

JOURNAL OF AFRICAN ARTS & CULTURE

Editors

Prof. Obed Acquah, PhD
Prof. Mary Dzansi-McPalm, PhD
Prof. C.W.K. Mireku, PhD
Prof. James Flolu, PhD

Patrique deGraft - Yankson, PhD
Ebenezer Acquah, PhD
Osuanya Quaicoo Essel, PhD

<https://jaac-sca.org>

ISSN 2637-3610

Volume 4 Issue 4

December 31, 2020

Ideation of Textile Regalia for Akuapem State Paramourncy: Royal Palanquin and Umbrella in Focus

Solomon Marfo Ayesu
Department of Fashion and Textiles Studies, KsTU
solomaxxy@rocketmail.com

David Anokye
Centre for National Culture, Kumasi
kenodez@yahoo.com

Ebenezer Kofi Howard¹
Benjamin K. Asinyo²
Department of Industrial Art,
KNUST
billhowardgh@yahoo.com¹
asinyoboss@yahoo.com²

Citation: Ayesu, S. M., Howard, E. K., Asinyo, B. K. & Anokye, D. (2020). Ideation of textile regalia for Akuapem state paramourncy: Royal palanquin and umbrella in focus. *Journal of African Arts & Culture*, 4(4), 44 – 69.

Abstract



The study seeks to contribute to the royalty and unity of the Akuapem State through ideation and execution of textile regalia for Akuapem state paramourncy. The study is grounded on the Studio-Based research design employing the Universal Design Methodology taking inspiration from Akuapem state symbols and the chieftaincy structure with 'unity in purpose' as a design philosophy. The results revealed unique textile regalia consisting of a figurative palanquin and Triple-Headed colossal umbrella. The regalia are designed with the main Akuapem State symbol, the five (5) divisional symbols and the eight (8) Akan totems, which do not only reaffirm the unity of the State but also define the hierarchy of the chieftaincy system in the Akuapem State. Akuapem is a major ethnic group in the Eastern Region of Ghana, which consists of sixteen (16) different towns and kingship with rich cultural tradition and unique symbolism, which the study establishes could be harnessed for socio-economic development of the state. However, the schisms among the chiefs witnessed over the years have been the major

setback to the developmental agenda of Akuapem State. The study ideated symbolic textile regalia to serve as a unified force to address the schism among the state for progressive development. The study recommends the adoption of the triple-headed umbrella regalia for the paramount chief and the double-headed umbrella for the divisional chiefs. This is to pave way for the sub-chiefs to use the single-headed umbrella for easy identification and hierarchy and status of the various chiefs during festivals and state functions.

Keywords: Ideation, Textile Regalia, Akuapem State, Royal Palanquin, Umbrella

1. Introduction

A regalia is an insignia or a symbol of office, a ceremonial object or a dress used by chiefs, royals and people in high authority. It could be textiles, sculpture, jewellery or other royal paraphernalia. Traditionally, and particularly in Africa, all chiefs possess royal regalia as a sign of office they hold of which some are symbolic whereas others are functional. Just like other traditional set-ups, it is observed that Akuapem state can boast of a number of royal regalia which are symbolic and functional to the chiefs and people of the state. This study specifically focuses on two major Akuapem state regalia with specific reference to royal umbrella and palanquin in the context regalia as ceremonial objects using textile (fabric) as a chief material.

The Akuapem traditional area is geographically located in the Eastern Region of Ghana and on what could be described as the Akuapem ridge (mountain), which stretches Northeastwards across the Volta Region towards Togo. The Akuapem traditional area comprises ethnic groups such as the Akan (that is, historically affiliated with the Kyerepong and Akyim state) and the Guans' communities. Interestingly, both ethnic groups occupy the seventeen (17) townships of the Okuapem state. Moreover, the two main festivals that are celebrated yearly by the communities within the Okuapeman are; *Odwira*, celebrated by the Akans and *Ohum* by the Guans. During these ceremonies, numerous artefacts are displayed symbolizing the state's supremacy, power, resources, and authority (Gilbert, 1994).

Etymologically, the name 'Akuapem' traditionally has two (2) meanings. According to Oduro-Awisi (2013, p. 66-67), Akuapem traditional area was formally known as 'Hill Guans'. Two schools of thoughts have it that, the name 'Akuapem' comes from Nkoa Apem" (thousand slaves) which was corrupted to "Akuapem" (the thousand subjects) when they were under the dominion or control of the Akwamu. The second school of thought says that Akuapem, was

derived from the words *akuw apem* (thousand groups). The unified force who fought for their liberation from the Akwamu's. However, Gyamerah, (2014. p. 33) expounds that, the origin of the Akan word *Akuapem* was derived from two Akan terminologies, *Akuw* and *Apem*, which literally means 'a force or group of thousand people.' He further explains, the historical antecedent of the term reveals that it was an adopted name for the Akyem rebels, (*Akuw-apem*, 'a force of thousand people', who invaded and expelled the Akwamu State). After the Abotakyi accord, the Akuapems adopted and retained the name of *akuw-apem* as the name of the new State, Akuapem. Comparatively, the name 'Akuw apem' fits well than 'Nkoa apem' because the Akuapems were able to defeat the Akwamus in subsequent wars and drove them away from the land. Therefore, there was no way the Akwamus could have taken them as slaves or subjects, resulting in the use of that name. From the foregoing etymological perspectives, it can be deduced that the explanation 'thousand companies' (*Akuw apem*) is more suitable for the Akuapems. Even though the Akuapems were under the Akwamus, the Akwamus were defeated and driven away from the land of the Akuapems; thus, there is no reason for them to be called slaves (*Nkoa*).

Historically, the Akuapem state is traced as far back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Kwamena-Poh (1972) has it that, records from European sources suggest that the current Akuapem area was inhabited by the Europeans, in what was known as Equea, Aboera, Bunu, and Latebe as far as 1629. Labi (2002) as cited by "Offie" TV (2020) establishes that Akan communities of the Akwamu and Akyim-Abuakwa origin first occupied a greater part of the Akuapem ridge. He added that the history of Akuapem state is related to Ancient Greece; mainly because both communities were largely dominated by the character of its mountains, separating the people for some time from their neighbours and at the same time, making it difficult for them to see each other from the eastern and western side. He further explained, a Danish writer in the 1760s said if the Negros in Accra were asked; "who lives on the high hill, as to whether they can see from as far as the seashore," (p 23) the answer given would be "No one" and that no human being can or has ever endeavoured to climb the hill. This clearly indicates that they were cut-off from the country capital, making it difficult for them to access social amenities.

Before the founding of Akuapem (Kwamena-Poh, 1972 as cited in Oduro-Awisi, 2013), the institution of chieftaincy was non-existence but the leadership of these communities consisted of Priest and Priestesses. Kwamena-Poh gives three (3) reasons for the early settlers on the Hill land with no chiefs. The first

reason was that the early Guan communities were predominantly a farming population and farming communities have seldom had political ambitions and have been usually dominated by immigrants well versed in the institutions of political authority. Secondly, the lack of minerals such as gold or diamond provided no incentives for the establishment of political unity to control the overflow of these commodities of trade which was so vital in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Lastly, the political leadership of the shrine-priest did not promote the unity of a wider area; like the Ga people, the Guans communities were theocracies. It was against this background that Priests, *odede*, or *asofo* were the heads of the Guan communities previously called Hill Guan, now known as Akuapem. This means that the early Guan settlers were organized militarily and politically under *odede*, or *asofo*. The *odede* wielded and exercised legislative, executive and judicial arms of government as well as religious, ceremonial and secular functions.

Appiah (2011) states that symbolism plays an important role in African art and Akan society in particular, as it is found to be evident in every aspect of African culture. He maintains that the Akan symbolic designs are pervasive since they are found almost everywhere including funeral grounds; in plaster designs on old shrines, chiefs' appliqué cloths, linguist staffs, umbrella tops, swords, jewellery, and all other paraphernalia. Again, symbols are printed in many Ghanaian textiles and have with time become very popular among lovers of Ghanaian fabrics. Symbolisms in Ghana, in the past, had no written documentation because they were assumed to be part of the people's oral tradition (Glover, 2004). Symbols may be used as an identifier, a language of concepts, an iconic representation, to express intangible truths, carry particular meanings, express something unknown, or simply to represent something else (Dzobo, n.d). Deacon (2011) asserts that symbols are, usually, linguistically expressed, yet there are nonverbal symbols such as flags, coat of arms, amongst others. According to Ofuafo (2013), a symbol is an overt expression of what is behind the veil of direct perception. Agbo (2006) posits that symbols are multifunctional; they are appreciated for both their aesthetic as well as their communication values. Generally, symbols are used for communication, either through verbal or visual means (Amate, 2011). For instance, the Golden Stool denotes the high authority of the office of the king of the Ashanti kingdom, whereas the leopard's or lion skin serves as the seat of authority for the king of northern Ghana within a given jurisdiction.

It is observed that the Akuapem state is endowed with many symbols (regalia) due to the relationship they had with the Akyem Kingdom (Oduro-Awisi, 2013). This observation has been corroborated in the writings of Labi (2002) as he posits that about a thousand symbols embedded in gold were created by a certain military man called Agyekum Adu Oware. Interestingly, some of these symbols were later sent by chiefs within the Okyeman to their allies in Akuapem. Some of these symbols (regalia) took the form of umbrella tops, linguist staff and ceremonial swords, and could be found in Akyem state today (Labi, 2002). In the Akuapem state, the divisional towns and the various clans have unique and interesting symbols, which are mostly seen on umbrella tops, linguist staffs, stools, drums, ceremonial swords, pots and wood carvings but scarcely seen in fabrics as in textile regalia. Moreover, the meanings and significance are either not much published or known by the populace as compared to that of Adinkra symbols of the Asante kingdom. In recent times, however, the unity and peace that the people of Akuapem used to enjoy, has seen many setbacks hence, affecting the developmental agenda, progression and advancement of the state. Equally, their rich culture, which is exhibited in the celebration of 'Odwira' and 'Ohum' festivals where most of the symbols and regalia are used, has also been affected due to the schisms among the chiefs in the area (Labi, 2002).

Interestingly, a more revealing observation by Kwamena-Poh (1972) is that Akuapem symbols could serve as a greater source of inspiration for textile regalia for the Akuapem State. The notable historian, again, added that besides having the ability to unite the countless divisional chiefs in the Akuapem Traditional Area, these symbols also have the potential of promoting the Akuapem State and their culture as well as educating the people on the significance of the various symbols in relation to the history of the state. This submission by Kwabena-Poh and the personal observation made BY the researchers propelled the study to ideate and produce royal textile regalia for Akuapem traditional state paramountcy.

2. Materials and Methods

The study adopted universal design method (Figure 1) in developing a research design model, which evolves through conceptualisation, creation and production. The *conceptualisation phase* encompasses a survey and observation; the *creation phase* is geared towards drawing concept, ranking of drawings and selection of ideas whereas the *production phase* constitutes prototype making, actual manufacturing and exhibition.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytical Phase: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Observation ○ Measurement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is the User? Surveys & Observation Standards Regulations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Phase: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluation ○ Judgement ○ Decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stretching ideas Drawing Concepts Building Models Ranking & Selecting Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Phase: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Description ○ Translation ○ Transmission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prototyping Details and Specifications Manufacturing Product Testing Usability Testing Compliance with Standards Marketing

Figure 1: Universal Design Methodology by Van-Roosmalen (n.d)

The University of Pittsburgh, School of Health and Rehabilitation Science

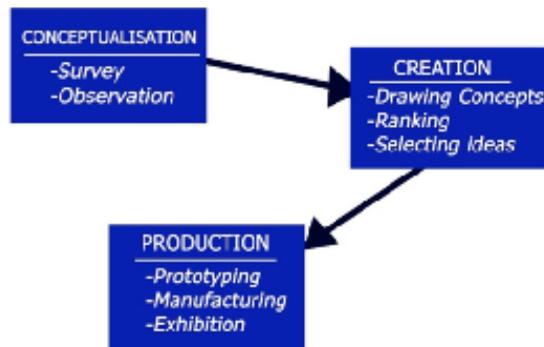


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework adapted from the Universal Design Methodology (Van-Roosmalen)

Conceptualisation phase

At the conceptualisation stage, the study first considered the user, who in this context is the paramount chief of Akuapem traditional area. The research team surveyed the five (5) Akuapem divisional towns where interviews were conducted and also acted as observers during the celebration of 2014 Odwira festival at Akropong and Amanokrom. During the observation period, the standards and

regulations governing the production of regalia for the paramount chief were taken into consideration. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents.

Table 1

Distribution of interview respondents

Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Divisional chiefs	1	2
Linguist	8	16
Senior elders (Abusuapanyin)	4	8
Divisional secretaries	3	6
Sub chiefs	5	10
Elders (group interview)	12	24
Clergies	2	4
Craftsmen	5	10
General public	10	20
Total	50	100

Creation phase

At the creation phase, however, the data gathered from the interview and observation were evaluated, judged and the final decision taken for the design of the royal umbrella and palanquin. Based on the response, several sketches were made, different drawing concepts were also adopted for the building of models and the drawings were ranked for the final designs.

Production phase

At the production stage, the selected designs were worked on using the Adobe Photoshop and Rhinoceros application software where final details and specifications were added. Final designs were ranked and selected for production. The products were then exhibited for public appreciation and comments.

3. Results and Discussion

Design Concept

The conceptual basis of the study is, *Nsa baako nkura adeso*, meaning, one hand cannot carry a load. This means that unity is strength, which is the philosophical underpinning of the study. This philosophy is interpreted as the need to reunite the Akuapem state to facilitate socio-cultural and economic development. Akuapem used to be a one ethnic-state, which did everything together especially, during the celebration of the Odwira festival. However, due to separation and disunity, which seem to have continued over the years, the State has witnessed less development around most of its communities. Nevertheless, as a new peace pipe has been smoked among aggrieved parties in 2013, it has, therefore, become very important to keep to the current vow of ensuring unity for the development of the Akuapem traditional area. As epitomized in Akan proverbs 'Nsa baako nkura adeso' which suggests unity is strength or a broom tied in a bundle form is unbreakable, it is prudent for the people of Akuapem to see themselves as one people and work together for the development of their state. The primary aim of this study is to produce a unified royal palanquin and umbrella that can symbolically represent the paramountcy and strengthen the cohesion among the people.

Hierarchy of Chiefs of Akuapem State as a Conceptual model for the study

The study adopted the hierarchy of the chiefs of Akuapem State as a conceptual model for the study. The justification for this is to ensure that the designs are ideated to reflect the status and powers of the various chiefs; the paramount, divisional, sub-chiefs (Figure 2). In this hierarchical framework, it is evident that Akuapem was carved from seventeen towns made up of various communities that are grouped into five (5) divisions with one Paramount Chief (Omanhene) (Kwmena-Poh, 1972). A divisional chief head each of these divisions. Considering the hierarchy, the *Okuapehene* is the paramount chief of the entire Akuapem land followed by the *Krontihene* the chief of Akropong and its environs (the head of the five divisional chiefs, the second in command of Akuapem). *Adontenhene* follows the hierarchy with Aburi and its localities whereas the *Gyaase* divisional status is located at Amanokrom and its vicinities. The *Gyaasehene* is the principal custodian of the regalia of the paramount chief (Omanhene) of Akuapem State. The last two (2) are the *Nifa* (right) and *Benkum* (left) divisional status in that order. The *Nifa* (right) has its capital at Adukrom and *Benkum* (left) at Larteh and their localities. Undoubtedly, all these divisional chiefs have sub-chiefs under them, which could make them a state on their own. This hierarchy guided the

design of the textile regalia for the state.



Figure 2: Hierarchy of Chiefs in Akuapem State

(Adopted as a conceptual model for the study)

Akuapem Traditional Symbols and their Significance

Table 2, 3 and 4 represent the Akuapem State symbol, the five divisional chiefs and the symbolism of the eight Akan totems within Akuapem tradition respectively.

Table 2

Akuapem State Symbol

Akuapem Symbol	Symbolism
 <p data-bbox="185 651 499 687">Akuapem State Symbol</p>	<p data-bbox="534 367 1126 404">“Twereamong” (Trustworthy and reliability)</p> <p data-bbox="534 433 1032 469">The symbol centres on two elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="580 495 1198 567">□ Elephant - the biggest and strongest animal on the land and <li data-bbox="580 596 1198 706">□ Palm tree - the strongest tree that the elephant normally rests or sleeps by it because it is trusted or reliable. <p data-bbox="534 731 1198 840">Philosophically, Akuapem state is as big as the elephant and strong as a palm tree; a dependable, trustworthy and a reliable state.</p>

Source: Field survey (2019)

Table 3: The Five Divisional Symbols

Divisional Symbol	Symbolism
 <p data-bbox="231 1277 526 1314">Benkum Divisional Symbol</p>	<p data-bbox="602 1101 1198 1210">“Letebo okre lo” simply means Larteh people are one and do everything together making it difficult for other people to capture them.</p>
 <p data-bbox="244 1514 513 1550">Gyasi Divisional Symbol</p>	<p data-bbox="602 1317 1185 1426">“Asuketewa a eso agware” (a small river that is enough for bathing). Amanokrom symbol signifies a small town that can do so many things in unity.</p>



Kronti Divisional symbol

Aduana is an Akan clan whose symbol is also used by “Kronti” division of Akuapem traditional area. It symbolises discovery, honesty industriousness, authority, and the seat of the chief.



Adonten Divisional Symbol

“Nkunkren” is an appellation by the Aburiman to exchange pleasantries or greetings and the response is “biakoye” (oneness). The symbol represents wildness, fearlessness, and authority.



Nifa Divisional Symbol

“Esieenso Kotoko” is an appellation of Adukrom Akuapem for showcasing how great, fearless, and strongest they are.

Source: Field survey (2019)

Symbolism of the Eight Akan Totems within Akuapem tradition

Table 4: The Eight Akan Totems

Akan Totems	Symbolism
 Asona (Crow)	Statesmanship and patriotism
 Oyokuo (Falcon)	Statesmanship, patience and bravery.
 Ekuona (Buffalo)	Honesty and uprightness
 Bretuo (Leopard)	Bravery and Aggressiveness



Agona (Parrot)

Eloquence and perfect management



Asakyiri (Vulture)

Calmness and patience



Asona (Dog with fire in the mouth)

Honesty and industriousness



Asenie (Bat)

Diplomatic and faithfulness

Source: Osei-Akoto (2010).

Fabric Design and Printing

Based on the concept of *unity is strength* and following the hierarchy of the state, the two (2) swords crossing each other (Figure 3a) were selected, signifying unity and a stool (Figure 3b) signifying royalty were used for the designing of the fabric. The sword and the stool were arranged and designed into a fabric

using the Adobe Photoshop application. Hand screen printing technique was employed for the printing of the design on velvet fabric as indicated in Figure 4a and 4b using the traditional colours of the Akuapem State.

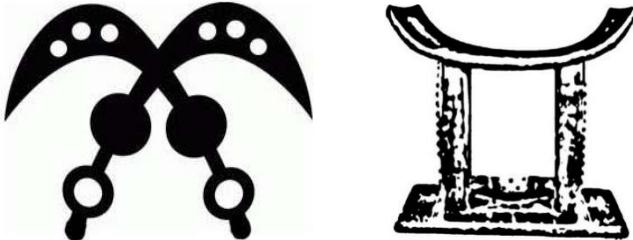


Figure 3a and 3b: Double crossed sword and Traditional stool. **Source:** Studio work, 2019



Figure 4a and 4b: Printed velvet fabric for the project
Source: Studio work, 2019

Traditional colours of Akuapem State and their symbolism

Blue is the main traditional colour of Akuapem. Blue is the colour of the sky and sea. It symbolizes trust, loyalty, wisdom, confidence, intelligence, faith, harmony and togetherness, truth, and heaven. Blue is considered beneficial to the mind and body; it slows human metabolism and produces a calming effect. Blue is strongly associated with tranquillity and calmness as Akuapem is noted for. Other colours peculiar to the Akuapem state are green, brown and purple. Green symbolizes growth, vegetation, spiritual growth, renewal, breaking of shackles, freedom from bondage fertility, bountifulness, hope, and the victory of life over death. Psychologically green relates to balance and harmony of the mind, the body and the emotions. It assists in decision making by helping us to see all sides clearly. Brown is associated with dependability and reliability, with steadfastness. In the design, brown is commonly used in the darkest forms as a replacement for black for a background colour. Purple represents associated with wealth and royalty, while lighter purples (like lavender) are considered more romantic (Cerrato, 2012).

Drawing Models for the Umbrella

Considering the concept of the study, several drawings were made using the symbols of Akuapem state to portray unity among the five (5) divisions and the paramount chief (Figure 5 - 7).



Figure 5



Figure 6

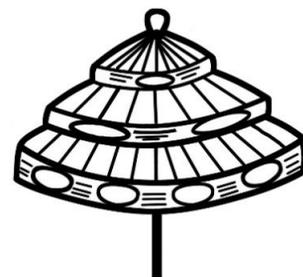


Figure 7

Fig. 5 - 7: Drawings of the umbrella.

Source: Studio work, 2019

The Palanquin Design

Similar to the design of the umbrella, drawings of the palanquin were made using the traditional symbols of Akuapem traditional area. The design has the five (5) wings put together to create a linkage between the divisional chiefs and that of the paramount chief for projecting unity, cohesion, and development. The palanquin design concept was developed from the main symbol of the Akuapem state, which is the elephant. Figures 8 - 11 show the drawings of the palanquin.

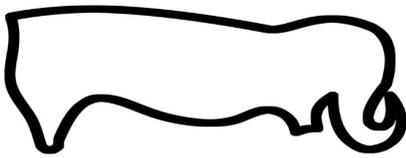


Figure 8

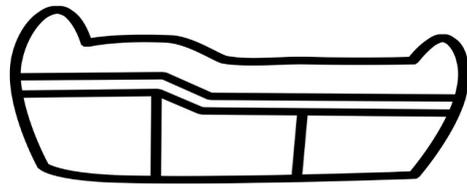


Figure 9

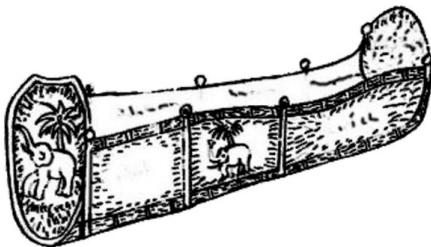


Figure 10

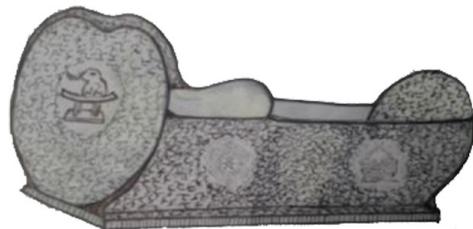


Figure 11

Figures 8 -11: Drawings of the palanquin.

Source: Studio work, 2019

Ranking and Selection of Ideas

After making several sketches, Figures 12 and 13 were selected from the sketch models of the umbrella and the palanquin. Details were further added to them to enhance the aesthetic qualities, which include a triple-headed umbrella and a palanquin with handle and backrest. Significantly, the new design of the triple-headed umbrella for the paramount chief can now pave the way for the divisional chiefs to use the double-headed type. The sub-chiefs would, however, use the single-headed umbrella to bring distinction between the chiefs in terms

of status during gatherings.



Figure 12

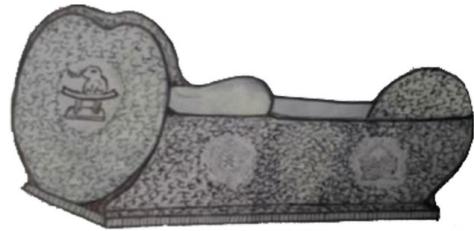


Figure 13

Figure 12 - 13: Ranked and Selected umbrella and palanquin.

Source: Studio work, 2019

3D Rendition of the Designs

Rhinoceros software was used in transforming designs from a two-dimensional view to three-dimensional shapes (3D). By using this software, selected designs were converted into three-dimensional shapes, and rendered them in colour (Figure 14 -16). The same software was used to design the prototypes that served as a guide during the actual production of the palanquin and the triple-headed umbrella (Figure 17 -18).

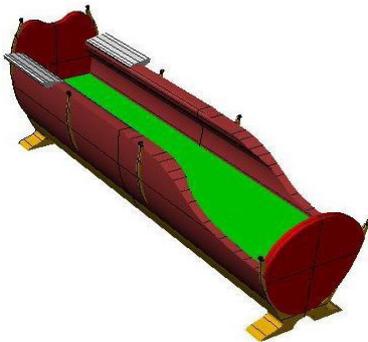


Figure 14

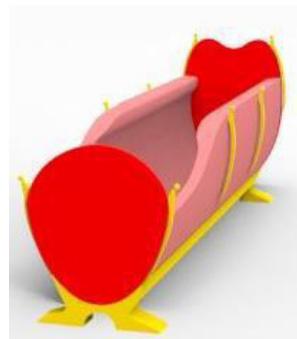


Figure 15

Figure 14 - 15: Rhinoceros designs.

Source: Studio work, 2019



Figure 16: *Rhinoceros design of the palanquin.*

Source: Studio work, 2019



Figure 17: Rhinoceros design of umbrella.

Source: Studio work, 2019



Figure 18: Rhinoceros design of umbrella.

Source: Studio work, 2019

Production Processes

The procedure for the production of the palanquin and umbrella evolved as follows:

- Based on the concept of unity and following the hierarchy of the Akuapem state, in the context of Universal Design Methodology, selected two swords crossing each other *Akofena* signifying unity. and a stool which signifies royalty in Ghanaian Traditional symbolism were used in the design and printed on a velvet fabric for the project.
- The framework of the palanquin was built with wood and woven with slashed rattan (*demire*) and cane (*nfiawn*). Bamboo was also slashed into slices and with the help of calved wood (*Koboko*) and nylon cord, the strictures were built.
- Trimmings and the various printed symbols were patched onto both regalia
- The actual *Okuapeman* symbol was calved with wood; two-dimensional (2D) form for the front view of the palanquin and three-dimensional (3D)

form for the top of the umbrella.

- Two (“4×4”) wood were calved for the carrying of the palanquin. A long stick was calved thick enough for the opening of the umbrella.
- The complete umbrella was opened by placing a wooden pole through the *koboko* for the smaller umbrella on top and locked with a nail. This was followed by the second step medium and the last larger section respectively. Finally, the 3D calved symbol was fixed on top of the umbrella.

Final Product Exhibition and Evaluation

The final products (Figure 19 – 20) were exhibited at KUNST Gallery for three days for the consumption of the general public. Many commendations and recommendations were made by the observers during the exhibition with respect to originality, suitability for the unity purpose, compliance to standards, cultural significance, amongst others. Pictures from the exhibition were sent to the elders and chiefs of Akuapem state for assessment and feedback where the products received positive approval awaiting the paramount chief to adopt them for use as custom demands.



Figure 19: Completed Umbrella.

Source: Studio exhibition 2019



Figure 20: Completed Palanquin.

Source: Studio exhibition 2019

Field Survey Findings on Royal Umbrellas and Palanquins

Observation made on royal umbrellas and palanquins used by a paramount chief, divisional chiefs, queen mothers and sub-chiefs during 2014 Akuapem Odwira festival revealed that both the paramount chief and the divisional chiefs use the Double-headed umbrella making it difficult to differentiate between them. Figure 21a indicates the umbrella used by elders, Figure 21b the sub-chiefs and queen mothers whereas Figure 21c is used by the divisional chiefs and the paramount chief.



Figure 21a



Figure 21b



Figure 21c

Source:

Field survey, Odwira festival (2014)

Figure 22a and 22b show traditional palanquin used both by sub-chiefs and divisional chiefs, whilst 22c is used by the paramount chief.



Figure 22a



Figure 22b



Figure 22c

Source: Field survey, Odwira festival (2014)

Evidently, the palanquin for the paramount chief aside the state symbol used has no symbolic element that is relevant to the unity of the Akuapim state. That of the subchiefs are out of place with no recognisable traditional elements to place them in the context of their respective traditional jurisdictions. Structurally, the curvy base of the existing palanquins makes them difficult for freestanding coupled with lack of comfortability and space requirements. These served as considerations for the study.

To ascertain acceptance for the unity regalia idea for Akuapem state, a total fifty (50) respondents made up of linguists, opinion leaders and elders were interviewed. Out of this, two (2) respondents (4%) were not in support of the use of divisional symbols for the production of the regalia for the state. Three (3) of the respondents (6%) could not decide whether to support or disagree with the idea. However, forty-five (45) respondents (90%) agreed and supported the idea of creating unification regalia for the Akuapem state. This suggests a strong acceptance of the design idea by the paramountcy and the people of Akuapem state.

Results and Discussion of the newly created royal umbrella and palanquin

The results of the newly created Akuapem state textile regalia (palanquin and umbrella in Figure 23) are discussed concerning their aesthetic, conceptual and philosophical significance.



Figure 23: Completed regalia (palanquin and the umbrella)

Source: Final exhibition, 2019

The Triple-headed Umbrella

The umbrella is in three sections (triple-headed). The first head, which is the largest carries the eight (8) Akan totems. Every clan in the Akan traditional area in Ghana has a totem. Akuapems, due to their good humanitarian relationship has at least three (3) of the Akan clan representatives or chiefs in every community. Every chief belongs to one of these clans but within a town, one may have three or more of these clans with their representative or chief who is identified by the symbol s/he uses. For example, Akropong, which is the paramount seat of Akuapem belongs to Asona clan with the crow as a totem. In the same town, the Kronti division, the second in command in terms of ranking of the chieftaincy, belongs to Aduana clan with the totem being a dog with fire in the mouth. However, within the same town, there are other clans such as Aseyiri with its totem being a vulture.

The findings from the field observation led to the placement of all the Akan clan totems around the edge of the first step of the umbrella. This implies that Akuapem, the mother of all, has these clans under the supremacy of the *Omanhene* of the land and for that matter they have to bow and pay homage to him. Also, in between each of the symbol is a design developed from the state sword and traditional stool which also represents kingship. The edge was finished with gold trimmings signifying wealth since the colour gold traditionally signifies wealth.

The second head of the umbrella, which is square-shaped signifies stability and orderly standing for firm foundations, both literal and metaphorical. It also represents the four (4) corners of Akuapem and, therefore, carries the symbols of the four (4) wings of the divisions of Akuapem which are Aburi, Amanokrom, Larteh and Adukrom. The fifth symbol on the same head is that of Akropong. The third head, however, carries the symbol of Akropong, which represents the seat of Akuapem traditional council. On top of the triple-headed umbrella is the sixth symbol carved with wood, which is the general symbol of Akuapem. This is the Akuapem state symbol carved with wood and plated with gold colour signifying wealth of the Akuapem State.

The umbrella is made of a screen-printed fabric using Ghanaian traditional symbols. The umbrella represents all the people of Akuapem, including the clans under one authority. The use of all the clan and divisional symbols on the umbrella in hierarchical order portrays unity. This is a wake-up call for all the people of Akuapem to see themselves as one people, irrespective of their root towards the development of the state.

The Palanquin

The palanquin was made with rattan in the form of a ship with a flat bottom which allows it to sit on the floor without any support. It is designed with backrest and two arms. The inner back is sloppy in order to make it possible for the chief to rest his back when sitting in the palanquin. Also, the two arms provide a resting place for the arms which are always fully loaded with pendants. Moreover, the umbrella fabric was also used for the palanquin for the purpose of harmony.

The five (5) divisional symbols are also found on the palanquin with the Akuapem traditional symbol added to the symbols. When the *Omanhene* sits in the palanquin, two symbols, Amanokrom and Adukrom are seen at his right-hand side whilst Aburi and Larteh symbols are found at his left. At the back of the palanquin is the "*Krontihene*" symbol which is also the immediate authority after the *Omanhene*, whereas the main Akuapem traditional symbol is carved in wood with gold plated and placed in front of the palanquin. The rough edges were furnished with gold trimmings signifying the office of higher authority as seen in (Figure 19).

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that despite the enforcement of unity agenda by Akapem state in 2013 which led to the cohesive celebration of Odwira Festival in 2014, distinguishing between the paramount chief, the divisional chiefs and the other sub-chief during the celebration was a difficult task. The reason being that the paramount chief and the divisional chiefs used the same type of umbrella with no hierarchical distinctions. Again, the study found no royal umbrella and palanquin during the festival with traditional symbols showing identity and status of the chiefs except the palanquin of the paramount chief which had the state symbol in front of it. Based on these empirical gaps, symbolic royal textile regalia were produced for the Akuapem state; a colossal umbrella with the name "*Ebisi bi so si bi so*", (a triple-headed umbrella) and a well-crafted palanquin with the major traditional symbols were produced for the paramount chief to be used during the celebration of Odwira festival and other important durbars that the chief may deemed fit. Significantly, the regalia, which comes with the traditional state symbols of the divisions and the clan symbols displaying unity among the entire states of Akuapem seek to bring all Akuapem people together under one umbrella for the socio-cultural and economic development of the State.

The newly produced regalia, with all the divisional symbols, the clans and the state symbol, signifying unity is expected to promote unity when used at the Odwira festival. Moreover, the palanquin and the umbrella show improvement on the existing ones with good features such as arm-rest and backrest making it very comfortable to use. The flat base also makes it easy to sit on the ground for easy boarding by the chief. Also, the triple-headed umbrella shows the hierarchy in terms of status in the kingship. When Omanhene uses the "*Ebi si bi so si bi so*" (triple-headed) umbrella, it enables the divisional chiefs to use '*Ebi si bi so*' (double-headed) umbrella leaving the single-headed type for the sub-chiefs. From this, there will be easier identification and recognition of the ranks of chiefs of Akuapem state during the Odwira festivals.

The study recommends the incorporation of traditional symbols in the production of regalia for cultural identity and distinction of status among chiefs in Ghana. By so doing, Ghanaians will be educated by traditional symbols of the various clans and royalty in Ghana as these symbols are displayed during festivals. Again, the study recommends to the chiefs especially the five divisional chiefs of Akuapem to use the divisional symbols mostly in their ceremonial clothing, paraphernalia, and regalia to project and reflect their

identity as a representative of their communities. Also, with the new design of the umbrella and the palanquin, the study recommends to the *Omanhene* to use the products to permit the divisional chiefs to use the double-headed umbrella whilst the sub-chiefs use the single-headed umbrella for easy identification and representation of the hierarchy.

References

- Agbo, H. A. (2006). *Values of Adinkra and Agama symbols* (Revised Edition). *Bigshy Designs and Publications*. KNUST, Kumasi.
- Amate, P. (2011). *Visual Representation of selected Akan proverbs in Ghana: Their Philosophical and Socio-cultural Values* [Unpublished MA Thesis]. College of Art and Social Sciences Department of General Art Studies, KNUST.
- Appiah, P. (2011, December 30). Akan symbolism. *Daily Graphic – Ghana*. <http://kunstpedia.com/articles/akan-symbolism.html>
- Deacon, T. W. (2011). *The symbol concepts*.
https://anthropology.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/symbol_concept.pdf
- Dzobo, N. K. (n.d.). *African symbols and proverbs as source of knowledge and truth*. <http://www.crvp.org/book/series>
- Gyamerah, S. K. (2014). *Pre-Burial rites in tutu in the Akuapem traditional area of Eastern part of Ghana* [Unpublished MPhil thesis]. University of Ghana, Legon.
- Gilbert, M. (1994). *Aesthetic strategies: The politics of a royal ritual*. Cambridge University Press. United States of America.
- Glover, S. (2004). *Separate visual representations in the planning and control of action*. Cambridge University Press. United States of America.
- Cerrato, H. (2012) *The meaning of colours*. Herman Cerrato – Graphic Designer. [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Cerrato,+H.+\(2012\)&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Cerrato,+H.+(2012)&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart)
- Kwamena-Poh, M. A. (1972). Government and politics in the Akuapem state. *Taylor & Francis, Ltd Vol. 10*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/483947>
- Labi, A. K. (2002). Akanization of the Hill Guan arts research review; NS 18.2.

Oduro-Awisi, K. A. (2013). *Chieftaincy disputes in Akuapem traditional area: A search for solution* [Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis]. Faculty of Social Sciences Department of Religious Studies, KNUST.

Offie TV (2020). *The ethnography of Akuapem*.

https://www.facebook.com/offietv/posts/the_ethnography_of_akuapemthe-history-of-the-akuapem-state-can-be-traced-as-far-/128560235479592/

Ofuafu, P. U. (2013). Art symbols as means of communicating religious concepts in Urhobo. Traditional Society. *The Journal of International Social Research*. Vol.6

Osei-Akoto, B. (2010). *Akans and their various Abusua*. Published by Justiceghana. Hits: 37199.

Van-Roosmalen (n.d.). *Universal design methodology*. The University of Pittsburgh, School of Health and Rehabilitation Science. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Universal-design-methodology_fig1_281003495

About the Authors

Solomon Marfo Ayesu is a lecturer at the Department of Fashion Design and Textile Studies. He holds HND (Fashion and Textile Design) from Kumasi Polytechnic while the BA (Hons)Textiles, and MFA Textile Design were obtained from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). His research interests are textile design, fashion design, textile printing and dyeing, design thinking and innovation, drawing and illustration, Art and culture.

Ebenezer Kofi Howard is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Industrial Art (Textiles). He holds BA (Hons) Textiles, MA Art Education, MFA Textile Design and PhD in Art Education, all from KNUST. His research focuses on design thinking and innovation, textile art and design, textile printing and finishing, fashion design and illustration, and Art education.

Benjamin K. Asinyo is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Industrial Art, KNUST, Kumasi. He holds BA Industrial Art (Textiles Option) and PhD Art Education from KNUST. He is a research fellow, designer, curriculum developer and lecturer. He instructs in textiles, research methodology and computer

applications in Design. His initiative is to encourage ICT application in higher education, and has several articles to his credit.

David Anokye is a practising textile artist and the head of visual arts department of Centre for National Culture, Kumasi-Ashanti. He holds HND in Commercial Art (Textiles), B.Ed. in Art (Textiles) and MFA Textile Design from the Takoradi Polytechnic, UEW and KNUST. His research desires are in Art and Culture related issues, tourism, textile dyeing and weaving.

Editorial Board

JAAC have committed editorial team with expertise in the diverse fields in the African Arts and Culture disciplines. They are well grounded and work together to maintain the reputation of the journal in academism.

Chief Editor

Prof. Obed Acquah

Co-Editors

Prof. Mary Dzansi - McPalm

Prof. James Flolu

Prof. C.W.K. Mereku

Dr. R.E.K. Amissah

Dr. Ernest Kwesi Amponsah

Dr. Ebenezer Acquah

Dr. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel

Dr. Joseph Essuman

Dr. Evans Asante

Managing Editor

Dr. S.M. Yirenkyi

Graphic Editors

Dr. Patrique deGraft - Yankson

Mr. Nicholas Opoku

Advisory Board

Prof. J.Y. Sekyi-Baidoo

Dr. Edward Appiah

Dr. Christiana Hammond

Dr. Eric Debrah Otchere

Rev. Dr. Elias Asiamah

Past Chief Editor

Prof Kojo Fosu

Call for Paper

The Journal of African Arts & Culture (JAAC) is an open access online platform for scholarly dialogue relating to African Arts and culture. It is committed to publishing and disseminating high quality scholarly materials that demonstrate the power and significances of the arts and culture in general in African society past and present. This journal with interdisciplinary scope publishes progressive research in the field of ancient, contemporary and modern African Arts and Culture. It covers issues in both performing and visual arts; accepts original scientific papers, critical essays, interviews, exhibition and book reviews, critiques, short reports amongst others.

JAAC welcomes article submissions at any time. JAAC is published four times a year: March, June, September, and December.

Send all inquiries about your article submission to:

jaac.journal@gmail.com OR

info@jaac-sca.org

For more information on submission guidelines visit <https://jaac-sca.org>