

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF TEXTILE PRODUCTS IN RITES OF  
PASSAGE AMONG DANGMES IN GHANA**



**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF TEXTILE PRODUCTS IN RITES OF  
PASSAGE AMONG DANGMES IN GHANA**

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**A thesis in the Department of Art Education, School of Creative Arts,  
submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Philosophy  
(Art Education)  
in the University of Education, Winneba**

**MAY, 2021**

## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

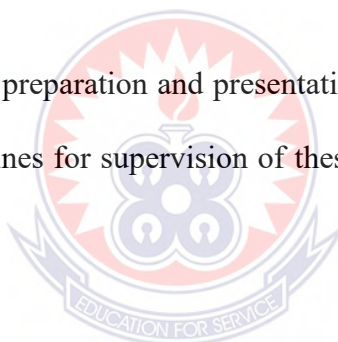
I, Bernice Pinto declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

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### Supervisor's Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.



Principal Supervisor: Dr. Emmanuel R.K. Amissah

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Co-Supervisor: Dr. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel

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DATE:.....

**DEDICATION**

To my family.



### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT(S)**

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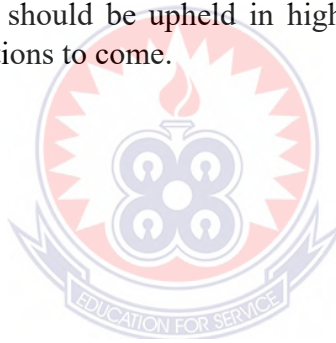
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## ABSTRACT

Rites of passage are patterns of behaviours and customs performed by various ethnic groups during major life transitions. During such rites various art forms including textile products are used. Designs, patterns and colours within these textile products have diverse cultural and symbolic elements embedded in them which promote the culture of the society. The study explored the symbolic significance of textile products used by the Dangmes during rites of passage. The research design employed was the qualitative descriptive case study. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in gathering data. A traditional leader, youth chief, elderly indigenes, youth and a textile educator form the sample for the study. The study adopted semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation and illustrations as data collection instruments. The study revealed that textile products used during rites of passage distinctly communicate great values and ideas to people in society. The study concludes that no matter the designs, patterns and colours of textile products, they have symbolic connotations which turn to communicate largely to the people. It therefore recommends that local textile products used among ethnic groups should be upheld in high esteem in order to maintain the cultural heritage for generations to come.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Overview

This chapter gives the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations (scope), definition of terms used, abbreviations and acronyms used and organization of the rest of the text.

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

The establishment of textile art dates back to conception, when people used fig leaves from the Garden of Eden to cover themselves because, as evident in the Bible, the body felt cold and naked (Genesis 3:7, 21). To shield and defend the body from dangerous creatures and harsh weather conditions, leaves and animal skins were used as body shelter (Bellis, 2019). According to Quarcoo (2011), people embrace textiles to enhance their appearance, express their status or disclose their identity in society. This is because textiles from all walks of life have become very important and an essential product that forms an integral part of human lives. Although textiles have the fundamental function of protecting the body, its usage has evolved over time (Schwarz & Kovačević, 2017). What people wear has a huge effect on where they hail from and the type of society they belong to. The use of textiles in the Western culture is largely supported by style and fashion (Dzramedo, 2009), whereas in most parts of Africa, the use of textiles communicates to others regarding the wearer's status and identity, the occasion or activities for which it is used and often in a trendy way to boost one's appearance. Textiles play a major role in everyday life of the people based on their extensive use of symbolic imagery from the Ghanaian culture (Salm & Folola, 2002).

Most ethnic groups in Ghana are identified by the kind of textiles they wear because it speaks volumes about their cultural background. Kraamer (2006) postulates that textile products are displayed among different ethnic groups to enhance the cultural and philosophical nature of that particular group. The Akan, Ga-Dangme, Ewe, Mole-Dagbani and Guan people are among the main ethnic groups in Ghana (Anquandah, 2019). Although these ethnic groups have different language, customs and traditional ways of life, they all observe rites of passage. Rites of passage are basically the patterns of behaviours and customs that various cultures engage in during major life transitions (van Gennep, 1909). The transitions include naming ceremony, puberty, marriage and death. Amidst these transitional periods, textile products play a vital role in the performance of the various rites in the Ghanaian society irrespective of the ethnic group. During the execution of the rites and other occasions, the Akan ethnic group display their beautiful and coloured kente as well as their symbolic Adinkra cloth. Similarly, the smock is also used during such rites and occasions among Dagomba, Gonja, Mamprusi ethnic groups in the Northern part of Ghana and the klala in the same way is used by Ga ethnic group in the Southern part of Ghana. These textiles products are embedded with symbols which express the values and philosophical implications of the society depending on the occasion or the rites.

Symbolism in art forms is very significant in the Ghanaian society. It brings out the philosophies which are basically established in the culture of rites of passage through the textile products worn by the people to mark the transitions. These philosophies explain the concept behind various symbols, designs, patterns and colours that are embedded in the textile products to suit the occasion and the statues of the person wearing it. For instance, the named patterns in the kente cloth symbolically tell the Ghanaian story, impart proverbs and reflect the rich and artistic heritage in the society. The Adinkra cloth

contains symbols which also represent proverbs, express belief, philosophies, aesthetics and hopes of the Ashanti people and more specifically of the printer and weaver (Collins, 2013). These symbolic and cultural elements within the textile designs and products convey philosophies behind the use of the textiles in particular occasions or events by the various ethnic groups in Ghana including the Dangme people.

The Dangme people form a unit of the Ga people of the Greater Accra Region in Ghana. The Ga and Dangme people share similar traits that bind them together as one, such traits include culture, beliefs and dialect, hence the common name Ga-Dangme or Ga-Adangme. The Dangmes are made up of the Ningo, Prampram, Ada and Shai-Osudoku which is located on the eastern part of Greater Accra. Due to regional demarcations of Ghana, the Krobo people who are also part of the Dangme group, have settled as part of the people in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The Dangme, use various art forms such as beads, sculpture, basketry and textiles during different occasions and activities. Textile products are used among the Dangmes on all occasions and ceremonies such as rites of passage, festivals and other events for commemoration and communication. It is used during naming ceremonies to welcome new babies into the society. Young girls are also adorned with unique textiles and jewellery during puberty rites to usher them into womanhood. Marriage and funeral rites are without exception. The symbolism of textile products used during the transitional periods among different ethnic groups are of great significance to the culture and beliefs of the people. In the Dangme society in Ghana, these transitional periods and the textile products used are very key to the cultural diversity within the ethnic group.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ghanaians from various ethnic groups are bound by shared cultural heritage. Each ethnic group is endowed with a very rich culture and tradition which reflects their nationality. The diversity of cultural expression coupled with different traditional practices, the beauty of the national society is experienced through the use of various art forms including textiles. Clothing and costumes have various elements and aesthetic values of symbolic interpretation, communication and commemoration in the Ghanaian Society (Essel, 2019). Due to this symbolism, textile products are inevitable in the life of man. The Akan and Ewe ethnic groups of Ghana, reach to the heart of the society through the use of their colourful '*kente*' and '*kete*' cloth respectively (Frimpong & Asinyo, 2013; Badoe & Opoku-Asare, 2014). The Northern part of Ghana communicate through the traditional smock (Essel & Amissah, 2015; Adjei, Adongo, & Osei-Sarfo, 2016) while the Ga people display their victorious '*klala*' (Kwakye-Opong, 2011). This indicates that almost every part of Ghana has unique textile products which are backed by a philosophy that defines the rationale for which such textiles are used particularly during the rites of passage.

These textile products are exhibited during rites of passage, irrespective of the ethnic group. They communicate to members in the society through the symbols, colours used and styles (Essel & Amissah, 2015; Badoe & Opoku-Asare 2014). They have distinctive symbolic and aesthetic qualities that enable individuals to become aware of when and how to use a specific textile product. The symbolic elements and philosophies that underpin these textiles are a part of the social life of the people during rites of passage. Rites of passage mark the period of change that every individual goes through, regardless of their social and economic status from childhood to adulthood. There are comprehensive literature and academic documentation on the rites of passage of different ethnic groups



in Ghana. Kumetey (2009) looked at Krobo's perception on the puberty rite (dipo) in contemporary Ghana. His study revealed a higher perception on how dipo has outlived its usefulness in contemporary Ghana and reduced it to just a tradition ceremony. Similarly, Potočnik (2017), wrote extensively on the history of death and funeral rites among the Ga people at Jamestown. He explored the changes in traditional rites under the influence of colonial intervention and modernization which has existed long ago in the precolonial Ga society.

Other researchers also focus on artistic textile naming in Ghana. Anorkor (2018) explored the art of fabric nameology in the Ghanaian culture. Her study revealed that fabric names in Akan are inspired by adinkra motifs, Ghanaian proverbs, names suggested by customers and fabric retailers. The study concluded that the practice of fabric naming is a unique culture and needs to be preserved. She recommended that before people purchase any type of fabrics, the knowledge about fabric names should be considered. Her study also focused on the names of fabric in Akan and suggested the need for other researchers to focus on the name given among other ethnic groups in Ghana. In a similar study, Amissah and Letcher-Teye (2018) went ahead to explore the artistic and cultural significance of Ghanaian printed fabric designs. In their analysis, selected Ghanaian printed clothes were described to bring out the cultural significance and aesthetic values inherent in the Ghanaian identity-centered designs. They described the clothes based on the Akan local names given and the complexity of the design. These names were based on the cross-cultural behaviour and beliefs of the people to boost a sense of belongingness and appreciation of the Ghanaian spoken languages.

In an attempt to increase the knowledge of the textile culture among the Ga-Dangme group in Ghana, Asmah, Clement and Mate (2015) addressed the use of proverbial symbols in cloth for Ga Royals. They revealed the rich traditional

philosophical culture of the Ga proverbs and later converted these proverbs into symbols that were recorded and fabricated in beautiful clothing for Ga Royals. In a similar study, Kwakye-Opong (2011), went on to explore the clothing and adornment in the Ga culture from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century. She concluded by noting how some traditional clothes are unchanged, while modernization and acculturation have influenced others. Her study revealed that though foreign influence has affected the use of Ga costumes both negatively and positively, these clothes and adornments remain a reliable means of Ga cultural expression in Ghana. These studies have looked at the Ga part of the Ga-Dangme people.

All these studies looked at rites of passage among some ethnic groups, the artistic and nameologies of textile products among Akan in Ghana and the clothing culture of the Ga people to express Ga cultural practices. However, little attention has been given to any of the rites of passage and textiles culture of the Dangme people who are a part of the Ga-Dangme ethnic group, specifically the eastern part of the Dangme people (Ada, Ningo, Pampram, Shai and Osudoku) in Greater Accra. This study therefore seeks to identify, describe and explore the symbolic significance and educational implications of the usage of textile products during rites of passage among the Dangmes in Ghana.

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

1. To identify and describe the usage of textiles products among Dangmes during rites of passage.
2. To explore the symbolic significance associated with these textile products.
3. To examine the implications of these textile products to the development of Art Education in Ghana.

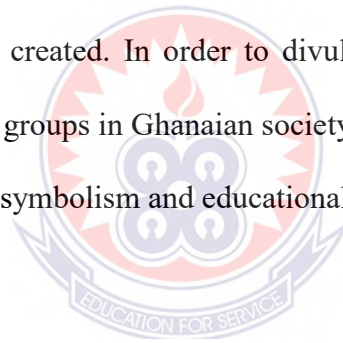
#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. Which textile products are used during rites of passage among the Dangmes?
2. What are the symbolic significance associated with the use of these textiles products?
3. How will these textile products affect the development of Art Education in Ghana?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Culture gives a nation a sense of identity through beliefs, values, patterns of behaviour and products created. In order to divulge the relevance of cultural values, especially among ethnic groups in Ghanaian society, it is important to study the Dangme culture in relation to the symbolism and educational implications of textile products used during rites of passage.



This study would;

- showcase the real textiles cultural heritage of the Dangme people established during rites of passage.
- unearth the symbolic elements, fundamental theories, ideas and values that underpin the use of various textile products by the Dangmes during rites of passage.
- equip the young people in the Ghanaian Community with significant knowledge of the Dangme culture and why it should be preserved.
- equip contemporary textiles graduates with creativity and innovations to bring out cultural transformation by improving on indigenous textile .

- add to existing knowledge about the textile culture of the Dangme people to help preserve the rich culture in Ghana as well as provide adequate information which would be used as reference material for individuals, researchers, art historians and textiles practitioners.
- enable art educators to give room for appraisal of commonly used textile products and Ghana as well as build-up the concept of Ghanaian symbolism in the creation of art works.

## **1.6 Delimitation**

The study attaches importance to the various textile products that are used by the Dangme people during the performance of rites of passage in the society. It focuses mainly on documenting the symbolic relevance of textile products of the Dangme during the post-colonial era in Ghanaian history. The study was conducted within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, precisely the Ningo traditional area. Reference was also made to the textile products of other ethnic groups in Ghana.

## **1.7 Definition of Terms**

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| Abakle: | A name given to a twisted cotton yarn or raffia with one bead in the middle worn around the wrist of the baby. |
| Aho yo: | A woman whose husband is dead  |
| Aho:    | A rite performed for men and women who lost a spouse.  |
| Ayigbe: | A term used by the Ga-Dangme people to call indigenes who heir from the Ewe land and speak the Ewe Language    |

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Bami:           | A Dangme word for borrowing the woman during the first phase of the actual marriage rite                   |
| Bi Kpojemi:     | A Dangme name for naming ceremony for babies   |
| Bliisi:         | A plain black fabric used during funeral rite  |
| Bo futaa:       | A local name for white cloth   |
| Bo tsutsu:      | A local name for coloured cloth  |
| Da gbomi:       | A Dangme word for knocking in marriage rite  |
| Dangme/Adangme: | A language spoken by the Dangme people of Ghana.   |
| Djange wɔ nɔ:   | A priest or priestess who serve as the voice of the Djange to the people                                   |
| Djange:         | A river that serve as the goddess of the people in the town  |
| Djanmaku:       | A clan in Ningo who are serve administrative purposes in the town  |
| Ga-Dangme:      | They are a group of people who hail from the Greater Accra Region of Ghana whose language is Ga or Dangme. |
| Gbami:          | A Dangme word for marriage rite  |
| Gbe nɔ:         | A Dangme word for death  |
| Kabiawɛ:        | A clan in Ningo who serve as the Prime Minister of the town  |
| Kanya:          | A group of people who join hands together in unity   |
| Klada:          | A small strip of fabric tied around the left wrist of the baby who lost one of the parents.                |

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Klala:                 | A local name in Ga given to a plain white fabric  |
| Loowe:                 | A clan in Ningo who serve as the commander in chief for all the Asafoatsɛ in the town   |
| Loowekponɔ:            | A clan in Ningo who serve as storekeepers to safe guard the weapons in the town   |
| Ningo:                 | They are indigenes who speak Dangme from the eastern part of Greater Accra.   |
| Oyile piɛmi:           | The house for the oyile gods  |
| Oyile wɔ nɔ:           | A priest or priestess who serve the oyile gods  |
| Razu:                  | A rite performed by for pregnant young women within a sub-clan of the Kabiawɛ clan  |
| Sa kumi:               | A type of rite performed for the Si girl at the sea shore   |
| Si womi:               | Puberty rites for young females from part of the Kabiawɛ clan   |
| Si yo:                 | This refers to a Si girl  |
| Suboe:                 | A type of red fabric given girls and women to be used as loin cloth   |
| Symbolic Significance: | The generic meaning given to a concept of ideas, beliefs principle values that guides the behaviour of the people or society. |
| Textile Products:      | An artefacts produced from either woven, felted, knitted or crocheted textiles from natural or synthetic fibres.              |
| Titliku:               | A woven fabric used to cover the private part of the 'Si' girl  |
| Yomoyo hi:             | A title given to elderly women in the Dangme language   |

## **1.8 Abbreviations/ Acronyms**

APA: American Psychology Association

SHS: Senior High School

## **1.9 Organization of the rest of the Text**

Chapter Two consists of the review of related literature consisting of quotations and passages from various authors used to support the study. Chapter Three entails the methodology used in conducting the study, Chapter Four covers data presentation, analysis and discussion and Chapter Five comprises the summary, conclusions and recommendations. The references are arranged alphabetically according to the APA style of referencing.



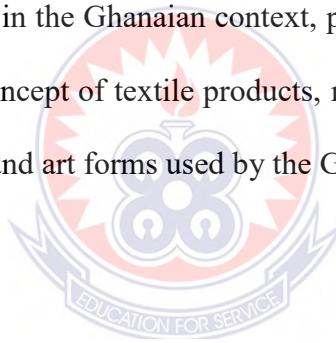
## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.0 Overview

This chapter dealt with related literature that connects with the study. The research analyses the various scholarly writing by authors from different backgrounds connected to the symbolic significance of textile products as well as depicting the researcher's point of view.

The review focuses on the theoretical framework, concept of symbolism, Ghanaian symbolism and significance, symbolism of colour, shapes and lines, concept of Ghanaian printed fabrics, concept of rites of passage, rites of passage in the African context, rites of passage in the Ghanaian context, philosophies associated with textile in the Ghanaian society, concept of textile products, reliance on textile products in Ghana, the Ga-Dangme people and art forms used by the Ga-Dangme.



#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

The textile culture of the Dangme people is emitted through the culture that binds them as one unit with common value, beliefs, philosophies and symbolic interpretations. Based on these, the study is influenced by the theory of cultural identity.

##### 2.1.1 *Theory of Cultural Identity*

The theory states that individuals with a common culture follow a common cultural philosophy, use the same cultural symbols and adhere to patterns of common thought and norms of behaviour (Yabo, 2015). The acknowledgement of one's cultural characteristics, beliefs, values, behaviours, norms, customs and heritage as well as the



understanding of how they are expressed in one's self are part of cultural identity (Wexler, 2009). In a given culture, the idea of cultural identity focuses on the identity of oneself as an individual. According to Yabo, identity is the subjective knowledge of a person belonging to a group different from other groups in social life. Urrieta and Noblit (2018) see identity as how people perceive themselves, how they see who they are in the social and cultural environments in which they participate, and how they connect inside and outside the environments to others. Once an individual identifies himself or herself as a member of a given society, they embrace and obey the everyday doings and behaviour patterns within that society. Identity in itself may proceed gradually from the unconscious to conscious. When an individual is born into a society, he or she unconsciously inherits some form of identity through their behaviour patterns due to their ethnicity or nationality. Once the person grows, he or she begins to understand the symbolism within values, beliefs and philosophies in the society and consciously decide to accept these patterns of behaviour to create a special relationship with others which increases their sense of belonging in society.

According to Freud (1985), as cited in Petkova and Lehtonen (2005), the individual is always a part of a group whether an ethnic or national group, they try to accept the members of that group and see themselves as equals in the group. People who have different thoughts and do not obey the rules, values and beliefs of the group turns out to be despised by the members of the group. Freud called these identities a collective identity. Petkova and Lehtonen (2005) pointed out that the collective identity of Freud consists of three fundamental components: a sense of belonging, affiliation with members of the same group and differentiation from non-members. These have made identity a very important function in the inherent culture of the individual. For one to belong to an ethnic group such as an Akan, Ewe, Ga and Dangme, self-identity plays a major role in

their daily social and cultural practice. People with a common cultural identity share common differences and practice to other identifiable groups through a collective understanding of belongingness or membership of that particular group.

However, this theory was used as a framework for the study to unearth the commonly shared culture among the Dangmes in Ghana in order to define their symbolic values, beliefs and philosophies with regard to the textile products used during different stages of the rites of passage. The Dangme people are connected by a common cultural activity such as rites of passage which forms an integral part of their everyday life in the society. They participate in these activities to entertainment, learn new skills, meet new people as well as pass on cultural traditions from one generation to the other. As a central component of the Dangme culture, language and textiles are important aspects of participation and identity. The Dangme language forms part of the broader cultural identity and heritage of the people. This theory is important to the study because as the Dangme people identify themselves with common textile culture, it gives them the feelings of belonging and security as an ethnic group. This is evidence in the common values and symbolism in textile products used during various events including rites of passage. It also gives them access to social networks which provide support, share values and create a sense of confidence and expectations among members in the society.

## **2.2 Concept of Symbolism**

The word symbolism has its source from the word symbols. As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2020), Symbol is something that stands for, represents, or denotes something else (not by exact resemblance but by vague suggestion, or by accidental or conventional relation). Madu (1992) also defines symbols as a universal and objective meaning which have subsistence irrespective of the imagination or intellect that

grasps them. Encyclopaedia Britannica (2020) in defining Symbols in the context of art states that a symbol is ‘an object, an action, or a pattern of objects and actions, or even (less frequently) simply a nonrepresentational item such as a colour or a line that does the symbolising; what is symbolised is a characteristic, such as evil or progress or courage’. Based on the above definition, a symbol can be defined from the perspective of an expression of a material form which stands for a particular idea, belief, figure, sign, process or act.

Deriving his definition from the source word symbol, Ayiku (1998) defines symbolism as denoting the practice of representing things in symbols or of giving symbolic meanings and significance to objects and acts. A French critic Jean Moreas coined the term Symbolism in 1886 (TATE.org, 2020). The term was used to describe the poetry of Stephane Mallarme and Paul Verlaine. Though the origin was first applied in literature, it was soon applied in the visual arts. In the application of the concept of symbolism, the representation of the real and natural world as depicted in impressionism, realism and naturalism was gradually faded in favour of symbolism (TATE.org, 2020). Based on the above discussion Tate.org (2020) defines symbolism as late nineteenth-century movement that advocated the expression of an idea over the realistic description of the natural world. Wilson (1985) references the standard definition of symbolism as something that stands for, represents or denotes something else (not the exact resemblance, but by vague suggestion or some accidental or conventional relations. Wilson (1985) also quotes Beres (1968) as saying that the standard definition of symbolism is too broad as it portrays symbolism as standing for and standing in for the thing it represents. The latter, according to Beres, should not be considered as a symbolism.

Even though the term symbolism was coined in 1886, the concept of symbolism dates back to the prehistoric period. During those days, the prehistoric man would engrave or use natural colours to draw their prey on surfaces and how they are going to attack the animal. It was believed that the symbolic victorious attack on the surface used as a medium became the reality when the prehistoric man went on his hunting expedition. Several symbolic arts has being identified in different parts of the world including the Rock Art of the Mediterranean Basin on the Iberian Peninsula (UNESCO, 2020), The Cave of the Beasts in Libya (Bendrey, 2014) Chauvet Cave, France (Groeneveld, 2017) and many more. This is a proof that the idea of symbolism has existed for far longer periods before the word was originally coined. In African context, the concept of symbolism can clearly be traced to well documented history of the Egyptians. There are many examples that can be given when it comes to the use of shapes, colours and other items to symbolise things. Foroughi and Javadi (2017) for example chronicles the symbolic meaning of colours used in Ancient Egyptian paintings. He states that, Green symbolises renascence and prosperity, red symbolises power, victory and violence, white symbolises resurrection and holiness, black represents resurrection and death, yellow represents immortality while blue symbolises sacredness and inundation of the Nile. These examples indicate that the symbol of colour has symbolic can meaning depending on the area and context it is used.

The above discussion shows that the concept of symbolism is widely used across generations and every part of the world. It represents something but does not become a replacement of the thing. Most symbols have philosophical meanings and these make them functions. Without symbolism, it is difficult to describe things in its natural state as mentioned by Tate.org (2020).

### 2.2.1 *Ghanaian Symbolism and Significance*

Ghana, like other African countries, has symbolism as core to their tradition, culture and religious engagements. There are several areas in the Ghanaian society, which makes use of symbolism that includes art forms such as pottery, sculpture and Textiles. This is attested by Amissah and Letcher-Teye, (2018) as they argue that symbolic African prints are predominantly used in Ghana because of the meaning derived from it. The symbols, colours and patterns in the cloth are able to communicate to the interpreters some sort of information. These may be in the form of proverbs, poems, the state of the person such as sadness, joy and so on.

There is therefore a clear indication that symbolism cannot be overlooked with it comes to textile products used in our day-to-day life. These symbols also have philosophical meanings. Whenever someone is able to interpret the symbolic meaning of the graphic image, colour and patterns of the textile products, it clearly indicates the state of the person. According to Howard, Sarpong, and Amankwah, (2012) the market women who give names to textile products that are symbolic is based on the patterns, graphic images and colours. The meaning in textile products are obtained from proverbial and mythical meaning and representation such as “the hand holding an egg”, “three heads carved together”, “the bird with the head turned back”, “pineapple” and others normally seen on the linguist staff. Other symbolic representations include the traditional stools used by the Akan, the symbolic designs on top of umbrellas, the sword of a community which represents the authority of the chief are characterized with use of animals such as eagles, lions and crabs. These are examples of ways symbols are represented in the daily aspect of the Ghanaian society. It also indicates the significance of symbolism (Amenuke, Dogbe, Asare, Ayiku, & Baffoe, 1999).

In textiles, an example is the patterns used in kente cloths that are mostly used for joyous occasions. It is characterized by a colourful combination of patterns. Badoe and Opoku-Asare (2014) assert that the patterns and colours in the cloth define the meaning of the cloth and the status of the person who is using the cloth. Some of names given to the kente cloth based on the colour and patterns includes *Fa hia kotwere Agyeman* (carry poverty to Agyeman or seek help from Agyeman), *Nsoroma* (means star which symbolises feminine aspect of life), *adwini asa* and *sika futuo* (Symbolises royalty, elegance, wealth, perfection etc.) (Badoe & Opoku-Asare, 2014). Badoe and Opoku-Asare (2014) also make a revealing statement that the gender difference can be ascertained by the way they are worn. He states that the males wear it in the manner of the Roman *toga* while the females are normally characterized with the *Kaba*. Another distinction they make between the males and female kente cloth is the structure of the kente. According to Badoe and Opoku-Asare (2014, p.53),

The male Kente cloth is made up of 28 strips sewn together. Each strip measures about 4 inches in width. The length is made up of 39 motifs and the breakdown is as follows: 5 motifs for the starting border design and another 5 motifs for the closing border design. 29 motifs for the main design. Note that only 3 different motifs are used for the border design whereas another 2 motifs are alternated to form the main design; thus in all 5 different motifs are used to produce a Kente cloth. The female Kente cloth is made up of 24 strips sewn together; 8 strips for the Kaba, 8 strips for the Slit and another 8 strips for the cover cloth. Each strip measures about 4 inches in width. The length is made up of 21 motifs with the break down as follows: 5 motifs for the starting border design and another 5 motifs for the closing border design. 11 motifs for the main design; the middle motif is a unique one. Note that only 3 different motifs are used for the border design whereas another 2 motifs are alternated to form the main design with a different middle motif; thus in all 6 different motifs are used to produce a Kente cloth.

This is clear that, in spite of aesthetic qualities of the kente cloth, the most predominant aspect of the cloth is its symbolic nature as each of the patterns used in the design has a meaning.

Another symbol that is commonly used for textile products in Ghana is the Adinkra. Each adinkra symbol has a meaning. The Adinkra cloth contains symbols which represent proverbs, express beliefs, philosophies, aesthetics and hopes of the Ashanti people and more specifically of the weaver (Collins, 2013). The meaning determines the appropriateness for the occasion to use that cloth (Aboagyewaa-Ntiri, Campion, & Kemevor, 2018; Plessis, 1994; Polakoff, 1980; Poirier, Eglash, & Babbitt, 2014). To show supremacy and belief in God symbols such as the *Gye Nyame* (Except God), *Nyame nnwu na mawu* (God won't die for me to die) and *Nyame ye hene* (God is King or Lord) are used. During marriage ceremonies, in order to portray, love, faithfulness, togetherness and sustenance of the home, the symbols used includes *Odo Nnyew fie kwan* (Love does not lose its way home); *agyindawuru* (A symbol of faithfulness, alertness, and dutifulness); *akoma ntoaso* (Joining of hearts); *aya* (it symbolises fortitude, defiance against problems, independence, resoluteness, persistence, and resourcefulness.); *Bi nka bi* (No one should bite another) to symbolise authority, power and leadership, the following symbols are used; *Adinkrahene* (King of the Adinkra symbols which symbolises authority and leadership); *aban* (represents seat of power and authority and means a fortress or a castle); *nsaa* (excellence), *nkonsonkonson* (A symbol of unity, community). During funerals or death rites the following symbols are commonly used; *Nkyinkyim* (Twisting which symbolizes the difficult nature of life), *mere dane* (time changes), *owuo atwedee* (death ladder, everybody will climb it) (Adinkra Symbols and Meanings, 2020). These names in Akan are proverbial and or wise sayings that fit into the occasion and the situation the person is in. it makes the adinkra symbolic in nature as

an adinkra cloth which is meant to celebrate birth is not symbolically appropriate for a funeral. The adinkra cloth must be fit for purpose.

One cannot therefore underestimate the importance of symbolism in the Ghanaian society. Throughout the environs of communities, different symbols are used and it represents or communicates something to the people who interact with them. That is why the Ghanaian society has transferred the concept of symbolism for ages, as mentioned by Amisah and Letcher-Teye (2018) that the concept of symbolism was transferred from a generation and this will continue in the current generation into other generations.

### 2.2.2 *Symbolism of Colour, Shapes and Lines*

Colour plays a major role in the discussion of symbolism especially when it comes to textile products. In Ghana, the combination of rich colours for textiles products is not for aesthetics, but also functional and symbolic. Each colour has a meaning that communicates to anyone who interacts with the textile product. In the Ghanaian context, if anyone sees you in particular colour of a cloth, it may define your status as a jubilant person, religious person, in danger, mourning a loved one and so on. Essel (2017) explains some of the symbolic meaning of colours used for textile materials.

...red symbolises danger, bloodshed, war, death, bereavement and epitomizes bravery, seriousness, energy and power over death ...blue is associated with love, calmness, tenderness and affection while yellow/gold represent royalty, high social status, wealth, gaiety, good living, rule of God or king. Green is linked with vitality, fertility, energy, growth, youthfulness and vegetation ...black is associated with death, sorrow, strength and history. White stands for joy, victory, freedom, purity, and virginity (p. 9).

The most predominantly used colour is red, black, yellow and white. In the context of these definitions of the colours, the colour red is mostly used during funerals, when people are demonstrating against their displeasure about something, when a community



is moving into war or conflict and so on. Sometimes people use red at places that are also deemed dangerous or hazardous to warn people of the impending situation. In the Akan religious setup, Red (bogya) is associated with rituals and sacrifices because it is linked with blood. Red is seen as sacred (Breidenbach, 1976).

Black is mostly used for funeral rites. Because black is related to darkness, the Ghanaian indigenous society, black is deemed as evidence of evil and sadness. Anything associated with the colour is mostly unwelcomed while the colour white is seemingly the opposite of Black. White is used during naming ceremonies marriage rites. It is associated with purity. Priests of the Ga wear the klala, which is white. Most of the joyous and celebratory occasions have been characterised with the colour yellow or a variance of it. Royals and wealthy people also use it. That is why yellow is normally associated with wealth or good living and rule of Kings and God. It may also be born out of the fact that the colour yellow is associated with Gold, which is a rich mineral, and the possessors of it are deemed rich or wealthy.

Lines and shapes contribute to the design of symbolic textile products. Each shape has a meaning and this meaning is reflected in the arrangement of the shapes to form a pattern. The common of these are circle, oval, triangle and rectangle; and the line, undulating and zigzag (Amenuke, et al., 1999). The circle represents different things depending on the society and the context within which they are used. Examples include the use of circular shaped objects and designs to represent deities and gods. Some of these deities and gods are located in temples in Labadi, Prampram, Takyiman and Elimina. The circle also represents the presence of God in the society (Amenuke, et al., 1999).

The oval was mostly a representation of the feminine. The shape is used to characterize the female human figure. It also represented the purity as the shape of pots for washing and bath are shaped in the oval. The shape therefore represents the cleansing

power in the society. The square or rectangle also represents the sanctity (purity) of God's influence on society. It also represents the male. It is also used to represent the extent of power of a ruler. These shapes are therefore embroidered into cloth to symbolise this authority. According to Amenuke et al, (1999) the square or rectangle represents "qualities of God as perfection in wisdom, faithfulness, justice, courage, fairness and mercy".

The triangle symbolises female symbols which mostly represent friendship, cordialness and warmth. These shapes are rampantly used for ornaments such as the elbow band, sandals, and headgears for chiefs. With lines the zigzag and undulating represents the good application of wisdom and stream of life respectively. While the spiral lines represent the "delicate nature of women, peace, mercy and continuity of growth" (Amenuke, et al., 1999).

This therefore presents and justifies the argument that most textiles are symbolic. It carries information for its interpreters. Because of its symbolic nature, it also makes the product functional as the appropriateness of the symbols used in the design determine when to use the textile product.

### **2.3 Concept of Ghanaian Printed Fabrics**

Essel (2017) states that what is termed as African Print and narrowing down to Ghanaian prints are not indigenous prints to the Ghanaian. He further explains that, before colonial times, the Asante printed adinkra cloth. He argues that the wax prints with influence from Asia and Europe and without any established links to Africanism, has been termed as African Print. Some of these so-called African Prints are not symbolic which a key feature of the indigenous African Prints is. The African Print terminology is also widely used in Ghana. It should also be established that, though the adinkra cloth arguably

is the origin of Ghanaian prints, it is worth admitting that technology has improved ways by which Ghanaian print has evolved.

Amissah and Letcher-Teye (2018) point out that, the use of textiles prints has become a tradition, which has been transferred from generation to generation and the prediction that it will continue into the future generations. Essel (2017) in his paper “Deconstructing the Concept of ‘African Print’ in the Ghanaian Experience”, admits the various concepts that have determined or defined African prints includes symbolism and functionality but not limited to these two. The symbolic nature of the cloth mostly defines the suction of the cloth. Therefore, symbolism over generations has defined the Ghanaian printed fabrics. Amissah and Letcher-Teye (2018) put this into context by stating that

The prints come with very interesting Ghanaian motifs based on proverbs, adages, royal emblems, adinkra symbols among others. The choice of motif, composition, repeats etc. are carefully executed making them look very attractive when displayed... the prints bear philosophical significance. They have names that depict or explain the beliefs and practices of the Ghanaian culture (p. 78).

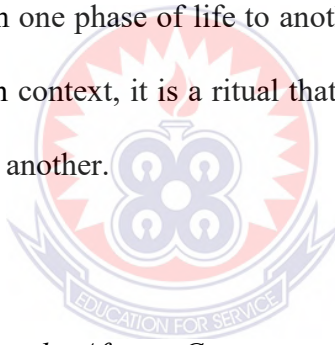
Premising on the above, it can clearly be deduced that, even though the aspect of aesthetic is important to the patrons of Ghanaian prints, the main concept behind these textile products are symbolism. The colours, patterns and symbols used underpins the symbolic significance that is derived from it making it functional and fit for purpose.

#### **2.4 Concept of Rites of Passage**

Rites of passage are generally seen as rituals which transit people from one phase of life to another. van-Gennep (1909: p. 1) defines rites of passage as “patterns of behaviours and customs that various cultures engage in during major life transitions”. According to van Gennep, these rites of passages are created by communities or as a directive by the community to inculcate into individuals’ cultural values and knowledge

so that people can fit into the community. In talking about Rites of Passage, van-Gennep (1909) concludes that a person must submit, from the day of his birth to that of his death, to ceremonies whose forms often vary but whose function is similar (p. 189)

Turner, (1968) van-Gennep, (1909) and Ghaye and Pascal (1988) all seem to agree that generally, rites of passage in various parts of the world have to do with the status of the person and the transitions from one status to another. An example is that a child would always be seen as a child but as soon as there is transition, liminality, the status of the person changes into another. Turner (1988) and van Gennep (1909) agreed that, generally, rites of passage have the concept of “separation” from a particular phase of life to another. While modernization in most parts of the world has seen education as a key to transitioning people from one phase of life to another (Bigger, 2008). Raboteau, (1978) states that, in the African context, it is a ritual that is supposed to be done to transit the person from a phase into another.



#### *2.4.1 Rites of Passage in the African Context*

Ampim (2003) defines rites as a fundamental act or set of rituals performed according to prescribed social rules and customs. Most societies in Africa and for that matter, Ghana perform these rites as part of their traditions and culture. These rites are tagged to guide the communal life of people to ensure that there are social and moral stands for the people living in a society. According to Nwadiokwu, Nwadiokwu, Favour and Okwuazun (2016), the rites of passage in the African context is linked to the traditional region. They generally classify them in the following categories which start from rites for pregnancy. From them, there are Birth Rites, Naming Rites, Puberty Rites, Marriage Rites and Death Rites. Ezenweke (2016) also agrees to these phases of the rites

which is a consensus from most scholarly publications including those of Ampim (2003) and Nwadiokwu et al; (2016).

Ezenweke (2016) focuses on the people of Igbo and states the relevance of these rituals that are done to contribute to the moral fibre of their community. The Igbo people are from Nigeria in West Africa. Below are some general descriptions of the various rites of passage and a random pick on how each rite is performed for at least one distinct location in Africa apart from Ghana.

#### *2.4.1.1 Birth Rites*

The initiation of a person into the world in the African context is marked by two rituals, pregnancy and birth even though that of birth is more predominant. According to Ampim (2003), the rites of Birth and the naming ceremony is performed by almost every African culture. The purpose of this rite is to initiate new-born babies from the spirit world to the physical world in order to help the new-born to fit into society. Ampim (2003) indicates that every new-born has a mission from the spiritual world of which he or she has to achieve. The purpose of this ceremony, therefore, is to commission a newly born into fulfilling this purpose for his life. In certain cultures in Africa, the family will consult a diviner to seek the mission and guide the new member into achieving it.

A detailed description of birth rites is given by Cox (1998), as performed by the Ndebele-speaking people of Zimbabwe. He explains that the ceremony starts in the 9<sup>th</sup> month where the pregnant woman leaves her husband's house to her parents' home. A special room is prepared for that purpose and the lady is kept there, with the mother, grandmother and other women who are selected as part of the midwifery team to help in the delivery are allowed to enter into the room on the day of delivery. It is forbidden for any man to enter this room. After the delivery, rituals are performed until the umbilical

cord falls off by putting herbs in the fire, and the smock used to warm the head of the newly born baby. After a week, the child is brought out and introduced to the community as a way of incorporating the child into society. The father is then given a portion of the umbilical cord to be buried near their home. Community and family then give gifts out after which the baby and the mother return to the father's house (Cox, 1998).

#### 2.4.1.2 Puberty Rites

Ezenweke (2016) argues that the rites performed during puberty are to help a person move from childhood to adulthood. At this stage, the person will also move from unproductive life to a productive life where they are supposed to take care of themselves. Based on Ezenweke (2016), the rationale for performing puberty rites for young adults is to make them prepare for the world of work which will impact on the community. The productivity of an individual is a subtle contribution to the development and sustainability of a community. The puberty rites also initiate them into marriage because the rites signify a transition from the childishness of a person to a more matured state. According to Igbo beliefs, the rites enact a new life into the human spirit as it encounters a new life through a relationship between the living and the dead. This ritual, therefore, symbolizes the death of an old childish behaviour life into adult life (Ginsberga, Kariuki, & Kimamo, 2014).

The Agikuyu of Kenya has also organized puberty rites for males and females of a set-age in an initiation rite called *irua* (Hinga, 1998). They are taken to different locations to go through a prolonged process of puberty rituals which includes circumcisions and slaughtering goats which they dedicate to the ancestors. This is done according to a particular rule or order for purification. They are integrated into the

community through a ritual called *menjo* which involves shaving the hair which signifies a transition from childhood to adulthood.

Puberty rites are therefore a significant phase of the African young person which is an initiation into adulthood. Apart from the moral, social, cultural, religious and philosophical significance of the rituals and ceremonies that are performed, the use of various artefacts also point to the philosophy of the indigenes who perform these rites in the African society.

#### *2.4.1.3 Marriage Rites*

In the African context, marriage is not only joining together a male and a female but coming together of families to help the husband and wife to build a new family and fulfil their mission and purpose in life (Egwuatu, 1986). According to Ampim (2003), the rationale for marriage is for the building families and communities. This goes beyond the idea of seeing marriage as satisfying sexual desires in the African society. Again in African society, a person is considered an adult and a responsible person if he or she is married. Marriage, therefore, is an important part of the African setup. The rite to institute marriage for an individual varies from community to community.

For most people within the African society, marriage is a formalized separation of a person to create a new alliance. The Tswana society of Botswana epitomizes these marriage rites. This rite is initiated when the two families, that of the male and female come into agreement that, they are ready to bring the man and lady together into marriage. This agreement can even occur when they are young (before adulthood) because it is believed the lineages and connections of families are supposed to be maintained especially with families with kingship or of great health. According to Amaze (1998),

some payment called *bogadi* similar to what is generally called bride price is paid to the family of the lady in a form of cattle. After, the boy moves to cohabitate in the girl's parental home for about a year. Within this liminal period, it is expected that the girl would get pregnant. If the girl gets pregnant, they move out to set up their matrimonial home by moving to the man's paternal home. If for any reason, the girl is unable to get pregnant for the liminal period, the marriage is abrogated and they are not accepted into society as married couples (Schapera, 1950).

One significant thing that cuts across almost all the cultures and societies in Africa is the payment of bride price, which can differ depending on the traditions in a particular community. The artforms that are used during this period have great significance especially the textile products which are predominantly used during the rites.

#### 2.4.1.4 Death Rites

Ampim (2003) indicates that the last stage of the rites of passage is departing from the real human world to the spiritual world. The rite is done when a person dies. Therefore he calls it rites of ancestorship. According to him, the African philosophy in contrast to other philosophies (death ends all ties and communication with the living) belief that the spirit of the deceased still lives according to a status based on the quality of life the person lived on earth. This is the reason why libation is poured to invoke the spirit of the dead. It, therefore, becomes important to the African society that every person who dies is given a befitting farewell to the ancestral world by performing funeral rites.

An example of an ancestral rite is performed by the people of Limba of Sierra Leone in West Africa is explained by Marfoh (1999). They believe that the spirit of the ancestors can affect the living, hence a funerary rite to transition the dead into the



ancestral world is performed. It is their belief that, till the ritual called “Aboreh” is performed, the spirit of the dead will hover in the community till the ceremony is performed. They also believe that, if these rites are performed for the person, they are protected from any form of misfortune, illness and witchcraft attacks. The final stage happens at the graveside where rituals and a white fowl is slaughtered for the ancestors to accept a new person into their midst (Marfoh, 1999).

Rite performed for the dead in the African traditional set up is also philosophical, yet cultural and religious with a variety of art forms being used especially, textiles products and the symbolic nature of the colours of the textile products used during the rites.

#### *2.4.2 Rites of Passage in the Ghanaian Context*

##### *2.4.2.1 Birth Rites*

In reviewing the rites of passage in the African context, it was indicated that there was some sort of rites performed when a woman is identified to be pregnant. This is among the Igbos of Nigeria but these rites have not been identified in Ghana as included in various documentations on the rites of passage. This is because the pregnancy rites done by most of the ethnic groups such as the Ewe, Ga and Akan people in Ghana are not formalized like the institutionalized ones such as the birth, puberty, marriage and funeral rites. But Otto, Habib and Ankomah (2015) recorded some of the generic practices and prohibitions of the Ewe, Ga and Akan people. The pregnancy rites that are performed during the pregnancy stage are mostly targeted towards protecting the pregnant woman from any form of evil. During this stage, they drink and bath herb, tie talisman around the

waist or wrist and amulets hang around the doors as a means of protection from any evil spirit (Aziato, Odai, & Omenyo, 2016).

Much attention is given to the rites that are performed after the delivery of a child. According to a report by NCCE (2004), the period for performing the Naming Ceremony differs among the ethnic groups in Ghana. While the Ewe and Akan people will do it on the eighth day after the birth of a Child, Ga people can go up to one month before the naming ceremony. The rites are performed eight days after birth because the child is considered a ghost until after the eighth day. That is when the child is officially accepted into the society he or she is officially seen as part of the world.

The NCCE (2004) report stated that among the Ga people, water is splashed out onto the thatched roof for it to drop on the baby wherein other circumstances, the water is sprinkled on the baby. The symbolic representation of this is that the child is being introduced to the rain and earth which are elements of nature. The person performing the ceremony is supposed to be an honourable person in society who mentions the name of the child, gently tapping the baby's with the right and left leg, and says "ko minane, ko misuban" which literally means "take after me, follow my footsteps". This is significant to Ga people because they want the baby to live a life that fit into society by imitating the examples of those who have lived a good life before him. For other ethnic groups, they used schnapps or drink and sometimes, salty water to touch the lips of the baby. The baby is then told that his or her yes must be yes and no must be no indicating that he or she has to be truthful at all times.

Among the people of Dagomba in the Northern sector of Ghana, the woman is kept in seclusion for a week as some rituals are performed during this stage of life. A private naming ceremony is performed on the sixth night and on the seventh day, a public

ceremony is performed in accordance with the Islamic doctrines. Like the Ewe people, the Dagomba will go to the extent of seeing a diviner ascertain which of the ancestor has been reincarnated. This is to help them understand and anticipate the kind of life the baby will live.

Another significant thing the Ewe and Ga people do is to perform a sacrifice for the mother as a token of appreciation by the father. It is called “Vidzinu” and “otshiwoo” by the Ewe and Ga people respectively. Naming is an important part of the Ghanaian culture. This is because the Ghanaian believes that names given to a person have both spiritual and physical impact on the person’s life. Names are given using various criteria. These criteria may include the day the person was born. For instance, a male born on Monday is called Kojo or Kwadwo while Kofi is given to a Friday born by the Akan while the opposite sex is called Adwoa and Afua respectively. Among the Ewe ethnic group, the firstborn is called Fui while the Akan calls her Piesie (Agyekum, 2006) or Opiesie according to the NCCE (2014). There are also special names given to a child whose mother has had several stillbirths which they believe will not allow the evil spirit to kill the baby as has previously happened. The Ewe people give names like Ati (Stick), Epke (stone), Elo (Crocodile) according to a website called History of Ewes (2016) while the Ga people give names like Yaka, Ohui, Awuni among others names. The Akan gives names like Sumina (garbage), Donko, (slave), Kaya, (carrier of loads), Adwengo (palm oil) and many more (Agyekum, 2006). The child is also given a name of a prominent person who has lived well in the society or the family with the belief that the child will be able to emulate the lives of these people they have been named after.

The Naming Ceremony is done by most ethnic groups usually accompanied by rich traditional culture with the use of art forms that include textile, calabash art, body art, beads, and anklets. For most of the groups in Ghana, the colour of the dresses they

wear is white which signifies joy and victory. Each art form used during the naming ceremony is symbolic in nature as it has an interpretation of how it is being used.

#### 2.4.2.2 Puberty Rites

In the Ghanaian context, the most documented puberty rites are Dipo and Bragoro which are associated with the Krobo and Akan community respectively. The Akan see the first menses of a young girl as unique and therefore calls for an occasion for public rejoicing and congratulations (Oppong, n.d). For the Ashanti people, it is the single most important event of a girl's life. They, therefore, embark on some private and public rituals amid music, songs and prayer to commemorate the new phase of the girl's life, from the phase of childhood to womanhood. According to Oppong, most of these rituals and prayers are done by the Akan are targeted towards the importance of maternity and fertility, hence the girls are called mothers once the ceremony is over.

According to Kyei (1945), the Akan have several names that are associated with puberty rites. They include names such as '*YEGORO NO BRA*' meaning "the onset of her menses is being celebrated". '*YEKA N'ANO*' which also means "her mouth is being touched"; '*YEBO N'ASOM*', meaning "her hoe is being struck" and '*YEWO NO BRA-TO*' which literally translates "her menstrual mashed yam/plantain is being prepared". However, the most commonly used name is '*BRA-GORO*' which literally means "menses ceremony".

The first stage of this ceremony for the Akan, especially the Asante, begins by informing the queen mother, the chief and the chief priest to seek their blessings. Libation is poured for the commencement of the ceremony. The next day, the girl is clouded gorgeously in costly kente cloth, wristlet beads, gold necklace and sparkling trinkets and

paraded around the main streets of the town or city for all indigenes to witness the ceremony amid singing, drumming and dancing. She is later seated in front of her home for friends and family to celebrate with her. She is then ushered to the riverside by her father's sister, grandmother and elderly woman after having a close head shave, where they bath her at the riverside and perform rituals. No man is supposed to be seen there. After this, she is brought home and the grandmother educates her on womanhood to prepare her for marriage and motherhood (Kyei, 1945; Oppong, n.d).

It is an offence and abomination for a girl to become pregnant without going through the Bragoro initiation. It is deemed to be an offence and insult to the spirits of the dead which infuriates them. The result for the act of getting pregnant before the nobility rites are performed can include drought, famine, disaster, childlessness, hardship and many more. In order to curtail this consequence, the Kyiribra rites are done for the girl and her accomplice. In most cases, it is believed that the girl concealed her menses. The kyiribra even though it is deemed disgraceful is meant to restore the girl and her accomplice to social order, disrupted by the crime, of an uninitiated girl becoming pregnant to its old peaceful, unblemished condition (NCCE, 2004).

The Ewe people of Ghana call puberty rites as '*gbɔtɔwɔwɔ*' or '*nutata*' which is literally translated as 'clothing the girl'. It is observed that most of the puberty rites processes among the Ewe in Ghana have virtually died. This is because of the influx of modernization as seen with many in Ghana. Among the people who perform puberty rites in Ghana are the Logba and Avatime people in the Volta Region. The Logba and Avatime people have sustained and maintained the puberty rites over generations. According to Klu (2014), puberty rite in the Logba language is '*ezi udze*' which is a literal translation meaning 'to carry a girl'. These rites are initiated after the first menses of the girl by performing many rituals including mashing yam with red oil and egg for the girl, teaching

the girl lessons in motherhood, womanhood and how to take care of the family and husband by preparing a traditional meal made with rice for her to-be husband and family (Klu, 2014).

Among the Ga, especially in the Tema area, they perform puberty rites to initiate a girl into womanhood. Those from Tema Manhean and its surrounding areas call the rites *Ashii* while those around the Kpong area call it *Otofo*, according to (NCCE, 2004). The rites are divided into three stages. The first stage has to do with confining the girl for three days and training her to be a woman deemed to have good standing in society. Just like the Ewe and the Asante, the girls are taught how to live a good life as a woman which includes, keeping and managing the home, managing the husband and children and many relevant activities needed for womanhood. The second phase of the activity has to do with the girl being shown to the public and admirers (Kumetey, 2009). The girl is smeared with shea butter and a piece of white calico covering her lower part of the body. The last stage is where she is given a hot bath to wash off the oil from the shear butter, dressed up to the chest in nice textile fabric and with the breast uncovered. Accompanied by some of the elders, walks through the streets and greets friends and family amidst singing and drumming. On the last day, gifts are presented to her (Kumetey, 2009).

One of the well-documented puberty rites is the Dipo by the Krobo people of Ghana. According to Ostrow (2011) contrary to popular beliefs outside the Krobo which indicates that the rites have to be performed after the first menstrual period is not entirely true. If the girl happens to be in her menstrual period before the rites are performed, it is deemed as an honour and a sign of a true Krobo woman. For a girl to qualify for the rites of puberty, it is the parent who chooses a priestess as ascertain if the *susuma* (the soul) of the girl indicates that she is ready to do the Dipo. After the approval, the girl is ready for the ceremony. If the girl is found pregnant before the ceremony, the girl is whipped

publicly and permanently banished from the village. The main aim of this extreme punishment is to deter young girls from engaging in under-aged sex (Ostrow, 2011).

The Dipo is normally done by sending the girl to a shrine where soni (part of a palm tree) is placed around the neck which is an indication that she has begun the process of Dipo. She is kept at the shrine where she goes through training which includes motherhood, keeping the house and their husband and so on (Boakye, 2010). After every successful training, a mark is made on the lady's body to signify she has successfully been trained. These marks are made in the palm, stomach, back and other parts of the body. The girl's hair is shaved and rituals are performed for purification by sacrificing a white fowl and bathing her. She is then carried to the town or village. She is then adorned with rich beads that signify the rich culture of the Krobo as they perform the Klama dance in the community with well-wishers giving the girls gifts. (Boakye, 2010).

The following are some of the uses of puberty rites for girls:

One of the justifications for performing puberty rites is a way of preventing girls from teenage pregnancy. It is believed that anyone who does not partake in the puberty rites and gets pregnant brings disgrace to her family and herself. The pride that comes from waiting to pass through the rites which comes with accorded respect to the girl and parent is one of the main driving forces for performing puberty rites in Ghana. Due to the communal nature of Ghanaians, a girl who is unable to pass through the puberty rites and gets pregnant becomes a misfit in the society (Kyei, 1945; Oppong, n.d; Ostrow, 2011).

During the performance of the various rituals of the puberty rites, the girl acquire the knowledge of womanhood (Boakye, 2010). This happens when the girl is taken to a place and thorough education is done for them on how to handle herself as a woman and during the menstrual periods. All the characteristics that distinguish a child from a woman

are learnt so that she is able to fit into the society as they learn how to dress, traditions and so on. It is also believed that any woman who has gone through the puberty rites has good morals and principles, and therefore qualifies to be a mother and a wife. Most of the girls who go through the rite are sure to get good husbands (Kyei, 1945; Oppong, n.d; Ostrow, 2011). The above indicates that rituals and teachings done using various forms of art forms including products. These art forms are has philosophical significance to the performance of the rites being performed.

Another subtle importance of performing the puberty rites is that it helps the girl acquire some amount of wealth for the future. During the ceremony, the girl is given gifts from friends and family, which can be used to set up an income generation activity. These gifts are given because the girl is now deemed as an adult, therefore would have to partially or fully take care of herself. These gifts will help her set up for life. The most prevalent of these gifts are household items and textiles products. (Kyei, 1945; Oppong, n.d; Ostrow, 2011; Klu, 2014).

Even though the focus of puberty rites by various ethnic groups discussed are focused on transitioning the girls into adulthood, the use of art forms especially, textiles and its philosophical significance cannot be overlooked.

#### *2.4.2.3 Marriage Rites*

After the person has been initiated as an adult during the puberty rites, the nearest or next rite that is performed is marriage rites. In most cases, the young lady who is or had performed the rites of passage is betrothed to a man for marriage. As discussed in the puberty rites, the lady who has gone through the ceremony is deemed a responsible and



morally upright, therefore after the transition into adulthood, she qualifies to marry (Kyei, 1945; Oppong, n.d; Boakye, 2010).

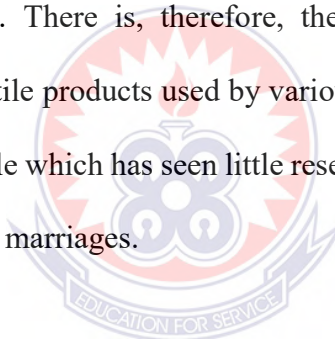
The Akan call it *Awareɛ* and according to their belief, it goes beyond a man contacting a woman in marriage but it has to be sanctioned by the lineage or family head before it can be deemed as legal (Appiah-Sekyere, 2018). This is most common with most of the other ethnic groups in Ghana. Marriage goes beyond the individual but has the full involvement of both families (Forkuor, Kanwetuu, Ganee, & Ndemole, 2018). Marriage in the Akan set up can be contracted through the man searching for a woman and moving into courtship before marrying her. A girl is betrothed to a man, a man offered a wife mainly by her parents and wife who are gotten due to obligation, for example, a chief in the Akan set up will have a customary stool wife or a person who inherits the uncle automatically inherits her wife (NCCE, 2014; Oduro-Sarpong, 2003).

All ethnic groups in Ghana perform marriage ceremonies. Most of the activities and rites are done during the marriage ceremonies are same with few variations in the way these activities are rendered. One generic thing performed during this rite of passage is the payment of a dowry which is commonly called the bride price. The Ga people calls it '*Sɛɛ Nihamɔ*' (Nuworsu, 2015) which involves the payment of cash and items used to seek the ladies hand in marriage. The Akan also call it '*tiri nsa*' (Oduro-Sarpong, 2003). In all these, the payment of bride price, whether in a form of livestock, money or certain prescribed items, forms a greater part of the marriage ceremony.

Another significant part of the marriage ceremony is the use of various art forms. These include both the visual art forms and the performing art forms. Marriage ceremonies like the other rites of passages performed in Ghana are embarked with jubilant and colourful ceremonies to initiate the couples into a new phase of life that will start a

new family. According to Afful and Nantwi (2018), some of these art forms used during these periods include textiles, body art, music and dance, incantations and so on with each of the activities and are also used as gifts for the couples and from the groom to the bride. Afful and Nantwi (2018) explains that the art forms that are used for marriage ceremonies are significant and symbolic in nature. For example, in the Ewe communities, the 'ayawagba' given to the bride signifies the wealth of the parents of the couple or the couple themselves. The Akan and the Ewe also use traditional stools during the celebration of the customary marriage.

Based on Afful and Nantwi's (2018) observation, it can be clearly understood that the role of art forms especially, textiles has a major role to play in marriage ceremonies in customary marriages. There is, therefore, the need to explore the philosophical significance of these textile products used by various ethnic groups in Ghana especially, that of the Dangme people which has seen little research and documentation of the textile products used during the marriages.



#### *2.4.2.4 Funeral Rites*

Funeral is seen as the last stage of the rites of passage. Ghanaians believe that the ceremony is done as a form of transitioning the dead to the ancestral world. According to Nyamadi, Aberinga and Nyamadi (2015), funeral rites are used to bid farewell to people who have died to the ancestral world. They cite an example of the people of Kandiga of Kasena-Nankana in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The people believe that performing these rites will qualify the dead to be elected as a god to protect the household and family. Their research indicated that, after the ritual has been performed, the ghost of the dead

departs from the living and settles with the ancestors. The family of the dead is teased and ridiculed if they are unable to perform the funeral rites of a person.

## **2.5 Concept of Textile Products**

Textile culture is defined by the way people make and use textiles products across different cultures. Historically, there are biblical counts of how textiles products started and from there, its evolution over periods of time. According to the biblical account, man's first attempt to cloth themselves was to use large leaves upon identifying that they were naked (Genesis 3:7). The records then mentions that, God made covering for the first man using the skin of animals (Genesis 3:21). After this, the textile culture has evolved from these historical states to not just a covering of the nakedness of a person but also, fashion and defining the status of people in the society.

Various parts of the world have developed various textiles cultures using various textiles products. The western textile culture is defined mostly by the fact that the body needs protection from the harsh weather conditions and fashion. It looks at the aesthetic qualities even when it is meant to protect the body. For the African context, textile culture is defined by symbolism backed by a philosophy. Apart from the textile product protecting the body, there is a significant interpretation and rationale for wearing this textile product. Indigenous textile culture have meanings and significance. These meanings and significance underpins the use of particular textile product for a particular occasion or instance. For instance, Adinkra was originally used for funerals and now has evolved into it being used for other occasions such as naming ceremonies and marriage ceremonies Aboagyewaa-Ntiri, Campion and Kemevor (2018). Kente is also used for public events such as naming ceremonies, marriages rites and festivals (especially by the royal family) (Badoe & Opoku-Asare, 2014).

### 2.5.1 *Reliance on Textile Products in Ghana*

There are unique textile products used among various ethnic groups across Ghana. This is because of the diversity in the ethnic groups and what they wear. In the Northern sector of Ghana, the most significant and obvious textiles products are the use of the smock. According to Essel and Amissah (2015), the use of the smock dates back to the precolonial era and has lived on to our current days giving a typical example of the pre-independence day declaration with the First President of Ghana and his entourage, clothed in a smock (Adjei, Adongo, & Osei-Sarfo, 2016). The smock which is historically deemed started in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Northern Ghanaians made contact with the Arabs and learnt the act of weaving (Nkrumah, 1998). Essel and Amissah (2015) did not pin-point a specific source where the smock originated from but rather, gave the various deferring views on where it originated from referencing various scholarly materials. It must be clearly stated that Essel and Amissah (2015) with the varying point did not mention the origination from Iran but various parts of West African. This makes it difficult to determine the origin of smock weaving in Ghana, unlike Nkrumah (1998) assertion that it originated from Iran. The weaving of the smock even though has spread across the Northern sector of Ghana was initially preserved by the people of Moshie, Kokomba, Dagomba, Mamprusi, Lobi and Gonja (Adjei, Adongo, & Osei-Sarfo, 2016). The smock is also known as Fugu and with the Dagomba calling it Bingmbaa (Essel & Amissah, 2015). Essel and Amissah (2015) describe various kinds of smock which include the sleeveless, wide and large smock, smock with sleeves and the one for king's enstoolments. Another key thing that Essel and Amissah (2015) mention is the fact that colour symbolism or interpretation is not considered in the designing of smocks unlike the Kente of the Akan in the Southern sector of Ghana.

Another important textile that is mostly found in Ghana, especially the Southern sector of the country is the Kente cloth. Historically, the Kente is predominant with the Asante and Ewe but it can also be located in the Northern parts of Ghana too. As mentioned before, the kente is symbolic in nature with the pattern and colours used to determine the occasion, gender and status of the wearer according to (Badoe & Opoku-Asare, 2014). The word Kente originates from "*Kenten*" which means basket in the Akan language (Twi). This is because of the way the traditional basket is interlaced together. It has been documented that the weaving of Kente started in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the Asante Region of Ghana and predominantly woven at Bonwire and Adanwomase while within the Ewes, it is woven in communities around Kpetoe, Anlo and Somme (Frimpong & Asinyo, 2013). This was after two hunters from Bonwire observed the way a spider wove its web during a hunting expedition, a later introduction of the traditional Kente loom for weaving the Kente. (Badoe & Opoku-Asare, 2014).

Kente is used for many occasions especially, joyous and celebratory occasion, woven strictly on the bases of gender, it is used for outdoorings and naming ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, festivals, traditional gathering and so on. Some of the patterns are reserved for chiefs and queens and as such, it is not used by any other members of the society. Badoe and Opoku-Asare (2014) asserts that one can use the colours and or patterns on the colour to interpret and determine the category of people and occasion that the cloth is used. The Kente is normally used as a toga or upper or lower body cover, but with modernization and fashion trend, it has moved from this form of using it for shoes, bags, slippers and other textiles products. (Frimpong & Asinyo, 2013).

Another textile product that is common with the Akan which is now widely used in many part of the country is the Adinkra Cloths. According to scholarly materials by Plessis (1994); Poirier, Eglash and Babbitt (2016); Aboagyewaa-Ntiri, Campion and

Kemevor (2018) and Polakoff (1980), the Adinkra cloth is a printed cloth for the Asante of Ghana. It is believed that, after a victorious war with the Gyaman, the Asantehehe gave the Cloth to the king of Gyamang as a symbol of his victory. The cloth had symbols which were mimicked by the Asante. Adinkra means “Goodbye”. The cloth was therefore used in a funeral to bid farewell to the dead. Over the years, the use of Adinkra cloth has changed over time. It is no longer used only for funerals but many other ceremonies including naming ceremonies, thanksgiving programmes, marriage ceremonies and so on. The occasion is informed by the colour of the cloth and the symbols used in it. Each symbol has its meaning ranging from the supremacy of God to advise on how a person must behave and live with others in society. The Adinkra symbols which are used for the cloths are philosophical in nature, therefore sending a lot of wise messages to the wearers and the interpreters. (Aboagyewaa-Ntiri, Campion, & Kemevor, 2018; Plessis, 1994; Polakoff, 1980; Poirier, Eglash, & Babbitt, 2014).

One of the key things that is worth noting is that almost all the textiles products used in the Ghanaian indigenous set up has symbolic meaning except for the smock as mentioned by Essel and Amissah (2015). The clothes have specific names and an interpretation of the cloth based on the patterns, motifs and symbols used. According to Amissah and Letcher-Teye, (2018) textiles products, especially the printed clothes, communicate philosophical meanings based on the motifs, symbols and patterns used. These clothes are used for specific occasions depending on the philosophical meaning and relevance to the occasion. This clearly points out that, the textile products used in the indigenous set-up have names and a philosophical meaning that are relevant to the various phases of the rites of passage.

Headgears are also one of the obvious textiles products that can be seen across all the textile culture in Ghana. An example is cited by Essel and Amissah (2015), where the

people who wear smock or fugu also put on a hat which is also woven just like the main smock. In the Asante and some of the Akan communities, queen mothers and royal women are traditionally seen in woven scarf that depicts royalty. Scarfs are also common with the Ewe. The priest of the Ga uses the calico to produce some sort of hat to accompany the klala dress they wear. This also shows that various types of headgears are produced from textiles products. This, therefore, means that the use of textile product is important to the Ghanaian society. They are symbolic in nature, as it is used for specific occasions and events. These textile products are also philosophical in nature and communicate to society. Therefore, one cannot underestimate the role of various textiles products in the Ghanaian culture. Identifying the textile products of the Dangme people as used during the rites of passage define the underling symbolic significance of textile products used by the Dangme people.

## **2.6 The Ga-Dangme People**

There are bits and pieces of documentation about the history of the Dangme people. Most of the documentations believed Ga and Dangme arrived together almost at the same time. The Dangme people occupy the coastal area of Ghana, from Kpong to Ada along the South Atlantic Ocean and the islands along the Volta Lake while the Ga occupied the rest of the Ga and Dangme states. (Anquandah, 2006). The Ga and Dangme people are believed to have originated from the Niger Congo family which are identified with the Kwa group of languages. They are believed to have come from Oyo through to Abeokuta in Nigeria, Dahomey in Benin, Ketu in the Volta Region of Ghana before settling in the Accra Plains which was then known as the Lolovor even though it is unclear when exactly they settled in their current place (Oforiwaa & Ollenu, n.d; Ebeheakey & Steve, 2018). Anquanda (2013) also indicates that there are oral traditions points that the

Ga and Dangme people are from Nigeria or some part of Benin/Togo but seemingly seem to disagree with these arguments based on Adu-Boahene's (2007) arguments.

According to Anquanda (2013), Adu-Boahene, a former Ghanaian historian argues that the Ewe, Foh and Adja who are believed to have migrated from Dahome in Benin/Togo still have their roots there with some people at these places, speaking and identifying themselves as such. There is therefore clear evidence that they have their roots from Benin and Togo. The contrast of that is seen with the people of Ga and Dangme. There are no traces of the Ga and Dangme Languages in any other state in West Africa. Anquanda (2013) then concludes that it can be argued that the Ga and Dangme are largely indigenous to where they are currently located and that any link to Nigeria or Benin is due to trading or the invasion of the Akwamu people during a war. It, therefore, becomes very difficult to define the origin of the Ga and Dangme but the surest thing is that the two schools of thought is that they are either from Nigeria or Benin or are indigenous people who did not migrate from any place. These are two of the major schools of thought about the origin of the Ga and Dangme people but there is a third dominantly accepted and popular as true about where the Ga and Dangme people originated from.

According to Fiorgbor, Tetteh, and Nartey (2019), the people of Ga and Dangme migrated from Israel by giving some traces from Biblical accounts (Job 4:11, Proverbs 30:30, Judges 18 & 19) as evidence. The writers link the Biblical group called '*Laish*' who are not identified as part of the twelve tribes of Israel but were resident in northern Palestine, the current location of modern Israel. They further give a detailed chronicle of their movement from Israel, through Sudan, Nigeria, Dahome, through the Togoland to their current location. The movements are attributed to hostilities they faced at various areas they settled unrouted to their current locations. In the discussions of Fiorgbor, Tetteh, and Nartey, (2019), they attempt to explain some statements from the Pentateuch



which points that ancient Israel may be the source of evidence that Ga and Dangme and to some extent, the Ewe migrated from Israel.

It is, therefore, possible that Oforiwaa and Ollenu (n.d); Ebeheakey and Steve, (2018) missed part of the history of the origin of Israel because of lack of materials. Their account suggests it is partly presented because of the similarities in the sections they covered as compared to the discussion by Fiorgbor, Tetteh, and Nartey (2019). Due to the consistency of Anquanda (2013) on the origin of the Ga and Dangme states, researchers should perform an investigation about the origin of the Ga and Dangme states, documented and accepted as their history to remove any erroneous misconception and ambiguities about the history of the Ga and Dangme.

#### *2.6.1 Art Forms used by the Ga-Dangmes*

Several art forms are used in the Ga states. Most of these art forms are linked to the various ceremonies performed by the Ga and Dangme people including rites of passage and festivals (Kwakye-Opong, 2014). During the period of festival (Homowo which means hoot at hunger), some of the art forms used includes body decorations and markings normally found in the priestesses. These are normally done on the arm for identification and religious purposes. These symbols are there to demonstrate courage and virility of the priestesses. When it comes to the textile used during the Homowo festival, the most dominant textile is that of the priest which is always linked to the robe prescribed to Moses by God for priestly duties. Careful observation will point to the fact that it is not as exactly as that of the Christian faith as prescribed in the bible (Exodus 28 and Leviticus 8). The Ga calls it “Gan” with its origin from the English word gown. The priest also wears a hat with 365 edges signifying the number of days in the year.

Indigenous Ga also put on various textiles or costumes to celebrate the occasion with no specific denotations but with a lot of aesthetic qualities (Kwakye-Opong, 2014).

Nortey (2012) explains that beads are also popular during the homowo festival. For instance, the Nai Wulomo, who is the priest within the Teshie, Nungua and Osu areas of the Ga state wears beads on the wrist with three precious stones with the colours blue, yellow and red. The blue symbolises the sea, the yellow symbolizes the wealth from the earth and the red (called silibaa) signifying heaven. The priestess also wears five beads (afili) on their wrist and two beads (fufua) on their ankles indicating their status in society and for spiritual protection respectively. According to Nortey, (2012), one of the most important artefacts that are used during the Homowo is the wooden bowl known as “*tsese*”. It is crafted artistically and used for traditional rights during the festival. Other art forms that are found during the homowo festival includes stools, chairs, palanquins, ceremonial umbrellas, state sword and so on with a variety of pottery artefacts also used during the occasion (Nortey, 2012).

During the various rites of passage, the Ga and Dangme use a variety of art forms ranging from textiles, sculpture and pottery to beads, leatherwork and so on. During the performance of the rites of passage, there are common uses of art forms by the Ga people. These include textiles, pottery, beads for the visual arts while the performing arts have art forms which include singing and dancing amid drumming. Another art form for the performing arts is recitation or poetry. Textiles and beads as an art form play a predominant part of the Ga and Dangme culture and cannot be ignored when rites of passage are performed. As already established, the rites of passage in the indigenous African Setup is made up of the following phases: Birth and Naming, Puberty, Marriage and Death and Funeral. During these stages, the Ga-Adangme people exhibit these art forms as linked to their beliefs.

Art forms, therefore, have roles to play in the Ghanaian society including the Dangme. The Dangme uses various art forms for different occasions including the rites of passage and festivals. These art forms are not just for beautification purposes alone, but they are also symbolic, religious and philosophical in nature to depict the rich culture of the Dangme people.

## **2.7 Summary**

The concept of symbolism is very importance of in the Ghanaian society. Different symbols are used to represents or communicates ideas and values to the people who interact with them. Artefacts including textiles materials in the African context are symbolic and carry symbolic meaning. These textiles materials are used throughout the various ceremonies with the rites of passage as one of the dominant cultural and societal aspects of the African and for that matter Ghanaian. They carry information for its interpreters because of its symbolic nature. It makes the products functional as the appropriateness of the symbols used in the design determine when to use the textile product.

The Dangme of Ghana also has to document their symbolic significance especially relating to the rites of passage. With the emergence of fashion, which is mostly viewed from the aesthetics perspective rather than the symbolism and philosophical impact of these textile products, there is the tendency of losing the philosophical meaning of these textile products. This is because most of the symbolic meanings of textiles products are being maintained through oral traditions and with time, some vital parts may be lost. Based on this literature review and the gap identified, the project seeks to identify and document the symbolic significance of textiles products used during the rites of passage by the people of the Dangme.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Overview**

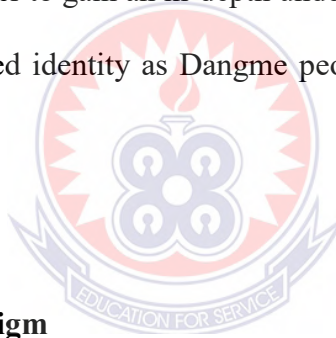
This chapter explains the research process employed in attaining the requisite data needed to establish the facts on the ground concerning the study. It presents the research approach, paradigm and design employed, the population for the study, sampling techniques and samples employed, data collection instrument, data collection procedure and method of data analysis used.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

Research approaches are common methods used in conducting research (Williams, 2007) that provide specific direction for procedures in a study (Creswell, 2003). They consist of three (3) broad categories; quantitative approach, qualitative approach and mixed method. The study focused on the qualitative research approach to investigate and give an in-depth interpretation of the kind of textile products used by the Dangme people to explore the philosophical and cultural significance during rites of passage.

According to Creswell (2014), the qualitative approach is an approach to exploring and interpreting the nature of a social or human issue for individuals or groups. Qualitative research is seen as an approach that employs many methods of data collection that require non-numerical data interpretation. The non-numerical data consists of information such as an individual statements made during an interview, written records, images, clothing and behaviour observed (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). The use of qualitative research has helped to describe and understand individuals or a groups of people with a common identity as well as to generate and develop theoretical

understandings of phenomena. There are five basic ways of conducting qualitative research: case study, ethnography study, phenomenological study, grounded theory study and content analysis, (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Williams, 2007). The case study examines an individual, program, or event, while an entire community that shares a common culture is studied by ethnography. Grounded theory research is the process of collecting data, analysing the data and repeating the process in a format called constant comparative method. The purpose of the Phenomenological Study is to understand an experience from the point of view of the participants while the content analysis reviews forms of human communication including books, newspapers and films as well as other forms to identify patterns, themes or biases (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The case study qualitative approach used helped the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding, identify and appreciate the participants with a shared identity as Dangme people who share a common culture in Ghana.



### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

A paradigm is a fundamental belief system, theoretical structure and assumptions in the field of research (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). They further added that it is a way of understanding and studying the reality of the world. Research paradigm is grouped into three basic elements. These are the positivism or post-positivism paradigm, the interpretivism or constructivism paradigm and the pragmatism paradigm (Yelkpereri & Tamanja, 2019; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). These paradigms help the novice researcher to establish the philosophical stand of the work under study.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that qualitative study requires the adoption of an interpretative and naturalistic approach that relies on different kinds of subjective data and examines individuals in their natural environment in unique circumstances. This

means that the qualitative researchers “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret the phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p.3). Hence, the philosophical assumption underlying this study is driven from the interpretive or constructivism paradigmatic point of view. In order to understand the historical and cultural environments of the participants, the interpretive or constructivist helped to focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work (Creswell, 2003). This paradigm according to Rehman and Alharthi (2016), seeks to understand individuals understanding of the social phenomena they interact with. In order to make meanings of the collected data, this paradigm helped the researcher to collect qualitative data in the form of interviews, observation, documentation and photographs from participants. Inductively, some part of the data was analysed to create patterns from specific themes to general themes drawn from interpretations subjected to the context of the participants.

### **3.3 Research Design**

Although the paradigm forms the basis of research, the main plan for the whole research work is the research design. Research design is the rationale or master plan of a study that shows how to conduct the research (Pelleth, 2010). Kothari (2004) reiterates that the conceptual context within which the research is conducted shapes the research design. He believes it is a blueprint for knowledge gathering, measurement and analysis. Research design according to Kothari, has a great influence on the reliability of the result arrived and as such, constitutes the firm foundation of the entire research work edifice. Therefore, it should be done carefully because any error in it may upset the entire research. Research design is a type of investigation within the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide accurate direction for procedures in a study (Creswell, 2003).

Based on the nature of the study, the case study and descriptive design under the qualitative method of research was employed. These designs enabled the researcher to gather qualitative data in words rather than numbers to explore the meaning and concept of the phenomena during interpretation and analysis. In order to achieve a deeper understanding of the cultural as well as symbolic significance of textile products used by the Dangme people in Ghana, both case study and descriptive design were combined in the study.

Crowe, Creswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery and Sheikh (2011) describes case study as a research approach that is used in its actual context to produce a detailed, multi-faceted understanding of a complex problem. They argue that case study can be defined in various ways but the central tenet is to explore an occurrence or phenomenon in detail and in its natural context. In congruence to this, Creswell (2014) postulates that, a case study is an in-depth investigation of a bounded system such as activity, occurrence, process and individuals based on a comprehensive data collection. He went further to explain the bounded system as a case which is separated out for research in terms of time, place or some physical boundaries. In this research, the use of case study is bound by location, time and emphasis on the Dangme people of Greater Accra. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) states that case studies attempt to learn more about a situation that is little known or poorly understood.

Case study is categorized into three main types; intrinsic, instrumental and collective (Crowe et al, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015; Suryani, 2008). An intrinsic case study is an in-depth description of a specific individual, organization, or occurrence conducted in order to explain the specific case. An instrumental case study is a case study performed to provide more general insight into the perception of problems or phenomena than just the individual case (Christensen, Johnson

& Turner, 2015). The collective case study also requires the simultaneous or sequential analysis of many cases in an effort to create an even wider understanding of a specific problem (Crowe et al, 2011). Case study provides a thorough and holistic overview of each case and the context in which it is embedded to reflect both the insider view of each case and the outsider's objective point of view (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). For the purpose of understanding the Dangme symbolism in relation to their textiles products, the intrinsic case study was used. This helped to obtain an in-depth understanding and description of the cultural stances during rites of passage in Ghana. The study relied on the interview and illustrations to provide an in-depth understanding of the case.

Qualitative descriptive research design on the other hand explains phenomena as they occur by answering the questions, when, when, who, where, how and when. It seeks to accurately portray the characteristics of a particular group or situation in describing social events, social structure and social situations (Akhtar, 2016). The descriptive research is used to identify and obtain information on the characteristics of a particular issue like community, group or people.

Descriptive case study according to Yin (2018) is a case study aimed at explaining a phenomenon (the case) in its real-world context. A descriptive case study is a concentrated and thorough case study in which proposals and concerns regarding a phenomenon are thoroughly investigated and articulated at the outset (Durepos, Mills, & Wiebe, 2010). Yin further stated that it is possible to use case study design in descriptive, explanatory, and evaluative modes. In congruent with Yin (2018), Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) postulates that the purpose of case study is in three folds. The first is to explain a phenomenon in rich detail, the second develops an explanation for a phenomenon while the last fold describes the phenomenon. Although this research focused intentionally on



exploring the symbolic significance of the use of textile products among the Dangme in rich detail, the other two purposes were also utilized to throw more light on the case being studied. The study employs descriptive case study to reveal patterns and connections, in relation to theoretical constructs, in order to advance theory development in the symbolic use of textile products among the Dangme people.

### **3.4 Population of the Study**

The population for the study are the Dangme people in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Population is a group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common which are of interest to the researcher (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). Population is generally classified as the target and accessible population. The target population according to Bartlett et al. (2001) as cited in Asiamah, Mensah, and Oteng-Abayie (2017) is the entire group of individuals or participants with unique interest attributes that are relevant to a study. On the other hand, the accessible population is the final group of participants from which data is collected by surveying either all its members or a sample drawn from it. It represents the actual sampling frame (Bartlett et al., 2001) which consist of all the elements in the population. The sampling frame of this study was derived from the geographical location, socioeconomic background and level of knowledge on the symbolic relevance of textiles products in Dangme rites of passage.

Although the target population for the study are the populace of the Dangme group in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, the accessible population constituted traditional leaders, elderly indigenes, textiles educators and youth of Ningo traditional area. The homogenous type of population was considered for the study because of the similar characteristics shared by the Ningo people in relation to dialect, practices and values.

### **3.5 Sample and Sampling Technique**

After a representative number of the population was selected, the researcher focused on designing the sample for the study. A sample design according to Kothari (2004) is a definite strategy to obtain a sample from a given population or the technique that the researcher would adopt when choosing items for the sample. Sampling is explained by Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2015) as drawing elements from a population to obtain a sample. With a similar view, Kothari posits that sampling technique is the process of selecting respondents that constitute the study.

The sampling technique adopted for this study was the purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The purposive sampling technique enabled the researcher to select or identify individuals with authority or in-depth knowledge of issues related to the symbolic significance of the textile products used during rites of passage among the Dangme people of Ningo. Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2015) emphasize that when using purposive sampling, the researcher needs to specify the characteristics of the population of interest and then locates individuals who fit the appropriate characteristics in the case of the Ningo. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the elderly indigenes, the youth and textile educators. The sample size consists of twelve (12) respondents. One (1) traditional leader, one (1) youth chief, five (5) elderly indigenes, four (4) for the youth and one (1) textiles educator.

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

Data Instrumentation according to Fraenkel and Wallen, (2000) is the process of data gathering which involves selecting or designing of the instrument and the collection under which the research tools would be administered. Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2015) augments that data collection is how the researcher obtains the empirical data to

be used to answer his or her research questions. In order to achieve the purpose of this research, the study adopted Interviews, observation and photographs as instruments for the data collection to obtain first-hand information and ensure trustworthiness in the study.

### *3.6.1 Interview*

According to Leedy and Ormord (2001), an interview is a two-person conversation that is usually facilitated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining relevant information for the study. Christensen, Johnson and Turner (2015) added that interviews are conducted in face-to-face situations and also over the telephone. Interview can be classified as Structured, Semi-structured and Unstructured interview (Kabir, 2018). The semi-structured interview was specifically used in this study. It is a qualitative research data collection method which explores more open-ended questions which allows the interviewee to discuss particular responses further on the subject matter. The interview guide was developed based on the objectives and research questions. It allowed probes and follow up questions needed to clarify the meaning of responses and encouraged in-depth descriptions of the phenomena. Kabir postulates that semi-structured interviews are often preceded by observation, informal and unstructured interviewing in order to allow the researchers to develop a keen understanding of the topic of interest necessary for developing relevant and meaningful semi-structured questions. It provided a reliable and comparable qualitative data which gave informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms.

### 3.6.2 *Observation*

Observation is a natural way of gathering real and true data. Observation according to Kabir (2018) is a simple way to learn about the world around us. In observation, the researcher uses all the senses to examine people in the natural settings or circumstances that arise spontaneously in order to eradicate bias in the study. Kothari (2004) added that, information gathered is sought by way of the researcher's own direct observation without asking from the respondent. In qualitative research, the degree of observation varies depending on the choice and research design adopted by the research. Observation can be structured, unstructured, non-participant or participant observation. Structured observation employs a checklist of observations in which all aspects of fascinating phenomena are written to direct the items to be observed (Yelkpiri & Tamanja, 2019). Unstructured observation is achieved without any functionality to be considered in advance (Kothari, 2004). Participant observation on the other hand, involves making oneself, more or less, a member of the group observed to experience what the members of the group are experiencing to gain a better understanding of the activity under study. In non-participant observation, the observer observes as a detached emissary without any attempt on their part to experience through participation what others feel (Kothari, 2004).

The researcher employed the non-participant observation in order to gather vivid information and also pay close attention to the textile culture of the Dangme people during rites of passage. This helped the researcher to make significant meaning of the symbolic elements within the use of the textile products. In order not to lose focus by immersing oneself into the observation, the researcher used an audio recorder and digital camera to capture interested phenomena during the observation.

### 3.6.3 *Illustrations*

Illustrations from archives were also used as an instrument in the study. The photographs from historical records brought out evidence from the archival records of the Dangmes in relations to the textile products used during their rites of passage. The images used helped to gather relevant data to support the study.

## 3.7 **Data Collection Procedure**

Data for the study were classified into two, the primary data and the secondary data. The primary data were obtained from the first-hand-experience gathered on the field through interview, observation and illustrations. The primary data were gathered by observing and communicating with the people through interviews. The researcher before conducting the interview, visited the towns to make the necessary contacts and appointments for the interview. A semi-structured interview guide was drafted for the interviewees based on the research questions and the objectives of the study. In order for the participants to express themselves better, their responses to the interview questions were in the Dangme language. It was recorded and later transcribed into English language. During the observation phase of the study, the researcher took field notes to help retrieve important information for the study. Images were carefully selected based on their support and relevance to the study.

Relevant literature reviewed in the study was based on the secondary data gathered. Secondary data are any data collected from a source that has already been published in any form (Kabir, 2018). The data for the study were collected through information from books, journals, annual reports, unpublicised theses and dissertations from the internet and libraries among others.

### **3.8 Data Analysis Plan**

The study employed visual, descriptive and thematic analysis to breakdown the gathered data into smaller parts based on the research questions. Morse and Field (1996) briefly explains that thematic analysis involves the search for and identification of common trends that extend throughout an entire interview or set of interviews. Themes are usually quite abstract and therefore difficult to identify. In thematic analysis, patterns are often identified and coded conceptually into important and interesting themes so that one item may be relevant for several purposes. It provides good descriptive information from the data. The gathered data from the interview and observation were analysed and interpreted based on the principle of thematic analysis. It was done by organizing the data according to recurrent themes found and constructed in a non-biased way to create a coherent story from the data.

Illustrations gathered from the field employed visual analysis to aesthetically analyse and describe the textile products, based on the content to bring out the symbolic significance behind the use of textile products of the Dangme people during rites of passage. Visual analysis is a form of qualitative data used to understand and interpret images (Barbour, 2014). The method enhanced the richness of the imagery data gathered from the field. The descriptive qualitative analysis was also utilised in the study. Visual analysis was employed to discuss research question one while the descriptive analysis was used to develop in detail the research question two. Finally, the thematic analysis was adopted to organise the research question three into themes set to bring out rich details in the study.

### **3.9 Ethical Consideration**

A sound research is a moral and ethical undertaking which ensure that the interests of those involved in a study are not compromised by the research being carried out (Halai, 2006). Based on this premise, participants were informed about the study and only participants who agreed to the study were interviewed. Similarly, interviewees consent were sought before all recording and photographs necessary for the study was taken. With the exception of those that were important to the research and required to be identified, all private subjects that were discussed were kept extremely confidential. The identities of participants have also not been released in any way.

### **3.10 Ensuring Trustworthiness**

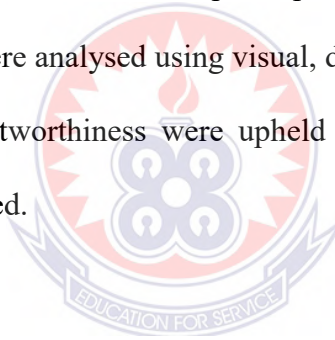
Trustworthiness of a study is very relevant for ensuring credibility in research (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). In the pursuit of ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research, Guba (1981) as cited in Shenton (2004) recommends the criteria of credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity) in the study. Credibility was ensured in this study by the use of the strategy of triangulation. Triangulation according to Korstjens and Moser (2018) aims at using multiple approach of data collection methods to enhance the process of qualitative research.

In accordance with this, the study employed semi-structure interviews, non-participant observation and illustrations as data collection methods for triangulation to increase the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. The study used the multiple source of data that emerged from the analysis process to describe vividly the phenomena under study. Some themes were generated based on common codes presented by the data

on the symbolism of textile products among the Dangme group to help enhance the validity of the study. At the end of the study, inputs were made, mistakes were corrected as well as accuracy ensured through the use of peer briefing.

### **3.11 Summary**

This chapter explicates detailed procedures and processes employed to collect data for the study. The study adapted qualitative approach which was drawn on the descriptive case study design to explore the symbolic significance to textile products among Dangme during rites of passage. Data was collected through different instruments such as semi-structure interviews, non-participant observation and illustrations. The information collected were analysed using visual, descriptive and thematic analysis tool. Confidentiality and trustworthiness were upheld in the study to ensure validity and reliability of data gathered.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.0 Overview

This chapter presents detailed discussion of data gathered through interviews, observation and illustrations on symbolic significance of textile products in rites of passage among Dangmes in Ghana. For easy analysis and interpretation, data gathered centred on the principle of visual, descriptive and thematic analysis. Data gathered were presented in two sections. The first section focused on the demographic data of the participants in the study. The second section, however, focused on the presentation and analysis of data from the interview, observation sections as well as illustrations based on the research questions.

#### 4.1 Demographic Data of the Respondents

The demographics cover the sex, age range, town affiliation and status. A total of twelve (12) respondents formed the sample size for the study.

Table 1:

*Demographic Data of Respondents*

| Question | Items          | Respondents | Percentage | Total |
|----------|----------------|-------------|------------|-------|
| Sex      | Female         | 8           | 67%        | 100%  |
|          | Male           | 4           | 33%        |       |
| Age      | Above 50 years | 6           | 50%        | 100%  |
|          | 30-40          | 4           | 33%        |       |
|          | 20-29          | 2           | 17%        |       |

*(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)*

Table 1 represents the demographic data collected. Out of the twelve (12) respondents, four (4) were males whereas eight (8) were females. These represent thirty-three percent (33%) and sixty-seven percent (67%) respectively. Six (6) respondents were above fifty (50) years representing fifty percent (50%), four (4) were between thirty (30) and forty (40) years which also represents thirty-three percent (33%) while the remaining two (2) were between the ages of twenty (20) and twenty-nine (29) also represents seventeen percent (17%). All twelve (12) respondents were from Ningo Township.

From the Table 1 above, females dominate in the study because they use textile products most in the community. Although men perform certain roles during the performance of the rites of passage, the data revealed that females play the majority of the roles in the performance because they mostly perform the rites for the women. They also have better knowledge and experience about the performance of the rites. Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents were above fifty (50) years which reveals that the data was gathered from people with adequate knowledge and experience in the subject matter being studied. It also revealed that the aged had a better understanding of the rites and customs of the land.

#### **4.2 RQ1, Usage of Textile Products during Rites of Passage among Dangmes**

This research question sought to address the kind of textile products used by the Dangmes during the performance of rites of passage. Before delving into the intricacies of the question, it is prudent to examine the historical background of the people on which the study was conducted as emerged from the interview.

#### 4.2.1 *History of Ningo*

According to a traditional leader, natives of Ningo were part of the Ga-Adangme ethnic group that migrated from Israel, settled in *Ile Ifi* in Nigeria and then moved to Gold Coast (Ghana). Ga and Dangme people stayed together in unity at a town called *Lɔlɔvɔ* in Ewe language which literally means ‘the love is finished’. In affirmation, Fiorgbor, Tetteh, and Nartey, (2019) attested that the people stayed at Tagologo for a longer period until an issue broke out and they separated. They renamed the place *Lɔlɔvɔ*, an Ewe phrase meaning ‘love is finished.’ This was because, at *Lɔlɔvɔ*, they fought among themselves and got separated. During those times, there was no proper hunting and fishing. A group of individuals moved together in search of food which indirectly caused the migration from one place to the other. Wherever they found food or fruits, they stayed there and fed on it until it got finished, then they move to another place.

In the quest of searching for food, according to the traditional leader, a man by name Djangmah discovered the Ningo land. The Djangmah group became the first clan to arrive in the Ningo land. The Ningo people did not move as a group to the area of settlement, rather, they moved to the land individually (which formed the different clans at Ningo). The Ningo town was divided into four divisions. These divisions was made up of clans. The clans are made up of groups known as *kanya*. Names of the Ningo people are different because of their connection with the Ewe, Hausa and Asante ethnic groups they stayed with. This is due to how the people came to settle in the land. For instance, if an individual moves to the town and realises that it is a good place for settlement, he or she goes back to bring his siblings to settle there with him. He recounted that the interesting aspect of the whole settlement issue is that two clans may be siblings. Two siblings who settled in different parts of the town welcomed different people from any ethnic group who decided to settle with them and they became a clan. They mingle with

Ewe, Akan and other ethnic groups to become one *kanya* which literally means ‘people who can join hands in one earthenware’. So they are called *Ayigbe* (Ewe) *kanya*, Asante *kanya* and Dangme *kanya*. So a clan (*kanya*) may be founded by an ancestor from an ethnic group but founders of some of the groups that form the clan are from different ethnic groups.

According to the traditional leader, around 1500 AC, the Great Ningo people had already settled in the land according to the ‘*Kanya*’. Anquandah (2001) confirmed that Ga and Dangme people settled in the current location but it is generally pointed to the 14<sup>th</sup> century and gained roots in the 1500s. Great Ningo as they are mostly called is made up of four (4) major divisions. They are the *Loowe* (fish division or people), *Djanmaku* (division of the relatives of *Djangmah*), *Looweƙponɔ* or *Kponguno* (the fish people on the hill) and *Kabiawe* (the leopard people or the people who are as brave as leopard).

Table 2:

*Divisions and their Responsibilities*

| Division                              | Role            | Responsibility  |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| <i>Loowe</i> or <i>Looweƙponɔ</i>     | Paramount Chief | Serve as paramount chief in the town  |
| Divisional chief of <i>Kabiawe</i>    | Maklalo         | Serve as the Prime Minister of the town   |
| Divisional chief of <i>Djanmaku</i>   | Banahene        | Serve administrative purposes in the town   |
| Divisional chief of <i>Loowe</i>      | Simpi           | Serve as the commander in chief for all the <i>Asafoatsɛ</i> in the town  |
| Divisional chief of <i>Looweƙponɔ</i> | Jase            | Serve as storekeepers who safe guard the weapon. Take care of the properties of the chief including his arms and armoires |

(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

Table 2 displays the various native divisions within the Ningo traditional area and the roles and responsibilities they play in society.

The people of Ningo are patrilineal. The traditional leader reiterated that the people of Ga and the Ningo are also siblings but the difference is the change in language. The Ningo people also celebrate Homowo one month after the celebration of the Ga people. It is mostly celebrated either at the ending of August or the first week in September depending on the Ga calendar. Previously, the Dangme and Ga people were not ruled by kings but by priest (*wɔ nɔ*). Fiorgbor, Kuwornu-Adjaottor and Nartey (2019) assert that the Dangme rulership is based on theocracy (a system of supremacy where rulers were priests with divine intuition). He narrated that the issue of kingship started as a result of borrowed culture from the Akan during the war with them. Djanmah became the first king in Ningo because he was the first person to discover the land. Formally, the priest of the *Djange* (gods) known as *Djange wɔ nɔ* was the one who ruled the entire traditional area. The king of Ningo serves a dual function. He serves as a king (*Matsɛ*) at the same time as the priest (*Djange wɔ nɔ*) of the traditional area. The kingship follows an order in the town and the various functions are distributed among the four divisions that built the town.

#### 4.2.2 *Rite of Passage among the Dangme People*

The culture of a people comes in many forms. Culture can be associated with how a group of people dress, the kind of names given to their offsprings, the food they eat and rituals they perform including their history. Aziza (2001) states that culture includes everything that distinct one group from the other. Examples are their greeting habits, dressing, social norms and taboos, food, songs and dance patterns, rites of passages from birth, through marriage to death, traditional occupations, religious as well as

philosophical beliefs. The people of Ningo have great respect for tradition and values. They also perform various rites and rituals including chieftaincy, rites of passage and other events. The study delves into the textiles products used during rites of passage among the Ningo people. According to the respondents, rites of passage are the transitional stage a person passes through from one stage of life to the other. The various stages of the rites of passage of the people of Ningo are not different from the general Ghanaian perspective of rites of passage. It caters for all aspects of the culture in society. During these stages, artforms are used; beads, sculpture, pottery, body art, performing art and textiles. Afful and Nantwi (2018) explain that these art forms are significant and symbolic in nature. The rite begins when a child is born (*Bi kpojemi*), to a point where the child grows and the culture of the people demands that the child be initiated into adulthood (*Dipo or Si womi*), marriage (*Gbami*) and finally death (*Gbe no*).

#### 4.2.3 *Textile Product Used During Birth Rites*

The rites of Birth and the naming ceremony are performed by almost every African culture (Ampim, 2003). The data collected on birth rites according to the two elderly women revealed that life begins at birth. When a child is born, it is believed that he or she is a gift from God to the parents as well as the family. When a wife is pregnant, it proves the man has performed well as a husband. The pregnant woman is taken care of by the man till delivery. According to one elderly woman, the people of Ningo believe that pregnancy is the midpoint of life and death so after delivery, the woman is congratulated and the baby is duly welcomed into the world. The man immediately begins preparation for the *Bi kpojemi* (naming ceremony) on the eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) day just like Ga and Akan people. The baby is kept in the room for seven (7) days to protect him or her from

evil eyes. On the eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) day, the child is brought out in a ceremony known as *Bi kpojemi* or naming ceremony.

The ceremony starts early in the morning around four o'clock (4:00 a.m.) with few people from both sides of the family. The father presents items for the ceremony. The woman is given two (2) white clothes (*Bo futaa*) and two (2) coloured cloth (*Bo tsutsu*) either printed fabric, lace or kente depending on the man's wealth. The baby is also welcomed with items such as white dresses, mat, basket, basin, beads, *abakle* and *suboe* for the only female child as well as other gifts from loved ones. The textile products used during naming ceremony such as the *Abakle*, *suboe*, *klada*, the white and coloured clothes mostly used are described below.



Figure 1: Babies with *Abakle* tied around their wrist (arrowed).  
(Source: Field work and Akane's Gallery, 2020)

*Abakle* represented as Fig. 1 is a twisted cotton yarn with one bead in the middle worn around the wrist of the baby. This is usually a gift from the paternal grandmother. A double-ply of white cotton yarn is inserted through a bead, pulled to balance symmetrically leaving the bead in the middle and tied together with a water knot. Another

four (4) plies of the cotton yarn is twisted around the two plies inserted in the bead from one side of the bead to the other. The twisting is done close to each other in a very compact manner to hide the first yarn inserted into the bead. The colour of the bead ranges from green, blue, white to multi-colours and they are in the forms of rectangular and cylindrical shapes. According to an elderly woman, the type of bead used determines the name given to the *abakle*. The common names given are *jafi* and *adiagba*. Mostly the *jafi* is given to a female child while the *adiagba* is given to a male child. Sometimes, it is used interchangeably. The *abakle* is given to the first child in the family and passed on to other siblings that come after them. It is tied on the right wrist of the child which is visible to anyone who sees the child. The child wears the *abakle* for a long period until the yarn around it tears apart or tightens the child's wrist.



Figure 2: A baby tied with *klada* on the left wrist (arrowed)  
(Source: Artist Impression, 2020)

According to the elderly women, *klada* (fig.2) is a small strip of fabric tied around the left wrist of the baby who loses one of the parents. It is a fabric which was used and cherished by the deceased. It measures 0.5inches by 8 or 10 inches depending on the size of the child's wrist. The fabrics are different in colour, type and design. The water knot is used to secure the fabric around the baby's wrist. It is knotted by laying the strap of



fabric symmetrically on the wrist of the child. One end of the strap is passed over the other twice and the two straps are pulled to tighten the knot leaving about 2 inches of the strap hanging to make it visible. The baby wears the *klada* all the time until it tears apart. When the child is always feverish after the death of a parent, it is believed that the parent comes to stand or scare the child so the *klada* is worn for the child.



Figure 3: A female child dressed in *suboe* (Loin cloth)  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

The data revealed that traditionally, the *suboe* (fig.3) is given to baby girls to be worn as pants. It is a long strip of fabric usually measuring 6 by 40 inches for children. It is a plain-woven cotton fabric in red colour with small white squares creating triangular-shaped designs arranged in full drop. For children, the *suboe* is affixed to the waist bead to hang symmetrically at the front and back in between the two legs to cover the private part. The front part is rolled over the bead until all is rolled up to form a pant-like structure at the front leaving the backside hanging. The child wears it anytime to play. Although

female children are given *suboe* as the tradition demands, the parents do not mostly wear it for their girls these days, they rather prefer wearing girl's pants for their girls.

#### 4.2.3.1 *Some clothes used during the naming ceremony among the Dangme people*

*Although the woman is given clothes, there is no particular cloth associated with us like the Asante people but mostly the clothes that we choose have symbolic meaning to either how the child was born, the love the man has for his wife and so on (Youth Chief).*

*We mostly use printed fabrics like GTP, ATL, Printex and lace. Even sometimes kente is used. We do not just buy any cloth. From naming, we buy clothes like Obukamada, Magoo tsoba and others with symbolic meanings (Elderly women).*



Figure 4: *Otompa*  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

Fig. 4 consists of leaves in the resemblance of wheat leaves and stars which are linked to the leaf by line to create the motif in the fabric. The leaf patterns are arranged all-over the fabric with the stars connected by lines to the leaves in an open-spaced full-drop manner. The design contains various elements including shape, dots, wavy lines, textures and colour which was organised to create unity, balance and harmony in the

background. The entire design is tinted to form the texture and create contrast in the fabric. *Otompa* literally means (Carry me down from the river).



Figure 5: *Magoo tsoba*  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

Fig. 5 known in Dangme as *Magoo tsoba* (Mango-tree-leaves) is designed with floral patterns joined by chains of veins arranged all-over the surface of the cloth. The floral patterns form the main motif in the fabric. The fabric comprises different elements of design including shape (floral pattern), lines (curvy, diagonal and spiral), dots and colour. These elements were organized to flow rhythmically with a variety of floral shapes and lines harmonising to create contrast in the design.



Figure 6: *Katietoto bo*  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

Another cloth of interest used is the *Katistoto bo* (Fig. 6) which literally means 'groundnut cover'. The design was created from the outer cover of groundnuts as the main motif. The motif was arranged diagonally in a half-drop manner. The texture connects in a tint of the main colour of the design which was blue-black. Lines, shapes, colour, space and texture form the main elements in the design. To create a pleasing atmosphere in the design, the arrangement of the elements create unity, harmony, balance following a rhythmic movement which brought about a pleasant atmosphere in the design.



Figure 7: *Kuadaa ba*  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

The *kuadaa ba* (pepper leaves or leaf) in fig.7 is designed with leaves and pepper on a stem forming the main motif which was arranged in an all-over repeat pattern in the cloth. The motifs are connected with the help of short curvy lines. Around the edges of the motif are white shapes created accidentally to give a unique textured effect in the background. Elements of design such as lines, shapes, colour and dots were carefully blended to create unity and variety in the cloth. The principle of contrast was created based on the colours used in the cloth.

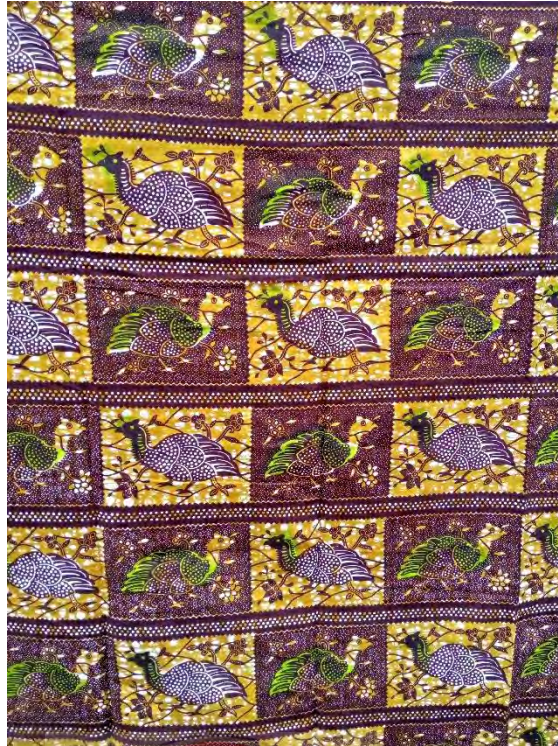


Figure 8: *Wobi bo*  
(Source: *Fieldwork*, 2020)

*Wobi bo* (guinea fowl cloth) as the name suggests in fig.8 is designed with the image of guinea fowl arranged in the full-drop repeat pattern. The guinea fowl served as the main motifs. Floral patterns and curvy lines connect the motifs in a counterchange pattern. Each motif was inserted in a rectangular box which differentiates the two main colours in the fabric. All motifs inserted in the brown coloured boxes were coloured in the brown and lemon-green colour to bring out details of the natural dense beaded-shape white spots on their feathers. On the other hand, the motifs created in the gold rectangular boxes were not coloured yet their natural beaded-shape white spots were detailly visible. Thick horizontal lines with zigzag edges were created up and beneath each horizontal unit repeat of the motif. Within the thick horizontal lines are dots horizontally arranged in steps of three to emphasize the thick horizontal lines. The background texture consists of irregular dots in white colour which projects the beauty of the design. Symmetric balance

and contrast were achieved based on the arrangement of the motifs and the colour scheme respectively which created a rhythmic movement, unity and harmony in the fabric.



Figure 9: *Ketewusisi*  
(Source: *Fieldwork*, 2020)

Another interesting design used during birth is the *ketewusisi* (fig.9). It comes in various colour schemes including blue-black and white. The name of the cloth is likened to the shape of the base of a basket, hence the *Dangme* name *ketewusisi*. Consisting of several circular-shaped designs arranged in the full-drop repeat pattern form the main motifs in the cloth. The motifs are designed in the resemblance of a ripple effect to create radial balance when a stone is thrown in the middle of a well. This effect splits into several connecting dots of different shapes and sizes arranged circularly to create the impression of a radial balance in the cloth. The motifs connect to each other with the help of short lines. The background of the design was treated in the wax-drop effect to enhance the appearance of the design. Elements such as dots, shapes, lines, colour and texture were governed by the principle of unity, balance, radial movement and variety to create an interesting harmonious effect in the cloth.

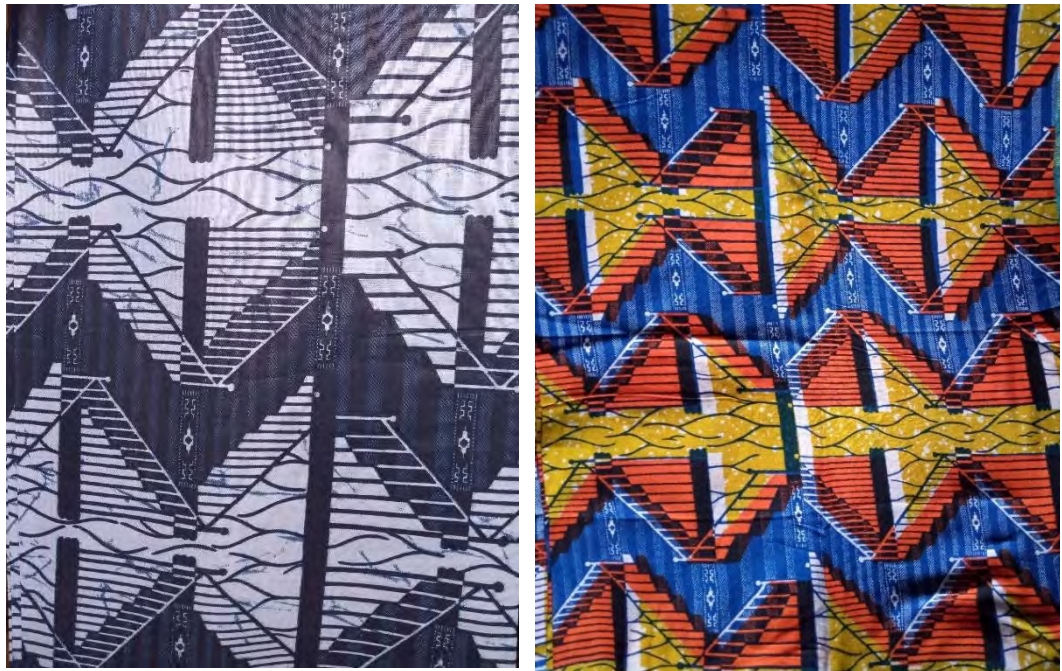


Figure 10: *Sanga dɔmi*  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

Figure 10 shows lines arranged horizontally to create broad zigzag effects designs in the cloth. These lines were treated in a ladder-like chain which forms an arrow-like shape movement in upward direction in the cloth. The broad zigzag lines together with the ladder-like lines at the edges form the main motif in the cloth. To break away the monotonous nature of the design, the designer employed thick vertical lines which run through each pattern repeatedly in the design. The motifs were arranged in an arrow-like pattern which runs horizontally in the cloth. Depending on the nature of the design, the background texture was either treated with wax-effect of lines and dots which created a crackle effect to enhance the beauty of the design. The design contains curvy lines connected to create harmony and unity in the design. Lines, shapes, texture and colours are organised to project the principle of balance and rhythm in the cloth. The tinted nature of the background texture in the cloth, coupled with the colours of the motifs created contrast in the design. *Sanga dɔmi* literally means (Cobra's valley).

After birth, when the child grows to a certain age, it is believed that he or she has transmitted from childhood and gradually into adulthood, therefore another rite is performed to usher the child into adulthood. This rite is known as puberty rites.

#### 4.2.4 Textile Product Used During Puberty Rites

Puberty rites according to Ezenweke (2016) are the rites performed to help a person move from childhood to adulthood. Just like the Akan, Ewe, Krobo and Ga ethnic groups, natives of Ningo prepare and train their young girls and boys from childhood into adulthood. In a personal conversation with a traditional leader, the Ningo people perform three types of puberty rites depending on the affiliated clan of the individual. He recounted that ‘the people belonging to the *Loowe* clan performs *Dipo* because they are the crown bearers and part of the *Le* people just like the *Osu-Doku and Krobo* people. Some part of the *Kabiawe* clan performs *Si* while others perform *Razu*. Some clans do not perform any rite for their young children. This contradicts Kyei (1945), Klu (2014) and Ostrow (2011) which stated *bragoro*, *ezi udze* and *dipo* as a general puberty rites performed by the Akan, Ewe and Krobo respectively.

Data indicates that formerly the people married early so the girl is initiated into the *dipo* or *Si* around age nine (9) to twelve (12) and she must be a virgin. In the case of *dipo*, if the *dipo yo* (*dipo girl*) was not a virgin, she had to speak out so that a ritual was performed on her before continuing the other stages. When she refused to speak and she was made to sit on the sacred *dipo* stone, she would get stuck to it. Due to chieftaincy disputes, the sacred stone was taken away from the town and the *dipo* stopped since 1976. If the town decides to enstool a chief, he is sent to *Osu-doku* for the *dipo* rites because he is to marry either a *dipo yo* or *Si yo*.



According to the respondents, the *Si* is different because it is done even when the girl is pregnant. The *razu* is performed for only pregnant women. The main puberty rite now is the *Si*. The *Si yo* together with their cousins and sisters move from house to house (parents family house) in the town to gather dirty clothes from the people. These clothes are sent to the stream and washed, perfumed and arranged in a basin for distribution. The *Si yo* is dressed in a cloth called *titliku* which is covered with the *suboe* and beaded-bells around her ankle and accompanied with songs through the town. The girls accompanying her carry the washed clothes in a basin and send them back to the homes they were gathered from. On their return, a meal is prepared for them to eat and make merry. During the night, the beaded-bells are removed and kept in a room for three (3) days. She is then trained by the *yomoyo hi* (elderly women) on how to treat their husbands, homes and families in marriage. Boakye, (2010) also stated that the girls acquire the knowledge of womanhood. This happens when the girls are taken to a place and thorough education is done for them on how to handle themselves as women and during the menstrual periods. The girl is later sent to the *Oyile piɛnya* for the *oyili wɔ nɔ* (priestess) to perform a ritual for the initiation rite where she sits on a sacred stone wearing the *titriku* cloth. After which, the clothes which will be used for dressing her are picked and placed on her waist three (3) times from her back and given to her to change into it.

The next morning according to the respondents, the *Si yo* goes to the *Sa kumi*. This is where a man accompanies her to the seashore to dig a hole at the shore for the seawater to fill it. (The man could be her brother or suitor). With a pot, the *Si yo* fetches the water from the dug hole at the shore while people accompany her with songs to the *Oyile piɛmi* three (3) times. The fourth one which is the last one is sent to her house to appreciate her for her good efforts. As a sign of thanksgiving, the *Si yo* dresses up in the *suboe* or printed

loin cloth with chest uncovered, accompanied by singers as she parades through the town and dances as people shower her with gifts.

The data revealed that items for the ‘*Si*’ rite are provided by the father or husband-to-be of the *Si yo*. In the case where the father pays for the items, he levies the cost of it on the man who decides to marry the girl. Formally, *suboe* was the only fabric used in dressing the *Si yo*. Currently, the *suboe* is worn under a wax printed fabric which is used for the covering. This is due to the limited designs of the *suboe* cloth, but the wax printed clothes have a variety of designs which the girl changes every day until the *Si* rite is over. Items needed for the *Si* rite are *titliku*, *suboe*, beads, wax printed cloth and headgear.



Figure 11: *Titliku*  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

Figure 11 represents a local kente design pattern. It consists of two strip designs joined together, one a unit cloth used to cover the private part of the *Si* girl. The cloth contains different designs arranged in rectangular shapes. Plain weave pattern was used to create the various rectangular-shaped designs in the background. The designs consist

of short-thick lines, palm-like design with the fingers opened and triangular-shaped designs converging at the middle apex. These triangular designs created a diamond-like shape in the design. The ash coloured background and the colourful designs in red, yellow, blue, black and white created a beautiful contrast in the cloth. It is worn under the *suboe* by the old woman who performs the rite for the girl.



Figure 12: A young lady dressed in *suboe* cloth covering her private part during *Si* rite.  
(Source: Artist Impression, 2020)

During the *Si* rite, as tradition demands, the young girl is dressed in the *suboe* or loin cloth in fig.12. It is a plain-woven cotton fabric in red colour with small white squares creating triangular-shaped designs arranged in full drop. It is a long strip of fabric which measures 1 by 8 or 10 feet depending on the height of the *Si yo*. For her, the *suboe* is inserted through the waist beads between the two legs tightly from the front to the backside to cover the private part. It is left hanging by pulling it to her feet from one side until the length of the front balance symmetrically with that of the backside. The *suboe* is worn as part of the dressing styles of the *Si y'*. Formally, the *suboe* was the only fabric

used for dressing during the Si rite but currently, printed clothes are used while the *suboe* is worn underneath the cloth. This is because the *suboe* had only three designs therefore the ‘*Si*’ girl would end up repeating them. But the cloth has variations in designs that the *Si yo* can change all the time until the *Si* period is over. The *suboe* is 100% cotton properly because of its hydrophilic nature to absorb a significant amount of blood without feeling wet. The choice of this particular textile product for mensuration purposes could be as a result of several factors. Cotton as a choice has several properties that make its use easy and comfortable. It is highly absorbent, hence no matter the amount of menstrual flow, it can help to keep the girl dry always

According to the elderly women, printed clothes are also used for dressing the young lady to parade herself through the town. They explained that not any printed cloth is used but clothes which have advisory elements in them. These clothes include Ahlewukpo, Ohiafokpewete, Ludo te, Keodemingoesuioninese and so on. These clothes indirectly cautions young people about life and the society.



Figure 13: *Ahlewuipo*  
(Source: *Fieldwork*, 2020)

The design in Figure 13 which literally means sugar-cane node, contains vertical undulating lines interwoven to form a series of shapes representing sugar cane nodes. These nodes are arranged vertically to form the main motif in the cloth. The crackling effect was employed to bring out the background texture which was created with nodes packed together. The background colour of the cloth is tinted and shaded to bring out the contrast in the design. Elements of design including lines, shapes, dots, texture and colours are unutilised to create harmony in the cloth. Emphasis is placed on the vertical nodes that formed the main motif. The principle of variety in terms of the shape of the dots, lines and colours display in a rhythmic way which creates unity in the cloth.

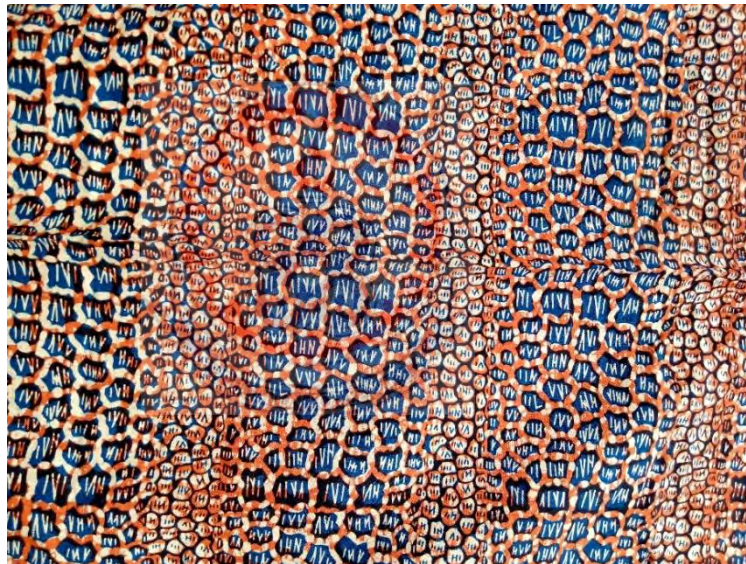


Figure 14: *Ohiafokpewetε*  
(Source: *Fieldwork*, 2020)

*Ohiafokpewetε* (the poor does not chew stone) is designed with irregular shapes in the likeness of stones. The design is arranged to create an inverse and converse structure of the stone-like shapes which are repeated all over the surface of the cloth. It created a strip-like effect on the cloth. The stone-like structure forms the main motifs as well as the texture in the background of the design. The background texture is treated with the wax drop effect in a tinted colour of the stone-like shape. Each stone-like shape contains symbols in the likeness of the alphabet (VHI) which creates emphasis in the

design. Mostly, this cloth is designed in the combination of two contrasting colours. The design comprises irregular shapes, lines, dots, colour and texture organised to create unity, variety and contrast between the background and the main design to harmonise well in the cloth.

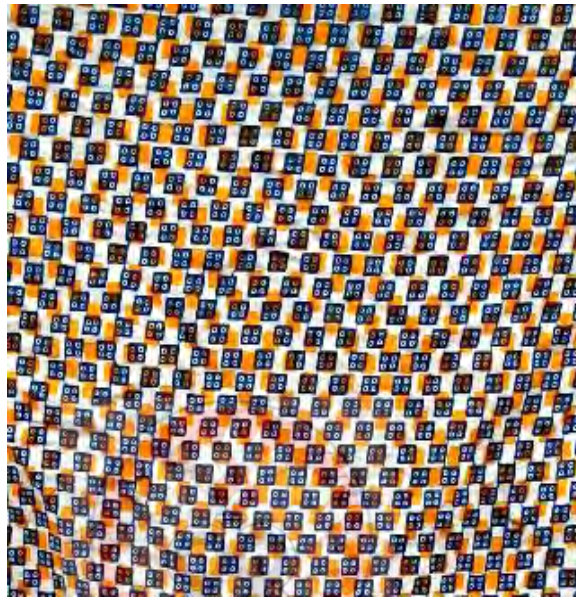


Figure 15: *Ludo tε*  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

The cloth in fig. 15 consists of small squares design arranged all over the surface of the cloth. The squares are treated in a brick repeat layout which creates a sensation of diamond-like shapes in the background. The small squares form the main motifs in the cloth. In each small square are four smaller circles which enhanced the appearance of the design. The arrangement of the squares harmoniously enhanced the principle of rhythm. Though the design is monotonous, unity and contrast are achieved based on the colours used in the design to create an interesting effect in the cloth.



Figure 16: *Keodemingwesunioninese*  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

The image of a mirrored palm forms the main motif in the *Keodemingwesunioninese* cloth (fig.16). The motifs are connected with curvy lines, horizontal lines and circles to create a full-drop repeat pattern in the design. The design consists of broad vertical and horizontal lines which house the main motifs. The broad vertical lines are arranged in a strip-like manner where a strip is shaded with a short diagonal line and the other strip is not shaded. Between each horizontal unit repeat of the motifs were broad horizontal lines which are also shaded with short diagonal lines. This horizontal line contains circles and smaller size of the motifs with holes inserted in them breaking the monotonous movement of the motifs vertically. The wax-drop effect created the textures in the background of the design. The designer employed the element of colour, shapes, lines, dots and texture to create an interesting atmosphere in the design. Contrast is achieved based on the colours used to bring out harmony in the design. Balance, unity and variety are achieved by the arrangement of motifs in the cloth. *Keodemingwesunioninese* (if the palm is sour, it does not look like the back of the palm).



Figure 17: *Mɔmɔ bo*  
(Source: *Fieldwork*, 2020)

*Mɔmɔ bo* (fig.17) literally means butterfly cloth. The cloth was designed with two butterflies connected with a circle to form the central motif. The design contains other motifs in the form of rectangular-shaped patterns with small triangles within them. The design also contains a motif with the shape of a back of a distorted tortoise. The background of the cloth was treated in the wax-effect as texture. Curvy lines connected the motifs to achieve unity and variety in the design. The motifs were arranged in a random repeat pattern to create a harmonious effect. Shapes, texture, dots, lines, space and colour form the main elements guided by the principle of harmony and unity in the design. The contrast was also achieved based on the choice of colours used in the cloth.



#### 4.2.4.1 Style of Dressing during and after the Si Rite



Figure 18: Printed cloth as loin cloth during the *Si* rite. (Half piece cloth is rolled vertically and inserted through the waist beads. It is pulled to balance symmetrically from the front to the back and left hanging.)  
(Source: Yomo Suma's Gallery)



Figure 19: Kaba and Slit without cover cloth by an unmarried lady after the *Si* rite  
(Source: Yomo Kabe's Gallery)

Puberty rite is mostly associated with marriage because as soon as the child reaches puberty, various signs begin to show. These signs become a perfect sign for the child to go into marriage. Ezenweke (2016) stated in affirmation that the puberty rites also initiate young people into marriage because the rites signify a transition from the childishness of a person to a more matured state.

#### 4.2.5 Textile Product Used During Marriage Rite

In a personal conversation with the Youth Chief, he described marriage as a relationship between two families in the society. This conforms to Forkuor, Kanwetuu, Ganee and Ndemole, (2018) that marriage goes beyond the individual but has the full involvement of both families. The traditional leader also restated that marriage among the Dangme people was in three forms:

- A situation where the parents arrange a marriage for their daughter
- A situation when a family is owing another family. The lady is forced to marry a son from their creditor's family.
- When the couple decide to marry because they know each other.

The chief of the town follows the second form, he was forced to marry a wife chosen by the *Maklalo* of the town. Normally, when a man finds a woman he wishes to marry, the first step is known as knocking. The knocking involves two things: Either the man has seen the lady and told her about his intentions or not. If the lady is aware, the drinks brought by the man's family are given to her to hand it over to her father. If not, parents of the lady ask her if she accepts the family that have come for her hand in marriage. Sometimes, the man does not go to the lady's family rather, his family does that on his behalf. The second activity is known as *da gbomi* literally means bringing drinks. This is where the man's family visits the lady's house with different kinds of alcoholic drinks to take the lady as their wife. The final stage is called *bami* meaning borrow which is the actual marriage rite. After the *da gbomi*, the man and his family revisit the lady's family to borrow her as a wife. The items needed for the rite are; printed fabrics (six for the lady, one for both father and mother), headgear, sandals, money, umbrella and walking stick for the father, *suboe* and beads for the lady, *klala* (if the woman is a priestess). Although these items are important some families decide to take cows as bride

price but even so, the man still has to provide the *suboe* and beads because the two items are constant items that must be provided by the man. Below are the descriptions of the various textile products used during marriage rite;



Figure 20: Presentation of the *sobue* to a woman at a marriage ceremony  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)



Figure 21: A woman dressed with *suboe* cloth in the form of a pant and hair cover with headgear.  
(Source: Artist Impression, 2020)

An elderly woman reiterated that the *suboe* (fig.21) is also given to women by their husbands as tradition demands during the marriage rite. It is a form of underwear for the woman to cover her private part. It is a plain-woven cotton fabric in red colour

with small white squares creating triangular-shaped designs arranged in full drop. It is a long strip of fabric which measures 1 by 6feet. The woman wears the *suboe* as pants. The long strip of fabric is folded into two along the width (1/2 feet by 6feet). The fabric is affixed tightly between the two legs through the waist beads to cover the private part. It is rolled several times through the beads until the whole strip forms a pant-like structure. It is not worn in the open but rather the husband alone sees it. The woman wears it all the time and even wears it while menstruating.

The headgear used is known as *Odasobo* in Akan language. This name was borrowed from the Akan ethnic group because of its long lasting nature. Married women are given this headgear to cover their hair for their husbands according to an elderly woman. The *odasobo* is folded into two halves to form a triangular-shape. The broad edge of the gear is tied from the front to the back side, twisted and rolled back to the front side and knotted with a simple French knot. The style of tying the gear solely depends on the wearer.

Apart from the *suboe* and headgear, printed clothes are also very important items given during marriage. According to the respondents “*these clothes contain advisory values in the culture of the people to maintain peaceful coexistence between couples and families. It sometimes spells out the position of married people in the society. These clothes include Keoyaagbawebisi, Obukaamada, Abaklebo and so on* (Respondent 3, personal interview, May 17, 2020).



Figure 22: *Hunoyomunyujefɔkaanafi*  
(Source: *Fieldwork*, 2020)

Mostly known in Akan and Ga as Gramophone plate. It is known in Dangme as *hunoyomunyujefɔkaanafi* (fig.22) which literally mean ‘your rival issue smells like cowpea’. The fabric was designed with the Gramophone disc and several short curvy lines in the shape of question marks that move in different directions. The Gramophone-shaped disc forms the main motifs in the design. These motifs contain circles and converging lines arranged in an open-spaced strip-like repeat pattern. Wax effect of dots is created in the background to compliment the textures and the main design to create an interesting atmosphere in the cloth. The sizes of the motifs (big and small) and the choice of colours used creates a great contrast. The principle of emphasis is created based on the big motif standing-out to draw viewers’ attention to the design. Converging lines in the motifs which were broken by circular-shaped design also created a rhythmic movement in the design.



Figure 23: *Keoyaagbawebisi*  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

Fig. 23 consists of rectangular shapes of different sizes and thickness and squares arranged in check layout repeat pattern to form the main motifs in the cloth. The rectangles were treated in a block-coloured shape running in both vertical and horizontal stripes. Besides both the vertical and horizontal stripes are thick rectangular lines flowing in the same directions as the main motif pattern. The background is treated with curvy lines as textures or left plain depending on the nature of the design. The designer employed elements including shapes, lines, colours, space and textures which balanced symmetrically creating the effect of unity and harmony in the cloth. *Keoyaagbawebisi* literally means ‘before you enter into marriage ask’.



Figure 24: *Obukaamada*  
(Source: *Fieldwork*, 2020)

Figure 24 (literally as you think I will be wasted) was designed with leaves connected with lines and a six-sided star which forms the main motifs. The background of the design is treated with a wax-effect pattern of irregular dots as textures. The motifs are arranged randomly all-over the cloth in a harmonised way. Differences in shapes and sizes of the leaves brought about the principle of variety and unity in the design. The lines, shapes, dots, colours and textures were judiciously utilized to create contrast and harmony in the cloth.



Figure 25: *Abaklebo*  
(Source: *Fieldwork*, 2020)

Fig. 25 is designed with bean-like shapes and strings of beads which formed the main motif. The motifs are arranged to form an arrow-like effect moving upward in the cloth. The string contains different kinds of beads in various shapes in the cloth. The elements of shapes, lines, dots, space and colour are utilized to create the principle of unity and repetition harmoniously in the cloth.





Figure 26: Felicia  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

Felicia (fig.26) is designed with leaves connected by curvy lines arranged in an all-over manner. The leaf pattern formed the main motifs in the design. Elements including shapes, lines, dots and space created variety and unity in the design. The effect of contrast was utilized based on the choice of colours used to create a harmonious effect on the cloth.



Figure 27: Be bo  
(Source: Fieldwork, 2020)

The *bε bo* (fig.27) contain images of curved brooms serving as the main motif in the cloth. The motifs are arranged in the full-drop repeat pattern. The design is reversed in another colour to create a symmetrical pattern in the cloth. The background is treated with crackled-effect in wax printed fabrics. Short curvy lines shaped like question marks and the crackle-effect formed the main textures in the design. The reverse part of the design in brown colour contained an intersection of diagonal lines creating a small diamond shape within the lines. The shapes, lines, dots, textures and colours were organized to create unity and harmony in the cloth. Emphasis was created with the main motif (broom) as the centre of interest in the cloth. The contrast was achieved based on the colours used in the design.

#### 4.2.5.1 Style of Dressing for Marriage Women and Men



Figure 28: Married women in Kaba and Hale with cover and a married man in toga-style  
(Source: Yomo Kabe's Gallery)

During marriage rites, women are given pieces of cloth by the men to be sewn into dresses. Formally the married women sew *kaba* of different design and tie a piece of cloth around the waist (*Hale*) in the likeness of *slit* and also leave two yards as cover cloth. Currently, the *hale* style has been substituted with the slit. The cover cloth is tied to the right hand side around the waist on the *kaba* and *slit*. According to the respondents, marriage women are also supposed to cover their hair with a headgear. The study revealed that these styles of dressing make it visible to distinguish married women from the unmarried in the society. This is because formally, rings were not the symbol of identifying married people but rather the dressing style of both men and women identified them as such. According to the Youth chief, married women mostly dress in *kaba* and *slit* with a cover cloth during functions for her to be identified as married in the community.

The people believe that the glory of women is their hair which symbolises beauty. Therefore, they cover their hair in public. The man or husband is the only person to see her glory and beauty anytime because he is the head in her family. The cloth is tied on the right hand side to symbolise maturity and in the right sense of mind. If a woman ties the cloth to the left hand side according to the elderly women means, she could either be unstable in the mind or a stranger to their tradition. The person is immediately corrected to prevent any form of public disgrace. The men mostly use the same cloth as their women. The men use full pieces of the cloth to either cover their body in the toga style or sew it into a jumper which is worn to compliment the women's *kaba* and *slit*. The cloth is rolled and gathered around the armpit area and gently placed on the right shoulder in the toga style to show that they are married.

#### 4.2.6 Textile Product Used During Death Rites:

According to the respondents, funeral rites are very important in the society. The deceased, the kind of colours and cloth used is of equal importance as well. When a child dies, the parents provide every item needed for the burial. When a woman dies, the husband provides everything needed for her burial. In order to bid the woman farewell, the husband buys 3 pieces of wax printed cloth, *suboe* and beads for her to go with. He also adds the old *suboe* used by the woman to the items. This is to break the sexual bond between the man and the deceased wife. When a man dies, children take full responsibility of providing the coffin for the burial. In a case where the children are young, the man's siblings or family provide the coffin for the burial. The wife of the deceased is also responsible for the provision of all other items used in bathing the deceased. The items include sponge, soap, towel, perfume as well as pants, a piece of cloth, singlet, handkerchiefs and a ring.

*Aho* is a rite performed by both men and women who lost a spouse, but the dominated is the women *Aho*. It is performed with the *bliisi* (plain black) cloth. If the deceased and family belong to a Christian background, the spouse or woman sews the cloth into the kaba style and wears it. But if the deceased and his family are not Christians but a *wɔ nɔ*, the woman uses red cloth (*bo tsutsu*) to wrap her body as a dress for the rite. The *Aho* is performed by the women for six (6) months. During the period, the woman and the children walk barefooted. The *aho* cloth is only one, the woman wears it until it tears apart. It is washed before sunset in the evening because it is not worn to sleep. The woman selects a few simple dresses or clothes that she can wear at night. It is a belief that the ghost of the deceased person comes to communicate with the spouse about why and who killed him in the form of dreams or Trans. After the sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) month, the *yomoyo* (elderly woman) who performed the *aho* for the woman sends her to the seashore to

remove the *aho* and set the woman free. The *Aho yo* then hands over all the clothes she uses to perform the rite to the elderly man. After, the woman dresses in white cloth as a sign of thanksgiving.

Although people who die during the years were buried, the actual funeral rite is organized to pay a final homage to the dead. This is done for all persons who died within the years (1, 2, and 3) depending on the clan. It is done to help the dead to cross the supernatural river into the spiritual world. This confirms Marfoh (1999) belief that the spirit of the ancestors can affect the living, hence a funerary rite to transition the dead into the ancestral world. It is a week-long funeral rite which starts on Monday and ends on Sunday. The cloth used is compulsorily plain red cloth without any design or the *suboe* cloth.



Figure 29: Some participants during the annual funeral rite at Ningo  
(Source: Tsɛko Taanye's Gallery)



Figure 30: Participants dressed in plain red cloth in a procession to the general funeral grounds.  
(Source: Tseko Taanyie's Gallery)

During the annual funeral rite celebration, plain red cloth or the *suboe* cloth are sewn into dresses by the women and jumpers by the men to bid farewell to deceased family members who died during the year. Both men and women use pieces of the cloth as headgear, tie around the wrist, neck and on their guns to symbolise their seriousness to evoke the ancestors to guide the new souls to successfully cross the river to the underworld. The next research question tackles the symbolic significance associated with these identified textile products among the Dangme people during rites of passage.

#### **4.3 RQ2. Symbolic Significance Associated with the Usage of the Textile Products**

This research question sought to examine the symbolic significance associated with the usage of textile products among Dangme people. According to the Youth Chief, the symbolic elements within the textile products used to unearth the philosophical ideas which guide the way of life of the people. These ideas serve as beliefs which help to guide

the society to maintain peace and order according to the people. The symbolic relevance is embedded in their way of life through the use of various art forms. In an attempt to find out these symbolic significance, a traditional leader said;

...people see our puberty rites done for women before marriage as a form of idol worship. But actually, it is done to scare young people to remain chaste before marriage. The textiles used during all the rites have figurative meanings which are associated with our culture. They emerge from the beliefs and values of the people. Most artforms used within ethnic groups one way or the other denotes some symbolic elements which are based on the belief of the people (Respondent 1, personal interview, April 11, 2020)

An elderly woman also narrated that,

...our culture differs slightly from other ethnic groups, though all the rites are the same. The textiles products used may be the same but the reason behind why we use it may be different from how others use it'. The name given to a product can identify what it shows be used for and why. Example the *abakle* when given tells directly that the child has been recognized by the father. Another is when the fabric *Ohiafokpewetε* is given, it basically tell you to be careful in life (Respondent 4, personal interview, April 20, 2020).

A teacher recounted that,

...the textile use especially the clothes that are sewn into kaba and slit are used based on how one understands the concept behind the design. One cloth can be used during all the rites but the ideas behind why it is worn may defer. For instance, someone can use white *Sanga domi* cloth during naming rite, and use the same cloth in its colourful manner during marriage and a black colour of that

same cloth during funeral rites, but when asked they can give different meanings of why it was worn during the various rites' (Respondent 6, personal interview, April 19, 2020).

The above responses indicate that the symbolic significance of the textile products are part of the daily lifestyle of the people. During each stage in life's transitions (from birth to death), the meaning of the products used are particular to the wearer and circumstance behind the wearing. The symbolic significance within the textile products according to the respondent are influenced by the socio-cultural belief behind the usage of the products, the design within the products and the name given to the textile products. These significance help the society to make great meaning of life.

#### *4.3.1 Socio-cultural Belief of the Textile Products*

Some of the respondents opined that the socio-cultural belief behind the use of a particular textile product brings out its symbolic significance. The symbols in textile products according to the respondents are of great value to the culture of the people. In affirmation, Obeng (2014) as cited in Ayiku (1992) elaborated that symbols within the arts including textile prints have powerful meaning that allow people to make sense of lives in the society. Based on the response, the following reason outlines the socio-cultural belief on which a particular product is selected for each phase of the rites of passage. The symbolism of textile products communicates the actual cultural value and beliefs of the people. This was attributed to the fact that a sense of belonging is achieved through the use of commonly shared values and beliefs. According to an elderly respondent, when people wear textile products in a particular design or colour, they tend to show loyalty to the customs of the land. During each phase of the rites of passage these products are used



not only because of their aesthetic quality but because of the story, the symbolic and functional significance attached to them. For instance, the symbolic meaning behind the use of the *abakle*, *klada*, *suboe* and other textile products within a particular rite.

According to the respondents, the *abakle* (Fig.1) symbolises the name given to the child during the naming ceremony. Names are an important aspect of culture. It helps to identify an individual, a group, nation and continent. The father is the one who names the child because Dangme people inherit patrilineal just like the Ga people. He is obliged to give the child the *abakle* to show that he has named the child and the child now has the right to his inheritance. The name one responds to also helps in trace the person's lineage. Any child or baby without the *abakle* means that child has not been recognized by the father, therefore, does not have a name. Even when the child grows and the father decides to recognise the child as his, he is to give the child the *abakle* as a sign of naming. A person who has been chosen as a chief in the town is also given *abakle* which represents the stool name of the chief. It is made once for the first child because they believe that the firstborn is the one bringing the destiny of the father to life so they hold the family's strength. The subsequent children use the same *abakle* that was given to the firstborn because they add strength to the destiny the first child brought. It is worn on the right hand to make it more visible to people meaning that the child's destiny has been placed on hands so the grandmother who made it speaks greatness on it to protect the child and for the destiny to become a reality. The colour of the *abakle* shows the child is pure, fresh and very precious to the family.

Another product which is very significant is the *klada* (Fig.2) which is presented to a child. Symbolically, Dangme (Ningo people) believe that a dead parent might come for his or her child because of the close relationship between them. The *klada* is worn to scare the dead away from the baby or the child. It is tied on the left hand of the baby

because it is believed that they hold the left wrist of the child when walking to protect them from any harm. So when the *klada* is fixed on the left wrist, the dead realizes that what they want to do would be harmful to the child in the land of the living so they stay away from the baby or child. When the *klada* is not worn for the baby, the dead parent immediately takes the child away with the view that the baby may not be treated like how they would wish to treat him or her.

Again, the *suboe* (Fig.3, 12, 20, 21) is used during all the phases of the rites of passage. It symbolises the red light (menstruation) in a female's life which is reflected in the colour of the fabric. The white design in the *suboe* represents the pureness of the menstruation. It is presented to the child by her father during the naming ceremony as a continuous reminder of her growth into womanhood someday and a caution that she will certainly menstruate as a female. The backside is left hanging because they believe the child will certainly sit and play on the ground to protect her from sitting on anything that might harm her on the floor. During the puberty rite, the *Si yo* wears the *suboe* to symbolize real womanhood. It is given to the *Si yo* as part of her clothes to help her keep herself well during menstruation. It is worn openly to show that she is ripe for marriage. The *Si yo* cannot perform the rite without the *suboe* because they believe that the *suboe* is what makes her a woman and so it might be used to appease her soul as a girl transitions into womanhood.

As part of the marriage items, the man gives the woman *suboe* to symbolise the wealth of a real woman. It is worn tightly between the thighs to prevent air from passing through to avoid frequent fractulating. It is believed that the husband is the only person to see the woman's *suboe* because traditionally he alone has access to view the woman's nakedness. The *suboe* is also given to the woman as a protective shield and a healing tool for her immediate family and also her blood relations. Due to the pureness of the blood

that flows from the woman into the *suboe* during menstruation, it possesses healing powers which heals children from diseases such as *Ablami* (convulsion) and epilepsy. They believe these diseases are from the spiritual realm so whenever a child suffers from these diseases, the woman removes her *suboe* and uses it to bath the child and the child gets healed. Also, when a blood relation of the woman dies and they believe the person was murdered by someone, the woman removes her *suboe* and hits it on the coffin so that the dead person or persons can direct them to the one who killed them. Although most people prefer panties to the *suboe*, it is one item that cannot be left out during marriage rites among the Dangme people. Finally, during funeral rites, the same *suboe* is also given to women to use as well as to continuously protect the family in the spirit world.

The *titliku* (Fig.11) is used during puberty rites. According to the respondent, it symbolises secrecy. Every *Si* girl in the society wears this cloth to cover her private part since no pants are worn. The *titliku* is not visible to everyone except the initiate (*Si yo*) and the initiator (the elder woman who performs the rite). This according to the respondent is the act of secrecy in the rite. The cloth is thick enough to absorb the blood in case the girl gets scared and starts bleeding heavily as she sits on the sacred stone. The cloth also reveals that not everything about women is to be exposed to the public. The private part of the woman is sacred and needs to remain sacred to her.

Socially, white is used on a jubilant occasions in the society. According to the respondents, children are also presented with white dresses and products during naming ceremonies. They believe that every child who arrives into the world is a spirit and must be duly welcomed with love and congratulate him or her for coming to life. The child is new to the world and must be welcomed with a pure heart which is a symbol of white. According to the Youth Chief, because newly born children are spirits who have decided to come and live with the living, they must be welcome and made comfortable to stay on

earth. Therefore, gifts are given to the child to demonstrate the love for the spirit. The white dresses, fabrics, upholsteries and so on symbolise purity in the heart with joy for the new-born. It was observed that during the first four to six months of the baby's existence, they are constantly clothed and adorned with only white products. One elderly woman reiterated that their spirits (new-born children) are innocent and blameless therefore the white products and cloth used projects the joy of the family to receive them with love and gentleness. If new-borns are not welcomed in white coloured products, they mostly return to the spirits. Because they feel they are not welcome on the earth and this could probably course that family to go childless for several years in the society.

Women are also appreciated for their effort in child-birth by family and friends according to an elderly woman. When they deliver safely, it is believed that they were victorious over death and therefore are wished well and congratulated with white clothes. The women are presented with two or more white cloth (*Bo futaa*) and coloured cloth (*Bo tsutsu*) either printed fabric, lace or kente depending on the man's wealth. The women sew these clothes into beautiful styles of kaba with two yards of cover cloth. This reveals their status as lactating marriage women in society. According to the respondents, the men give white cloth to women after birth to share in their joy as well as appreciate them for successfully bringing forth. The women wear white clothes for the first six months and wear coloured clothes for the next six month (a period known as the golden time) after the white period. The coloured clothes known as *Bo tsutsu* are presented to women as thank-giving gifts which are also worn for six months. If the baby dies (the first baby) during the white period, the woman continues to dress in white cloth until the six months are over. According to the Youth Chief, they believe that other spirits accompanied the baby to earth, so those spirits are still around to see how the death of the child has affected the family. The continuous wearing of the white cloths by the woman proves to the spirits

that she is glad for the child given to her but would not mourn its death because it was supposed to stay alive on earth with the family.

Apart from the *abakle*, *klada*, *suboe* and *titriku*, other textile products in the form of printed fabrics are presented as gifts to the women during the various stages of the rites of passage. During birth rites, the clothes are presented as gifts to signify love and appreciation. The clothes used for puberty rites give words of caution and advice to the youth in the society. Marriage ceremony is a jubilant time in the life of men and women in the society, therefore, certain clothes with significant meaning to marriage are presented to epitomise the love and joy as well as to appreciate the woman. During funeral rites, the clothes are used to either grief or celebrate a life well lived by the deceased. The selection of the clothes for a particular rite according to the respondents is based on the socio-cultural belief of the people, the names and design of the clothes. The cloth *Otompa* (Fig.4) which is broken into *Otom-* carry me, *pa-* river, literally means “carry me down from the river”. When a lady fetches water from the river-side, she expects help to bring the water down’ on her return. This cloth is mostly used during Birth rites. It was selected based on its socio-cultural significance. The cloth symbolises burden-less life. According to the respondents, the husband gives his wife the blue and white *Otompa* cloth to relieve her of the burden of the nine-month gestation period. The man uses the cloth to communicate the help granted to relief the woman of the safe pregnancy burden. This implies that the nine-months of stress, weight and anxiety have successfully paid off with a beautiful or handsome creature of life.

#### 4.3.2 Names of the Textile Products

Another factor that influences symbolic significance of the use of textile products during a particular rite is name. Names are very relevant in the Ghanaian culture. Based on the cultural values of the people, the name of a particular textile product reveals the functionality of the product. It reveals the wearer's personal experience or incidents about the product. According to the respondents, proverbs, experience and functions attract names to textile products. In affirmation, Anokor (2018) stated that local names of Ghanaian printed fabrics are based on situations, historical occurrence, insinuation, proverbial sayings and inspirations from the environment. The symbolic significance is generated based on the names of these clothes.

*Ahlewukpo* (fig.13) is a Dangme name or *Awherepo* in Akan which literally means sugar-cane node. Sugar-cane is one of the sweetest plant but its nodes are very hard to chew. Though its juice is sweet like sugar, its nodes are hard so extracting the juice from it is very difficult. A girl in her puberty age is given this cloth as part of her dressing cloth. The cloth serves as an instrument of caution to the young girl. The symbolic meaning behind the use of cloth during puberty rite is explained to the girl that life is very sweet and interesting like the sugar-cane. But its challenges are difficult and always on the rise. Therefore the *Si'* girl is cautioned to be ready to face both the easy and difficult part of life. Growth comes with its own sweet and challenging moments so they need to be strong to sail through successfully.

*Ohiafokpewetɛ* (Fig.14) is literally translated as *Ohiafo* means 'the poor' and *kpewetɛ* means 'does not chew stone' (the poor does not chew stone). It symbolises peaceful coexistence in the society. No matter how poor people are, they cannot chew stones because of hunger. The cloth is used mostly during puberty rites to caution young persons to help and live at peace with everyone irrespective of their wealth, status and

family background. This is because no one can chew stone amid hunger. Since the names of clothes in the Ghanaian society are based on the values and customs of the land, the cloth is known in Akan as *Efiemmosea* (house-hold pebbles). Amissah and Letcher-Teye, (2018) opines that the meaning of the cloth implies that only relatives can hurt you badly. The meaning of the cloth in Akan though contrary to the Dangme meaning, have great philosophy which communicates the spirit of peaceful co-existence between family, friends and the society at large.

Another interesting cloth used during puberty rites is *Keodemingɔɔesuioninese* (Fig.16). *Keodemingɔɔ* - if the palm is sour and *esuioninese*- it does not look like the back of the palm literally means (if the palm is sour, it does not look like the back of the palm). The palm is mostly used for everything about the hand. It is opened to taste the sweetness or sourness of food. The cloth symbolises destiny. They believe that destiny is in the hands of an individual which helps to strengthen the union and wealth in the family. Therefore, if one considers the family to be worse in their dealings, his or her destiny is tied to them. The family can never be changed or replaced with any other family.

*Hunoyomunyujɛɔfɔkaanafi* (Fig.22) which literally means “your rival issue smells like cowpea” is mostly presented to women during marriage rites. The cloth symbolises peaceful co-existence. The fabric serves as advice to married women. According to the respondents, formally, men in society marry two or more wives depending on their resources. The wives mostly fight against themselves due to little issues. This cloth is intentionally given to the women to remind them that when they get a rival in the marriage, they should live at peace with one another. This implies that they should be patient and careful about issues that transpire between them. They should not be quick to raise arguments with each other whenever there is a misunderstanding, rather they should live at peace with their rivals.

*Keoyaagbawebisi* (Fig.23) literally means ‘before you enter into marriage ask’. Marriage is considered as a life-long agreement in society. Therefore, one must not rush to marry anyone without a proper investigation. According to the respondents, there is no turning back in marriage, so parents investigate well to be sure of no surprises before giving their children out for marriage into another family. This cloth is given to caution young couples on the undulating journey of marriage. Marriage is profound and couples are expected to seek advice from elderly people in the society before they finally make a decision to marry.

One more interesting cloth used during marriage rites is *Obuka ma da* (Fig.24) which literally means ‘You think I will be wasted’. No human being is considered a wasted product. Every human being plays a particular role in the family. During marriage according to the three elderly women, the cloth is given to a woman who has been considered as a waste in the family to tell society that she has not been wasted. Sometimes it represents the joy found in the union of marriage to some people in the society. Women in this cloth simply communicate the joy of not being alone again longer.

*Felicia* (Fig.26) is another beautiful flowered cloth presented during marriage rites. It is called *Felicia* in Dangme as well as in Akan. It is an English name given to a female. According to Amissah and Letcher-Teye, (2018) its name *Felicia* came about when a man travelled and on his return bought a floral designed cloth for his beloved wife by the name *Felicia*. This cloth is given to wives during marriage rites to express their love and appreciate the feminine beauty in the man's life.

According to the respondents, plain white clothes are presented to the priestess during marriage rites. They use only plain white cloth without design in them because according to a traditional leader, the spirit of the land communicates through them.



Therefore, they are supposed to be pure which is a symbol of white. In order for the spirit to continue to use them all the time to communicate to the people. Badoe and Opoku-Asare (2014) confirms this assertion that the costumes used among Ga priests are white which therefore means that, in some parts of the Ghanaian society, white is interpreted as Holiness.

Death is an inevitable part of life in every society. According to the respondents, they believe in life after death. Hence, when people die, clothing and other products are needed to make their stay in the spirit world (death) comfortable. Black and white printed cloth and black printed cloth are mostly used for funerals in the community. The black and white printed cloths are used when a young person below age 60 dies. They believe that the person has not lived life to the fullest on earth. The cloth is worn to mourn and grief for the early departure of the deceased. The white printed cloth on the other hand is worn to celebrate a life well lived on earth. It is mostly worn when the deceased is 60 years and above to joyfully celebrate them. Men are meant to work hard so they sweat a lot, towels and handkerchiefs are given to them to clean their sweat as they continue to work hard in the spirit world.

According to a traditional leader, after the burial rites, they organize an annual funeral rite for all persons who died during the year or within two years. One week is set aside after the *homowo* festival to organize such funeral rites. The textile product used is plain red cloth without any design or the *suboe* cloth irrespective of the economic or social status of the deceased. The red cloth (*Botsutsu*) symbolises grief, mourning and danger. The people wear the red cloth to mournfully pledge with their ancestors in the spirit world to protect and guide the new ones to successfully cross the river to join them in the spiritual world.

### 4.3.3 *Designs within the Textile Products*

The motifs, colours, shapes and patterns within a design speak volume of beliefs, norms and values to people in society. Some respondents opined that apart from the name given to textile products used during a particular stage of the rites of passage, the nature of the design, colour and motif display also bring out meanings in its functional usage. Anorkor (2018) confirms that the elements of colour, shapes and motifs in a design contain symbolic meanings which are used to grace special events and occasions such as rites of passage. These clothes are selected based on the design to bring out the symbolic significance and functional use in the society.

Respondents recounted that *Magoo tsoba* (Fig.5) cloth is mostly used during the performance of birth rites in the society. *Magoo tsoba* (Dangme) literally translated as '*Mango-tree-leaves*'. The mango tree is classified as a strong tree which can withstand heavy wind without falling. The leaves grow fresher and greener and blossom around the fruit as a protective layer. *Magoo tsoba* symbolises strength and freshness in life. The man gives this cloth to the woman to communicate with others about the beautiful tree which has sprung up in his house. This implies that the new-born baby would prosper and be as strong as a Mango tree even in time of drought. The cloth is known in Akan as *Ahene pa nkasa* which literally means 'precious beads do not make noise'. Amissah and Letcher-Teye (2018) linked the name of the cloth to an adage that "empty barrels make the most noise". Other colour schemes of this cloth are worn by both male and female during jubilation moments in the Ghanaian society.

According to one elderly woman, the *katistoto bo* (Fig.6) which is also used during birth rites symbolises the broken nest of the newly born. The shape of the groundnut in the cloth is likened to a pregnant woman, once it matures, the edible part is brought out and eaten. This implies that when the woman reaches a matured state (ninth months) the

baby is brought out from its nest (the woman's stomach). Once the woman delivers, it is assumed that she has brought out a precious jewel which needs to be gently protected and cared for. Therefore, man presents the cloth to the woman to indirectly thank her for bringing forth such a precious jewel to strengthen the bond of their family.

Another cloth used during birth is the *kuadaa ba* (Fig.7). It literally means 'pepper leaves or leaf'. Pepper like any other fruit breaks out of its flower when ripe. It sprouts out of the leaf and stands out for it to be easily identified and harvested. The name of the cloth is based on the nature of the design. The white and blue *kuadaa ba* is presented as a gift to the woman to be used during the first six months and the coloured one is used after the six months of wearing white cloth. This implies that although the woman has brought forth or delivered, she still stands out among her peers and so she needs to be celebrated for the joy bestowed on the man and the family.

The *Wɔbi bo* (Fig.8) which is known in Akan as *Akonfem* literally means guinea fowl. It symbolises vigour and strength because of its strong and mostly disease-free nature. The cloth is presented as a gift to the woman during the naming ceremony to congratulate her on the vigorous strength installed to bring the child to life. According to an elderly woman, the way the guinea fowls face each other in the cloth design shows the nature of commitment between marriage couples. To face one another in a time of joy and struggles. Although the couple are from different backgrounds, they are united in marriage to face each other to care for the many children they will have in the right direction. The man speaks through the cloth to encourage the woman to gather much more strength for the many children yet to come in the marriage.

Again, the cloth *ketewusisi* (Fig.9) is mostly used during birth rites. *ketewu* means 'basket' and *sisi* means 'base' (base of a basket). It symbolises peace and serenity. The

design in the cloth looked like the base of a basket. Baskets are used to store food items in the society. When the base of the basket is strong, it keeps the items from falling when lifted. The cloth communicates the serenity of peace between the couple and the joy created in the heart of the man for the child born to him. According to the respondents, the ripple effect the dots created imply the great blessings brought by the first child to the family. They believe that the first born has the blessing to open the womb for the many children yet to come. Among the Akan and Ga, the cloth is known as *Nsubura* and *Nubu* respectively which literally means deep well of water (Amissah & Letcher-Teye, 2018). Just like the Dangme, the name of the cloth among the Akan and Ga people was linked to the visual impression created when the design is seen.

*Sanga dɔmi* (Fig.10) is a Dangme word. It literally means *Sanga*- Cobra and *dɔmi*-valley (Cobra's valley) replace the resting place of the cobra. The name was given based on the nature of the design and used during all the phases of the rites of passage especially birth rites. It is known in Akan as *Owuo Atwedee* which literally means 'death ladder'. According to Amissah and Letcher-Teye, (2018), the cloth symbolises the inevitable aspect of life which is death. Although the literal meaning of the cloth among the Dangme and Akan are different, the philosophy behind it is similar. Cobra is a poisonous snake and nobody decides to go near its resting place to gradually draw their death sentence. Therefore no matter the wealth and status of a person, they will surely be bitten to rest by the spirit of death. Women are given this cloth during birth rites to place them at rest for overcoming the death ladder of birth. At the same time, the man indirectly communicates his strength to help the woman to gradually prepare, care and train the child. This implies that the child has come to rest in a good place (earth) where he or she will have to stay longer before continuing the journey.

Based on the intricate nature of the design in the cloth, it is used during the performance of puberty rites in the society. *Ludo tɛ* (Fig.15) literally means ludo dice. It is a cube object which has dots all over each surface used to play the ludo game. The dots are from a single dot to six dots on all the six sides of the cube. The dice is tossed and thrown on the ludo; whichever side the dot settles on becomes the number used. Sometimes the gamer gets a single dot or the six dots. This cloth symbolises the dicey nature of life. The cloth is given to the young girl to caution her on the dicey nature of life. They may win or lose but must always need to understand that their loss as well a win does not stay forever. The dice will turn, therefore, they need to be careful in life. Life has different faces which must be phase well to succeed.

Fig.17 (*mɔmɔ bo-* butterfly cloth) symbolises the race in life. Life is like a butterfly, it flies away when not handled well. According to the respondents, young people are intentionally given this cloth during their puberty rites to advise them on life's opportunities. Life presents them with various opportunities which they must take and make good use out of it. Because life is lived only by ones so it should not be mishandled or wasted, else it may fly away like a butterfly. Therefore, young people need to be patient in life.

The cloth is known as *Abaklebo* (Fig.25) because of the beads used in the design. The beaded *abakle* is given to new-born babies as a symbol of name identity during the naming ceremony. The man in appreciation, gives this cloth to the woman as a sign of new naming. The *abakle* gives a new name to the woman as Mrs. which means the woman is now recognised by the man's name. The cloth is known in Akan as *Odo chain* (love chain). One shows love to a person by giving them gifts. The Akan and Dangme people have different names for the cloth but the meaning is similar to love. The love a man has for a woman will make him agree to marry and change the surname of the woman. This

implies that the man is openly echoing to the society his love and acceptance of the woman in marriage.

As the design indicated in fig, 27, the *bɛ bo* with the literal meaning as ‘broom cloth’ is presented to women to indirectly remind them of their role in their husbands' house. A woman according to one elderly respondent is supposed to keep her house clean at all times. So that when people visit the man, they feel the presence of a woman’s touch in the house. The cloth is to remind the woman to never depart from cleaning every morning and any time there is dirt in the house.

#### **4.4 RQ3. The Effect of the Textile Products to the Development of Art Education in Ghana**

Adu-Agyem and Osei-Poku (2012) elucidate that education is geared towards the holistic development of a person which aims at developing the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective modes of human development right from the Pre-school stage through to the Tertiary level of education. Education through the arts enables students to think properly with the head, act with the hand and feel with the heart, therefore, making the study of art education significant to national development. It is for this reason that this research question sought to examine the extent to which the textile products of the Dangme affect the development of Art education in Ghana. The data gathered were organized under six major thematic areas including cultural heritage, creativity and innovation, Infusion of commonly used textile products into the basic curriculum, characteristics of materials during textiles production and intelligent appraisal of the commonly used textiles products associated with each rite of passage through documentation.

#### 4.4.1 Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage has to do with the transmission of cultural values from one generation to the other in society. The culture of the people forms part of their daily lives. Textile products used according to the respondents have some symbolic meanings backing which needs to be perpetuated in the culture of the Dangme ethnic group in Ghana. In this regard, a traditional leader narrated that:

The youth must learn and be abreast with our culture and history. There are things we do which most people deem as primitive and idolatry which is not so. They rather have some philosophies that back them up to maintain orderliness in the town. The textile products that are used for example, the *abakle* is very significant even to an adult. Chiefs are also given the *abakle* to give them their stool names. All these should be emphasized on the youth to know more about our culture.

A young person said that,

Although I am a native of Ningo, I do not know the meaning behind the textile products used during the various rites of passage. I think if our grandparents and parents sit us down and teach us, we can also teach other generations even without any formal education.

This extract indicates that the cultural heritage of the people should be developed and transmitted from generation to generation. This confirms the assertion in The Culture Policy of Ghana in 2004 to make deliberate attempts to promote art and culture through formal and informal education to develop the nation holistically. The concept of the textile products used during rites of passage can deliberately be discussed through the communication centres in the town, media and durbars to transfer the knowledge of the culture to the youth in the society.

#### 4.4.2 Creativity and Innovation

Through creativity and innovations, products are made to suit the context for which they are used. According to the respondents, the Ghanaian culture is expressive through creative explorations in the kind of art forms used. Textile clothes have been designed to bring out the values and beliefs of the society through the concept of designing and giving local names to each cloth. Below are some comments from the respondents

...people who lived many years ago were able to interpret circumstances in the society through the creation of art forms to express their thoughts. For instance, a baby cries constantly and feels feverish because a loved one who died is believed to be appearing to the child, a favourite cloth of that person is torn and tied around the wrist of the child and like magic, the child feels better: a sign of creativity (Repondent 3, personal interview, May 2, 2020).

Another stated that,

...names for local cloth are given based on situations or occurrences in the society and these names match the kind of designs in the cloth. Some of the names are very funny but have relevant ideas behind them (Repondent 4, personal interview, May 2, 2020).

Again a teacher said that,

....most clothes designed long ago have names attached to them and it goes in-line with the occasions of which they can be used for. Textile designers of those times were original to create designs and name them to suit happenings in society and these names exist even till now but most clothes we use today have no names, they only have nice designs which appeal to our sight.



The identity of a group in the society is perpetuated through creation of the kind of art forms used to project it. The above responses indicate that creativity and innovation form part of the daily lives of people in the society but currently, these skills are gradually deteriorating due to the inability of the current generation of designers to create works that suit the society in which they live. The creations and development of textile products must go beyond just aesthetic and fashion concepts to bring out the symbolisms embedded in these products. Creation of designs with more local names will help project the rich cultural significance and philosophies behind the Ghanaian textile products to the world. It is against this backdrop that textile products were crafted and designed to improve the creative and innovative skills of designers in the society. One of the main purposes of textile products to the indigenous people is to improve the cultural implications and rationale for using them in the right way. These cultural implications also help art educators and students to identify the symbolisms underpinning these textile products which will inform the creative nature and policies that will govern the delivery of art education models for schools in Ghana.

#### *4.4.3 Infusion of Commonly used Textile Products into the Basic Curriculum*

Textile products used in the Ghanaian society have real values and knowledge based on the context of the Ghanaian philosophies and cultural significance of which the Dangme people are no exception. The interpretation of these textile products can be infused into the basic curriculum for students in Ghana to improve the appreciation of local content in schools. According to a textile teacher, ‘since the basic curriculum is currently under consideration for change to improve local contents at the basic level, the textile products used by various ethnic groups should be crafted and infused to educate young ones on the philosophies behind the use of various local textile products in the

country. This will create awareness in students on why certain textile products are used during various occasions and events'. Contrary to the assertion of the non-existence of African philosophy (Kanu, 2014), the infusion of these textile products into the curriculum will bring out the various philosophies backing them and dispute this assertion even in the basic levels. The products are relevant and rationale for which they are used by the indigenous people. These philosophies which are imbibed in the religious and traditional practices during the rites of passage will also give art educators and students the guiding principles of a particular group of people and the contribution of textile products to these principles in the Ghanaian society.

#### *4.4.4 Characteristics of Materials used during Textiles Production*

The type of material used for textiles production is elaborated in the kind of textile products used in the society. According to an elderly woman, 'the *sobue* is used to absorb blood because of its cotton nature which has the ability to retain the blood for a long time without staining the wearer. Even most of our local clothes are also cotton which also absorb sweat during our daily activities'. Cotton is mainly used as the commonest textile products due to its characteristics and the weather making it comfortable to use in the Ghanaian society. They are highly absorbent and allow free circulation of air which makes its wearer friendly in the society. As students identify the various textile products used in the society, they learn to acknowledge the characteristics of these products and when to use them in textile production.

#### *4.4.5 Appraisal of Commonly used Textile Products Associated with each Rite of Passage in the form of Documentation.*

The symbolic significance of local textile products must be well perpetuated through an intelligent appraisal and oral tradition to reflect the cultural values of such

products. The main reason for some Western researchers' conclusions that, 'Africans do not have a philosophy' is because, in the past, there have not been deliberate attempts to document African philosophy in the form of academic discourse (Busia, 1963) A textile teacher stated that 'because some Ghanaian scholars even see our art forms as fetish, most artists prefer to move into graphic designing to create abstract designs which does not even relate to the cultural values in our society. But there are a lot of textile products used during our rites of passage which have significant bearing and impact in our society which needs to be communicated by textiles educators in the country'. The identification and interpretation of the various textile products used disclose the symbolism significance associated with them during rites, rituals and ceremonies in the society. Therefore, one core thing to do as art educators and researchers is to identify and interpret artefacts including textiles products that are used for cultural and religious purposes, identify the symbolic meanings and then communicate in the form of documentation. This will enlighten other researchers around the world to acknowledge that African has philosophy and these can be seen in the kind of art forms used especially in textile products.

#### **4.5 Summary**

This chapter captured the findings and analysis of the research questions for the study. The data collected on the three research questions were critically described, explained and analysed using the theory of cultural identity. The first research question which sought to identify and discuss the textiles products used by the Dangme during rites of passage. The identified textile products were described using visual analysis. Research question two (2) explored the symbolic significance behind the identified textile products using the descriptive qualitative analyses. Research question three (3) on the other hand was analysed under five themes; cultural heritage, creativity and innovation,

Infusion of commonly used textile products into the basic curriculum, characteristics of materials during textiles production and intelligent appraisal of the commonly used textiles products associated with each rites of passage through documentation.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Overview

This chapter summarizes the research, draws conclusions and makes recommendations on the symbolic significance of textile products used during rites of passage among the Dangme.

#### 5.1 Summary

The study sought to identify and discuss the textiles products used by the Dangme ethnic group during rites of passage. Specifically, it explored the symbolic significance associated with the textile products and examined their implications to the development of Art Education in Ghana. The significance of the study was outlined as well as scope or delimitation. Extensive literature was reviewed on the concepts of symbolism and rites of passage in both the African and Ghanaian perspective, concept and reliance on textile products in Ghana, the Ga-Dangme and the art forms used among the Ga-Dangme. The theory of cultural identity was used as a guide in the work.

The qualitative approach and descriptive case study design were the research approach and design used for this study respectively. This afforded the researcher the opportunity to vividly describe the textile products used under each rite of passage to bring out their symbolic meanings. The accessible population consists of twelve (12) respondents comprising a traditional leader, one youth chief, five elderly indigenes, four youth and a textiles educator of Ningo. The purposive and simple random sampling techniques were adopted in selecting the sample. Three data collection methods were used; semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation and illustrations. Visual, descriptive and thematic analysis were employed to break the data gathered for research

questions one, two and three respectively into a more understanding context. These, however, brought out the main findings revealed in the study. Conclusions and recommendations were drawn based on the findings.

## 5.2 Main Findings

The chapter four of the study sought to answer the three research questions that guided the study. The main findings of the study were:

- a. Most textile products used by Dangme people during rites of passage have distinct identification. This is similar to other ethnic groups in Ghana such as Ewe, Ga and Akans according to Afful and Nantwi (2018). They argue that each textile product used in the Ghanaian traditional setting is symbolic in nature and has a distinct meaning. This assertion is also supported by Arthur, (2017); Poirier, Eglash and Babbitt (2014).
- b. Females are identified by using the *sobue* in all the stages of the rites of passage but the style of wearing differs from one stage to the other. This is a clear indication of the role of textile products in determining gender and their roles in the indigenous Ghanaian society. Badoe and Opoku-Asare (2014); Essel and Amissah (2015) discuss that, most of the textile products used in the Ghanaian society can be differentiated by gender.
- c. Dangme area (Ningo traditional area) perform three different types of puberty rites based on the clan of affiliation and it is not compulsory to all members in the society. This is contrary to that of the Akan, Krobo and Ewe who perform *Bragoro*, *Dipo* and *Ezi udze* respectively where every young girl entering adulthood has to compulsorily go through the puberty rites to avoid any unwanted

consequences according to Klu (2014); Kumetey (2009); Ostrow (2011) and Kyei (1945)

- d. Textile products used during rites of passage contain symbolic significance that guide the way of life of the Dangme people. These significance are influenced by the socio-cultural belief, the names and designs of the textile products used which defines their values, beliefs and culture as a group. Similar discussions by Aboagyewaa-Ntiri, Campion and Kemevor (2018); Poirier, Eglash and Babbitt (2016) and Badoe and Opoku-Asare (2014) states that the Akan tradition Adinkra and Kente clothes have specific connotations that carries meanings ranging from the colours, design pattern and names used .
- e. *Suboe* is used at all the stages of rites of passage, however, the symbolic significance differs from each rites of passage. Some literature such as Kyei (1945); Kumetey, (2009); Boakye, (2010) Opong, (n.d); Ostrow (2011); Klu (2014) and Afful and Nantwi (2018) emphasis on the role of gifts during the various phases of the rites of passage from different culture, none of them identified the different symbolic meanings of the textile products given as gifts.
- f. The symbolic meanings derived from names of some cloths used during rites of passage by the Dangme people differ from other ethnic groups in Ghana through the clothes are similar in design.
- g. Dressing style of the married is different from the unmarried among Dangme people. This confirms Salm and Folola's, (2002) statement that the symbolic imagery of textiles products used in Ghana are contrary to modern views which focus mainly on fashion.

- h. There has not been much scholarly documentation of oral tradition and inclusion of textile products used in rites of passage among the Dangmes and their symbolic significance in the Basic and SHS curriculum of schools in Ghana, hence the gradual losing of the symbolic significance of such textiles products in society.

### 5.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn;

- a. Textile products are identified based on how they are worn, tied on the head, wrist, around the arm and the names associated with them. During birth rite, the *abakle* worn on the right-hand of the child to identify the child as someone who has been named and recognized by the father. The *klada* which is tied around the left hand indicates that the child has lost a close relation. When *sobue* is given, it identifies the person as a female or womanhood in the society. The various clothes used during the rites of passage identify an individual based on the philosophy behind the cloth.
- b. *Sobue* is associated with females in the society. It is used during birth, puberty, marriage and death. For children, the front part of the *suboe* is rolled over the bead until all is rolled up to form a pant-like structure at the front leaving the backside hanging. During puberty, both sides of the *sobue* are left hanging by pulling it to the feet level from one side until the length of the front balance symmetrically with that of the backside. A woman wears the *suboe* as pants. The long strip of fabric is folded into two along the width and rolled several times through the waist beads until the whole strip forms a pant-like structure covering the private part.



For deceased women, it is rather added to her belongings to be used in the spirit world.

- c. The kind of puberty rite performed in the town indicates the clan the person or people belongs to. People belonging to the *Loweh* clan perform *dipo* because they are the crown bearers and part of the *Le* people just like the Osu-Doku and Krobo people. Some parts of the *Kabiawe* clan perform *Si* while others perform *Razu* to initiate young people into adulthood. The rest of the clans do not perform any rite for their young children.
- d. An interpretation of the symbolism behind textile products revealed that they are not only for aesthetic or functional purposes but lead to an understanding of the significance philosophies defined based on their values, beliefs and culture.
- e. Most of the textiles products used during the rites of passage were peculiar to a particular rite but that of the *suboe* is different. The unique thing is that, even though it is the same *suboe*, it has different meaning and significance. Therefore, it will be inappropriate to assume that the symbolic significance is the same because it is the same textile product being used. Children are given the *sobue* to serve as a continuous reminder of her growth into womanhood someday and a caution that they will certainly menstruate as a female. At puberty, it is given to the *Si yo* as part of her clothes to help her keep herself well during menstruation and to appease her soul as a girl transitions into womanhood. However, the same *suboe* is again given to women as a protective shield and a healing tool for her immediate family and blood relations due to the pureness of the blood that flows from the woman into the *suboe* during menstruation. The *sobue* is added to the

items in the coffin for the deceased woman to continue protecting her family in the spirit world.

- f. The meaning of clothes and the names differs from one ethnic group to the other. These are based on the symbolic significance attached to the textile products by the various ethnic groups in Ghana. Few of the clothes identified had similar meaning but majority had different symbolic significance which also defined what they were used for.
- g. The symbol of marriage is imbibed in the style of dressing of both men and women in society. Traditionally, the ring is not a symbol of marriage among the indigenous Dangme people. During functions and occasions, married women are identified by their style of dressing; *kaba* and *slit* and use some part of the cloth to cover the *kaba* from the waist. They always tie their hair with headgear for identification. The men also use the cloth to sew either jumper, shirt or use it in the toga style to cover some part of the body leaving the shoulder exposed. The unmarried dress in *kaba* and *slit* without any headgear or cover cloth and the men as well use the cloth to sew shirts.
- h. Over the years oral tradition and education have been the way of transferring culture from older generation to younger generation in society. However, in contemporary times of the Dangme people, oral tradition has faded out leading to a breakage in the transfer of culture. The Basic and SHS textiles education curriculum has also excluded the use and significance of traditional textile products of Dangmes. This has resulted in the majority of the young having little or no knowledge about the textile products used during rites of passage among Dangme in Ghana.

#### 5.4 Recommendations

From the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations were made.

- a. Textile products identified should be perpetuated by chief and elderly members in the community through town durbar, youth forums, community services as well as the media to keep the youth abreast with the identity of textile during rites of passage.
- b. The indigenous style of wearing the *sobue* should be incorporated into the contemporary dressing trend of the Dangmes to improve the concept of contemporary fashion in the town.
- c. Scholars should research into the three types of puberty rites performed by the Ningo people to bring out the difference and similarities as compared to other ethnic groups in Ghana.
- d. Interpreted symbolism should be documented by researchers to contribute to knowledge on the symbolic significance of textiles products of the Dangme and by extension Art Education in Ghana
- e. Further research should pay attention to every single detail of the textile products used during the rites of passage to avoid any misinterpretation of the symbolic meaning and significance of the textiles products used during the rites of passage among other ethnic groups in Ghana.
- f. Research should be done into the contextualization of the meaning and significance of textiles products based on the symbols and name used within a particular cultural context. Therefore, interpretation of designs should be done in the cultural context instead of the generalization of the meaning of the cloth.

- g. Textile products worn that distinguish the unmarried from the married among other ethnic groups in Ghana should be well interpreted by textile educators to derive the actual symbolic significance behind their usage during various functions or occasions in the society. This will help to avoid generalization of the products used.
  
- h. Textile educators and culture custodians should help enlighten learners and the youth on the symbolic functions of textile products used in rites of passage among various ethnic groups in their locality during extra-curricular activities such as school cultural festivals.



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## APPENDIX A

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

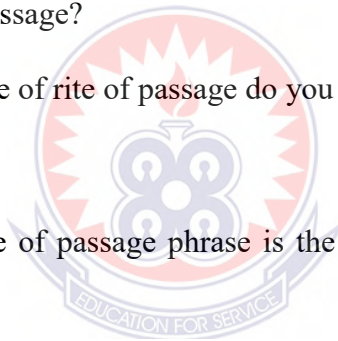
This interview guide was designed to solicit information on '*symbolic significance of textile products in rites of passage among the Dangmes in Ghana*'. Every information provided will be use strictly for academic purpose and be treated with maximum confidentiality. Please help the researcher with answers to the following questions.

#### **General Information**

- Sex M ( ), F ( )
- Age: Above 50 ( ), 40-30 ( ), 29-20 ( )
- Status in the Community

#### ***Rite of passage among the Dangme People***

- What is rite of passage?
- How many phrase of rite of passage do you have?
- What are they?
- Which of the rite of passage phrase is the most important among the Dangme people?



#### ***Textiles products used during Rite of Passage***

- What art products are used during the rites of passage?
- Which textile products are used during rite of passage in Dangmes?

#### ***Symbolic meaning of the textiles products***

- Why are these textile products used during rite of passage
  - `What are the symbolic meanings associated with the textiles products?
  - What influence the use of a particular textile products during each phases of the rites of passage?
  - How does these textile reflect in the culture of the people?

- Why are these textile products important in the culture of the Dangmes?

***Implication of the textile products to Art Education in Ghana***

- What are the significance of these textile product to the Ghanaian Society
- How will these textile products affect the development of art education in Ghana?



## APPENDIX B

