

Student Info Notes as downloadable pdf

AKOABA / WELCOME

ADINKRA the visual language of the Asante of the Gold Coast of West Africa
Edith Langley Barrett Art Gallery, Utica College September 4 – October 9, 2015
The 35th anniversary of the Edith Langley Barrett Art Gallery begins with Adinkra

The pdf is prepared for as a reference for select text areas of the exhibit. Images, works of art and specific cultural authentication information is to be referenced within the exhibit. All Ghana shared content has been authenticated as well as that of the new scholarship authenticated.

THE EXHIBIT

Presentations from Collections

- UC Eleanor and Roger Baker
- UC Rexford Yaw Osei-Owusu
- William H. Gotwald, Jr.
- Hamill Gallery of Tribal Art

Gallery Intern, Research and Development

An Hoang Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

Research Intern, National Museum of Africa Art, Smithsonian Institute 2015-16

Gallery Intern, Ghana Cultural Liaison and Asante Language

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Collection Research Files from 2002-3 by Joana Boama Soufa and Natalie Campbell

Support for this exhibit is provided by

- National Museum of Ghana, Accra
- Manhyia Palace, Kumasi
- Ghana National Culture Center, Kumasi
- Kumasi Armed Forces Museum
- Bontwere Kente Weaving Village, Ghana
- Ntonso Adinkra Production Center, Ghana
- Utica College Offices of the VPAA/Provost
- Professor Helen Blouet, UC Anthropology
- Amanda Dummett, NYC, Editor

ADINKRA symbol charts available at the gallery

THE COLLECTIONS

The Eleanor [‘1951] and Roger Baker Collection includes works from Africa, South Pacific, Australia and the Caribbean. Eleanor and Roger Baker collected the West African cultural objects as gifts from cultural leaders, friends, colleagues, and as purchases during their work and travel in West Africa beginning in the early 1970s.

The collection, and its documentation, is a gift from the Bakers to Utica College and adheres to the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Prevention of Illicit Import, Export and Transfer Ownership of Cultural Property and the Condemning the Trade of Stolen Cultural Property.

The Rexford Yaw Osei Owusu [‘2016] Collection are contemporary cultural objects presented as gifts to UC with an emphasis on textiles and the continued value of culture in textiles based on heritage.

The William H. Gotwald, Jr. Collection [Sarasota Florida] is an extensive collection of masks comprised of authentic and market masks collected in Africa while on travel for professional research and personal tourism. As UC Professor Emeritus of Biology, Bill generously shares his exhibit in part and whole for exhibitions and served as the faculty team leader in the establishment of the Edith Langley Barrett Art Gallery in 1980. The Adinkra Cloth on loan is an authentic, local cloth, and was collected in Ghana while on travel for research under the Fulbright Scholar Program.

Hamill Gallery of Tribal Art [Boston, Massachusetts] is an exhibition space and collection for over 160 world culture groups with an emphasis on the people of the continent of Africa. Cultural works are presented on three month rotations, marketed and collected. The Adinkra cloth on loan is an authentic, local cloth.

WHAT IS ADINKRA

Adinkra is the Asante symbolic visual language designed to hold and communicate knowledge, meaning and understanding. Adinkra began as a visual language in the 19th century by the Asante of the Akan, in the Gold coast of West Africa, before British colonization. Today, this is Ghana.

Adinkra is concept and idea, representational, metaphoric, graphic design, surface design, direct, codified, literal, inferred, patterning, dialogue with syntax, old, traditional and new and spread all around the world. Patterns are rendered in geometric abstractions of objects associated with the intended meaning.

The Symbols of Adinkra, and Kente, are not the same symbols, or patterns as dialogue.

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Ghana includes most of the original lands and people of Akan. Côte d'Ivoire also includes original lands of the Akan. Ghana is bordered on its west by Côte d'Ivoire, on its east by Togo, on the north by Burkino Faso and the south by the Gulf of Guinea. Ghana's capital is Accra, located on the coast. Ghana has 10 cultural districts spanning its 110 political districts.

Traditions developed across West Africa internally as well as through infusion from others and brought a diversification of objects in cultural expression. Adinkra was developed first by a Gyaman king while in captivity in Kumasi. It was adopted by the Asante, made into their own, and spread to all of the Akan; and beyond.

Adinkra symbols represents knowledge and values, and are associated with proverbs. Color is specific as cultural expression and becomes a vital part of Adinkra as visual expression and symbolic dialogue.

Expand digital view for clarity.



Images provided by Ghana Ministry of Culture



https://www.google.com/search?q=asante+cultural+map&biw=850&bih=843&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0CAYQ_AUoAWoVChMiwLqT8p_vCxwIVwIU-Ch08IA46&dpr=1#imgrc=

OSA NTI

‘Osa nti’ means to be brought together because of war. In the past, the numerous groups of the People of Akan were brought together because of war. ‘Osa Nti’ is spelled in English as Asante, Ashanti and Asanti.

The Akan groups are: Asante, Akuapem and Akyem (the Asante, Akuapem and Akyem dialects are together known as Twi), Agona, Kwahu, Wassa, Fante (Fanti or Mfantse, Anomabo, Abura, Gomua) and Brong.

The Asante speak Asante Twi, Ghana’s first language. The multiplicity of ethnicities in West Africa present many dialects of the language. This is a culture and language that reaches back over 6,000 years with a portion of its history connecting to the language of the ancient Sumer and Akkad cultures.

PROVERBS

Proverbs are polite forms of longer information and instruction. Proverbs are direct, indirect, concise and operate with precedence and authority. Proverbs often have double, or more, meanings. Leaders call upon proverbs from the ‘stool of authority’ to settle matters. Interrelationships depend on proverbs and the understanding of them for sharing and transference of knowledge. Dialogues in patterns of combined Adinkra symbols can be constructed and communicate knowledge and meanings connecting back to proverbs.

THE HISTORY OF AKONNWA TUNTUM AND SIKA DWA KOFI

Nana Osei Tutu was the first Akan king. His first symbol of authority was Akommwa Tuntum, the Black Stool. It is preserved along with all other stools after him at the Bampanasi Stool House [located on the outskirts of Kumasi]. The Black Stools signify patriotism by the people. It helps bond people in the present with their ancestors and those yet to be born. This symbol is important because continuity of people across all generations is the foundation of culture for the Akan. It is told that Nana Osei Tutu sought counsel from the heavens and a golden stool was sent down to him on a Friday [Kofi]. With Osei Tutu, his golden stool became The Golden Stool. It is a sacred object that should never touch the ground. A chair matching the king's chair was made and placed beside the king. The Golden Stool sits on the chair equal to, at the same height as, the king's seat. Small bells attached to the stool ring as it is moved to call the people together. The formal name of this golden symbol for the Akan is Sika Dwa Kofi, 'The Golden Stool Born on Friday'. After a king's death, his specific Golden Stool stands for him, and offerings are thereafter made at the stool. However, the stool belongs to the maternal line as a king rises from his maternal lineage. The male spirit is ntoro and the maternal spirit and lineage is abusua.

THE AKAN SIKI DWA

SIKA DWA is the icon for total authority. Sika Dwa translates to 'Golden Stool'. Sika Dwa is a cast gold, or carved wooden sculpture painted in pure gold. Gold represents the life force of The Sun, Soul and Homeland and held in Kumasi. The Sika Dwa is sacred, royal and designed with Adinkra symbols for perseverance, gender and lineage, longevity, unity, and beliefs. Asantehene [king] do not sit on Sika Dwa. It is to be held at the base of his neck as the king walks...to show he is the head of the people of The Gold Coast of Africa. In this, the Sika Dwa becomes a mask all in the Asante kingdom. When the king is seated, the Sika Dwa is placed next to him. The Asantehene rises to power through his matrilineal heritage.

SILVER DWA

SILVER Dwa TRANSLATES TO Silver Stool of Mampong – Asante. The Silver Dwa is held by the Chief of the Mampong, one authority level below the Asanthene and the Sika Dwa. The Silver Dwa serves as the pivot of religious and political power. The Mampong-Asante are located north of Kumasi and was one of the independent states of Akan that inspired the unification of all Akan in the 1600s. Legend says Nana Asiaman Nyankopon descended from heaven and led the first migration of people. Her authority was the Amaniampong Silver Stool of Mampong supported by a silver chain. They were seeking a land that could support their future generations. The stool has symbols of, and is a symbol of, history, politics, social, religion and aesthetic values.



Ghana Presidential Architecture [shape of the Sika Dwa / Golden Stool]
Image provided by <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/ghana.htm>

Formerly a Gold Coast British colony, Ghana became the first Sub-Saharan nation to gain independence, in 1957.

COLOR AS LANGUAGE

Color is specific for representing days and their meanings.

Wearing a specific color on a given day reflects cultural knowledge and respect.

It is inappropriate to not honor this part of culture.

YELLOW SEREDEE

Yellow means, and represents, power of the natural endowment of the Earth, and for the Akan. This includes Gold/Sika. The land is rich with yellows such as gold, iron, minerals for crops, seeds, grasses, pollens and abundant forests. Yellows can represent gender. Yellow means ‘until and when things fall apart’...and is not usually worn by elders after a certain point in life....Yellow can be paired with White for infants and young children as a positive color. Males use yellow to represent their primary role as providers—for wealth, gold, protection, strength, being strong.

SILVER EWIEMUHAN

Silver is associated with the moon which represents the female essence of life and symbolizes serenity, purity and joy. It is the color and material for the second level of Akan royal authority. Women will wear silver as their color and metal of ornamentation in ceremonies and festivals.

WHITE FUFUO

White is an indicator of Happiness, Positive and Innocence in Young Children. For any happy or positive occasions White is an appropriate color. The first color a child is to see after they are born is White. It represents they are innocent, happy, loved and well received. Children wear white up to puberty. Funerals progress through stages of events. The third and last stage of a good person’s funeral sees them dressed in White. All cultural areas observe this right of a good person to be respected as good, verified by the living as good and help them depart to eternity as worthy of being received in the afterlife as good. It is the honor and duty of the survivors to honor and prepare the deceased for this protocol and without it they are not presented by their survivors as such. Most funerals are held on Saturdays, a day indicated by Black. The day after the end of the funeral is Sunday, a day associated with White and giving thanks for the life of the one while they were here.

GREEN ABUNUABUNU

Green is a color that explicitly means life, plants, growth, positive, fertility, planting seasons and crops. In Ghana there are two seasons—wet and dry. Green, wet seasons are twice per year. One would use true rich vibrant Greens and Green-Golds for all the positive and hopeful meanings and wet seasons. One might use darker and dull Greens in the dry seasons to indicate a dormant season. Green is often used for wishes for fertility to have children. Green would be used and worn by females in their ‘fertile’ years, and not used when they pass through the menopause cycles.

VIOLET / RED-BLUES MOGYA NKAKAA

The red and blue violets are not a traditional Akan color. Today, more and more elder women wear violets and purples—to say elder and wise.

RED KOKOJ / MOGYA

Red is red, is red, is red.

Whether long ago with blood, mineral pigments, or contemporary synthesized dyes and paints... Red is Red. Red is used to communicate, and mean, Danger, Alert, Alarm, Distress and Warning. In a period of Mourning, the ones who lost a love one wears Red. The brighter and more intense the Red, the more distress and loss is expressed. Red means serious. It becomes a visual statement for the wearers’ condition, their life relationship and role at a funeral. Friday became associated with Red based on the adoption of Christianity to indicate the day of Christ’s bleeding and death. It is most inappropriate and unthinkable to wear Red to occasions such as births, weddings and business functions.

BLUE MURUNKUM

Blue represents the sources of the Water of Life. Water is a spirit and a physical body. Without clean Water we have no life. Sources of rivers are purest and will be expressed or represented in bright and clear Blues. The ocean is life giving and represented in Blue. Blue also represents Abundance, Positive,

Happy and Benefit. Rivers have in them the Moon, Sun, Clean Sands and Soils, and Light. Water of Rivers moves through the body of Earth and picks up its minerals as it courses its distances. Water takes in minerals, is colored by minerals, and develops variable opacities. Water can also take on pollutions as the flow. Colours may, or may not, indicate the body and spirit of Water is ill. The Spirit, and Body, of Water can be in pain when tormented by pollutions because it is alive. Rivers can be gods. They can travel to many places, always moving and stirring. A 'bad day' for rivers is a day to not cross because you may become ill or be harmed. Those days for the Rivers are Red and Black days.

BLACK TUNTUM

Black means Fearful, negative, Evil, Sad and Harmful. It is often used in combination with Red. Saturday is a Black day, and most often the day for funerals. Saturday is not a good day to cross a river. It would be seriously inappropriate to wear black to a wedding, to a birth, or to any social occasion. It is not done...one would be told to leave and scolded for doing such. White is for Sunday. White and Black are often worn together, to bring both together—sadness, the passing of that and on to a happier day—the two colors together speak for that connection and progression—all in one. In everyday wear, White and Black are worn to designate social, business, moods, and bring a balance, fullness of expression.

ASANTE DAY NAMES

Akan and Ewe give their children a first/given name for the day of the week they were born, and often one for the number order of their birth into the family.

Day Name	Male Name	Female Name
Sunday	Kwasi	Akosua
	Akwasi	Akosi
	Kosi	Akosiwa
	Kwesi	Asi / Esi
Monday	Kwadwo	Adwoa
	Jojo	Adjoa
	Kodjo	Adjua
	Kojo	Ajoa
Tuesday	Kwabena	Abenaa
	Kobby	Abena
	Kobina	Abla
	Komla	Abrenaa
Wednesday	Kwaku	Akua
	Kaku	Aku
	Quaccu	Akuba
	Kuuku	Ekua
	Queku	
Thursday	Yaw	Yaa
	Ekow	Aba
	Yaba	Ayawa
	Yao	Baaba
	Yawo	Yaaba
Friday	Kofi	Afua
	Fiifi	Efe
	Koffi	Afia
	Kofii	Efia
Saturday	Kwame	Amma
	Ato	Ama
	Komi	Ame
	Kwamena	Ameyo
	Kwami	

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- Authorship credit is: An Hoang, Rexford Yaw Osei Owusu, Carolynne Whitefeather

Areas of new scholarship are presented for:

- Textiles, Weaving and Kuba Cloth, Adinkra Cloth, Kente Cloth
- Masks/Masking/Dancing the Mask
- Akuaba
- Kwaku Anansi and Onini

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ADINKRA Cultural & Visual Language of the ~~Asante~~ of the Gold Coast of West Africa
New Scholarship by UC Gallery Interns

SEPT 4 – OCT 9 · 2015 **UTICA COLLEGE BARRETT ART GALLERY**
Mon – Fri 1 – 5 p and Sat 12 – 3 p

Fri, Sept 4	1 – 6 p	Open House Art Walk with Student Docents 4 p Emmanuel Osei Owusu, Kumasi, Ghana
Wed, Sept 30	12:30p	Lunch Hour Series Carolynne Whitefeather and Emmanuel Osei Owusu
	1 p	Art Walk with Student Docents
Friday, Oct 2		Homecoming
	4 – 7 p	Caren Ganeles, Hand-Stamped Card Making @ the Gallery
	1 – 7 p	Art Walk with Student Docents

To schedule a course or group visits,
email us beginning August 20th:
gallery@utica.edu