

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**THE ART OF FABRIC NAMEOLOGY IN THE GHANAIAN CULTURE**



**ABIGAIL ANORKOR LARTEY**

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**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

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GHANAIAN CULTURE**

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**A THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC EDUCATION, SCHOOL  
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STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA, IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A  
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (ARTS AND CULTURE) DEGREE.**

**JULY, 2018**

## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

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

**SIGNATURE** .....

**DATE**.....



### Supervisor's Declaration

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

**JOSEPH ESSUMAN (PhD)**

**SIGNATURE:** .....

**DATE:**.....

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My appreciation goes to my family for all the unconditional support, and also to Dr. Degraft Yankson and Dr. Amissah, for helping me build and refine the original idea for this study.



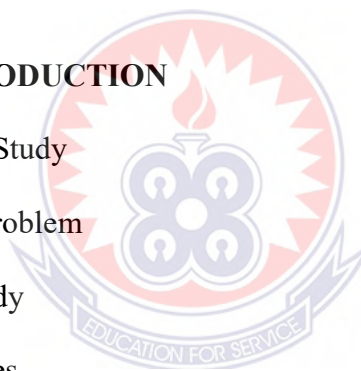
## **DEDICATION**

To my lovely parents: Mr. and Mrs. Lartey; and my beloved sister: Mrs. Shirley Aseweh.



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## ABSTRACT

Ghanaians have various fabrics which are associated with their culture. One such fabric is the Ghanaian wax prints. These fabric prints have unique designs and motifs made in beautiful colours. Some of these prints have names, which are identified by the people, and significantly valuable in the Ghanaian culture. Many works have been done on textile products but a missing part is the nameology of Ghanaian fabric prints. The study sought to find out how naming of fabrics is done. Categories of people were interviewed to seek their great contributions to such unique fabric names on the Ghanaian fabric market. The population of the study consisted of consumers/users of the fabric prints, fabric retailers, textile manufacturers and sales personnel in Greater Accra Region. For the purpose of this study, respondents were selected from three textile companies in Ghana which included Ghana Tex Styles, Akosombo Textiles Limited and Printex. The sampling technique was the purposive sampling. The sampled group of people were interviewed using an interview guide. The study revealed that fabric names are inspired by adinkra motifs, Ghanaian proverbs, names suggested by customers and fabric retailers. Also the fabric prints are classified under classical and contemporary, the prints have symbolical meanings and the effects of fabric names on the culture of Ghanaian. The study concludes that the naming practice of fabrics is a unique culture and since culture needs to be preserved, one such way is the practice of naming Ghanaian fabric prints. It recommended that people should be knowledgeable about fabric names before purchasing any fabric type. The fabric designers should study the trends of naming fabrics and also inculcate the orderly presentation of classical print designs into the contemporary fabric prints to sustain the naming culture. Fabric names have negative and positive effects so care should be taken into consideration when buying and using fabrics with names.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background to the Study

The use of fabric has come to be with man since the earliest period of time. Man has found various ways of using fabrics from clothing to upholsteries, furnishing and decoration purposes. Tortora (1987) states that –No one knows exactly when the spinning and weaving of textiles began, but archaeologists tell us that woven plant fibre fabrics were made more than eighty-five hundred years ago in Catal Hayuk, a hunting village in Turkey” (p. 6-7). She further added that, the only fibres available for use were found in nature, and the process used to make these fibres into cloth were carried out by hands. Textile is the use of fabrics produced by weaving, knitting, felting, embroidering and other methods (Ikpakronyi, 2006 as cited in Oyedele & Babatunde, 2013).

The Holy Bible asserts that when the first human couple realised they were naked, they made clothes out of fig leaves to cover themselves (Genesis 3:7). The Bible recounts further in Genesis 3:21 that God later on gave the couple a long gown made with animal skin as clothing. It is not only fabrics or clothing that is mentioned in this biblical account as stated above. In Genesis 1:3 of the Holy Bible, Graham (2011) took an interesting look at this when he reiterated that, –God said, let there be Light‘ and there was light”. To him, God named a thing before he created them. In this regard, naming seems to be a necessary first step toward creation. Therefore, the art of naming as we have come to know started long time ago in the story of creation where things were called into being.

Hence, naming of people and things has come to stay and so do fabrics too. There are variety of names for various fabric products worldwide.

Fabrics come in various forms and have been used by man both functionally and aesthetically in purpose. In the social context, naming has complex significance. It is a sign and source of identity for individuals and groups. Indeed, the art of naming is instituted in the context of culture because of the power that is associated with names (Hanley, 2004). Hence, the power in the art of naming in many cultures has been followed since creation in many context and purposes including spiritual, ethnics, religious and social status. For instance, people in the area of Art, Engineering, Medical fields and many other areas have named their products so that they can be easily identified. In the arts specifically, there are interesting ways by which names are formed or given to products.

In the textiles industry for instance, printed fabrics made in Ghana and other parts of Africa have become a means of projecting Africans identity and wealth. These fabrics have been accepted as prestigious cloths because of their aesthetic values and the symbolic meanings they portray. In a culture where symbols are widespread with varied connotations, what is printed in a fabric as motifs is done with utmost care. Sackey (2002) defines printing on fabrics as “an art of making impressions by pressing or stamping a medium (paint, ink, wax, resin) onto a surface as a means of reproducing designs” (p. 84). He further explained that, old and new methods of fabric printing can be classified into: block printing, roller printing, screen printing, heat transfer printing and resist printing.



There are some fabrics with designs dating way back in my great grandmother's time and possibly before; over hundred years of its existence. It is easy to see fingers, lipstick, elephants, birds and many more in the array of patterns on our African print. After all, the fabrics are what we wear and there has to be more to the story of the designs on our African print (Quartey, 2015).

Symbols carry a particular meaning recognised by the people who share a common culture. The Ghanaian symbols have powerful meanings that also allow us to make sense of our lives and without them our living is meaningless (Obeng, n.d). In light of this, most African fabrics or prints in the past were made with symbolic patterns for the various classes of people in the society and to grace special social gatherings such as naming and outdoorings ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, durbars, funerals and other festivities. These indigenous arts and customs are caught in the crossfire between the need to protect and project the Ghanaian unique cultural heritage and the adoption of a perceived modernity that is a key factor in creating identity for ourselves as a country (Ross, 2004).

Empirical evidence shows that, some Ghanaians, in the past, built wardrobes of high quality symbolic African prints for posterity whereas others bought and wore cloths with symbolic designs to cast insinuations, yell insults at their rivals, exhibit their love, and to serve as a means of distinguishing and projecting one's social status (Howard, Sarpong & Amankwah, 2012). During the 1960s and 1970s, fabric prints made in Ghana had names that could easily depict or explain the beliefs, practices and culture of Ghanaians (Orhin, 2007). Wendren (2008) opines that the patterns in the prints tell stories of relevance to the wearer, such as proverbs, poems and traditional African fables.

Textile, among Africans, is an important expression of culture (Gilfoy, 1987 as cited in Oyedele, 2013).

African prints have philosophical significance. The colours also hold philosophical significance as they can represent social standing, age, tribal orientation or marital status. There are designs depicting images of proverbs, local emblems relating to traditions of kingships or authorities of chiefs, designs with educational significance, and commemorative cloth depicting individuals and events (Clarke, 2002).

In the Ghanaian culture, fabric prints have become a valued asset which has lived on from generation to generation. For instance, the names of some Ghanaian fabrics are: –Nkrumah Pencil” which was named after the first president of Ghana Dr. Kwame Nkrumah for his leadership and authority over the country Ghana, –Akyekyedee akyi” which means the back of a tortoise, –meho yefe kyen me kora” literally meaning am more beautiful than my rival, –Duakorɔ gye mframa a ebu” meaning if a single tree faces the storms alone it breaks and many more.

Another typical example of printed fabrics that has great historical knowledge and significance is the Adinkra cloth. These fabric prints are made specifically with the use of Adinkra symbols. Appiah (1997) records that, Adinkra cloth design used to be worn by only royalty and spiritual leaders for funerals and other special occasions. In the past they were hand printed on undyed, red, black, dark brown hand-woven cotton fabrics depending on the occasion and the wearers role which in most cases actuate the naming of the fabric. It is for this reason that the researcher embarked on the art of fabric naming

in the Ghanaian culture and to find out the effect these names impact on the Ghanaian culture.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Africans have unique ways of documenting their history and culture. Clearly, visual arts in most African societies have been used to record man's way of life; from paintings, jewellery, clothing, sculpture to other forms of art. Africans create and design fabrics to express their culture. Their fabrics are either woven or printed and possess unique traits (Oyedele, 2013). For instance, clothing plays a vital role in man's way of life. In the Ghanaian culture, fabric prints have become a valued asset which has lived on from generation to generation. These fabric prints are used in various stages of man's life: the birth of a new child, puberty rites, marriage, festivals, funeral rites and many other occasions.

Over the years, Ghanaian fabric prints have been given great philosophical names that have symbolic significance and meaning to its people. The fabrics usually come in beautifully printed designs or motifs and in various symbolic colours to attract the consumer and serve the purpose of such occasions when used by the wearer. Examples are clear to the extent that, some of the fabrics come with names already printed on them and this piece of information can be seen on the selvedge of the textile prints. These fabric names communicate events, proverbial meaning, historical events and many more to the observer (Degraft, personal communication, 2017).

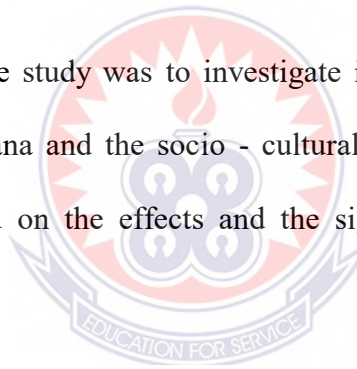
Anku and Lodonu, (2002) demonstrated how documentation is done as a means of art education. Specifically, on textiles, many authors have done various works on

batik, tie-dye, woven and printed fabrics and their methods of execution, aesthetics, functional use, economic benefits, socio-cultural roles, to mention but a few. A careful look at the literature on these issues shows that the missing part of the many good works done so far on textiles, is the nameology of Ghanaian fabrics.

The researcher is of the view that most studies that have been carried out on this art have left out the naming aspects of this visual or body art that need further research. One hardly finds a well-compiled book containing information on the origin and names of Ghanaian fabric. This poses a problem that needs to be researched thoroughly.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate into fabric nameology as a culture among the people of Ghana and the socio - cultural context of the fabric names. The study further investigated on the effects and the significance of fabric names to the Ghanaian culture.



## **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. To identify and discuss what influences fabric naming in Ghana.
2. To examine the classifications of socio-cultural naming systems of fabrics.
3. To discuss the semiotics and semantics implications of fabric names.
4. To examine the effects of fabric names in the Ghanaian culture.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions would guide the study:

1. What influences the art of fabric naming in Ghana?
2. What are the classifications of socio-cultural naming systems of fabrics?
3. What are the semiotic and semantic implications of fabric names?
4. What are the effects of fabric names in the Ghanaian culture?

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

This thesis will serve as a contribution to the existing literature on Ghanaian fabric names. Again it will be of much help to institutions such as the textile industries, fabric retailers and mostly, educational sectors under all arts educating fields. It can also be used as a source of reference material to educate tourists and Ghanaian citizens who will need more information or a deeper understanding about Ghanaian fabric names. Furthermore, the thesis will help to enhance the artistic awareness of Ghanaian textile designers and fabric dealers who knowledgeably produce and name all the aesthetically Ghanaian fabric prints on the markets and their great contributions in sustaining the Ghanaian culture.

#### **1.6 Delimitation of the Study**

This study is limited to selected textile designers, retailers of textile fabrics, producers and general consumers of fabrics or fabric products in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. For this study, selected fabrics were picked from three textile

producing companies in Ghana namely; GTP, ATL and PRINTEX. Finally, the art of fabric naming and relating issues connected to fabric names were examined.

### 1.7 Limitation of the Study

In the process of writing this thesis, I encountered some difficulties: Firstly, some of the fabric dealers involved in the interview declined the taking of photographs and other needed information within their fabric shops. There was much difficulty for some of the respondents and to back their submissions with facts since it was mostly an oral culture. Also photographs needed to support this thesis, which would have made the thesis more appealing to readers, could not be obtained.

### 1.8 Definition of Terms

**Acculturation:** is the exchange of cultural features that results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact; the original cultural patterns of either or both groups may be altered, but the groups remain distinct.

**Aesthetics:** is concerned with beauty or the appreciation of beauty or a set of principles underlying the work of a particular artist or artistic movement.

**Adinkra:** is an Akan word which simply means –saying good-bye” to another when parting which has traditional proverbs and philosophical meaning.

**Bast Fibre:** fibrous material from a plant, in particular the inner bark of a tree such as the lime, used as fibre in matting, cord etc.

**Birisii:** this is an indigo blue cloth

**Bombyx mori:** the commercially bred caterpillar of the domesticated silk moth which spins a silk cocoon that is processed to yield silk fibre.

**Ceremony:** is an expression of shared feelings and attitudes through more or less formally

ordered actions of an essentially symbolic nature performed on appropriate occasions.

**Cultural Symbolism:** in an (anthropological sense, is the use of traditional symbols to convey different meanings. Traditional symbols may be anything: objects, words, colours, or patterns; their defining characteristic is that they stand for something other than their intrinsic property. For instance, while there is nothing intrinsically dangerous about the colour red, it has become a symbol for danger in a number of societies.

**Culture:** the attitudes and behaviour that is characteristic of a particular social group or organisation at a particular time and place.

**Design:** a decorative pattern or a plan or drawing produced to show the look and function or workings of a garment or other objects before it is made.

**Flax:** a blue flowered herbaceous plant that is cultivated for its seed and for textile fibre made from its stalks; a textile fibre obtained from the flax plant.

**Kanga:** a colourful garment worn by women and occasionally by men in African Lakes region. This print of fabric is made from cotton and is culturally significant on Eastern Coast of Africa.

**Kobene:** this is avermillion or terra cotta red cloth.

**Kuntunkuni:** dark tan brown cloth with significant patterns in black.

**Motif:** a decorative image or design, especially a repeated one forming a pattern.

**Mulberry:** a small deciduous leaves, native to East Asia and long cultivated elsewhere, in particular the white mulberry is originally grown for feeding silkworms.

**Nameology:** the study of the secret meanings of names and understanding the significance of names.

**Selvedge:** The selvedge forms the longitudinal edges of a fabric and are generally formed during weaving. The weave used to construct the selvedge may be the same, or may differ from, the weave used in the body of the cloth.

**Semiotics:** the study of signs and symbols and their uses or interpretations.

**Semantics:** this relates to meaning in language or logic.

**Silkworm:** the commercially bred caterpillar of the domesticated silk moth (*Bombyx mori*) which spins a silk cocoon that is processed to yield silk fibre.

**Socio-cultural:** a set of beliefs, customs, practices and behavior that exist within a population. It embraces the society and the culture of people.

**Yarn:** a continuous strand of spun fibres used for weaving or knitting. Distinguished from thread which is composed of two or more yarns (ply) united by twisting.



## **1.9 Organisation of the Study**

The study was organised into five chapters. The first chapter was the introductory chapter which first discusses the background of the study; the origin of fabrics, their significance and usage in the Ghanaian culture. It also outlined the purpose of the study, discusses the research problems and objectives, which was the difficulty encountered during the interview with the interviewees and the acquisition of photographs for the study. Chapter two is the review of related literature in which several books by recognised authors were read and their relevance to the study discussed. The following was discussed: fabrics and its origin, fabric uses, culture; the culture of naming and its significance, proverbial and symbolic meanings of Ghanaian fabrics, colour and its symbolism and the developmental trends of Ghanaian fabrics. Chapter three describes the main approaches used in obtaining data for the work, which is the research methodology. It deals with the research design, population of the study, sample and sampling procedure, data collection instrument, method of data analyses and data and their treatment. Chapter four deals with analyses and interpretation of results. Lastly, the chapter discusses the importance of the study, which is an addition to literature and its usefulness the Ghanaian culture; the summary, conclusion and recommendations for the thesis.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.0 Overview

Literature review considers relevant theories in a particular research area. The need for this review is to provide the basis for the current work and assist the researcher in carrying out a more detailed work. For the purpose of this study, thematic areas were reviewed and discussed under this chapter. The conceptual framework; the effects of fabrics and its name on Ghanaians and their culture is illustrated below:

#### 2.1 Conceptual Framework

Table 1: Conceptual Framework

<b>Origin of Ghanaian fabric prints</b>	<b>Process of fabric naming</b>	<b>Effects of fabric names on the Ghanaian culture</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Fabric names derived from Ghanaian adinkra symbols</li> <li>- Fabric names dictated by retail collaborators</li> <li>-Fabric names suggested by general users of the fabric prints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Fabric names derived from a dominating motif in the fabric</li> <li>- names from Ghanaian proverbs, adages, music, folklore, myths.</li> <li>-Names from current occurrences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Communicate messages</li> <li>- naming culture safe guards the future generation</li> <li>-Project social status</li> <li>-Promote cultural activities such as funerals, naming ceremonies, marriage rites.</li> <li>-Project culture to the foreigners</li> <li>-Record historical events and passage of knowledge</li> </ul>

Source: Author's own construct (2018)

Table 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for the study. The whole study outlines the naming of fabrics in the Ghanaian society which delves into how the fabric names communicates messages, projects the social status of individuals and its significance to the Ghanaian culture. It further throws light on the culture of the people and how the naming culture safe guards the future generation, brings responsibility and discipline in the Ghanaian society, and how it projects that to the world.

## **2.2 The Origin of Fabrics**

The use of fabrics has come to be with man since the earliest period of time. A Christian literature, the Holy Bible reveals that the first human couple recognised that they were naked, hence made clothes out of fig leaves to cover themselves (Genesis 3:7), whereas further reading of (Genesis 3:21) shows how God gave the couple a long gown made with animal skin as clothing. When early people realised they needed more than their own hair and skin to protect them from the weather, they looked around to see what was available. Once they started to hunt, they used the skin of animals as clothes. This skin when continuously used becomes harder and made difficult for them to hunt. For this purpose, they started to treat the skin to preserve its softness. Later the bones of animals were used as needle and nerves were used as thread to stitch the hides (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2006).

–Fabric is woven into humanity and has touched so many lives—beginning in ancient times when primitive people used flax fibres, separated into strands and plaited or woven into simple fabrics coloured with dyes extracted from plants. Given the intimate history of people and fabric, it is hard to imagine that the industry or –art” of making fabric has evolved into one that adversely affects the environment” (Silas, Hansan & Lent 2007, p.7).

The authors on another facet say they are of the view that for thousands of years before the introduction of synthetic fibres, the four great fibres in the fabric industry were flax, wool, cotton and silk. They assert that all products were created from natural, rapidly renewable and abundant sources. The use of textiles dates back before the birth of Christ. Early men have found various uses of textiles. It has originated in various natural forms through the surroundings we live in; from plant to animal fibres processed to form a textile fabric.

According to Hearle (2003), over ten thousand years ago, early men and women found ways to collect natural fibres, align and twist them into yarns, and interlace them into fabrics, which found uses as clothing, shelter and an increasing range of other purposes. Over the centuries cloth has always serve as a key trade item and stimulus to economic production and imported textiles in early West African empires (Abraham, 2013). The natural sources of these fibres over the years have been manufactured to meet the contemporary usage of man. From the above opinions derived from the Holy Bible, Abraham (2013), Silas, Hansen, & Lent, (2007) and Hearle (2003) on the origination of fabrics, some organised development runs through their assertions:

- a. Fabric originated from the early period man was created.
- b. Man then started to look in their environment for other natural valuables in which they can make clothing to protect their bodies.
- c. Natural fibres have been established as the most widely used fibre whiles other synthetic fibres have also been produced by man.
- d. From the clothing functions of these fibres, it has also moved into other functionalities where these fibres can be used for varied textile products.

### **2.2.1 Types of Fabric and their Characteristics**

Fabrics come in different forms and have been used by man for reasons which can be functional or aesthetical. There are diverse fabrics and for the sake of this study natural fabrics such as cotton, silk and linen will be discussed. Nielsen (1979), as cited by Abraham (2013), highlighted that the fabrics used by Africans are key component of their inherent culture. African fibres are full of the Earth Mother products, that is, cotton, raffia, bark, wool from goats, camels and sheep (Dendel, 1974). For thousands of years the four natural fibres used by men are flax, wool, silk and cotton. Man-made fibres were introduced only at the beginning of the 20th century, from ancient times to the middle of the 18th century. Spinning and weaving were done by hand (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2006). For the purpose of this study, the following types of fabric would be treated and they are as follows:

### 2.2.2 Cotton Fabrics

Cotton remains the most miraculous fibre under the sun, even after 8,000 years. No other fibre comes close to duplicating all of the desirable characteristics combined in cotton. The fibre of a thousand faces and almost as many uses, cotton is noted for its versatility, appearance, performance and above all, its natural comfort (Shiksha, 2014).

Cotton is a natural fibre that comes from the seedpod of the cotton plant and is used to make many fabric types at every price point. The fibre is hollow in the center and, under the microscope, resembles a twisted ribbon (Shiksha, 2014). The processing of cotton fibres starts right from the cotton farm and is as follows:

From the fields, seed cotton moves to nearby gins for separation of lint and seed. The cotton is then dried and cleaned, this process is known as ginning. After the ginning, the next process is classing. This is where the fibre samples are classed according to fibre strength, length and fineness. After this process cotton is ready for sale. A well step by step description of how the cotton fibres are processed right from the fibrous raw state into a state which is used as clothing will be discussed (Shiksha, 2014).

A seed fibre, found attached to the seed of the cotton plant is the most important apparel fibre. The fibre is natural cream or tan coloured with length ranging between  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Cotton identified as a comfortable fibre exhibits good strength, high absorption, soft hand and good heat conductivity thus making it an ideal choice for clothing in summer. Its nature of high absorption enables the fibre to be dyed and cleaned easily. Shiksha (2014) stated that, in the processing of cotton fabrics, "Cotton yarns need to be scrubbed with starch to make them tough enough for spinning" (p. 2). She further

added, since cotton is used for clothes for daily use, the way the cloth protects against varying weather conditions is crucial and proper processing systems should be executed (Shiksha, 2014).

One best quality of cotton is cited by this author, “the quality of cotton is normally associated with its absorbency” (Ahiagble, 2004, p. 35). A good finishing process of the fibres into yarns yields in a good finished product and also the absorbency of cotton is very important since it is a natural fibre which has the property of high absorbency.

Cotton fabric is popular because it’s easy to care for and comfortable year-round. In hot, humid weather, cotton “breathes”. As the body perspires, cotton fibres absorb the moisture and release it on the surface of the fabric, so it evaporates. In cold weather, if the fabric remains dry, the fibres retain body heat, especially napped fabrics. Cotton is easy to clean; it can be laundered or dry-cleaned. It withstands high water temperatures, so it can be boiled and thus sterilised. It does wrinkle easily and is prone to shrinkage. It absorbs up to 27 times its own weight in water (Ahiagble, 2004). Below are other outline characteristics of the fabric:

### **2.2.3 Characteristics of Cotton**

The characteristics of cotton as identified by Shiksha (2014) and Ahiagble (2004) are: cotton has a comfortable, soft hand, easy to launder, it takes dye easily, good colour retention, it is durable and strong, it conducts heat well, it resists abrasion, resists pilling and moths, has little resiliency; prone to wrinkling and it weakens from extended exposure to sunlight

## **2.3 Silk Fabrics**

Silk is a natural, protein fibre produced by the silkworm. The best known silk is obtained from the cocoons of larvae of the mulberry silkworm scientifically called the *Bombyx mori*. It is made from two continuous filaments strongly joined together and used to form the cocoon of the silkworm. The cultivation and manufacturing of silk were secret and guarded by the Chinese for thousands of years. Japan is now the major producer and exporter of silk. Fabrics made from silk are soft, fine, smooth, lustrous, warm and stronger than wool. It is called ‘Queen of the Fibres’ and is used for formal wear (www.scribd.com Shiksha, 2014; Ahiagble, 2004).

The silk fibre is the most beautiful of all textile fibres and is acclaimed as the queen of textiles. The silk fibre comes from the cocoon of the silk worm and requires a great deal of handling and processing, its shiny and lustrous appearance gives it the quality and name ‘Queen of the Fibres’ which makes it one of the most expensive fibres in the world. Silk has the following characteristics as identified by Shiksha (2014) and Ahiagble (2004)

### **2.3.1 Characteristics of Silk**

Very lustrous in appearance, when pure silk is the strongest lustrous fibre known, its shape: the fibre is long from 1,000 to 1,300 years, luster: high, elastic recovery: good, elongation: good, resiliency: Medium Density: 1.25 - 1.34 g/cm<sup>3</sup>, moisture absorption: good dimensional stability: good, acids: damage, alkalis: strong alkalis damage fibre, sunlight: prolonged exposure causes fibre breakdown, insects: destroyed by carpet beetles and to flame: burns with a sputtering flame



## 2.4 Linen (flax) Fabrics

It is a 'Bast Fibre' and fabric made from it is called linen. It is a staple fibre though its length (20-30 inches) is more than the other staple fibres available. Linen fabric is shiny, smooth, durable and easy to wash. Like cotton, it wrinkles very easily, is cool, absorbent and is suitable for summer wear. The characteristics of linen are low to medium lustre, soft and smooth texture and the fabric gives a warm feeling to the human body (Shiksha, 2014; Ahiagble, 2004). Linen is normally seen as the oldest natural textile fibre which was earlier used for the Egyptian Pharaohs as burial shrouds. Its usage has been dated back thousands of years ago. Although linen wrinkles, it is one of the most popular fibres.

### 2.4.1 Characteristics of Linen

The following are the characteristics of linen as identified by Shiksha (2014) and Ahiagble (2004). With shape: width varies, diameter is varying from a few inches to 22 inches or more; average length after processing is 10 to 15 inches, luster: medium to high, elastic recovery: low elongation, resiliency: poor, density: 1.5, moisture absorption: good dimensional stability: good, acids: good to cool, dilute acids; low or poor to hot dilute. poor to concentrated either hot or cold, sunlight: good insects: good and to Flame: burns readily.

## 2.5 Uses of Fabrics

According to Kadolph (2007), “Man uses fabrics right from the birth stage to the very end of the life cycle stage which is the death stage. We wear fabrics, use them in homes, in hospitals, schools, churches and hotels. Fabrics can also be used in the making of protective clothing such as raincoats, life jackets and boots. Fabrics can be seen in various forms wherever we go. Fabrics can prolong the life of humans when it is used in the making of polyester arteries and valour heart valves” (pp. 4-5).

The rich people of Greece used only linen material. The priests used linen material for their dress while performing holy and custom deeds (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2006). Historically, linen has been used as holy garments by priests across most cultures and this has a solid reference from the Holy Bible of (King James version), Revelations 19:8 which stated, “And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints”. Linen was not only worn by the priests but served as other functional purposes in the performance of duties at temples, their altars and places of worship.

Clothing has over the previous centuries been an essential medium for negotiating cultural differences either as absorbing distant cultures into familiar frameworks or emphasizes cultural differences (Rovine, 2009). Fabrics comes in various forms and has been used by man both functionally and aesthetically in purpose. Normally, a motif is chosen and specially designed to be worn by individuals to important events such as weddings, baptisms and funerals (Bickford, 1994). African fabrics as an example are adopted as national costumes and have gained importance of a status symbol showing wealth and social prestige (Abraham, 2013). Instance, Ghanaian fabrics are made and

chosen on purpose to reflect particular activities. The Ghanaian kente fabric and the traditional adinkra fabrics can serve as examples for such purposes.

The differently scholarly works referenced above by these authors portray the uses of fabrics in more remarkable ways. Fabrics are not only worn for body coverage, but its use also varies with the stages of human life. Rovine (2009) and Bickford (1994) were also of the view that fabrics play vital roles in the cultures of its people. Some fabrics are also made and designed into outfits which serve as functional purposes on important occasions or celebrations. Abraham finally concludes that, fabrics are made to reflect particular occasions or events and it also speaks about the wealth and status of the wearer. Here, two major groups of functions can be safely considered for effective use of indigenous Ghanaian fabrics. These are those classified as “Joyful Occasions” and those referred to as “Sad Occasions”. Examples of the joyous occasions include; outdoorings, puberty and initiation rites, marriage ceremonies, festivals, durbars, enstoolment and many more. Funerals, famine, death, war, sickness constitute the sad occasions.

Africans have various uses and functions of their prints. Commemorative fabrics, found all over Africa, serve as a communication device. With colourful repeat patterns, these fabrics call attention to and celebrate political events and persons, religious and educational groups, and much more. When used as a textual and visual document, the fabric becomes a vehicle to commemorate an event or to celebrate a person’s life or achievement. One does not need to know how to read in order to understand the messages found in these textiles (Sylvanus, 2007). According to Sylvanus, most of the printed wax fabrics have been used to make objects in what the author called “reframed commodities” which refer to objects which have been altered to fit new functions (Sylvanus, 2007).

From the above arguments, it could be deduced that African fabric prints are communicational tools which carries messages across. These messages are communicated through the designs or the colours in the prints. These purposes also fall either under the social and cultural aspects in relation to the style of living of its people. Ghanaians also have fabrics which they use for joyful occasions and those for sad occasions. When one wears a particular fabric purposely for a joyful occasion on a sad event or gathering, or vice versa, there will be a miscommunication of his or her action. Thereby when it comes to such society, one is careful of what he or she wears for such traditional occasions or gatherings.

## **2.6 History of Printed Fabrics**

The history of printed textile design is dated as early as 2500 B.C. A thousand years later, printed textiles were being worn in Egypt - Coptic period. Examples of printed fabrics survive from many different cultures. It is not known whether China textile printing was a fairly extensive industry in India during that period (Anonymous, 2014). In some parts of Africa, the colouring agent for fabrics most readily available to the people was mud. By selecting mud from different places and mixing it with a variety of substances, a subtle range of shades of black, red, yellow, brown and white could be made. One of the strongest earth pigments is ochre, prized to this day by the Masai of Kenya for the rich red it yields which they use to colour their garments, hair and bodies (Gillow & Bryan, 1999, p. 103). The authors further stated:

A typical example of a printed fabric in African history is the Bogolanfini (mud cloth). It is one of the most striking of all daubed textiles and its origin is from Mali. The dyeing and printing of cotton is entirely organic and safe to the environment. The fabrics are decorated with geometric patterns in white on a black background. The result of painting previously dyed cloth with river mud, applied with a bamboo splint or metal spatula, and blending colour from the exposed, unpainted areas with a solution of caustic soda, peanuts and millets. The mud cloth is traditionally worn as ceremonial costume at rites of passage (p.104).

Another example of African printed fabric is the Capulana is the traditional loin cloth in Mozambique. Originally this printed fabric comes in only three colours white, black and red. But today it comes in many colours and varying patterns (Gillow & Bryan, 1999). Printed fabrics was developed from the natural state of applying colours to a more developed technique of colouring. Today printing of fabrics is done in many varying forms where different patterns are also introduced in the printing style. Later on wax prints were introduced in the textile industry which picked on speedily.

Printed wax fabrics were traded in Africa toward the end of 15th century before the arrival of the Europeans and were used as monetary unit (Sylvanus, 2007). According to this scholar, between 17th and 18th centuries, African markets became a commercial interest for European – produced fabrics with firms such as Royal African Company and the Dutch and English East India Companies acquiring hegemonic positions in the

structuring of their commerce and today, there are only two European factories such as VLISCO in Netherlands and Chinese-owned A.B.C in England.

Steiner (2002) further stated this about printed textiles, and he elaborated on the history of printed fabrics by stating that the prints which was exported to Africa during the 19th and 20th centuries were of two main categories: wax prints (wax batiks) and non-wax prints (fancy or roller prints). Within the sub region, a Scotsman by name Ebenezer Brown Fleming, a merchant from Glasgow was known to have played a significant role in the importation of wax block prints to West Africa. His successful commercial activities in the trade of wax prints made him obtained monopoly at the initial stages and was named as the major importer of these special textiles (Howard, Sarpong & Amankwah, 2012).

Linnebuhr (1992) observed that the use of messages which are normally topical, metaphorical or erotic interest printed on Kanga (a piece of printed cotton fabric) started in Zanzibar (the capital city of Tanzania) and eventually spread to other areas in the Swahili coast. Informatively, a field research conducted by Beck (2000) found that African women who traced their descent to the Arab peninsula and strongly oriented towards Islam, only wear their African print fabric (leso) in private (at home), leave the house dressed in veil, preferring fabrics with floral and geometrical designs and no inscriptions as they presume the communication of these fabrics as shameful, whereas women with their descent within the coast prefer to express themselves by means of the print fabrics (leso).

There have been various scholarly works on the history of printed fabrics in African countries. Steiner (2002) went ahead to establish the two main categories of African prints which he stated as wax and non-wax prints. Linnebuhr also made a comparative among some African women traced from Arab who are believed to be Islamic. Some part of these women wear their African prints at home and find themselves wearing other printed fabrics with no inscriptions with their veils when stepping out of their homes. They presume the communication of these fabrics with inscriptions as shameful. Among these same tribe of women, those found along the coastal areas prefer to express themselves by means of the prints with inscriptions. In total, the history of African prints has migrated from one process to the other and also significant players have helped to bring the prints this far where it has been accepted by not only Africans but worldwide.

## **2.7 Printed Fabrics**

In my express opinion, textiles are usually coloured to make them attractive and beautiful. They would appear extremely dull in the absence of colour. There are two ways of adding colour to a textile substrate, that is, printing and dyeing. Printing is a process in which a multicolour effect is produced on the textile at discrete places where as dyeing completely covers the substrate with colour. The substances used to colour the textiles can be classified as dyes or pigments.

Sackey (2002) sees printing on fabrics as an art of making impressions through printing medium onto a surface as a way of reproducing designs. Other scholars also opine that African textiles are a vital expression of culture (Oyedele, 2013). Africans have long had a history of flourishing textile industry dating back as 5000 BC before the

installation of Dutch textile firm VLISCO in Togo in 1846 Further argues that the VLISCO patterns are inspired by Africans hence, made to address the needs of the African population and additionally are more traditional African textiles such as “tie and dye”, Kente from Ghana. The Kuba people from DR Congo use raffia and also Ndebele people of Southern Africa have a traditional beautiful quilts and blankets. All these fabrics have special symbols or designs and names which project their status and cultural value (Oyedele, 2013).

African print is a recognised term used by the European textile companies in Africa to classify fabrics which are machine-printed with wax resins and dyes to obtain batik effect on both sides of the cloth (Akinwumi, 2008). The Ghana’s printed fabrics are normally categorised as hand printed traditional textile (Adinkra), machine printed fabrics (wax prints/fancy prints) and wax resist local fabrics - batiks/tie and dye (Kudowor, 2012).



*Figure 2a. A Vlisco Pattern*



*Figure 2b. A Vlisco Pattern*

(Source: <https://www.pinterest.com>).



Kudowor (2012) further reiterates that Adinkra is an Ashanti cotton cloth produced at Ntonso, North of Kumasi and it was developed around the 18<sup>th</sup> century where graphic motifs are printed in black tar with the use of stamps made out of carved calabash and used to create individual patterns that have related proverbs. And also with different symbols that are used to convey messages and meanings for the viewer.

According to him, modern Ghanaian fashion is fed by wax prints, these cotton fabrics are produced by fabric processing and printing firms such as VLISCO, Akosombo Textiles Limited and Printex with designs that promote wealthy and send messages in the forms of imagery and related proverbs (Kudowor, 2012).

Also, batik (meaning “wax written”) and tie-dye fabrics became popular in the late 1960s and the process of batik was introduced into Ghana from South East Asia which involves a process of wax to block the dye from parts of the cloth. The tie-dye method requires tying the cotton fabric in sections to resist dyes and immersion in dyes. Batik and tie-dye use patterns and motifs convey particular messages. These fabrics are essential economic item in West Africa that a lot of people continually compete to make new designs (Wahlman & Chuta, 1979).

The richness and variety of African prints is interesting not only to fashion designers but also to anyone who wants his cloth to express his personality (Abraham, 2013). Abraham further exemplifies how cultural ideas are demonstrated and objectified in the fabric design (Nielsen, 1979 as cited by Abraham, 2013). In Abraham’s view, the researcher agrees that in most printed fabrics, the cultural values and philosophies are embodied in the print of the people. Either being the activities and the way of life of the

people will be dominating in the design or colour of the print. The print then becomes a means of portraying one's culture and a tool of communication to other cultures.

## 2.8 Design Precepts in Printed Fabrics

Every good textile design should follow design precepts in the execution of the textile by the manufacturers. The design precepts come in two major themes; the elements of design and principles of designs. Common to most African print fabric is its characteristic design having irregular composition style. The style of African prints has an orderly repetition of motifs which are interrupted by a shift in texture, direction or scale (Abraham, 2013).



Figure 3. A fabric print *Efie mmosea* (elements of textural design).

(Source: Author's fieldwork survey, 2017).

Figure 3 above is an image of a fabric print beautifully arranged with designs elements). The fabric name *efei mmosea* (which literally means, (household gravels). The motif has some elements of design arranged perfectly to form the basic motifs in the fabric. It depicts the irregularities of shapes of small gravels in nature. The fabric name was derived from a Ghanaian proverb; *efie mmosea etwa wua, eye ya* literally (when one is gets cut from gravels in his/her home is much painful than the gravels outside his/her

home) meaning; when a member of your family hurts you, it is much painful than an outsider. Motifs are required for designing any art, whether it is jewellery, ceramics, fashion, furniture or textiles. According to Saw (2002), a motif is any recurring thematic element or repeated figure in design. It could be an object, shape, colour and direction.

According to Pemberton (2001), it does not matter how old the garment is or how many times you wear it, you feel good in it because it always gets you noticed because of the colour. Colour has three properties. The first is hue, which is the name of the colours. The primary hues are yellow, red, and blue. Secondary colours are made by mixing two primaries. Intermediate colours are mixtures of a primary and adjacent secondary colour. The second property of colour is value, which refers to the lightness or darkness of hue. The third property of colour is intensity, which refers to the purity of the hue (also called "Chroma"). A line is a form with width and length, but no depth. Artists use lines to create edges, the outlines of objects. A line is created by the movement of the artist's pen. The direction of a line can convey mood. Horizontal lines are calm and quiet, vertical lines suggest more of a potential for movement, while diagonal lines strongly suggest movement and give more of a feeling of vitality to a picture. Texture is one of the more subtle design elements that make a textile print richer and more interesting. These elements and principles of design when executed accurately in a work of art can create various qualities of great pleasure to the human eye. Artist then play with these major rules and guidelines as it aids in executing any work of art.

From the above distinctions, fabrics are designed with design elements and principles in mind to arrive at an excellent work piece. Since most Ghanaian fabrics are made to communicate messages across to viewers, from this study it will be induced

whether the names given to fabrics are based on the design precepts in the fabric being the motifs, shapes of designs, colours or the direction of the design.

## **2.9 Culture**

In my submission, the term ‘culture’ refers to the language, beliefs, values and norms, customs, dress, diet, roles, knowledge and skills, and all the other things that people learn that make up the ‘way of life’ of any society. Culture is passed on from one generation to the next through the process of socialisation. Although there are many aspects of everyday life which are shared by most members of society, there are different conceptions and definitions of culture within this general approach.

### **2.9.1 Culture and its Significance**

According to Ward (1957), the pattern of life within a community, the regularly recurring activities and material and social arrangements and characteristic of a particular group can be seen as a culture of a group of people. He further elaborates that: culture is learned, culture is unconscious, culture is shared, culture is integrated, culture is symbolic, culture is a way of life, culture is dynamic and culture is relative. Ward further explained that symbolic culture is based on arbitrarily assigned meanings that are shared by a society whiles historical culture is social heritage, or tradition, that is passed on to future generations.

From the period where Ghanaians were giving names to fabric till now, I can assert that fabric naming has become part of the Ghanaian culture. All the elaborations Ward made on culture can be aligned to fabric naming practices as well. This culture has been moved from generation to generation and is still being practiced today. The culture

of naming fabrics has become very symbolic to its people. The fabric naming can fall under the two categories given by Ward as culture being: symbolic and historical culture.

Geertz (1973) stated that an historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means which men communicate” (p. 89). In a similar vein, the Cultural Policy of Ghana (2004) dwells on the totality of way of life evolved by Ghanaians through experience and reflection in attempts to fashion a harmonious co-existence with the environment (pp. 3-4). This will bring awareness to bear on Ghanaians that, culture is not static, not pagan or not just drumming and dancing but away of life.

The researcher concurs with Geertz’s (1973) opinion on culture, whereby the culture we are practicing today is an historical process which has lived on from generations to generations. Factors being it symbols, language and way of life are all means of communication where we can communicate to each other respectively. Symbolic forms are great aspects of various cultures around the world.

Dimensions of culture can be listed as Values, Norms, Ideas/Beliefs, Attitudes, Symbols, Traditions and Artefacts. For instance, when we talk about culture being symbolic we can refer to the Ghanaian flag serving as a National symbolic item in Ghana and outside Ghana, the fabrics Ghanaians have such as the kente, the prints and others can serve as a symbolic tool to others outside of the country. Such things can represent and communicate about the nation Ghana. Culture, as stated by Rosman and Rubel (1989), is the lifestyle of a people. The way of life of people starts from the day they are born till death. There are diverse cultures in the world with each having its peculiar

characteristics. Obeng (n.d) also adds that, the concept –culture” is difficult to define because human beings who make up culture come from different geographical, historical, political and economic backgrounds. Consequently, what is cherished in one society may be disliked in another.

Through recorded history, societies around the globe use clothes and various forms of body adornments to non-verbally communicate rank, gender, occupations, class, wealth and group affiliation, serving as a form of free speech. Which are also communicated in forms of signs, symbols, and iconography and served as non-verbal but visual forms of expressing of the habits, thought, techniques and condition that characterised a society as a whole (Weston, 2006). Kemevor and Duku (2013) asserted that Ghanaian festivals are colourful and vibrant event which bring together families, clans and all ethnic groups in communities. Festivals are a part of culture that celebrates all the rites of passage in life as well as annual and seasonal events and that culture is not fashioned out of art; but art is created to reflect the activities, objects, and the lifestyle of the society. Ebeli (2015) gave a comprehensive meaning of culture from Ghanaian perspective. According to her, culture is used in a discourse as the total acceptable way of life of a given people. This comprises their modes of thinking, acting and feeling which are expressed in religion, language, law, art, of which music is part, as well as the material products such as houses, clothes, food and tools. Culture comes in various diversities across the world. In the macro and micro environments, the cultures can be practiced similarly among the people living in a locality or totally different. Below are two examples of cultures that will be looked at in relationship to the study.

### **2.9.2 The Dominant Culture**

Dominant culture of a society refers to the main culture in a society, which is shared, or at least accepted without opposition, by the majority of people. One culture becomes the dominant culture simply because it is the culture of a large majority of people. One main characteristics about such cultures is that, such cultures have the power and influence over others because of their larger size (Ebeli, 2015).

### **2.9.3 A subculture**

According to Ebeli (2015), subculture is a smaller culture held by a group of people within the main culture of a society, in some ways different from the main culture but with many aspects in common. This is a cultural group within a larger culture, often having beliefs and interests that are variance with those of the larger culture. Examples of subcultures include those of some young people, gypsies and travellers, gay people, different social classes and minority ethnic groups.

### **2.9.4 The Culture of Naming**

Names have a specific meaning to every nation since they convey the history and culture of that particular nation. They also evoke memories of love or bitterness within members of that cultural setting. Names reflect the way in which people think and see the world around them (Chauke, 2015). A name should also bear testimony to the history and culture of the people.

Different people of African origin produce names to the cloth they wear based on their cultural values and these serves the purpose of everyday wear and other special

festivities (Dendel, 1974). The name of a fabric shows either the wearer's conception of it or personal experience or incident connected to the purchase or wearing of it (Nielsen, 1979). Every culture names as well, the naming practice has got its history from naming of objects, places and materials. It is no surprising that fabrics have also had their own share of naming. Hanley (2004) believes that the art of naming is established in the context of culture due to the power that is connected with names. Orhin (2007) accentuates that in the 1960s and 1970s, locally produced fabric prints names were employed to depict or delineate the beliefs, practices and Ghanaian culture. And most importantly, the Western African culture facilitate all credit to the fabrics as a series of local significances, enactment of local logics of usage, interpretation and meanings attributed such that once the fabric leaves the warehouse and enters the market, a name is allotted to it to increase its market potential, and the lifespan of these names are usually unpredictable as some disappear at once whereas others enter the category of bestsellers (Sylvanus, 2007). Chauke, additionally stated another fascinating instance where names are given and he said, 'Politically inspired names are names that are related to the politics of the day in the country. These names may relate to political incidents or the activities of politicians' (Chauke, 2015).

Other scholars believe that the retail of African prints are enhanced through the usage of attracting indigenous names in the form of proverbs, catchphrases or words, slogans and maxims (Sylvanus, 2007; Akinwumi, 2008). However, for the big benchmark textile printing companies in the world such as Vlisco and ABC, the African influence in design is of paramount importance. In view of this, Vlisco and ABC designers constantly search for new and appropriate ideas by travelling to Africa to





## 2.10 Proverbs, Myths and Folklore

Proverbs are usually used to express ideas indirectly and it forms crucial part of conversation in Africa as proverbs in communicating can determine an individual's level of intelligence. A proverb conveys messages and has content which may be factual information or ideas, thoughts and feelings exhibited by participants hence its interpretation provides some essential perspectives on the ways in which people of a given culture view and demonstrate the world around them through their proverbs (Ntshinga, 1999). According to the scholar, the phenomenology of religion is where symbols –constitute the language of the sacred under the protection of rites and myths”, oneiric or dreams are essential as it is in the dreams that one get sight of the most fundamental and stable symbolisms of humanity passing from the –cosmic” function to the –psychic” function, and the poetic imagination is closer in exhibiting expressivity in its nascent states.

Proverbs in Africa are a way of life, a means of communicating experiences borne of human perseverance, fortitude and triumph over adversities in life. These proverbs are thus enshrined with the highest of African philosophical thought arrived at by reflecting on the questions of life through the symbolic use of trees, plants, animals, rivers, the human body and the environment. These proverbs provide metaphors, adages and smiles as a means of communicating messages among the living and between the living and the dead (Abdulai, 2000). No wonder proverbial sayings cut across all forms of things which pertains to our environment and our way of life. African proverbs are attributed to the past where knowledge or wise sayings are borrowed and built on to pass through

generations to generations. Abdulai (2000), further outlined some African notable proverbs with significant meanings, they are as follows:

- a. Any elder who does not know how to sit on a stool, sooner or later shall see it taken from underneath him.
- b. An infant who insists on chewing nuts with its infant teeth will soon find out they folly.
- c. Borrowing is a wedding, paying back is mourning.
- d. Because the crab lives near water, it knows the language of the water.
- e. Confiding your secrets in a talkative is like carrying your grains in a torn sack.
- f. Climbing on the raffia palm is usually a difficult task for the snake.
- g. Death is a visitor who will always take you by surprise.
- h. Do not bite the hand that feeds you (you will go hungry).
- i. Ears are like a pair of scales; when more words are put in them they weighed down.
- j. Even though you may be taller than your father, you are still not his equal.
- k. Family names are like flowers, they blossom in clusters.
- l. Fingers on a hand do not quarrel.
- m. Guinea fowls do not lay eggs in captivity.

- n. Gossip is like a contagious disease, once you catch it, it is hard to get rid of it.
- o. History repeats itself.
- p. He who does not heed the warning to stop usually stops when there is no one to tell them to.
- q. It is because our bodies will itch; that's why we grow finger nails.
- r. It is only the bad craftsman who quarrels with his tools.
- s. Keys that can open a door are the same keys that can lock it.
- t. Knowledge like a garden must be cultivated, if not it cannot be harvested.
- u. Mothers who have lost many children to death, hates the idea of their children taking a nap.
- v. Marriage is like a blanket. Anytime you cover yourself with it, it irritates your body, and yet when you cast it aside, your body feels the cold.

Abdulai, further stated, the ability to communicate with proverbs depicts how wise or intelligent one is. In such cultures wit, eloquence and intelligence is portrayed on how well one is adept with these proverbs (Abdulai, 2000).

## **2.11 Myths and Folklores**

Myths are traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events. Folklore are the traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community, passed through the generations by word of mouth or a body of popular myths or beliefs

relating to a particular place, activity, or group of people (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2018). A study which emphasizes on the description of the symbols and aesthetic significance of motifs on the temples located at various locations in the Ashanti Region of Ghana discovered motifs such as *dwannini mmen*, *owuo atwedee*, *sankofa*, *odenkyem*, *nnomaa mmienu*, *mmoatia adwa* amongst others and also found that the forms represented in the motifs and their meaning were obtained from local objects, tales, myths, proverbs and experiences (Asante, Kquofi & Larbi, 2015).

## 2.12 Symbolism

Cultural factor such as symbolism is very important in African setting and possess their own autonomy of motivation (Shorter, 1974). Symbols are “universal and objective meaning which have subsistence irrespective of the imagination or intellect that grasps them” and there are three dimensions or functions of symbols which include phenomenology of religion, oneiric or our daily dreams and poetic imagination (Madu, 1992). Quartey (2015) asserts that there has to be more to the story of the designs on our African print. This is because symbols used in prints have powerful meanings that allow us to make sense of lives. (Obeng, n.d). Much studies have shown that in the past decades, some Ghanaians, built wardrobes of high quality symbolic African prints for posterity, others patronise cloths with symbolic designs to cast insinuations, yell insults at their rivals, demonstrate their love, and also project their status. (Howard, Sarpong & Amankwah, 2012). The print patterns tell stories of importance to the wearer such as proverbs, poems and traditional African fables (Wendren, 2008). Women normally give printed wax fabrics proverb-names based on the patterns printed on them (Beck, 2000). Asamoah (2011) asserts, “The symbols should be better promoted in cloths, not only as

symbols but with their meanings included” (p. 28). According to him, some fabric designers like Akosombo Textiles Limited have been using the symbols in their black-and-white, black, red and also brown funeral cloths by indicating just the symbols and the proverb connected to it. The textiles companies need to go further by including the real meanings of the symbols along with the symbols in the cloth. Some have varied and subjective designs with highly symbolic names and interpretations.

These are designs that draw on the African interest in proverbs and mythology, for example "one tree cannot stand the wind" and "death disintegrates family bond" (Victoria, 1998). Quarcoo (1972) stated that, "Symbolism is a major style in Ghanaian art" (pp. 5-6). This is especially prominent in the visual arts in Adinkra patterns, which mainly consists of graphic patterns stamped into plain clothes, are mainly proverbs or maxims or history or philosophical summaries of ideas. Symbolism in Kente is mainly done through patterns, the adinkra is in graphic patterns". For instance, symbols such as the chameleon and a hand holding an egg signify that in life there are limits to human possibility. This symbol further admonishes politicians that power is fragile like an egg and needs to be handled with utmost care. The uses of such visual symbols provide benefits such as motivation, increased creativity, mental scaffolds, and aesthetic appreciation (Kquofi, 2013).

Textiles, worn regularly next to the skin whether for everyday use or, or in a particular ritual context, take on something of the personal identity of the wearer as they absorb the secretions of the body. This close tie between the textiles and their owners is a symbolic extension of the day to day rituality of cloth use, and makes them powerful metaphorical ingredient in a variety of magico religious practices. For instance, Yoruba

herbalist would burn small pieces of hand woven cloth as an ingredient of amulets, while they felt were particularly appropriate for curing barren women or those troubled by persistent miscarriages (Victoria, 1998).

The symbols, motifs and images associated with Ghanaian arts are of tremendous significance to the identification, recognition and display of our rich Ghanaian cultural heritage (Ross, 2004). As voiced out by various authors under this sub topic, textiles go beyond just covering the body from nakedness or bad climate but there are various mind blowing historical significance of the textiles we use. Textiles are used for ritual and religious purposes, and to convey significant messages to others. Not just about its beauty but for functional purposes.

### **2.12.1 Symbolism of Colour**

Colour is an element of art which plays a vital role in various art works. The use of colours used by the artists in their works across cultural environments has their symbolic meanings. The symbolic meanings can be based on historical, philosophical, things in nature and spiritual values. The concept of colour in the Ghanaian culture doesn't depend on its visual qualities but on the meaning and the social relevance attached to that colour. Like line and shapes, the use of colour is also symbolic, for individual colours. Colour groupings have symbolic meanings and significance based on Ghanaian historical, philosophical and spiritual values.

Bortoli and Maroto (2001) likewise described colour in the context as, –A single colour can have many different meanings in different cultures. In Asia orange is a positive, spiritually enlightened, and life-affirming colour, while in the US it is a colour

of road hazards, traffic delays, and fast-food restaurants. Colours can symbolise a rite of passage, differentiate a premium from a discount brand, and distinguish between fun and serious, young and old, male and female. Context is everything: a group of people wearing black might be the crowd at a gallery opening, priests, Mennonites, a punk band or ninjas. In addition to all the traditional meanings associated with colours in various cultures; those linked to birth, weddings, and funerals” (p. 4).

Over the years, colour has played a major role in the life of man. It has influenced our emotions and continues to affect the nerves that control our eyes to create different moods and feelings. These moods have been used for a variety of purposes by different societies, and can be translated into philosophical, psychological and spiritual meanings. The Ghanaian society is one of the set-ups which does not, therefore, use colour only for aesthetic purposes, but mainly for deep symbolic purposes.

Antubam stated that, (1963) –Among Akan Ghanaians in the indigenous era, white cloth was used by a young bride on her first entry into her husband’s bedroom to signify her virginity” (p. 78). He further added, as soon as a Chief or any person of importance dies, his close relatives wear *Kobene* (vermillion or terra cotta red cloth). As soon as his corpse is laid in state, they change into *Kuntunkuni* (dark tan brown cloth with significant patterns in black). They are seen in *Birisii* (indigo blue cloth), when the corpse is covered up in its coffin, and they wear that till forty days after the burial (Antubam, 1963).

Colours have various meanings and significance and can vary dramatically between various cultures across the world. In the African countries, colours have great



symbolic meaning and communicate our way of life through rituals, festivities, war and many more. Although some colours do have negative connotations (such as black for funeral or evil) in some cultures, the same colour may have positive connotations in Tshivenda (where black represents fertility and ancestors) Colours have symbolism and meanings that go beyond just an ink.

Alder and Barnard (1992) emphasise this and stated that –A Queen mother, or even a humbler woman, might wear silver, white or blue to signify purity, virtue or joy. White is usually worn by priestess to symbolise deities or the spirits of the ancestors. Green may be worn by young age girls to suggest newness, freshness and puberty. Black can stand for melancholy, vice, devils, old age, death and even history. Red is commonly worn for loss, sadness, death or dissatisfaction. Sometimes red is worn at political meetings to indicate anger” (p. 63).

Sackey (2002) also highlighted some tribes of Ghana and their usage of colour. He voiced, –among the Gas, Fantes and Krobos, a gift of a green cloth to a young girl during her puberty rites is to wish fertility and fruitfulness (child bearing). Most Ghanaian societies tie red bands round their heads, necks and wrists during the funeral of close relations. He further explained the Gas use fabrics with blue and white combinations or pure white colour for mothers and babies during outdoorings ceremonies for their new babies to symbolise victory over child-birth”.

The Ghanaian National flag has also been one greatest historic assert of Ghanaians and has a very strong symbolic meaning and great history. In supporting this perception, Ahiagble (2004) voiced that, on most occasions the fabrics one can see in the

Ghanaian market are in the four colours of the Ghanaian National flag – red, yellow, green and black. The red colour always reminds the people their struggle for independence. Many lives were lost during the struggle, so red stands for the blood of such victims. The yellow symbolises the good and valuable minerals of the land. The green stands for the rich forest and the fertile vegetation. Finally, the black colour in the flag, which is a star celebrates Ghana as the first Sub-Saharan African country to get independence.

To Ahiagble (2004), indigo is related to “love [and] womanly tenderness” and calls to mind “early dawn [and] the crescent moon.” Gold in Asante, above all, “stands for royalty... the presence and influence of God in society, and the rule of the king”; it also symbolises “continuous life warmth, and controlled fire.” Differences in Asante and Western colour associations are most apparent in the uses of red “to symbolise occasions of melancholy such as... any loss through death of a close relative, an act of war, national anger, sudden calamity, boisterousness, violence, a show of dissatisfaction and often considered a sacred colour and represents warning or danger (Antubam, 1963).

Safo-Ankama and Akrofi (2013) indicated that symbolic colours were employed to suit the need of the people in the domain of hunting for disguise, representation of thought in cloth and flags, magical purposes for representation of beauty and exhibition of class and status when it comes to the Ghanaian culture colours are also of great significance to them. Through the birth of a person right to the last stage of life, death. Ghanaians also have a strong history with colours during their attainment of independence. Colours indeed are part of human’s way of life which cannot be done without.

### 2.12.2 Animal and Plant Symbolism

In Africa, the use of animals in artworks is not executed for the sake of it. Each animal symbol has a specific meaning to the artist, and certain animals signify certain characteristics. That is why one will see so many carvings of animals or even animal embroidered in African fabrics. Some animals signify strength, wickedness or bad luck. Biedermann (1992), as cited by Nengovhela (2010), comments that; the symbolic significance of animals is sometimes obvious and primal, such as those associated with fertility, warfare, wisdom, or specific behaviours, while in other cases animals are used as symbols for complex and abstract ideas and beliefs. Some primitive people collectively believed, for example that an omnipotent lion of the heavens swallowed the sun and thereby brought on darkness each day”.

Symbols come in many forms especially in plant, animal and man-made symbols. These forms of symbols have become very popular in cloth making in Africa. Some of the man-made symbols normally used in the designing of cloths include *aban*, *adinkrahene*, *adinkrahene dua*, *adwo*, *agyinduwura*, *akofena*, *akoben* and many others (Tetteh, 2006).

Tetteh (2006) highlights that there are many animal symbols used in designing of clothes and these include *akoko nan*, *ananse ntontan*, *fafanto*, *funtumfunafu denkyem* whereas some of the commonly plant symbols include *abe dua*, *adwera*, *bese saka* and others. Plants and animals has been a source of inspiration in arts creation since the beginning of time. Man has created various works of arts from taking inspirations in the environment in which they live. From pottery, songs, in which plants and animals have

supernatural powers offering support to the people. Some animals and plants and its symbolism in some cultures is listed below:

- a. Cow: is an animal which symbolises fertility, fruitfulness and a symbol of goodness.
- b. Tortoise: symbolises patience. The tortoise is a very slow animal which can be found in nature but the animal signifies patience and endurance.
- c. Palm branch: a symbol of total victory, justice and royal honour.
- d. Dove: a symbol of gentleness, calmness, peace.

### **2.12.3 Man Made Symbols**

Humans also create they own symbols through various means in their way of life. Objects mad by man also have symbolic meanings to its people. A few are stated below. In most cultures, the use of particular forms which represent human beings, animals and ordinary household objects such as combs, chairs and tables. Letters, simple phrases, names of objects and people which are carefully copied and incorporated into the designing of textiles fabrics (Ahiagble, 2004). Some man made symbols and their symbolism in some culture:

- a. Bell: power to dispel evil spirits. It is believed that when the bell is rung it wards away evil spirits and drives them far way beyond the reach of the community or an. Individual.
- b. Bow and arrow: a symbol of war, bravery and ability to win a battle. It has been a tool used by the primitive people since the early times.

- c. The eye: a symbol of providence in leadership or rule. As a good ruler, one should have a good eye to rule its people.
- d. Stool: a symbol of hospitality to all people. In entering into any cultural setting, one is given a stool to sit on before other issues are addressed.
- e. Hand: is a symbol of handwork, and he that works hard the hands shall flourish.
- f. Ceremonial sword: signifies the social status of a clan. Various clans have their totems and symbols associated to them and these symbols are mostly found on their ceremonial swords.

#### **2.12.4 Adinkra Symbols**

The Adinkra symbol and cloth have every interesting history. It has been orally submitted that Adinkra was a famous King of Gyaman, a town in the Ivory Coast (La Cote D'Ivoire) tried copying the golden stool by the Asantes of Ghana, his province was immediately attacked, defeated and annexed by the Ashantis. He was slain in a war with the Ashantis who captured his people as slaves to the Asante Kingdom. After the defeat of Adinkra the Ashantis adopted the artistic symbols of the Gyaman people which was named after their king Adinkra hence "the Adinkra symbol". The Gyaman slaves introduced these symbols and the art of printing to the Ashante Kingdom as a tribute and remembrance of their dead King and ancestors. The symbols and fabrics made by them, were therefore, in remembrance of the dead, and were used for funerals and melancholic occasions. The significance of this printed cloth is therefore, to bid farewell to the spirit of dead relations and to sever all former human relations with the dead. Symbols used transfer their meanings into ideas that serve as purposes of those particular Adinkra

cloths (Gillow, 2003). Few decades ago, the most usual background to the stamps was russet brown; called Kuntun-Kruni, because the dye which gave that colouration was obtained from a plant called the Kuntu. Adinkra cloth can teach us about symbolisms which can enrich our thoughts and add depth to our personal experience as we think symbolically (Dendel, 1974).

Agbo (2006), as cited in Asmah (2009), stated that –one eminent Ghanaian artist who has contributed to the preservation and the promotion of the adinkra symbols is Ablade Glover. He has to his credit a chart on the adinkra symbols with a collection of sixty adinkra symbols with their Akan names and proverbs explained literally in English.

Another significant contributor to the promotion of traditional symbols is Kayper-Mensah, who gives a vivid explanation of a collection of adinkra symbols through an effective use of short poems. Nana J.V. Owusu-Ansah is also another innovative contributor who designed some new adinkra motives. Some of these motifs are nearly retention and slight modification of the old adinkra symbols” (p. 60).



*Figure 5. Adinkra Fabric Print Gye Nyame (Except God) mixed with Dwannimmen (Ram's Horn)*

(Source: Fieldwork, 2017).



*Figure 6. Adinkra Fabric Print Dwannimmen (Ram's Horn)*

(Source: Fieldwork, 2017).

Fosu (1994) states, there are over sixty Adinkra symbols in the public domain that are utilised in a variety of combination in contemporary fabrics and many other art forms. Another view presented by the late Dr. J.B Danquah is that the word adinkra derives from the Akan word *nkra* or *nkara*, meaning, ‘message’. Intelligence and where human destiny or the life span is concerned it refers particularly to the intelligence or message which each soul takes with him from God upon obtaining leave to depart to earth; the soul itself called *okra* or *okara* (Quarcoo,1972).

Antubam described the method of creating the symbols as, “the representation of abstract symbols cut from pieces of calabash and printed on to various colours of mourning cloth worn on various stages of the funeral ceremonies. This, in short, is the part played by Adinkra in the symbolic art of Ghana” (1963, p.157). Visual literacy for communication like tribal marks, emblems of clans and the *Adinkra* symbols in the Akan culture also transmit special sacred messages (Addo, 2001 as cited in Kquofi, 2013).

Fosu further explained, anyone of the motifs or any combination of them could be arranged in narrative patterns to convey specific messages. These messages may be expressed as reflections on issues pertaining to beauty, morality or other higher values (1994, p.43). Historically, the Adinkra cloth has a great significance to the Ghanaian culture. In addition, when it comes to Ghanaian history, the Adinkra was worn to funerals by the Asante royal elite and the wealthy, perhaps to commemorate the defeat of King Kofi Adinkra whose name also carried the same meaning as the fabric. Therefore, each motif was symbolic and conveyed personal messages of the wearer. The adinkra symbol has been a great part of artistic and cultural history since its introduction in Ghana. Various authors have also contributed in holding up the right and cultural significance of



the symbols in educating many presently. The symbols are seen on many works of arts from textiles, to jewellery, paintings, wood carvings, sculptural works and many more.

### **Adinkra hene**



*Figure 7.* Adinkra hene

(Source: [www.adinkrasymbols.org](http://www.adinkrasymbols.org)).

It is the chief of the adinkra symbols. It is a symbol of greatness, charisma and leadership. This symbol is said to have played an inspiring role in the designing of other adinkra symbol. It signifies the role of leadership.

### **Sankofa (return and take it or go back for it).**

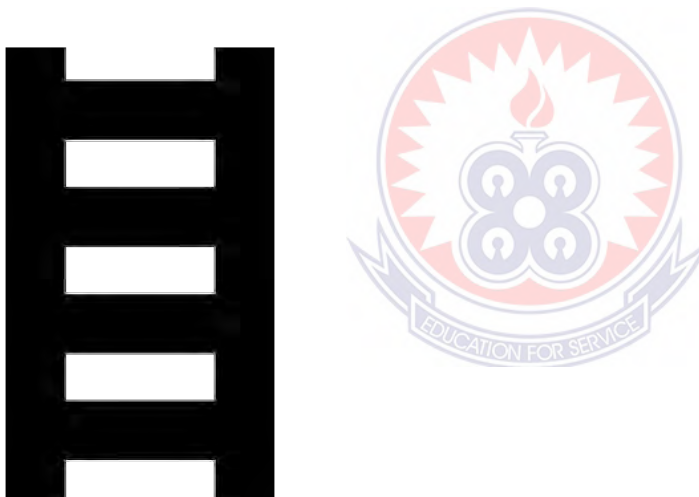


*Figure 8.* Sankofa

(Source: [www.adinkrasymbols.org](http://www.adinkrasymbols.org)).

It is no taboo to return and fetch it when you forget. You can always undo your mistakes. It is not an offense to re-examine one's past and pick appropriate ideas for solving current or future problems. It is a symbol of the importance of learning from the past. It is a very popular symbol, especially in the Afrikan Diapora which comes in two varying design. One, it shows a bird turning around to catch its lost egg while the other has a symbol of a heart like shaped symbol depicting the same meaning. It is a sign of the return, which says that it is never too late to turn around and start on a new path once one has recognised one's mistake

### **Owuo atwedee (Death Ladder)**



*Figure 9. Owuo atwedee*

(Source: [www.adinkrasymbols.org](http://www.adinkrasymbols.org)).

This symbol is in two parts; owuo which means death in the Akan language and awedee which also means ladder. Owuo atwedee obaako mforo meaning everybody will at a point in time climb the ladder of death; thus everybody will die one day. This symbol reflects that death is inevitable. It is also a symbol of morality. A reminder of the

transitory nature of existence in this world and urges one to live a good life on earth to be a worthy soul in the afterlife.

### **Gye Nyame (Except God)**

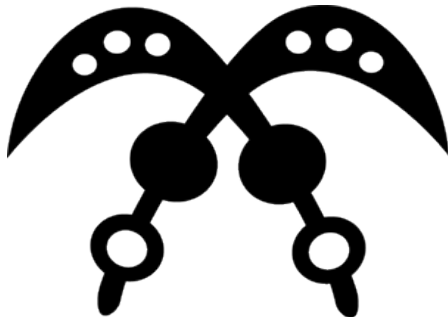


*Figure 10. Gye Nyame*

(Source: [www.adinkrasymbols.org](http://www.adinkrasymbols.org)).

This is the symbol of the greatness of God who has power over everything. God made the whole Universe so he has all the powers. This implied that the wearer relied only on God for protection.

### **Akofena**

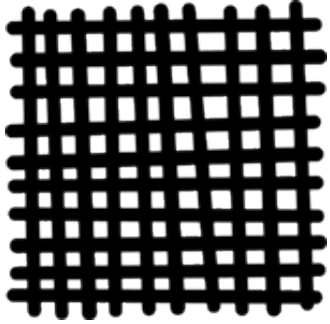


*Figure 11. Akofena*

(Source: [www.adinkrasymbols.org](http://www.adinkrasymbols.org)).

It is a symbol of courage, valour and heroism. The crossed sword was a popular motif in the heraldic shields of many former Akan states. In addition, to recognising courage and valour the sword can represent legitimate state authority.

### **KetePa**



*Figure 12. KetePa*

(Source: [www.adinkrasymbols.org](http://www.adinkrasymbols.org)).

It is a symbol of a good marriage. This is derived from the expression that, a woman who has a good marriage is said to sleep on a good bed.

### **Dwannimmen (Ram's Horn)**



*Figure 13. Dwannimmen*

(Source: [www.adinkrasymbols.org](http://www.adinkrasymbols.org)).

It is a symbol of strength and humility. The symbol teaches one to be humble because in humility there is strength, strength to concur all your troubles. The ram is also noted for its strength when it engages in a battle with other animals, a point also occurs when the ram humbles itself in life.

## Mate masie



Figure 14. Mate masie

(Source: [www.adinkrasymbols.org](http://www.adinkrasymbols.org)).

“What I hear, I keep”. It is a symbol of wisdom, knowledge and prudence. Understanding means listening and taking into consideration what another person has said. It is a symbol which frowns on gossips in a society, when you hear a secret saying about something you apply wisdom in handling the information and not spread rumours negatively.

## Yeni (ani) bere aa enso gya



Figure 15. Yeni (ani) bere aa enso gya

(Source: [www.adinkrasymbols.org](http://www.adinkrasymbols.org)).

Our eyes never spark into flames no matter how much pressure we are under. It is a symbol of patience self-discipline and self-control.

)w) -foro-adobe

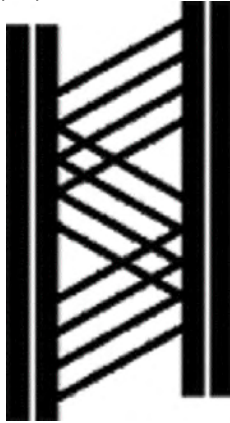


Figure 16. )w) -foro-adobe

(Source: [www.adinkrasymbols.org](http://www.adinkrasymbols.org)).

It is an adinkra symbolising the ‘Snake climbing the raffia tree’. It is symbol of integrity, excellence and feat.

### 2.13 Philosophies and their Significance

Philosophy comes from Greek word meaning ‘love of wisdom’. Philosophy uses the tools of logic and reason to analyse the ways in which humans experience the world. It teaches critical thinking, close reading, clear writing, and logical analysis; it uses these to understand the language we use to describe the world, and our place within it. African prints have philosophical significance. The prints, as affirmed by Orhin (2007), have names that could easily depict or explain the beliefs, practices and culture of Ghanaians. The colours used in the fabric printing have philosophical importance as they show social status, tribal orientation amongst others. Akinwumi (2008) concurs that, it is generally believed that the general design characteristics of the printed African fabric (wax print) are amalgam of mainly Javanese, Indian, Chinese, Arab and European artistic tradition. Some of the designs show images of proverbs, emblems normally associated with a

certain kingships or authorities of chiefs and memorial cloths depicting individuals and events (Clarke, 2002).

The naming of the African print fabrics transcends its status as a simple object hence reflect or translate a reinterpretation of the European design pattern and normally some of these named fabrics are used in polygamous relationships and some of them include ‘the eye of my rival’ and when my rival sees it, she will throw herself into the river’ illustrate some of these practices (Sylvanus, 2007). The inscriptions on the print fabrics show poetic qualities hence women show their education and knowledge through them and also communication through this medium are usually seen as violating a woman’s dignity which threatens social integration through quarrels and breaking up of marriages and families (Beck, 2000).

Howard (2012) adds that, “Totemic animals and proverbs are used in the prints to communicate ideas, philosophies, values, beliefs and practices of the people. The colours, motifs and textures depicted in this category of African prints are organised in the manner that makes them aesthetically pleasing. The prints exhibit high artistic qualities through excellent application of design elements and principles” (p. 614). Sylvanus (2007) carried a research study of boutiques in Paris and found that objects which were of African origin were named after the Wolof (Senegal) names of the five Muslim prayers hence proved to be a successful marketing strategy.

## **2.14 Summary of Literature Review**

This review of literature has provided an in-depth assessment of existential literature on the art of fabric naming in the Ghanaian culture and offered how these

names affect the Ghanaian culture. It has been understood that the use of fabrics started since ancient times from Biblical point of view. Fabrics come in different forms and some of them include cotton, silk, rayon and linen. There are weaved fabrics and printed fabrics which happen to be more popular in Africa. In Ghana, printed fabrics are usually divided into hand printed traditional textiles known in local as Adinkra cloth, machine printed fabrics (wax prints) and wax resist local fabrics (batiks and tie-dye). It has been seen that the symbols or designs used in these prints convey some targeted messages normally to depict their status, offer insults to rivals or project one's culture. And these have impact on individuals and group way of living.





## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Overview

This chapter outlines the various techniques by which pieces of information about the research topic was obtained. It also focuses on the research design and the description of the study site. It provides a critical presentation of the research instruments, the data collection procedures, and the method of analysis of the data employed in this study.

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study mainly adopts the qualitative research approach. Essentially, a qualitative research bothers on the what, how, where, when and why of the subject under research, and all these are important features of this study. The word qualitative implies an emphasises on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency (Denzin & Lincoln 1998).

–Concerned with a quality of information, qualitative methods attempt to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for actions and establish how people interpret their experiences and the world around them. Qualitative methods provide insights into the setting of a problem, generating ideas and/or hypothesis” (MacDonald & Headlam, n.d, p. 8).

The authors argued that the main aim of a qualitative research is complete, detailed, description of what is observed and also the researcher's role tends to become subjectively immersed in the subject matter.

In considering the naming of Ghanaian fabric prints, describing them and giving a historical detail about the names, the research problem was firstly answered by a qualitative research method. This happened in a setting of individuals who work with or use the Ghanaian fabric prints in Greater Region of Ghana. And such areas were the textile industries, retailers of fabrics in the local markets and general users of fabric prints. The researcher also conducted library research and appropriate internet searches and produced a descriptive report.

Yin captures this aptly by claiming that for a research, every empirical study has a design and ~~the~~ design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to the initial research and ultimately to its conclusions" (Yin, 1995, p. 26). The design serves as a plan which guides the researcher in the data collection, analysis and interpretation processes. Descriptive research method is a form of research that specifies, describes or reports the nature of a particular situation or phenomenon.

This was used to throw light extensively on the relevance of the art of naming Ghanaian fabric, and its significance to the Ghanaian culture. The descriptive method is informed by the fact that the researcher aims at describing the art of fabric nameology in Ghanaian culture.

### **3.2 The Study Setting**

The Greater Accra Region of Ghana is a hub for the manufacture, design and sale of locally manufactured Ghanaian fabric prints. In the region, two major textile producing companies can be located and they are Tex Styles Ltd and Printex Ltd. Another big textile producing company is Akosombo Textiles Ltd which can be suited in the Eastern Region of Ghana. These printed manufactured fabrics are used at different times for different occasions. Such fabrics are usually located in the Central Business Districts like Accra Central and Tema. Both Accra Central and Tema are located in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The Region has common boundaries with the Central Region, Eastern Region and the Volta Region.

### **3.3 Population of the Study**

The target population of a research study is a large collection of individuals or objects in which an empirical query focuses on. They are a group of individuals or objects in the position to answer the researcher's questions. The accessible population is drawn from the target population and it is from the reference or accessible population the sample is obtained.

### **3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

The sample size for the study was made up of 15 selected Ghanaians comprising one (1) textile designer, one (1) manager, three (3) sales personnel, two textile consumers of fabrics and eight fabric retailers. The estimated sample size for the study was fifteen (15). Much as the researcher would have loved to interact with the whole population a number of factors are compelling her to stick to a sample size of fifteen. These total numbers who

make up the sample size have the same characteristics as the rest of the population. Therefore, their responses can be generalised for the population. Based on the aforementioned, the following table displays the distribution of the sample for the study:

**Table 2**

**Distribution of Sample**

Textile designer	Area Manager	Sale Personnel	Textile consumers	Fabric Retailers	Total
1	1	3	2	8	15

Purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of the above samples. For this procedure allows the researcher to use his/her own judgment to select those who will be relevant to the study. Agyadu (2011) explains purposive sampling as certain elements of the population who are deliberately selected on the judgement of the researcher. Thus the researcher identifies characteristics of the population of interest and selects the elements or subjects with those characteristics.

### **3.5 Research Instruments**

Creswell (2007) asserts that qualitative research practices such as field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos make the field and the interview process visible and lifelike. In the pursuit of this objective, the main tool that was used for data collection was an interview guide which guided the conversation between the researcher and the respondents. Interviews are used in research to gather data

directly from participants. Interviews allow for a wide range of data to be collected as the interviewer gets the chance to follow up answers and delves deeper to get further details. Other forms of tools used were photographs and recordings.

### **3.5.1 Semi -Structured Interview**

An interview guide was used as the main instrument for data collection because of the flexibility it gives the researcher, especially in a bid to unearth detailed, relevant and sensitive information through probing. The participants also had the chance to air their views, feelings and experiences, thus leading to the construction of their own worlds based on their perspectives. Semi-structured interview guide was developed in line with the study objectives and the research questions thematically. Semi- structured interview was used to interview key informants like fabric retailers, and also textile designers, managers and sales personnel in the textile industries. The major themes that guided the interview process were centered on the origin of the arts, the reasons for those arts and other issues pertaining to the use of names on Ghanaian fabrics. semi structured interviews allow the researcher to fully understand participants' views and opinions by asking them set questions but including an extended question in the interview which may not have been possible from just asking set questions.

Qualitative data is in the form of words and the words are based on “watching, asking and examining”, implying that qualitative research involves observation, interview and analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 9). First, the researcher, with the help of some contact persons at GTP (Tex Styles Ghana Ltd.), PRINTEX and ATL (Akosombo Textiles Ltd.), respectively in the Greater Accra and Eastern regions of Ghana scheduled

an appointment and conducted interviews with some sales personnel, managers and fabric designers at the respective mentioned companies. The second batch of interviewees was cloth dealers from the above mentioned companies who can be located at the Accra Central market. Most participants were interviewed in their respective work places to enable the researcher understand discussions contextually. The casual interviews were conducted within a time length ranging from ten to fifteen minutes per interview.

More so, the researcher assumed an –insider’s” position by first of all initiating good rapport with the Area Manager. This enabled the respondents to comfortably give the researcher the necessary guidance regarding access to the participants. With respect to the participants, the researcher introduced herself as a student researcher who wanted to learn more about the art of fabric nameology with specific reference to Accra Central fabric markets. The participants, on the other hand, felt comfortable and disclosed all the issues regarding the art of fabric nameology. This facilitated a smooth data collection process. After data collection, the investigator then assumed an –outsider’s” position, this enabled her to analyse and present the data without any prejudices and perceptions. Data was analysed and presented from the perspective of the participants and not the researcher’s perspective.

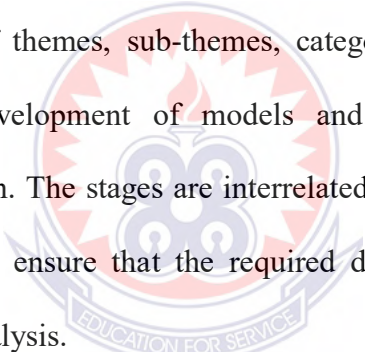
### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection process was concluded with series of follow-ups to textile designers, managers, sales personnel and textile consumers. The entire data collection process took a period of one month; it commenced on February 15, 2017 and ended on March 15, 2017. Data collection was entirely carried out by the researcher since the researcher understood the local language very well and wanted to avoid possible errors

from translators and research assistants who could have misunderstood the focus of the study.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasised that qualitative data ~~are~~ not usually immediately accessible for analysis, but require some processing. Raw field data need to be corrected, edited, typed up, tape recordings need to be transcribed and corrected” (p. 9). The study adopted thematic analysis method. The analytical process consisted of ten cyclical stages which include data collection, data processing and organisation, transcription, data familiarisation and immersion, data reduction and display, naming and labelling, development of themes, sub-themes, categories, dimensions and properties, relationship building, development of models and concepts, and finally drawing conclusion and verification. The stages are interrelated and at every point the researcher can go back and forth to ensure that the required data are collected to conveniently embark on an effective analysis.

The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central sunburst or starburst design. Below the sunburst, there are three stylized human figures or symbols. The entire emblem is surrounded by a circular border containing the text "UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA" at the top and "EDUCATION FOR SERVICE" at the bottom.

The interviews, direct observations, photographs, recordings and the information gathered from the sample were organised using the descriptive research method. This included both primary and secondary sources of information about the names of Ghanaian fabrics and its relevance to the Ghanaian culture. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations made to determine the names of Ghanaian fabrics and its imminent to the Ghanaian culture.

### 3.8 Trustworthiness and Authenticity

Lincoln and Guba (1985) as cited in De Vos (2002), call trustworthiness the true value of the study. To ensure that the data for the study is trustworthy, the researcher relied on a tape recording of the interview, field notes and personal observations as well as respondents' validation. To ensure validation, the recorded interviews were played to respondents for them to authenticate the responses.

Robson (2002) further stated that the aim of a piece of research is to have a measure that is reliable and valid. Two examples of ways of dealing with these problems are to clarify the questions for the interviewees, and for the researcher to train himself/herself to be acquainted with possible problems. Verbatim tape transcriptions were availed to participants as soon as possible after the interviews. Holstein and Gubrium (1985) cited in Greeff (2002) pointed out that this allows the information to be clarified and elaborated.

Kusi (2012) argues that trustworthiness is one of the most common criteria for accessing the quality of qualitative interpretative research. Its components are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility of findings was ensured through methodological and data triangulation. Thus, the researcher used varied instruments, methods and procedures for data collection. Additionally, data were collected from multiple sources such as textile designers, managers, sales personnel, textile consumes and fabric retailers. To further promote credibility, data transcription and coding was done by the researcher and another experienced colleague who is grounded in qualitative research at the Department.



### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical issues are important in attempts to acquire new knowledge but the way it is handled can affect the trustworthiness of especially qualitative findings (Kusi, 2012). The relevance of ethical issues in an empirical inquiry involving the nameology of Ghanaian fabrics cannot be overemphasied. Interviewees were made aware of the recordings of the interviews while in the taking of photographs permission was asked before taking any pictures.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.0 Overview**

The study aimed at investigating into fabric nameology as a culture among the people of Ghana. The first section of this chapter discusses the demographic characteristics of respondents followed by the analysis of the qualitative data. For the purpose of this study, data were collected from respondents, fabric dealers, sales personnel in some textile industries, managers and general consumers of fabric prints. Interview questions were conducted on the background of fabric naming which also includes the symbolic meanings of motifs, socio-cultural significance of fabrics with names and the effects the names have on individuals. This was verbalised to intended respondents. All major findings are presented and analysed to address the research questions and objectives of the study, and this precedes with the demographic characteristics of respondents.

#### **4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

For the purpose of responding to the objectives of this study, fifteen (15) respondents were interviewed to help answer the research questions, focused on investigating into fabric nameology as a culture among the people of Ghana. These included two (2) consumers of printed fabrics, three (3) sales and marketing personnel; one each from GTP, ATL and Printex, one (1) creative director from GTP, one (1) Area manager from GTP, and eight (8) fabric dealers of GTP, ATL and Printex respectively.

In this chapter the researcher analysed the data gathered and presented various themes in relation to the study. These were explored one after the other through a thematic analysis of data collection. Following that, the researcher looked at which ones that were in connection with the research during the interview process which was deemed important.

#### **4.2 Fabric Naming in the Ghanaian Culture**

A name should also bear testimony to the history and culture of the people. Different people of African origin produce names to the cloth they wear based on their cultural values, and these serve the purpose of everyday wear and other special festivities (Dendel, 1974). Dendel, however, did not outline the category of people who gives these fabric prints names that is connected to their cultural values and the everyday purposes these prints serve in the society. In his expert opinion, Sylvanus (2007) also observed that most importantly, the Western African culture facilitate all credit to the fabrics as a series of local significances, enactment of local logics of usage, interpretation and meanings attributed such that once the fabric leaves the warehouse and enters the market, a name is allotted to it to increase its market potential, and the lifespan of these names are usually unpredictable as some disappear at once whereas others enter the category of bestsellers. It can also be put on the record that aside the fabric names, its usage and significance to the Ghanaian culture those who give names to the Ghanaian fabric prints are great philosophers and their input to the Ghanaian culture needs to be considered highly.

This segment therefore aims at detailing readers role played by category of people who gave names to the Ghanaian prints, how the prints are used in the everyday life of its people, the significance of the print designs in communicating to Ghanaians and effects

of the names on their culture. This was achieved by an intense one on one interview with the participants on the field of study.

#### **4.3 The Art of Naming Fabrics in Ghana: The Major Influences**

Research question one, what influences the art of fabric naming sought to investigate the major influences that begot names given to Ghanaian fabrics loosely labelled as African prints. The view of respondents as to what influence their choice of names for fabrics have been itemised. The respondents listed different sources and cultural backing that influenced fabric naming which are as follows:

##### *a. Fabric names derived from adinkra motif designs*

In finding out from the respondents about what influences the naming of Ghanaian prints, majority (75%) of the fifteen respondents said the naming of fabrics was inspired by names of *adinkra* motifs designs. This means that once an *adinkra* motif becomes dominant or key feature of a design, the fabric print is identified by the name of such *adinkra* motif. To the respondents, they ascribed names of *adinkra* motifs to fabrics because *adinkra* has become part of the Ghanaian culture which they associate with; and it tells indigenous Ghanaian stories.

Visual literacy for communication like tribal marks, emblems of clans and the *adinkra* symbols in the Akan culture also transmit special sacred messages (Addo, 2001 as cited in Kquofi, 2013). Every *adinkra* has symbolical meaning and it communicates at every point of life to the Ghanaian. To concur with Appiah (1997), the colours and symbols of *adinkra* cloth depict complex ideas and concepts which are related to moral and ethical behaviours.

These strong beliefs and cultural heritage of Ghanaians has been carried on from the traditional adinkra cloth designs to the prints we presently have on the markets. Also, some of the respondents stated, *adinkra* symbols are found in nature and are basically items identified around our environments or society which the people can associate or identify with. Scholars including (Danzy, 2009; Arthur 2001; Essel & Opoku-Mensah, 2014) have confirmed that some *adinkra* are composed of plant and animal; the symbols are derived from features of plants and animals in the environment while others are from manmade symbols. *Adinkra* are visual symbols that represent concepts or aphorisms. *Adinkra* are used extensively in fabrics and pottery among the Asantes. The *adinkra* fabric prints are often made from woodcut/calabash stamps as well as silk screen. Appiah (1997) further explained *adinkra* as part of the Ghanaian culture as he stated, in the early times the *adinkra* cloth design which is used to be worn by only royalty and spiritual leaders purposely for funeral and other special occasions is presently taken a different turn as the *adinkra* cloth and prints made from the symbols are now worn by anyone, stylishly wrapped around men and women on any other occasions. This means the *adinkra* symbols have come to stay and is predominantly used in almost every visual art forms in the Ghanaian culture. The view held by respondents that the naming of fabric prints stemmed from adinkra motifs used in the fabric designs and which also has a dominance effect in the fabric aids fabric retailers in naming such fabrics after the adinkra symbols had been confirmed by scholars including Appiah (1997), Dogoe (2013) and Kudowor (2012). For instance, a fabric named *ketepa* (good mat) and *owuo atwedee* (death ladder), *abankaba* (handcuffs), *akofena* (royal sword) and *Yeni (ani) bere a enso gya* (red eyes doesn't spark fire) are all good examples of classical print fabric names

whose design motifs is derived from the Ghanaian historical *adinkra* symbols. Below are images of some fabric prints that were named after *adinkra* motifs;



*Figure 17. A fabric print Yeni (ani) bere aa enso gya*  
(Source: Field image, 2017).

The figure above literally means our eyes never spark into flames no matter how much pressure we are under. It is a symbol of patience self-discipline and self-control.



Figure 18. *Abankaba* (handcuffs)

(Source: Field image, 2017).

The figure above means handcuffs, this name actually originated from a Ghanaian proverbial saying –*Efie ye a anka abankaba nna me nsa*”. This literally means that all is not well else I would not be in handcuffs. Oyedele and Obisesan (2013) corroborated with the response in this study stating that Africans create and design fabrics to express their culture. Their fabrics are either woven or printed and possess unique traits. This suggests that the Ghanaian prints has a unique identification to their culture.

*b. Fabric names suggested by customers*

Another factor that influences the naming of Ghanaian fabric prints is the names suggested by the users of the prints. Fabric users or customers, suggest names of their preference which suits a particular occasion, time or occurrence. 87 % of respondents

selected gave the following to be reasons that influences fabric names which are suggested by customers for some Ghanaian prints. The following are the reasons outlined for this research; customers suggest names based on the customer's concept, the kind of occasion and purpose the fabric will serve and fabric names that precede the fabric design. Also they attributed the fact that, customers are allowed to bring their fabric designs and names they prefer to be printed for their individual purposes. Such names and design prints are usually used for specifics; for instance, ceremonies like funerals and child naming/outdooring. During such ceremonies, groups of people will want to be identified by a particular type of fabric design and may want to communicate particular messages either a mourning message or a joyous one. Sometimes customers/users of fabric prints take designs they really like to textile industries for printing. Some are given on circumstances like the departure of love ones. Example is the fabric name *Ada asafotufiami festival*, the name was attributed by some group of fabric users or customers from the Ada ethnic group in Ghana. These people saw a need to print a special fabric with their inscription and design to commemorate their annual festival among their locality, thus the Ada's. this fabric was highly purchased and used extensively. The festival is one of the biggest events in the district (Maa Becky, personal communication, 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2017). Below is the image of the above fabric design;





*Figure 19. Ada asafotufiami festival*

(Source: Field image, 2017).

The textile industries execute their designs to suit their taste and inscribe any preferred names or labelling on their prints. Some fabric users normally buy designs from graphic or textiles designers and give names to such designs they have purchased before they take the designs for production at the textile industries. Authors like Rovine and Bickford supported this fact by stating; fabrics play vital roles in the cultures of its people.

Another factor to look at under this section is fabric names suggested by religious groups of people. Some fabrics are also made and designed into outfits which serve as functional purposes on important occasions or celebrations. Also, among the above illustrations, other institutions aside individuals also send their preferred designs and names to the textile industries and such are the schools, churches, co-operate institutions

and many more. All these institutions send preferably their logos, inscriptions and their design layout to the textile industries. They then associate the names of their institutions to that particular fabric print.



*Figure 20.* A fabric print made for the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca  
(Source: Field image, 2017).

This religious institutional print was made for the Islamic group in the Ghanaian society. The fabric has the inscription *Allah Yaba Kowa Yeje Mecca* (May Allah make everyone go to Mecca). Mecca is believed to be Islam's holiest city and also a place of birth of the Prophet Muhammed. And is only Muslims that are allowed into the city, with millions of people arriving for the annual Hajj (pilgrimage). This fabric print was made for the Muslims in Ghana who will be embarking on their annual trip to Mecca. The print has their inscription and other symbolical items which they use for their worshipping activities.

Another reason to look at is the customer's concept. Their concept or idea can be based on proverbial sayings, symbolic meanings or phrases, life's experiences, religious backings like hymns and phrases in music, quotations from the Holy Bible or Quran and many more. For instance, in the history of Ghana, there was a popular song composed by the late Agya Koo Nimo (A Ghanaian musician) which he used the *abankaba* (handcuffs) to narrate a storyline in his song of how one was handcuffed because of societal issues. Later other playwright stories took inspirations from this *abankaba adinkra* symbol and used it in further works of arts. Further on, another popular fabrics names linked with a song is; A fabric name called *Aben wo ha* (is readily cooked) a song composed by Daddy Lumba (a popular Ghanaian musician) which was popular around the late 1990's the title of the song was picked and named after the fabric. Lastly, customers also help in spreading names of some fabrics from one locality to the other in search of that same fabric design which is unknown in that different locality. It is then said that the fabric name is preceding the fabric design as people come to the fabric retailers in search of such fabrics. This usually occurs when customers hear of a newly fabric name and goes round the fabric markets in search of that fabric because they have heard of such names from a word of mouth especially other users of fabrics or from fabric retailers in different localities. In this process when the new fabric name is catchy it comes to stay in the fabric markets and also among the Ghanaian society. When such names are introduced by few customers and is accepted by the fabric dealers in the market places the new name is said to precede the new fabric design and as time flies on the name comes to be accepted and to stay. Some respondents are of the view that; when a name is given, anywhere it is tried, tested and it becomes nationally accepted. The name is tried in the markets and this

is done when the customers come to buy, they mention names to the dealers and because they may not know of such names the catchy names stick on their minds. The next time someone else comes to buy a fabric, the fabric dealers introduces the new names they have heard and as this practice keeps moving the name comes to stay. This practice goes on and on from various cities and across the country.

*c. Fabric names dictated by retailer collaborators*

Fabric retailers also contribute highly in the naming of Ghanaian fabric prints. Their direct contact and interactions with customers give them the locus and suggested fabric names which has the tendency to attract potential buyers. Fabric retailers outlined the following as reasons to their naming of fabrics; they are the main pioneers that associate names when the fabrics comes into the market, they also name fabrics by popular occurrences, the design motifs also aid them mostly in naming and the names aids as a tool for higher purchase of their goods. Among the fabric collaborators, customers and textile designers, (80%) are of the opinion that; when consumers of fabric prints love the names given to a kind of fabric, there is high patronage of that fabric. This makes the naming of fabrics a very essential factor in fabric retailing which is not only beneficial to the fabric dealers but also to customers/users of fabrics and the Ghanaian culture in totality. They gave an instance to a popular fabric name, *Awareε nni taem* (marriage has no time frame). This fabric has been reprinted severally because of its high patronage by fabric users/customers. It is said that, lots of people about to marry love the fabric because of the name, its design and the message the fabric name carries. Sylnanus and Akinwumi made such references in their view that the retail of African prints is enhanced through the usage of attracting indigenous names in the form of proverbs,

catchphrases or words, slogans and maxims (Sylvanus, 2007; Akinwumi, 2008). In support to the above declarations, fabrics or prints are given symbolic names by market women who trade in textiles and sometimes customers who use the prints. The market women need mechanisms to sell their fabrics for their customers and for this purpose the naming of fabrics became highly significant in the society.

Instance of fabric names derived by retailer collaborators, is another fascinating name called *kumkumbhagya* (an Indian telenovela telecast on Ghana televisions). Since the telenovela became a popular occurrence, the fabric name emerged from that source. The fabric design for example, is barely one-year-old since its establishment but it's sales has increased tremendously on the fabric market that it has become so scarce. This name spread widely among fabric dealers in the Makola Market, Accra and beyond. But originally, the fabric name *kumkumbhagya* is said to have originated among fabric dealers in Takoradi that is the Western part of Ghana. This fabric was named after a popular Indian television series which was translated from the Indian dialect into twi (an Akan dialect in Ghana). Because of the storyline and the translation into twi (a language largely known and spoken by most Ghanaians), the series is loved and mostly watched by a high populated number of people. Below is the image of the fabric print;



*Figure 21.* The *kumkumbhagya* fabric print.

(Source: Field image, 2017).

It can be inferred from the responses of the interviewees that, now fabrics that are given names are those that are fast moving on the Ghanaian market and because they are fast moving it needs to be identified both by the customers and the fabric retailers. Essel (2017) expressed furthermore, what seem to be giving its credence of African fabric character is its colour psychology and localised cloth names, later introduced by its African retailers' collaborators.

Some respondents opined that, the designs in fabric prints sells as while as the fabric with names. But the rate at which the fabric with names sells is higher than those without names. Furthermore, one of the interviewees indicated that some of the fabrics come with the names at the selvedge of the cloth or inside the designs which aids at easy identification while others do not come with names at all but are later named in the markets. It is also important to know that there are some new fabric designs with no names in the market but will soon be assigned names for easy identification and also envisaged that when that is done, it will increase their sales. Fabric names is a very good

guide in buying fabrics from fabric retailers (Nikoi, personal communication, 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2017).

From these attributions, fabric retailers do not only sell the fabrics based on the colours and design motifs but also are the pioneers in giving names to their products which plays major roles in the Ghanaian culture. The fabric collaborators name fabrics based on occurred situations or instances, proverbial sayings, insinuations, historical occurrences, inspirations from nature or the environment.

Among the respondents in the textile industries they have made an observation that; fabric names or captions are given by fabric dealers due to their inability to memorise design numbers. When people place orders from the textile industries, and they mention a fabric name *Akyekyedee akyi* (the tortoise's back) they may not know the exact fabric name but when they mention *Akyekyedee akyi*, in the market, the fabric dealers will quickly be able to identify such name.

In the same vein the textile industries mainly deal with designs or design numbers within their internal operations. For instance, with a design number like 60162 when mentioned in GTP they can relate to it but when use in the fabric markets they cannot because they sell their products by the fabric names and designs but not by numbers. These numbering of fabrics also apply in the other textile industries used for the research. The inability of fabric dealers in keeping the design numbers makes them give the fabrics captions they can easily identify and which secondly can persuade customers to buy and to boost their sales.

All the above mentioned factors influence the naming of Ghanaian fabric prints. The researcher has come to conclusion that fabric retailers or collaborators gives names to some fabrics produced from Ghanaian fabric industries immediately they arrive the Ghanaian markets.

#### **4.4 Classification of Socio-cultural Naming Systems of Fabrics**

The second research question was formulated by the researcher to find out from the respondents the various classifications of socio-cultural naming systems of fabrics within the study setting. Socially how fabric name binds the people together, creates a sense of belonging, moral values in the society. On the cultural lookout how names are reflected in the Ghanaian culture and its significance.

##### *The socio-cultural naming systems of fabrics*

Notably, some personalities within the society constantly misinterpret or vary some piece of culture as well as make deliberate variations. The naming of fabrics has been an effective and essential way in making some processes to be put in place to limit cultural diversity. It was established that fabrics originated in the early days among the Ghanaian people and even worldwide. But special fabrics are traced to the Ghanaian culture and used by Ghanaians. Among the Ghanaian fabrics are the prints, which does not come in just beautiful colours and designs but have innumerable symbolic, fascinating and deeper meanings to the people of Ghana.

According to 80% respondents, they are of the view that fabric names have social and cultural significance to the lifestyle of Ghanaians. They mentioned countless fabric names that have connotations to the Ghanaian culture and these include; *Se Asa* (is it not



finished), *Nsubura* (portrays a good well or springs of water), *Yaw Donkor* (is a name of a person and a phrase in a song), *Bonsu* (a shark or whale), *Ama Serwaa* (the name of a late Ashanti queen mother's), *Efie mmosea* (gravels in the home), *Abei makola* (cleaning of Makola), *Woko awareɛ bisa* (make proper enquires before marriage), *Sɛ wobɛka me ho as3m a fa akonnwa tinase* (if you want to gossip about me, take a stool and sit on it), *Nkrumah pencil* (was named after the authority of a sitting president), *City hotel* (named after a popular hotel in Ghana), *Enka me nhyɛ* (do not restrict me), *ɔkunupa* (a good husband), *Duakro gye mframa a ɛbu* (one tree breaks at the force of a wind), *ɔbaapa* (A good woman or good wife), *Ansan* or *Akonfem* (Guinea fowl), *Ashwɛdɛi po* (Sugarcane) and *Awareɛ nni taem* (there's no particular time for marriage) to mention but a few. Carefully looking at the socio cultural ways of Ghanaians and the names they give to their fabrics, such names have a bearing to their culture and socially accepted. The following classifications were made for the research findings; fabric names with communicative significance, names that insinuate and proverbial fabric names. These are discussed as follows;

*a. Fabric names with communicative significance*

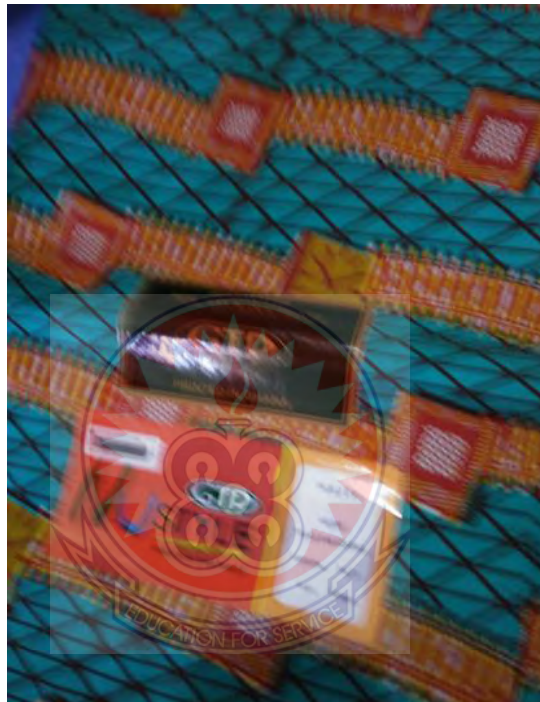
The study was to find out from the respondents, their views on fabric names in relation to the socio-cultural lives of the people of Ghana. The name of fabrics in the Ghanaian textile industries are endless and mostly the names are not just given but have their socio cultural significance. Observing the rites of passages in the Ghanaian culture, fabrics come into play in all the passages of life and such fabrics are worn during such occasions to tell a story or communicate. According to Mama Vivian, even when you go for an occasion and you want to communicate a specific message to the people it is the

kind of fabric you wear that will send your message across (Mama Vivian, personal communication, 2017).

As cited by Bickford, normally motif is chosen and specially designed to be worn by individuals to important events such as marriages, baptisms and funerals (Bickford, 1994). Some of these fabric designs communicates messages to the wearer and onlookers. Commemorative fabrics, found all over Africa, serve as a communication device. As revealed by some scholars, the prints have colourful repeat patterns and these fabrics call attention to and celebrate political events and persons, religious and educational groups, and much more. When used as a textual and visual document, the fabric becomes a vehicle to commemorate an event or to celebrate a person's life or achievement. One does not need to know how to read in order to understand the messages found in these textiles (FriendsNews.com). In support the fabric prints are great communicational tool in the Ghanaian society.

According to (87%) of respondents who cited an example to Ghanaian marriage rites, a significant way of communicating messages across is through the usage of fabrics with names. An example to this reference was; *Awareε nni taem* for example which has popularly become part of the fabrics identified and highly patronised for traditional marriage rites over some past years among the people of Ghana. This fabric name *Awareε nni taem literally* means there is no particular time set for marriage communicates both to the young and old. Within the fabric design is a dominant clock which symbolises, there is no set time for marriage and an endless parallel motif design which runs through the fabric also symbolising the marriage as a long path which both partners have to endure. This further implies that people may marry at early stages of

their lives while others may find partners at a later stage of their lives. Marriage is seen as an important factor in the Ghanaian traditional rites and because of the message the fabric carries, it has become a significant tool used for performing marriages in the Ghanaian culture.



*Figure 22. Awareε nni taem*  
(Source: Field image, 2017).

Another communicative fabric name is the *ɔbaapa* (a good woman). In figure 23 below, the image communicates the good nature of women and gives acknowledgement to the good virtues a woman possesses which is appreciated and valued. This fabric is mostly liked to be part of the list of fabric items for marriage ceremonies because of its name. To communicate that, the suppose husband to the bride has found a good woman

to spend the rest of his life with. In support to this, the Holy Bible made a reference that; Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies (Proverbs 31:10). This is a way of communicating how the man values his wife to be and the message is carried through the fabric name.



*Figure 23. abaapa (a good woman).*

(Source: Field image, 2017).

Another rite of passage observed by Ghanaians is the naming or outdoorings ceremonies. In this regard, some respondents stated: most people use fabric names for a particular occasion, for instance, for naming outdoorings/ceremonies, a fabric name *Awuo ye* (the goodness in childbirth) is used which literally means one derives a lot of benefits from childbirth hence its name. This perfectly suits the occasion as well as communicates





Figure 25. *Wode yen gyaa hwan* A fabric print with the name inscribed in the design motifs.

(Source: Field image, 2017).

The fabric name *wode yen gyaa hwan* literally (in whose care did you leave us). This is usually used for funeral ceremonies of departed souls of love ones. When the departed soul has a major responsibility or role in the family his or her loss becomes a big blow to the family, hence, the naming of the fabric you left us for who to take good care of us or to fill the vacuum the departed soul has created.

b. *Fabric names that cast insinuations*

Quite a number of studies have shown that in past decades, some Ghanaians, built wardrobes of high quality symbolic African prints for posterity. Others patronised cloths with symbolic designs to cast insinuations, yell insults at their rivals, demonstrate their love, and also project their statuses (Howard, Sarpong & Amankwah, 2012). These findings are confirmed by that of the present study which revealed that the print patterns tell stories of importance to the wearer such as proverbs, poems and traditional African fables (Wendren, 2008). Aside it's storytelling and proverbial significance other

functions of fabric naming are for insinuations. Essel (2017) expressed that; this is because the names given to fabrics could be entertaining, inciting, provocative or cast insinuations, based on naming systems contributed by the retailers who collaborate with the producers. In people's way of communicating messages indirectly to others they tend to insinuate them through the usage of some particular fabric names which have symbolic designs or names for such purposes. The fabric names *mede me se abɔ adwe ama kwasea bi abɛfa* (have used my teeth to crack a nut for a fool), *kɔnkɔnsani bɛbrɛ* (the one who gossips shall suffer), *wosere kyere me kwa* (you laugh with me in pretence) in figure 26 below, *aboa bi beka wo a ɛfire wo ntoma mu* (if an animal will bite you it will come from your own cloth) and many more are fabric names whose meanings cast insinuations.



Figure 26. Fabric print with its name inscribed in the fabric *wosere kyere me kwa*.

(Source: Field image, 2017).

The name *wo sere kyere me kwa* means you just laugh with me. The name literally means you just laugh with me but have no good intentions for me. Some people pretend to love and be so friendly to you but behind you they are your enemies. This fabric name can serve as proverbial or insinuations in the Ghanaian culture. One may wear this fabric to cast insinuations at someone he/she happens to be at loggerheads with to communicate the intensity of rage he/she has. On the other hand, when it serves as a proverbial adage it means one should be careful in dealing with friends around them as one may not know the intentions of others. Some of the respondents were of the view that, some of the names are given to the fabrics because they best describe the designs in the fabric thereby, helping them to sell the designs. Another fascinating fabric design that casts insinuation is below;



*Figure 27. The fabric name mede me se abɔ adwe ama kwasea bi abɛfa*  
(Source: Field image, 2017).



This fabric name *mede me se abɔ adwe ama kwasea bi abɛfa* literally (I have used my teeth to crack nuts to be taken away by a fool). This name yells insults or insinuates specifically at those who are lazy and want to make gains where they have not worked; one cannot work hard for a foolish person to enjoy. Some people live in societies and among families expecting to derive benefits from the toil and hard work of others. It is believed that after one's hard work on earth he/she should find a suitable successor to enjoy the deceased's wealth.

This fabric name when used in some context will cast insinuations at people without the wearer necessarily communicating verbally as the name speaks on its own. Also family members will see this act as an insult when a nuclear family among an extended family picks this particular fabric as an attire to be used for the departure of a deceased's funeral. It is said to be unacceptable because of the name the fabric bares and its meaning to such function. As the fabric name insinuates it will be disrespectful to the elderly among the family as they are more conversant with culture and traditions (Nana Okraku, personal communication, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2017).



Figure 28. Fabric print name *kɔnkɔnsani bebrɛ*  
(Source: Field image, 2017).

This fabric print name *kɔnkɔnsani bebrɛ* literally, the one who gossips will suffer. This is to say that, one who usually talks about people or say evil things in their absence will suffer. It is deemed that when you talk mostly about people you will engage yourself in troubles: a way society discourages gossip and backbiting in the Ghanaian culture.

*c. Fabric names that are derived from proverbial sayings*

Proverbs are thus enshrined with the highest of African philosophical thought arrived at by reflecting on the questions of life through the symbolic use of trees, plants, animals, rivers, the human body and the environment. These proverbs provide metaphors, adages and smiles as a means of communicating messages among the living and between the living and the dead (Abdulai 2000).

With regards to Ghanaians naming fabric prints which some are found to be proverbial names, majority of (87%) out of fifteen respondents indicated accordingly; Before our colonial masters, we wore cloths to help people identify us with a particular tribe, clan, group or tell about a particular occasion be it festival, funeral, marriage or naming ceremony. Thereby, the Ghanaian fabric prints are part of our culture because of some proverbs known and valued in society has been named by some prints and we wear the prints to portray the Ghanaian culture. Cited examples of proverbial fabric names are illustrated below;

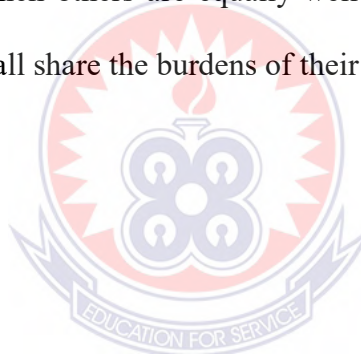


Figure 29. *Duakrɔ gye mframa a ebu*, a popular Ghanaian proverb.

(Source: Field image, 2017).

This fabric name literally means one tree breaks at the force of a wind. The name is derived from a popular Ghanaian proverb *praye se woyi baako a na ebu: wokabomu a emmu'* literally means when you remove one broomstick it breaks but when you put them

together it doesn't break. This proverb which stands as a source of inspiration for the fabric name in figure 29 above, symbolises unity in strength and promotes unity and oneness among the Ghanaian culture. This principle is so essential for maintaining a stable society and to bring peace among its people and neighboring communities. In that, when people find themselves in groups and work together there is effectiveness and efficiency hence deriving strength. One tends to hold the other when he/she is falling in groups but when you are alone you will fall at any forces life throws at you. Comparing to Ghanaian family lineage, when only one person is found to be wealthy in a family all others throw their troubles and burdens on the person which will breakdown the person at some point in time but when others are equally well to do they can also support other family members and they all share the burdens of their family.



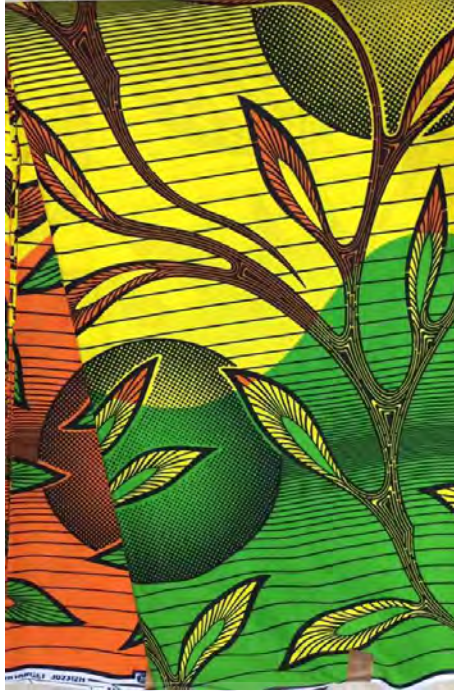


Figure 30. *Papaye asa*, a popular Ghanaian proverb.

(Source: Field image, 2017).

The literal meaning of this fabric print *Papaye asa*, is (doing good is no more). A Ghanaian proverb typically exhibited in the everyday way of life of its people. The name means doing good is finished; people are tired of doing good because of the evil rewards others pay them with. Thereby the push to do good and have a good reward in return is no hard to achieve, hence the fabric name.

In support, Ghanaian proverbs provide a window into the culture of a community. They often reflect the thought, principles and ideologies of a community through the use of cultural metaphorical statements. Nothings best defines a culture as distinctly as its languages, and the elements of language that best captures a society's values and beliefs is its proverbs (answersafrica.com). When it comes to the values and believes in the

Ghanaian culture, they also believe in the good training of a child to hold on the moral values in the society. A fabric name in reference to this is illustrated in figure 31;



Figure 31. *Abɔfra bɔ nwa na ɔmmɔ akyekyedes.*

(Source: Field image, 2017).

This fabric name literally means: a child breaks a snail, not a tortoise. A child breaks the shell of a snail and not a tortoise. The shell of a snail is easier to break as compared to the tortoise. Simply implies, children are to do things pertaining to children and not that of adults. In the Akan culture, it is a taboo for a child to challenge adults in any endeavor. Hence children need to be careful in dealing with adults lest their actions may be misunderstood.



Figure 32. *Wo nsaakyi beye wo de a ente se wo nsayam*, (a popular Ghanaian proverb).  
(Source: Field image, 2017).

Literally, if you will find the back of your hand sweet, it is not as sweet as the palm of your hand. Life cannot be measured equally, there are good times in life and bad times as well hence the palm of your hand is softer than the back of your hand. To the Ghanaian culture this proverb can also be compared to a traveler that: one may enjoy life elsewhere but home is home.

The names of fabrics connote specific meanings in communicating the Ghanaian socio-cultural way of life. Achebe (1994) a Nigerian famous author, as cited in Appiah-Adjei, (2014), stated that African countries also hold their cultural values; proverbs high in esteem. He further stated, "Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten". Appiah, concurred

with what Achebe said and opined, Achebe believes that words are prepared by proverbs for consideration and digestion; that proverbs are the basis by which words or conversations are made.

To safeguard the rich cultural heritage of Ghanaians they inculcate their moral values into the naming of things in the society so the practice continually lives within the society. Ghanaian proverbs are rich and bring responsibility and discipline among its people.

#### **4.5 The Semiotic and Semantic Implications of Fabric Names**

The third research question aimed at finding out the semiotic and semantic implications of fabric names with respect to the Ghanaian culture.

##### *Semiotics and Semantics of printed fabric*

Semiotics in this context deals with the imageries in the fabric prints and what they imply to the Ghanaian culture. The mental picture such fabric designs create in the mind of people was looked at and discussed under this section. With the semantics, it is the meanings derived from the images and the fabric names. Symbols are universal and objective in meaning irrespective of the imagination or intellect that grasps them (Madu, 1992). In this regard, Quartey (2015) asserted that there has to be more to the story of the designs on our African print. This is because symbols used in prints have powerful meanings that allow us to make sense of lives (Obeng, 2014). According to Adu-Asare, symbols guide and direct our choices in everyday life. Whether we realise it or not, symbols are one of the keys that indicates that we are civilised, or conditioned to behave according to our community's morals (Adu-Asare, personal communication, 2017).



Below are selected fabric names that were identified during the research and whose semantic and semiotic implications to the Ghanaian culture was discussed as follows; a fabric name to look at is *ɔbaatan na ɔnim deɛ ne ba bɛdie* (only a mother knows what her child will feed on).



Figure 33. *ɔbaatan na ɔnim deɛ ne ba bɛdie*.

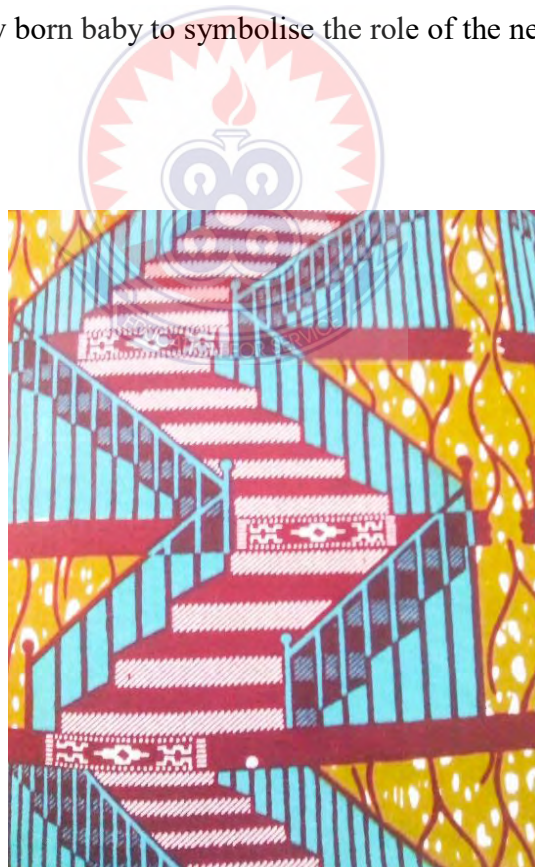
(Source: Field image, 2017).

This fabric name, *ɔbaatan na ɔnim deɛ ne ba bɛdie* literally means it is only the mother who knows what her children will feed on. Within the fabric design are birds captured in their nets, where the mother is feeding its off springs. It depicts how mother birds care for their little offspring till they become of age.

The mother bird is seen as the heroine in this picture. She creates her own nest to shelter its off springs this also depicts a Ghanaian proverb which says; (by going and coming, a bird weaves its nest), protects them from bad weather conditions and harm,

goes out there even in bad weather conditions to get food for their upkeep. The imagery in the design translates its meaning directly to peoples understanding.

The name symbolises the caring nature of mothers and their love for their offspring even in difficult moments. According to some 80 % respondents; in the Ghanaian culture when one buys this fabric as a gift for the mother, it signifies appreciation because of the message it conveys. The fabric design comes in other colours which can be worn for funerals or thanksgiving service of a deceased mother. In this context, it simply communicates the loss of a mother who truly cared for her children and how her departure will be of great loss to their family. This same fabric can also be used for the naming of a new born baby to symbolise the role of the new mother to her child.



*Figure 34. Fabric print Owuo atwedee*

(Source: Field image, 2017).

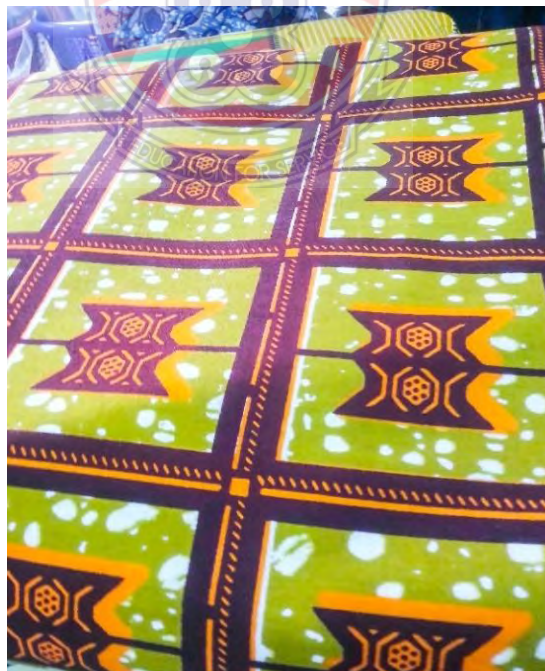


This fabric print has three identical names which has been known and accepted by Ghanaians. The first name is *ɔdehyeɛ nsu* literally means (a royal does not cry) and this name is said to be derived from the Ashanti communities because they are of a belief that royalties do not struggle in life. Secondly, *ɔbra twa te sɛ sɔda* meaning (life cuts so hard like the edge of a saw) was also named by the Fanti communities in Ghana. The Fantes gave this name because some fabric dealers are of the view that the motif in the fabric resembles the edges of a saw, hence its symbolical name. Another tribe in Ghana, the Ga's from the southern part, also named it as *kplotoo kadaa* which means (the jaws of a pig). These groups of people also associate the motif in the fabric to resemble that of a pig's jaw. To look at the semantic meanings to this imagery, life is said not to be easy at all. It is a battlefield where one meets challenges, pains and struggles. This fabric imagery creates an awareness of strength to all survivors in life. Anyone has this mental picture of life fights harder to succeed. This symbolic name does not promote laziness and envy in the society, but encourages hard work, everyone faces one challenge or the other in life. In semiotic terms, if the symbol is compared to a saw and associated to life which can cut like a saw, no one has to joke with life. For this reason, one has to handle life with care because when you mishandle a saw it can cut you badly.

Another fabric name to look at is the *Eniwa* literally means the (eye). The main motif in the fabric print (the eye) lays emphasis on the prominence of the eye as a major tool on the human body and animals and also aids for checks and balances in the society. It reminds users that in all situations, the eye is there to detect and record. In other words, no one escapes the watchful eyes.



*Figure 36. Eniwa (The eye) which was named basically after the motif in the fabric.*  
(Source: Field image, 2017).



*Figure 37. Sɛ wobɛka mɛ ho aɛm a fa akonnwa tena ase*  
(Source: Field image, 2017).

The fabric name literally means, “if you will talk/gossip about me take a seat”. The name was given based on the stools being the central motifs in the fabric. In the Ghanaian society the name has a proverbial significance. Additionally, the stool imagery has a way of communicating to people and discouraging gossip and backbiting in the society. According to 80% of the respondents, the stool in the fabric image implies that one needs to sit in order to talk ill and gossip about people. A way of exhibiting that one is less occupied with his/her field of work and that makes that individual have more time to engage in fruitless gains. Simply, the fabric name denotes backbiting and gossiping in the Ghanaian society and frowns upon those who engage in such acts.



*Figure 38.* Image of the fabric name *Sika wɔ ntaban*.  
(Source: Field image, 2017).

The fabric name, *Sika wɔ ntaban* simply means money has wings, thereby it can fly. The symbol of the birds in the fabric design communicates plainly the name of the fabric. According to 86% of respondents who attested to this fabric name, the meaning is associated with money has a very good way of disappearing if one does not handle it with care. And also in life's circumstances, today one may have lots of money, but tomorrow the situation may differ. This fabric design casts a mental picture on the minds of Ghanaians as it speaks and refers in pictorial sense of the culture of the people. Also in the Ghanaian culture, birds have great reverence in most tribes as it serves as totems of most clans in Ghana.



*Figure 39a & 39b. Variation designs of the Ketepa fabric*

(Source: Field image, 2017).

The fabric name *Ketepe* literally means a good mat. The same fabric is designed in varied form in figure 39b namely, *Zaminama kete* (a mat design which is associated with the Northern Islamic tribes of Ghana. These special mats are used by the Islam's to perform their daily prayers. The name *Ketepe* is an *adinkra* symbol which symbolises a good marriage. In the Ghanaian society this is derived from the expression that, a woman who has a good marriage is said to sleep on a good mat or bed. In semantics terms, the name gives such meaning to the people because of the compatibility of the woven design in the fabric; a good mat/good marriage. This is translated into the cultural life of the people that a woman with a good marriage sleeps on a good mat.

#### 4.6 The Effects of Fabric Names in the Ghanaian culture

The effects of fabric names in the Ghanaian culture was examined under the following factors below;

*a. Effects of fabric names on an individual*

The study explored whether if there are effects of Ghanaian fabric names on the wearer. Respondents gave reasons which attribute to the effects fabric names have on the wearers. The names give a sense of belonging, makes one knowledgeable while others can cause rivalry, miscommunication and insinuations. Eighty percent (80%) out of the fifteen respondents were of the view and that, fabric names have great effects on individual wearers and these by analysis can be grouped under two main categories: the positive effects and the negative. They gave some instances to justify the above opinions. Some respondents also disagreed with the view that fabric names do not have any effect



on the wearer or individual but is just an item one uses in a time frame and discards when necessary.

Most of the respondents gave instances of how fabric names can positively have effect on the wearers and they ascertained; some fabric names result in making the wearer feel good about him/herself; have a high sense of self confidence, makes the wearer have a feeling of royalty and a sense of belonging. Some respondents also asserted, those who cherish culture and hold on to true traditions love the culture of naming fabrics. Some respondents are also of the view that those who hold tradition and culture highly are those who claim that fabric names that cast insinuations or yell insults cannot be used as gift items because of the names they bare and the message it carries. Such fabric names that insinuates or yell insults are; *kɔnkɔnsani bɛbrɛ*, *aboa bi bɛka wo a na efiri wo ntoma mu*, *Mede me se abɔ adwe ma kwasea bi abɛfa* and many others cannot be used as gift items to people who knows the essence of fabric names.

Another attestation by some respondents was that some fabric names when used can destroy or break relationships between loved ones or families. Instance was stated; A young lady bought a fabric print named *Owuo atwedɛ* literally (death's ladder) as a gift for her mother-in-law who happened to visit Ghana from America. On receiving the gift, the mother-in-law unwrapped it with excitement. On seeing the gift, she got disappointed and felt insulted. The mother-in-law, later complained bitterly to her son (thus the lady's husband) that she saw it as an act of disrespectfulness from her daughter-in-law. The meaning of the fabric name being death's ladder was interpreted by the mother-in-law as her daughter-in-law was wishing death on her. This destroyed the beautiful relationship between the two (Maa Elizabeth, personal communication, 20<sup>th</sup>

February, 2017). Fabric names carry great philosophical meanings to the Ghanaian culture in a way that one has to be careful in buying fabrics with names as gift items.

The richness and variety of African prints is interesting not only to fashion designers but also to anyone who wants his cloth to express his personality (Abraham, 2013). It exemplifies how cultural ideas are demonstrated and objectified in the design (Nielsen, 1979 as cited by Abraham, 2013). Most interviewees in this study, affirmed the position that; Fabric naming does not die out, as such the fabric names have relevance on the wearer. Some fabrics names according to the research have positive effects on the wearer and also some respondents threw some highlights on the negative effects.

*b. Current trends of fabric naming*

Most fabric designs on the market have not been named yet, especially the new style prints (a brand name of fabric prints) by GTP and other fabrics from ATL and Printex. Most of the fabric prints with names are the classical prints while few new prints have also been given names. Some of the new names are following the cultural pattern of the old naming system while some do not. Some respondents' view on the current trends of fabric naming was stated: presently, young people may want to buy fabrics with names; some don't just look at the colours and the designs but look out for the names of the fabric. With the trends of fabric naming presently, a lot of new fabric designs don't have names, the fabric dealers and customers are now getting inspirations to give special names to most fabrics on the market. But there are still other fabrics which have the very old traditional names (termed as classical) which is reprinted in different colours and designs to attract the youths. Just a few of the new prints handpicked have names which are catchy enough to sell. During the field study, it was observed that some

fabric prints have more than two or three of the classical prints designs on them. The name which originated for such design print is called *Nsasawa* literally means (combination of fabric designs). An example is depicted in figure 40.



*Figure 40.* The *Nsasawa* fabric print with almost seven classical print design names  
(Source: Field image, 2017).

In the figure 40 fabric design names like *akyekyedee akyi*, *Bonsu*, *Duakorɔ gye mframa a ebu*, *Felicia* and *Sika wɔ ntaban* have been mixed up and infused in the above fabric print with some other textural effects. This *nsasawa* is a fabric making technique which practices the joining of different pieces of fabrics to become one whole piece. This practice is said to have originated mainly among the poor in societies as they cut and sew pieces of their torn fabrics to make a larger piece of fabric rather than using them as floor rugs. As time went on, the practice was liked by many and became a sense of fashion where beautiful designs were created out of different fabric pieces by stitching them together. The textile industries also copied this style and started manufacturing fabrics with different fabric designs. More than (73%) of respondents asserts that;

When a fabric is given a name, it is tried, tested and it becomes nationally accepted. When a name is given in a locality, it is tried by buying customers who walk into the shops of fabric dealers and the dealers mention the names to them which stick in the minds of the customers. The next time customers come to buy a fabric they go with preferred names they have heard or known and as this practice keeps moving it then means the name has come to stay. Now someone may come from Takoradi and may mention a fabric name he/she wants to buy and when it is not known by a fabric dealer in another town it is the design in the fabric that will help the seller to identify what the customer wants. This means the fabric names can be transferred from one locality or community to the other.

It can be inferred from the responses of the interviewees that, now fabrics that are given names are those that are fast moving on the Ghanaian market and because they are fast moving it needs to be identified by the customer. Again, names are given by inspirations. The fabric dealers have great inspirations from nature, symbols, proverbs and many more in the naming of Ghanaian fabrics. Others were also of the view that, with the current trend of contemporary fabric naming, the practice is just for a lasting moment. Stating, after a while some fabric names vanishes from the market because it is not even widely known, but with the classical prints (old prints) the names are still relevance and lived on from time in memorial because of the cultural backing and identity placed on them.

Africans for over thousands of years have been creating and designing fabrics based on their culture, geographical location and the available resources. They express their thought through the medium of art. Their textile materials have complex traits which

give it certain characteristic, design, colour, arrangement and yarn content (Omotoso, 2006). In this regard, some respondents opined that; there can also be instances where the use of motifs in a fabric design can be used to name the fabric. Example; Owuo atwedee baako mforo has a ladder in the design of the fabric, mostly because fabric dealers usually use the traditional symbols to name the fabrics. According to Kudowor (2012), modern Ghanaian fashion is fed by wax prints, these cotton fabrics are produced by fabric processing and printing firms such as VLISCO, Akosombo Textiles Limited and Printex and the designs of these prints promote wealth, advice, mourning, praise, insinuations, hard work which sends messages in the form of imagery and related proverbs.

*c. Sustaining fabric naming*

In the view of (87%) of respondents, fabric naming should be sustained. One reason is because it is a good mechanism for fabric trading since the names persuade customers or users of fabric prints to buy. Some of the fabric dealers during the interview however stated: The names of fabrics or the naming culture should be sustained because it helps in the selling of their fabrics. The old people appreciate the fabrics with names but some youth don't like or even know fabric names. They are strongly of the view that; fabric naming is part of the Ghanaian culture and thereby should be sustained. Now the fabric names given to newly printed designs are more appealing to the Ghanaian youth. They also believe that the old fabric names are still relevant in today's culture which also serves as an educational tool for the Ghanaian youth: an historical heritage passage. Others outlined the following contributions as benefits derived from the naming practice of fabrics; naming is a means of self-expression; where people can express their mood

through the clothing they wear, a communicating tool and also a means of Ghanaians sustaining their cultural heritage. To concur with what Hanley (2004) stated, he believes that the art of naming is established in the context of culture due to the power that is connected with names. The fabric names are also connected to the culture of Ghanaians and because of the power these names have on its people, the naming culture cannot die out but can be sustained. In summary, fabric naming is a culture or practice that has come to stay and also greatly sustaining the fabric selling business in Ghana.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Overview

This chapter attempts a holistic summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations on the basis of the research questions that directed the study. The following questions put the study in focus:

1. What influences the art of fabric naming in Ghana?
2. What are the classifications of socio-cultural naming systems of fabrics?
3. What are the semiotic and semantic implications of fabric names?
4. Is there any effect of fabric names?

The summary of research findings, conclusions and recommendations that follow are in line with the above research questions.

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

The study sought to find answers to the major themes that formed the basis of the thesis discussion. The findings are outlined as follows:

From the study, names of fabrics are inspired by *adinkra* motif designs, Ghanaian proverbs, names suggested by customers or users of fabrics and fabric retailers. *Adinkra* motif designs which are used predominantly in a fabric prints are named after such *adinkra* symbol. These *adinkra* symbols have symbolical meanings when it comes to the

Ghanaian culture. Names are also suggested by customers who take their preferred names and designs to the textile industries for production. This is done to serve a particular need or occurrence in the society. Fabric retailers hold the culture of Ghana high by naming fabrics with cultural backings to preserve Ghanaian culture and boost their sales. The art of fabric naming is a cultural practice which has lived on for many generations and promises to continue for generations to come.

Fabric names in the Ghanaian context are classified into two – Classical and Contemporary. Classical prints are fabric prints that have existed for more than fifteen years while those with less than fifteen years of existence are referred to as contemporary. Irrespective of the classificatory category of the fabric names as identified, it may carry communicative significance, and seen as a unifying cultural entity. Classical names are *old* and have lived on many years in the Ghanaian culture; its names are strongly exhibited in the socio-cultural context of the people. Examples of classical fabric print names are *Ani bere a ensɔ gya*, *nsubura*, *ketepa*, and *Duakorɔ gye mframaa ebu*. Some examples of the contemporary fabric prints are *Awareɛ nni taem*, *Kumkumbhagya*, showers of blessings. These fabric prints are barely two years old.

Some design elements in the fabrics have symbolic connotations which correspond directly to the fabric names. Some fabric prints communicate plainly their messages based on its designs by creating a lasting mental picture in the minds of the people. Example of such fabric designs are *ɔbaatan na ɔnim deɛ ne ba bedie* (depicting a mother bird feeding her off springs in its nest), *Owuo atweee* literally (means death's ladder depicting that everybody will at one point in time climb the ladder of death), *Sika wo ntaban* (means money has wings, thereby it can fly) and *Sɛ wo bɛ ka me hu asem a fa*



*akonwa tinase* (if you will talk/gossip about me take a seat). The names were given based on the stools being the central motifs in the fabric. The symbol of the birds in the fabric design. While in other instances the names do not have any connotations to the design elements in the fabric prints. Some also convey different meanings totally from the fabric design. Example of fabric name which do not depict or match the design elements is *Abofra bo nnwa na ommo Akyekyedes, Papaye asa, Kumkumbhagya* and many more.

Effects of fabric names are classified under positive and negative effects. Examples of positive names are *ɔbaapa, ɔkunupa, Aware nni tame, ɔbaatan na enim nia niba bedi*. Such positive effects derived from fabrics with good names are: self-belongingness, self-confidence, good values; and also boosts commercial sales of the fabrics. While examples of negative fabric names are *Kɔnkɔnsani bebre, Wo sere kyere me kwa, Mede mese abɔ adwe ma kwasea bi abɛfa* and many more. These names generate negative effects which can cause rivalry among people, insinuations or yell insults, miscommunications, destroy relationships among people, marriages and families. However, the trend of fabric naming has always been informed by different circumstances and situations, for which reason old fabric names differ in rendition and semantics from the new fabric names. The fabric naming culture is seen to be sustained in the Ghanaian culture.

## 5.2 Conclusions

From the findings the following conclusions were drawn:

Fabric designers play no role in the art of fabric nameology in the Ghanaian culture, but rather fabric names are influenced by adinkra symbols, Ghanaian proverbs, popular phrases or adages and occurrences. All these names are derivatives from Ghanaian cultural backgrounds.

Ghanaian fabric prints are categorised under classical and contemporary. The classical prints have very detailed and intricate designs which has led to the interestingly old fabric names. The contemporary fabric prints are mostly concentrated on the fancy colours and designs and a little of the naming culture as compared to the old system of fabric naming.

The symbolical features in Ghanaian fabric prints plays very vital role in the naming of fabrics and the symbols communicates to Ghanaians in their cultural dealings.

Ghanaian fabric names are named under positive and negative naming effects. Care should be made in distinguishing both the positive and negative names since they all have effects on the Ghanaian culture.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

From the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations have been made on the naming of fabric prints and its significance in the Ghanaian culture:

- i. Customers should be well informed by fabric retailers about fabric names before buying fabrics with names. Being knowledgeable about fabric names makes one have the right choices in buying such fabrics.
- ii. The fabric printing companies should study the trends of naming fabrics. This will also enable fabric designers to become part of the fabric naming culture and also contribute in binding and sustaining the culture of Ghana.
- iii. Since the fabric designs have both symbolic and unsymbolic features, fabric designers should carefully produce fabrics where people will have preference from which category to choose from. This will boost the sales of fabric retailers, and sustain the culture of Ghana.
- iv. Ghanaian fabric print names come in two categories: positive fabric names and negative fabric names therefore any buyer or user of fabric prints should be careful in selecting or buying. Some fabrics may not bring any negative connotations in some instances other fabric names have negative connotations which needs consideration.

### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

This research study of fabric naming in the Ghanaian culture concentrated mainly on the names in the Akan speaking dialect. The researcher proposes that, the study of fabric names in other Ghanaian languages should be looked at to know if they are following the same trend of fabric naming with that of the Akans.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **INTRODUCTION TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

University of Education

Department of Music Education

Winneba.

10th May, 2017.

#### **TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Dear Sir/Madam

#### **LETTER OF INTRODUCTION:**

**LARTEY ANORKOR ABIGAIL (8151750010)**

The above mentioned name is a second year student pursuing Master of Philosophy (Arts and culture) in Music Education at the University of Education Winneba, Graduate School.

She is currently writing his thesis on the topic –The Art of Fabric Nameology in Ghanaian

Culture” and therefore needs your assistance to enable her acquire the necessary information for her thesis.

I am officially introducing her to you/organisation to provide her with the necessary information and assistance that she might need.

We count very much on your cooperation and understanding in this regard.

Yours faithfully,

Emmanuel Obed Acquah

Ag. Head of Department



## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Do people know if Ghanaians have names for their fabrics?
2. For how long has the naming of fabrics been with the Ghanaian culture?
3. Are there reasons which leads to the naming of fabric prints?
4. What are the reasons which leads to the naming of fabrics in Ghana?
5. What are some examples of fabrics names and to what instance were the names given?
6. Are there instances where fabrics are named based on the images/designs in the fabric?
7. What does the names given to the images/designs in the fabric connote or denote?
8. Is fabric naming a Ghanaian culture?
9. In what way can we say fabric naming is part of the Ghanaian culture?
10. What is the significance of fabric names to the Ghanaian culture or the Ghanaian individual?
11. Do fabric names have effects?
12. In what ways or instances does fabric names have effects?
13. Do people really buy fabrics based on the names?
14. How do you compare fabric naming to contemporary Ghanaian culture?
15. What has been the current trend of fabric naming?
16. Do you think fabric naming should be sustained?