

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**SEMIOTIC STUDY OF GA TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS IN
SOME SELECTED PALACES**



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UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**A SEMIOTIC STUDY OF GA TRADITIONAL SYMBOLS IN
SOME SELECTED PALACES**



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**A thesis in the Department of Ga-Dangme Education,
Faculty of Ghanaian Languages Education, submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies, in partial fulfillment**

**of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
(Ga)
in the University of Education, Winneba.**

FEBRUARY, 2023

DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, **SETH ARYEE**, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works and written texts 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.

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE :.....

SUPERVISORS' DECLARATION

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

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DATE :

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work first to my dear wife, Mrs. Abigail Aryee and my lovely children, Abihail Naa Ayele Aryee and Sethur Nii Ayikwei Abeala Aryee for their prayers and support. I also dedicate it to all the hardworking Ga people who are doing their best to help elevate the Ga language and culture.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents	Page
DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF FIGURES	x
ABSTRACT	xii
CHAPTER ONE: THE GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the study	1
1.1.1 The Ga people	5
1.1.2 The traditional Ga mantse palace	7
1.2 Statement of the problem	8
1.3 Purpose of the study	9
1.4 Research objectives	9
1.5 Research questions	9
1.6 Significance of the study	10
1.7 Limitation of the study	10
1.8 Delimitation of the study	10
1.9 Organization of the study	11
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	

2.0 Introduction	12
2.1 Sociolinguistics	12
2.2 Semantics	13
2.3 Semiotics	15
2.4 Relation between semiotics and semantics	21
2.5 Symbols	23
2.6 Symbolism in Ghana	30
2.7 The history of Ga traditional symbols	33
2.8 Review of specific researches on symbols	34
2.9 The theoretical framework	38
2.10 Chapter summary	42
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
3.0 Introduction	43
3.1 Research design	43
3.1.1 Case study	43
3.2 Population	44
3.3 Participants	44
3.4 Sampling technique	45
3.5 Sources of Data	47
3.6 Data collection technique	48
3.6.1 Interviews	48
3.6.2 Observations	48
3.6.3 Documents	49



3.7 Data analysis	49
3.8 Ethical issues	51
3.9 Chapter summary	52
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS	
4.0 Introduction	54
4.1 The Ga traditional symbols	54
4.2 The meanings of the interpretations behind the symbols	54
4.2.1 <i>Alakaaa Nyɔɔmɔ</i>	63
4.2.2 <i>Akpokpolonto</i>	64
4.2.3 <i>Abobonua</i>	65
4.2.4 <i>Wao gɔɔti ni miitsɔɔ ɔwei</i>	66
4.2.5 <i>Jata ke Akpɔsɔ</i>	67
4.2.6 <i>Wuɔnuu</i>	68
4.2.7 <i>Too Ojweni</i>	69
4.2.8 <i>Adowa ni damɔ shwuɔ nɔ</i>	70
4.2.9 <i>Waobii enumɔ ni adɔrɔ</i>	71
4.2.10 <i>Waobii ni hie wɔlɔ</i>	72
4.3 Some Ga symbols, their meanings and their application to contemporary living	73
4.3.1 <i>Akpokpolonto</i>	74
4.3.2 <i>Maɔ ko ta maɔ ko nɔ</i>	76
4.3.3 <i>Abobonua</i>	77
4.3.4 <i>Atswa</i>	79
4.3.5 <i>Aweɔ be ɔmɔ</i>	81



4.3.6 <i>Ja Nyɔŋmɔ</i>	82
4.3.7 <i>Abui</i>	84
4.3.8 <i>Adowa ni damɔ shwuɔ nɔ</i>	86
4.3.9 <i>Adowa fai</i>	88
4.3.10 <i>Aɲtwere</i>	89
4.3.11 <i>Alagba te</i>	91
4.3.12 <i>Akpa</i>	93
4.3.13 <i>Asamaŋkama</i>	95
4.3.14 <i>Aspaatere</i>	98
4.3.15 <i>Abiii wo ni ahe nu</i>	99
4.3.16 <i>Akpakpa</i>	102
4.4 Chapter summary	104
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
5.0 Introduction	106
5.1 Summary of the thesis	106
5.2 Findings	108
5.3 Conclusion	111
5.4 Recommendation for future research	111
REFERENCES	116
APPENDIX A	125
APPENDIX B	128

LIST OF FIGURES

Contents	Page
1. Figure A	38
2. Figure B	39
3. Figure 1	55
4. Figure 2	55
5. Figure 3	55
6. Figure 4	55
7. Figure 5	55
8. Figure 6	56
9. Figure 7	56
10. Figure 8	56
11. Figure 9	56
12. Figure 10	57
13. Figure 11	57
14. Figure 12	57
15. Figure 13	57
16. Figure 14	58
17. Figure 15	58
18. Figure 16	58
19. Figure 17	58
20. Figure 18	59
21. Figure 19	59
22. Figure 20	59
23. Figure 21	59
24. Figure 22	60
25. Figure 23	60
26. Figure 24	60
27. Figure 25	60
28. Figure 26	61



29. Figure 27	60
30. Figure 28	60
31. Figure 29	62
32. Figure 30	62
33. Figure 31	62
34. Figure 32	62
35. Figure 33	63
36. Figure 34	64
37. Figure 35	65
38. Figure 36	66
39. Figure 37	67
40. Figure 38	68
41. Figure 39	69
42. Figure 40	70
43. Figure 41	71
44. Figure 42	72
45. Figure 43	73
46. Figure 44	74
47. Figure 45	76
48. Figure 46	77
49. Figure 47	79
50. Figure 48	81
51. Figure 49	82
52. Figure 50	84
53. Figure 51	86
54. Figure 52	88
55. Figure 53	89
56. Figure 54	91
57. Figure 55	93
58. Figure 56	95
59. Figure 57	98



60. Figure 58

99

61. Figure 59

102



ABSTRACT

This thesis presents the traditional symbols found at selected palaces of the Ga people and brings out the historical, philosophical, educational and moral values inherent in them. It seeks to encourage the understanding and usage of the Ga traditional symbols in a more meaningful way by the Ga people themselves, Ghanaians as a whole and foreigners as well, as well as contemporary artists, designers, craftsmen, teachers, and all who appreciate the traditional symbols. The thesis highlights the seven symbols that represent the seven coastal towns of the Ga state, namely Ga Mashie, Osu, La, Teshie, Nugua, Tema and Kpone. The thesis finally discusses how the symbolic meanings, philosophical, historical background, and the moral lessons of some selected symbols can be applied to contemporary living. The research approach is qualitative. The Peirce Semiotic theory was used for the analysis of the data. The thesis posits that, the Ga traditional symbols form part of the Ga culture and their communication values are very important. The thesis adds to knowledge in the disciplines of linguistics in general and semiotics in particular.



CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

1.0 Introduction

This thesis focuses on investigating the communicative value of the Ga traditional symbols found at selected palaces among the Ga speaking people. The study, among other things, seeks to identify and categorize the Ga traditional symbols, explain the meanings behind the symbols and to finally discuss how the meanings of the Ga traditional symbols relate to contemporary living.

Beyond this section, the thesis is organized as follow; Section 1.1 presents the background to the study. Section 1.2 presents the statement of the problem whilst the purpose of the study is captured in section 1.3. The research objectives and research questions follow in sections 1.4 and 1.5 respectively. Section 1.6 discusses the significance of the study whereas the limitation and delimitations of the study follow in sections 1.7 and 1.8 accordingly. Section 1.9 presents the general organization of the thesis. The last section, 1.10 concludes the chapter.

1.1 Background to the Study

Proverbial concepts are the basic units of thought that underlie human intelligence and communication. Proverbial culture is the inevitable result of the way society philosophies are acquired, created, maintained and translated into symbols (Asmah et al., 2015). Symbols communicate, and they form part of a society's traditions. According to Danser (2005), traditions usually start out as oral stories depicting immortals with super-natural powers over their mortal subjects. He added that traditions are, in essence, a starting point

in any society's history and culture, giving the society a sense of identity or a way to explain the unexplainable events. Traditions help a society to behave within a code of social structure and to understand and give an explanation to good and evil deeds as they occur.

Traditions reflect the culture they sprang from and are particular to that society. Danser (2005) further explained that, the traditions themselves can be seen as a representation of religious, philosophical or psychological beliefs that are particular to a society. Symbols are the tangible aspect of these traditions and they give visibility to an invisible idea or a set of beliefs (Danser, *ibid*). Humans tend to perceive the world through signs, and their daily life frequently involves symbolizing surroundings (Hoffmeyer & Emmeche, 1991 as cited in Chao-Ming & Tzu-Fan, 2015). Symbols are unique to particular societies and their geographical surroundings. The various traditions practiced and performed by the various ethnic groups or traditional societies are the 'cultures' of these societies.

The term 'culture' refers to the language, beliefs, values and norms, customs, dress codes, diet, roles, knowledge and skills, and all the other things that people learn that make up the 'way of life' of any society (Asmah et al., 2015). Tylor (1871) cited in Danesi (2004, p. 35) defines culture as "a complex whole including knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capability or habit acquired by human beings as members of a society." Idang (2015) states that, "Culture, as it is usually understood, entails a totality of traits and characters that are peculiar to a people to the extent that it marks them out from other people or societies. These peculiar traits include the people's language, dressing, music, work, arts, religion, dancing and so on. It also includes a people's social norms,

taboos and values. Values here are to be understood as beliefs that are held about what is right or wrong and what is important in life”. Culture is passed on from one generation to the next, mainly, through the process of socialization which includes communication (Asmah et al., 2015).

The art of a particular culture can reveal ever-changing human images and attitudes, so awareness of a people's indigenous art; visual and cultural symbol is very important. In the culture transmitting process, one important means of communicating culture from one generation to another is through the use of symbols, when diligent efforts are employed to project and explain the symbols; therefore, documentation of a society's symbolism becomes more imperative in the culture transmitting process due to the emergence of sub-cultural activities. According to Asmah et al. (2015), there are no cultures that are impervious or porous to the influences of other cultures. As such cultural diversity inevitably develops in the course of cultural transmission. Culture is rooted in the experiences, customs and beliefs of the everyday life of the ordinary people. It is 'authentic' rather than manufactured, as it is actively created by ordinary people themselves (Asmah et al., *ibid*). Examples of culture include proverbs, traditional folk songs, storytelling and folk dances which are passed on from one generation to the next by socialization and often by direct experience in many rural events.

Traditionally, our people communicated using symbols and signs. These are considered non-verbal means of communication. Gamble and Gamble (1999, p. 132) quoted the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, “He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret, if his lips are silent, he chatters with

his fingertips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore”. What they mean is that, as humans, our ability to be creative and to solve problems are often challenged as we seek to make sense out of communication situations. They thus posited that, the term non-verbal communication designates all the kinds of human responses which are not expressed in words; non-verbal communication is more extensive than just communicating with our bodies and appearance. According to Kuwornu-Adjaottor (2015), we can even communicate by sending messages through the environment we create and live in. The spaces we inhabit convey information about us to others even when we are away from them. Gamble and Gamble (1999) characterized non-verbal communication as follows: it is perpetual, frequent, and involuntary. They said that non-verbal communication, like verbal communication, can be ambiguous. ‘It is not possible to develop a list of non-verbal behaviors and attach a single meaning to each. All non-verbal communication must be evaluated or interpreted within the context in which it occurs’ (Kuwornu-Adjaottor, 2015, p. 23).

Symbolism was very essential in the communicative life of the Ga people in ancient times. For instance, a leaf was put in the mouth of a messenger, a symbol indicating that he should not speak to anybody until he gets to where the message was to be delivered. During a traditional dance, such as the *obonu* dance, a traditional dancer dances with several signs and symbolism. In modern times, traditional technology provides the avenue of translating certain traditions, for example, proverbs, into visual symbols which augment their abilities to communicate and create new opportunities in art and culture. Focusing on such dynamics increases our appreciation of the cultural flexibility of such proverbial symbolism and their innovativeness in creating new social awareness and

shared symbolic expressions under contemporary circumstances (Gundaker, 2000). This research work serves as an academic document on Ga traditional symbols and their communicative values.

1.1.1 The Ga people

Geographically, the Greater Accra Region, of which the Ga people belong, is the smallest of the 16 administrative regions in terms of area. It occupies a total land surface of 3,245 square kilometres or 1.4 percent of the total land area of Ghana. According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, the population of Greater Accra is 5,446,237, making it the most populous region, taking over from the Ashanti Region, with a population of 5,432,485, which was the most populated region in the 2010 census. In percentage terms, according to the Ghana Statistical Service, Greater Accra accounts for 17.7 per cent of Ghana's total population for the 2021 census. Henderson-Quartey (2001) explained that the Ga people live along the shoreline of the Gulf of Guinea. He further stated that the Ga settlement areas is bounded on the East by the *Tshemu* lagoon near Tema, on the West by the *Sakumofio* River, on the North by the Akuapem mountains and the South by the Gulf of Guinea. According to Reindorf (1895) as cited in Henderson-Quartey (2001), the coastal towns established by the Ga-Adangbe speaking emigrants who arrived from *Aneho*, *Benin*, *Boni* and *Boma* to the Gold Coast in the early sixteenth century, stretches from *Lanɔma* (Mountain Cook Loaf) to *Fla*, that is, the Volta Basin along the shorelines of the coast of the Gulf of Guinea. These coastal towns include Ngleshi (James Town), Kinka (Ussher Town), Osu (Christiansburg), La (Labadi), Teshi, Nungua (Little Ningo), and Tema. Field (1937) and Kilson (1971) as cited in Henderson-Quartey (2001)

corroborated Reindorf's assertions when discussing the geographical locations of the Ga people along the coast, and stated that the sea forms the Southern boundary and the sharply rising Akwapem mountains forms the Northern boundary. They also asserted that the *Densu* River and the *Laloi* lagoon with their tributaries coming down from Aburi in the Akwapem range, served as the Western and Eastern boundaries respectively.

Asmah et al. (2015) among others have stated that the coastal towns of the Ga people are six, but Field (1937) and Kilson (1971) as cited in Henderson-Quartey (2001), have long indicated that the coastal towns established by the wandering Ga tribes from west to east are Accra, Osu, Labadi, Teshie, Nungua, Tema and Kpone, making the number seven. The names of the towns are currently Ga Mashi, Osu, La, Teshi, Nugua, Tema and Kpone. Each town has its dependent villages and hamlets. These constitute the Ga state. Each town had a stool, which served as the central object of Ga ritual and war magic (Henderson-Quartey, 2001). These major towns are welded into a loose confederacy under the Ga king (Ga Mantse) (Asmah et al., 2015). The Ga people constitute the second largest ethnic group within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana (Agbesi et al., 2015). Ga is a Niger-Congo language of the sub-family Kwa. It is spoken in Ghana, in and around the capital city, Accra. Linguistic descriptions of the Ga people date back to early 1800, and although digital text resources are few, it is well studied linguistically, and has some advanced resources such as the Ga-English dictionary (Dakubu, 2009).

The Ga people has a rich tradition which sets them apart from other ethnic groups. This includes their music and dance, festivals and local way of dressing. The Ga people has a history of how they communicate their cultural values and traditions using symbols. Ga

traditional symbols have existed for centuries, yet many Ghanaians are not aware of them and they have classified them under the famous Adinkra symbols of the Akan society. As a result, many people, including some Ga people, believe that the Ga traditional symbols are a subset of the Adinkra symbols, and this essay will delve into the truth or otherwise of this assertion. Ga traditional symbols can be seen on family houses, palaces, canoes, stools of chiefs, linguist staffs, palanquins, chiefs' umbrellas, royal clothing among others. This thesis establishes the uniqueness of the Ga traditional symbols.

1.1.2 The traditional Ga *mantse* palace

The political structure of the Ga people comprises seven main independent sub-states known as the traditional areas. The *mantsemei* or kings of the capital towns are of equal status and are independent. Each village has its own *mantse* or chief who is under the *mantse* of the traditional area who is the same as the *mantse* of the capital town (Osabu-Kle, 2000). The *mantse* or chief/king lives in a palace. The traditional palace is made up of individual rooms aside from the main hall where the chief receives elders and others who visit for several reasons and/or on several occasions. Just before getting to the entrance of most of these traditional palaces is a shrine, designed with clay and/or images or statues carved from wood. The images or statues are in the form of humans or human parts such as a face, an arm or just a thumb, and animals such as tiger, lion, leopard, eagle, crow, or cock. All these images are signs or symbols that communicate vital information about the culture of the Ga people. The palace has different rooms. There is a room where the chief sleeps, a room that houses the stools and swords (referred to as *seitsu*), and a room that contains the other general ornaments of the palace (Nii Osabu Lomotey, p.c for

Ga). Symbols in the form of images are used in and around the palace. The symbols are either mold from clay or carved from woods. These symbols have meanings, and therefore communicate certain aspects of the culture of the people. In modern times, design technology is applied to enhance the appearance of these symbols. It is a common phenomenon to see a statue, a painting, or drawing of the chief in front of the palace. Some of the symbols depict some ancient lifestyles of the people such as going to the farm, wrestling with wild animals, felling trees or a hunting expedition; while others show some modern lifestyles of the people including fishing in canoes, chiefs being carried in palanquins, and chiefs in company of some prominent personalities. These help the current generation appreciate the communicative value of these traditional symbols.

In recent times, there have been attempts to extend some palace compounds outside of the main palace. These compounds are constructed with modern construction materials and designs, most of them, being in the form of sheds, to hold durbars, important funerals and other outdoor gatherings. This compound is referred to as “*Mantse agbonaa*” in Ga, which means the King’s compound.

1.2 Statement of the problem

There are various research works on the Ga people and their culture, but to the best of my knowledge, there is very little research into symbols in Ga. Asmah et al. (2015) worked on proverbial symbols in cloth for Ga royals, and that seems, to the best of my knowledge, the only major research work into symbols in Ga. In that work, the researcher’s main aim was to design a befitting royal cloth for the Ga King and the Queen mother for their collaborative festivals using modern design technology. The symbols used were deduced

from various angles of life but the Ga state has more than just symbols in royal clothing. Therefore, this thesis on Ga traditional symbols seeks to project the traditional symbols found at selected palaces systematically, with their background and the meanings behind their interpretations.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the communicative value of the Ga traditional symbols. The thesis looks at the symbols found at the selected palaces, their meanings in relation to the Peirce semiotic theory, and how these meanings relate to contemporary living.

1.4 Research objectives

The objectives of this research work are to:

1. identify the Ga traditional symbols from the seven selected palaces
2. explore the meanings of the traditional symbols
3. explain how the meanings of the traditional symbols relate to contemporary living.

1.5 Research questions

The following research questions underpinned this thesis.

1. What are the Ga traditional symbols in the seven selected palaces?
2. What are the meanings of the selected Ga traditional symbols?
3. How are the meanings of the Ga traditional symbols applicable to contemporary living?

1.6 Significance of the study

This research work will add to the concerns of Ga people, home and abroad, for the elevation of the Ga culture, making it attractive to other Ghanaians and foreigners. It will also serve as a reference work for further research work into symbolism in the Ga culture.

1.7 Limitations of the study

The researcher faced the challenge of not getting access to some of the core symbols at the targeted palaces. At one of the palaces, the wall containing the symbols had been painted, and the traditional symbols replaced with some modern designs for decorative purposes. At another palace, there was serious renovation work in progress. The researcher therefore had to fall on a resource person for assistance in getting some of the symbols. This made it difficult to get all the targeted symbols for this research. This delayed the writing of the thesis and presented a stressful situation to the researcher.

The researcher therefore had to fall on a resource person for assistance in getting some of the symbols, and some too from the internet to overcome the stated challenge.

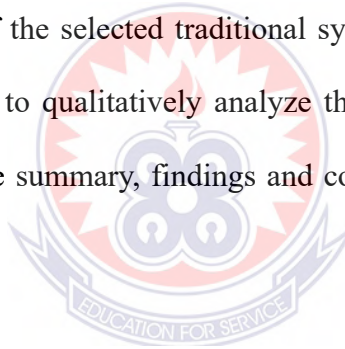
1.8 Delimitation of the study

Although this research work is about the Ga traditional symbols, the focus is on the seven main palaces of the Ga state and the main Kaneshie Palace also known as the Ga *Mantse* Palace. These seven palaces are the Ga *Mashi Mantse* Palace, the Osu *Mantse* Palace, the La *Mantse* Palace, the Teshie *Mantse* Palace, the Nugua *Mantse* Palace, the Tema *Mantse* Palace, and the Kpone *Mantse* Palace. The various symbols in these palaces are the main focus of this research work.

1.9 Organization of the study

This research work has five chapters. Chapter one discusses the background to the study, highlighting the rationale behind the study. It also contains the statement of the problem, research objectives and questions, significance of the study, purpose of the study and the delimitation of the study. Chapter two presents a review of relevant literature as well as explanation of terms, where a distinction between semiotics and semantics is presented. This chapter also describes the theoretical framework of the research.

Chapter three deals with the research approach, data and data collection methods, sources of data, and sample population size. The fourth chapter presents the findings of the semiotic visual analysis of the selected traditional symbols. In this chapter, the Peirce's semiotic theory is applied to qualitatively analyze the data. Chapter five concludes the entire study. It presents the summary, findings and conclusion. It also made suggestions for further research.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to provide an intensive review of literature focusing on themes that are relevant to the topic under investigation. Literature will be reviewed briefly on sociolinguistics, relationship between semiotics and semantics, but more detailed on semiotics and symbols. The traditional Ga *Mantse* palace will also be discussed briefly and the theoretical framework for this thesis would be explained.

2.1 Sociolinguistics

Language is a 'social fact' (Halliday, 1978). This statement implies that in language there are values, cultural norms and social structure shared by the members of a society. This statement is elaborated by Sweet (1888) as cited in Halliday (1978) that language originates spontaneously in the individual, for the imitative and symbolic instinct is inherent in all intelligent beings, whether men or animals; but like that of poetry and the arts, its development is social. Language is central to human nature. Each human language is a complexity of knowledge and abilities enabling speakers of the language to communicate with each other in order to express ideas, emotions, desires, and all the other things that need expressing. Herk (2012, p. 25) defined sociolinguistics as "the scientific study of the relationship(s) between language and society." Coulmas (1998) explained that sociolinguistics is concerned with describing language use as a social phenomenon and, where possible, it attempts to establish causal links between language and society, pursuing the complementary questions of what language contributes to

making a community possible and how communities shape their languages by using them. Nababan (1991) stated that sociolinguistics is used to discuss aspects of society, especially the variation contained in language-related factors.

According to Danesi (1999), sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics studying how language functions in society. He adds that sociolinguists study how linguistic forms and uses vary according to age, class, gender, situation, and other social variables. Traditional symbols are part of the linguistic forms since they communicate important aspects of a society's culture. According to Halliday (1978), a social reality (or a 'culture') is itself an edifice of meanings—a semiotic construct. In this perspective, language is one of the semiotic systems that constitute a culture. He further explained that the formulation, 'language as social semiotic' means interpreting language within a sociocultural context in which the culture itself is interpreted in semiotic terms—as an information system. Since symbols communicate, they form part of the language use by the society. It is thus imperative to discuss sociolinguistics in this study.

2.2 Semantics

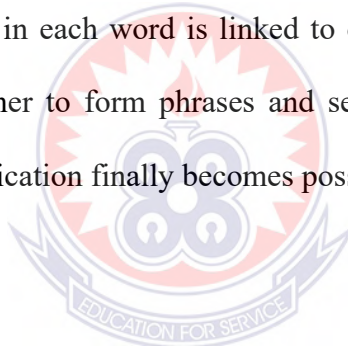
Smith et al. (2007) simply state that semantics is the study of meaning in language. We know that language is used to express meanings which can be understood by others. But meanings exist in our minds and we can express what is in our minds through the spoken and written forms of language as well as through gestures, action and so on (Bagha, 2011). According to Yule (2005), semantics is the study of meaning. He also adds that, semantics is concerned with the meaning of words, phrases and sentences. Similarly, Pardede (2016) also defines semantics as the study of meaning and goes on to say that, it

is the relationship between words and symbols and objects or concepts they refer to. Leech (1983) postulates that semantics as the study of meaning is central to the study of communication thus, it is the study of the human mind where thought processes, cognition, and conceptualization are all intricately bound up in the way we convey messages or experiences of the world using language. The sound patterns of language are studied at the level of phonology and the organization of words and sentences is studied at the level of morphology and syntax. These are in turn organized in such a way that we can convey meaningful messages or receive and understand messages. How language is organized in order to be meaningful is what we attempt to answer at the level of semantics. According to Bagha (2011), semantics is that level of linguistic analysis where meaning is analyzed. He explains further that it is the most abstract level of linguistic analysis, since we cannot see or observe meaning as we can observe and record sounds.

Olmen & Athanasopoulos (2018) explain that semantics is the field of linguistics concerned with the study of meaning. They add that not even all linguistic meaning is traditionally regarded as included under the heading of semantics, and that one could characterize meaning in linguistics roughly as the content expressed in communication by means of language or as the message that a speaker conveys to a hearer. Meaning is related very closely to the human capacity to think logically and to understand. So, when we try to analyze meaning, we are trying to analyze our own ability to think and understand our own ability to create meaning. Semantics concerns itself with 'giving a systematic account of the nature of meaning' (Leech, 1981 cited in Bagha, 2011). Abdurrahman (2019) explained that semantics is the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences, and that linguistic semantics deals with the conventional meaning

conveyed by the use of words and sentences of a language.

In addition, Issah and Adomako (2013:96) define semantics as “a branch of linguistics that studies the meaning of words, the relationship between words and their meanings and the individual meanings of words. They add that “it is the study of meaning of words, the relationship between words (that is the physical forms) and their meanings (that is the sense) and the individual meaning of words, in relation to the overall meaning of an utterance.” The various definitions given by the scholars above establish the fact that semantics is the branch of linguistics or language study that deals with meaning and the meaning is usually looked at from the interpretation of words, phrases and sentences. Every meaning embedded in each word is linked to or related with other words and as these words are put together to form phrases and sentences, a wholesome meaning is derived, of which communication finally becomes possible and appreciable.



2.3 Semiotics

Generally, semiotic is the study of signs or an epistemology about the existence or the actuality of sign in societal life (Yakina & Totua, 2014). Napitupulu (2016) explains that the study of semiotics is closely related to the field of linguistics. Linguistics deals with the study of the structure and meaning of language more specifically, and semiotics explores the study of signs and symbols as a significant part of communications. Liszka (1996, p. 1), one of the students of Charles Peirce, quoted Peirce as saying that “semeiotic is defined as "the analytic study of the essential conditions to which all signs are subject"; it's aim is to discern "what must be the characters of all signs ..." and "what would be true of signs in all cases...". Lotman (2019, p. 5) states that “Semiotics is the

recognition of the fact that communication and information-processing are a primary fact of human culture, and that no study of human culture can be undertaken except on the basis of such a recognition". Lotman (ibid) has earlier stated that culture and semiotics are essentially coextensive phenomena. He explained that culture is by nature semiotic, and that semiotics evolves in a cultural environment. Therefore, to him, semiotics is primarily the semiotics of culture, or cultural semiotics, and the other branches of semiotics must stem from it. The study of semiotics is so important that it works even in the animal world as explained by Marcel Danesi in Seboek (2001) thus:

Seboek has transformed semiotics back into a 'life science,' having relocated it, in effect, to its roots in medical biology. In other words, he has uprooted semiotics from the philosophical, linguistic, and hermeneutic terrain in which it has been cultivated for centuries and replanted it in the larger biological domain whence it sprang originally. Seboek's biological approach inheres in a perspective that aims to investigate how all animals are endowed genetically with the capacity to use basic signals and signs for survival, and how human semiosis is both similar to, and different from, this capacity. (p. xv)

Similarly, Cobley (2001) asserts that semiotics, so conceived, embraces animate nature and human culture; it incorporates scientific analysis with cultural analysis; and it surveys the continuity of semioses within language as well as those outside. Marcel Danesi wrote in Proskurin (2007) that semiotics, is a fundamental form of inquiry into how humans shape raw sensory information into knowledge-based categories through sign creation, no matter what particular orientation is taken to the inquiry. Prior (2014), explained that semiotics is a broad diverse field that involves the study of multiple kinds of signs conveyed via varied channels and media, of socially-organized and evolutionarily-generated sign systems, and of the conditions of signification or semiosis (i.e., the processes of making meaning from signs). Semiotics can be traced to ancient

Greek formulations of semeion, as symptom or sign, in medical and philosophical traditions (Prior, 2014; Sebeok, 2001). According to Chandler (2017) the standard medieval definition for the sign became *aliquid stat pro aliquo* (something that stands for something). In modern history, semiotics has been taken up in philosophy, literary and cultural studies, language and literacy studies, psychology, and even biology. The present shape of the field has been forged in the competing theoretical traditions of Saussure's (1983) dyadic, Peirce's (1998) triadic accounts of the sign, and of Voloshinov's (1973) historical-materialist accounts of the social and psychological functions of signs (Prior, 2014).

Sebeok (2001) states that 'Semiotics is the science that studies signs and their communicative functions'. It is both a science, with its own corpus of findings and theories, and a technique for studying anything that produces signs. Both Charles Peirce and John Locke define semiotics as the 'doctrine' of signs (Peirce, 1958 cited in Liszka, 1996; Sebeok, 2001). Semiotics is often confused with communication science. Although the two fields share much of the same theoretical and methodological territory, the latter focuses more on the technical study of how messages are transmitted (vocally, electronically, and so on) and on the mathematical and psychological laws governing the transmission, reception, and processing of information. Semiotics, on the hand, pays more attention to the meaning of the messages, and how they have been put together with signs. This is why it also includes the study of purely fanciful, misleading, or deceitful signs and messages (Danesi, 1999; 2004).

One of the broadest definitions of semiotics is that of the late Italian semiotician Umberto

Eco, who stated that ‘semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign’ (Chandler, 2017). According to Eco (1984), semiotics can be general or specific. General semiotics is, first of all, concerned with the concept of sign. A general semiotics is simply a philosophy of language which stresses the comparative and systematic approach to languages (and not only to verbal language) by exploiting the result of different, more local inquiries. It assumes that it is impossible to speak about verbal language without comparing it to other forms of signification and/or communication. Eco opined that a specific semiotics is, or aims at being, the 'grammar' of a particular sign system, and proves to be successful insofar as it describes a given field of communicative phenomena as ruled by a system of signification. Specific semiotics study phenomena that are reasonably independent of their observations. The experiences of specific semiotics influence a general semiotics more than any philosophy of language. Expanding the discussion on the subject, Hamel (2011) states that semiotics is the study of sign processes (semiosis), or signification and communication, signs and symbols, and is usually divided into three branches: semantics, syntactics, and pragmatics. Hamel’s classification can be said to be a modernization of Lizka (1996) who explains that semiotics is, in one aspect, a formal science:

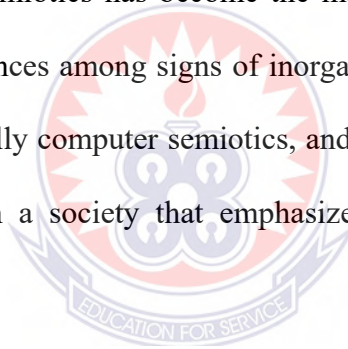
As a formal science it is interested in determining those necessary and essential conditions of the character and employment of signs. It has three branches in this regard, and these are; the study of the necessary conditions which count anything as a sign as such (semiotic grammar), the establishment of criteria for counting something as true by inferences from and through signs (critical logic), and the determination of the conditions for the communication and development of signs (universal rhetoric). (p. 14)

Semiotics is frequently seen as having important anthropological dimensions. In general,

semiotic theories take signs or sign systems as their object of study, and the communication of information in living organisms is termed biosemiotics or zoosemiosis. Pateda (2010) stated that there are at least nine kinds of semiotics. These are summarized as: analytic semiotic which analyzes the semiotic system of signs and symbols. There is also descriptive semiotic which is semiotic that notices the sign and symbols system that can be experienced at the moment. For instance, the overcast sky indicating that there is going to be rain. Another kind of semiotics is the faunal semiotic (zoo semiotics). This is a special kind of semiotic that notices sign and symbol system produced by animals. Danesi (2004) explained that Sebeok (2001) was influential in expanding the semiotic paradigm to include the study of animal signaling systems, which he termed zoosemiotics, and the comparative study of symptoms, signals and signs in all living things, which he called biosemiotics.

The other kinds are cultural semiotic, which is the kind of semiotics that examines sign and symbol system applicable in a particular culture or society. Almost all cultures use certain signs and symbols which distinguish one culture from another in this world. Narrative semiotic which is another kind of semiotics, deals with signs and symbols system in narrative in folklore form. Natural semiotic is another special kind of semiotics that describes signs and symbols system produced by nature. Then the normative semiotic that specifically talks about signs and symbols made by humans in intangible norms. For example, traffic signs. Social semiotic is also a special kind of semiotics that analyzes signs and symbols produced by human, in intangible words or sentences. Lastly, the structural semiotic, a kind of semiotics that studies signs and symbols system that is manifested in the language structure.

It is obvious that semiotics is intrinsically interdisciplinary. It has strong disciplinary ties with both philosophy and linguistics, although such links typically feature more prominently in the semiotic literature than in that of the long-established disciplines of philosophy or linguistics. Ever since Eco (1976) formulated the problem of the "semiotic threshold" to try to keep semiotics within the cultural sciences, semiotics— especially Peircian semiotics—has developed further into the realm of biology, crossing threshold after threshold into the sciences. Although semiotics emerged in efforts to scientifically investigate how signs function in culture, the twentieth century witnessed efforts to extend semiotic theory into the non-cultural realm, primarily in relation to living systems and computers. Peirce's semiotics has become the main source for semiotic theories of the similarities and differences among signs of inorganic nature, signs of living systems, signs of machines, especially computer semiotics, and the cultural and linguistic signs of humans living together in a society that emphasizes the search for information and knowledge (Idris, 2020).



This is because Peirce's semiotics is the only one that deals systematically with non-intentional signs of the body and of nature at large. Such theories have resulted in findings that have changed the scope of semiotics from strictly cultural communication to a bio-semiotics that encompasses the cognition and communication of all living systems from the inside of cells to the entire biosphere, and a cybersemiotics or a theory of information systems (Idris, 2020). This recent advancement, the cybersemiotics, is what some modern semioticians are applying to produce traditional symbols in cloths using current technologies such as the one by Asmah et al. (2015) who designed proverbial symbols in cloths for Ga royals.

Writing on 'semiotics as a tool for analysis', Martin and Ringham (2000) state that there are four basic principles on which the semiotic analysis of texts is based. The first is that meaning is not inherent in objects. Meaning, rather, is constructed by what is known as a competent observer, that is, by a subject capable of 'giving form' to objects. For example, it would be incapable of grasping the significance of an implement from say Africa or Asia. However, left alone with it, an observer will give it a meaning that is based on what knowledge he/she has and what will suit his/her purpose. Secondly, semiotics views the text, (any text) as an autonomous unit, that is, one that is internally coherent. Therefore, instead of starting an analysis with ideas or meanings external to the text and showing how they are reflected within it, semiotic analysis begins with a study of the actual language and structures of the text, showing how meanings are constructed and, of course, at the same time what these meanings are. Thirdly, semiotics posits that story structure or narrativity underlies all discourse, not just what is commonly known as a story, and lastly, semiotics posits the notion of levels of meaning. It is, for instance, the deep abstract level that generates the surface levels. A text must, therefore, be studied at these different levels of depth and not just at the surface level as is the case with traditional linguistics.

After discussing what semiotics entails, the next sub-division looks at the relationship between semantics and semiotics.

2.4 Relation between Semantics and Semiotics

A word is a language element that is usually heard or read, represented by symbols in the form of alphabets (Napitupulu, 2016). Symbol in semiotic is usually called a sign. Since symbols have meaning and meaning is a semantic object, there is then a reason to

examine the relation between semantics and semiotics. Chandler (1999) explains that contemporary semioticians study signs not in isolation but as part of the semiotic 'sign systems'. They study how meanings are made, and as such, are concerned not only with communication but also with the construction and maintenance of reality. It is therefore true that semiotics and that branch of linguistics known as semantics have a common concern with the meaning of signs. Sturrock (1986) cited in Chandler (1999) argues that whereas semantics focuses on what words mean, semiotics is concerned with meaning of signs. Sturrock (1979) states that while semantics focuses on the denotative dimension of the meaning of words, semiotics offers a broader perspective of the meaning by focusing on both connotative and denotative dimensions of signs.

According to Morris (1938) cited in Chandler (1999), semiotics embraced semantics, along with the other traditional branches of linguistics. Thus, semantics is the relationship of signs to what they stand for; syntactics (or syntax) is the formal or structural relations between signs; and pragmatics is the relation of signs to interpreters. Semantics discusses the system of meaning, while semiotics is a theory of sign and symbols (Pateda, 2010). Some signs stand for their objects just by virtue of convention or some kind of relatively arbitrary connection to their objects. According to Mertz (2013), Peirce labeled this kind of conventional connection “symbolic”, which is also referred to as “semantic” meaning. The relation between semiotics and semantics is like the one between a knife or a fork and cutlery. While a knife or a fork is an item of cutlery, cutlery is not necessarily a knife or a fork. While semantics deals with linguistic meaning, semiotics deals with meanings that transcend linguistics (Napitupulu, 2016).

2.5 Symbols

Etymologically speaking, the word 'symbol' comes from a word which means 'to throw-with', or to make something coincide with something else. A symbol was originally an identification mark made up of two halves of a coin or of a medal. Two halves of the same thing, either one standing for the other, both becoming, however, fully effective only when they matched to make up, again, the original whole (Eco, 1984:130). The Encyclopedia Britannica defines symbol as any device with which an abstraction can be made. A symbol is something associated with something else that it signifies or represents. Language, consequently, is a form of symbolism that not only accepts ambiguity but, in some measure, employs it effectively. Symbols are not translations of our thought; they are its organs (Eco, 1984:135). What a symbol seeks to do, is to represent a reality or a truth and to reveal them either instantaneously or gradually (Napitupulu, 2016). Seth (2013) pointed out that the use and recognition of symbols enriches our lives.

Humans, especially semioticians, have therefore developed an extensive vocabulary of signs and symbols. The relationship of the symbol to a reality is conceived of as somewhat direct and intimate and also as somewhat indirect and distant (Napitupulu, 2016). A symbol as "a sign which refers to the 'object' that it denotes by virtue of a 'law', usually an association of general ideas (Peirce, 1931 cited in Eco, 1984, p.136). A symbol is a sign that stands for its referent in an arbitrary, conventional way (Sebeok, 2001; Danesi, 2004). According to Mensah (2010), a symbol is something such as an idea, object, conventional or non-conventional entity that is used to represent something else. He stated also that a symbol could be abstract or not. Abstract symbols are symbols that

do not depend on their concrete material substance. Most semioticians agree that symbolicity is what sets human representation apart from that of all other species, allowing the human species to reflect upon the world separately from stimulus-response situations (Sebeok, 2001). The symbol is sometimes identified with the reality that it represents and sometimes regarded as a pure transparency of it. As a sign or 'picture', the representation of, or the relationship to reality, of a symbol, has either a denotative or a truly representative meaning.

As humans, we seem to be driven by a desire to make meanings, and thus can be called *Homo significans* – meaning-makers (Chandler, 2017). It is our nature to interpret things, and, in doing so, we treat them as 'signs'. Signs take the form of letters, words, images, sounds, odours, flavours, actions, events, or objects. Signs have no intrinsic meaning and become signs only when we invest them with meanings (Chandler, 2017). 'Nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign' (Pierce, 1931 cited in Chandler, 2017:11). Therefore, anything can be said to be a sign as long as someone interprets it as representing something else. It is the meaningful use of signs that is at the heart of the concerns of semiotics. For example, a V-sign made with the index and middle fingers can stand symbolically for the concept 'victory'; white is a colour that can be symbolic of 'cleanliness,' 'purity,' or 'innocence'; dark colour for 'uncleanness,' 'impurity,' or 'corruption'; and the list could go on and on. These symbols are all established by social convention (Sebeok, 2001). Geertz (1973) explains that meanings can only be stored in symbols, citing a cross, a crescent, or a feathered serpent as some examples of such symbols that has meanings in religion. Such religious symbols, dramatized in rituals or related in myths, are felt somehow to sum up, for those for whom they are resonant, the

quality of the emotional life it supports, and the way one ought to behave while in it. What is frequently appreciated in many so-called symbols is exactly their vagueness, their openness, their fruitful ineffectiveness to express a 'final' meaning, so that with symbols and by symbols one indicates what is always beyond one's reach (Eco, 1984:130).

Whereas signs are often arbitrary in character, symbols frequently are based on a likeness. The lion represents courage because lions are said to be brave. The lily symbolizes purity because it is white. Such symbols often have the force of metaphor or comparison. In Ghana, for example, when symbols embody or imply a moral statement, proverb, or motto, they are called emblems. Sometimes too, symbols are used on personal levels such as the use of flowers, especially, rose and sunflower, to show love, care and affection to relatives and loved ones. According to Frutiger (1989), it is difficult to achieve any certainty about the symbolic expression content of any given figure in the class of non-alphabetical graphic expression in our environment. A significant example of this difficulty is the sign of the crossbones. On the warrior's banner or the pirate ship's sail it appears as the heraldic signature of a fellowship. On the medicine bottle it is the signal for "poisonous," and on the motorcyclist's leather jacket it is a symbolic sign for daring or acceptance of risks.

It is obvious that if one looks for a definable common denominator for the different types of symbols, one could perhaps choose the term 'meaning picture' or 'meaning sign' to best describe the religious experience. The symbol (religious and other) is intended primarily for the circle of the initiated and involves the acknowledgment of the

experience that it expresses (Napitupulu, 2016). The symbol is not, however, kept hidden in meaning; to some extent, it even has a revelatory character. It indicates the need for communication and yet conceals the details and inner most aspects of its contents. Symbols reflect culture and are used to convey specific ideologies, social cultures and different aspects of different cultures. That is to say, the true meaning of a symbol lies in the cultural background it belongs to (Lei, 2015). Symbols help us get a better understanding of the world we live in and they serve as a guide in the way we make judgments about happenings around us. Napitupulu (2016) explained this further and stated that:

In the world of science, humankind has been called a symbolizing animal, a notion championed by the theory of evolution. That notion suggests that at some point in the evolution of mankind—perhaps in Neolithic times—the human species distinguished itself by forming conceptions of the cosmos that made the environment in some degree comprehensible. Such conceptions, normally based on human patterns of behavior and experiences, served to order the external world in terms of symbols that functioned as reality. These symbols were later superseded by symbols of greater cogency as indicated in various myths narrated worldwide. (p. 11)

Semiotics can be defined as the study of symbolism and meaning (Chandler, 2002), and symbols, including language, are tools that through representation make human interaction possible (Black et al., 2018). Symbolism has been key in Ghanaian communication networks. It is opined that the Ghanaian and African worldview in general is full of symbols which serve as foundation for understanding their way of life (Mensah, 2010). Symbols occupy the core of our social and cultural world. Symbols that have been created throughout the world are simplified abstractions of complex realities, where the visible represents the invisible. The ability to use symbols through

identification and understanding of their meaning helps to enrich people's lives. Seth (2013) classified symbolism into five kinds, namely; cosmic symbolism, natural world symbolism, human life symbolism, myths and religion, society and culture. Lotman (2019) asserted that symbols represent one of the most stable elements on the cultural continuum. He stated:

An immutable set of symbols passing diachronically through a culture assumes to a significant degree the function of unifying that culture; as a culture's memory of itself, symbols prevent a culture from disintegrating into isolated temporal strata. The unity of a basic set of dominant symbols and their persistence in the life of a given culture determines to a significant degree the national and regional borders of that culture. (p. 13)

It is in my opinion that a society cannot achieve its full cultural communication system without the use of symbols, as explained by Agyekum (2006) that symbols are the replica of the meanings of words, things, actions, emotions, behavior, and ideas of a people within a particular culture. People's actions can be motivated and guided by symbols and their meanings.

The two dominant models of what constitutes a sign are those of the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (Danesi, 2004; Chandler, 2017). For the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who is regarded as the founder of modern linguistics, language is a system of signs, and linguistic signs make sense only as part of a language's sign system. Within such a system, a sign has two aspects: a signifiant (usually rendered in English as a 'signifier') and a signifié (a 'signified') (Chandler, 2017). Saussure's model of the sign is simplified as a 'dyadic' or two-part model of the sign. He defined a sign as being composed of a 'signifier' – the form which the sign takes or

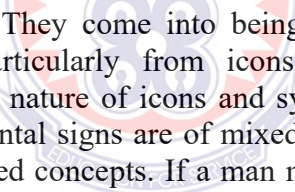
(physical part) and the ‘signified’ – the concept it represents or (conceptual part) (Danesi, 2004). In contrast to Saussure’s model of the sign in the form of a ‘self-contained dyad’, the American pragmatist philosopher and logician Charles Sanders Peirce had formulated his own model of the sign, of ‘semeiotic’ (as he called it) (Chandler, 2017). Peirce offered a triadic model: The representamen – the form that the sign takes also called the ‘sign vehicle’; an object – something to which the sign refers (a referent), or which it represents; and an interpretant – the effect produced by the sign or the sense made of it (Peirce, 1992 cited in Danesi, 2004; Chandler, 2017).

It is important to be aware that semioticians usually make a distinction between the sign (the whole meaningful ensemble), which as Peirce (1992) cited in Chandler (2017) noted ‘is not a real thing’, and its sign vehicle – the perceptible form it takes (such as a word or image), which more strictly is a signifier in structuralist usage and a representamen for Peirceans, while in Saussure’s model, the sign is an indivisible whole, and it signifies only when interpreted (Chandler, 2017). For Saussure, the signified and signifier were purely psychological; they were the form rather than the substance. Today, the signifier is interpreted as the material form (something that can be seen, heard, touched, smelled or tasted) and the signified as the mental concept. A symbol is one part of semiotics because semiotics, as stated earlier, is a special science studying the system of sign or symbol.

Semiotics is the study of how meaning is created, not what it is. Campbell (2002) states that a symbol is an energy evoking, and directing agent. He stated further that a symbol, like everything else, shows a double aspect, and it is therefore necessary to distinguish, between the ‘sense’ and the ‘meaning’ of the symbol. Buchler (1955) explains that a

symbol is a Representamen whose Representative character consists precisely in its being a rule that will determine its Interpretant. All words, sentences, books and other conventional signs are symbols.

It is important to show how symbol is to be understood in the Peirce's model or in a triadic relation with other signs, and in a triadic relation of a sign, that is Sign-Interpretant-Object. Peirce (1903) cited in Lee (2008) opines that in the triadic relation of sign, symbol is defined as "a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as referring to that object". The symbol is thus itself a general type or law, that is legisign and as such it acts through a replica. Buchler (1955) states that:



Symbols grow. They come into being by development out of other signs, particularly from icons, or from mixed signs partaking of the nature of icons and symbols. We think only in signs. These mental signs are of mixed nature, the symbol-parts of them are called concepts. If a man makes a new symbol, it is by thoughts involving concepts. So it is only out of symbols that a new symbol can grow. (p. 115)

It is very important to note that although some scholars have tried to differentiate between symbols and signs, these two terms are used interchangeably in the study of semiotics as seen in most of the literature cited in this work. As stated earlier, semiotics is defined as the social science that studies the nature of meaning and 'meaning-making', and as a discipline, it is concerned with the symbolism conveyed by objects and words. At the most rudimentary level, meaning is a product of the interaction between a sign system and a decoder. At all times, we are perpetually engaged in this relationship and are

constantly decoding the signs and or symbols around us (Pantelo, 2017). According to Eco (1976), the meaning of anything that holds symbolic value can be understood on five levels- physical, mechanical, economic, social, and semantic. He used the example of an automobile to illustrate the area of meaning each of the five levels is concerned with. On the physical level, it has a weight, it is made of a certain metal and other materials; on the mechanical level, it functions and fulfills a certain function on the basis of certain laws; on the economic level, it has an exchange value, a set price; on the social level, it indicates a certain social status. The use of signs and symbols interchangeably in semiotics is seen in the explanation of the semantic level:

On the semantic level, the automobile is understood as one cultural unit in a much larger cultural system composed of many units. These units are signs created by cultural relationships. These signs acquire the symbolic value that creates meaning in verbal or iconic communication. (Eco, 1976, p. 27)

Buchler (1955) also explains that a symbol is a sign naturally fit to declare that the set of objects which is denoted by whatever set of indices may be in certain ways attached to it is represented by an icon associated with it. And according to Seth (2013), while a sign is straightforward in its function, and it may be a constituent part of a written or visual language, a symbol on the other hand, is a visual image or sign representing an idea.

2.6 Symbolism in Ghana

Ghanaians have several ways of communicating their thoughts and feelings. These communications are often done by means of symbols, proverbs, songs, storytelling and dirges. Ghanaians employ both verbal and non-verbal channels for communication. Verbal communications are expressed in oral forms while non-verbal ones are done through

symbols (Kuwornu-Adjaottor et al., 2015). Gamble and Gamble (1999) characterized non-verbal communication as perpetual, frequent, and involuntary. They opined that communication is a natural part of human life and that no matter how hard one may try, one cannot but communicate. No one can stop sending nonverbal messages. As far as one person is observing the actions of another, it is impossible not to communicate. Non-verbal communication, like verbal communication, can be ambiguous. Like words, non-verbal messages may not mean what we think they do. Therefore, one has to be very careful when interpreting non-verbal cues.

All non-verbal communication must be evaluated or interpreted within the context in which it occurs (Kuwornu-Adjaottor et al., 2015). Non-verbal communication in our local settings is termed 'Domestic symbolism' by Yankah (1995) and it is defined as a surrogate language where the message is presented in the form of a traditional symbol in view of the spoken word (Yankah, 1995 cited in Kuwornu-Adjaottor et al., 2015). In Ghana, there is the assertion that the most prominent among traditional symbols are the Adinkra symbols. But I think that, that assertion should rather be expressed as 'the Adinkra symbols is the most circulated or widely known collection of symbols among Ghanaians'. Kuwornu-Adjaottor et al. (2015) explain that traditional symbols present translations of thought and ideas that express and symbolize the values and beliefs of the people among whom they occur. These images have often become symbolic by having certain ideas or proverbs imposed on them. The artifacts that are expressed in symbolic art forms in Ghana are textiles, pottery, stools, jewelry, umbrellas and linguist staffs among others.

As an aspect of their cherished culture, the Ga people has symbolism, which does not only

bring out the visual impression of their culture as seen on linguist staffs, palanquins, royal stools, royal clothing, among others, but which also functions as a major communicative tool for the transmission of culture. Symbolism among the Ga people is both natural and man-made. Some natural happenings that serve as symbols for communication among the Ga people include seeing a fight between a cock and a hen (which means that one will receive a visitor soon), when a woman meets big black ants on her way to the market (it means she will have a better sale), the crow of a cock in the evening or at night/bedtime (it is a sign of bad omen, and such a cock must be killed), when a person is sick and his/her cat leaves home (it means the sick person will die), the sign of the rainbow in the sky during a heavy downpour (indicating that the rain will soon stop), among others.

Man-made symbols that communicate apart from the traditional ones include seeing a leaf or stick in a door's lock (meaning there was a visitor in your absence), a red or white cloth tied to one's wrist during a burial service (meaning one is a close family member or a friend of the deceased), meeting someone with a leaf in his mouth (meaning he is not supposed to talk to anyone on his way/a messenger with an important information), a stick with a piece of red cloth tied around it on a land (means do not enter to work on it) or at the mouth of a river (means do not fish in that river), leaves or branches of trees on a path (meaning be careful, something dangerous ahead), and a host of others (Amon, 2001; Squire, 2005). These symbols and their communicative values are taught at the various levels of education in the Ghanaian Language curriculum. The Ga people use symbolism in their daily activities.

2.7 The history of Ga traditional symbols

The evolution of symbols dates back to the prehistoric periods when men drew images on walls in caves for visual communication. It is unfortunate that the exact date and origin of the symbols cannot be traced because it dates back many generations. And there is also the lack of early written records on the Ga Samai (Ga symbols) that makes it difficult to track their ancestry. Besides, the origin of the Ga people themselves still remains unclear: some traditionalists claim they have a Jewish descent, although several existing records suggest that they are early settler immigrants from Nigeria (Adjong, 2021).

In Ghana, the most prominent among traditional symbols are the Adinkra symbols. Unlike the Adinkra symbols, which are visible in different forms of print, fabric design, and ornaments, the Ga symbols enjoy rather little prestige. The traditional wisdom embodied in all these proverbial symbols is clearly not being transmitted to the younger generation as much as it should be. It is difficult to determine or find the complete set of Ga symbols, and there's a reason to believe that many of them have been lost. Ga symbols are not common to see on the Ghanaian landscape, not even in the parts of Accra where most Ga people live. The fisherfolk who once painted these symbols on their wooden canoes seem to have completely drifted away from this practice over the past decades. A few items of jewelry and other decorative ornaments with these symbolic designs exist on the market, but they are usually mixed up with Adinkra-design ornaments, and most traders in this business are unaware that some of these ornaments are of Ga descent.

The need to safeguard Ga traditional symbols as well as other symbols alike, and transfer their rich concepts, sayings and proverbs to younger generations is evident and urgent. These symbols transcend language barriers and portray the beauty of linguistic diversity at the same time (Adjong, 2021). Recently though, some developments have been put in place to project the existence and importance of the Ga symbols. The manufacturing of Ga-symbol key holders, gold-plated brass pendants (usually with hydraulic press), and the designing of printed Ga symbols in T-shirts and paintings of the symbols on clay pots and other ceramics are projects about the preservation and promotion of the Ga cultural heritage (Adjong, *ibid*). Beyond these, one may find these symbols in traditional African prints worn during highly recognized ceremonies like funerals and festivals. Being the custodians of the land, the Ga traditional council have continued to preserve these symbols, displaying carvings and paintings of these symbols in and around their palaces.

2.8 Review of specific researches on symbols

Asmah et al. (2015) worked on a project entitled “Proverbial symbols in cloth for Ga Royals”. That work focused on the translation of Ga proverbs into symbols and the use of the proverbial symbols to produce royal clothes. What this work sort to do was to use modern design technology to modernize the ancient symbols and use same to produce cloths for Ga royals to use for festivals and during important occasions. It was a descriptive work because no theory was applied to interpret the symbols used. Kumoji (2005) worked on a similar project in which she integrated the Adinkra symbols and the alphabets to create a new visual medium. Her project was about the utilization of pictograms and ideograms based on Adinkra symbols and Western alphabets to create a

visual language for cross cultural understanding. She explained that there is a connection between the western alphabet and the Adinkra Symbols and hence applied her visual artistic prowess to merge the two to achieve her purpose of creating a cross cultural identity. Her work can be said to be a visual integration of two symbols from different cultures with meaning and cross-cultural identity. Her main aim was to recreate the Adinkra symbols using two writing systems namely the Univers, a western typeface and the Adinkra symbols from Ghana (West Africa), as a form to reintroduce Adinkra into the multimedia world. She studied the philosophy behind some Adinkra symbols and their communicative values in Akan, and employed the repetition of univers letterforms to create Adinkra symbols to show the integration of the Western typeface and African symbol as one unit.

Owusu-Sampah (2014) wrote on "Adinkra". According to her, the Adinkra symbols, a unique pattern of lines, shapes, circles and squares whose origins date from around the 19th century, is among the richest and most proverbial of symbols in Africa relating widely to the history, beliefs and philosophy of the Asantes. Her goal and focus were on the significance of these symbols and their visual representation and symbolic influence in modern day society. As a means of symbolic communication, these Adinkra symbols, whose qualities evoke meanings such as honor, respect, gallantry, good fortune, wealth, and war, among others, formed the basis for the fabrication of jewelry and metal art forms.

Kuwornu-Adjaottor et al. (2015), also worked on 'The philosophy behind some Adinkra symbols and their communicative values in Akan' where they selected some Adinkra

symbols and brought out the philosophical, educational, historical and moral values inherent in them. Their work focused on encouraging the understanding and usage of the Adinkra symbols in a more meaningful way by Ghanaians and foreigners, contemporary artists, designers, craftsmen, teachers, and all who appreciate the traditional symbols. Their work discussed fourteen (14) Adinkra symbols grouped into two of seven each. The first group consists of the symbols that are familiar to many Ghanaians but the philosophy, history and moral lessons behind them are not known to Ghanaians, and the other group consists of symbols that are unfamiliar to many Ghanaians as well as the philosophical and historical lessons associated with them. The paper posited that the logical value of the Adinkra symbols used by the Akans as a mode of communication is less important as compared to their communication values that are important.

Napitupulu (2016), in his analysis of symbols in Toba Batak Traditional House concluded that the symbols used in Toba Batak Traditional House have meanings or what they symbolize. For instance a 'Tarus' symbol stand for prosperity and a mother's love, 'Boraspati' symbol represents fertility, 'Jenggar' symbol for strength, 'Singasinga' symbol for prestigious, 'Ulupaung' for wisdom, 'Gaja Dompok' symbol for truth, among others. The symbols in Toba Batak traditional house have generally become an identity of the traditional house itself, and according to the ancestral belief of the Toba Batak people, the symbols serve as a protector from demons that will disturb the family in the traditional house from outside their environment. The research suggested that the belief in faith and hope of the Toba Batak culture as depicted by their traditional symbols should be preserved and be made known to future generation or transmitted from generation to generation. The researcher used Saussure's theory which is the dyadic model of the sign

that contains the signifier and the signified to analyze symbols in Toba Batak traditional house. In a research paper by Adjei and Opong (2021) on “Exploring Fry and Drew’s Application of Ghanaian Symbolism in Architectural Ornamentations”, symbolism is said to be the dominant factor in the Ghanaian art form. This symbolism characterizes the socio-cultural, religious and political ideals of the Ghanaian people. The symbols translate the Ghanaian thoughts, beliefs, ideas, aspirations and spirituality which are abstract into reality. The paper asserts that in Ghana, the symbols are in the form of Adinkra, generalizing the notion that Adinkra, which refers to Akan symbols, is for all symbols in Ghana. This assertion cannot be true since all the various ethnic groups in Ghana have their traditional symbols.

It can be seen from the above cited related works that most of the works are on Adinkra symbols of the Akans with focus on the history, philosophy, communicative values and how these symbols can be employed into modern printing of cloths and in the production of other forms of art. These researchers applied various methods and designs to aid their work and to achieve their objective of letting their readers understand and appreciate the importance of traditional symbols in communication and in enhancing the Akan culture in particular, and the Ghanaian culture as a whole. Most of the works on symbolism cited so far either did not apply any direct semiotic theory at all or used Saussure’s theory, as seen in Napitupulu (2016) who applied Saussure’s theory which is the dyadic model of the sign that contains the signifier and the signified. The researcher therefore, having read all these works and others, want to use the Peirce Semiotic Theory to analyze Ga traditional symbols. The application of a theory in this regard will add a new dimension and a new way of analyzing our symbols and to show that scientific theories can be applied to

enhance and project some ancient, local symbols to the world. It will also prove that the Ga traditional symbols are not archaic but they are useful in the modern communication system.

2.9 The Theoretical Framework

Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Saunders Peirce are considered pioneers in the development of semiotics (Chandler, 1999). The researcher adopted Peirce's theory which is a 'triadic' model of the sign that contains 'representamen', 'object' and 'interpretant' or what Lee (2008) called "Sign-Interpretant-Object" to analyze symbols in selected palaces in Accra. The framework has been particularly influential in the study of linguistic signs in recent studies.

Peirce's theory of the sign is made up of the **representamen**, the form which the sign takes, the **object**, that to which the sign refers, and the **interpretant**, the sense made of the sign (Chandler, 2017). He added that, the sign is a unity of the thing that does the representing (the representamen), what is represented (the object), and how it is interpreted (the interpretant). To qualify as a sign, all three functions are essential (Chandler, 2017). The three components can be represented by the semiotic triangle.

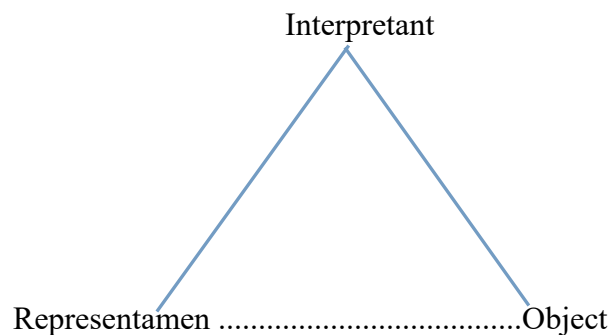


Fig. A Peirce's model as a semiotic triangle.

The dotted-line represent the fact that there is not an observable or direct relationship between the representamen and the object (Chandler, 1999, 2017). Most scholars of Peirce prefer to visualize Peirce's model using a tripod or pinwheel shape with a central node as shown below (Chandler, *ibid*):

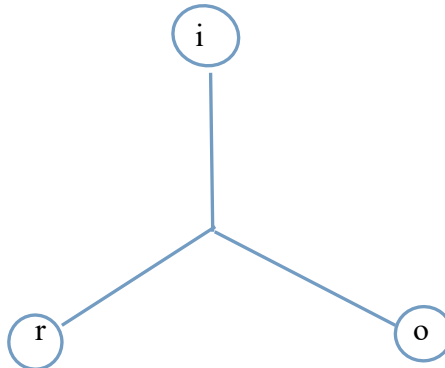


Fig. B Peirce's model as a semiotic tripod

The theory was explained thus:

A sign or representamen is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its Object, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its Interpretant, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object. (Peirce, 1902 cited in Lee, 2008, p. 3)

Buchler (1955) explains that the triadic relation is genuine, that is, its three members are bound together by it in a way that does not consist in any complexus of dyadic relations. The researcher used the Peirce's theory to analyze symbols in the selected palaces of the Ga state since it has been particularly influential in the study of linguistic signs.

Peirce has made three divisions of trichotomies of signs. The first is based on how the sign is in itself. The second is made according to the relation of the sign to its object and the third is made according to how the interpretant represents the sign (Lee, 2008; West, 1977). Peirce explained the trichotomies as follows: with the first division, a sign may be

termed a qualisign, a sinsign, or a legisign; in the second trichotomy a sign may be termed an icon, index, or a symbol; and according to the third division a sign may be a rheme, a dicent sign (or dicensign) or an argument. The Peirce semiotic theory is actually based on the second trichotomy (Chao-Ming & Tzu-Fan, 2015).

The second trichotomy is also called *the Sign-Object Relation*. Peirce felt that this trichotomy was the most important. This is the one he most often refers to when making a brief explanation of the sign theory. The main reason for emphasis on this trichotomy can be found in the fact that he considered his work on signs to be foundational to logic, and logic is concerned with the relation of a proposition to its object and as to whether or not the proposition represents its object correctly (West, 1977). Explaining the second trichotomy, Eco (1984) asserts that Peirce explained an icon as a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of characters of its own; an index is a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that object; and a symbol is a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of a law, or an interpretation. According to Danesi (2004), an icon is a sign that stands for a referent through some form of replication, simulation, imitation, or resemblance. An index is a sign that stands for a referent by pointing to it or by relating it (explicitly or implicitly) to other referents. A symbol is a sign that stands for its object by convention or agreement in specific contexts.

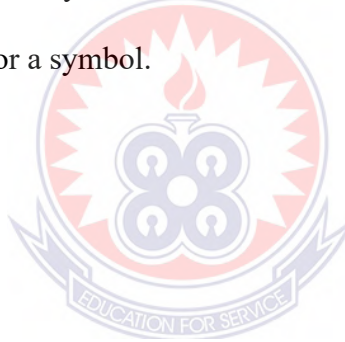
For example, a rose is a symbol of love in some cultures. Knowledge of how to represent a real-life physical situation in a symbolic way is a truly remarkable achievement of the human mind. It allows us to eliminate physical intervention through representations of

the real world by means of symbols and diagrams that allow us, in turn, to experiment mentally with that very world to see what they yield (Danesi, 2004). Symbolism is everywhere. It plays, for instance, an important part in religious life. For instance, the cross symbolizes Christ's death and all Christian beliefs, the Star of David represents Jewish teachings, and so on. People throughout the world have agreed on certain symbols to serve as a shorthand system for communication, recording and recalling information. In the scientific world, every branch has its own system: astronomy uses a set of ancient symbols to identify the sun, the moon, the planets, and the stars; in Mathematics, Greek letters and other symbols make up an abbreviated language which is taught and understood by students and teachers alike. Some common examples include the signs/symbols $<$ (less than), $>$ (greater than), and $=$ (is equal to). Specific kinds of symbols appear in such fields as commerce, engineering, medicine, packaging, and transportation. All countries have official or unofficial national symbols. A flag or an anthem may symbolize a nation (Danesi, 2004). In Ghana, for instance, we have a national flag with different colours (red, gold, green, with a black star in the middle) symbolizing our struggle for independence, our mineral resources, our productive vegetation and our country being the hope of Africa respectively.

The researcher, in applying the Pierce's Semiotic Theory to discuss and explain Ga traditional symbols, analyzed the selected symbols as: the **symbol** (representamen), the **object**, (what the symbol refers to), and the **interpretant**, (what the symbol means or interpreted to mean).

2.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has reviewed some relevant literature on the research topic. The themes of sociolinguistics, semantics and semiotics were discussed. The relationship between semantics and semiotics was briefly discussed. The chapter also discussed symbols in an elaborate manner as it is fundamental to the development of the content of this research work. It has been pointed out that in the study of semiotics, a symbol is also a sign. Symbolism in Ghana and the history of Ga traditional symbols, as well as some related literature on the subject matter, were also highlighted. The chapter again, has elaborated the theory underpinning this thesis, the Peirce's Semiotic Theory or Prose. This theory is based on the second trichotomy of Peirce's divisions of the sign which identifies the 'sign' as an icon, an index or a symbol.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to introduce and explain the rationale for the research methods chosen for the study. This chapter describes the methodology used for the study. It discusses the following: research design, population, sampling strategy, sources of data, data collection methods, data analysis procedure concerning the research. The qualitative approach and the case study design were used for this study.

3.1 Research design

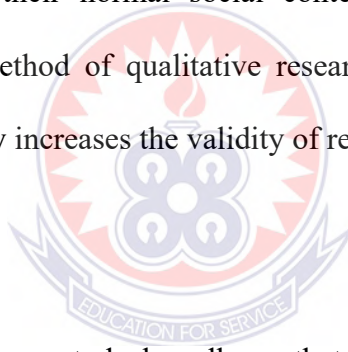
The approach adopted for this study is a qualitative one. In general, qualitative research methods are useful in discovering the meaning that people give to events they experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The main focus in qualitative research is to understand, explore, discover and clarify situations, feelings, attitudes, perceptions, values, beliefs and experiences of a group of people (Kumar, 2011). Basically, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have construed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 2009). Experiment Resource (2009) cited in Appiah-Adjei (2014) argues that the primary aim of qualitative research is to provide a complete, detailed artistic description of the subject of a study with the purpose of uncovering prevalent trends and patterns in thought and in opinion. This work also sought to provide an in-depth picture of the symbols in the Ga traditional symbols. Using the qualitative research method for this work was appropriate as it provided avenues for the

interpretation of historically or culturally significant phenomena.

The general basis of the work cannot be realized without in-depth analysis and interpretation of the history and culture of the Ga people in relation to their use of symbols in communication. According to Kankam & Weiler (2010:65) “rather than trying to simplify things, this approach tries to uncover complex things and understand meanings.” This means that, these designs help in making difficult matters easy to understand and allow researchers to be understood by their readers. The researcher used this type of research design because it is basically descriptive. Verna and Mallick (1999) note that a qualitative study is the study in which the researcher collects data in the form of words rather than numbers and reflects the experiences, feelings, or judgment of individuals taking part in an investigation of a problem or issue whether as the subject or as observers of the scene. It means that the researcher in the research design deals with words rather than numbers. By so doing, it helped the researcher to give a proper account of the feelings, experiences and judgment of respondents in the research.

Qualitative methods also emphasize the researcher’s role as an active participant in the study (Creswell, 2005). In this study, the researcher was the key person in the data collection, as well as the interpreter of the data findings. A qualitative approach is most suitable for this study because it gives the researcher a better understanding of the live experiences of the participants. In qualitative research, the researcher gathers data by using fewer specific questions which probe for a deeper understanding of a certain phenomenon. This type of research has no predictions or expected results (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In gathering data, the qualitative researcher may use single

individual face to face in-depth interviews, structured and non-structured interviews, consensus focus group interviews and discussions, narratives, documentary content analysis or archival studies and participant and non-participant observation. A major characteristic of qualitative research is its efforts at in-depth study of a little problem. According to Morgan (1980) as cited in Appiah-Adjei (2014), qualitative research shares theoretical assumptions of the interpretative model, which is based on the notion that social reality is created and sustained through the subjective experience of people involved in communication. Qualitative researchers are more concerned in their research where they attempt to accurately describe, decode, and interpret the meanings of phenomena occurring in their normal social context (Fryer, 1991). The researcher chooses the case study method of qualitative research design because the method of collecting data qualitatively increases the validity of results (Creswell, 2009).



3.1.1 Case study

Simons (2009) defines a case study broadly as that process of conducting systematic, critical inquiry into a phenomenon of choice and generating understanding to contribute to cumulative public knowledge of the topic. Creswell (2009) perceives the case study as an exploration of a “bounded system” over time and involving detailed and in-depth data collection from multiple sources such as interviews, documents, observations, field notes, and so on. Hence, the nature of the case study is to conduct a deep investigation of the unit of study (individual, group, or institution) within the environment unique to that unit of study. According to De Vos et al. (2005), the case being studied may refer to a process, activity, event, programme or individual or multiple individuals. It might even refer to a

period of time rather than a particular group of people.

Stake (1995) cited in De Vos et al. (2005) argues that the sole criterion for selecting cases for a case study should be “the opportunity to learn”. Where multiple cases are involved, it is referred to as a collective case study. The exploration and description of the case takes place through detailed, in-depth data collection methods, involving multiple sources of information that are rich in context. These may include interviews, documents, observations or archival records. As such, the researcher needs access to, and the confidence of, participants (De Vos et al., 2005). The product of this research is an in-depth description of a case or cases. Mark (1996:219) cited in De Vos et al. (2005) refers to three types of case study, all with different purposes. These are explained as follows:

- The intrinsic case study is solely focused on the aim of gaining a better understanding of the individual case. The purpose is not to understand a broad social issue, but merely to describe the case being studied.
- The instrumental case study is used to elaborate on a theory or to gain a better understanding of a social issue. The case study merely serves the purpose of facilitating the researcher’s gaining of knowledge about the social issue.
- The collective case study furthers the understanding of the researcher about a social issue or population being studied.

The case study approach was selected because it is best fit for data collection and analysis for this study. According to Yin (2003, p. 9), the case study has a distinctive advantage over other research designs because “the strategy employed is to investigate ‘how’ or

‘why’ questions asked about a contemporary set of events over which the researcher has no control”. The case study is described by Merriam (1998) as “being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic”, indicating that the case study is focused on a specific event and has the potential to provide significant insight into how individuals confront problems through a holistic view of the situation.

The focus of this researcher is to study, analyze and give an in-depth description of Ga traditional symbols found at selected palaces, and their communicative values in the cultural setting of the Ga people. The researcher also looks at how the meaning associated with each of the symbols apply to contemporary living. The case study approach is the best for such a study because it allows for a step-by-step analysis of each symbol and its description.

3.2 Population

A population is defined as a group of individuals, with at least one common characteristic which distinguishes that group from other individuals (Best & Kahn, 2006). It is necessary to have a target population for research such as this. A target population consists of a specific group to whom findings might be generalizable. The research was carried out among the natives of Ga, precisely in seven selected palaces, the target population. These palaces were the main Kaneshie Palace also known as the Ga Mantse Palace, and the seven palaces of the seven towns that make up the Ga state. The palaces are the Ga Mashi Mantse Palace, the Nugua Mantse Palace, the Tema Mantse Palace, the Teshie Mantse Palace, the Osu Mantse Palace, the La Mantse Palace, and the Kpone Mantse Palace. These palaces were selected in order to get a fair representation of the Ga

people.

3.3. Participants

The linguists/*otsaamemei* in these palaces were interviewed for data collection. In all seven (7) people, all male, were interviewed and the age range between 45 and 70. Six of them have had some level of formal education, one had informal education.

3.4 Sampling technique

Tuckman (1999) defines sampling as the act, process, or the technique of selecting a suitable size, or a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population. Sampling is a small size of the population selected for observation and interview. I used purposive or judgmental sampling to select participants for this research. According to Neuman (2007:142), purposive sampling is used in situations where an expert uses judgment in selecting cases with a specific purpose in mind. Purposive sampling refers to intentionally chosen sample according to the needs of the study. This means the researcher selects participants because they have indicated their willingness (or they will agree) to participate in the study. Purposive sampling is often used in exploratory research or in field research such as this one. Face-to-face interview was conducted.

3.5 Sources of data

Data for this study were collected from two main sources namely; primary and secondary sources. The primary source included intuitions of the researcher as a native speaker of the language, (formal and informal), recording of interviews of some selected elderly

members in the communities, most of whom are royal spokespersons or *otsaamime*, and through observation and taking of field notes. The information gathered was confirmed by the resource person and proved to be authentic. For the secondary sources, data were collected from Asmah et al. (2015), Adjei-Klu (2019) and Amon (2001). Some materials for this study were also sourced from the internet.

3.6 Data collection technique

The data collection strategies used were interviews, observation, audio recordings and documents.

3.6.1 Interviews

Interviewing is the predominant mode of data or information collection in qualitative research (De Vos et al., 2005). An interview is an interaction between two or more people for purposes of exchanging information through a series of question. Interviews play a central role in the data collection (Cresswell, 2013). Interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Dawson, 2009). Semi-structured interview was employed in this study. A semi-structured interview according to Patton (2002) is an interview type where the researcher specifies issues and topics to be covered in an outline form and the interviewer decides the sequence and wording in the course of the interview. In general, researchers use semi-structured interviews in order to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of, a particular topic (De Vos et al., *ibid*).

The semi-structured interview method gives the researcher and participant much more flexibility, and the researcher is able to follow up on particular interesting avenues that emerge in the interview, and the participant is able to give a fuller picture of the topic or issue being discussed. Semi-structured interviews are especially suitable where one is particularly interested in complexity or process, or where an issue is controversial or personal (De Vos et al., *ibid*). The researcher made sure to take the needed notes for the study during the interview sessions just as De Vos et al. (*ibid*) states that keeping the objectives of qualitative research in mind is very important, since otherwise the researcher might consider everything as being significant. This helped the researcher to stay on track and be able to distinguish between what is important and what is not. Judd et al. (1991) cited in De Vos (2005) states that field notes should consist of everything the researcher sees and hears. Field notes should contain a chronological description of what happens to the setting and the participants (Arkava & Lane, 1983, p. 177 cited in De Vos et al., 2005). The triangulation of this course of data was important for this study because it ensures credibility of the research. According to Owu-Ewie (2012), triangulation in qualitative research is the need to use multiple research design methods or multiple data collection strategies to ensure validity and credibility of the work to bring all details concerning the data collection. The interview questions were designed in the Ga Language and the questions asked were thoroughly explained to participants. The responses were later carefully transcribed and translated into English for this research work.

The interviews were carried out at Ga Mashi palace on June 13, 2022; at Teshie, La and Nugua palaces on September 5, 2022; at Tema and Kpone palaces on September 13,

2022; and at Osu palace on October 1, 2022. The researcher used a Samsung Galaxy A12 smart phone to record the various interview sessions. According to Duranti (1997), no matter how good we are as writers, if our goal is to have an interaction, writing is a very poor technology for describing the richness of the experience. Smit et al. (1995, p. 17) cited in De Vos et al. (2005) argued that a tape recorder allows a much fuller record than notes taken during the interview. The researcher therefore personally, with permission from the participants, recorded the discussions that have been used for this analysis. The recorded tapes were later played back and the information was transcribed and translated.

3.6.2 Observations

Observation is a method of data collection in which researchers observe within a specific research field. It is sometimes referred to as an unobtrusive method (Patton, 2002). The researcher sort permission and observed symbols shown to him at the Ga *Mashi* and the Osu palaces on June 13, 2022, and video-recorded same. Some of the symbols on stools and swords were not readily available because they were in the ‘stool room’. The researcher was allowed to stand at the entrance to the room and the symbols were shown to him by the caretaker of the room after confirming that he is a native and that the work was a genuine one. At the La and the *Nugua* palaces, the researcher observed the symbols on display around the palace walls on September 5, 2022. The symbols from Teshie, Tema and Kpone were obtained by the assistance of research assistants. This happened on September 13 & 14, 2022.

3.6.3 Documents

Interview was the main method for data collection but the researcher also reviewed some documents. Tuckman (1999) noted that documents are information about an event or phenomena which people have prepared. One major work the researcher reviewed was Asmah et al. (2015) 'Proverbial Symbols in Cloth for Ga Royals', where some pictures and information about some of the symbols were obtained. This was done with the help of two research assistants. They assisted with the pictures of the symbols and recording of some interviews. The researcher also engaged the services of a resource person, someone well-versed in the Ga tradition, to assist with some historical facts about the traditional symbols. Data gathered were analyzed and used to answer the research questions.

3.7 Data analysis procedure

Donald et al. (2006) explain that data analysis is the process that most differentiates quantitative from qualitative research. Data analysis is a process where researchers make search and arrange it in order to enhance their knowledge of the data and to present what they learned to others. Cohen et al. (2007) wrote that qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and making sense of the data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. They further stated that there is no single way of analyzing and presenting the data, however, it must 'fit the purpose'. The data analysis for this research work took the form of written description. The recorded interviews were transcribed and then translated into English. All transcribed observations and interviews were carefully reviewed for accuracy.

3.8 Ethical issues

Credible research which is done with the permission of all relevant participants, protects the participants, adheres to the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, and also takes care of the wellbeing of participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Resnik (2015) notes that ethics are rules and regulations that govern the method, procedure, or perspective for deciding how to collect and analyze data used to solve a research problem. The researcher personally sought permission from all eight palaces. All except one gave dates for the researcher to come for the interview. The participants in the case study were informed of the purpose of the study, and they were invited to participate in the research. The participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the ability to withdraw from the research at any given time. There were two palace elders who expressed their wish to be referenced in the research work and that the researcher should bring more researchers to the palaces to project the Ga people and their culture.

3.9 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the methodology for the study. The study took the form of a qualitative case study, which was interpretive in nature. A defining characteristic of case study research is the ability to use a combination of methods to collect data. As such, the researcher employed a multi-method approach and data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis. The chapter revealed the number of research participants and the research sites. It further presented a summary of how the data were collected, presented and analyzed, and finally dealt with some ethical issues of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussions on the semiotic study of selected Ga traditional symbols. The chapter identifies the Ga traditional symbols from the seven selected palaces, explores the meanings of the traditional symbols and explains how the meanings of the symbols relate to contemporary living.

4.1 The Ga traditional symbols

The Ga people has a beautiful culture and this culture must be propagated very well to Ghanaians. One very important way to communicate this beautiful culture is through symbolism. A symbol is a sign that stands for its object by convention or agreement in specific contexts (Danesi, 2004). According to Gyekye (2002), it was the preliterate cultural context of artistic creations that necessitated symbolism, which he explained as meanings and ideas expressed through art. Therefore, the various symbols in the Ga traditional culture have meanings and express ideas that teach moral lessons. The Ga-Dangme groups have a wide variety of symbols/emblems. Some of these symbols are animals, plants, and other living things such as hen/cock, eagle, dove, lion, pineapple, chameleon, deer, elephant, tortoise, snail and so on as well as everyday objects. Adjong (2021) explains that the proverbial meanings associated with these creatures denote positive values, and, when expressed, admonish the Ga-Dangme to cultivate such values. The following are the Ga traditional symbols obtained for this research work.



Fig. 1 *Asraafoi*

Gloss: soldiers



Fig. 2 *Waobii*

Gloss: fingers



Fig. 3 *Akpokplonto*

Gloss: Tortoise



Fig. 4 *Asamaɲkama*

Gloss: A kind of thorn



Fig. 5 *Gbeyeishemɔ be*

Gloss: No fear

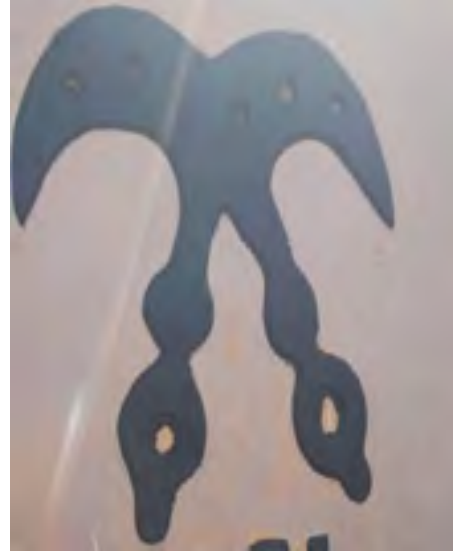


Fig. 6 *Tsi*

Gloss: Sword



Fig. 7 *Ja Nyɔɔmɔ*

Gloss: Except God



Fig. 8 *Shade kpakpa*

Gloss: Good omen



Fig. 9 *Akpaki*

Gloss: Gourd



Fig. 10 *Atswa*

Gloss: Scar



Fig. 11 *Adowa ni damɔ shwuo no*

Gloss: A deer on an elephant

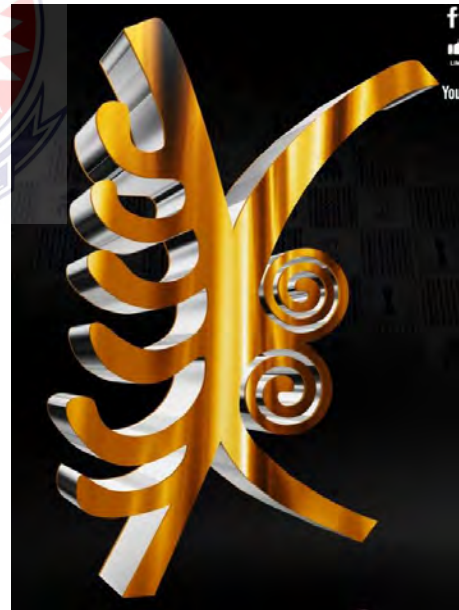


Fig. 12 *Awale te*

Gloss: A stone for *awale* (*awale* is a kind of game)



Fig. 13 *Aspaatre*

Gloss: A pair of sandals



Fig. 14 *Antwere*

Gloss: Ladder

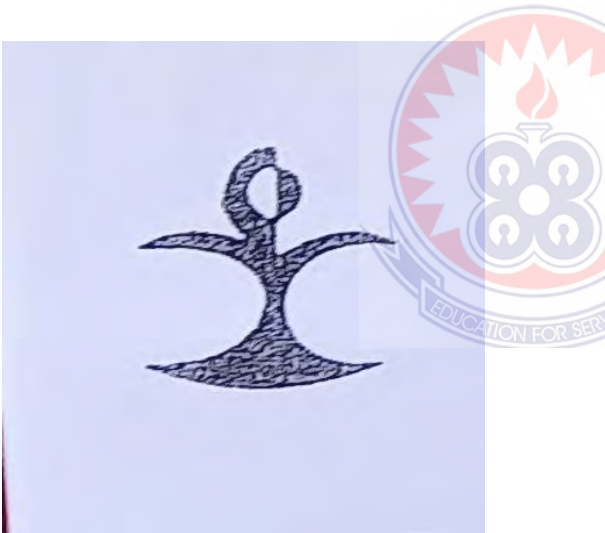


Fig. 15 *Alakaaa Nyɔɔmɔ*

Gloss: God cannot be fooled



Fig. 16 *Akpakpa*

Gloss: Pawpaw



Fig. 17 *Alagba te*

Gloss: A kind of stone



Fig. 18 *Atoobi*

Gloss: A kind of bird



Fig. 19 *Aweɲ be ɲmɔ*

Gloss: Laziness has no farm/no food for
lazy man



Fig. 20 *Akpa*

Gloss: Trap



Fig. 21 *Abiii wo ni ahe nu*

Gloss: One does not ask for honey and collect water



Fig. 22 *Abui*

Gloss: Needle there are choices in life



Fig. 23 *Hiɲmei sɛɛ*

Gloss: Eye-brow



Fig. 24 *Abobonua*

Gloss: A kind of bird



Fig. 25 *Tsui kpaḡmɔ*

Gloss: Heart covenant



Fig. 26 *Maḡ ko ta maḡ ko nɔ*

Gloss: A town is on another town

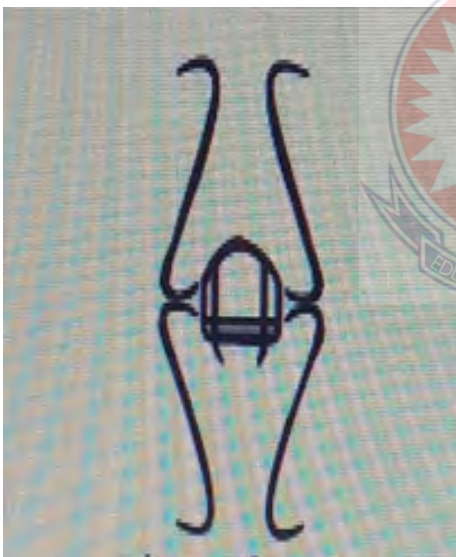


Fig. 27 *Adowa fai*

Gloss: Deer hat



Fig. 28 *Jata ke Akpɔsɔ*

Gloss: A Lion and a monkey



Fig. 29 *Wao gɔɲti ni miitsɔɔ ɲwei*

Gloss: A thumb pointing to the sky



Fig. 30 *Wuɔnuu*

Gloss: A Cockerel



Fig. 31 *Too Ojweni*

Gloss: A Ram



Fig. 32 *Waobii ni hiɛ wɔɔ*

Gloss: Fingers holding an egg



Fig. 33 *Waobii enumɔ ni adɔrɔ*

Gloss: Bent fingers

4.2 The meanings of the interpretations behind the symbols

The Ga *Samai* (literally, Ga symbols) are pictograms which embody a great wealth of knowledge about the rich tradition and culture of the Ga people. These symbols have their referents, referred to as ‘object’ according to the Peirce semiotic theory. And beyond the objects, there are interpretations or ‘interpretant’ that explain the meanings of the symbols. According to Poon (2017), indigenous symbols are incorporated into meaning making of social narratives, and play a key role in the regular communication system of the society they belong to. The following are thus, some selected Ga traditional symbols and their meanings.

4.2.1 *Alakaaa Nyɔɔmɔ*

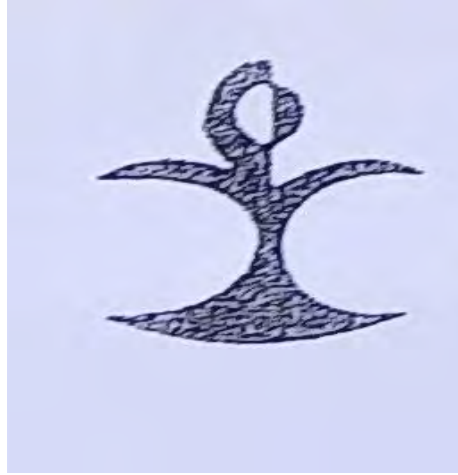


Fig. 34 *Alakaaa Nyɔɔmɔ* ‘God cannot be fooled’

Representamen: Fig. 34

Object: *Alakaaa Nyɔɔmɔ* ‘God cannot be fooled’

Interpretant: The Ga people believe that humans are accountable to God, their Maker, for the way they live their lives, and that God sees everything we do on this earth. Therefore, when a person commits a crime in secret, he/she cannot hide it from God. If God wants the crime to be exposed, he can do so easily. The symbol thus indicates that, when a crime is committed, and it seems hidden from humans, and for that matter the criminal walks about freely, thinking he/she has escaped punishment, he/she is deceiving or fooling himself and not God. Hence the saying “Mɔ ni susuɔ akɛ eelaka Nyɔɔmɔ lɛ, lɛ diɛntɛ ehe elakaa” which means “the one who thinks he is deceiving/fooling God is deceiving/fooling himself” *because God cannot be fooled/deceived* (italics mine).

4.2.2 *Akpokpolonto*



Fig. 35 *Akpokpolonto* 'Tortoise'

Representamen: Fig. 35

Object: *Akpokpolonto* 'Tortoise'

Interpretant: This symbol is interpreted as *Tsuishitoo ji kunimyeli* which means 'patience pays' or 'it pays to wait'. What this means is that in life it is very necessary to be patient, especially in some critical situations. For instance, when one is being provoked, falsely accused or looking for a married partner. Experience has shown that exercising patience in such matters always leads to success. Therefore, to the Ga people, this symbol gives hope, in the sense that no matter the difficulties, there will be victory. This is in tandem with the saying "there is light at the end of the tunnel" or the Ga saying that *fiofio adidɔŋ feɔ ni ekeyeɔ gbee toi* (the housefly eats the ear of the dog gradually).

4.2.3 *Abobonua*



Fig. 36 *Abobonua* 'Woodpecker'

Representamen: Fig. 36

Object: *Abobonua* 'Woodpecker'

Interpretant: This symbol is interpreted as *Fuufeemɔ*, literally meaning pride/boastful. Usually, people boast about their abilities and achievements, but those that are prideful sometimes boast of what they do not even have. The Ga person knows that being prideful is not something society encourages. Hence, the sight of this symbol reminds the Ga to eschew pride and be humble.

4.2.4 *Wao gɔŋti ni miitsɔɔ ɣwei*



Fig. 37 *Wao gɔŋti ni miitsɔɔ ɣwei* ‘A thumb pointing to the sky’

Representamen: Fig. 37

Object: *Nyɔŋmɔ pɛ gbeyei wɔsheɔ* ‘We fear only God’

Interpretant: This is the symbol for Ga Mashi. It is a common phenomenon among people in general to point a finger to or look upwards when making reference to God in conversations or discussions. Therefore, this symbol means that the Ga Mashi clan fears nobody except God. Symbolically, it means they are aware that God alone is Almighty and He alone must be feared. Historically, most of the ancient Ga warriors were from Ga Mashi. These warriors led the Ga people to various wars in the past and notable among them was Nii Ayi Kushi, a fearless warrior, who later became one of the earliest Ga chiefs (Amartey, 1991).

4.2.5 *Jata ke Akpɔsɔ*



Fig. 38 *Jata ke Akpɔsɔ* 'A lion and a monkey'

Representamen: Fig. 38

Object: *Suwɔ ke ekomefeemɔ* 'Love and friendship'

Interpretant: This is the symbol for the Osu clan. The symbol is made up of 'jata' (lion) and 'akpɔsɔ' (a kind of monkey). The symbol shows a lion having a handshake with a monkey. This is an unusual scene. A lion would naturally not have time playing with a monkey, its prey. It would have devoured the monkey as quickly as possible. Thus, for a lion to shake hands with a monkey, it is clearly a sign of love, friendship and unity. Therefore, the symbol of the lion and the monkey together represents brotherly love and unity among the Osu people. The Osu state has four divisions. The divisions/families are the Owuo Family, the Anohor Family, the Kinkawe Family and the Dowuona Family. The symbol indicates that these four divisions see themselves as brothers and friends, not enemies. Like the lion and the monkey shaking hands, they (the four divisions) should always allow peace and unity to prevail among them. They should not permit any signs of disunity and hatred among them.

4.2.6 *Wuɔnuu*



Fig. 39 *Wuɔnuu* ‘A Cockerel’

Representamen: Fig. 39

Object: *Klalofoemɔ* ‘Readiness’

Interpretant: Among all the domestic animals, it is the cockerel that crows in the morning to signify the birth of a new day. The cockerel’s crow in the morning is so significant in life that it communicates to humans that it is morning and they must wake up. In the olden days when there were no watches or mobile phones to sound alarm to wake man up, the crow of the cockerel did so. The cockerel’s crow is still relevant. Among the seven towns that make up the Ga state, the La people considered themselves as the group that led the entire Ga people during their migration to their present place (Henderson-Quartey, 2001). They are always ready, prepared for battle. In essence, they are the cockerel that crows for the entire Ga state to ‘wake up’. Therefore the saying “Wuɔ gbɛɛ, La gbɛɛ” meaning “whenever the cockerel crows, La is ever ready”..

4.2.7 *Too Ojweni*



Fig. 40 *Too Ojweni* ‘A ram’

Representamen: Fig. 40

Object: *Hewale* ‘Strength’

Interpretant: This symbol is for the Teshie traditional area. It is a ram with coiled horns. A matured ram is a strong animal. It fights with its strong, coiled horns. When fighting, the ram goes back and comes with full force to attack its opponent. A ram does not run away from a fight. Sometimes when the fight is very fierce and its horns are even broken, this animal keeps on fighting. This remarkable characteristic of the ram is the idea behind the selection of it as the symbol for the Teshie people. The Teshie people are strong and brave, always ready to defend themselves. The symbol therefore stands for the strength and courage of the Teshie people.

4.2.8 *Adowa ni damɔ shwuo nɔ*



Fig. 41 *Adowa ni damɔ shwuo nɔ* ‘A deer on an elephant’

Representamen: Fig. 41

Object: *Jweɲmɔ mli kwɔlɛ* ‘Wisdom’

Interpretant: This is the symbol for the entire Ga state. This symbol represents wisdom. The Ga state is relatively small in size when compared to others such as the Akans, the Ewes and the Northern states. Yet, it considers itself above these huge kingdoms as depicted by this symbol where a small animal like the deer is seen standing on a giant elephant.

For a similar reason, this symbol is currently being used by the Nugua Stool. According to a narration by Henry Osabu Lomotey (personal communication, September 12, 2022), a member of the Nugua royalty, the Nugua people came with the Ga Mashie people to occupy the present landscape of the Ga state. Although the Nugua state is smaller when compared to the Ga Mashie state, it claims to be the leader of the entire Ga group. Therefore, they qualify to use the symbol for the entire Ga state. Meanwhile, the original and known symbol for the Nugua Stool is “*manɲsɛsɛi ni manɲsɛ ta nɔ*” (a royal stool with

a chief on it) meaning “*wɔkɛ wɔmaɲtsɛ ba*” (we came with our King).

4.2.9 *Waobii enumɔ ni adɔɔ*



Fig. 42 *Waobii enumɔ ni adɔɔ* ‘Bent fingers’

Representamen: Fig. 42

Object: *Kɛji wɔmɔ bo lɛ, wɔɲmɛɛɛ ohe* ‘When we get hold of you, you cannot escape. you’

Interpretant: This symbol represents the people of Tema or Tema community. The fingers help a person to pick and hold objects. To get a tight hold on something in the palm, the fingers are bent. This symbol of bent fingers gives a clear signal to the communities surrounding Tema and beyond that the Tema people are very strong and manly in war. When they get hold of a person, there is no escape for him/her. According to an oral narration, the Ga people got to their present location in various groups. Even so, there were some conflicts between La and Teshie, and between Ga Mashie and Osu for that matter. But there was no record of any of the groups or towns attempting to wage war against the people of Tema because they are known to be strong and they do not spare

those who attack them (J. B. Larteh, personal communication, September 18, 2022).

4.2.10 *Waobii ni hie wɔlɔ*



Fig. 43 *Waobii ni hie wɔlɔ* 'Fingers holding an egg'

Representamen: Fig. 43

Object: *Hiemɔ lɛ jogbanɔ* 'Hold with care'

Interpretant: This is the symbol for the Kpone royalty. Generally, an egg is a very delicate item. To preserve it, it must be held with care. That is how the people of Kpone see their kingdom. According to them, royalty is like an egg, if it falls and breaks, that is its end. Therefore, to protect their royalty, and keep it intact to themselves, they treat it like an egg, holding it with care and caution. Their symbol teaches about carefulness in life, especially when dealing with delicate and critical issues.

4.3 Some Ga symbols, their meanings and their application to contemporary living.

According to Hall (1996) as cited in Poon (2017), the study of symbols seeks to understand symbolic forms of mediation and the mediated, and aims to critically demonstrate symbolic construction in its cultural role as meaning-makers in postmodern era. Hall explained further that several works and researches by eminent structuralists,

semioticians, linguists and artists recognize the heterogeneity, universality and commonality of ideas and concepts behind symbols, in their service as “metaphorical texts of social transformation, cultural change and possibilities”. Poon (2017) stated that indigenous symbols represent sacrosanct meanings but the construction of behaviours, emotions and values based on universal characteristics of symbols among different groups in society, has been a longstanding problem. As the world continue to advance naturally and technologically, the people in it are also advancing in their way of doing things, their culture. A diligent, modern study of our traditional symbols can contribute greatly to this advancement. The meanings ascribed to these symbols and the philosophies behind them are valuable in life. Majority of these symbols teach lifelong lessons, some of which can be applied in the current system we live in. The researcher therefore, has tried to see how the meanings and philosophies behind some selected symbols apply to contemporary living. This will also help to bring out the communicative value of the Ga traditional symbols in a more current and appreciative manner.

4.3.1 Akpokpolonto



Fig. 44 *Akpokpolonto* ‘Tortoise’

Representamen: Fig. 44

Object: *Akpokpolonto* 'Tortoise'

Interpretant: *Tsuishitoo ji kunimyeli* 'Patience is victory'

Background: The tortoise is a slow moving animal in the forest. As humans, we learn a lot from nature, especially from the animals. For example, in some of the Ga folktales, we are encouraged to imitate the wisdom and hardworking nature of some of the animals in the forest. One of these folktales is the tale about the tortoise and the hare in a race. That tale is about the tortoise' ability to achieve success in difficult situations although it is slow. Tortoise won the race, not because it was swift, but because it was focused and determined. The Ga people believe that valuable lessons can be learned from the behaviour of the tortoise.

Philosophical lesson: The symbol teaches us that life is not a race. With determination, one can achieve his/her purpose or aim no matter the pace at which he/she goes or the setbacks he/she may encounter. The Ga person believes that one important fact about being successful in life is being focused and determined and not necessarily being the fastest or smartest.

Application to contemporary living: In the world today, most people rush to acquire wealth, prestige and fame. This can be seen in the lifestyles of some of the young ones in our communities. We see them using various vile means (sometimes referred to as shortcuts) just to be rich or to be famous. Such ones most often do not get what they want and others at times even lose their lives in the process, while those who even make it become disrespected and unloved by the society. The Ga proverb "*keji oye ohe oyai le, oyeo yele naabu*", which is translated as "if you rush, you eat the bitter part of the yam"

affirms this situation. Usually those who rush for cooked yam without exercising patience eat this bitter part of the yam, and have to forcefully spit it out. It is therefore wise to exercise patience in life, do things gradually, and surely, one shall get to his/her destination. After all, “there is no hurry in life” as the saying goes.

4.3.2 Maṅ ko ta maṅ ko nɔ



Fig. 45 *Maṅ ko ta maṅ ko nɔ* ‘One town sits on another town’

Representamen: Fig. 45

Object: *Maṅ ko ta maṅ ko nɔ* ‘One town sits on another town’

Interpretant: *Nɔyaa* ‘Advancement in life’.

Background: Experience has taught the Ga people that there is wisdom and advantage in learning from others. Until they settled in their present location, the Ga people fought wars, conquered and were conquered, lived with and/or among other tribes, and learned from these tribes. The Ga people know that as rational beings, we keep learning from others in order to progress in life.

Philosophical lesson: There is always a better way of doing things in life, and there will always be someone who is more knowledgeable in something that one can consult in life.

Application to contemporary living: It is a fact that no one has it all or no one knows everything. In academics, we say ‘no one is a walking encyclopedia’. A similar expression in Ga is “nilee be mə kome yitsoŋ”, literally meaning “wisdom is not in one person’s head”. Therefore, we learn from one another to be able to achieve our goals in life. Traditionally, the Ga people, like some other ethnic groups, practise the apprenticeship system of acquiring professions or occupations. This system allows young ones to learn from experienced persons. In all aspects of life, one must learn from others in order to progress. Married couples, for example, have to complement each other’s efforts to succeed. Colleague workers learn from one another. In academics, for instance, there is ‘peer review’ where colleague teachers, lecturers and even students get the opportunity to sharpen their skills by learning from others. Young ones must learn valuable lessons from experienced adults if they want to make it in life. In fact, this symbol communicates a very important fact about life.

4.3.3 Abobonua



Fig. 46 *Abobonua* ‘Woodpecker’

Representamen: Fig. 46

Object: *Abobonua* ‘Woodpecker’

Interpretant: *Fuufeemo* ‘Pride’.

Background: ‘Abobonua’ is a kind of bird called the woodpecker. It has a long hard beak that it uses to create holes in plants to look for food. Due to the ability of the woodpecker to create holes in plants/woods, there is a proverb, a wellerism in Ga, attributed to it. It says, “*Abobonua kɛɛ kɛji enye gbo le, ebaakpe tso mli ni efu le ye jeme, shi be ni enye gbo le enaabu efuu*” which literally means that the woodpecker said if its mother dies, it will create a hole in a plant and bury her in it, but when its mother died, its beak had swollen. This statement by the woodpecker to have its mother buried, not in a grave but in a wood, shows it is full of pride. We learned from the wellerism that “abobonua” was not able to fulfill its promise due to the fact that it cannot control that unforeseen occurrence of having its mouth getting swollen.

Philosophical lesson: It is not wise to boast about the next day when you have no control of how the next day will be. It is equally unwise to be full of one’s self. As humans, we must know our limits and must boast only about what we can do or control and not what we cannot do or control.

Application to contemporary living: Some people are very boastful and proud. They believe in themselves so much that they speak about the future as if they own the world. This behaviour is not good because it generally leads to disappointment and shame. The Ga people know that humans do not have the ability to see what lies ahead, hence they must say and do things that are within their power. That is why they say “*ashwaaa afɔɔɔ wɔ nɔ ejaakɛ oleee nɔ ni wɔ kebaaba*” which means that one must not boast about

tomorrow because one does not know what tomorrow will bring. This situation is common among most politicians in Ghana. They promise so much, sometimes beyond what they can do, just to win political power. And after winning, they are faced with the realities that make it very difficult to fulfill their promises, leading to shame, disappointments and humiliations. Due to that some find it difficult visiting their constituencies, and some are hooted at or chased away from their constituencies when they do visit.

This symbol teaches us to be mindful about our utterances, and that we should always say and do what we can, not what we cannot. It teaches us not to be prideful as in the saying “*shwaahe jeee wuuhe*”, literally meaning “the place for pride is not the place for battle”. This expression means that it is one thing to boast about one’s abilities, but it is another thing facing a situation that requires the use of the abilities one has boasted about. In other words, it teaches us that since we are humans, and we do not know what the future holds, we must always be humble no matter our status and abilities in life.

4.3.4 Atswa



Fig. 47 *Atswa* ‘A scar’

Representamen: Fig. 47

Object: *Atswa* ‘A scar’

Interpretant: *Hietelɔ naa eƆɔŋ ni etsiɔ ehe* ‘Prevention is better than cure’

Background: Scars are marks left on the skin after wounds are healed. Scars remind people of what happened. Scars also remind people of the pains they experienced and that these pains, represented by the scars, could have been prevented.

Philosophical Lesson: Scars are symbolic representation of painful experiences in life. Like physical scars, some of these painful experiences can be avoided. Hence, the saying “Prevention is better than cure”.

Application to contemporary living: Throughout history, people have gone through various situations that have led to tragic endings. These tragic endings have taught us some lessons. Some of us have done things we wish we did not do. We can say that those ‘bad’ things have left scars on us. And since scars are not pleasant sights, we try to avoid same or similar mistakes and we also try to warn others using our experiences as examples. It is very common today to hear people use the expression “Prevention is better than cure” when advising others. Health professionals use this expression very often when giving public counseling and when advising patients, especially, on health issues involving preventable diseases. In casual and some entertainment discourses, people humorously render the expression “Provision is better than kiosk”, suggesting that it is better to have provision (food items) than an empty kiosk. The fact is that it is truly and always better to prevent a situation from becoming bad or worse than allowing it to happen and trying to find solution.

4.3.5 Awɛɛ bɛ ŋmɔ



Fig. 48 *Awɛɛ bɛ ŋmɔ* ‘A lazy person has no farm’

Representamen: Fig. 48

Object: *Awɛɛ bɛ ŋmɔ* ‘A lazy person has no farm’

Interpretant: *Kɛji otsuuu oyeee* ‘No food for the lazy person’

Background: A lazy person is one who does not want to work. Such a person lacks the will power or the intuition to start any profitable activity for himself or even with others. In the olden days, the main occupation for the Ga people were farming and fishing. These were difficult ventures and a lazy person cannot farm or go fishing. This symbol tells of a true-life situation where lazy people often do not do profitable business and therefore do not have work to do.

Philosophical Lesson: This symbol teaches an important lesson of cultivating the habit of working hard to provide for one’s self and his family. There is a saying that “No food for a lazy man”. It is necessary that a person looks for a job suitable for him/her in order to get the necessities of life.

Application to contemporary living: There is a line in a popular Ga song that says “*Kɛji otsuuu lɛ oyeee*” which means “If you do not work, you do not eat”. It is therefore

imperative for each person to do something with his/her hands in order to survive. In Ghana currently, there is a high rate of unemployment because the focus is on getting office work and the likes. I think and believe that if people will accept to do menial jobs such as farming, cleaning, painting, selling of foodstuffs, and so on, we won't have such huge numbers of young people without jobs. Therefore, it can be concluded that one of the causes of unemployment in Ghana is laziness. Laziness has forced many of the young ones to engage in some unwholesome activities such as gambling, prostitution, armed robbing, illegal mining and land-guarding just to make quick money. Although such activities serve as sources of livelihood for those who engage in them, society does not consider them acceptable form of employment. These activities usually lead to problems such as high crime rate in the country. Our appreciation of this symbol and others can help curb such vices in the society.



4.3.6 Ja Nyɔŋmɔ



Fig. 49 *Ja Nyɔŋmɔ* 'Except God'

Representamen: Fig. 49

Object: *Ja Nyɔŋmɔ* ‘The Supremacy of God’

Interpretant: *Mɔ ko mɔ ko be ja Nyɔŋmɔ* ‘There is nobody except God’

Background: God is believed to be the creator of the entire universe and everything in it including humans. God is the source of life and the sustainer of it also. Although God cannot be seen with the physical eye, his existence and presence is felt in various ways. Some even base God’s existence to the existence of the air we breathe, hence the belief that He is everywhere. The Ga people call God ‘Ataa Naa Nyɔŋmɔ’ (Father Mother God) to indicate that God is both a father and a mother. The Ga believes that the power/strength of God is unmatched, so he is referred to as Tɛ Ofe (the Almighty). There are various attributes of God to show that He is Supreme.

Philosophical Lesson: People from all walks of life believe in God’s existence and power, and agree that God is supreme. In almost every home, children are taught to believe in God from their infancy and some are even taken through some religious practices so that they develop strong faith in Him. Fig. 56 teaches about trust and reliance on God.

Application to contemporary life: People’s belief in the Supreme Being (God) is still intact today. Christians, Muslims, and Traditional worshipers are convinced that there is an Immortal Supreme Being somewhere who punishes wrong doers, blesses those who do good, and provides people with all their needs and therefore He should be worshiped and revered. Adherents of the known religions in Ghana (Christianity, Islamic and Traditional) as well as those in the other religious forms, all express believe in God’s existence and supremacy to the point where it affects their way of living. In our various

societies, there are ways of life that are acclaimed as acceptable by God and others that are not. A person who does not live by godly standards is seen as a child of the devil, and such a person is shunned in society. The trust and reliance on God is evident in most of our Ga expressions. For example, we have “*Nyɔ̃mɔ Ʒɔɔ ni wɔɔɔ*”, which means God exists for us to exist. There is also the saying “*Mɔ ko mɔ ko bɛ ja Nyɔ̃mɔ*”, literally meaning ‘there is nobody except God’, an expression that occurs in most of our social discourses to show our hope and trust in God. The Adinkra version of this symbol, “*Gye Nyame*” has overshadowed the Ga symbol as can be visibly seen on clothes, both royal and ordinary, and on sign posts in our various communities.

4.3.7 Abui



Fig. 50 *Abui* ‘A needle’

Representamen: Fig. 50

Object: *Abui* ‘A needle’

Interpretant: *Ake mlifu mɔɔɔ saji anaa* ‘Do not use anger to solve issues.’

Background: The needle is a small metallic tool used in sewing. It was one of the important tools in the traditional Ga home then, and even now, the needle is regarded as a necessary sewing tool. It is usually used to mend torn clothing, fix fabrics together into dresses and so on. A thread is put through its hole (called its eye) to aid in the sewing or patching process. There are different types of the needle in use today: the smallest one for dressmaking, the fisherman's needle, and the cobbler's needle. If the needle is hot, it will burn the thread inserted into its eye and the sewing objective will not be achieved. Therefore, the elders proverbially say, "*Abui ni he edo la le, eshaa kpaa*", meaning 'the hot needle burns the thread'.

Philosophical lesson: Just as a hot needle burns the thread in it, so does an angry person destroys things. When we do things in anger, we later realize that we did not do well and that if we have allowed the anger to cool off, we could have handled the issues better. It is therefore not advisable to do things or handle issues while angry.

Application to contemporary living: As humans, we are not perfect and as such we must always watch our actions, because the end results of some of these actions are irreversible and very damaging. As we live with and among people, they will offend us and we too will offend them. If we try solving problems that arise among us in anger, we cannot live at peace with one another. Anger has brought about so many challenges and disturbances in marriage, family, friendship, and in other aspects of life. In our daily lives, we receive advice and counsel from parents, the elderly and some leaders in society to eschew anger and live peacefully with one another. The movie industry has produced, and keep producing, movies to drum home the importance of not handling issues in anger. In

Ghana for instance, in order to prevent political tensions that can lead to civil agitations, confrontations and vandalism, there is the Peace Council. It is obvious that the world needs peace, and that is the core mandate of the United Nations. It is there to solve issues that bring conflicts and to bring world peace. The UN meets nations and organizations to talk about peace and how to achieve it, including assisting them to appreciate the damages caused by uncontrolled anger.

4.3.8 Adowa ni damɔ shwuo nɔ

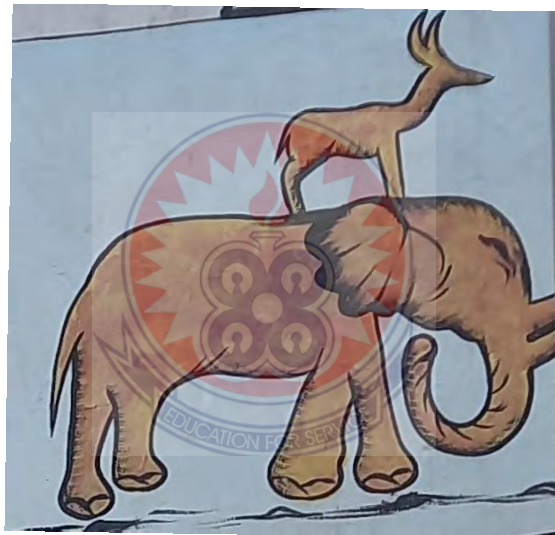


Fig. 51 *Adowa ni damɔ shwuo nɔ* 'A deer on an elephant'

Representamen: Fig. 51

Object: *Adowa ni damɔ shwuo nɔ* 'A deer on an elephant'

Interpretant: *Jweɲmɔ mli kwɔle* 'Wisdom'

Background: The elephant is undoubtedly the biggest animal in the forest. Therefore, for a smaller animal like the deer to be able to climb and be on top of it requires a great deal of wisdom. In like manner, the Ga people is a small group compared to the other ethnic

groups in Ghana. Historically, the Ga people as a small group fought with large groups such as the Ashantes and the Akwamus and defeated them (Henderson-Quartey, 2001). This was possible because the Ga people applied wisdom in their warring days. This gave birth to ‘the symbol of the deer standing on the elephant’. This is the symbol for the entire Ga state.

Philosophical lesson: This traditional symbol symbolizes wisdom and knowledge. Each of us need to be wise in all aspects of life. The Ga people believe that the One who created man is all wise and made man like himself. Humans therefore have wisdom which they must apply in life. When things are done in wisdom, the results are always positive and appreciative.

Application to contemporary living: In every human society, wisdom is a necessary virtue needed to do things right. The world is a difficult place to live. It therefore requires wisdom for a successful living. People in authority especially, must be seen to be handling issues and dealing with people in wisdom. In the traditional home or family, adults are mandated to instruct the young ones in wisdom and guide them to apply same when doing things. A person who lacks wisdom is disrespected no matter his/her status in society. In today’s world, children are sent to school in their very early years, to acquire knowledge in so many fields of study. But the reality is that, most of these children, despite their knowledge acquisition, do not do things in wisdom. Wisdom is the judicious use of knowledge. Institutions must therefore go beyond providing knowledge to learners, to teaching them wisdom, that is, putting the knowledge acquired to good use to solve critical problems in life. This symbol is really a remarkable one!

4.3.9 Adowa fai



Fig. 52 *Adowa fai* 'The deer's hat'

Representamen: Fig. 52

Object: *Adowa fai* 'The deer's hat'

Interpretant: Nilee ni akɛkuraa maɲ 'The cunning and wisdom of the king'.

Background: The deer is a small animal in the forest. It is one of the fastest animals in the forest. The deer is also agile and cunning, it is a wise animal. Due to its small size, it lives by its cunning, wisdom and swiftness. This animal defends and protects itself by these beautiful traits. The Ga people used the skin of the deer to make the hat/crown for the chief/king.

Philosophical lesson: One of the important characteristics of a chief among the Ga people is wisdom. Up until today, King Solomon of ancient Israel is still being talked about, favoured and compared to some modern rulers because of his wisdom. It is obvious that a king must be wise, but not only that, he must also be smart and swift to handle certain serious matters in order to earn his subjects' admiration. The deer hat worn

by the Ga chief symbolizes the wisdom, cunning, and swiftness of the chief.

Application to contemporary living: In life, there are acceptable human behaviours or traits and unacceptable ones. Among these acceptable traits are wisdom and swiftness. Swiftness or smartness has a link with being clever. The world is developing at a faster rate technologically, especially with the use of the internet. Social media has taken the place of mass media and it makes use of sophisticated electronic gadgets. It has become very necessary for a person to be wise and smart to move along with this technological advancement. The young ones who are smart or clever are able to manipulate the system, operate these sophisticated electronic gadgets to study or to work. In fact, if one is not smart in life, one is left behind.

4.3.10 Antwere



Fig. 53 *Antwere* 'Ladder'

Representamen: Fig. 53

Object: *Antwere* 'Ladder'

Interpretant: The path you take when ascending is the same path you take when descending. Another interpretation is that the people you will meet on your way up are the same people you will meet on your way down.

Background: The Ga symbol “Aɔtwere” has two arrows, one pointing upwards and the other pointing downwards. We usually think of the ladder when we want to climb up a tree or a building to do something. But the ordinary ladder was not made for climbing up only, it is the same instrument that helps us climb down when we are done with what we went up to do. There is a saying in Ga that, “*He ni atsɔɔ kekɔwɔ ɲwei le, jɛmɛ nɔɲɲ atsɔɔ kekpelekeɔ*”. What this saying means is that the path we pass when going up is the same place we pass when coming back. The Ga people believe that life is full of ups and downs, and thus the different people we meet in life must be respected no matter their status.

Philosophical lesson: No matter our status in life, we must avoid looking down on people, especially those who society sees as ‘worthless’. It is important to acknowledge that others assisted us before we got to where we are. Everybody in the society has a role to play in making the society develop.

Application to contemporary living: It is very important to treat people with respect because we need each other in life. Therefore, in our local settings for example, it is required that we show simple courtesy by greeting the people we meet on our way. There is this adage that, “The people you meet on your way up are the same people you meet when you are returning”. In Ghana, among the political class, this symbol teaches a fine lesson of appreciating people. When politicians want votes, they do everything humanly possible, sometimes begging even the poor in society. But when they successfully get to the top, that is, the political positions they desired, they forget about the people who helped them get there. They soon forget that it was these same people who have pushed them to get to where they are, and that these same people can bring them down.

4.3.11 Alagba tɛ



Fig. 54 *Alagba Tɛ* ‘Useless or (hopeless) stone’

Representamen: Fig. 54

Object: *Alagba Tɛ* ‘Useless or (hopeless) stone’

Interpretant: *Mɔ fɛɛ mɔ he ye seenamɔ* ‘No one is useless in this world’

Background: The ‘alagba tɛ’ is a kind of stone that is seen as not fit for any purpose. It is not a stone that one will choose to throw with any purpose of either killing a bird or scaring an animal away from destroying something as is the practice in most local communities. In the olden days and even now, boys and young men especially, use stones to kill birds. The stones for this adventure are carefully selected to achieve the target. No one will choose a stone that would not achieve the targeted purpose. Such a stone is regarded an “*alagba tɛ*”. But the saying that “*alagba tɛ gbeɔ looflɔ*” (the useless stone kills a bird) indicates that, after all, that stone is not useless as it has been described. Sometimes, it is able to achieve a purpose like other purposeful stones.

Philosophical Lesson: In life, people sometimes view others as useless because to them, such people have no achievements. In other settings, such ones are referred to as ‘good-for-nothing’. But just as each part of the human body plays a vital part to help the whole body function well, so is with every human on earth. This symbol represents the idea that ‘no one is useless or hopeless in life’.

Application to Contemporary Living: Nobody is born useless or hopeless into this world. But today, due to certain situations, some people are classified or regarded as useless or hopeless. For instance, in the local Ga parlance, we have the expression “*Yaka gbomɔ*” which means “a useless person”. This negative expression is usually directed to those considered as low achievers or good-for-nothing in life. Parents who are disappointed in their children for non-performing in academics or in the business world, use this expression on them to vent their frustration. Teachers also use this expression to describe students who perform poorly in class or in examinations. The lesson behind this symbol is that people should know always that no one is useless in this world, and that in most cases, certain unforeseen concurrences make some people look hopeless or even useless. When conditions change, or when other opportunities are given to such ‘useless’ or ‘hopeless’ people, they perform better, sometimes even better than those that are considered bright. For example, in academics, students who are seen as poor academic performers (because they cannot read, do Mathematics or Science), and do not progress in their education to higher levels, have become successful in business or in the world of technology, and are doing far better than their peers in the academic world. I know of a situation where a mentally derailed person (usually considered useless) foiled what could have been a disastrous robbery operation. Therefore, appreciation of such a symbol will

help parents to love and care for all their children, not seeing those who will not meet family standards as ‘useless’ or ‘good-for-nothing persons. Same can be said about teachers, religious leaders and other persons in leadership positions to value their followers or subjects, encouraging them and not condemning them at the least chance. It will also help to reduce the use of negative expressions in our communities.

4.3.12 Akpa



Fig. 55 *Akpa* ‘A trap’

Representamen: Fig. 55

Object: *Akpa* ‘A trap’

Interpretant: *Akaseɔ nii kejeɔ niashikpamɔ mli* ‘Experience teaches us to do things well’

Background: Traps are usually set by farmers and hunters to trap animals. There are different traps available for use, including some large ones for bigger animals. When an animal gets into a trap, it becomes difficult for it to escape, making it possible for the trap setter to get the animal alive or dead. The trapped animal is either consumed as meat or sold for cash. Traps are not just set anyhow; they are set wisely and skillfully. To achieve

the purpose of setting the trap, sometimes the trap is hidden by covering it with leaves or just behind a tree. Some animals are able to identify the traps and avoid them. They do this after realizing that some animals have fallen victims at a particular spot or along a particular path. This is 'experience' of a sort. In the olden days, traps are not set for only animals. People also set traps intentionally to hurt others or even to kill them. To avoid being trapped, one must be wise, cautious and very observant. Traps usually catch the unsuspecting victims.

Philosophical lesson: It is a fact of life that one will not have everyone loving or liking him/her, no matter what he/she does. Some people dislike others and sometimes, even hate them to the point of setting traps for them to fall or fail in life. To avoid getting trapped by one's haters/enemies, one must be experienced in life and be cautious about his/her movements in life. The Ga proverb, "*Akpatse kpa kpaaa yaka*" (the experienced person does not miss his/her way), explains the philosophy behind this symbol.

Application to contemporary living: "Life", it is said, "is full of surprises". Among these surprises are traps that sometimes are set up by people who are supposed to be relatives or friends. In modern times, traps are not only physical objects like metals, plastics, sticks and rubbers, but also words and intentions of people. It is even possible for a person to be trapped by his/her own words and/or actions. This scenario is seen in most of our local movies, showing the reality of the situation and therefore the need to be very careful and experienced in life in order to avoid these traps. Due to the competitive environment created in certain aspects of life, some people have resorted to setting deadly traps to fault others, including their relatives and close friends, and to project themselves

as innocent. In the romantic world for example, a lady can set up a trap for a guy she does not love, or both guys clamoring for her love if she does not love them. And with most of the kidnapping and murder cases in our communities, ladies are used as traps to get the victims, who are mostly men. This symbol therefore teaches us that “traps” are all around us, and that we must always be cautious in dealing with people, especially those closer to us, in order to escape their traps or avoid becoming traps to our own selves.

4.3.13 Asamaŋkama



Fig. 56. *Asamaŋkama* ‘A kind of thorn’

Representamen: Fig. 56

Object: *Asamaŋkama* ‘A kind of thorn’

Interpretant: *Ofite osaa* ‘That which destroys and saves at the same time’

Background: *Asamaŋkama* is a thorny plant that covers the ground. It pricks with sharp pains when stepped on. Yet, this thorny plant is also a herbal medicine. It is used to treat stomach pains and aids in resolving constipation. The plant is grinded on a millstone, mixed with water and injected into the rectum through the anus. Due to its thorny surface that pricks and hurts, and at the same time, having medicinal value, the Ga people use the

expression “*ofite osaa*” (you destroy and you repair) to describe this creeping plant.

Philosophical lesson: This symbol teaches that it is not good to view certain things or people as always bad or negative. Most of these things or people have their good sides also. When such things or people are studied, and given the chance, they can serve better purposes in life. Some people believe that every negative happening has a positive side also. The symbol also teaches that we should not be quick to judge people as failures or as good-for-nothing because they failed us or were not successful at something in the initial stages.

Application to contemporary living: In life sometimes, it is necessary for some people to fail in order to be serious and become successful afterwards. The failures of these people cause pains, hardships and heartaches to their friends and relatives. Later when they become successful and ‘useful’, they are praised as important individuals and seen as reliable by these same friends and relatives. Some parents have to endure the pains and torments of some bad beginnings of their wards, being it showing signs of bad behaviour during the formative years or poor academic performance at the early stages of their education. These children later become successful and exemplary, making their parents proud and happy. When the former scenario happened in traditional Ga home, a mother would sing the expression “*mitsee le mifɔɔ, ebaada*” (I will not throw my child away, he/she will grow). This expression suggests that the mother believes that despite the challengers, the pains caused by the child, he/she will become useful, positive in the future, and will be beneficial to others as well.

In the football world for instance, a star player, sometimes a striker, may miss several chances to score, causing anxiety and pains to his/her team, especially if the team is losing the game and needs to draw or win. It does happen that in the final minutes of the game, this same disappointing player makes amends and utilizes the next available chances, converting them to goal(s), and makes his/her team win. When this scenario happens on a typical football pitch in a Ga community, one is likely to hear the chant “*ofite, osaa*” (you destroy, you repair). It is possible that, the expression “*ofite, osaa*” would subsequently become the nick name or a slogan for that particular player.

It is very obvious that the meaning behind this traditional symbol teaches a valuable lesson that we should not only look at the negative side of people, but focus more on their ability to be positive and be useful. Parents for example, must love, cherish and care for all their children, including the ‘stubborn’ ones because they do not know what each will become in the future. When we all develop and maintain a positive outlook about ourselves, the world would be a better place for all of us. It is equally important to know that, as a person, you can overcome initial difficulties, pitfalls and painful experiences, and become successful. This is expressed in the Ga saying that, “*mɔ ko kɛ eshigbeemɔhe efɛɛ ewɔɔhe*” (one does not remain on the ground where he/she falls).

4.3.14 Aspaatere



Fig. 57 *Aspaatere* ‘A pair of sandals’

Representamen: Fig. 57

Object: *Aspaatere* ‘A pair of sandals’

Interpretant: *Mɔ fɛɛ mɔ kɛ enaagba* ‘Each person has his/her own problem’

Background: It is common for people to dress wearing pairs of sandals/shoes. Like other foot wears, a pair of shoe protects the feet and adds to the beautiful appearance. Shoes come in different shapes and sizes. A pair of shoes can be over sized on a person and can be undersized also, making it too tight on him/her. Nevertheless, for a pair of shoes to look attractive on a person, it must be the right size. The fact that each pair of feet has its pair of shoes is the focus of this symbolic use of “*aspaatere*”.

Philosophical lesson: People go through various problems or difficulties in life. Yet, aside from the general challenges, each individual has his/her own peculiar problem he/she is facing in life. There is a saying in Ga that, “*mɔ ni wo aspaatere lɛ, lɛ ele ehe ni emiaa*” (the one wearing the shoe knows which part of the foot feels the pains). This saying is usually expressed in English as, “*He who wears the shoe feels the heat/pain*”.

Another expression says that, “*mɔ fɛɛ mɔ kɛ aspaatere hɛnɔ ni yaa lɛ*” (everybody has his/her size of shoe). This symbol teaches us to be mindful of our personal challenges and to always remember that everybody has his/her own issues to solve.

Application to contemporary living: The fact that everyone has challenges in life should move us to humble ourselves and value others as well. We must appreciate what other people are going through and either bear with them or encourage them not to give up. It is unkind to pretend that all is well with others and try to cause more problems for them knowing that they have their own issues to handle. It is also important to avoid unnecessary attacks on other people, adding to their pain. Rather, when we learn about the problems of others, and see that ours is less difficult, we can offer a helping hand. Children must be taught to appreciate the efforts of their parents/guardians, especially in this hard economic situation, be responsible, and be considerate as well. This will provide a better ground for them as they grow to understand the world around them.

4.3.15 Abiii wo ni ahe nu



Fig. 58 *Abiii wo ni ahe nu* ‘One does not request for honey and be given water instead’

Representamen: Fig. 58

Object: *Abiii wo ni ahe nu* ‘One does not request for honey and be given water instead’

Interpretant: *Mɔ fɛɛ mɔ kɛ nɔ ni esumɔɔ* ‘Choosing to be positive and having a grateful attitude is what determines your life’.

Background: The symbol talks about honey and water. Honey and water are both liquids. However, honey tastes sweeter than water, and they serve different purposes. Honey is eaten either alone or as a compliment to different foods such as bread, tea or porridge, and for medicinal purposes too while water is drunk to quench thirst, used for cooking, bathing, watering and so on. Since the distinction between these two items is clear, there is no way one can be substituted for the other. In other words, there is no way a person who needs honey will accept water as honey.

Philosophical lesson: There are choices to be made in life. Every rationale human being has likes and dislikes, as well as choices to make in life. Making a choice and being positive about the right choice is what determines a person’s progress in life. It is very important to know what you really want, and it is equally necessary that you go for that and not something else. It is said that determination leads to success.

Application to contemporary: This symbol teaches us to be firm and determined in the decisions or choices we make. People who know the right things to do and make the right choices in life are often very successful. In Ghana for instance, names such as Asamoah Gyan (former Black Stars Captain/businessman), Joseph Siaw Agyapong (CEO of Zoomlion Ghana Limited), Osei Kwame Despite (CEO of Despite Group of Companies), Oscar Yao Doe (Executive Chairman of Eurostar Limousine Group), Nana Ama McBrown (Actress and media personality), and Michael Owusu Addo (Sarkodie) among

others are regarded as rich and powerful but without university degrees (YEN.com.gh)

These recognized Ghanaians were able to achieve success because they knew what they wanted and were focused on achieving same. Therefore, to be able to achieve our goals in life, it is important to make the right choice and be determined to follow through to the end. This is what most motivational speakers tell their listeners. Counselors alike, encourage their clients to make the right choices, and that, they should not allow other people to make choices for them. Preachers also admonish their members to be resolute and focus on the choices they make, knowing that each person shall reap what he/she sows. It is also important for parents and teachers to know the core skills, abilities and competencies of their wards/learners in order to guide them accordingly in their career choices. They should not force the children to pursue what they think is the best for them. Experience has shown that most children who were forced to pursue career choices of parents, guardians and teachers, without considering the interests of the children, have not performed as expected. Thus, guidance and counseling centers, especially in our schools and universities, must recognize this important aspect of the career guidance profession, and act accordingly.

4.3.16 Akpakpa



Fig. 59 *Akpakpa* 'Pawpaw'

Representamen: Fig. 59

Object: *Akpakpa* 'Pawpaw'

Interpretant: *Ekomefeemɔ mli hewale yɔɔ aloo ewaaa, hewɔ le, hiemɔ le blɛoo* 'We are only strong as we are united, and weak when we are divided' or 'fragile, so handle with care'

Background: This symbol has two interpretations. One is about the name given to it, pawpaw. Pawpaw is a tropical fruit. The pawpaw fruit gets rotten easily when it is matured because it becomes soft. Sometimes it rots even on the tree, and that attracts birds to it. Hence, as a symbol, it is likened to the woman and how she must be treated.

The other interpretation is concerned with the symbol itself. A closer look at it shows two people raising something up. Thus, it is a symbol of unity and cooperation.

Philosophical meaning: The philosophy behind the first interpretation of this symbol is the notion that a woman is a weaker vessel. A woman is considered soft and weak, and

therefore must be handled with care and affection, especially as a wife, by her husband. An expression in Ga that supports this idea is “*yoo be mɔmɔ he*” (there is no part of a woman that can be held). This simply means that every part of a woman is delicate, and she must therefore not be pinched, hit, or beaten but rather be treated with care, love and affection.

The symbol also teaches us about unity of purpose and cooperation. This is supported with the Ga expression “*mɔ ke mɔ woɔ nɔ ni eyaa ηweɪ*” (cooperation brings success). This means that when people work together, they are able to achieve the targeted result or aim.

Application to contemporary: Violence against women is a common practice in most countries in the world. According to a 2021 World Health Organization report, Violence against women, particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence, is a major public health problem and a violation of women’s human rights. It was estimated that about 1 in 3 (30%) of women globally, have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. This is appalling and callous, especially in the era of advanced formal education. Among the Ga people, during a marriage ceremony, the elders counsel a prospective husband to treat his wife with care and affection and not to be beating or maltreating her. They usually say “*hiemɔ le tamɔ wuw wɔlɔ*” (handle her like an egg) or “*hiemɔ le tamɔ akpakpa*” (handle her like a pawpaw). In that WHO report, it was stated that violence against women is preventable, and that is a fact. Therefore, the application of the meaning of this symbol can help curb or prevent violence and disrespect against women.

This symbol also teaches that ‘unity is strength’. This saying is a famous one and it has been used for centuries around the globe. The idea behind this phrase is that when people work together, they are more likely to achieve success faster than when they work individually. This is synonymous to another famous quote “united we stand, divided we fall”. The Ga people know the importance of cooperation and do their best to value it in life. Regarding a child’s upbringing and training, there is a saying in Ga that “*mɔ kome fɔɔ shi jee mɔ kome leɔ*” (one person delivers/gives birth but not one person trains the child). This means that the Ga people are aware that others are needed in caring for, disciplining and training a child to become responsible in future.

As a people, Ghanaians value cooperation. For instance, in almost all the various ethnic groups, there is the practice called “*nnɔɔɔ*”, an Akan word for “cooperation/working together” by farmers, where they assist one another on their farmlands. This usually brings good harvest and encourages cooperation and peaceful coexistence among the people. Today, as the country faces serious economic and security challenges, the government is calling on every Ghanaian to come on board so that we can work together to find solution to our crisis.

4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has dealt with the data analysis. The data gathered were analyzed systematically to answer the research questions. Different Ga traditional symbols and their interpretations and/or the ideas behind them have been discussed. Each of the selected traditional symbols has a philosophical meaning and teaches moral lessons that do not fade with the passing of time. The symbols for the seven coastal towns of the Ga

state were highlighted and explained, and the Peirce Semiotic Theory adopted for the analysis, bringing out their uniqueness. The seven towns, by their lineup were Ga Mashi, Osu, La, Teshi, Nugua, Tema and Kpone. Each symbol embodies the royal ambitions as well as the aspirations of the people. Finally, the chapter discussed the background and philosophical lessons behind some selected Ga traditional symbols, and how the meanings of the symbols apply to contemporary living.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The main aim of this thesis is to investigate the communicative value of the Ga traditional symbols. These symbols are less famous compared to the Adinkra symbols of the Akans. Yet these symbols, the Ga Samai or Ga symbols, have communicative value like other traditional symbols and teach important morals and lifelong lessons.

This chapter is divided into the following sub-sections; section 5.1 presents a general summary of the study while section 5.2 summarizes the findings of the study. In section 5.3, the researcher outlines the conclusion of the study. The recommendations on other researchable areas for future researchers, since this current study did not cover all about the topic, are presented in 5.4. From giving the overview of the thesis, I now go to the next subsection which is on the general summary of the thesis.

5.1 Summary of the Thesis

The focus of the study was to analyze the communicative value of the Ga traditional symbols using Peirce's Semiotic Theory. According to this theory, a sign or symbol is made up of the **representamen**, the form which the sign takes, the **object**, that to which the sign refers to, and the **interpretant**, the sense made of the sign. This theory is usually represented by the semiotic triangle or the semiotic tripod. Some of the symbols were selected and analyzed based on this theory. The following research questions served as a guide for this study:

- ◆ What are the Ga traditional symbols in the seven selected palaces?

- ◆ What are the meanings of the selected Ga traditional symbols?
- ◆ How are the meanings of the Ga traditional symbols applicable to contemporary living?

These questions have been answered in the preceding discussions in chapter four. The thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 presented the general overview of the thesis. The chapter spelled out the background to the study, giving the tradition of the people and how their use of symbols contribute to their beautiful cultural heritage. It stated the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research objectives and questions. The significance of the study, the limitations and delimitations were also looked at. The last section of chapter one presented the organization of the thesis.

Chapter 2 dealt with review of some literature that were considered relevant to the work. The chapter provided a review of related literature on the following thematic headings: sociolinguistics, semantics, semiotics and symbols. The chapter also explained the theoretical framework for the study, which is the Peirce's Semiotic Theory.

In chapter three, the discussion was on the descriptions of the methodological procedures that were applied by the researcher to gather valid data for the semiotic analysis of Ga traditional symbols. The chapter dealt with the research design, population for the research, the sampling and sampling technique. It discussed the sources of data and the techniques used in the data collection. The data for this study were collected from recordings of interviews of participants (linguists and other elders) as well as from note taking, picture taking and from the internet. The different sources of data which included primary and secondary sources were discussed.

The chapter four concentrated on discussion of the data gathered. It presented an analysis of the data in a way that provided answers to the research questions. The Ga traditional symbols and their interpretations were highlighted. The last section of chapter four discussed some selected Ga traditional symbols using the Peirce's Semiotic Theory, and how the meanings of these symbols are applicable to contemporary living.

The final chapter, chapter five, presented the summary of the entire thesis, findings of the researcher, and the conclusion of the thesis. It also presented the researcher's recommendations on other topical issues for future researchers. After presenting the general summary of this thesis, the next subsection discusses the findings of the researcher on the study.

5.2 Findings

The data showed that some of the Ga traditional symbols were recently developed. The Ga people in the past have their symbols mostly in the descriptive form, with only few drawings or paintings of the symbols to show. Some of the symbols are animals, both wild and domestic, such as tortoise, cock, lion, elephant and deer. Others that are not animals include ladder, egg, fern, sword, stool, needle and parts of the human body.

The study revealed through the data collection that some of the Ga traditional symbols were acquired through the encounter with the Akans, and some of them too were direct translations of some Adinkra symbols. Typical examples are “*tsuiη kraηmɔ*” (heart covenant) and “*shade kpakpa*” (good omen) from “*Akoma Ntoaso*” (Linked Heart) and “*Mmusuyidee*” (the agent that removes ill luck) respectively.

Another significant finding from the research was that some of the palaces are decorated with designs, images and paintings of various kinds which are Ga traditional symbols. The saddest situation is at the Ga *Mantse* palace at Kaneshie where these modern paintings and designs have been used to replace the traditional symbols.

Regarding the Osu Stool, the researcher found out that a new symbol has recently been launched to replace the existing one. This new symbol is made up of four joint heads, an additional head, set up on top of the four, a black stool, and a kind of shrub called “*nyanyara*” around them. The four heads represent the four divisions of Osu. The additional head on top of the four represents the Osu *Mantse*. The black stool is the authority of the Osu Stool, called *Sei Kwami* (Stool Kwame) as well as the collective power of the Osu people. The *nyanyara* (a kind of shrub) is a sacred plant with unique mystical, spiritual and protective powers of the Ga people. This new symbol is yet to be approved by the entire Osu State. The new symbol for the Osu Stool is shown below.

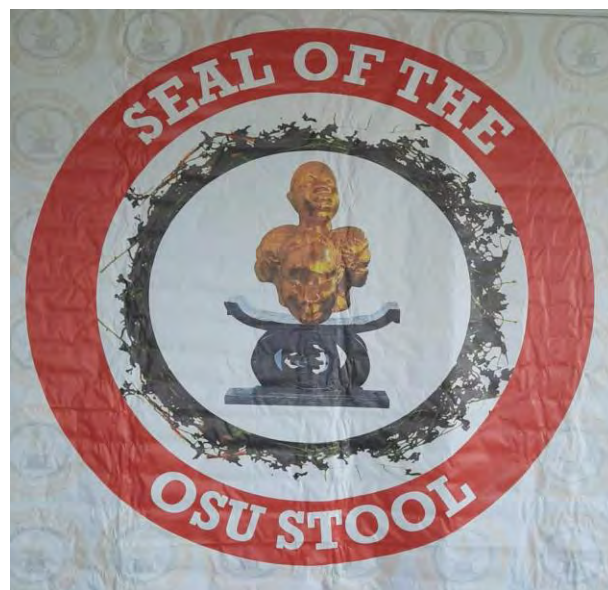


Fig. 60 Osu Stool symbol

Finally, the researcher found something noteworthy about the Nugua Stool symbol. The known and original symbol for the Nugua town is “a royal stool with a man sitting on it”. The symbol means “*wɔkɛ wɔmantse ba*” (we came with our King). This symbol means that the Nugua people came to settle in their present location with their own king. Hence, they will not allow anyone to impose a chief/king on them. In effect, by that symbol, they are saying “we came with our own chief, we are the royals”. Currently though, the Nugua royalty believes that it is the leader of the entire Ga state. Therefore, it is using the symbol that represents the entire Ga state now, which is “*Adowa ni damɔ shwuo nɔ*” (a deer on an elephant). The two symbols are shown below; a drawing to depict the original Nugua stool symbol and the one being used now.



The original Nugua Stool symbol



the Ga Mantse symbol (currently used by the Nugua Stool)

5.3 Conclusion

The study has demonstrated that the Ga people have their traditional symbols referred to as Ga samai. Although not very popular among Ghanaians, in recent times though, there is this awakening spirit to project the rich and very important culture of the Ga people through symbolism; a call that this study supplements. The study also showed that apart from the symbol for the entire Ga state, the symbols for the seven coastal towns/traditional areas, and other traditional symbols, there are also symbols for the various quarters/divisions and their respective families.

5.4 Recommendation for future research

In order to sustain the all-important call to project the rich culture of the Ga people, it is recommended that further research should be carried out to include detailed descriptions of all the traditional symbols. These include symbols for the quarters/divisions and their respective families as well as the symbols on each royal linguist staff. It is also strongly recommended that further research into symbolism in Ga should establish whether Ga traditional symbols came about as a result of the interaction between the Ga and the Akans or not. Finally, the researcher recommends that conscious effort must be made to delve deeper into the relationship, if any, between the traditional symbols and the recent designs/paintings found at some of the palaces in Accra.

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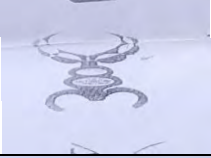




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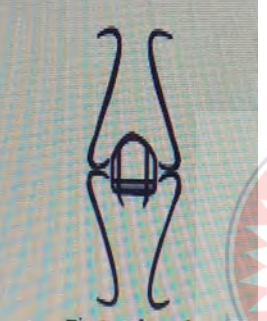


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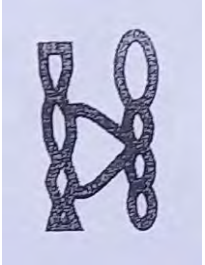
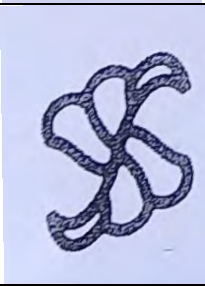



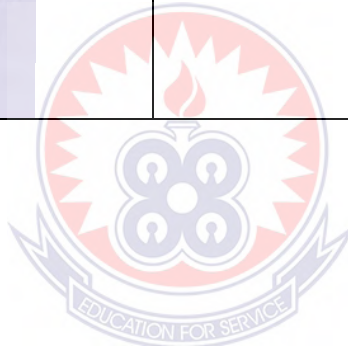
APPENDIX A

Some traditional symbols and their interpretations

No	Symbol (Representamen)	Name (Object)	Interpretation (Interpretant)
1		Atsiki Oye (type of fishing net)	It symbolizes use of appropriate tools and hardwork
2		Akpaki (a ceramic ware)	Every matter on earth has its solution
3		Waobii (fingers)	Everything in life has its importances
4		Tsui kpanjmo (Heart covenant)	True commitment
5		Shade kpakpa (Good omen)	Hope for the future
6		Tsi (royal sword)	The power/strength of the king

7		<p>Alakaaa Nyɔŋmɔ (God can't be deceived)</p>	<p>We shall reap whatever we sow</p>
8		<p>Maŋ ko ta maŋ ko no (One town is on another)</p>	<p>Advancement in life</p>
9		<p>Adowa fai (a deer's hat)</p>	<p>Wisdom and agility of the king</p>
10		<p>Akpokplonto (tortoise)</p>	<p>Slow but sure</p>
11		<p>Asamaŋkama (a kind of thorn)</p>	<p>That which destroys and repairs</p>

12		<p>Haatso (a kind of plant)</p>	<p>The discerning person always looks for peace</p>
13		<p>Anokwa (truthfulness)</p>	<p>Truth can't be hidden, it will always suffice</p>
14		<p>Hĩmeis̃̃ts̃̃oi (eye-brow)</p>	<p>Everyone needs a guidance/ guardian</p>



APPENDIX B

Some Palaces with or without Ga Traditional Symbols



Ngleshie Alata Mantse Palace, Ga Mashi



Osu Mantse Palac



The Ga Mantse Palace (outside)



The Ga Mantse Palace (inside)