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Mastering Adinkra Symbols: An Establishment of Positive Ghanaian Personality in the Next Generation

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Overview- Adinkra symbols, one of the oldest of all art forms, reaching back to prehistoric times, are an important determiner of cultural mutuality among Ghanaians. Adinkra symbols and their meanings have a positive impact on instilling in Ghanaians the pride of identifying themselves as Ghanaians and holding on to it. Well-meaning Ghanaians and important stakeholders in education who are rooted in tradition are keen at being equipped with possibilities of providing a re-orientation of the cultural values among learners if there is the need to present what was good in ancient eyes and move forward undeterred to make a better tomorrow. Human beings, as products of the many different cultures which surround us, can never be seen as culture free. Adinkra symbols and their meanings, if embedded in any form of teaching, have the potential of fostering emotional and cultural intelligence in alienated Ghanaians to return to the glorious past so as to re-validate viable values, contextualize and consolidate them for today, avert the mistakes of the past and confront tomorrow with such lasting eternal values that can make the nation active in a world where values are no longer constant.

Keywords: *adinkra, core competency, cultural mutuality, national identification and global citizenship skills.*

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Mastering Adinkra Symbols: An Establishment of Positive Ghanaian Personality in the Next Generation

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Overview- Adinkra symbols, one of the oldest of all art forms, reaching back to prehistoric times, are an important determiner of cultural mutuality among Ghanaians. Adinkra symbols and their meanings have a positive impact on instilling in Ghanaians the pride of identifying themselves as Ghanaians and holding on to it. Well-meaning Ghanaians and important stakeholders in education who are rooted in tradition are keen at being equipped with possibilities of providing a re-orientation of the cultural values among learners if there is the need to present what was good in ancient eyes and move forward undeterred to make a better tomorrow. Human beings, as products of the many different cultures which surround us, can never be seen as culture free. Adinkra symbols and their meanings, if embedded in any form of teaching, have the potential of fostering emotional and cultural intelligence in alienated Ghanaians to return to the glorious past so as to re-validate viable values, contextualize and consolidate them for today, avert the mistakes of the past and confront tomorrow with such lasting eternal values that can make the nation active in a world where values are no longer constant. Our values, worldview and experiences are structured by the society and culture that exert influences on our lives each day and endow the Ghanaian learner with insight into Africanism. This essay focuses on the identification of Adinkra symbols inside the JHS 3 classroom and it argues that supporting the enhancement of cultural and national identification and global citizenship skills with the importance of Adinkra symbols in the preparation of final year student-facilitator-facilitators of junior high schools in Ghana will constitute a good strategy in committing them to respect their environment and protect their culture for positive patriotic attitudes to be realized in the next generation of Ghanaian youth. It looks at the origin and significance of Adinkra symbols in order to maximize the positive result on cultural identification. Also this essay gives an indepth outline of the methodology used with examples of Adinkra symbols, their names, meaning and their significance in the Ghanaian context and it gives reasons for why the learning of Adinkra symbols can be beneficial in the instilling of patriotism in each one of the learners. The facilitators are from the units of Ghanaian Languages and culture and African Literature of Foso College of Education because the concept is of major interest to the two entities for as it instills the pride of nationalism and patriotism in learners as propounded by Ghanaian languages and culture, it equally helps in the self-identification, reorientation of the Ghanaian personality and negritudism in learners as African literature seeks to achieve.

Keywords: adinkra, core competency, cultural mutuality, national identification and global citizenship skills.

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Impact of Emblems on Ghanaians.

- To bring all of us together as Ghanaians.
- To show loyalty to our nation.
- To have unity and prosperity.
- To be proud of our traditions.
- To serve our nation with all our strength and might
- To defend the nation from foreign invaders
- To uphold our cultural heritage
- To know the symbols of authority in Ghana/

I. Adinkra Colours and their Meanings

Asante traditional symbols which is associated with ideologies, values and significant to other cultures need to be learnt, cherished, valued so that it could be transferred to the next generation and those yet unborn. It is these ideas and values helps to identify us as a group so it needs to be maintained and if possible modified to suit the modern society and the younger generation.

a) Symbolism of Colours

Colour symbolism can vary dramatically between cultures. Most colours have more positive associations with them than negative. Although some colours do have negative connotations (such as Black for a funeral or for evil) these negative elements are usually triggered by specific circumstances. People's age also has an effect on how colours are perceived. For example, children tend to like bright, happy colours. These are some of the meanings that each colour can represent.

Through discussion, it was established that

i. *Silver/Grey*

Silver/Grey symbolizes security, reliability, intelligence, staid, modesty, maturity, conservative, old age, sadness, shame and boring.

ii. *White*

White is a sacred and pure colour. It's colour of angles and gods, as the colour reflects that which is sacred and pure. It is also the colour doctors, nurses, and others in the health profession, as well as cleanliness. In fact, the Japanese refer to nurses as "Angels in White". White can also represent reverence, purity, simplicity, peach, humility, youth, winter, and snow, good, cold, clinical, and sterile.

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iii. *Yellow*

Yellow can symbolize joy, happiness, optimism, idealism, gold, honesty.

Learners were then made to represent any of the colours learnt in a drawing to portray its meaning. Before the session ended, learners were asked to find out in addition one occasion which requires the use of the colours to be treated the next day.

b) Meanings of Adinkra Colours 2

i. *Black*

Black is the colour of the night, and of "evil" can also be a colour of elegance or class (such as a black-tie, and black evening gowns).

Black can also represent a lack of colour, the primordial void, emptiness. It also represent ideas such as sexuality, mystery, wealth, fear, evil, sadness, remorse, anger, and depth. It can also mean sorrow or mourning,

Black, is the colour of mystery and solemnity, the colour of the night. Black expresses the depths of the unknown, and encourages the imagination of a different world from that of daylight realities. Used by itself, black can represent bad luck or misfortune.

ii. *Black/White*

Black and white stands for mourning and cheerless occasion. For example, traditional garb for a funeral is black and white. Black represents loss and white for passing onto heavens. (this was unanimously accepted by all the other languages)

iii. *Blue*

Blue is the colour of the purity, and is associated with girls who have similar pure qualities. it is the colour of water and the sea, indicating femininity, life, purity, etc. just as water does.

Blue can also symbolize peace, calm, stability, security, loyalty, sky, water, cold, technology and depression.

An unanticipated contribution was given by the *Adanse* group. They added that indigo blue mirrors the colour of the vast ocean surrounding the lands. This shade of blue is very commonly seen in art and clothing.

iv. *Brown*

Brown represents the ideas of earth, hearth, home, the outdoors, comfort, endurance, simplicity, and comfort.

v. *Gold*

Gold is also associated with royalty. It represents the colour of the heavens, and is used to decorate status.

vi. *Green*

Green can represent nature, the environment, good luck, youth, vigor, jealousy, and misfortune. green is regarded as the colour of eternal life, as seen in evergreens which never change their colour from season. In the trees and vegetation are implied.

vii. *Orange*

Orange can represent energy, balance, warmth, enthusiasm, flamboyant, and demanding of attention.

viii. *Purple*

Purple can represent royalty, spirituality, nobility, mysterious, wisdom, enlightenment, cruelty, arrogance, and mourning.

ix. *Pink*

The colour pink usually serves two purposes.

It can be used to show childish innocence, or a characters child-like personality.

It can also be used to show a more flirtatious personality.

Pink is normally a colour associated with girls and femininity.

Pink is considered a colour of good and life, it also symbolizes pure love and we speak of people being "in the pink" or the "freshness" of a newborn baby. Lastly, pink is associated with sexuality, and purity. Pink symbolizes pure love, it is also used for sexual advertisement to indicate the purity of the girls.

x. *Red*

Red can symbolize many things; from blood, to love, infatuation.

Strong emotions, or things of strong emotions rather than intellectual ideas. For example, red can symbolize excitement, energy, speed, strength, danger, passion, and aggression.

The colour of blood and fire, represents life and vitality.

Red also signifies the colour of the sun: symbol energy, radiating its vitiating life-force into human beings.

Red is also looked upon as a sensual colour, and can be associated with man's most profound urges and impulses. Ironically, red cats symbolize bad luck.

This day's lesson was interesting. Learners seemed well informed about the discussions and gave details and examples that were new to the facilitators. Learners were told they will demonstrate occasions and instances which require the use of these colours. Learners were put into denominational groupings and balloted for the colours so that they could bring samples to class the next day. The facilitators, having her colleague student-facilitator-facilitators agree to participate in the activity, paired them to ballot for one group and prepare them for the demonstration the next day. They were so very happy and the lesson ended for the day.

c) Occasions Which Require the Use of Adinkra Colours

Among Akans, "Fufuo" is the ritually favourable colour and it has immediate association with victory and

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spiritual purity. It is associated with the sacred, and it is considered the colour of gods and kings; the symbol of the purity and sacredness of persons and their estate. "Fufuo" also expresses joy and hope and well-being. That aspect of the human person which bears a man's destiny and directs his fortunes (KRA) is associated with "Fufuo", Hegan (1961).

"Tuntum" stands for darkness and loss, and for death, but it does not necessarily connote defilement or profanation. The Stool of kings or elders who die in battle or of old age while in office are consecrated and held sacred to their memory, and they are black. While stools, the unconsecrated stools of the Ashanti, are by contrast profane. Antobam (1963) suggested that black symbolizes spirituality and age. "All objects which are dedicated to the spirits of the dead are purposely treated to appear and back". Antobam (1963); objects or war booty, except gold and silver, are blackened. But In spite of its association with spirituality and age "Tuntum" is never used for the celebration of victory; it usually expresses sorrow and it is associated with ill-luck.

"Kobene" is full of ambiguities. Akans generally point to blood as the paradigm of this colour cluster and much of the ambiguity in the symbolic meaning of the colour derives from the mixed associations of blood. Blood stands for life and vitality, and the word "bogya: (blood) means the fire (gya) of creation (bo). Akans believes that blood is the means by which a "Kra" (soul) might is spilled wastefully, stand for death.

Akans consider menstrual blood to be dangerous. It is believed that when menstrual blood comes into contact with a sacred object it desecrated or blunts the sacred object (okum ano) in terms of the purposes the sacred object serves. In such contexts then, red might stand for impurity and danger. When a man puts on a red cloth and smears himself with red ochre, it means he is in a defiant mood (ogyina kodom ano). Among the Ashantis, as Rattray (1927) observed, and it is generally true for most Akans, "sorrow and singer (and danger) (mine) would seem to be related", 'm' ni abere" (my eyes are red) being the idiom common for both expression" of course "m'ani" refers to the blood-short eye.

Time for questioning was an exhaustive one. Learners were so much exhausted in the lesson that it ended up with discussions on our cultural identity. It was seen that no other race in the world draws so much inspiration from colours as do Ghanaians. This is a cultural heritage that we should always hold up to to re-identify our cultural recognition and make up.

d) Black and White for a Funeral.

This group enacted a festival scene where executioners dressed in red looked frightful and aggressive. With the chief executioner's imaginary sword flying left and right in the air, the scene was filled with "y'ani abere koo' symbolizing the spiritual protection of the chief and how ready they were to execute anybody who wrongly crosses their path. The war songs accompanying the actions carried with it love for the chief, vitality and willingness to defend the the town from human predators.

e) A 50th birthday party. gold.

Enacted a marriage scene where the bride was dressed in blue to portray femininity, fertility and good character. The expressions the bride's father used to describe her daughter who at 28 years was still a virgin, and the interesting way the bride was stuffed to portray her feminine features was a strong declaration that she was going to execute all the traditional duties of a virtuous woman.

Naming ceremony seeing all participants wearing white attires. The lives of the baby and mother signify victory over death which looms in during labor. And now that seven days had passed by and the baby is still alive, absolute victory had been won. The entertaining way of slaughtering a cow, cooking and eating told about the enjoyments of life if lived gracefully.

f) Adinkra Symbols

Adinkra Symbols	Names	Transliteration	Meaning	Moral value
	ADINKRAHENE	The king of the adinkra symbols	Symbol of greatness	Recognition of and respect for traditional leaders
	AKOBEN	The horn of battle	Symbol of loyalty	Defending traditional emblems and Beliefs from adulteration
	AKOFENA	The sword of battle	Symbol of authority	Taking pride in the conquest and heritage won for us

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	AKOKONAN	The legs of a cock	Symbol of nature	Recognition of Onyakopon as the creator and the supernatural
	AKOMA	Heart	Symbol of patience	Tolerance and respect for all.
	AKOMA NTOSO	An extra heart	Symbol of understandi ng	Understanding the diversities in our culture that sum up to identify us as people of one destiny
	BESE SAKA	A bag of cola nuts	Symbol of affluence	Taking pride in and protecting both our natural and human resources

Symbols	Names	Transliteration	Meaning	Moral value
	BOA ME NA ME MMOA WO	Help me so I can also help you	Symbol of	The Ghanaian life characterized by a camaraderie sort of living
	BI NNKA BI	Nobody bites another someone	Symbol of harmony	Our heritage of freely forgiving one another
	DAME-DAME		Symbol of intelligence	The simplicity and purity underlying our culture
	DENKYEM	Crocodile	Symbol of adaptability	The flexibility in our culture makes for adaptability and modification
	DUAFE	Wooden comb	Symbol of beauty	Emphasizing the beauty of blackness
	DWENNIMMEN	The horns of a ram	Symbol of strength	The vitality in our tradition gives us the strength to protect it
	ABAN	Fortress	Symbol of security and protection	The Ghanaian tradition is itself protective of its abiders
	EPA		Symbol of slavery	A reminder of the atrocities of colonialism and slave trade
	ESE NE TEKREMA	The Teeth and the tongue	Symbol of friendship	True friendship overpowers minor misunderstandings

Symbol	Name	Transliteration	Meaning	Moral value
	Fawohodie	Independence	Symbol of freedom	To cherish the struggle for independence
	Fihankra	Not Announcing your departure	Symbol Of Security	The sudden departure of our colonial masters after republic
	Funtunfuneefu	Fragmented pieces of a unified whole	Symbol of unity diversity	The oneness in the cultural diversities of our traditional make up
	Gye Nyame	Except God	Symbol of supremacy	Only God exercises control over us
	MATE MASIE	I have kept what I heard	Symbol of wisdom	The wisdom of yesteryear determines the pace of meeting the future

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	Gyawu Atiko	The occiput of Gyawu	Symbol of valor	The mightiness and fearlessness that the Ghanaian is supposed to exhibit in fighting for his right and that of his tribe
	Kintinkantan	Determined arrogance	Symbol of arrogance	Reminding us of the shameful eventuality of arrogant people.
	Nkonsonkonson	Chains	Symbol of oppresion	Cataloguing the trauma of oppression in our colonial history
	Nyame Dua	The tree of God	Symbol of worship	The need to be obedient to God and give him all the reverence

Symbol	Name	Transliteration	Meaning	Moral value
	Mframadan -	Wind house	Symbol of planning	The need to plan to fortify one's home, nation
	Nyame Nnwu Na Ma Wu	I will not die when God is still alive	Symbol of immortality	Because death does not end it all but there is the belief that there is life after death, we should be careful with how we live on earth
	Wawa Aba	The seed of wawa	Symbol of hardiness	It requires that we pass through some hardiness before we can achieve our aims
	Mmusuyidee	Remover of Misfortunes	Symbol of sanctity	Because it takes a a fortune to pacify the gods to remove misfortunes befalling us, there is the need to stick to the dictates of the gods
	Sankofa	Go back and take	Symbol of nostalgia	The neglected wisdom of yesteryear, the abolished positive beliefs and practices remain a rich storehouse of traditional resource for generations ahead to take lessons from.
	NEA ONNIM NO SUA A, OHU	When an ignorant person learns, he becomes informed	Symbol of Curiosity and yearning	The innate desire of the African to yearn for more knowledge
	NEA OPE SE OBEDI HENE	someone who aspires to be king	Symbol of royal chain	The need to have heir apparent and to our traditional thrones
	Owuo atwidie baako mforo	One person does not climb the ladder of death	Symbol of death	The thoughts of an eventuality hanging around all necks

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