, in order for that collective action to occur, we must consider ourselves as part of the African family because, we are either African or nothing. Ama Ata Aidoo provides an analysis of how the naming of the Africans American (Eulailie Rush) has been successful in separating her from the African family and from her cultural roots.

In the *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, the author, Ama ata Aidoo, through stage instructions describes the setting and action in the courtyard of the newest wing of the Odumna Clan which is the Fante version of Aduana clan.

Indeed, the serviceable nature of the family members ranging from the Old Lady through Esi Kom, Mansa, Akyere, to Monka, and from Petu, Akroma to Ato depicts a strong characteristics of the Aduana Clan. As their totem depicts, the dog wants to serve with all its strength. It is sometimes booted away by the very people it is serving. The dog catches rodents for the owner, but when the owner finds the dog so close to the meat, he will hit it with either a stick or his legs. This happens to Esi Kom, the mother of Ato who brings some foodstuffs to his son and his wife. These things are thrown away by her in-law.

Eulailie describes the family thus: “.....As for his folks, they are cute. I adore the old one ...His mother gives me a feeling though...” The differences in culture seem to disturb Eulailie, but that is how serviceable Ato’s people are. Esi Kom:

    Hmm...They told us when we arrived from the farm that you and your wife have come to spend today and tomorrow with us. So I thought I would bring you one or two things, for I hear food is almost unbuyable in the city

It is believed that many more Akan Totems and symbols can be found in many other plays.

It is therefore prudent to assemble the rest of the totems found from the field for my

reader's attention. This will serve as a compendium of traditional symbols, which could be visited or referred to, where necessary, and appropriate. In our search for the traditional symbols (*Sankɔfa* elements) in the plays under-study, and any literary works, it provides easy access to the symbols during coding. The findings were basically derived from the survey conducted from the Head towns of the Akan totems

1. Socio-cultural elements in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

- a. Customary Marriage (P11: Speech 3 – 21, P13: 9)
- b. Taboos and other customary practices (P44 - action )
- c. Traditional games, dances and songs (Kwaakwa) (P. 23)
- d. Child upbringing. (P. 9)
- e. Bride Prize (P. 10)
- f. Communal spirit
- g. Ethnic marriages (P. 11)
- h. Childbirth commented by Eulailie (Pp. 22 & 35)
- i. Subjugation of Womanhood (P. 26)


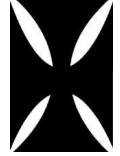




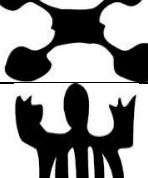
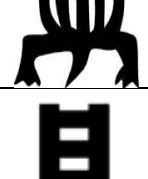


2. Traditional religious practices in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

- a. The Sprinkling of Oto and concoction (pp. 36-37)
- b. References to Traditional medicine (P8: Speech. 13)
- c. Biblical Allusions (P4: Speech. 2,3,4 & 5, P44: Speech.2)
- d. Taboos (P. 44)

3. History

- a. Reference to olden times by the Old Lady (P7: Speech. 7)
- b. History of the Slave Trade (P12: Speech 11 & 12, P14: Speech 2.)


**Table 4.8:** Traditional Symbols (Adinkra) in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

ADINKRA SYMBOL	NAME OF SYMBOL	THEME/MEANING	PARTICULARS
	<i>Gye Nyame</i>	God's Supremacy	P14: Speech. 2, P18: Speech. 2 & P48: Speech. 11
	<i>Musuyidee</i>	Sanctity	P2 (prelude) , P36 & 37 (Stage Directions), P40: Speech 11, P41: Speech. 16
	<i>Nyame Biribi wo soro</i>	Hope	P18: Speech. 2
	<i>Akoma</i>	Patience/Love	P10: , P39: Speech 9, P40: Speech. 7
	<i>Hwemudua</i>	Examination	P40: Speech. 8,10 and 11
	<i>Akoben</i>	Loyalty/wariness	P2: Prelude
	<i>Akoma Ntoaso</i>	Choice and understanding	P25: Speech.1.2 and 3
	<i>Denkyem</i>	Adaptability	P25: Speech. 1
	<i>Owuo Atwedie</i>	Mortality	P13: Speech 4,5,and 6
	<i>Mfofoo</i>	Jealousy	P3: Speech. 4




	<i>Aya</i>	Defiance	P44: Speech 2
	<i>Ɔsram ne Nsroma</i>	Faithfulness	P4: Speech. 1,2,3,4 and 5
	<i>Epa</i>	Slavery	P12: Speech. 11
	<i>Mate Masie</i>	Wisdom	P1 PRELUDE

**Table 4.9:** Traditional Symbols (Totem) in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

TOTEMIC SYMBOL	NAME OF CLAN	CHARACTERISTIC	PARTICULARS
	<i>Odumna</i>	Loyalty and Perseverance	P1: Prelude

**Table 4.10:** Traditional Game in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

	<i>Traditional Game of intelligence</i>	Comparable to marriage( It takes two to play and there should be no cheating)	P46: Speech 11
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#### Indigenous Akan Names in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

1. Ato Yawson
2. Esi Kom
3. Monka
4. Akyere
5. Petu
6. Akroma
7. Ebo

### 4.3. Proverbs identified in the Four Plays

This section provides the various proverbs identified in the four plays. In this study, proverbs are also considered symbols of communication. Picking the proverbs from the tradition and translating them into English depicts amovement into traditional culture for knowledge, and this forms part of the *Sankofa* concept. I have provided in dialogue form what I call the *Playwrights' Proverbial Debate*. Efua Sutherland represents proverbs identified from *Edufa*, Mawugbe represents proverbs from *In the Chest of a Woman*, Owusu provides the identified proverbs from *The Legend of Aku Sika*, and Ama Ata Aidoo makes available, the proverbs identified from *The Dilemma of a Ghost*.

#### **Efua Sutherland:**

The dead are removed. Time must, and will soften the pain of the living (P. 9: 8)

#### **Mawugbe**

Only fools plunge into battle without doing any homework about their enemies' strength.  
(P. 2)

#### **Owusu**

The Child does not break the tortoise...The snail he may pick and crush (p.2: 2)

#### **Ama Ata Aidoo**

If the heavens withdraw their light, man must light his own way. (P7: Speech. 7)

#### **Mawugbe**

I don't want to jump into the dancing ring before the big drum... (P. 7)

#### **Ama Ata Aidoo**

No one knows what the man of fame and honour was like when he was a child (P9: Speech.13 &14)

#### **Sutherland**

What we get, we possess (P. 33: Speech 7)

#### **Owusu**

The Child does not break the tortoise...The snail he may pick and crush (p.2: 2)

**Mawugbe**

The charcoal smiled at the piece of mahogany and said “we may look alike, but I have been through red hot fire and smoke” (P. 7)

**Owusu**

Let us not anticipate the hunter’s game. He may set out to kill a bull, but he may bring home a rat. (P.16: Speech 13)

**Ama Ata Aidoo**

One must take time to dissect an ant in order to discover its entrails (P10: Speech. 20)

**Sutherland**

We spend most of our days preventing the heart from beating out its greatness. The things we would rather encourage lie choking among the weeds of restriction. And before we know it, time has eluded us.

**Owusu**

The Chicken and the Egg, who is the Elder? (P.2: Speech 2)

**Ama Ata Aidoo**

They ask for the people of the house; and not the money in it. (P16: Speech. 4)

**Mawugbe**

To every mountain, there is a valley. (P. 7)

**Owusu**

Dignity to the unsure foot is spite (P.16: 1)

**Sutherland**

There is not much time allotted us, and half of that we sleep. (p. 53: Speech 2 )

**Mawugbe**

The early morning mouth smells but it is full of wisdom... (p. 65)

**Owusu**

When the hyena is accused by the antelope of brutality, only patience finds him out; it is his nature (P17: Speech 6)

**Ama Ata Aidoo**

If you perchance hear on a silent afternoon the sound of a mortar, go get out your mortar too, for they are only pounding cassava (P16: Speech 5)

**Mawugbe**

Nobody goes for a walking stick and picks the one which will grow taller than him. (p. 73)

**Ama Ata Aidoo**

If nothing scratched at the palm fibre, it certainly would not have creaked. (P29: Speech. 8)

**Mawugbe**

Palm wine cannot be taller than the calabash in which it is. (p. 73)

**Owusu**

The day you are ill-prepared is when you meet your in-laws. (P. 24: Speech 6 )

**Ama Ata Aidoo**

Living a life of failure is like taking snuff at the beach. (P30: Speech 11)

**Owusu**

Even the elephant has a limit to the weight it must carry. (P. 25: Speech 1)

**Ama Ata Aidoo**

If Nakedness promises you clothes, ask his name. (P33: Speech. 9)

**Owusu**

Those Odomankoma will bless will not be helpless for ever (P. 28: Speech 2)

**Ama Ata Aidoo**

Marriage is like *Oware*<sup>65</sup>, someone is bound to lose and another to gain. (P46: Speech. 11)

**Mawugbe:**

Two heads have always proved better than one... (79)

**Ama Ata Aidoo**

No stranger ever breaks the law (P49: Speech 3)

**Mawugbe**

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<sup>65</sup> Traditional game played with pebbles.

If you have an important piece of advice, you offer it with a mouth that has not yet tasted pepper and salt. (p. 65)

**Ama Ata Aidoo**

Before the stranger should dip his finger into the thick palm nut soup, it is a townsman who must have told him to. (P49: Speech. 3).

**Mawugbe**

Don't think that when the eye is blind, it knows no sleep. (P39: Speech. 9)

**Owusu**

Even the Elephant has a limit to the weight it mus carry. (P. 25. Speech 1)

**Ama Ata Aidoo:**

One does not stand in ant-rail to pick off ants (P38: Speech. 15)

**Sutherland**

Dignity is security (P. 89 Speech 7)

**Ama Ata Aidoo**

There is no disease in this world but it has a cure (P41: Speech. 3)

#### **4.4. Findings on *Death on Trial* Production**

The play takes its source from the historical episode of the people of Bodomase, near Kumawu in the Ashanti Region where it was alleged that, a man called Dwenti fought and captured Death's mortal Box (Owuo Apakan). As a result, for three years, there was no incidence of child birth and no incidence of Death in the Vicinity. People who were very sick and old wanting to die, and those who had been pregnant for more than two years began pestering him to send back the mortal box to the owner. Is Death a curse to mankind or a Blessing? The play throws a challenge for mankind to reflect on life as a journey and this was confirmed by some of the audiences who were interviewed after watching the play for three nights.

It was discovered after the performance that, the methods used for analysis through content analysis could be applied to live performances as well; however, the textual analysis is normally done solely by the researcher and could be read over and over again. During live performance, the researcher becomes part of an audience. Here, there could be some distractions, as the researcher does not have absolute control over the stage performance. Again, the production cannot stop once started. Although, it was done for three nights, each night's performance had its own peculiarities. Some cast members were changed; it was raining during one of the performances, and as an open-Air theatre, despite the fact that audiences were willing to stay in the rains to watch the play, it was difficult being comfortable and fully concentrating on the performance. Another major difference was that, as some of the Akan traditional symbols were seen physically during live performances, one had to be fully knowledgeable of the various traditional symbols in

Akan societies before one could apply them to the analysis. “The symbols were in action and moved out of sight, sometimes, very quickly”<sup>66</sup>.

Again, while content analysis seems to be subjective on the part of the researcher, in the analysis of the stage and live production, objectivity is very crucial. The difficulty to identify and code a traditional symbol in a play, using content analysis strengthens the durability and permanence of the process. This is significant as a live performance of a play is summarily ephemeral and the tendency that some symbols can be masked is primarily possible.

In the play, the eight Akan Totems were exhibited by the forest creatures who gave Bediako the powers to conquer everything including the mortal box (Owuo Apakan) of Death. The combination of the powers of the Akan clans provides extraordinary potent powers to the communities. This is evident through the mask they give to Bediako.

#### **Calabash Bearer:**

*.....Wear the mask Bediako ...and I hang the amulet around your neck. With these on  
Your face and neck, no god or human, either living or dead can overpower you...*

The traditional way of prayers in the form of libation was made to conform to the stage directions as provided by the playwright. An example is seen in Movement Five:

In the forest, Bediako has been surrounded by eight (8) forest creatures bearing the Totems of the various Akan clans. They look like human beings. They move in a circular form and they conjure unseen charms. As they conjure the charms they place them on the head of Bediako. Bediako is in a trance as the calabash bearer of the creatures steps out with a thunderous voice and making libation sings a traditional song:

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<sup>66</sup> Kwadey, an audience member retorted after the show when he was asked whether he discovered the symbols in the play.

**Calabash Bearer**

*Nanaee yeregu nsa oo nsaoo*

*Nana Nyame yeregu nsao nsaooo*

*Nanaee yeregu nsao nsa nisee (They respond)*

*Nanaee yeregu nsao nsaoo*

*Asaase Yaa yeregu nsa oo nsaoo*

*Nanaee yeregu nsa oo nsa nisee ...*

*Y'atenaseoo pem, Nana Nyame nsao*

*Responses: Y'atenaseoo pem*

*Aduanafoɔ nsamanfoɔ Nsaoo (The totem of the Aduana clan which is a carved dog with fire in the mouth is displayed)*

*Agonafoɔ Nsamanfoɔ nsao (The totem of the Agona clan, the parrot is displayed)*

*Asakyirfoɔ nsamanfoɔ nsao (The totem of the Asakyir clan, the vulture is displayed)*

*Aseneefoɔ nsamanfoɔ nsao (The totem of the Asenee clan, the bat is displayed)*

*Bretufoɔ nsamanfoɔ nsao (The totem of Bretuo clan, the Tiger is displayed)*

*Ekooɔnafoɔ nsamanfoɔ nsao (The totem of the Ekoona clan, the Buffalo is displayed)*

*Oyokoɔfoɔ nsamanfoɔ nsao (The totem of the Oyokoo clan, the hawk is displayed)*

*Asonafoɔ nsamanfoɔ nsao (The totem of Asona clan, the Crow is displayed)*

*Y'atenaseoo pem...y'atenaseoo pem*

**Calabash Bearer**

*The divine women and custodians of our clan totems, I salute you. (They bow in response)  
Our Traditional life dominated, by religion and surrounded by innumerable gods and spirits, with whom, the lives of mortals interact. Let's drink. (Pours)*

**All**

*Eeei Ziom*

*Below you deities are spirits including the spirits of the departed ancestors. You all come for drink. (Pours)*

**All**

*Eeei Ziom*



### **Calabash Bearer**

*Apart from you, the Supreme Deity, Onyankopɔn Twedeampɔng who is never represented by a carving of stool, or mask, because mankind does not know what you look like, other gods and ancestral spirits are represented by masks, stools and statues which are kept in shrines where they are worshipped. Patrons of hunting, and fishing, guardians of our roads, you are the creative essence. You are at once destroyers, and at once creative creators. You are enigmatic symbols! Come, you spirits. Come for drink and protect us. (Pours finally)*

**All**

*Eeeeei Ziom*

### **The Akan Semiotics in *Death on Trial***

Semiotics or semiology, respectively involves addressing physical objects in terms of their ability to convey meaning: as signs. (Chandler 2007: 64). For Saussure, the sign is more than a means of communication; it comprises the basic fabric of culture. Sausurrean signs do not merely express existing meanings, they are mechanisms by which meaning is created, for in fixing abstract concepts (Signified) to material object (Signifier) sign systems provide the structures in which thought occurs, shaping our perception and experiences. . Keir Elam in his book, *Semiotics in Theatre and Drama* said;

It can best be defined as a science dedicated to the study of production of meaning in society. As such, it is equally concerned with processes of signification and with those of communication that is the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged. Its objects are thus at once the different sign-system and codes at work in society and the actual messages and texts produced thereby<sup>67</sup>

Before the Saussurean theory on semiotics, the Akans had expressed themselves chiefly through gesture, mime, movement and sound which developed into dance and music. Signs and symbols and for that matter, semiotics abound in the Akan communities that people could talk by signs which the stranger can never understand.

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<sup>67</sup> Elam K. (1980) *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. p. 90

In the *Death On Trial*, actors and actresses were asked to research into the reality of Akan semiotics and came up with many factions of semiotics which were exhibited during the performances. The Akan Semiotics was important in this study because it helped us not to take 'reality' for granted as something having a purely objective existence which is independent of human interpretation. It taught us that reality is a system of signs. "Studying semiotics assisted us to become more aware of reality as a construction and of the roles played by ourselves and others in constructing it"<sup>68</sup>.

It helped us to realize that information or meaning is not 'contained' in the world or in books, computers or audio-visual media. Meaning is not 'transmitted' to us - we actively create it according to a complex interplay of codes or conventions of which we are normally unaware.<sup>69</sup>

Becoming aware of such codes is both inherently fascinating and intellectually empowering. We learn from Akan semiotics that we live in a world of signs and we have no way of understanding anything except through signs and the codes into which they are organized. Through the study of semiotics we became aware that these signs and codes were normally transparent and disguise our task in 'reading' them.

Living in a world of increasingly visual signs, we need to learn that even the most 'realistic' signs are not what they appear to be. By making more explicit the codes by which signs are interpreted we performed the valuable semiotic function of 'denaturalizing' signs. *Sankofa*, in this context helped to foster a better understanding of the meaning and impact of culture when the players acted using some of the following semiotic expressions:

- Facial Expression

The face is the most distinctive and intimate part of the performer. Apart from its basic function in theatre, where sometimes make-up can change the face; the face serves as a message in its own right. It differs from person to person due to variations in the features of the face which include the nose, eyes, the cheeks, the chin, the eye-brows, beard, moustache and others. Much of what goes on in the actor's mind finds expression on the face. The facial muscles often show the kind of emotions the actor feels. An actor can control his facial expression of a felt

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<sup>68</sup> This was said by Obiaa, an actress who played the role of Akosua Obiaa in the play *Death On Trial*, during a discussion on acting after the technical dress rehearsals, 10<sup>th</sup> November, 2014.

<sup>69</sup> Bismark Ofori, an actor who played the Role of Gyamfi in the play. He said this during the discussions after the Technical Dress rehearsal.

emotion and easily fake an emotion that is not actually experienced. The expression can be one of the following: fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, anger, joy and others.

In this production performers assumed roles portraying believable facial expressions and consistency. “Tiny things were observed well that what the forehead does to communicate either physically or emotionally was detected by the audience. I saw the forehead demonstrate nervousness, tension, worry and deep thought within a certain cultural situation on Gyeabour’s face?”<sup>70</sup>

Some other features of semiotic expressions indicated in all the Seven Movements included:

- **The Lips**

1. *Biting*: Biting the lips in a discussion or conversation shows uncertainty, indecision or pondering. (Obia) – *Movement Three*.
2. *Pursing*: To purse one’s lips shows disapproval or dislike. Sometimes, it also shows concentration. Usually, the mouth is formed into a small tight round shape. (Tiwaa pursed her mouth towards Obiaa) - *Movement Three*.
3. *Licking*: Licking the lips indicates the eagerness of someone waiting to have a bite or eat something. (Gyeabour before eating the poisoned food) - *Movement Three*.
4. *Keeping a Stiff upper lip*: This shows a face of resolution, unyielding to emotion (Gyamfi and Gyeabour) - *Movement Three*.
5. *Protruding the lips*: Protruding the lower lip more than the upper lips at something or somebody depict contempt. (Obiaa towards Gyeabour) *Movement Three*.

- **The Tongue and Teeth**

1. *Sticking out*: Lack of seriousness on one’s speech and guilt.(Gyeabour towards Obiaa) - *Movement Three*.
2. *Baring the teeth*: Baring the teeth at someone show anger and desire to attack. This normally is accompanied by a twisted and frightening facial

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<sup>70</sup> Dr. Botsio an audience member after the 3<sup>rd</sup> night performance. According to him, he had watched watched the play for all the three nights

expression. Further, baring and clenching the teeth signal pain or determination. (Gyamfi towards Gyeabour) - *Movement Two*.

- **Gestures**

Gestures are used in regulating conversation and supplementing speech. In what we call miming in the theatre, gestures are normally used to convey messages to the audiences. Actors, as part of their training should be well abreast with the various gestures within the cultural milieu for better understanding. (All performers) - *Movement Three*.

- *Head Gestures*: The head is the sum total of the human being and therefore, the actor. Movements of the head are the primary means of creating the *yes* or the *no* signals we are all familiar with. (All Performers)

### **The Head**

1. *Nodding the head up and down*: Agreement, encouraging sign to go ahead etc. (Bediako) – *Movement Two*
2. *Shaking the head side-ways*: Disagreement, No way sign, Never again. (Obiaa) – *Movement Five*
  1. *Eye Contact*: lovers devote more time gazing into each other's eyes (Gyeabour and Obiaa) - *Movement Three*.
  2. *Long gaze*: sometimes a long gaze transmits a message of hostility or dominance, superiority and power. (Bediako's search for answers to her sister, Obia's barrenness) *Movement Two*.
  3. *Downward glance*: Downward glance, depending on the situation can suggest modesty, guilt, shyness or fear.(Obia's encounter with Maame Kontoh and Obibini, her husband) – *Movement Four*
  4. *Blank Stare*: A blank stare indicates coldness toward a speaker. (Obiaa stared at Gyeabour vaguely) - *Movement Three*.
  5. *Probing glance*: Looking down at someone else's feet provides a key to the one's status. This kind of look starts from the face down the body to the feet.(Obiaa – Gyeabour's encounter) - *Movement Three*.
  6. *Blinking*: Blinking rate can be used to gauge the courage of a person. It can be a sign of lying. A woman can blink only one eye to seduce a man for sexual purposes. (Obiaa and Gyeabour) - *Movement Three*.

7. *Raised eyebrows*: The raised eyebrows can signify surprise. Sometimes this expression shows fear when the duration is sustained.(Gyamfi and Obiaa when Bediako vanishes) – *Movement Seven*
8. *Wriggling the Nose*: A man without the eye can still see hidden things by the nose as far as smelling is concerned. (Gyeabour smells the food and wrings his nose. In the same manner Accident, Filth, and infectious disease, wring their noses to signify the presence of Bediako).
9. *Flaring the Nostril*: flaring the nostril is a sign of anger or impatience
6. *Lips wide open*: A wide open mouth signals surprise. It is usually associated with wide open eyes and a wrinkled forehead.(Gyamfi’s encounter with the Palm-wine seller painting her hair near the pot of palm-wine)- *Movement Two*.
7. *Lips Half open*: When one is in a stupefied position. (When Bediako picks the mortal box from Death. Death stands stupefied.) *Movement Seven*.

### **The Hand**

1. *The arms raised vertically*: I have nothing to hide, therefore, I surrender (Obiaa) – *Movement One*.
2. *Raising the right hand and the index finger*: A gesture of calling attention to ask a question or to say something. (Palm-wine Seller) - *Movement Six*
3. *Patting down the air with the palms*: During heated debates or when tempers are high, it is a gesture that entreats people to calm down and exercise restraints - *Movement Two*.
4. *Clapping Hands*: Clapping hands can mean so many things – a sign of joy, anger, displeasure or distress (Death) – *Movement One*
5. *Making choppy movements with the side of the hand*: The sign emphasizes systematic arrangements of things or events (Death and Bediako) – *Movement Seven*
6. *Brushing something away in the air*: A demonstrative gesture mimicking the spiteful words “go away” I do not want to see you. (Obiaa towards Gyeabour) - *Movement Two*.

7. *Two hands on the head*: Distress, despair, sadness, exhaustion, mourning etc. (Obiaa, and Afrakoma, after the death of Obiaa's child) – *Movement Two*.
8. *The right palm on the left palm facing upwards*: Asking for favour or pardon.
9. *Finger on the lips or mouth*: Silence. I am quiet. (Death's Messengers) - *Movement Seven*
10. *Nail biting*: A sign of nervousness. (Obiaa) - *Movement Four*
11. *Beating the chest*: Showing off. (Gyeabour, Gyamfi and Tiwaa) – *Movement Three*.
12. *Hands firmly folded across the chest*: Indifference, unconcerned.(Tiwaa) – *Movement One*
13. *Shrugging off the shoulders*: I do not care, or I do not know. (Obibini) – *Movement Four*.

#### **4.4.1. Akan Traditional Costumes used in *Death On Trial***

The appearance of Traditional costumes in the production of *Death On Trial* is a strong basis of the *Sankofa* tenets which needs to be coded. For example, the different styles of traditional cloth wearing by Akan men are about thirteen in number.. They include: *Konfanko*, (Might), *Asikafoɔ amma ntem*, (Wealthy People did not come early), *Mewɔ mebiribi me di*, (I have what I eat), *Akyamfoɔ*, (The adorned one) *Ako dua*, (The tail of the parrot), *Dwabɛn Anantuo*, (The well-formed legs from Dwabɛn) *Atwape*, (Short edge), *Mekɔsree*, (I borrowed), *kwaha* (Obedience) *Merehwe me baabi* (I am looking elsewhere), *Agyabra*, (Father come here), *Kɔla* and *Meyere besi* (My wife will wash)

All male characters in the play were made to wear one of them. The King, for example at the durbar to welcome Bediako was made to wear *Konfanko* which is prescribed for only Kings and Chiefs in the Akan culture to wear.

The styles for women are: *Atete*, *Kentenkye* (*Dansinkran*<sup>71</sup>), *Kaba* (*Esoro*) *ne fom...* and *Daadaa*. Tiwaa wore (*Atete*), The Queen Mother (*Dansi Nkran/Kentenkye*), Female citizens, (*Dadaa*, *Esoro ne fom* etc.). Any of these styles or other traditional costumes for priests and other characters form part of the *Sankofa* elements in the play. The head – style for women (*Dansikran*, *Mesa*, *Nsisiho*, etc) were also taken into consideration.

Indigenous Akan names in *Death On Trial*

1. Bediako
2. Gyamfi
3. Afua Nipanka
4. Yaa Kroama
5. Tiwaa
6. Gyeabour
7. Afrakoma
8. Owusuaa
9. Fosuaa
10. Akosua Obiaa
11. Owuo
12. Nkwa
13. Obɔadee

#### 4.5 Limitations

One major limitation of this study was that, the selection of the playwrights and their literature is only a mere sample of the expansive work that they have published. While I have compiled a reference list specifically, for their works – published and unpublished, I realized that they covered so many different areas that, I am still not sure of whether or not my reference list is complete.

Nevertheless, I know that it would have been beyond the scope of this study to engage in an analysis of all of the works of these playwrights. Instead, selecting specific areas based on

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<sup>71</sup> According to nana Amankwa of Kronom in Ashanti region, when the white man came to an Asante durbar during the colonial period, he found the queen mother in a head style 'kentenkye'. As the queen mother always danced exhibiting the beauty of the head style, the white man thought it was a dancing crown. He voiced out; "This is a dancing Crown", and as the people could not pronounce 'the dancing crown', it change to 'Dansinkran'

my interests has been the best way to determine how to narrow the scope of this Study. Other researchers have also demonstrated similar strategies in selecting a small area of the expansive body of work by these playwrights. Collectively, I join hands with these other scholars, and I think we have made a small dent in extracting knowledge from the works in academic and cultural excellence. While I contend, I am skeptical about whether or not these processes would be as welcoming for other theatre practitioners during examination (analysis), judgment (evaluation) and interpretation (understanding) of plays.

#### **4.6 Chapter Summary**

I used Content Analysis (CA) to explore consistent themes in works of the four playwrights. For example, as I analyzed the works of the playwrights, especially, *In the Chest of A Woman* by Efo Mawugbe, I found that my emotions were aroused. There were times when I wrote “YES!” or drew happy faces next to a statement that described my experience or affirmed my perceptions; there were even occasions that the reading or activity prompted me to stop the task at hand and engage in poetic venting or discussions with friends regarding traditional Ghanaian treasures and symbolic identity. Therefore, CA was an effective strategy for maintaining my experience conducting the study because the study was reflexive. The method can be applied to this study as many of the narratives, poems, novels, and plays were understood during the moments of introspection. However, other personal memory data required me to utilize reflexivity to evaluate my knowledge acquisition, reflecting on various elements (verbal, nonverbal, feelings, and thoughts) following the actions and statements in the plays.

Therefore, I considered Merriam’s (1998) assertion that; often, reflexivity is considered a means to guide the researcher as he or she engages in collecting data about others. In this



sense, reflexivity was used to assist in identifying how my own perceptions impact the research.

The study used the conventional approach for coding categories. The symbols were derived directly from the texts data of the four plays selected. With the directed approach, most of the analysis began with theories of relevant research findings conducted on Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols as guidance for coding. And summative analysis in the thesis involved the counting and comparisons, especially, on the use of traditional Akan indigenous names in the plays selected. In the end, many similar Adinkra symbols were found in all the plays selected. Examples are: *Mpatapo*, *Gye Nyame*, *Mate Masie*, and *Musuyidee*.

Content analysis enabled the researcher to sift through large volumes of data with relative ease in a systematic fashion (Gao, 1996: 73). It was a useful technique for allowing me to discover and describe the focus of individual, group, institutional, or social attention (Weber, 1990). It also allowed inferences to be made which were corroborated using other methods of data collection, such as ethnographic survey conducted in the eight (8) head towns of the Akan Clan Totems.

In conclusion, I presented facts and tried to limit opinions of the facts as possible. Nevertheless, where there is a reference to any of the plays selected, I offered the description. I included tables, pictures, illustrations and some verbatim quotes from the interviewees, and from the content of the plays. This chapter has produced a compendium of Adinkra symbols and Akan Clan totems from the field as well as through content analysis of the four plays selected. The information is worthy enough to be used for the analysis and discussions. The coding was done manually and stratification of the symbols and categories has been provided for easy references from the published plays.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE STUDY

#### 5.1 Introduction

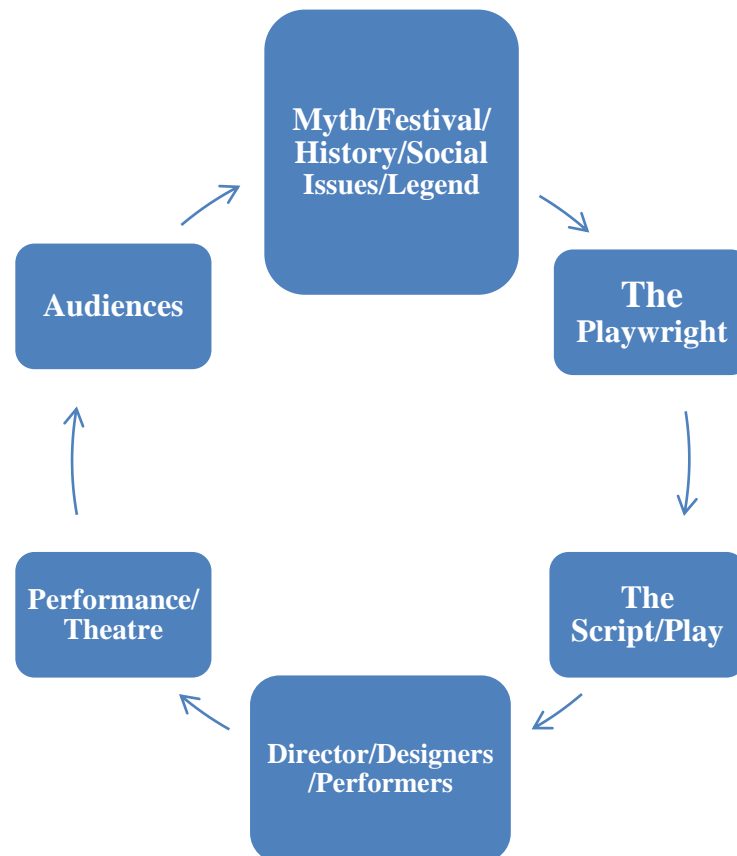
My personal experiences as a playwright, and as a student of culture, has been enhanced through this research, which set out to investigate how some modern playwrights have contributed and continue to contribute to the preservation and promotion of the cultural and traditional values/heritage in Ghana. I chose qualitative methodology in an attempt to produce a work that would contribute to educational scholarship while including personal perspectives of the playwrights' cultural impact. This consisted of extensive reviews of a selection of published body of plays and intense personal reflection and visits to traditional symbology.

The symbolic understandings of the works of these playwrights are important to the field of drama education, because they may inform dramatists and teachers about the positive attributes of Adinkra and Akan Traditional symbols in education in general. These understandings are important to the field of theatre because they demonstrate how these playwrights called for culturally responsible Ghanaian and other foreign audiences to feel the cultural reawakening in their play through this research..

In addition, I have been aware of how this study can contribute to the learning of traditional symbols and their meanings. It demonstrates how a playwright's work can call for theatrical education programs. As this study has shown, my work may serve as a guide for theatre practitioners working with various groups of students in the conceptualization of traditional Ghanaian education.

Upon carefully examining the work of theatre in its entirety, it is suggestive that all personnel in the theatrical family, in one way or the other employ the *Sankofa* theory in

their respective areas of operation. As the playwright resorts to history, myth, festivals, social and other cultural issues to write his/her plays, the director, the designers and other collaborators may go for the script and interpret or add to it. The audience may go to the theatre to experience and may acquire knowledge of what they have lost and want to regain. This is what I refer to as “The *Sankofa* Cycle”



**Figure 5.1:** The *Sankofa* Cycle for Theatre

This further explains the Akan Cosmological Belief consisting of God, Ancestors, and Spirits with man placed in the middle. The Akan is answerable and reliant on all the beings mentioned. Basing most of the discussions on the above, the tenets of African philosophy; *security*, *survival* and *continuity* will also form part of the foundations relating to the traditional symbols.

Some traditional symbols capture all the elements of communication in Ghanaian folk tradition. These include mime, music, gestures, symbolism, and non-verbal sounds. As Wole Soyinka points out succinctly: “Our forms of theatre are quite different from literary drama. We use spontaneous dialogue, folk music, simple stories, and relevant dances to express what we mean. Our theatre uses stylized forms as its basic accepted discipline” (Soyinka 1975: 127)

As a playwright, but in this study, as a critic, I have to realize that art can deviate from the accepted norms, and when it does, it may be wrong to dismiss it as “bad art”. In fact, what the critic and the audience might be experiencing is a new and innovative form of artistic expression. The rational approach of this thesis does not only give Ghanaian playwrights, critics and audiences the tools to define and make critical judgment about modern Ghanaian drama, but it also gives them the ability to recognize something new; something that violates the rational rules of analysis and interpretation. This has been aptly mentioned by Pickard:

If you want to invent a new art form, then master the historical and theoretical aspects of that art before you try to reinvent it. Don’t just learn them, master them. (Pickard 2009: 37)

Indeed, the *Sankofa* Theory, over and over again, expresses and shapes deeper meanings about national, regional, or ethnic identity.(let us think about national anthems, national pledge of modern nations) *Sankofa* expresses and shapes solidarity.(let us think about the use of “We shall Overcome” through music and drama in civil rights movement); It expresses and shapes political agendas (let us think about songs and dramas used during political campaigns in Ghana); It expresses and shapes human emotions, religion and livelihood. To understand *Sankofa*, then, we must understand the larger contexts in which it expresses and shapes humanity. *Sankofa* is better understood as a process, as a shared and negotiated system of meaning that permeates every aspects of our lives.

Generally, the examination and analysis of the plays indicated the following potential outcomes of Ghanaian playwriting:

1. Response to a calling on traditional issues
2. Competence in vital knowledge and essential traditional skills
3. Traditional character development and a sense of belonging
4. Ability to protect and to defend one's people, land, and culture
5. Ability to "build traditional<sup>72</sup> drama for eternity"

The fundamental idea of unearthing the traditional symbols embedded in the plays of these playwrights also served as a guide for Ghanaians at identity crossroads, seeking answers and embarking on the search for the true Ghanaian and for that matter, African theatre transformation. In so doing, playwrights could create a Ghanaian educational model that is beneficial to all students because it has outcomes that are desired outcomes for society in general, not just specific groups.

The various stories around Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols have dramatic power that can heal and inform the society. They may provide themes to represent all we have as drama. It will be very difficult to line up all the stories we have on about 56 different Adinkra symbols and 8 Akan Clan symbols (Totems). This will be suspended for another research altogether. That notwithstanding, a composite approach to deal with dramatic elements in the traditional symbols is consequential for self-discovery for the Akan, and the playwright who aspires to use traditional symbols in his or her plays.

For many decades, Adinkra and Akan Clan motifs have been used as inscriptions on stones, and blocks that were used in architectural ornamentations. The symbols can be seen on: plinths (the base block column or a pedestal) of public buildings, or in the architectural elements of facades, friezes and panels of residences of prosperous or important

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<sup>72</sup> The idea of looking at what constitutes traditional drama in Ghana which has been the debate amongst writers such as Sutherland, (1972), Abdallah (1999), Appiah-Adjei (2000), John Osei Tutu (2005) and others.

community people (See appendix 4). Adinkra symbols can also be used in corporate mottos, seals in logos, and crest of churches and important institutions, such as financial institutions, universities, insurance companies, and other businesses. Adinkra symbols are used as decoration of household goods from plates, glassware, silverware, furniture, and as base of lamps. They can also be found on many artifacts that Akans use in ceremonial activities, such as stools, drums, linguist staffs and other metal works. Adinkra designs can be found in many unique forms in other countries outside Ghana, especially in the United States. The various symbols can be embossed on necklaces and earrings, sculpture, engravings, tattoos, key-chains, business cards, prints on bedspreads, and motifs in curtains, designs on railings, wall decorations, trophies and plaque images.

The number of symbols is constantly increasing because adinkra is an ever-evolving art form. The artists of Ghana are always creating new and interesting adinkra symbols. This process according to Bruce (1998: 28) is referred to as “taking artistic license”. The Akan artists have created a wealth of creative adinkra symbols.

A new practice that has become common is to fuse two adinkra symbols together to create a new image and thus a composite definition. The fusing together of symbols combine their meaning to give an aggregate meaning more specific than the meaning of each individual symbol by itself. In the crest of the president of Ghana, there is a fusion of two adinkra symbols (Adinkrahene and Musuyidee).

Another combination of symbols is the *Sankofa* Bird standing on top of *Hwemudua*. *Sankofa* translates as “Going back (to the past) to fetch it” and *Hwemudua* translates to

mean critical examination. This combined symbol may be translated to mean “using a critical examination when going back to the past.”<sup>73</sup>

Certain recurring themes appear in the Adinkra and Akan clan Totems as artists seek to bring their ideals to expression. Out of these themes emerge some ideas hovering around humanism, idealism and rationalism. These three ideas, both separately and in their interaction, provide the frame work that surrounds the symbols and encloses them in such a way that they come together into significant unity.

The humanistic view of the Adinkra and Akan clan symbols seeks to capture the triple unities of time, place and action. The symbols contain humanistic tendencies and ideas. Through them, human experience is raised to its highest level; refined by their images, the individual is able to see the world in the light of universal values.

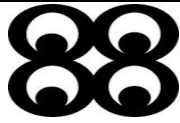

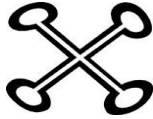

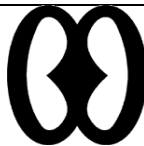
The practical nature of the Adinkra and Akan clan symbols suggests the shapes and designs of the symbols as idealized objects for a wise being. By their logical and illogical interpretations they seem to achieve something of permanence and stability in the face of transitory and random state of nature.

Rational and irrational forces exist within every society as well as within every person. People may perceive the symbols as rational or irrational depending on their understanding. Indeed, I have personally identified some of the symbols which do not run to their type and cause people to doubt their correlation. Some of them include:

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<sup>73</sup> This symbol has been used by Gyekye at the back of his book. *African Philosophy and Cultural Values* (1997)

**Table 5.1:** Adinkra Symbols Not True to Type

	<b>Mate Masie (Ntensie) What I hear I keep</b>
	<b>Obi Nka Obi – Nobody should bite the other</b>
	<b>Onyame Nwu na Mawu – God never dies, so I won't die</b>
	<b>Ese ne Tekremma – The teeth and the tongue</b>
	<b>Nyame Biribi wɔ soro; Ma mensa nka – God there is something in the heavens, let me receive it.</b>

### 5.1.1 Adinkra Symbolism: Meaning and Manifestations in the Four Plays

This is an extended study of a particular playwright and his/her work and the *Sankofa* (traditional elements) identified in the play.

The unfolding stories of the four plays are moving and very dramatic, and the writers have striven to capture the symbolic movement in the Akan tradition linking them to the drama of life. The stories depict how the universal man is shaped by history and tradition, but how he also has a questing spirit which moves him to uncover the mysteries of himself and the universe. The Akan culture portrays man as dynamic, as well as the product of history



and tradition. The plays have exposed many facets of human beings ranging from the Kings, sisters, wives, children, women and men, servants and akyeame (Linguists), and many other characters. These writers have also pictured the down-trodden peasant struggling to live on an over-burdened earth, as well as kings and nobles ruling in the magnificence and comfort of their palaces. They envisage that, those who built great empires and monuments to their towering pride, and those who made toys for their little children are all contributors to the society. They think about women washing their clothes at the edge of river, and the women who sit in parliaments and sometimes rule. Indeed, Aku in *The Legend of Aku Sika* is being summoned to appear before a crowd to expose her deformity. Ato in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* being summoned to explain why his wife has not become pregnant, Ekyaa in *In the Chest of a woman* is whisked to the palace to answer questions about her pregnancy before marriage, and Kankam in *Edufa* storms Edufa's house to request for the life of Ampoma.

The Akan tradition has symbols which call for critical examination of things and arbitration on human conditions... *Hwemudua.*



### **Okyeame**

Aku, we have told you everything. You must come to the palace on Saturday at noon.

### **Aku**

But it must not be

### **Yaa**

Aku; you must. Not to come would send message that you fear to face the truth. To come would mean that the ultimate judge of human imperfection is Odomankoma alone.

**Okyeame**

Moreover, the King sees no deformity in you.

**Aku**

But I am!

**Yaa**

You are? My sister-in-law is telling the truth then?

**Aku**

Yes! (p22)

HWE MU DUA "measuring stick for critical examination" A symbol of *examination* and *quality control*. This symbol strives for the best quality, whether in production of goods or in human endeavours.

The Akan believes in perfection. Nothing is taken for granted in the doings of the Akan. They pry into everything to verify its authenticity. There is an Akan proverb which says: "Se wo pusu nunum a wote ne Kankan" If you shake the *nunum*<sup>74</sup> plant you will feel its scent. Again they say; "if truth goes and hides in-between the thighs of your mother and you use your manhood to go for it, you have not slept with your mother"<sup>75</sup>

The proverb just tells us of how the Akans do not compromise with the truth. The Akans would go to all levels to investigate and find the truth of the matter.

The court system in the tradition makes sure that no stone is left unturned during settlements of cases. There is another Akan proverb which says: *Se w'anhwe no yie a wonhu no yie*. "If you don't take a close look at something well enough, you will not see it well"

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<sup>74</sup> A plant which produces an awful scent when it is tapped or shaken.

<sup>75</sup> Mohammed Ben Abdallah wrote this in *The Alien King* (1987)

The symbol which is always found at the courtyard of the King suggests that arbitrators should be vigilant, insightful, careful and agile in the dealings of cases brought before them.

Hwe mu dua enjoins us to be very critical and meticulous in whatever we do. *Wo de abotre dwa ntetea a wo hu ne breboɔ* (if you patiently dissect the ant, you will find its entrails). With this symbol, nothing is taken for granted as far as Akan adjudication is concerned. It concentrates on accountability, human rights, gender equality and in short, it stands for truth.

In the play, to appear before the crowd for mortal judgment, Aku definitely feels the savagery of the storm, the blinding lightning, and the thunders of the sky, and the quaking of the earth underneath her. Then, the end has come...

### **Fate**

One long night, I see only darkness. A life plagued by pain. From infancy

Supreme Being

Is there no light breaking the monotonous darkness? From the beginning to the end?

Fate

(Fate still looking into the bowl shakes his head, meaning negative) no light, and the darkness depends as she travels the journey. No light at all.

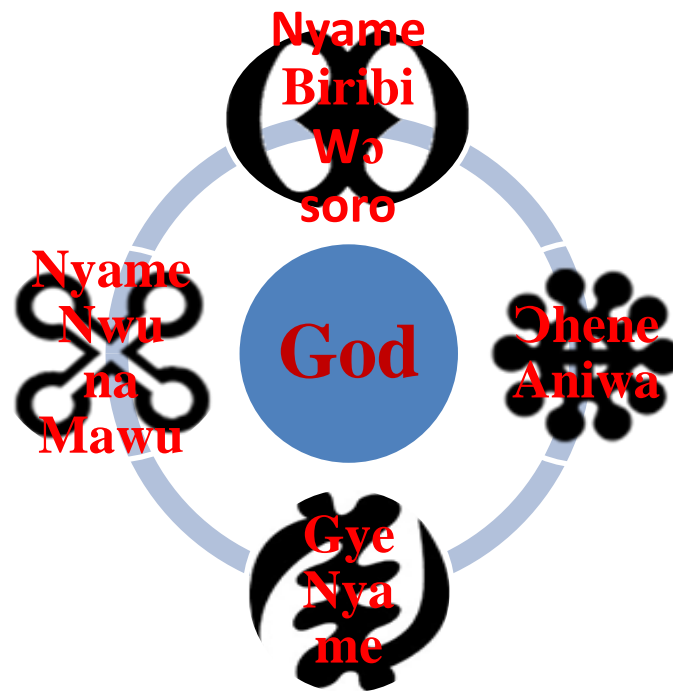
### **Supreme Being**

Then shall Divine intervention be necessary.

The play shows the many sides of man's life and how they are all reflected in his ways. He toils within a certain physical environment, shaping and being shaped by it. He is endlessly

thinking, theorizing and questioning about his many problems. The Akan tradition is aware that man cannot rescue himself from all the calamitous problems. Except God (Gye Nyame) can rescue man.

### 5.1.2 God's Supremacy in Ghanaian Modern Plays



**Figure 5.2:** Adinkra Symbols denoting God's Supremacy in Ghanaian Modern Plays

Intricately woven in Akan livelihood, language and belief is the Akan understanding of God, the Supreme Being which they have known in their ancient days. The Akan believes that God dwells with their ancestors. The Akans call him *Onyankopɔn*. *Onyankopɔn* was and is the great name of the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and omnificent God. In Akan language, “o” signifies a being or an agent capable of achieving something or serving a purpose as implied in *Onyansafoɔ* (Wise person), *Otumfoɔ* (powerful person), *Okum kɔm* (reliever of hunger), *ɔbɔadee* (the creator), *Onimpa* (being supposed to know good from evil; human being). *Onyankopɔn* to the Akan may mean: O-nya (Wise-Nyansa) Ko (one) Pɔn (great): One Great satisfying Father/Lord or Wise Being. Therefore, the idea

of God in the Akan traditional life cannot be underestimated. God is perceived as the beginning and the end. He is unique, the creator of everything including all the spirits, human beings, indeed the universe. He is a just judge and holy. God is the provider of everything; He is eternal, our Father, our Grandfather, and our Consoler. The Akan's approach to God is very practical. Hence, most of the names and attributes we render Him describe what he does for us rather than what he is in himself. The Asante call him *Amowia* (The Giver of light), *Amasu* (The Giver of Water), *Abomobuafre* (The one you go to with your problems), *Nya-amane Kɔse* (The Refuge for sinners), *Totrobonsu* (The Fount of water), and *Tetekwaframo* (Eternal). God is entirely spiritual but his existence is known even by a child. But in all aspects, God is a perfect spirit. The mention of God and His supremacy runs through all the four plays, and many Adinkra symbols have been identified and categorized under that broad theme of God.

For example, in *In the Chest of a woman*, the playwright makes references to the fact that God never makes mistakes. (Page 39: Speech 2). In *the Dilemma of a Ghost*, Nana, a character refers to what she could not solve to God.

**NANA:**

They will ask me where I was, when such things were happening.  
O Mighty God! (Page 14, Speech 2).

The First Woman in the same play also laments on her childlessness, and makes supplication to God..."Mighty God, when shall the cry of an infant come into my ears?" (Page 18: 2). On page 6 of *Edufa*, Seguwa also makes references to God as the only deliverer and giver of life:"

**SEGUWA:**

... But may God help us all, for the bridge we are now crossing is between the banks of life and death. And I do not know which way we are facing.

In Ama Ata Aidoo's *Dilemma of A Ghost*, the favour of God is sought for as the 1<sup>st</sup> Woman laments about child birth, because in most African societies, child-birth is considered very important for the married couple. People's marriages fall on rocks when children are not forth coming. Tragedy in the African sense does not derive from the death of the hero alone. One of the common sufferings of people especially women in marriage is barrenness. It is therefore no surprise that the woman requests a child from God. She knows that it is only God who can provide her with the cry on an infant in her ears.

**1<sup>st</sup> Woman:**

Mighty God, when shall the cry of an infant come into my ears; for the sun has journeyed far in my sky. (Act Two: P. 18)...

She further continues:

But you know, my sister that my name is lonesome...To start a marriage with barrenness...They want people. My people have a lusty desire to see tender skin on top a child's scalp rise and fall with human life. ...Your machines, my stranger-girl cannot go on an errand...They have no hands to dress you when you are dead...But you have one machine to buy now...That which will weep for you stranger-girl...You need that most...For my world which you have run to enter...Is most unkind to the barren...(Act Four p. 35-36)

**Petu**

...When two people marry, everyone expects them to have children. For men and women marry because they want children...therefore, my nephew, if they do not have children, then there is something wrong. You cannot tell us there is nothing. There is no disease in this world but it has a cure...It may cost a great deal, but money is worthless if it is not used to seek for people...( Act Four p. 40-41)\

In view of the indispensability of God is many of the Adinkra symbols make reference to God Almighty. These include



*Nyame Biribi wɔ Soro ma me Nsa nka* "God, there is something in the heavens, let me receive it" A symbol of *hope, benevolence* and *prosperity*. A reminder that God's dwelling place is in heaven, where he can listen to all prayers.

This symbol serves as a prayer for those who understand it. The symbol underscores the belief that even before the Bible came unto our land; our people had a way of reaching God Almighty. The symbol expresses God's existence and also demonstrates His benevolent love and care. The King of the Ashantis has this symbol in front of his chamber. Any time the King wakes up in the morning, the first thing he sees is this particular symbol. "He looks at it and recites "*Nyame Biribi wɔ soro, ma me nsa nka* (God, there is something in the heavens, let me receive it) It is a form of traditional prayer for the King every morning before he goes out. It may symbolize offering of petition, confession, adoration or thanksgiving to God.

Therefore, in *The Legend of Aku Sika* the Sage declares:

**The Sage:**

...Give me the voice to sing your song, a voice to resurrect your ancient daughter. Dreamlessly sleeping in the bowels of forgotten Myth...(p.2)

The concept of prayer to the Akan is based on the conviction that God exists, hears, and answers, that He is a personal deity. Although prayer has an intellectual base, it is essentially emotional in character. It is an expression of man's quest for the Divine and his

longing to unburden his soul before God. Hence, prayer takes many forms: petition, expostulation, confession, meditation and recollection.

The symbol expresses thanksgiving, praise, adoration, and intercession. Succession Prayer stands high in the world of values. God Himself prays, His prayer being that His mercy might overcome His judgment.

In the making of libation by the Akans, a man should not only pray for himself but should also think of others, using the plural form *Ma yen ahɔɔden. Momma yen mere ngu ...* "grant us health. Don't let us labour in vain" rather than the singular *Ma me ahɔɔden Momma me mere ngu* "grant me health or Don't let me labour in vain" If a man needs something for himself but prays to God to grant that very thing to his neighbour who needs it, such an unselfish prayer causes God to grant him his wish first. Man should never despair of offering supplication to God "even if a sharp sword rests upon his neck".

### **The Sage:**

...From whom the myths and legends of our faded past were showered upon the living tongues of our dead begetters; And you Begetters of our unborn generations, living in the wisdom of your ancient existence, guiding unseen the unsure foot of the hunter; and the uncertainties of our birth; hosts to our departing dead (Pours drink) – p2

Heaven is known to be the inheritance of priceless value waiting for those who will request in all sincerity. Our services will never be of waste and will be rewarded and be redeemed by the omnipresence of God Almighty. Our faith in heaven gives us hope and makes us strong to accept whatever comes our way. As a songwriter said: "Yesterday is gone, forget

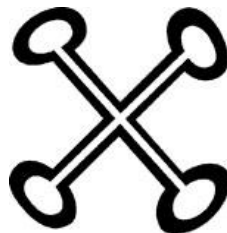


it, and tomorrow does not exist so don't worry. Today is here; let us therefore give thanks onto the Lord"<sup>76</sup>. Oh! God there is something in the heavens today too...let me receive it.

In anticipation, one may ponder and ask. "What is in Heaven? " For me, they are the positive values which Jesus Christ, the son of God Almighty and other prophets have proclaimed onto the earth. They are love, harmony, peace, forgiveness, uprightness, purity, justice, wealth, health, long life etc. A Methodist Hymnal (1857) composed by Norman Macloed goes:

Courage Brother, do not stumble  
Though thou path be dark as night;  
There is star to guide the humble:  
Trust in God and do the right.....

Some will hate thee, some will love thee  
Some flatter, some will slight;  
Cease from man and look above thee:  
Trust in God and do the right....



*Onyame nnwu na M'awu* (God never dies, and I will also not die)

"God never dies, therefore I cannot die" symbol of perpetual existence. It also signifies the immortality of man's soul, believed to be a part of God. Because the soul rests with God after death, it cannot die.

In the traditional setting of the Akans, the soul never dies because it moves to the Maker who is ɔdomankoma, Onyankopong who also never dies. The Akan believes that until God destroys the world finally, where, He himself will be no more, then, "I perish. But

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<sup>76</sup> J.B. Boatey, a Ghanaian gospel artist composed this song during the 1980s.

once God lives and creating us in his own image, I shall also live.” The Akan believes that; God Never dies, so he will not also die.

GYE NYAME,"except God". A symbol of the supremacy of God. Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Immortal God. The symbol could also be referred to as *Kyere Nyame* (With the exception of God).



**G**iving knowledge, strength and unfailing love  
**Y**ou are the Rock of Ages and the canopy under whom  
**E**very soul is provided shelter, freedom and security

**N**one can challenge the power of your creation nor  
**Y**our unyielding liberty and prosperity for all and sundry  
**A**mazing Grace, the great provider of eternal life  
**M**aintaining the world, my profound voice declares  
**E**xcept God! The controller of heaven and Earth. Amen!

Fig. 5.4

Source: *Researcher's collections on Adinkra poems*

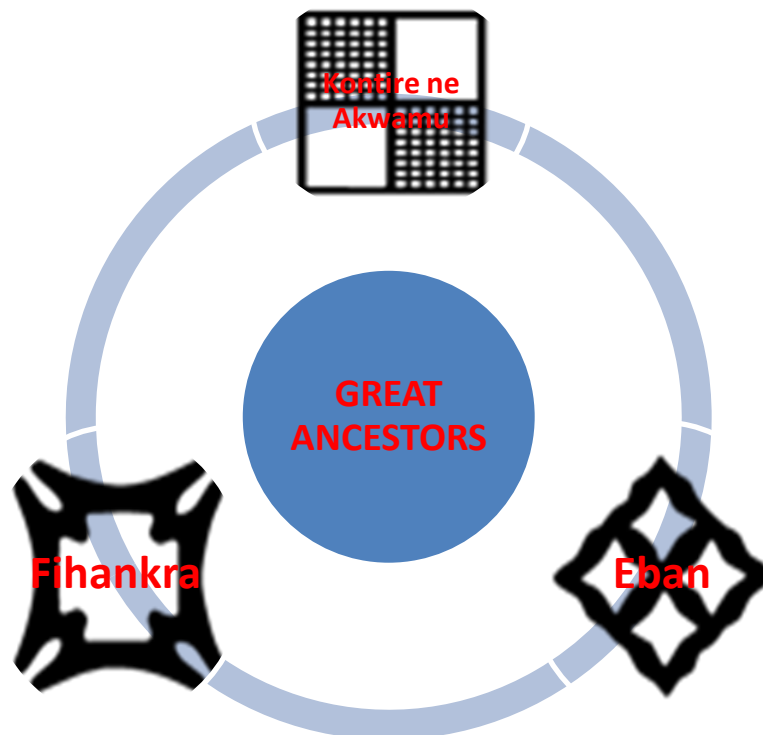
The two fingers pointing upwards and downwards demonstrate the fact that God controls both heaven and the earth. Everything in the world both seen and unseen is by God. It is superfluous to talk about the goodness of God. Many songs, proverbs and wise sayings have been composed about the *Gye Nyame* Symbol. *Obi nkyere akwadaa Nyame*. (Nobody teaches the child about God) sums up God's supremacy that even children know Him.

Proverb: *Abode santen yi firi tete; obi nte ase a, onim n'ahyease, obi ntenase nkosi nawiee, Gye Nyame* (The great panorama of creation originated from the unknown past; no one lives who saw its beginning. No one lives who will see its end except God.)<sup>77</sup>

**G**reatness above all great things, seen and unseen  
**O**mnipresent and Omnipotent Father of all time  
**D**own to earth; speak to him. He listens to all – Amen

**Source: Researcher's collections of poetry on God**

### 5.1.3 The Great Ancestors and Security



**Figure 5.3:** Adinkra Symbols denoting the Great Ancestors and Security

The concept of the ancestor differs from one society to another. Among the Akan, to be an ancestor one must have gone through the following tenets:

1. He or she must be dead; we cannot have a living ancestor.

<sup>77</sup> Kofi Antubam, *Ghana's Heritage of Culture*, (1963 p. 160)

2. The death must be a “good” death. Someone who dies through certain diseases, like epilepsy, leprosy, and small pox, and maybe in the present era, AIDS etc, cannot be counted among the ancestors. In the same way, one who dies tragically through drowning, or being shot accidentally, or because a tree has fallen on one cannot be venerated as an ancestor. The worst death for a woman is to die in child-birth. One accused of being a witch too is excluded from the veneration as an ancestor (Sarpong 2002: 98)
3. One must live an exemplary life; a good irreproachable life. No one wants to remember a good-for-nothing person, a thief, a murderer, a rapist, or a people who in general have no respect for themselves. It is those whose lives are worth emulating that are venerated as ancestors.
4. A person must be an adult. It is only on exceptional cases that a baby or an infant who dies and has not married with children will be venerated as an ancestor.

Among the Akans, it is believed that when good people die, they go to a place of bliss known as *Asamando*. They do not suffer pain, or deformity, or any hardship. They lead the life that they were living on earth in peace. They believe that a king is a king there; a farmer is a farmer there; and this explains why in the past, it was believed that human beings were killed when a king or a powerful chief died. Those killed were believed to go with the leader to serve him in various capacities. It is said some people even volunteered to be killed to accompany their chief or leader. They deemed it an honour. It is a firmly held belief that the ancestors are keenly interested in the living and form one family with them. The Akan family therefore, comprises the unborn, the living and the dead.

Ancestors are therefore seen as one of the spiritual links between the living and the Supreme Being. They are not worshiped by the Akans as some people perceive. They serve as protectors and people we can revere to provide certain things the living cannot

offer. They are evoked for various reasons, such as for protection, guidance, prosperity, and for vengeance against perceived enemies. Generally, the more people felt threatened, the more they call on the ancestors by making sacrifices to them or are compelled to do so.

Drama is an outgrowth of the rites of ancient communities engaged in prayer or invocation to the gods and ancestors. The Akan communities beseech the gods and ancestors to supply them with the things without which they cannot survive; rain, plentiful harvest, a successful hunt and many other things. Even in our modern times where Christianity and other Religions seem to take over, the Akan does not deviate from the cultural obligations. Traditional mechanisms around birth, naming, initiation, marriage and death are still practiced.

The great ancestors to the Akans are very significant beings. The Akans believe that the ancestors provide us with security and guidance. That is why they make libations and sacrifices to them. In *The Legend of Aku Sika*, the King swears an oath of allegiance both to the living and the dead.

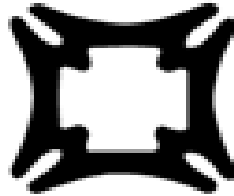
**King:** I am the great grandson of Okofroboo  
The fearless one who knew no retreat  
And fought and skinned a live lion  
Single-handed in the sacred grove  
Of our Great Ancestors.

In the same vein, Owusu Agyemang, in *In the Chest of A Woman* also swears an oath of allegiance to the people of Ebusa. One must not mention the name of our great ancestors in vain. Owusu Agyemang snatches the sword from a courtier and swears at *her* own peril. Her own peril as I put it indicates that, it is the custom that only men should hold the *Akofena* (Sword of Authority) to swear an oath of allegiance to the people and the ancestors. But in this case, Owusu Agyemang being a girl disguised as a boy makes the greatest sacrifice of her womanhood.

### Owusu Agyemang

May the gods of our elders and the spirit of our fathers  
Grant me no respite till the culprit is found and duly punished.  
If I fail to fulfill these words, may my people take my life.

Many of the Adinkra symbols depict the power of our great ancestors. Some of these are:



#### **Fihankera** (An Enclosed or Secured Compound House)

Symbol of security, safety, brotherhood, completeness and solidarity.

The Akan people place high value on the strength of family ties and family groups which include the ancestors. Fihankra is normally referred to as Fi Kesse mu (The Big House). Here, all matters in the family are settled when there is the need. Hence, people feel secured and safe anytime they are in the house. In the same manner your insecurity can also emanate from the same house. This give rise to the proverb: *Ahotɔ firi fie* (Charity begins at home). That is why Kankam in *Edufa* also solicits power from the spirit of the ancestors to find solutions to Edufa's overblown pride.

**Kankam:** ...Pity him you spirits. He grew greedy and insensitive; insane for gain... (P. 18 speech 7)



Eban (Fence)

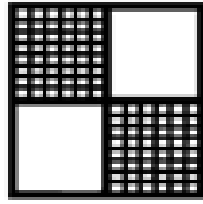
Symbol of safety, security and love.

The ancestors of the Akan are seen as the fence around the people. Therefore, they revere them and make sacrifices to them. They serve as security agents who provide them with immense protection and safety. Eban is a symbol of everlasting safety and commitment. In the Akan tradition, one of the critical components of life is *security* derived from the *family*, the *clan* and the *name* of a powerful god or ancestor. In *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, Ato, though considered a modern intellectual tries to convince his family to accept his wife, Eulailie by making reference to the ancestors, when he says:

**Ato:** Please, I beg you all, listen. Eulailie's ancestors were of our ancestors.... (p. 12: speech 12)

The architectural design of the house of the Akan simply connotes the fence "Eban". The home to the Akan is a special place. A home which has a fence around it is considered to be an ideal residence. The fence symbolically separates and secures the family from external attacks. Because of the security and the protection that a fence affords, the symbol is also associated with the security and safety one finds in love. In the literary sense, we say in Akan, *merebo woho ban* (I am creating a fence around you. Metaphorically, I am

protecting you) *mebɔ wo ho ban* (I shall create a fence around you), *Mabɔ woho ban*. (I have created a fence around you. Metaphorically I have protected you.)



### **Kontire ne Akwamu** (Elders of State or Council of State)

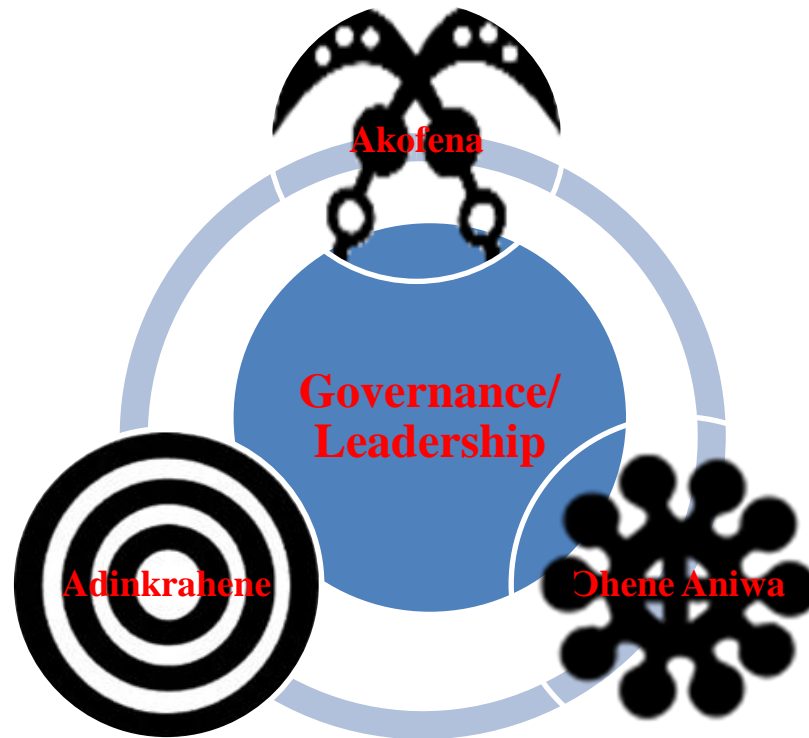
Symbols of democracy, duality of the essence of life, interdependence, compositeness and complementarity.

The Akan community and administration, especially with the Asante nation during war, they divide themselves into flanks, and the advance guards are the *Kontire* and *Akwamu*.

Proverb: *Ti korɔnkɔ agyina* (One head does not constitute a council – Two heads are better than one) This symbol represents the historic council that King Osei Tutu, the first, who united the Asante Confederation, created right before the Asante-Denkyira war. The two are classified as brothers who occupy the stools as Krontihene and Akwamuhene. They serve as the custodians of the wellbeing of the people.



#### 5.1.4 Governance and Leadership



**Figure 5.4:** Adinkra Symbols denoting Governance and Leadership

Man does not live alone. As the poet John Donne said: “No man is an Island” The Akan lives in a family companioned by brothers and sisters, and sometimes other relatives. He has friends, acquaintances, and neighbours. He resides in a community, a village, a town or a city, and a state. The Akan spends most of his life in the company of others of his kind. We refer to this association and companionship with others as society. There are rules and standards which regulate and limit association between people so that they may live more harmoniously together. These rules and standards of a society stem in part, from beliefs, from ideologies and religion.

Among the Akan, the chief is the head of a state, a town, or a village. He is nominated from among the royals of the state as the leader of the state by the people. The chief is the

custodian of the state's property. These include the land, the black stools of the ancestors, personal property of the stool, such as the stool regalia, as well as the people of the state.

Being the leader of the people, the King tries to prevent calamities, such as epidemics and untimely deaths that may occur in the state. He prevents these by praying and offering sacrifices to God and the ancestors. He is the war general of his people and pledges through oath of allegiance to protect the people during his enstoolment. The above Adinkra symbols demonstrate the attributes of the king. He holds the *Akofena* which is the sword of authority. He is considered the first and the most handsome person in the village. The *Adinkrahene* portends that, and his eyes see everywhere, and that is symbolized by *Ohene Aniwa*.

In the plays, we can count a number of issues that deal with traditional governance and leadership. There are characters such as Kings, Queens, Opinion leaders and family heads in the plays. They conform to the symbols in this category.

The playwrights considered their plays situating them according to our societal tendencies. There is hardly any society without leadership and governance. There are characters chosen to be leaders in the various plays. In the *Dilemma of a Ghost*, Petu, the head of the Odumna family exhibits leadership role when he goes to Ato's house to discuss pertinent issues. Kings and queen mothers are found in both *In the Chest of a Woman* and in *The Legend of Aku Sika*. Edufa in *Edufa* wields much respect in the community as a leader who manages the affairs of the community. They call him "the benevolent one" and he says about himself: "My enterprise feeds them". Kankam testifies this as he confronts Edufa. "Already, the town's pavements knew when it was he who was coming. Nudging announced him. Eyes pivoted to catch his smile....who were learning to call him Sir!" (P. 18 Speech 1).

The King in *The Legend of Aku Sika* for example, outlines his line of action after being enstooled as king. He confirms his standing against corruption.

Okyeame: Some of them say you are too free with ordinary subjects; that you are too strict with cocoa smugglers. You prevent them from exploiting the little gold which they were doing in the good old days, until you came to the throne.

King: ....Tell them I shall never condone their corruption, if they will not change those ways, they will never find in me compassion and understanding. (P. 15 Speeches 7&8)



ADINKRAHENE "Chief of the *Adinkra* symbols" A symbol of *Authority, greatness, charisma* and *leadership*. According to oral tradition, this symbol is said to be the chief of all the *Adinkra* designs. On the face of this symbol, the series of concentric circles may be used to mean a mere geometric idea of some fanciful connotations, however, the consultation with cultural authorities reveal the symbol to mean a greater cosmic significance.

- The features of this *Adinkra* symbol can easily be seen as the past, the present, and the future with the three (3) rings. It can also be seen as the protection of the youth in their early ages, the middle aged people, and those in the advanced ages.
- In the context of this discussion, the *Adinkrahene* simply represents God in His loyalty, protection, love, charisma and the all-knowing.



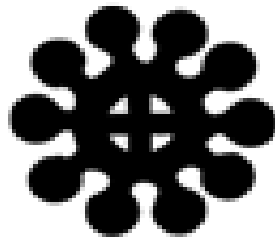
Akofena: Symbol of state authority, legality, the legitimised authority of a ruler, recognition of gallantry or heroic deeds.

Proverb: *Akofena nkunim kɔ a, wɔbɔ afena hye no Safohene* (The retiring great warrior always has a royal sword of rest)

With this symbol of authority, the King in The Legend of Aku Sika swears with it before he becomes the king of the people.

**King:**

I am the great grandson of Okofrobuo  
 The Fearless one who knew no retreat  
 ...I take the Great oath of Allegiance  
 I swear with this ancient sword in hand  
 That I shall rule with justice, truth,  
 And humility as my guide  
 That I shall protect, defend and safeguard  
 The rich heritage and rights  
 Of all our people...



Ohene Aniwa (The eyes of the King)

Proverb: *Ohene aniwa twa ne ho hyia* (The King has a lot of eyes and nothing is hidden from him)

The king's eyes are only two, but he sees everywhere. *Ohene* refers to the King and *Aniwa* means eyes. The King signifies leadership. His watchfulness is in a state of being alert and readiness. The King considers the dangers and safety of his people. Sometimes we refer

this symbol to Nyame Aniwa, God's eyes. The Lord sees whatever happens, everywhere, anywhere and every time.

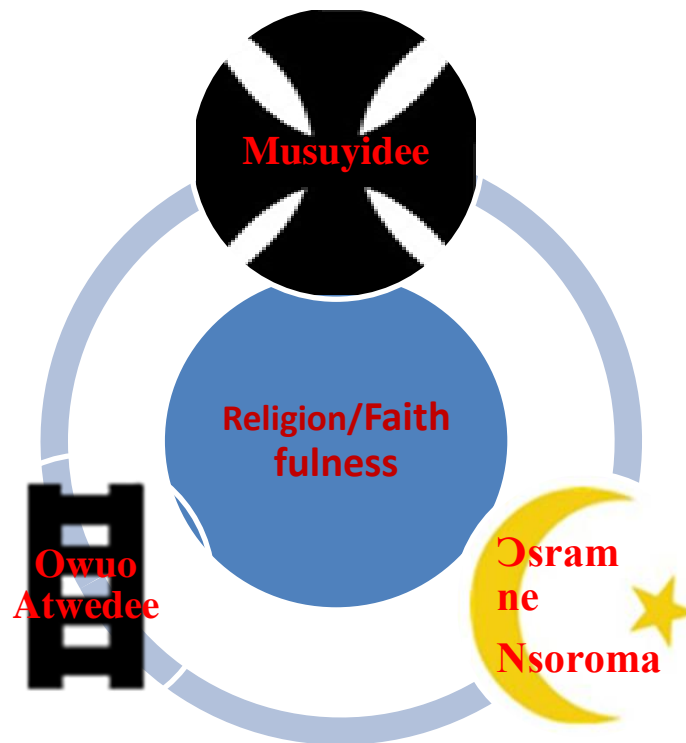
Traditionally, the King has many sub-chiefs and many wives who bring him information. It is therefore believed that nothing can be hidden from him. The linguists, personal attendants, concubines and all the people who are loyal to him are a great source of information to the king. He hears all and sees all. In the prologue to *Aku Sika*, the sage makes reference to God's eye which sees everywhere.

**SAGE:**

Earth, Fertile womb of the living, And the dead, the dying and us;  
Sky, Spread in limitless blue nothingness...with a thousand eyes  
and more, eyes that surround Mother earth at night...Eye that  
exposes her secrets.....

These lines by the Sage can be correlated to the wisdom of our traditional people. It espouses a symbol, Nyame Aniwa (Ohene aniwa). It sees everything on earth and this confirms God's supremacy.

### 5.1.5 Faithfulness, Cleansing and Religion



**Figure 5.5:** Adinkra Symbols denoting Faithfulness, Cleansing and Religion.

Rituals are part and parcel of the traditional life of the Akans. Every member of the community is involved. The gods are feared, as well as loved; along with pleas for sustenance, there are magical ceremonies of appeasement, enacted in gestures and worshipful praise. When the pleas are granted, there are festivities. The communal rites develop in a variety of forms. Some rites are “reports” or symbolic re-enactments. Accordingly, the Akan believes that he cannot live without venting the energy aroused by his deepest desire, needs and drives to worship God. In the selected plays, rituals runs through them all. The following pages in the plays are filled with cleansing, and religious deliberations. Pages 14 and 16 in *In the Chest of a Woman*:

**NANA YAA**

When the all-knowing age-old-Oracle at Nkwanta was consulted, it revealed that an abomination had been committed within the kingdom for which the gods were angry.

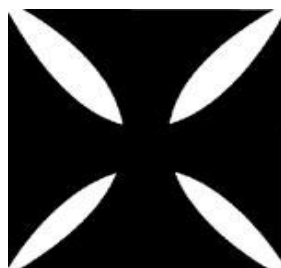
Pages 4, 5, 6, 7, 14, 22 and 24 in *Edufa* depict cleansing and sanctity. The purpose is to evoke the faithfulness and purity of the ancestors to come to our aid.

**Chorus One:**

(Solemnly) Come, friends. Let's do the ceremony for the benevolent one.

**Chorus:**

Evil has no place here. Nor anywhere. Away. Away... (*Moving rhythmically at a slow running pace through the court and courtyard, they perform their ritual with solemnity*)



MMUSUYIDEE

("That which removes bad luck" symbol of *good fortune* and *sanctity*. A symbol for spiritual balance, good fortune, good luck, sanctity, spiritual strength, and uprightness of spirit

Proverb: *Krapa tese Okra, Okyiri fi* (Sanctity is like a cat, it abhors filth)

In traditional Akan religion, there exists a strong belief in the supernatural. There are powers associated with all aspects of life and nature. Akans believe that if supernatural evil, witchcraft and sorcery were absent, all would be well. This supernatural evil is everything that destroys life, strength, health, fertility and prosperity. Akans see evil as all that detracts from or destroy, brings illness, infertility, famine and sudden or inexplicable death.

The shape of the symbol shows how the white colours are competing with the four black. The understanding is that, when all the black points meet, calamity will befall the society. The Akans believe that anytime there is cleansing, the white in the symbol increases in size to dominate the black, and thus, minimises evil happenings. In *The Legend of Aku Sika*, the playwright demonstrates this through the sage.

### **The Sage:**

Great Spider, Supreme Being, from whom wisdom issues. And falls on the wise, the grey hair. From whom the myths and legends of our faded past.....What may I offer? What can I offer with my nervous hands? (p2)

Many religious activities have symbolic meaning to the Akans. Most of the rituals involve music and dance, which are also symbols expressing the inner being of the individual. To the Akan, playing of drums and singing is a spiritual thing and doing so symbolises a unification of the player and his ancestors. Coupled with this is the dancing, which also symbolises unification of the dancer and his or her maker. Akans believe that working with the body in ritual releases spiritual force, and its function ensures natural and social harmony. It can be seen that the primary task and function of traditional Akan religion is that of fighting evil in society and making life more bearable. Society uses religion to address the problems of drought, famine and other disasters

The symbol is normally made visible according to the Akan calendar which stipulates cleansing of the stools, body, natural elements and many other cultural activities.

Traditionally, the Akan makes sacrifices to the spirit of everything including the tools he uses to work. According to Peter Kwasi Sarpong, "These tools have a rite performed over them before any big task is started and when a job in hand is not proceeding satisfactorily,



Wine is poured over, and the blood of a fowl is sprinkled upon them with the appropriate prayers”<sup>78</sup>



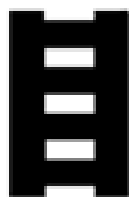
Ɔsram Ne Nsoroma - the 'moon and star'.

Symbol of faithfulness, fondness, benevolence, love, loyalty, and femininity

This Adinkra symbol represents love, harmony, faithfulness, and the feminine essence of life. It represents the North Star (female) awaiting the return of her partner, the moon (male).

*Proverb: Kyekye pe awareeo, bosome nso pe awaree Ɔdɔɔ. Meretwen medɔ yi, ekyekyekye mpo a ebe ba. (The star admires marriage and so is the moon. I am waiting for my lover, no matter how long it takes, my lover will surely come.)*<sup>79</sup>

The Adinkra symbol denotes truth, justice and the essential qualities of the Akan female hospitality. The symbols also exemplify reconciliation between people. Reconciliation is a “growing back together” that takes time.



Owuo Atwedee (The Ladder of Death)

Symbol of the faithfulness of Death, Mortal nature of man, and Fate

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<sup>78</sup> ibid

<sup>79</sup> Akan Social song

Proverb: *Owu atwedee ɔbaako nforo*; (*All men shall climb the ladder of death*).

To the Akan, this symbol is a reminder for all men that death is inevitable. This signifies an ultimate end for every soul and that death is faithful to his duties. The rungs of the ladder are representative of the stages of life: childhood, adulthood, Old-age, and death

In *The Legend of Aku Sika*, the playwright gives a Stage Direction which conforms to the pouring of libation in the Akan tradition. Prayer through libation dictates sacrifice to the gods, and evokes cleansing... “A solo flute echoes through the ether as the hands of the libation-pourer, the Sage, firmly gripping the calabash, pour drink for Mother Earth...”

(p5) The same ritual is organized in the other three plays. For instance, in Ama Ata Aidoo’s *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, Act Four page 36 gives a stage direction which measures the cleansing of the family house of the Odumna clan. This is done to remove all hovering bad spirits and invites good fortune.

Next Morning: Petu enters with wooden bowl full of white and oiled Oto (mashed yam); Akroma comes behind him carrying a brass tray containing a herbal concoction and a kind of sprinkling broom. They go round the courtyard sprinkling the walls and the floor first with the Oto, then, the potion. The gong man beats the gong behind them<sup>80</sup>.

**Petu:**

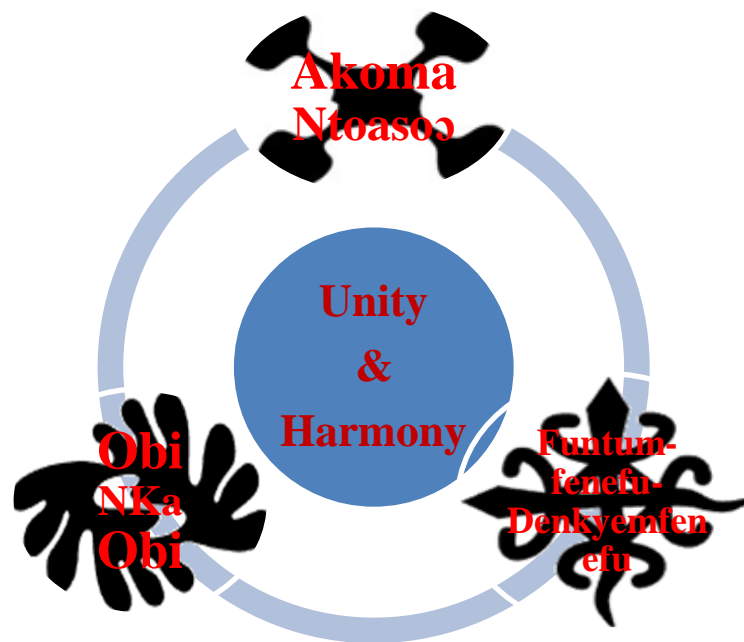
We were to choose this day because, as you know, on this day we try to drive away all evil spirits, ill-luck and unkind feelings which might have invaded our house during the past year. You know also that, we invoke our sacred dead to bring us blessings. Therefore, we are asking you to tell us what is wrong with you and your wife so that first we can wash her stomach with this, and then pour the libation to ask the dead to come and remove the spirit of the evil around you and pray them to bring you a child.

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<sup>80</sup> Stage Directions in *The Dilemma of A Ghost* P.14

Perhaps, these playwrights included the rituals as potent traditional ways to worship, and reaching the Almighty God. The playwright through his or her ingenuity has preserved the cultural heritage in his or her play.

#### 5.1.6. Unity and Harmony



**Figure 5.6:** Adinkra Symbols denoting Unity and Harmony.

One of the cardinal principles of every play is to resolve conflicts. In the plays selected, peace - making is very fundamental. In the *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, the playwright uses her play to resolve the long standing conflict between Tradition and Modernity. So also does Efo Mawugbe use his play to deal with the issue of male domination of power and women's desire to wield power. In the same vein, Sutherland exposes the dangers of loving your husband with all your heart, and Martin Owusu discusses the conflict associated with love and deformity. At the end of each play, the audience may discover one universal trait and that is unity and harmony. These run through all the plays and many symbols reveal them. In helping to open the door of compassion, understanding and state

of increased well-being for body, mind, heart and soul, and as theatre practitioners, we must learn to live life from the inside out, growing integrity of being, and expanded capacity for greater harmony, vitality and peace when rehearsing, producing and above all, living together. How does one achieve the harmony, peace and good relationship about theatre life? In order to answer this question, we must have some understanding of what is meant by "the good" as it is commonly understood. We speak of a good pen, a good computer, a good pair of shoes, a good car, a lousy car, a lousy mobile phone. If we look very carefully, the 'good' is directly linked to how the thing operates. The proper operation of a pen is to write, and so a good pen writes well. The proper operation of a knife is to cut food, so a good knife will cut well. The proper operation of a car is to drive efficiently, safely, smoothly, etc. So, a good car is one that drives well, that is, efficiently, safely, smoothly, etc. The Adinkra symbol for harmony and an emblem of peace is signified by an image of two fishes biting each other's tail. Yaa Kyeretwie and Kwaku Dua are biting each other's tail in *In the Chest of a Woman*, In *The Legend of Aku Sika*, we can glaringly find Nanayere, at loggerheads with the King, her husband. The same thing is happening in *Edufa* where, Father and son clash. In *the Dilemma of A Ghost*, Ato clashes with his wife, and unable to control his anger, gives her a dirty slap. These chronicle events and activities from our theatrical dispensations, and the symbol, highlighting nonviolent issues that result in independence and collective action to secure human rights and social justice in the theatre world.

According to Desmond G. Williams, the visual image of the symbol “cautions against backbiting, provocation, and strife; instead, it urges a community spirit of sharing, a message of group cooperation, justice, fair play and forgiveness”<sup>81</sup>



**OBINKA OBI** (Bi nka bi)- *No one should bite another*

A symbol of justice; fair-play; freedom; peace; forgiveness; unity; harmony, and avoidance of conflicts or strife.

In helping to open the door of compassion, understanding and conscious awareness, this symbol creates an atmosphere to help many people discover a state of increased well-being for body, mind, heart and soul.

The concept of *obi nka bi* can be considered as having the attributes of:

- Transparency
- responsibility
- accountability
- participation
- responsiveness (to the needs of other people)

The good life begins by bringing order to one's life. A good life is an ordered life. In fact, peace is precisely an ordered life. The Latin word for peace is *pax*, which means order or harmony. The good life begins by bringing about harmony between the appetites and reason. A fully human life is one that is governed by reason with an equal in rights and in cultivation (Mills 1859: 47)

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<sup>81</sup> Desmond George Williams, 'Bite Not Another' Selected Account of Nonviolent Struggle in Africa, (2006), Switzerland.

This statement emphasizes the idea of living together in peace and in harmony which the symbol Obi Nka Obi stands for.



### FUNTUNFUNEFU-DENKYEMFUNEFU

"Siamese crocodiles" symbol of democracy and unity in diversity.

Proverb: *Funtumfenefu-Denkyemfenefu, wɔn afuru ye baako nanso woredidi a na wɔreko/wɔre fom*. The Siamese crocodiles share one stomach, yet they fight over/struggle (for food). Symbol of unity in diversity, democracy, or the oneness of human family, despite cultural differences and diversities.

In popular terms, this symbol has been a constant reminder that infighting/struggling and tribalism are harmful to all who engage in it. The symbol suggests that, even though, we might belong to the same family or the same community, we have to struggle to obtain what we need individually. We have to contribute to the same pot (stomach) to the benefit of the community or family. In Unity and diversity, the symbol enjoins us to work together, even if we do not belong to the same family or community.

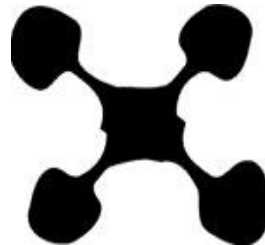
In *In The Chest of a woman*, the gossips lament about why two people from the same royalty should quarrel. According to them, such acts promote division and hatred.

### Adwoa

Oh yes. According to sources he sees no reason why two cousins of a royal family should quarrel.

## Akosua

Of course, such things easily lead to the unmaking of a nation. It tends to create divided royalty in a kingdom if not promptly checked.



*AKOMA NTOASOO* “Linked hearts” symbol of understanding and agreement, togetherness, and unity. This symbol suggests an agreement between parties or individuals.

Akoma Ntoasoo is an example of an extension of the heart (Akoma).

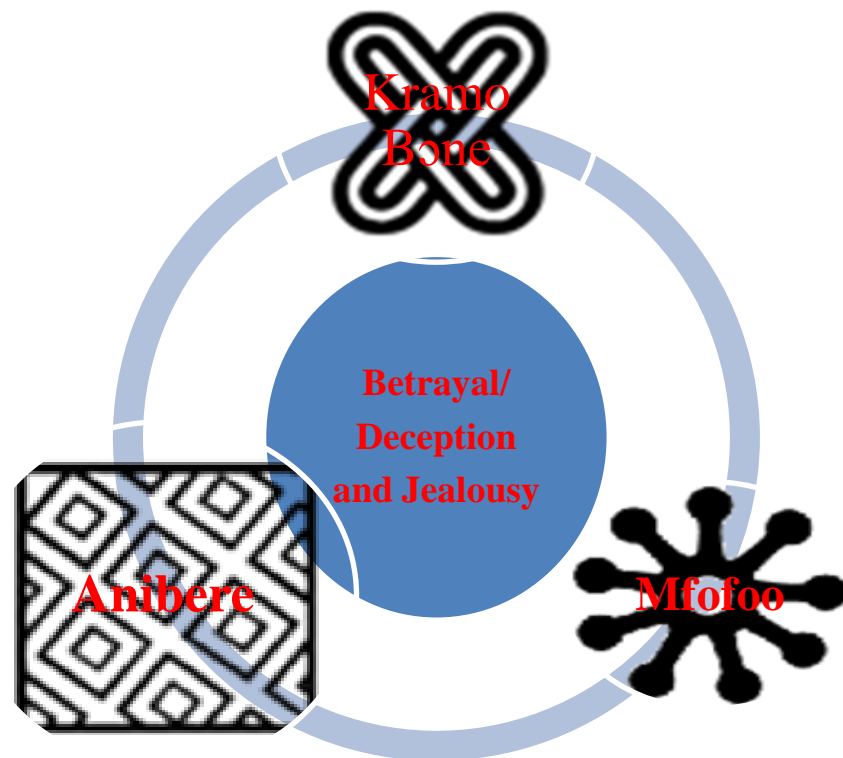
In *Edufa*, Ampoma slips beads around the neck of Edufa to claim him for ever.

**Ampomah:** (*Inscrutable*) Women, you understand, don’t you, that with this, I mean to claim him mine. And you are witnesses. My husband, wear this with honour. (*She surprises Edufa by slipping the beads round his neck*) With it, I declare to earth and sky and water, and all the things with which we shall soon be one, that I am slave to your flesh and happy so to be. Wear it proudly, the symbol of the union of our flesh. (Sutherland, 1967: 54).

But Edufa, trying to hide his embarrassment, quickly removes this “union of the flesh” of himself and his wife, from his neck. This then, explores the fundamental idea of the use of beads in Edua Sutherland’s *Edufa*, and how it provokes an endless debate of the supposed cultural misappropriation embedded in the play. What are the cultural implications, when a woman slips beads around the neck of a man? Beads are intriguing cultural items of beauty in many Ghanaian communities. Paradoxically, I am trying to underscore the dialectics of opinions from different cultural backgrounds, where some cultures identify beads as sacred, and also, as part of their ceremonial costumes, while other cultures especially the Akan men see beads as women adornments, and unclean. This ambivalent nature of Akan

men is interesting. Beads in Akan are called *tɔma* (Buy for) and it is the duty of the man to buy the beads for the wife. The men believe that Beads are stimulant. How then can it be unclean?and unclean, an abomination to be “touched” by a man in public.

### 5.1.7 Betrayal, Deception and Jealousy



**Figure 5.7:** Adinkra Symbols denoting Betrayal, Deception and Jealousy

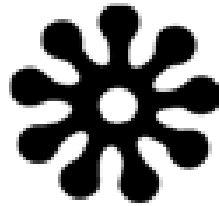
There are uncountable numbers of betrayal and jealousy in these four plays which have been unearthed by the researcher. In *The Legend of Aku Sika*, the king’s wife exhibits the tendency of excessive jealousy when she hears of the king’s idea of marrying another woman. This behaviour has been and still a phenomenon which manifests itself in many women.

Yaa Kyiretwie in *In the Chest of a Woman* is jealous of her younger brother for ascending the throne of Ebusa. She deceives the whole kingdom by concealing the true sex of her



daughter. She makes them think she is a boy so that she can occupy the throne of Ebusa. This is deception to the highest order.

In *Edufa*, Edufa thinks his father, Kankam is jealous of his riches. Edufa by his doings betrays Ampoma's love. "I want to go in alone" Ampomah tells Edufa.



**Fofu** (A Yellow-Flowered Plant)

Symbol against jealousy and covetousness

**Proverb:** Se nea fofu pe ara nese gyinantwi abɔ bidie (What the fofu plant wishes is that gyinantwi seed should turn black). Fofu (*bidens pilosa*) reminds the Akan that jealous and coveted acts are unbecoming of good citizenship.

Like the envious fofu plant, so are humans sometimes envious, jealous, and covetous. Such negative acts and feelings concerning another's attainment or advantages engender discontentment and insecurity. The fofu symbol is a warning that we should never let the lack of success or the things we do not have to destroy our enjoyment of life, and the celebration of what we are, and of those with whom we associate. We must be content with our lot. In *In the Chest of A Woman*, Yaa Kyeretwie is jealous of her brother; In *The Legend of Aku Sika*, Nanayere is very jealous of Aku. But in the end each of the people suffers humiliation and embarrassment.

***The Yellow Leaf***

As the colour of the leaves of this plant (*Biden pilosa*) is basically, yellow, the Akans acknowledge the fact that, the yellow leaf is about to fall. Thus, it is always jealous of the green leaf. Nanayere sees the greenness in Aku and becomes jealous of her. She will pull tooth and nail to make sure the marriage between the king and Aku does not happen.

### **The Man**

You will agree with me that she is extremely beautiful.

### **Nanayere:**

(Jealousy dictating her tone) To me she is not; but I am the least concerned about her looks.

Jealousy, covetousness, hatred and greed have established deep roots in our society. Many people are obsessed about other people's achievements and success and are always wishing to bring them down. Such people wish misfortune on their friends and neighbours. Others undermine the efforts of other people. The philosophy of this symbol is to teach people to be content with what they have and desist from malevolence, hatred, jealousy, and greed. these negative qualities are considered the roots of evil against the positive ingredients for the Akan society.

In *The Legend of Aku Sika* we experience this kind of attitude.

### **Okyeame**

Perhaps, Nana, the most serious dislike of all is the fact that you have decided to marry that young woman, Aku, whose pride has warded off scores of suitors.

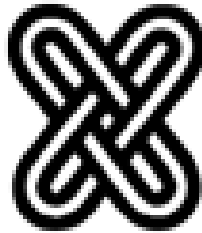
### **King**

Pride! What can I say to that/ Dignity to the unsure foot is spite. For I find in Aku virtues that the gods admire. She is like a diamond which glows among the dirt-choked sand. The devil fears to touch it....

The jealousy continues unabated when the Queen mother is also accused for hating the king.

### **Yaa**

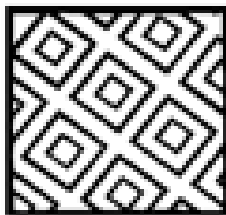
What could be so serious as to warrant a meeting of such urgency? And the queen mother too, who has never forgiven you for contesting against her favorite candidate, her own son.



### **Kramo Bɔne** (The Bad Moslem)

The bad make it difficult for the good to be noticed.

Proverb: *Kramo Bɔne amma yeanhu Kramo papa* (The fake Muslim and the genuine one look alike so we could not decipher the difference). A symbol warning us against deception and hypocrisy. Nothing is ever as it seems, and people are always pretending.



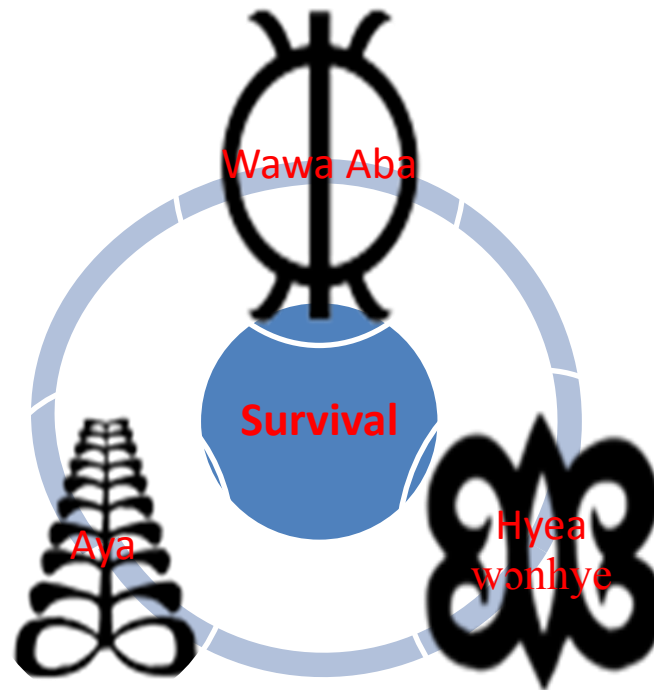
### **Anibere** (Seriousness)

Symbol depicting hatred, jealousy, envy, and self-conceitedness.

Proverb: *Ani bere a ensɔ gya* (No matter how red eyed, one's eye would not spark flame)

This symbol is synonymous to what Shakespeare said in Macbeth. "There is no art to find the mind's construction in the face". The symbol suggests that if people are anxious and dedicated to do a task, one may not see that anxiety in the eyes.

### 5.1.8 Survival with Patience and Endurance



**Figure 5.8:** Adinkra Symbols denoting Survival with Patience and Endurance

One of the key challenges and causes of anxiety about the future of the Akan is rooted in the security, survival and continuity of the family lineage. The ability to survive in a society has hitherto engulfed the thinking of many an Akan. This encapsulates the whole existence of the Akan and thus, propels him to endlessly search for security measures. The Akan wants to avoid:

- Personal failures and risks to multiply. Anxieties and fears of random events increase and intensify with the many challenges that confront people.
- Social failures always seek to explain their failure by making others responsible for their failure;
- The fear of failure causes individuals to fear their actual or imagined competitors;
- The burden of unfulfilled expectations: infertility, impotence, marital prospect, unfulfilled love; success in promotion examinations; etc. is deflected or displaced with accusations against competitors.

Many Akans resort to divinations, occultism and in recent times to some newly emerged Christian homes for protection. Edufa in *Edufa* sneaks to the diviner to enquire about his life. He is told that death is hanging on him. This Edufa tries to avert. Man must survive.

The life of Aku Sika also represents a symbol called *Hye a Wonhye*: “You burn and never gets burned”

**Nanayere**

Obaapanin, Elders, my royal husband has insulted me, disregarded custom, and trampled upon the sacred throne of his living ancestors

**Elder 3**

Go on.

**Nanayere**

He has decided to marry another woman of his own choice

**Okyeame**

That is not disregarding custom. In fact, it is not against custom

**Nanayere**

The woman he is marrying is Aku....And Aku is deformed...

**Elders**

Deformed (p18)

Aku was branded a nonentity but she survived all those downgraded position...

**Man**

The King plans to violate traditional custom by marrying another woman who is deformed. Do you know this? Have you heard this from him?

**Nanayere**

Do you know this for a fact?

**Man**

The marriage or the woman?

**Nanayere**

The woman. Who is she?

**Man**

Aku

**Nanayere**

Aku? That orphan girl who killed her mother for giving birth to her and destroyed her father whose grief ended his life?

**Man**

Oh! I thought you know about the woman's deformity

**Nanayere**

Apart from being evil?

**Man**

Evil she certainly is...

When God blesses, enemies will burn you, but you will never be burnt. Aku is seen as a nonentity but she survives all these downgrading positions.

**Aku:** ...The Giver of life would not let me die. I lived... (P.23 Speech 1)



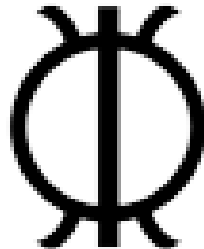
**HYE A WON HYE** "that which you burn but does not burn" - Unburnable

A symbol of imperishability, toughness and endurance. It denotes hope for humanity.

An Akan proverb says that: *Korotwiamansa to nsuom mu a neho na efo na ne ho nsensan de ewo ho daa.* (If the tiger falls into a pool of water, it only gets soaked, but its stripes ever remain)

They also say: *nsuo be ye boɔ den?* (What can the rain water do to the stone?) No matter what people will do, you will not perish.

The symbol tells us that though, fire has the power to burn everything, in this case, it cannot burn everything. It will resurrect its flaming tongue to burn but this particular object will withstand all the flames without perishing.



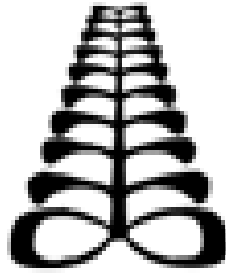
**Wawa Aba** - the 'seed of the wawa tree'.

This Symbol represents *strength, Endurance, perseverance and hardness*

Saying: *Oye den se wawa aba* (He is tough as the seed of the wawa tree)

The wawa tree, a hardwood, is revered for its quality as a medium for carving. *Wawa aba* in the Akan culture, the name serves as a symbol of persistence and endurance.

The symbol encourages us to be like the *Wawa Aba*, a seed of the Wawa tree, one of the strongest and most productive woods in Africa. For the Akan, in Ghana, the *Wawa Aba* mainly has mystical significance. Our culture cannot be wiped out.



AYA (The Fern)

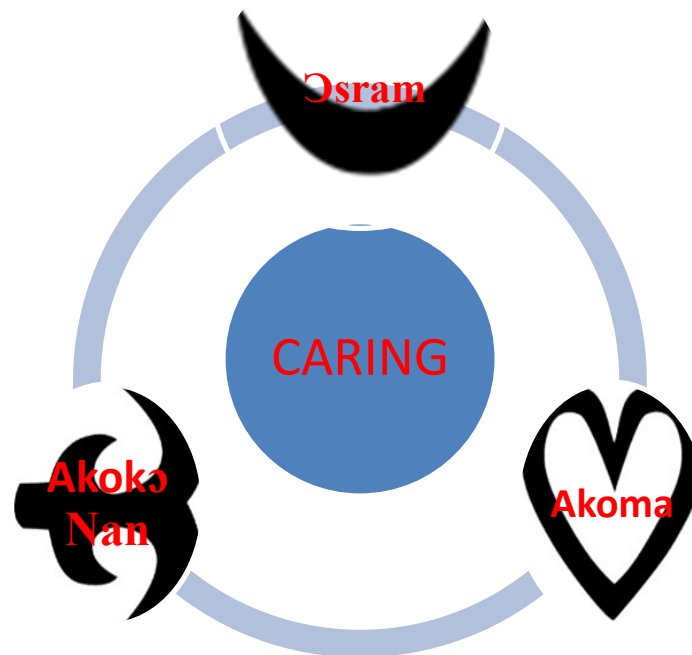
Symbol of endurance, independence, defiance against difficulties, hardness, perseverance resourcefulness and persistence

The *Aya* (ferns) are thin green plants normally found under cocoa trees in the forest and cocoa growing areas in Ghana. The *aya* plants can easily be cleared even with a blunt cutlass, but within a few days or weeks, you will find them, again in full gear, growing in their numbers. The farmer cannot stop clearing the *Aya* weed all year long, because, if you do not clear the *Aya* weeds, it will be very difficult to walk through them, as they grow together and very close to each other or one another. The interesting aspect of the weeds is that, no matter how often you clear them, they would grow again. This attitude of the plant has led to the description of the plant as being a “deviant”. The symbol connotes that, as many times as we are prevented, pulled down or cleared from our visions, aspirations, destinations and duties, we must not give up. We must spring up again. We must boldly face the ups and downs and all challenges we encounter with zeal and vigour.

The symbol is synonymous to the slogan of Kumasi Asante Kotoko football team: *Wokum apem a apem beba* (If you kill a thousand, another thousand will come).



### 5.1.9 Parenthood and Caring



**Figure 5.9:** Adinkra Symbols denoting Parenthood and Caring

Parenting and caring in the Akan families are synonymous. They go hand in hand. In these four plays, each exhibits some kind of caring from parents and correcting their children from bad behaviours through scolding or may be insults. That does not suggest that parents hate their children.

Ato in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* receives strong words from his mother, Esi Kom. “Keep quiet my son and let me speak now, for something has pricked my wound. My knees are callous with bending before the rich...How my friends will be laughing behind me now. After all the fuss, she is poorer than ever” (P. 30 Speech 15). But in the end, Esi kom draws Ato and Eulailie Rush together and makes them feel at home. Kankam in *Edufa* exhibits the same gesture when he reprimands Edufa of wrong doing but could not deny the fact

that he is his son. “Yes, in spite of my rage, there is still truth of father and son between us”. (P.17 Speech 5)

Nana Yaa Kyiretwie in *In the Chest of a Woman* sacrifices her dignity for the survival of her daughter.

**Owusu:** (Screaming) Murderer... You are a murderer and...

**Nana Yaa:**

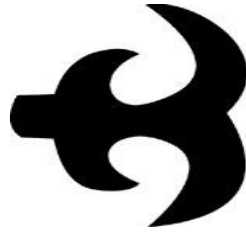
And your mother. That makes you a daughter of a murderer, and an intelligent one at that.....where else would I be if not by your side? I am going to stand by you, night and day... (Pp 29-30)

Even in death, the Akan believes that the dead mother’s spirit continues to guide and protect the living children. Ama Ata Aidoo informs us through Esi Kom. And that happens to be the last speech in the play.

**Esi Kom:** ... And you must be careful with your wife  
You tell us her mother is dead. If she had  
Any tenderness,  
Her ghost must be keeping watch over her ... (P.50 speech 1)

Fatherhood cannot be a reality without motherhood. It is the woman who enables the man to become a father and it is the man who enables the woman to become mother. Together, they are the nucleus of the family. Together, the Akans believe that they are co-creators with God. Just as mothers care, fathers also care for their children. Kankam aptly demonstrates this in *Edufa*, after quarrelling with his son, Edufa.

Kankam: To Kill? Say to myself. ‘Father your son wants to murder’, and go? All the world’s real fathers would not wish a murderer for a son, my son. Yes, in spite of my rage, there is still truth of father and son between us. (P.17 Speech5)



### AKOKO NAN (THE LEG OF THE HEN)

Symbol of protectiveness and parental discipline (correction), with patience, mercy and fondness.

The full name of this symbol translates to "The hen treads on her chick, but she does not kill it." (*Akokɔ nan tia ba na enkum ba*). This represents the ideal nature of parents, being both protective and corrective. A common expression of nurturing children.

The symbol goes beyond the mere proposition of child upbringing. It denotes selflessness and commitment to societal development.



### OSRAM - THE 'MOON'.

A Symbol which represents *faith, understanding, determination* and *Patience*.

Proverb: *Osram mfiti preko ntwā ɛman ho nhyia* (The moon does not go round the nation just at a goal - *hastily*)

The related proverb is 'it takes the moon quite a while to go round the world' – you need to show Patience when waiting for a particular event or outcome...

Now, what if you took the time to sit on the decision or problem for a while? Talking about Patience, Maame Pomaah had this to say:

Hens sit on their eggs until just the right time for hatching. Mothers become pregnant and they know naturally that this is a nine-month process, so naturally they don't try to rush it. A good coach knows it takes time to create a great athlete. Good coaches don't rush it because they know that if they do, more often than not, the athlete

ends up injured. With experience, we all come to know the natural gestation period for the ideas we commonly work with. So sometimes, the best thing to do is really nothing at all!<sup>82</sup>



### **AKOMA** (the heart)

A symbol of love *patience, goodwill, faithfulness, endurance and tolerance*

**Saying:** *Nya akoma* (Be patient – or take heart/ have patience)

In the Akan tradition, when a person is said to "have a heart in his stomach," it means that person is very tolerant and considerate. A saying *Nya Akoma* literally means "Get a heart - be patient". Another saying "Akoma Kesee" Heavy heart means someone who can endure difficult situations. On the other hand, when we say the person is "Light hearted; *Nakoma sua*; it means he/she is noted to be angry at the slightest provocation. *Onni akoma*

The heart is one very important organ of the body that is revered. Nobody takes the heart for granted. It is only when the heart stops when one is considered dead. When something severe happens in our tradition, most of the people especially mothers retort *M'akoma* (my heart) meaning I am in severe pain. It might necessarily not be physical pain. It connotes all pains; emotional, physical, mental and so on. Love, they say emanates from the heart, and so is hatred. In the Akan tradition someone can describe the other person as *Onni*

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<sup>828282</sup> An interview with Maame Pomaah of Atwima Gyekye. A woman who cherishes the moon and its patience with the star

*akoma pa* meaning he/she doesn't have a good heart, or be described as *Ɔwɔ akoma pa* which means he/she has a good heart.

When expressing love, one can say to his or her partner, “mede m'akoma nyinaa ma wo” Meaning “I give you all my heart” A mother with a big heart can take good care of her children.

The vitality of the woman's role as far as Akan clan totems are concerned is one of the most heartening developments of the Akan tradition. In all the mentioned plays, the family revolves around women.

In the Akan cosmogony, women were said to be founders of the various clans; for example, the Tena/Bretuo clan was said to have been mothered by Nana Asiamah Guahyia of Ayaase in Adanse, (Rattray, 1925), the Asona Clan which originated at Sodua in Adanse descended from a woman, Nana Foriwaa who was said to have emerged from the skies just like the mother of Tena Bretuo, (Agyemang Duah, 1963).

Since the Akan lineage is maintained through matrilineal line, these women leaders were either *Eno* or *Aberewa* (translated as good mother). *Aberewa* was regarded as the wisest counselor hence, the Akan insistence of always referring decisions on complicated and controversial issues to *Aberewa* (*Yere kɔbisa aberewa*) who in chambers always gave good counseling (Abayie 1990: 89). As a matrilineal society, the Akan society regarded as a bad omen when a woman failed to have a female issue, since such a situation terminated the lineage. Often, oracles are consulted to make sure that a female offspring was secured to maintain the family line; this is very true even today.

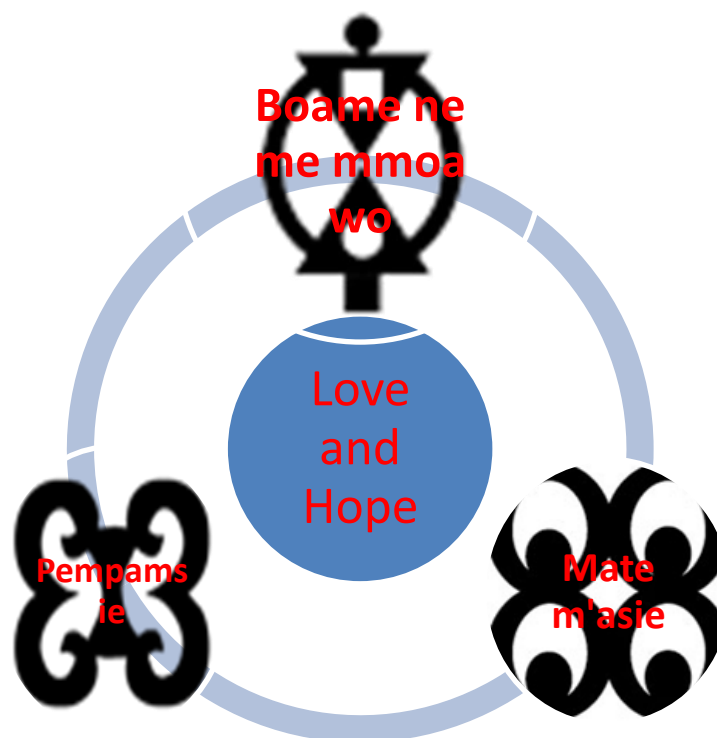
It must be emphasized that at the very origin of the forming of human societies among the Akans, the female leadership was not in dispute. At this stage, the male never failed to recognize the leadership role of the female (Abayie 1995: 45).

Many treatises and arguments have emerged in present times about how women have been relegated to the periphery. As Assimeng (1990: 73) puts it; “When it comes to critical decision making on matters affecting society as a whole, women are often ignored. In addition, they only marginally integrated into mainstream of national, social and economic development” Efo Mawugbe in *In The Chest of A woman* (1989) enquires on which stone it has been engraved that men alone should take leadership roles. In spite of the belief that women are sidelined in the Akan societies, the plays understudy, reveal the power of women.

*In The Legend of Aku Sika*, the actions of the King’s wife, Nana Yere brings about peace and resolution of negative issues in the play. Esi Kom in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* unites Eulailie Rush and Ato Yawson in the end, in *In the Chest of A woman* as has already been shown, the playwright demonstrates the power of women. That the breast is not only an extention of the body.... Both Rattray (1923: 134) and Busia (1968: 47) agreed that traditionally, females were more important than men in matrilineal societies. They emphatically claimed that the male stool would never have been in existence but for one particular reason. Busia (1968: 45) indicated that traditional histories from Mampong, Dwaben Wenchi and other divisions claimed that women were chiefs or rulers. However, their roles were hampered when they were in their menstrual periods. Busia stated: “so we asked them to give us men who would be chiefs in their place that is why the elders ask queen-mothers to nominate a candidate to become a chief”. In the cultural sense, women are not really relegated to the background. They form part in decision making, and perhaps, are placed in the mainstream of national development?

Indeed, both sides of the affirmative action to the debate of whether these, themselves reflect a social problem or are solutions to a larger societal problem have valid facts and use societal-level values to support their claim. The traditional system of the Akan people enjoins men and women to marry when they are matured in their life time, be responsible and promote communal spirit, respect authority and abate struggles and conflicts.

### 5.1.10 Love and Hope



**Figure 5.10:** Adinkra Symbols denoting Love and Hope

In *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, Ato assures Eulailie the happiness they would be enjoying when they come to Africa. The hopes and anxieties heighten when Ato tells her: “we are going to create a paradise with or without children....” (P 4 Speech 10). Dreaming on an enjoyable future, Eulailie asks. ‘...And your gods my gods ...Shall I die where you will

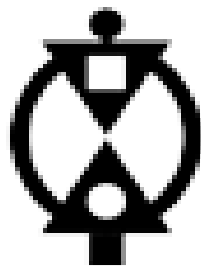
die ...? And Ato's response: "Yes... And if you want to, you shall be buried there also..."  
(P. 4, Speeches: 1, 2 &4).

In *The Legend of Aku Sika*, the King instills hope into the orphan girl, Aku, and assures her of his love despite her perceived deformity. He demonstrates his love by considering himself dethroned from the royal seat if they find out that Aku is deformed. This action promotes hope and better future life for those who are hopeless in life.

In the same vein, for the love of a daughter, Yaa Kyiretwie dies for Owusu Agyemang in Mawugbe's *In the Chest of a woman*. This is to ensure a better future for her daughter. Perhaps the greatest of all sacrifices and love for a fellow human being can be found in *Edufa* when Ampomah decides to die in place of her husband.

Kankam: I have learned that in your chamber that night you tried to make her forswear the oath she had innocently sworn. But the more you pleaded, the more emotionally she swore away her life for love for you... (P.17 Speech 1)

Earlier, Kankam had recounted how Ampomah owned up to die for Edufa. "... I will die for you Edufa, she said, and meant it too, poor, doting woman..." (P.16 speech 4)



**Boame na Memmoa wo** (Help Me to Help You)

Symbol of Hope, Interdependence *and* Cooperation



To the Akan, one man cannot build a whole township. Everybody needs assistance and so when one leads a good life, others come in to support the person.

Proverb: *Woforo dua pa a na yepea wo.* (If you climb a good tree you get helpers to push you up)



**Pempamsie** (Sew it in Readiness)

Symbol of hope, foresight, readiness and wisdom

Proverb: *Pempamsie, na daakye ebeye adepa ama wo* (Sew it in readiness for it will be useful for you in the near future).

The Akan believes that the future is built on the present and that; one has to be prepared by putting things together in readiness for the future. What you sow today is what you will reap in future. Nana Yaa Kyeretwie in *In The Chest of a Woman* strategises to sew and keep for the future for Owusu Agyemang. So also in *The Dilemma of A Ghost*, Ato's Mother goes and asks of the hand of Yaw Mensah's daughter for Ato in marriage. They were also rearing a sheep in Ato's name, and the idea of pawning all the golden ornaments to look after Ato in school also conforms to the *Pempamsie* idea. So ultimately, we all have to weigh up the short term rush we get from sharing knowledge or secrets that are not ours, or being over-ready with our promises, with the long term real benefits that come from knowing how to keep secrets and how to say 'no' when 'yes' is not feasible; Being trustworthy and reliable to ourselves and everyone else. But just how do we set about building our personal integrity if you've not already had a lot of practice at it? It is not

something you can take classes in. And old habits can seem hard to change. The answer is to tap into our deepest core values of choosing a new path in life by making the new behaviour feel natural and comfortable - as if you have been doing it for years. And the easiest way to do that is to make use of the power of M'ate Masie. By Listening to *Keeping secrets and promises*, you will find yourself relaxing more deeply than you have ever done before. But this is not an 'empty' relaxation. The masterful ability to maintain your stance will allow you to review your core values and magnify their power in your life, so that you can cast out unwanted behaviour patterns and establish a new template more in keeping with the real you. If one cannot sew in readiness, he divulges secret things easily, and this happens to the Man in *The Legend of Aku Sika*.

**Nanayere:**

What is it that could not wait till I got home? You have got me all anxious and worried

**The Man:**

You have cause to be anxious and worried. What I am about to tell you is very serious. It concerns your husband the king.

**Nanayere:**

Has he been irreverent to the ancestors and the elders?

**The Man:**

He would not dare sink that low.

**Nanayere:**

What is it then?

**The Man:**

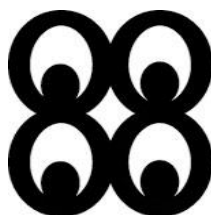
I would not have worried my head about it were it not for the fact that your own brother insisted that I tell you.

**Nanayere:**

My Brother. Why did he not tell me himself whatever it is?

**The Man:**

Because I told him to tell you, but he said I should let you know from my own mouth; he hates the “they say ...they say in this town (p12)



### **MATE MASIE (NTENSIE)**

What I hear, I keep being the meaning of this Adinkra symbol also brings to mind, wisdom, knowledge and prudence. It also implies “I understand”.

Proverb: *Nyansa bun mu ne mate m’asie* (The source of wisdom is understanding)

In the Akan tradition, Understanding means wisdom and knowledge. Again, it represents the prudence of taking into consideration what the other person has said.

People are often asked to keep what they are told secret. For unsubstantiated information, idle talk, which foolishly or maliciously spread rumours are termed as gossip and considered to be irreverent and unhelpful.

It is a leader's job to set direction and determine outcomes; that only happens when leaders feel confident in themselves. *Opanin due mante, mante* (The Leader pretends not to hear the obvious rumour)

The first action of scene two of *The Legend of Aku Sika* happens at the outer court of the king’s palace. The characters here are Nanayere and the Man. The whole action centres around two main issues; divulgence of a secret by the Man, and exhibition of jealousy on the part of Nanayere. In all these instances, the playwright engages some Akan traditional symbols.

When the man heard about Aku’s deformity, he could not be wise enough to keep it a secret. He quickly looked for Nanyere to tell her. He did not allow the wisdom of *M’ate*

*masie* or *Ntensie* (What I hear, I keep) to guide him. Unlike the brother of Nanayere who hates “They say...they say in this town”

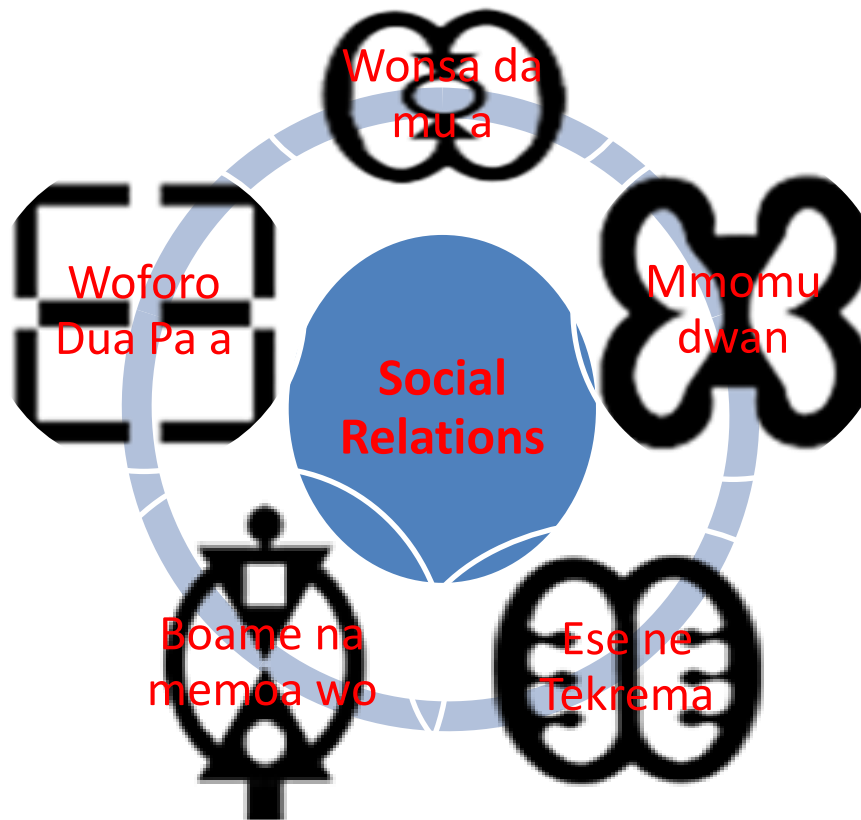
We all like to give and receive attention, and sharing information, particularly if we have privileged access to it (i.e. we know a 'secret'), is one of the most satisfying ways to meet this basic human need. This is the basis of all gossip. "I know something that you don't. But if I tell you, you will be indebted to me." That is how it works. In most cases, it does little harm. But, there are many times when being able to keep a secret is vital. Owusu Agyemang keeps her mother's secret to herself. Seguwa Keeps Edufa's secret. But Kankam could not keep Edufa's secret a secret. If you have been in the habit of letting secrets slip, people who know you will also know not to trust you with something really important. This means that your relationships with others will have little trust in them, and will be the poorer for it. You won't get as much respect as you would like.

The various plays depict human existence in society. The themes provide societal relationships where all facets of personalities are assembled in one community to solve universal problems and challenges. The plays serve as re-enculturation for the new generation to have a window into the past which will serve as the opening to the future. Social activities such as marriage, funeral, friendship, communal labour, festivals, traditional debates, storytelling etc, have all been captured by the plays under study. The fact that drama is meant to improve social relations has manifested itself.

In *The Legend of Aku Sika*, the social victimization of people living with physical deformity has been tackled to give hope and power to the so-called deformed. In the same way, women have been placed in authority by Efo Mawugbe's play, *In The Chest of A Woman*, while *Edufa* discusses how the dangers of loving a partner with all one's heart can

lead to complications. The dialectics of modernity and tradition have also been treated in Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, and all these are social problems.

### 5.1.11 Social Relations



**Figure 5.11:** Adinkra Symbols denoting Social Relations

The Akan society considers social living as very important, and that many of the above symbols speak for the society. They embody proverbs, instructions and well-being of the people. *Boame na memoa wo* (Help me and let me also help you); *Woforo dua pa a ye pia wo* (When you climb a good tree, we support you by pushing you); *Wonsa da mu a yenni nyawo* (When your hand is in the food, we do not eat without you), and many others.

### 5.1.12 Adinkra Symbols as Tragedy and Comedy

The Adinkra and Akan Traditional symbols, just like drama exhibit forms in drama such as tragedy; *Tumi tese Kosua*, (Power is like an egg), *Owuo Atwedee*, (the ladder of death), everybody will climb, *Sesa wuraban* (Changing of behaviour), *Anibere* (Seriousness), *mfofoo* (Jealousy) and *Epa* (Slavery). Through these symbols, the Akan person has explored his highest ideals and aspirations as well as his deepest sins and most profound despair...Through these, the Akan has aided his understanding and hence, to a definite extent, his banishment of human fears, and like tragedy, the symbols help him to widen the possibilities of human compassion, human tolerance, and human unity.

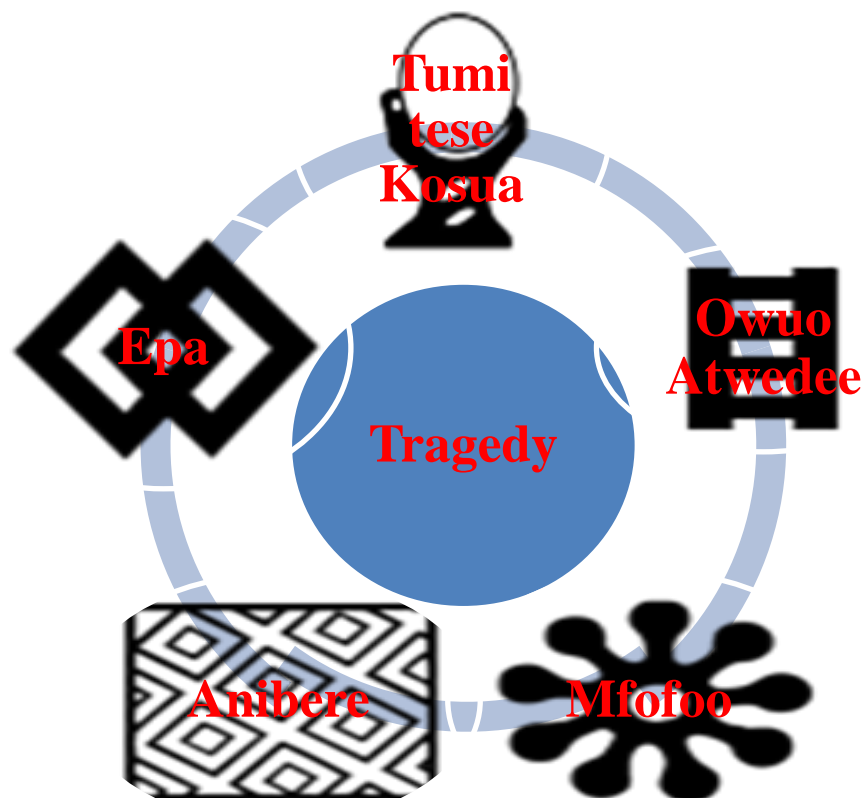


Figure 5.12: Adinkra Symbols Connoting Tragic Effects

To the African, tragedy moves beyond death. It transcends human mourning state. Childlessness, poverty, flood, and famines are all considered tragic. In the same vein, the Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols, like drama, can demonstrate the traits of comedy.

Through some of these symbols, we exhibit for our laughter and mock at those human deviations from the normal, which if allowed unhampered and uncensored would make us less human and less potentially noble. These symbols have taught the Akan person to know the ridiculous and to purge the ridiculous through laughter and satire

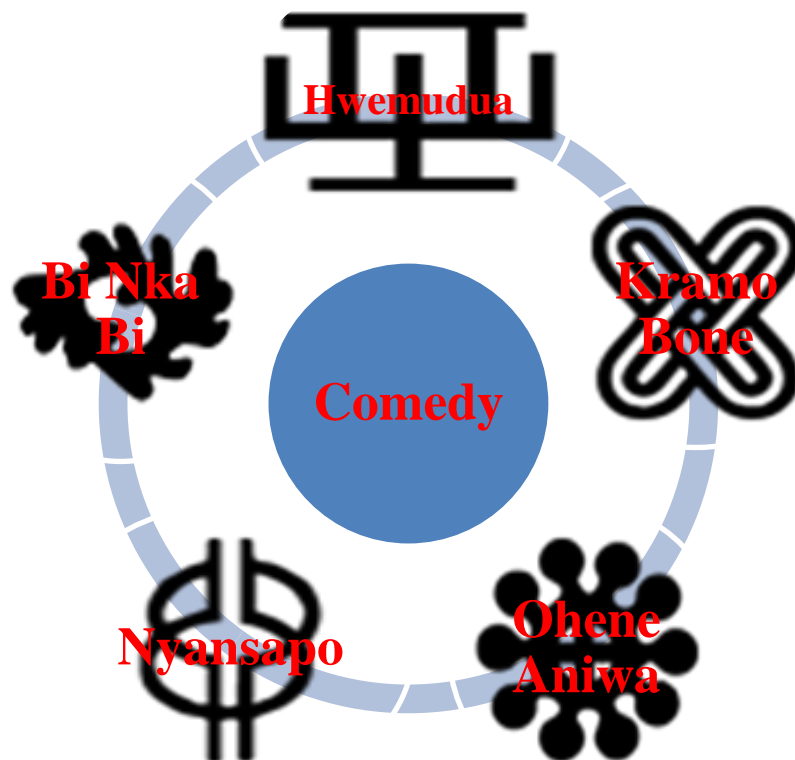


Figure 5.13: Adinkra Symbols Connoting Comic Effects

New art forms are rare, but when they do emerge, their creators are generally artists who have a mastery of the foundations of their art (Pickard 2009: 36). In other words, it can be argued that Efua Sutherland and Ben Abdallah wrote plays with universal appeal, plays they called *Anansegoro* and *Abibigoro* respectively. Because they were accomplished at classical drama and the drama of African and Ghanaian societies for that matter, they could re-define African drama. Picasso too had a 'blue period' wherein he mastered realism in painting, before he turned the art world upside down with his 'Cubistic' invention.

Every human life is composed of experience; indeed, constant encounters with the world around us carry us from birth to death. These encounters with the natural and cultural environment are what we call experiences. These experiences are not completely raw encounters, that is, they do not happen in a vacuum.

From the time we are born, all new experiences are viewed through the lens of previous experiences. And those previous experiences help to determine how the new experience will be shaped, interpreted, and understood (Brunner 1986: 30)























### **5.1.13. As If The Same But...**















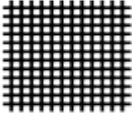



As an observation, some Adinkra symbols provide a level of difficulty for identification. They have similar geometric shapes, and similar sounding Akan names; (Eban and Aban). These can easily confuse us without a close inspection. In the past, some researchers have mistakenly identified the meaning of one with the shape of the other. The researcher produces this chart below to address certain symbols which may be confused with other symbols. A similar work was done by Bruce Willis in his *Dictionary of Adinkra Symbols*. This is adding up to what he observed in numbers.



**Table 5.2:** Adinkra Symbols which Resemble Each Others

Aban (Good Fortress)			Eban (Fence)
Agyindaworo (The gong-gong of Agyin)			Onyame nwu na mawu (I die only when God is dead)
Mpatapo (Knot of reconciliation)			Mpuaanum (Five tuft hair)
Sepo (An executioner's knife)			Epa (Handcuff)
Nkɔnsɔnkɔnsɔn (A chain, or a link)			Ese ne Tekrema (The Tongue and the teeth)
Bese Kese (Bunch of Kola nuts)			Sunsum (The soul)
Hye a wɔnhye (Unburnable)			Nkɔnsɔnkɔnsɔn (A chain, or a link)
Fofoo (Yellow leaf)			ɔhene Aniwa (The eyes of a King)
Kuntunkantan Inflated Pride			Mpuaanum (Five tuft hair)
Kuntunkantan Inflated Pride			Sunsum (The soul)
Kuntunkantan (Inflated Pride)			Mate Masie (What I hear, I keep)
Fi-hankera (Compound house)			Mmusuyidee (Spiritual Balance. That which cleanses and removes bad luck)

Bese Kese (Bunch of Kola nuts)			Nserewa (Big Okra or cowries)
Nyansapo (Wisdom knot)			Mpatapo (Knot of reconciliation)
Nkɔnsɔnkɔnsɔn (A chain, or a link)			Nyame biribi wo soro; Ma mensa nka (God there is something in heaven; let me receive it)
Ɔsram (The moon)			Ɔsram ne Nsoroma (The moon and the Star)
Nsoroma (The child of heaven, Star)			Ɔsram ne Nsoroma (The moon and the Star)
Pempamsie (Preserve or prepare)			Nyame biribi wo soro; Ma mensa nka (God, there is something in heaven; let me receive it)
Pempamsie (Preserve or prepare)			Nkɔnsɔnkɔnsɔn (A chain, or a link)
<i>Sankofa</i> (Go back for it)			Akoma (The Heart)
Nsoroma (The child of heaven, Star)			Ananse Ntontan (The Spider's web)
Adinkrahenedua (Adinkra King stamp)			Adinkrahene (The King of all Adinkra symbols)
Asaase ye duru (The earth has weight)			Boame na Me (Help me and let me also help you)

Kae Me (Remember me)			Sankofa (Go back for it)
Dono ntoasoo (The double dono)			Dono (The tension talking drum)
Mere ware wo			Mate masie
Boame na memmoa wo			Mmere dane
Momudwan			Nkonsonkonson
Nea onnim no sua a ohunu			Hwemudua
Owuo kum Nyame			Gye Nyame
Kete pa			Kontire ne Akwamu
Aya			Nyame Nti

### 5.1.131 The Cost of Forgetfulness and *Sankofa*

There is a saying that goes like: “Had I known is always at last”. Looking and scrutinizing all the theories and definitions of *Sankofa* by scholars and other writers, this researcher observes and discusses an area which as it were, has perhaps not been considered by any of the writers and advocates of the *Sankofa* phenomenon. *Sankofa* has a moral role to exhibit in the lives of people and tends to signal a severe cost implication when we forget and decide to go back for what has been neglected, either through our own negligence,

carelessness or immorality. The tendency that we will return and would not find anything behind is very probable. There can be serious changes and a kind of deterioration, even when we find it. If research is synonymous to *Sankofa*, we all know that any good research is very expensive. Longing to come back to our treasured roots, we may be disappointed; for, we may not come back to meet the keepers of our treasured monuments. They would be dead long long ago, or they may not be able to remember due to nature's inevitable course of growth, and decay.

We can make references to some of the plays being investigated to demonstrate how expensive the *Sankofa* idea can cause. In *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, Ato becomes the Moses sending Eulalie back to her roots. One cannot underestimate the conflicts and confusion. In the same manner, in *Edufa*, Kanakam's decision to go back to Edufa's house to claim and restore the dying Ampoma's life was very late. In *The Sudden Return* by Martin Owusu, Kwadwo Tabi returns to his ancestral home, only to find his house empty without people. "Where are the people in this house?" (Scene One: page 2)

The misconception of how easy it is to go back and claim something should be looked at once again. (Se wo were fi, na wo san kofa a yenkyiri). Mankind should endeavour to carry along our traditions and heritage. In other words, we must utilize what we have in the present times carefully and exhaustively. If we leave anything behind, we suffer as we go back for it. If the interpretation of the *Sankofa* image depicts a bird which is crossing a river with an egg in the mouth looking behind, one can deduce the difficulty this bird has been facing. The idea of forgetfulness has prompted me to further this analysis on to some of the traditional elements captured in the plays selected for this study.

Symbolism is part and parcel of the corporate soul of every dramatic work. All that can be captured in the text, on the stage, on tape, or record is a minute fraction of the emotions

that are expressed by this soul. No other communication method can replace symbols. This study has indeed established the potency of symbolism, as the main thrust on which modern Ghanaian literary drama rests.

When the Sage in *The Legend of Aku Sika* raises the calabash to the heavens, he requests favour from the hands of the Supreme Being. *Nyame Biribi Wɔ Soro Ma mensa Nka*. (God, there is something in the heavens, let me receive it).

**Nyame Biribi Wɔ Soro; Ma me nsa nka.**

God, I know there is something you hold in your hands above  
Please, let me receive it.  
As I have been able to wake up this morning by your grace,  
Let me receive the honour you have bundled in the air.  
Let me possess the glory from heaven. God!  
With regards to wealth, I know you control it above.  
I don't want to be too wealthy that people will point fingers at me.  
But the little that I will use for the benefit of myself  
And my family and again to support humankind,  
I know it is with you in heaven ɔdomankoma,  
Let me receive it.  
Oh God. Give me healthy life and strength.  
Not the one the pugilist uses.  
But the one which I can use to go up and down with ease.  
I know you handle it in heaven, please, let me receive it.

*Composed by Researcher*

## 5.2 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I summarise the various stories around Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols. It will be very difficult to line up all the stories we have on about 56 different Adinkra symbols and eight (8) Akan Clan symbols (Totems). That notwithstanding, a composite approach to deal with dramatic elements in the traditional symbols is consequential for self-discovery for the Akan, and the playwright who aspires to use traditional symbols in his or her plays.

As a Qualitative researcher, I explored transcripts, field notes, photography, and texts and made interpretations based on extensive analysis, coding, the identification of themes, etc. Yet, the researcher can still never be sure if those interpretations accurately convey the messages the author may have intended to convey. (Cutts 2009: 4)

Nevertheless, it was my intention to explore the plays through my dramatic knowledge while keeping in mind their vision of communication, socialization and identity. This was addressed by repeated analyses and evaluation of the plays, while paying careful attention to how they constructed meaning through symbolic communication in their works. My apprehension about the interpretations was calmed by the consistency of my work and the explicit nature of the themes and symbols identified. Personal and textual data were collected and analyzed in this study. And the interpretation and analysis were subject to my interpretation; therefore, the only perceived limitations of this study were the inferences and conclusions that I drew through the Qualitative content analysis. Yin (2003: 44) suggested that, “An investigator will “infer” that a particular event resulted from some earlier occurrence, based on interview and documentary evidence collected as part of the study” (Yin 2003: 36).

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1. Introduction

The thesis builds on and contributes to work in the field of Dramatic Criticism and the use of traditional symbols as communication in dramatic presentations. It also reveals the fact that creativity in every field does not occur in a vacuum and that all and sundry depends on the *Sankofa* theory that is, using what already exists as basis for creative expressions.

Although, a number of studies have examined *Sankofa*, drama, Adinkra and Akan Clan symbolism, there has not been a strong focus on how they are used by modern Ghanaian playwrights. As such, this study provides additional insights about the role of traditional symbols, particularly Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols with regards to philosophies and themes in modern Ghanaian plays. This research differs from previous studies on traditional symbols as communicative tools by identifying, stratifying and documenting the various symbols which hitherto, are not visibly detected in the context of modern Ghanaian play-texts.

In doing this, it draws strongly on the works of four modern Ghanaian playwrights:

1. Martin Okyere Owusu - *The Legend of Aku Sika*
2. Efo Kodjo Mawugbe - *In the chest of A Woman*,
3. Efua T. Sutherland - *Edufa*
4. Ama Ata Aidoo - *The Dilemma of A Ghost*

I have endeavored to provide a scholarly and personal example of how the *Sankofa* theory engaged me, when I was on this journey, but I am sure that my story is one of many. *Sankofa* has had impact on many individuals across the globe, particularly on Ghanaian modern playwrights. This thesis may add to the literature on the development of Ghanaian Drama, traditional symbols and communication as it may encourage other writers to

explore significant symbolic moments that can shape a Ghanaian communicative agenda. The claim of preserving our cultural heritage through playwriting seems to be uncertain. Most of our plays may project some cultural elements, but reviewing the content of the plays analyzed, the use of traditional indigenous names has been quite low. Apart from *Death on Trial*, and *Dilemma of a Ghost*, one will deduce that playwrights have not sincerely projected our culture through the preservation of our local names. Indeed, the exploration into the Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols, and the works of the playwrights has been useful because it highlights how through the search, the researcher has been able to integrate and reveal the obscurities of “traditional wisdom” in the plays as well as unmasking the dramatic elements found in the Traditional symbols. The study has provided a unique awareness that not only Historians, Sociologist and Anthropologists write on the preservation of the cultural heritage. One play by a playwright who is culturally conscious can harbour a compendium of many facets of traditional cultural heritage, The profundity of coding the *Sankɔfa* elements (Adinkra and Akan Traditional symbols as well as proverbs etc) embedded in the plays created the understanding of the inherent “Legacy of reclaiming our cultural values.” I believe that masking the *Sankɔfa* tenets and the narratives in Adinkra and Akan Clan symbols in our modern plays means relinquishing our culture and ourselves. Reclaiming the values of our culture through drama is an essential aspect of making us whole as Ghanaians, especially, if we see drama as another tool that can reveal our true identity.

The role played by symbols in the Ghanaian conception of reality is very fundamental and crucial. Hence, a sound understanding of Ghanaian patterns of thought and feeling requires an appreciation of the nature and functions of symbols as a medium of communication in the Ghanaian theatrical culture.



The study, therefore, has provided a frame-work which would be useful in the explanation of traditional symbols and their manifestations in Ghanaian theatre. By unearthing the hidden principles, philosophies, and the aesthetics of the various symbolic elements for performances and the symbolic nature of Ghanaian plays, emerging playwrights and other theatre designers have a basis to explore further.

It is an assumption that imagination and creativity do not come out of the vacuum. However, the inspiration for creative expression can be as varied as the number of Artists there are. How far and how successful renowned playwrights in Ghana such as Efua T. Sutherland, Joe Degraft, Nkrabea Efa Dartey, Mohammed Ben Abdallah, Asiedu Yirenkyi, Martin Okyere Owusu, Bill Marshal, Ebo White, Yaw Asare, Ama Ata Aidoo, Efo Kodjo Mawugbe, Yankah, Appiah-Adjei and others, have dwelt on symbols as sources in their artistic expressions have been given scholarly interpretation, using the four selected plays as reference points.

By this research, a better understanding of selected plays in the context of the *Sankofa* theory has been promoted, and the effectiveness of symbolic communication either tangible or subtle in the plays has also been revealed. The study avails the public and scholars of different forms and methods of communication which have come up as a result of new concepts of content and purpose of drama. The pervasive nature of the *Sankofa* Theory in playwriting has been investigated. Playwrights, by their positions in the theatre, as the initiators of the whole theatrical processes have been assessed, subjecting their plays through thorough analysis on how far they have projected the theory of *Sankofa* (Traditional elements) in their plays.

The playwright's idea to write a play based on a certain traditional dispensation; folklore, myths, history, religion, chieftaincy, rites of passage (Birth, naming, puberty/initiation,

marriage, and death/funeral), politics, and other social dispositions could be consciously conceived and portrayed as such. However, the treatment of some of the symbolic issues in some of the plays seemed unconsciously done.

After all these number of pages written, I feel that, I am just beginning to learn, to be truly educated on Drama, *Sankofa*, Adinkra and Akan Traditional symbols. The works of the four playwrights, and other methods used, play production and field interviews have guided my path as I have struggled with identification of traditional symbols and trying to find my way to contribute an understanding of symbolic communication, and possibly, become an authority of symbols and symbolic communication in Drama.

I needed a method in which the world of Dramatic Criticism, especially on Ghanaian drama which lies between modernity and tradition, and internal decision making of a researcher could be considered valid and noteworthy. I needed schemes that could encourage systematic reflection and ensure a scholarly account. I needed a means of analyzing evidence that not only organized a record, but also, enabled discovery, bearing in mind that playwrights and other creative writers who have an understanding of their own cultural backgrounds are able to connect to their audiences and provide culturally rich learning environments. I still am exploring and advancing in knowledge. This work is a guideline of one part Qualitative with content analysis; one part ethnographic exploration. The two parts are exhaustion and tears; increasing daily, the noble (grey/white) hair. Although I have tried to pinpoint specific experiences that have contributed to my study, I have noticed over the last few years that the more I know, the more aware I am of the significance of the experience on the symbolic journey, the more symbols there are to search for. Thus, I could not include them all. I have highlighted those that have stood out and hope they provide a glimpse into how I came to know just a few of them. Yet, I feel

that there is still much more to this story that, I cannot tell. Like the Mate M'asie symbol, there are just some things that one cannot articulate, not even with oneself.

I utilized content and ethnography, including a play-production research approaches as the primary methods because they promoted an introspective analysis of self and other playwrights.

As individuals, we are always changing and evolving, expectantly in a progressive manner. The methods helped me to see how I had evolved as a Ghanaian researcher by interacting with traditionally inclined people (Heads of Akan Clan Totems, traditional cultural practitioners) and studying other Akan Symbols and semiotics. This research has impacted my ability to translate and appreciate the complexity of symbols and the role they play in communication in formal and informal education. With methodical analysis of the plays of the four playwrights among others, I have been able to get in touch with my perception about the contribution of the preservation and promotion of the Ghanaian cultural heritage by playwrights as a truism.

The logic behind this is that in most cases, a person's contributions to the Ghanaian society is closely related to his or her understanding and perception of himself or herself in relation to the culture in which he or she functions and lives. Such a culture can be one that enslaves and shortens life or one that liberates and gives life. Ghanaian playwrights may not fully equip their audiences with a culture that liberates and gives life if they have not undergone personal cultural knowledge and transformation. And in this, *Sankofa* (Traditional symbols – physical or abstract) is canonical. I discussed the findings of the study, the significance of the findings, as they were embedded in plays, social foundations, and their contributions to educational and cultural research. I discussed the limitations of

this study and call for more research, focused on other areas of theatre scholarship. There is the need for Ghanaian theatre practitioners to engage in personal reflection, and transformation which may lead them to better educate and equip Ghanaian students and audiences to academic excellence and cultural identification. There is also, the need for drama education programs, to prepare theatre practitioners for cultural diversity.

From the analysis, it has been observed that *Sankofa* reaches across the barriers of time and space. It penetrates the barriers of creed, race and nationality. Through its magic, we share experiences with Sophocles, Shakespeare, Strindberg, Brecht, Ibsen, Peter Brook, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Athol Fugard, Zulu Sofola, Chinua Achebe, Ayikwei Armah, Efua Sutherland, Amma Ata Aidoo, Joe Degraft, Rev. Fiawoo, Asiedu Yirenkyi, Martin Owusu, Ben Abdallah, Saint Abdulai Alhassan, Yaw Asare, Efo Kodjo Mawugbe and many others: It was discovered that techniques in the material things of life may change and grow old-fashioned; but the fundamental experiences of human nature; the exuberance and struggles of youth, the thrill and amazement of young love, the hatred, sting and ingratitude are the heritage and common property of all people and all ages. The work suggests that the traditional environment shelters a vast treasure house of dramatic elements. To let this wealth of dramatic elements lie unutilized would be an incredible waste. It would be like a very rich man who kept a priceless collection of paintings locked away where not even he could see them, or a land where great choral music was available on paper but was never played. This also conforms to the highlife song composed by Ofori Amponsah<sup>83</sup>; *Etuo paa da obi dan mu nanso onhunu neto* which translates as: *There is a real gun lying idle in somebody's room, but he cannot shoot.*

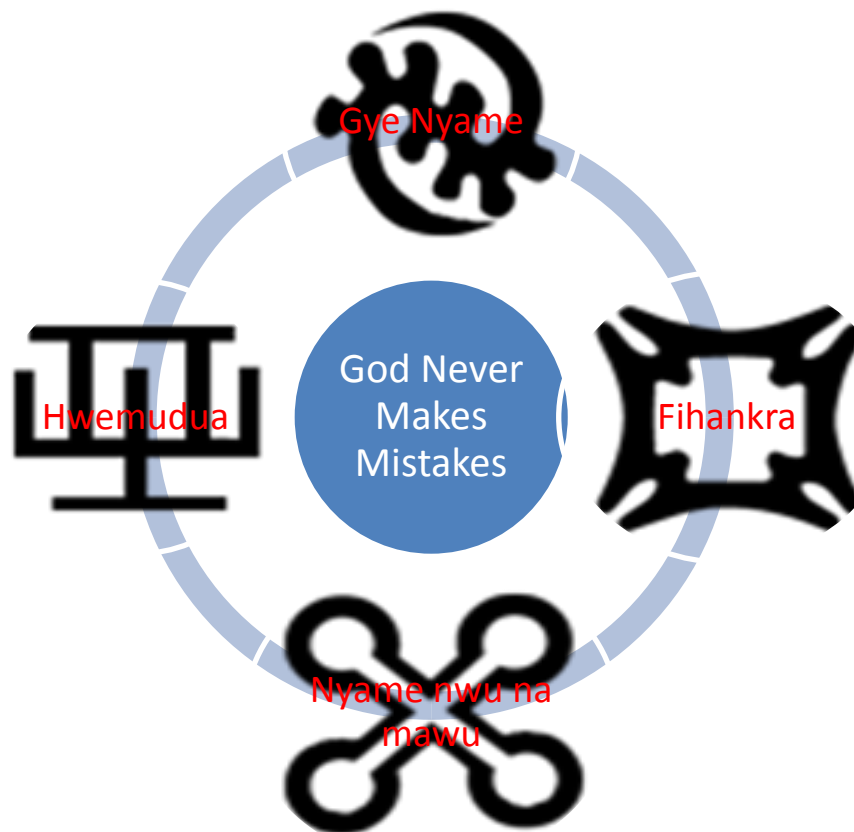
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<sup>83</sup> A contemporary Highlife Musician in Ghana who has now turned into a Church Priest.

There is something marvelous about sharing together in a creative cause, about people who can create their own celebrations, their own sports, their own art, and their own vocations by applying the *Sankofa* method. And the theatre is one of the few places where something of the old 6<sup>th</sup> of March independent day of Ghana spirit still survives. Weeks of hard, imaginative work go into a production. Directors, stage crews, actors, and actresses, and business staff are drawn together around a common goal. Finally, emerges the realization of the goal as the work is shared with the audience. Laughter, silence, excitement, applause, the warm feeling of respect and admiration for a job well done, the happy crowds backstage – *Sankofa* from this study has been well understood by me. *Sankofa* is nebulous rather than absolute, it seems chaotic rather than harmonious, it is dynamic rather than idle, it is complex rather than simple, and it is ubiquitous rather than esoteric. *Sankofa* is, because people are. *Sankofa* can be shared by all and sundry through the playwright, the initiator, when clothing Akan ideas, Akan symbols and Akan philosophies in dramatic forms. Let us remember: *Sankofa*; go back for it for it is yours. But *Sankofa* is very expensive when we forget or neglect and we are going back for it. There is insurmountable sacrifice.

Indeed, I postulate that the effective education of the youth of Africa and for that matter, Ghana has to be grounded in cultural identification. By this cultural identification I suggest that Ghanaian teachers, students and lovers of theatre need to be encouraged to see Ghanaian tradition as a very vital zone for national development. Playwrights and other creative writers who have an understanding of their own cultural backgrounds should be able to connect to their audiences and provide culturally rich learning environments. For example, in ancient Egyptian mummification practices, all but one of the organs was removed from the deceased person. The remaining organ was the heart. It was believed that the heart encompassed the essence of the person and, upon entering the afterlife, the

person would be judged by his or her heart. Seeing Drama as the heart of cultural preservation and promotion, it encompassed all that *Research* represents - truth, justice, facts, order, harmony, balance, and reciprocity. Indeed, all of these are embodied in the symbolic communication of our community.



**Figure 6.1:** Adinkra Symbols denoting God's Faithfulness

As a playwright, I share similar beliefs on education and beliefs on symbolic communication, and strongly believe in providing analytical opportunities for all students, especially students of the theatre arts fraternity. Additionally, I respect the authors, both as persons and as scholars. I make no claims for objectivity in this work. Instead, I welcome the subjective nature of the study as it has encouraged me to contribute wholly to data collection, analysis and interpretation. I deeply want to own my subjectivities. In so doing, I became aware of the depth of their impact. Ratner (2002) suggested that identifying our

subjectivities enables us to strengthen our “objective comprehension” of the world. (Ratner 2002: 8). To produce a thesis that is devoid of emotion, reflection, experience, and cultural analysis for me, is to produce a thesis that is not artistic. It was my goal to conduct a study that utilized my emotions, personal reflection, and experiences to provide an in-depth investigation of the works of Efua Sutherland, Martin Okyere Owusu, Efo Kodjo Mawugbe and Ama Ata Aidoo.

Therefore, exploring these aspects through content analysis, play production, poetry and other literary formats adds to the quality of the texts. While some may consider this a limitation, I consider the diversity of the texts, one of my assets...because, my life has been deeply altered through the research and writing from the texts, as I read and analyze them.

I imagine that some might say to me (or at least want to): *So what is Sankofa to human development? So what does this mean to drama, and education? So what am I to make of the quality of this work? So what?* My response to the “so what” would be very simple. Every Artist perceives a unique philosophical understanding of a concept or theory he or she wants to work on. My desire to research into the *Sankofa* phenomenon has taken me into various discourses for interrogation. Reflecting on the *Sankofa* concept, the related studies that have been reviewed; I join hands with the numerous authors and philosophers in the preservation and promotion of traditional culture. Anthropologists, Fine Artists, Musicians and Dancers, have all contributed in their own rights. My thoughts and creative instincts of this research have produced this poem to sum up my understanding of the *Sankofa* Theory.



**S**eeing behind, viewing the past, a great reflection of life  
**A**ncestral knowledge stretches its gifts towards us saying  
**N**ew ideas are based on old ideas. It is consequential  
**K**een examination of the past, a strong bridge for the  
**O**lder generation to have a place in the newer generation  
**F**orming an essential past shapes an essential present and future  
**A**lmighty God looked back and said, "It was good". Amen!

**Figure 6.2:** Poem composed and designed by researcher

It seems to me that we been educated away from ourselves. But all is not lost. *Sankofa* ...*Se wo werefɛ na wosan kɔfɛ a yenkyiri. Sankofa* (go back for it) this study sees the Sankofa concept serving as the bridge and the creative transformation of Ghanaians and Africans at large.

This happens to be the only response I have. I can only ask that readers take me at my word and understand that this work of symbols is a work of passion, endurance, and transformation. It is personal and artistic, political, analytical, sacrificial and evocative. The carefully modest standards I placed on my writing have shaped this text. At many times, a single paragraph took as long as four hours, typing and reading and deleting and cutting and pasting and typing again. By the Grace of God, it was done. I have remained committed to the challenge and to respecting the work and the writing. And in those characteristics is where its quality is found. I propose a drama education which must strive for a restoration of the balance between science and material things on one hand, and art



and philosophy on the other. Good drama is one of the paths leading toward such goal. The importance of human achievements in theatre, as well as in other arts is frequently forgotten. Ghana could be a country perfectly governed; immensely powerful with rich natural resources and without poverty or diseases; yet if we do not produce and protect, and project our own drama, architecture, sculpture, music, painting or books, we would someday pass into the sunset of formidable history, leaving only the traces of a shallow political record with which we will never be satisfied.

### **6.1.1. Contribution to Educational and Cultural Research**

This study adds to the plethora of research that suggested that, “our past joins us in the present and project us into the future” (T.S Eliot (1948), Nketiah (1903), Antubam (1963) Anyidoho (2000), Yirenkyi, (2003), Abdallah (2002), and “Drama education that is not symbolic cannot be quality education” (Marshall, et al., 1999: 164); this study also adds to the research that maintained symbols as communicative tools in Africa.

The study also adds to the limited body of literature on traditional symbols and Ghanaian theatre. It serves as a model for the identification of symbols in all plays for all students. Specifically, the plays of the selected playwrights, after the analysis and examination called for the new Ghanaian playwright, to use traditional Ghanaian and African heritage for their plays to reinforce the *Sankofa* claim as very crucial. It also serves as a model for play examination (analysis), judgment (evaluation) and interpretation (understanding) that emphasize the inclusion of all, and the pursuit of excellence in communication. The study is intimately integrated with the social symbols, cultural symbols, political symbols, occupational symbols, artistic symbols, religious symbols, and recreational life of the people. I maintain that the traditional Ghanaian approach to education is one where teaching and learning are not a stifled process; instead, it is an approach intertwined with

symbolic communication, and that indigenous Ghanaian education should begin very early in life, soon after birth, and continues to old age because *Sankofa* may be too late. Ghanaian education should be anchored in community involvement and identity formation. We find these aspects of traditional Ghanaian education embedded in the works of these playwrights. It is not my argument that Ghanaian-centered dramatic models offer limited contributions to education. However, I do contend that, my conceptualization of traditional symbols in Ghanaian theatre practices is inclusive of all traditional symbols. I propose that, Ghanaian playwrights must go through an ethnic know-how in order to be effective with Ghanaian audiences. Specifically, I suggest that, they become “whole, productive, and conscious beings” of the knowledge of traditional heritage. I interpret this contention to mean that Ghanaian playwrights and other theatre practitioners ought to seek the *Sankofa* Theory and identify with Ghanaian history and culture. The *Sankofa* Cycle for the Theatre has come to stay as a concept worth advancing.

### **6.1.2 Recommendations for Future Research**

As a playwright, a former worker in the cultural industry of Ghana, a Deputy Director of the Centre for National Culture, Kumasi, and now a University teacher with a specific interest in the preservation and promotion of Ghanaian culture through drama, I deem it a fervent responsibility to encourage Ghanaian playwrights and other Ghanaian creative writers to become culturally-centered in order to balance their works to suit both the old and the new theatrical audiences. This does not imply that, playwrights in Ghana have not been using cultural elements in their respective plays. What this thesis seeks to discover is how intensely they have used the traditional symbols under the *Sankofa* theory in their plays. One may assume that, modern Ghanaian playwrights have been resorting to the tradition for their creative materials. This thesis was set to explore that claim.

This study, generally recommends that, our cultural heritage should be re-visited and put to good use when we embark on any creative venture, thus, empowering the *Sankofa* theory to also empower drama which unlike most human creations tend to endure. The food we produce once consumed and the beautiful cars we manufacture once burned out disappear and soon are forgotten. This idea may include human existence. The human being dies and disappears forever, but great drama continues as a joy interminable.

Therefore, more research is needed to continue exploring the traditional symbols in plays written by Ghanaian playwrights, and also explore the dramatic and philosophical elements in the narratives of traditional symbols. This work of literature has been instituted as guidelines for us to use as we analyze the plays, educate our children and ourselves on our identity as Ghanaians.

Further research should broaden the scope of the literature reviewed as part of the analysis. In this study, I investigated the traditional symbols using the *Sankofa* theory in four Ghanaian plays. This propels the conceptualization of Ghanaian socio-cultural Renaissance, reinforcing my argument regarding the responsibility of Ghanaian playwrights, and other creative people to infuse relevant and useful traditional elements in their works; there is a need for more research which further explores how others conceptualize Ghanaian theatre practices and education for posterity.

Some questions to be explored might include, among others: *What unique characteristics do these traditional symbols bring to the theatre? How do playwrights make connections between their Ghanaian and African identities and empowering audiences? How do Ghanaian critics employ critical pedagogy in their evaluation of traditional theatre practices? What is the position of the modern Ghanaian playwright towards the*

*preservation and promotion of Ghanaian culture?* Further, research is needed that explores drama education programs that infuse traditional philosophy, and wisdom component through symbols. Specifically, research is needed that determines how strategic, continued immersion in cultural experiences impacts playwriting techniques of modern Ghanaian playwrights and their audiences.

The interrogation of the *Sankofa* concept with regards to cost implications on forgetfulness, and the immense sacrifice we encounter should be further explored as major research work. The abuse and mis-use of Adinkra symbols which I have termed as “Many Voices at the same time” should create a strong avenue for further research. People’s decoration of areas with too many traditional symbols including the fashions they wear which are embossed with too many Adinkra symbols, for me, create a lot of confusion in communication, as all the symbols speak at the same time. Learning about our culture and playing an active part in the cultural life of the school and wider communities is as vital to developing our identity and self-esteem as understanding who we are through knowing our history and the origins of our society.

Enjoying and participating in cultural life should be available to children and young people: it should not be restricted to those children whose families already participate in cultural activities. All children and young people no matter what their background or family circumstances should have the opportunity to develop their creativity, their relationship with society and to contribute to the economy in ways that are beneficial to them as individuals and to society.

Specifically, the following are also recommended for consideration:

1. *Sankofa, Traditional Symbols and the Performing Arts* should be introduced as a special course for students in the School of Performing Arts. The course will help the works of students to espouse our histories, philosophies, ideologies and our well being which can be found in our cultural heritage.
2. There should be a minimum level of Cultural Education that a child should expect to receive during his or her schooling as a whole. For children to leave full-time education without having engaged in the spectrum of Cultural Education would be a failure of a system which sets out to create young people who are not only academically able, but also have a fully-rounded appreciation of the world around them.
3. The Ghana Education Service and the National Commission on Culture should consider establishing a new Cultural Education Passport scheme for children between the ages of five and nineteen, which records all of their in-school and out of school cultural activities, enabling parents, caretakers and teachers to understand what each child has achieved and to plug any gaps in knowledge and experience. This would be particularly useful during the transition between primary and secondary schools, where pupils may enter a secondary school from a variety of different feeder primaries, each of which has a slightly different programme of Cultural Education.
4. There should be partnerships between classroom teachers, specialist Theatre and performing arts teachers and professional cultural practitioners in the delivery of a truly excellent Cultural Education to young people.
5. The government should recognize the need for exceptional funding for culturally based conservatoires, which train the artists, actors, dancers and musicians who will create and perform the culture of the future.
6. The positive traditional values should be inculcated into our youth as they grow. It will be too late to go back and reclaim these essential attributes of our humanity. The *Sankofa* process is incredibly expensive.

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**APPENDICES****Appendix One: Field Work Itinerary**

Name of Totem	Head Town	Date Visited	Contact person
Aduana	Dormaa Ahenkuro	November, 2 <sup>nd</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2013	Nana Kofi Asare, Dwenim Aduana Abusua Panyin
Name of Totem	Head Town	Dates	Contact person
Bretuo	Asante Mampong	8-11 November, 2013	Nana Ampratwum- Asante Mampong Bretu-hene
Name of Totem	Head Town	Dates	Contact person
Ekuoona	Adansi Asokore	24 <sup>th</sup> - 27 <sup>th</sup> November	Nana Akua Senya – Asokore Bretu-hemaa
Name of Totem	Head Town	Dates	Contact Person
Asinie	Amakom	28 <sup>th</sup> -30 <sup>th</sup> November, 2013	Opanin Kofi Nyarko Amakom Ahenfie
Name of Totem	Head Town	Dates	Contact person
Asakyiri	Akrokyere	1 <sup>st</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> December, 2013	Nana Kwame Ampong- Akrokyere Asakyiri Abusua Panin
Name of Totem	Head Town	Dates	Contact person
Oyoko	Manhyia	5 <sup>th</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> December, 2013	Nana Agyemang – Manhyia Ahenfie
Name of Totem	Head Town	Date	Contact person
Agona	Dunkwa Nsoaem	9 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> December, 2013	Nana Gyinadu Kuffour- Denkyira Nsoaemhene
Name of Totem	Head Town	Date	Contact Person
Asona	Kyebi	13 <sup>th</sup> - 15 <sup>th</sup> December, 2013	Opanin Osei Bonsu- Kyebi

**Appendix Two: Adinkra Symbols as part of Logos for Tertiary Institutions in Ghana**



Regent University College (Nyame nwu na m'awu)



University of Cape Coast (Gye Nyame)



Garden City University College (Adinkrahene)



Ghana Telecom University College (Adinkrahene and Kontire ne Akwamu)



Central University College (Nyame Aniwa)



University of Education-Winneba (Mate Masie)



University of Ghana (Aya and Dweninmen)



Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) (Nyansapo)



**Appendix Three: Adinkra Symbols in Some Businesses**



Obi Nka Obi



Nkyinkyin Symbol



Gye Nyame



**Appendix Four: Adinkra Symbols for home Decorations**

Akoko Nan being displayed at the entrance of a house, at Atwima Gyekye.



Asafohene's Palace in Kumasi: (From the left Top). *Obi Nka obi, Akoben, Ohene Tuo*. (From Left Down): *Fihankra, Dweninmen, et*

**Appendix Five: Some of the Adinkra symbols in use at public places captured from the field.**



The Statue of Dr. Alexander Atta Yaw Kyerematen with the Gye Nyame (Except God) symbol. He was the founder and the First Director of the Centre for National Culture Kumasi







## Appendix Six: Adinkra in Use for Fashion



Captured at the University of Ghana, Legon



A gentleman with *Gyawu Atiko*: Captured in Kumasi

*When the researcher asked whether they know the meanings of the symbols in their outfits, they replied in the negative.*



An Artist Impression of the Adinkra symbols embossed in clothes. The researcher captured this at Kumasi-Accra bus Station in Kumasi.

**Appendix Seven: Agreement Letters**

**UG-CARNEGIE NGAA SPONSORED RESEARCH PROJECT BY DANIEL APPIAH-ADJEL, PHD CANDIDATE, THEATRE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON.**



**TOPIC**

**TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS AND THEATRE: EXPLORING THE SANKOFA CONCEPT IN FOUR GHANAIAN PLAYS**

**CERTIFICATE OF HONOUR FOR (PHD) DATA COLLECTION**

**PURPOSE:**

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**AMOUNT IN WORDS:**

.....(GHC:        )

**NAME OF RECIPIENT:**

**SIGNATURE/THUMPPRINT:.....**

**CONTACT NUMBER (if available).....DATE.....**

**CERTIFIED BY RESEARCHER:.....DATE:.....**

**UG-CARNEGIE NGAA SPONSORED RESEARCH PROJECT BY DANIEL APPIAH-ADJEI, PHD CANDIDATE, THEATRE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON.**



**TOPIC**

**TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS AND THEATRE: EXPLORING THE *SANKOFA* CONCEPT IN FOUR GHANAIAI PLAYS**

**CERTIFICATE OF HONOUR FOR (PHD) DATA COLLECTION**

**PURPOSE:** ... Being the honorarium for assisting in the interview and findings on *Asinie* Clan as a facilitator and respondent

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**AMOUNT IN WORDS:** Two Hundred Ghana Cedis only (**GHC: 200.00**)

**NAME OF RECIPIENT:** Opanin Kofi Nyarko

**SIGNATURE/THUMPPRINT:**.....

**CONTACT NUMBER (if available)**.....**DATE**.....

**CERTIFIED BY RESEARCHER:**.....**DATE:**.....

**UG-CARNEGIE NGAA SPONSORED RESEARCH PROJECT BY DANIEL APPIAH-ADJEI, PHD CANDIDATE, THEATRE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON.**



**TOPIC**

**TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS AND THEATRE: EXPLORING THE SANKOFA CONCEPT IN FOUR GHANAIAI PLAYS**

**CERTIFICATE OF HONOUR FOR (PHD) DATA COLLECTION**

**PURPOSE:**... Being the honorarium for assisting in the interview and findings on *Oyoko* Clan as a facilitator and respondent

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**AMOUNT IN WORDS:** Two Hundred Ghana Cedis only (**GHC: 200.00**)

**NAME OF RECIPIENT:** Nana Agyemang Tenten

**SIGNATURE/THUMPPRINT:**.....

**CONTACT NUMBER (if available)**.....**DATE**.....

**CERTIFIED BY RESEARCHER:**.....**DATE:**.....



**UG-CARNEGIE NGAA SPONSORED RESEARCH PROJECT BY DANIEL APPIAH-ADJEI, PHD CANDIDATE, THEATRE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON.**



**TOPIC**

**TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS AND THEATRE: EXPLORING THE SANKOFA CONCEPT IN FOUR GHANAIAI PLAYS**

**CERTIFICATE OF HONOUR FOR (PHD) DATA COLLECTION**

**PURPOSE:**... Being the honorarium for assisting in the interview and findings on *Asakyiri* Clan as a facilitator and respondent

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**AMOUNT IN WORDS:** Two Hundred Ghana Cedis only (**GHC: 200.00**)

**NAME OF RECIPIENT:** Mr. Emmanuel Ampong

**SIGNATURE/THUMPPRINT:**.....

**CONTACT NUMBER (if available)**.....**DATE**.....

**CERTIFIED BY RESEARCHER:**.....**DATE:**.....

**UG-CARNEGIE NGAA SPONSORED RESEARCH PROJECT BY DANIEL APPIAH-ADJEI, PHD CANDIDATE, THEATRE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON.**



**TOPIC**

**TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS AND THEATRE: EXPLORING THE *SANKOFA* CONCEPT IN FOUR GHANAIAN PLAYS**

**CERTIFICATE OF HONOUR FOR (PHD) DATA COLLECTION**

**PURPOSE:**... Being the honorarium for assisting in the interview and findings on *Ekuona* Clan as a facilitator and respondent

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**AMOUNT IN WORDS:** Two Hundred Ghana Cedis only (**GHC: 200.00**)

**NAME OF RECIPIENT:** Nana Akua Senya

**SIGNATURE/THUMPPRINT:**.....

**CONTACT NUMBER (if available)**..... **DATE**.....

**CERTIFIED BY RESEARCHER:**..... **DATE:**.....

**UG-CARNEGIE NGAA SPONSORED RESEARCH PROJECT BY DANIEL APPIAH-ADJEI, PHD CANDIDATE, THEATRE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON.**



**TOPIC**

**TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS AND THEATRE: EXPLORING THE SANKOFA CONCEPT IN FOUR GHANAIAI PLAYS**

**CERTIFICATE OF HONOUR FOR (PHD) DATA COLLECTION**

**PURPOSE:** Being the honorarium for assisting in the interview and findings on *Bretuo* Clan as a facilitator and respondent

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**AMOUNT IN WORDS:** Two Hundred Ghana Cedis only (**GHC: 200.00**)

**NAME OF RECIPIENT:** Nana Agyei Kodee

**SIGNATURE/THUMPPRINT:**.....

**CONTACT NUMBER (if available)**.....**DATE**.....

**CERTIFIED BY RESEARCHER:**.....**DATE:**.....

**UG-CARNEGIE NGAA SPONSORED RESEARCH PROJECT BY DANIEL APPIAH-ADJEI, PHD CANDIDATE, THEATRE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON.**



**TOPIC**

**TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS AND THEATRE: EXPLORING THE *SANKOFA* CONCEPT IN FOUR GHANAIAN PLAYS**

**CERTIFICATE OF HONOUR FOR (PHD) DATA COLLECTION**

**PURPOSE:** ...Being the honorarium for assisting in the interview and findings on *Agona* Clan as a facilitator and respondent

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**AMOUNT IN WORDS:** Two Hundred Ghana Cedis only (**GHC: 200.00**)

**NAME OF RECIPIENT:** Nana Gyinadu Kuffour

**SIGNATURE/THUMPPRINT:**.....

**CONTACT NUMBER (if available)**..... **DATE**.....

**CERTIFIED BY RESEARCHER:**..... **DATE:**.....

**UG-CARNEGIE NGAA SPONSORED RESEARCH PROJECT BY DANIEL APPIAH-ADJEI, PHD CANDIDATE, THEATRE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON.**



**TOPIC**

**TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS AND THEATRE: EXPLORING THE SANKOFA CONCEPT IN FOUR GHANAIAI PLAYS**

**CERTIFICATE OF HONOUR FOR (PHD) DATA COLLECTION**

**PURPOSE** :...Being the honorarium for assisting in the interview and findings on *Asona* Clan as a facilitator and respondent

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**AMOUNT IN WORDS:** Two Hundred Ghana Cedis only (**GHC: 200.00**)

**NAME OF RECIPIENT:** Agya Osei Badu

**SIGNATURE/THUMPPRINT:**.....

**CONTACT NUMBER (if available)**.....**DATE**.....

**CERTIFIED BY RESEARCHER:**.....**DATE:**.....

**UG-CARNEGIE NGAA SPONSORED RESEARCH PROJECT BY DANIEL APPIAH-ADJEI, PHD CANDIDATE, THEATRE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON.**



**TOPIC**

**TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS AND THEATRE: EXPLORING THE SANKOFA CONCEPT IN FOUR GHANAIAI PLAYS**

**CERTIFICATE OF HONOUR FOR (PHD) DATA COLLECTION**

**PURPOSE** :...Being the honorarium for assisting in the interview and findings on *Aduana* Clan as a facilitator and respondent

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**AMOUNT IN WORDS:** Two Hundred Ghana Cedis only (**GHC: 200.00**)

**NAME OF RECIPIENT:** Nana Kofi Asare

**SIGNATURE/THUMPPRINT:**.....

**CONTACT NUMBER (if available)**.....**DATE**.....

**CERTIFIED BY RESEARCHER:**.....**DATE:**.....

**UG-CARNEGIE NGAA SPONSORED RESEARCH PROJECT BY DANIEL  
APPIAH-ADJEI, PHD CANDIDATE, THEATRE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,  
LEGON**



**CONTRACT FOR CULTURAL FACILITATORS  
SERVICE AGREEMENT**

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This agreement is made between Daniel Appiah-Adjei, University of Ghana, Legon (Hereinafter, referred to as the Contracting Officer) of the one part and Mr. Charles K. Tuffour CNC, Kumasi (Hereinafter, referred to as the Cultural Facilitator) of the other part.

***WHEREBY IT IS AGREED that the interviewer will among other things***

- Assist in the interviews of respondents identified in the various Head Towns of Clan Totems in the Ashanti region for the data collection
- Assist in compiling and collating information on Cultural events, particularly, on Clan Totems in the Towns selected for the data collection

***Tenure of this Agreement***

The agreement constitutes a temporary appointment for the period of Eighteen (18) days within the months of October, 2013 to January, 2014.

***Terms and Conditions of this Engagement***

The remuneration attached to this contract is a fee of One Hundred Ghana Cedis (100.00) per day, including feeding, accommodation and other expenses certified by Mr. Daniel Appiah-Adjei.

**6. *Formalization of this Contract***

The Cultural facilitator shall accept this offer of agreement on the terms and conditions stated above by counter signing the offer in two copies and returning one to Mr. Daniel Appiah-Adjei

<b>Cultural Facilitator (C.F)</b>	<b>Signature &amp; Date</b>	<b>Contracting Officer (C.O)</b>	<b>Signature &amp; Date</b>
<b>Charles K. Tuffour</b>		<b>Daniel Appiah-Adjei</b>	
<b>Witness</b>	<b>Signature &amp; Date</b>	<b>Witness</b>	<b>Signature &amp; Date</b>
<b>Mary Oforiwa Badu</b>		<b>Nyarko Lily-Versta</b>	



**UG-CARNEGIE NGAA SPONSORED RESEARCH PROJECT BY DANIEL  
APPIAH-ADJEI, PHD CANDIDATE, THEATRE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,  
LEGON**



**CONTRACT FOR CULTURAL FACILITATORS  
SERVICE AGREEMENT**

---

This agreement is made between Daniel Appiah-Adjei, University of Ghana, Legon (Hereinafter, referred to as the Contracting Officer) of the one part and Mr. Samuel Bonah CNC, Sunyani (Hereinafter, referred to as the Cultural Facilitator) of the other part.

***WHEREBY IT IS AGREED that the interviewer will among other things***

- Assist in the interviews of respondents identified in the various Head Towns of Clan Totems in the Brong Ahafo region for the data collection
- Assist in compiling and collating information on Cultural events, particularly, on Clan Totems in the Towns selected for the data collection

***Tenure of this Agreement***

The agreement constitutes a temporary appointment for the period of Four (4) days within the months of October, 2013 to January, 2014.

***Terms and Conditions of this Engagement***

The remuneration attached to this contract is a fee of One Hundred Ghana Cedis (100.00) per day, including accommodation feeding and other expenses certified by Mr. Daniel Appiah-Adjei.

**6. *Formalization of this Contract***

The Cultural facilitator shall accept this offer of agreement on the terms and conditions stated above by counter signing the offer in two copies and returning one to Mr. Daniel Appiah-Adjei

<b>Cultural Facilitator (C.F)</b>	<b>Signature &amp; Date</b>	<b>Contracting Officer (C.O)</b>	<b>Signature &amp; Date</b>
<b>Isaacm6j Bonah</b>		<b>Daniel Appiah-Adjei</b>	
<b>Witness</b>	<b>Signature &amp; Date</b>	<b>Witness</b>	<b>Signature &amp; Date</b>
<b>Mercy Asokwa</b>		<b>Simon Prempeh</b>	

**UG-CARNEGIE NGAA SPONSORED RESEARCH PROJECT BY DANIEL  
APPIAH-ADJEI, PHD CANDIDATE, THEATRE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,  
LEGON**



**CONTRACT FOR CULTURAL FACILITATORS  
SERVICE AGREEMENT**

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This agreement is made between Daniel Appiah-Adjei, University of Ghana, Legon (Hereinafter, referred to as the Contracting Officer) of the one part and Ms Augustina Ngissah CNC, Dunkwa (Hereinafter, referred to as the Cultural Facilitator) of the other part.

***WHEREBY IT IS AGREED that the interviewer will among other things***

- Assist in the interviews of respondents identified in the various Head Towns of Clan Totems in the Central region for the data collection
- Assist in compiling and collating information on Cultural events, particularly, on Clan Totems in the Towns selected for the data collection

***Tenure of this Agreement***

The agreement constitutes a temporary appointment for the period of Four (4) days within the months of October, 2013 to January, 2014.

***Terms and Conditions of this Engagement***

The remuneration attached to this contract is a fee of One Hundred Ghana Cedis (100.00) per day, including accommodation, feeding and other expenses certified by Mr. Daniel Appiah-Adjei.

**6. *Formalization of this Contract***

The Interviewer shall accept this offer of agreement on the terms and conditions stated above by counter signing the offer in two copies and returning one to Mr. Daniel Appiah-Adjei

<b>Cultural Facilitator (C.F)</b>	<b>Signature &amp; Date</b>	<b>Contracting Officer (C.O)</b>	<b>Signature &amp; Date</b>
<b>Augustina Ngissah</b>		<b>Daniel Appiah-Adjei</b>	
<b>Witness</b>	<b>Signature &amp; Date</b>	<b>Witness</b>	<b>Signature &amp; Date</b>
<b>Anthony Awuku</b>		<b>Harriet Amponsah</b>	

## Appendix Eight: Introductory Letters

Department of Theatre Arts  
School Of Performing Arts  
University of Ghana  
Legon.

10<sup>th</sup> October, 2013

**The Director  
CNC  
Kumasi**

Dear Sir,

### **DATA COLLECTION ON AKAN TOTEMS**

Please, as we discussed on phone and on the internet, (Email), I wish to humbly confirm the dates for the research on the Akan Totems for my PhD (*Traditional symbols and theatre: Exploring the Sankofa Concept in Four Ghanaian plays*), sponsored by UG-Carnegie NGAA for your attention and preparation. Thanks also for the accepting my request to ask one of your cultural officers to lead me to the various towns for the research.

Enclosed, please find the itinerary for your study and action.

I count on your usual corporation.

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Appiah-Adjei

(PhD Candidate)

Department of Theatre Arts  
School Of Performing Arts  
University of Ghana  
Legon

10<sup>th</sup> October, 2013

**The Director  
CNC  
Sunyani**

Dear Sir,

**DATA COLLECTION ON AKAN TOTEMS**

Please, as we discussed on phone and on the internet, (Email), I wish to humbly confirm the dates for the research on the Akan Totems for my PhD (*Traditional symbols and theatre: Exploring the Sankofa Concept in Four Ghanaian plays*), sponsored by UG-Carnegie NGAA for your attention and preparation. Thanks also for the accepting my request to ask one of your cultural officers to lead me to the various towns for the research.

Enclosed, please find the itinerary for your study and action.

I count on your usual corporation.

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Appiah-Adjei

(PhD Candidate)

Department of Theatre Arts  
School Of Performing Arts  
University of Ghana  
Legon.

10<sup>th</sup> October, 2013

**The Director  
CNC  
Cape Coast**

Dear Sir,

**DATA COLLECTION ON AKAN TOTEMS**

Please, as we discussed on phone and on the internet, (Email), I wish to humbly confirm the dates for the research on the Akan Totems for my PhD (*Traditional Symbols and Theatre: Exploring the Sankofa Concept in Four Ghanaian plays*), sponsored by UG-Carnegie NGAA for your attention and preparation. Thanks also for accepting my request to ask one of your cultural officers to lead me to the various towns for the research.

Enclosed, please find the itinerary for your study and action.

I count on your usual corporation.

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Appiah-Adjei

(PhD Candidate.

Department of Theatre Arts  
School Of Performing  
Arts University of Ghana  
Legon.

10<sup>th</sup> October, 2013

**The Director  
CNC  
Koforidua**

Dear Sir,

**DATA COLLECTION ON AKAN TOTEMS**

Please, as we discussed on phone and on the internet, (Email), I wish to humbly confirm the dates for the research on the Akan Totems for my PhD (*Traditional Symbols and Theatre: Exploring the Sankofa Concept in Four Ghanaian plays*) sponsored by UG-Carnegie NGAA for your attention and preparation. Thanks also for accepting my request to ask one of your cultural officers to lead me to the various towns for the research.

Enclosed, please find the itinerary for your study and action.

I count on your usual corporation.

Yours faithfully,

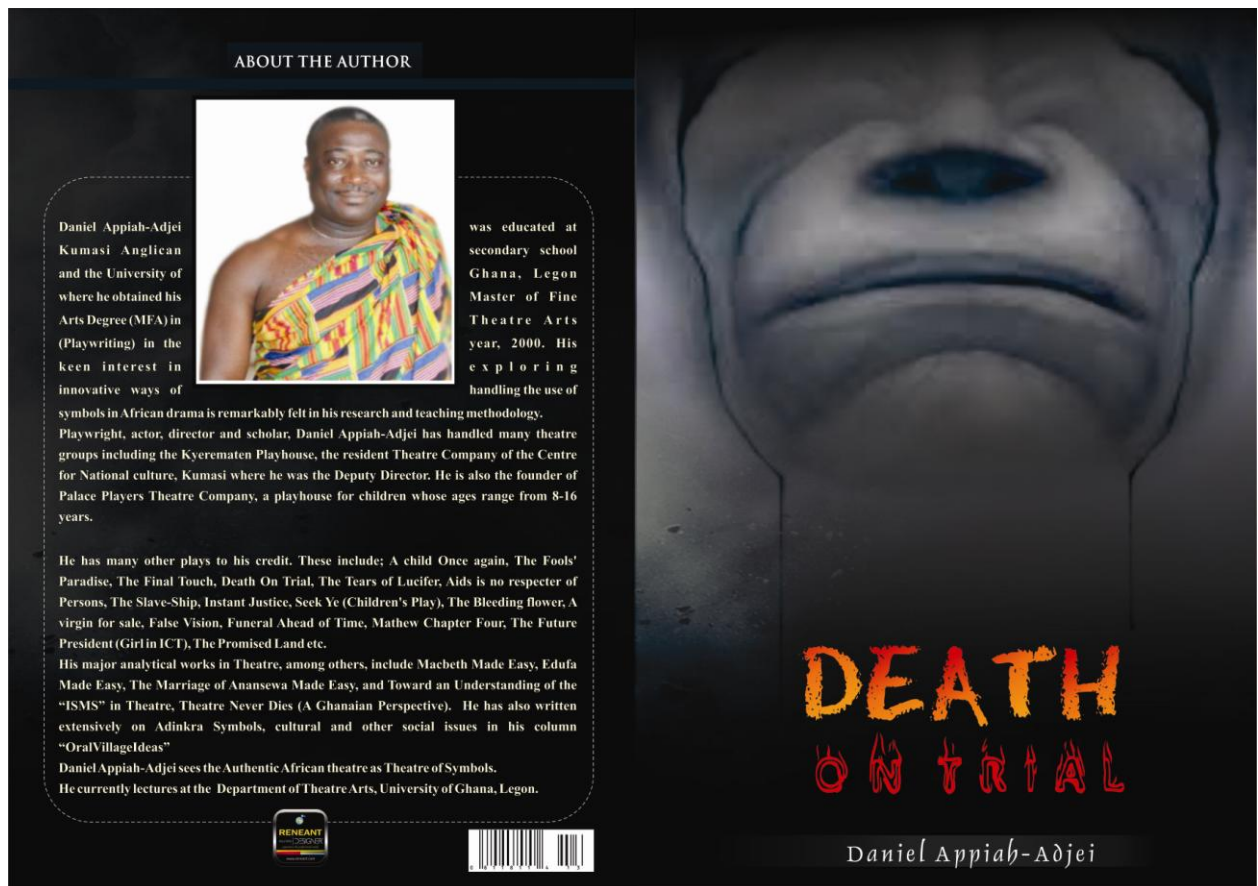
Daniel Appiah-Adjei

(PhD Candidate)



**ITINERARY FOR DATA COLLECTION****TOPIC*****TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS AND THEATRE: EXPLORING THE SANKOFA CONCEPT  
IN FOUR GHANAIAN PLAYS***

<b>Name of Totem</b>	<b>Head Town</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Aduana</b>	<b>Dormaa Ahenkuro</b>	<b>December, 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013</b>
<b>Name of Totem</b>	<b>Head Town</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>Bretuo</b>	<b>Asante Mampong</b>	<b>December, 8-11 2013</b>
<b>Name of Totem</b>	<b>Head Town</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>Ekuoɔna</b>	<b>Adansi Asokore</b>	<b>December, 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> 2013</b>
<b>Name of Totem</b>	<b>Head Town</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>Asinie</b>	<b>Amakom</b>	<b>December 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013</b>
<b>Name of Totem</b>	<b>Head Town</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>Asakyiri</b>	<b>Akrokyere</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2013</b>
<b>Name of Totem</b>	<b>Head Town</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>Oyoko</b>	<b>Manhyia</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2013</b>
<b>Agona</b>	<b>Dunkwa Nsoaem</b>	<b>January, 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> 2014</b>
<b>Asona</b>	<b>Kyebi</b>	<b>January, 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> 2014</b>



Pic. 3.1

*The Cover page of Death on Trial, designed by Re Ant Publishers, Kumasi*