
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Historic Headgears of Asantehene and their Symbolisms: The Case of Manhyia Palace Museum

Bernice Quampah¹, Emmanuel Bempong², Dr. Edward Owusu³ ✉ and Prof. Jones Lewis Arthur⁴

¹Lecturer, Department of Communication Studies, Sunyani Technical University, Sunyani, Ghana

²Assistant Lecturer, Department of Communication Studies, Sunyani Technical University, Sunyani, Ghana.

³Senior Lecturer, Department of Communication Studies, Sunyani Technical University, Sunyani, Ghana

⁴Associate Professor, Department of General Agriculture, Sunyani Technical University, Sunyani, Ghana

Corresponding Author: Dr. Edward Owusu, **E-mail:** edwardowusu@minister.com

| ABSTRACT

Artifacts are immensely useful to scholars who want to learn about a culture. When an artifact is conserved to retain its current condition, it preserves the truth of the historical story for generations to come. The Manhyia Palace Museum of Kumasi Metropolis (in Ghana) is one of the places where historical artifacts of the Ashantis (also known as the Asantes) have been preserved. However, some of the names of these artifacts remain unknown to the general public. Just as many people are ignorant about the symbolic meanings of these artifacts, the users and the occasions for utilizing such artifacts have not been documented. In light of these gaps, this study seeks to unearth the historical headgears of Asantehene. Relying principally on the qualitative research methods, the ethnographic research design was employed to gather data from four (4) sub-chiefs of Kumasi and two (2) curators of the Manhyia Palace Museum, who were purposively selected. In-depth interviews and observation were used to solicit data from the respondents. The findings of the research revealed some significance of the headgear and its physical features. Based on the conclusion, recommendations such as methods of preserving such historical artefacts have been suggested.

| KEYWORDS

Asantehene, Asanteman, Headgears, Symbolism, Artifacts, Manhyia Palace Museum.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Headgear is an object that humans use to cover their heads. It usually has a distinctive crown and brim, which has different uses. It is a symbol of position, office, class, and regional identity (Sontag, 2018). Headgears vary from society to society. Before the defeat of the Spanish, indigenous people in the Andes wore different headdresses as symbols of their regional and ethnic identities. Indians were viewed as property that was tied to parcels of land as the Inca Empire was colonized by the Spanish. Spanish landlords created some type of distinguishing headgear to recognize their subjects and set them apart from Indians living on nearby holdings. (O'toole, 2012). This custom has persisted among isolated rural populations as a symbol of place identification. Natives still create their hats with a distinctive flair. An example is the Tarabucos in Bolivia. The three-pointed Montera hats worn by Spanish matadors in the 19th century are similar to the caps worn by married women. Unmarried men and women don caps resembling those worn by Spanish soldiers in the struggle for independence, which is made of a narrow cylindrical fabric decorated with a bird, flower, and bead motifs (Chico, 2013). These caps resemble marching band hats, but they contain a flap that rests on the nape of the neck, signifying immaturity or being incomplete. Although the hefty, leather adult men's cap resembles a Spanish

helmet, folklore points to several sources of influence. There is a mountain in Tarabuco whose peak has a man's face-like feature. Indigenous people hold that this mountain's current shape was created by the spirits of men who perished fighting for their independence. According to one version of the folktale, this profile served as inspiration for the adult men's cap. The alternative explanation is that it was a helmet copy of the Spanish variety. The more plausible explanation is that it was built during the conflict to serve as a reminder of how cruel the native inhabitants of Tarabuco were toward the Spanish soldiers (heart eaters in Quechua). In the Andes, the hat serves as a conduit for social and cultural reproduction through disseminating customs, information, and beliefs (Morales, 2012). Being indigenous, illiterate, and monolingual also implies being removed from popular culture. Unfortunately, globalization and the widespread use of headgear pose a threat to the artistic creations of identity.

1.1 Evolution of the Asanteman

Several scholars have presented various opinions on the origin of Asanteman. For instance, from the viewpoint of Osei (2004), Asante lived in clans. Those who belonged to the Oyoko and Aduana clans claim to have migrated from a hole, and the rest who belonged to Bretuo, Asona, Asene, Ekuona, Agona, and Asakyiri claim to have fallen from the skies. Before migrating to Africa, Asante lived in Mesopotamia and Israel (Curtin and Curtin, 1984). They also shared the same ancestry. They may have been associated with the Old Ghana Empire as well. Asante travelled south in pursuit of peaceful, agriculturally-friendly areas that were free from conflict and strife (Ampene, 2021). The Asante people arrived in Gonjaland in the 14th century and then relocated on purpose to the Adanse region in the south to start farming. Their homes were caves, large tree buttresses, and trees (Williams, 1930). They claimed to have come from a hole or the heavens as a result of their shelters. Their population had significantly grown by the fifteenth century, and they had left Adanse to establish other townships. They eventually became divided as a result of their propensity to fight at the slightest provocation as time went on. As a result of this, any neighbouring ethnic group could easily attack them. They also had clan leaders as opposed to a single sovereign who would have ultimate control over them. During the rule of Nana Osei Tutu I (from 1695 to 1719), Okomfo Anokye assembled these leaders and summoned a Golden Stool to fall from the sky and land in his lap, making him the first Asantehene and the ultimate keeper of the Golden Stool. Okomfo Anokye told them that the Golden stool contained the spirit of all Asante, and this marked the beginning of the Asante. They were informed by Okomfo Anokye that the Golden Stool held the collective spirit of all Asante, which marked the beginning of the Asante Okomfo Anokye and their unification. They have gained thus much strength, fortune, power, and notoriety as a result of this. They were able to free themselves after this by capturing their rival states, notably the Denkyiras. Additionally, they were able to expand their empire through conflict and conquest. Okomfo Anokye joined together. They have gained thus much strength, fortune, power, and notoriety, thanks to this. From this point on, they were able to liberate themselves by conquering their rival states, like the Denkyiras. Additionally, via war and conquest, they were able to grow their domain.

Since the time of Nana Osei Tutu I, Asante has been ruled successfully by kings from the royal family. People are required to meet certain qualifications before ascending to the Asante throne. Secondly, one qualifies to be an Asante royal when his or her mother comes from the Asante royal family. According to Osei (2004), the following are the kings who have successfully ruled Asante:

1. Nana Osei Tutu 1 (1695 to 1719)
2. Nana Opoku Ware 1 (1720 to 1750)
3. Nana Kusi Obodum (1750 to 1764)
4. Nana Osei Kwadwo (1764 to 1777)
5. Nana Osei Kwame Panin (1777 to 1797)
6. Nana Opoku Fofie (1797 to 1799)
7. Nana Osei Kwame Asibe Bonsu (1799 to 1824)
8. Nana Osei Yaw Akoto (1824 to 1834)
9. Nana Kwaku 1 (1834 to 1867)
10. Nana Kofi Karikari (1867 to 1874)
11. Nana Mensa Bonsu (1874 to 1883)
12. Nana Kwaku Duah (1884 to 1884)
13. Nana Kwasi Agyeman Prempeh I (1888 to 1931)
14. Nana Osei Agyeman Prempeh II (1931 to 1970)
15. Nana Opoku Ware 11 (1970 to 1999)
16. Nana Otumfuo Osei Tutu II (1999 to date).

One cannot dispute the fact that the origin of the Asante empire can be traced to several schools of thought. While some believe they originated from one clan, others think that they lived in scattered clans until they finally became united under the leadership of Nana Osei Tutu I. In the opinion of Fage (1969), Asante came together because they all came from one clan – the Oyoko. However, in the works of Osei (2004), all Asante people came from different clans but managed to merge later.

1.2 The Birth of the Museum of Manhyia Palace

The Museum of the Manhyia Palace (of Asanteman) dates back to 1888 when Nana Prempeh I succeeded the throne of Asante. Due to the competition for control of Africa, the British offered Asante a treaty of protection in 1891 during his reign. Nana Prempeh, I turned down this proposal. Later, he sent a delegation to England to negotiate a treaty of amity and cooperation with the British. However, the British turned down his offer, and in January 1896, while they were still in England, they invaded Asante (Boahen 2003). The chiefs and advisors of Nana Prempeh I wanted to confront the British soldiers when they invaded Kumasi, but he opposed them. He bowed to the British humbly and peacefully, but on January 20, 1896, the British illegally detained him, his family, and several of his leaders, ransacked the palace and desecrated the Bantama Mausoleum. Then, Nana Prempeh I and his group were expelled, first to Elmina and then to Cape Coast, where they remained until December 1896. On January 1st, 1897, they were transferred to Freetown, Sierra Leone (Adjaye, 1989). The Yaa Asantewaa war broke out in August 1900 as a result of the British refusal to return their monarch to them and their demand for the Golden Stool. As a result of this battle, the Asante royal prisoners were transferred to a Seychelles island in the Indian Ocean. The month of September 1900 saw their arrival. On November 11th of that year, 1924, Nana Prempeh I returned to Ghana. When he came back, he had no palace to live in, so he lodged at Asafohene's palace. After that, as payment to Asante, the British government constructed a new palace. The palace built by the British has now been converted into a museum when Otumfuo Opoku Ware II built a new palace very close to the old one (Boahen 2003).

1.3 Significance of Artefacts and Museums

Redmond (2006) defined an artefact as a human-made object, which includes things like tools, weaponry, clothing, and containers. The educational evaluation of an artefact's historical, aesthetic, scientific, cultural, or monetary context determines the artifact's value. An artifact's historic value is defined as its ability to inform viewers of past events that affected a population or other living thing over a specific period of time. The beauty of an artefact can be found in its design or in how well it does its intended function. This is referred to as aesthetic value. The significance of an artefact in the cultural or daily practices of its people is referred to as the artefact's cultural worth. The worth of the item in terms of its price when it is purchased or sold is referred to as its monetary value. According to Dale (1960), individuals recall 50% of what they see and hear at once; thus, when the "seeing" and "hearing" all occur at once, it becomes possible for easy remembrance at a later time. This implies that when people visit a museum, they see artefacts and hear what staff members have to say about them. This allows museum visitors to utilize more of their senses to learn, which improves their understanding and helps them remember what they have learned much better. This implies that objects are also used as teaching tools in schools. Again, museums, as memory banks, keep artefacts of a certain period for the current generation to know the kind of art which was once done in past centuries, e.g., of such is the art of the caveman (Pollock, 2004). Museums promote the literacy level of people both in the museum and outside the walls of the museum through reading for information, lectures given, and pleasure shown in the proliferation of images and sound on television. Videos can also be used by a civilization to educate the next generation about its past. Society benefits from not having to do things the same way twice. By displaying images, diagrams, and films, which are occasionally backed by the Ministry of Health, they assist communities in stopping certain unsanitary activities to stop the spread of certain epidemic diseases (Vergeront, 2004).

1.4 Statement of the Problem

It is an undisputed fact that headgears constitute an integral part of indigenous African societies. However, the names of some of these heritages remain unknown to the majority of people. Similarly, its representations have not been documented though few studies have been carried out on headgear by some scholars (for example, Arnoldi and Kremer, 1995 and Chio, 2015). The few studies on headgear focused on the general perspective of headgear across the continent of Africa. Thus, little has been done on the history behind Asantehene's indigenous headgear. It is in light of this gap that we seek to unravel the types of indigenous headgears of the Asantehene (which are found in the Manhyia Palace Museum) and its cultural symbolism.

1.5 Objectives of the Research

Generally, the paper seeks to examine the indigenous headgears of the Asantehene. Specifically, the paper seeks to:

- 1- identify the types of historic headgears usually worn by the Asantehene.
2. assess the symbolisms of indigenous headgears of the Asantehene

2. Headgears and Methods of Producing them

Headgears worn by men and women are usually made of local materials. While the form and method of ordinary headwear might be exquisite, practical considerations for affordability and durability typically forbid the excessive use of delicate materials like feathers (the main component of the Tikar headpiece) or laborious artistic elaborations. Reeds, grasses, and tree fibers are woven into lovely headwear using a variety of basketry techniques (Pullanikkatil, Thondhlana and Shackleton, 2021). Some examples precisely imitate the shapes and designs of basketry containers, such as tightly woven hats made of grass fiber from Madagascar

that are decorated to seem like overturned baskets. This type of hat was first observed on ladies in Madagascar around the beginning of the 20th century. They have a deceptively straightforward appearance, but their technique—which combines a circular body with a rectangular crown—is quite advanced. The hat's understated brim shows that its primary function was as a statement about suitable female attire rather than as weather protection (Tull, 2021). The same might be said of the Nkutu men's caps in Zaire. Their creation demonstrates both a high level of technical skill and a vibrant aesthetic appeal, which is frequently reflected in woven geometric patterns. In Nigeria, Yoruba men frequently don towering cylindrical hats lined with cotton and manufactured from a variety of locally available fabrics (Arnoldi and Kreamer, 1995). The headgear, which is frequently decorated with embroidery patterns, is typically included in a coordinated cloth outfit that matches a flowing Hausastyle robe or an embroidered smock and pant combo. When lurex threads first became available on the market a few decades ago, they were quickly added to the locally woven fabric, giving the hats a touch of glitz and shine (Chico, 2013).

2.1 South African Headgears

According to Ryzik (2018), the Zulu bride from South Africa mostly wears a flaring red headdress reminiscent of the hairstyle of her ancestors. The Zulu hat is depicted in figure 1. This traditional headdress was originally made from her mother's hair and received as a gift on the day of her marriage. The Zulu hat comes in different sizes and colours, although most of them look cyclical. In the local Zulu language, it is called isicholo. During cultural and religious ceremonies, the Zulu hat is worn by married women. The hat is made of grass and coloured using ochre, an earthy mineral of iron mixed with clay, sand and animal fat. It is used to identify married women in a crowd (Chico, 2013).



Figure 1: Zulu bride from South Africa in a red headgear
Source: Chico (2013).

2.2 Headgear of the Krobos (in Ghana)

Figure 2 shows a hat that contributes to the Dipo custom. This headgear, known in the local Krobo language as komi pee, is a specially crafted elongated and cylindrically shaped basket hat that is used to cover the head of a Dipo initiate. This is one of the handcrafts purported in former days to have been learnt during the seclusion phase of the Dipo puberty rite. The basket hat is also worn by priests (but not priestesses) because, as the female Dipo initiates, the priest qualifies for appointment to office by undergoing rites similar to those undergone by the girls. This hat is believed to have immense religious significance; hence, one must be ritually clean to wear it (Adinku, 2016).



Figure 2: Initiates wearing basket hats
Source: Adinku, 2016



Figure 3: Priest wearing basket hat
Source: Adinku, 2016

2.3 Creativity in making Headgears

African hats can change, protect, disclose, or cover the head while coming in a range of shapes and materials. Bark, cotton, palm fiber, wool, gourds, animal manes, hides, and skins, as well as metal, have all been inventively used by many societies in the process of dressing the head. This is due to the enormous variety of local flora and wildlife that goes into their manufacture. Young Konkomba males, for instance, don helmets (ipiedza) when they dance at weddings and the funerals of senior men and women in northern Ghana (Arnoldi and Kreamer, 1995). These dances imitate warfare and are interspersed with loud yells. Several ethnic groups in northern Ghana and Nigeria make and use similar horned helmets with calabash or basketry bases. Even while some people still wear helmets now, they were much more prevalent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As diverse as the materials that African hatmakers utilize are their methods. Some artists use plaiting and twining, two basketry techniques. Others cut, shape, and sew skins or fabrics. The base materials of many hats are painted, pyro-engraved, incised, dyed, applied, and embellished (Square, 2013).

2.4 Importance of Headgears

Headgears and hairstyles are frequently used in Africa to transform the head, and by extension, the entire body, into a cultural entity. They can be used to designate warriors, diviners, hunters, musicians, and other specialists, as well as to signify membership in specific religious and initiation societies, mark and celebrate changes in a person's life cycle, and identify important participants at rituals and festivals (Sherron, 2006). Men and women both wear hats, caps, and head ties as they go about their daily lives. In addition to shielding the user from the weather, they frequently fulfil the community's expectations of decorum and modesty and act as a declaration of ethnic membership in a multi-ethnic setting. The arts of head dressing are used to express and explore widely held cultural beliefs and ideals concerning racial and ethnic identity, gender, life phases, power and position, profession, and social propriety. Additionally, they can convey the wearer's individual aesthetic tastes, emotions, and thoughts about fashion and modernity, as well as their support for or dedication to a specific job or course of action. Headgear and coiffures are a form of material "language" that may be worn and taken off, altered, and given a variety of meanings depending on how and where they are used (Arnoldi & Kreamer, 1995).

3. Methods

Relying principally on the qualitative research methods, the ethnographic research design was employed. Specifically, descriptive research was used in assessing the content of the data collected. Since our study involved the collection of data about the historical background of the artefacts, description of artefacts, and their interpretations, this design was solicited.

3.1 The Participants

The participants (main respondents) for the study who provided key data were four (4) chiefs of Asanteman and two (2) curators of the Manhyia Palace Museum. These respondents were purposively selected. In the case of the curators, they were responsible for giving data to any person who visits the Museum. These six (6) respondents described the artefacts and provided their meanings.

3.2 The Data

The data for this paper were the artefacts and their meanings solicited from the Manhyia Palace Museum. Also, we gathered data from the following libraries: Sam Jonah library, Cape Coast, KNUST Main library, Kumasi, and the Internet. Four (4) months (i.e.,

September 2022 to December 2022) were used in collecting the data. The library information was particularly used for the review of literature related to the study.

3.3 Instruments

In-depth interviews and observations were the two main instruments used in collecting data from the respondents. Interviews provide information that cannot be obtained through observation, or they can be used to verify the observation used for the study Ary et al., (2018). The lead interviewer from the four (4) researchers asked relevant questions concerning the museum, artefacts, and the interviewees also gave relevant information to the questions asked. The observation helped us to obtain in-depth information that the in-depth interview could not give. Again, with the permission of the curators, we captured some images with our devices. Thus, the staff who helped us at the museum brought out the artefacts which were in their showcases for us to observe critically and take photographs of them.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data collected were assembled, described, and interpreted. Afterwards, these data were descriptively analysed, and conclusions/recommendations were made. Thus, the content of the data was analysed using the objectives of the study as themes. Usually, such conceptual analysis aid in examining the existence of selected terms in the data (Owusu et al., 2019).

4. Findings of the Study

Through our respondents, these findings were made about the royal headgears of the Asantehene. At the Manhyia Palace Museum, the curator gave his general impression about headgears. He explained that headgears come in different forms, some are for both sexes and others are unisex. While some are worn to keep the hair in order, others are worn to protect the head from injury. Crowns are symbolic headgears worn by royalty, and they symbolise nobility, royalty, and power to rule. In corroboration, this, Sherrow (2006) stressed that headgears can be used to designate warriors, diviners, hunters, musicians, and other specialists. Again, they are used to signify membership in specific religious and initiation societies, mark and celebrate changes in a person's life cycle, and identify important participants at rituals and festivals. The curator further explained that certain historic headgears exist within the palace and are worn only on special occasions. They are exclusively reserved for the Asantehene. They have existed for many years and have been handed down from generation to generation. Materials used in making the headgears include metal, leather, cotton, straw, raffia, and wood. At the Manhyia Palace Museum, the curator showed us four royal headgears – 1) Obi nka obi a, obi nka obi kye, 2) Denkyemkye, 3) Odwirakye, and 4) a northern hat. The curator elucidated the significance of the four hats as follows:

4.1 Symbolism of Denkyemkye

From our observation, the *Denkyemkye* is a wooden image of a hat carved into the object of three energetic animals, which are the python, the eagle, and the crocodile. In a conversation with the curator, this artefact was carved by an Asante carver, of which the date for making the work is not known. It consists of the non-concrete images of an eagle, a python, and a crocodile which were all carved from one piece of wood.

The symbolism of Denkyemkye was provided by the curator of the Manhyia Palace Museum. He said Denkyemkye is worn once in the lifetime of the Asantehene before he is enstooled or sits on the Golden Stool. Three elements in the world are represented by these creatures. They are the earth, the heavens, and the bodies of fresh water. The eagle primarily hunts in the skies, while the python hunts on land (earth), and the crocodile hunts in freshwater. All of these elements are represented by the Asantehene. Asante's insignia is based on these graphics. The Asante symbol is meant to teach the general populace about the Asantehene's dread and power. The Asantehene is so revered that these are the creatures that could be compared to him. The Asantehene is the only political figure in the Asante kingdom who wears this emblem, which distinguishes him politically from all other chiefs. He also has the ultimate political power and authority in his kingdom to issue certain measures and orders, such as whether a chief should be demoted or not. The hat is made of woven leather strips that have been left in their original cream colour. The colour of the hat has faded slightly since it has been in existence for a long and has been subjected to a lot of touches.



Figure 4: Denkyemkye of Manhyia Palace Museum

The narration provided by the assistant curator of the Museum supports the viewpoint of the main curator. The assistant curator of the Manhyia Palace Museum quoted the following phrase to show his perspective of the Denkyemkye:

I have worked at the Museum for many years. In the course of the discharge of my duties, I have realised that certain artefacts are meant solely for the king of the Asante kingdom. It attests to his supremacy. Even those artefacts meant for him are not used haphazardly. Tradition demands that he uses them sparingly. A case in point is the Denkyemkye. The only period he is required to wear it is a few days to his enstoolment. He wears it only once. Custom does not permit him to wear it twice. The strength and characteristics of these three animals are supposed to be featured in the administration of the king. This explains why he wears them to be physically and spiritually equipped.

The above explanation synchronises with the works of Arnoldi and Kreamer (1995) when they explain that headgears are a highly symbolic representation of the wearer. They identify people as nobles and royals. As a result of their symbolism, they automatically ginger the wearers to play certain specific roles within their communities. Similarly, when people detect others in such headgears, they are accorded the necessary respect and reverence.

4.2 Odwira Kye and its Symbolism

The next headgear, which is portrayed in figure 5, was identified as *Odwira Kye*. In the explanation of the curator of the museum, an Asante artist created the *Odwira Kye* artefact. This hat has been worn since the seventeenth century. The Asantehene wears this headgear during *Odwira* ceremonies. In Twi, *Odwira* refers to a purification or cleaning festival, and *kye* refers to a hat. The leather which was employed for the construction of the hat was carefully designed with several diamond shapes created on the animal skin. In correspondence to this, Ryzik (2018) attested that the construction of headgears are usually done using materials obtained from the immediate local environment. These materials are processed artistically with the aid of local tools and materials. Unfortunately, the specific date for the construction of the *Odwira Kye* remains unknown since it has not been documented.



Figure 5: Odwira Kye of Manhyia Palace Museum

The *Odwira Kye* is normally worn during the *Odwira* Festival and other *Odwira* ceremonies. The function of this hat is to educate people that there is a period of purification for the Asante kingdom. This educates the public that in life, there is a spiritual practice done to cleanse and purify the Asante kingdom of their wrongdoings. Also, peace, protection, and prosperity are sought from God and the spirits of the ancestors for their kingdom. The *Odwira Kye* is portrayed in figure 5.

4.3 *Obi Nka Obi a, Obi Nka Obi Kye and its Symbolism*

Obi nka obi a, obi nka obi kye (which is translated as *if no one bites no one, no one bites no one*) is depicted in figure 6. The overseer at Manhyia Palace Museum explained that *Obi nka obi a, obi nka obi kye* is a leather work that is of Asante's origin. In his narration, we gathered that it was made during the reign of Nana Osei Kwadwo I, who ruled from 1764 to 1777. The *Obi nka obi a, obi nka obi kye* is six inches in height and eighteen inches around the circumference (at the middle point) and is made of gold, leather, and green local pigment. Gold is used to make designs that are creatively attached to the hat. The designs are close to each other. The *Obi nka obi a, obi nka obi* design is a bit abstract, but with a critical look, it is like two fishes in a river with each other's head at the tail of each other. The artist made use of several elements of design, like organic shapes for the abstract fish. There are also geometric shapes like triangles, squares, and circles. The elements in the composition are unified, and they do balance with each other. The respondent indicated that the "*Obi nka obi a, obi nka obi kye*" was taken away by the British in 1874 during the reign of Nana Kofi Karikari from 1867 to 1874. He emphasized that the hat was later sold to an auction house and that Nana Opoku Ware II was allowed to purchase it when he traveled to Britain. Nana Opoku Ware II accepted the offer.

From an in-depth interview with the two curators of the Manhyia Palace Museum, we gathered that *Obi nka obi a, obi nka obi kye* is made of gold, leather, and green pigment. These were used to create it. It was abstractly designed to take the shape of two fishes joined together. The symbol on it talks about living peacefully with everyone in society. Symbolically, it implies that Asante did not just go to war, but they did so when the need arose. An example is when an enemy state tried to take advantage of them, they would also retaliate. It also teaches the public to live in harmony and peacefully with each other because the figure on the hat represents balance forces and equal strength between two people or two parties in society. When these people or parties are aware of each other's strength and know that neither can be conquered by the other, they all try to hold their peace in order not to offend the other. Thus, each is aware that the moment one party tries to initiate a fight or offend the other, the other party will retaliate.

In confirmation of the above explanation, one of the sub-chiefs we interviewed provided the following narration:

Many people are of the perception that Asantes are warlike, but it is not always the case. When other communities get closer to us, they realise Asantes are a bunch of peace-loving people. The reason is that peaceful co-existence promotes unity and progress in a society. This notion is depicted in so many symbols. A case in point is the representation of this perception in the royal artefacts of the kings of Asanteman. Thus, any reigning king should wear it. A sacrilege and an offence to the throne are made when a chief fails to wear it.

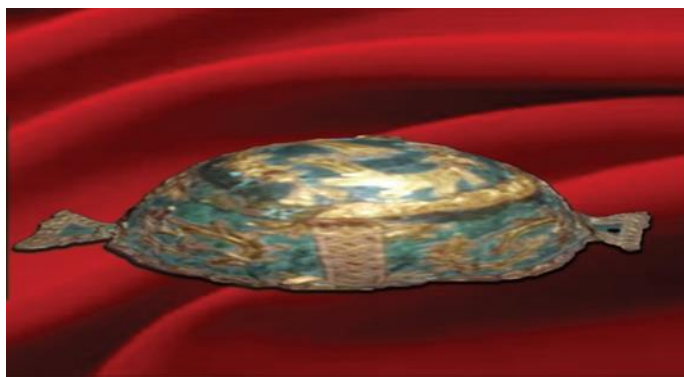


Figure 6: *Obi Nka Obi a, Obi Nka Obi Kye*

4.4 *Northern Hat and its Significance*

The fourth headgear consisted of two hats which were presented to Nana Prempeh II by some northerners as a demonstration of peaceful coexistence between Asanteman and the people of the northern sector of Ghana. The headgears were presented alongside two walking sticks, one bow, and an arrow. The presentation was done between 1931 and 1970. We understood from the curator of the museum that these were used by Nana Prempeh II to patrol the principal streets of Kumasi as a sign of protecting his citizens. He believed that as the Asantehene, he had to be the watchdog for his society.

It was observed that artefacts depicted in figures 7 and 8 were mainly made from leather and cane products. During an in-depth interview with the curator of Manhyia Palace Museum, we gathered that other materials which were used to make these artefacts were straw, colour and plastic. They were locally manufactured by some Northern region artists of Ghana, and they were given to Nana Prempeh II between 1931 and 1970. These artefacts (walking sticks, two hats, one bow, and arrows) vary in length and size.

One of the hats is made of leather, and the other is made of straw. The bows are wrapped in leather, whereas the arrows are made of rattan. From observation, the walking sticks are covered with leather and decorated with strings of beads. The bow is draped in natural leather; the arrow holders are covered with natural leather. The arrows were left in their natural colour. The hat was made of straw and dyed red, yellow, and green, but they have faded. The leather hat was decorated with fading colours red, black, and yellow. The colours applied to the hats were creatively and carefully applied at certain points.

The artist made use of elements of design-like lines and cylinders, which are all geometric shapes. These elements of design are in unity. The colours of these items have partly faded or peeled off, thus indicating a very old age. These artefacts educate the public on the Asantehene being the sole physical and spiritual head for the security of his people. The bestowing of gifts upon people brings peace and harmony. These artefacts educate the public on the possibility of every tribe borrowing aspects of culture from other tribes. Again, they educate the public on the fact that the Asantehene must protect his people both physically and spiritually. This teaches the public the importance of giving gifts to people since gifts have the propensity of bringing people together for friendship.

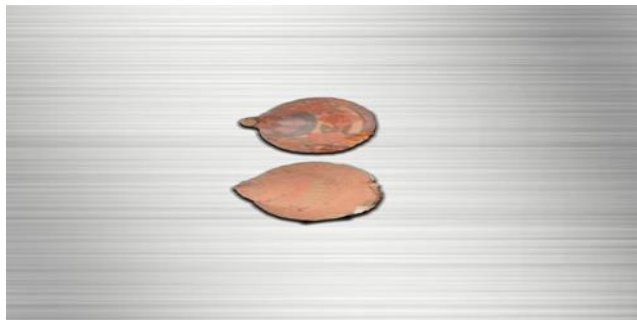


Figure 7: Two Northern Hats



Figure 8: Walking Stick and Bows and Arrows

The existence of the northern hat continually reminds the indigenous people about the friendly relationship Nana Prempeh II had with some northerners some time ago. The relevance of the hats from the northern region was later confirmed in an in-depth interview by a sub-chief of the traditional area:

Friendship helps to celebrate good times and provide support during bad times. Friendship prevents isolation and loneliness and gives you a chance to offer needed companionship. Friendship can also increase your sense of belonging and purpose. The provision of gifts and visits strengthens the relationship which people have with others. The natives of the Northern zone felt like establishing good ties with other people, predominantly with the Asantes, to foster support for each other when the need arises. This was achieved through the presentation of hats to Nana Prempeh II between 1931

and 1970. This hat has been preserved since that time. It educates the public on the necessity of fostering inter-ethnic and interpersonal relationships.

5. Conclusion

To conclude the discussion on hats, different indigenous materials are utilised to shape and create headgears. They are the representation of visual art forms. It was observed that some headgears are culturally symbolic and, therefore, exclusively worn by certain categories of people. Most of them have been passed down from generation to generation and are used by kings when they are performing certain ceremonial duties. These art forms are found both at the Asante culture centre and Manhyia Palace Museum. These art forms are mainly for exhibition and posterity. The reviewed historical hats are exclusively reserved for the king. It is presented in different shapes using different materials and worn on different occasions.

We recommend that since artefacts play significant roles in remembering and honouring those involved, it is important to preserve them appropriately. It has to be cleaned periodically to maintain its purity. Alternatives of such artefacts can be produced and kept in safe places to prevent the original ones from being extinct in case of fire outbreak or theft. Archival-safe, acid-free boxes, tissues, and foams can be used to keep them safe. Again, the upcoming generations can be encouraged to appreciate the historic artefacts of Ghana instead of cherishing the foreign-oriented ones. As more people treasure these artefacts, revenue can be generated for the Asanteman state and the nation as a whole. In addition, the nation can generate funds internally since most of these headgears are produced from local materials, which are easily accessible and less expensive. Consequently, many people can venture into such crafts and other related ones to reduce the unemployment rate in the country.

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