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The Educational Implication of Symbols of the Central Ewes of Ghana

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Abstract:

The Central Ewes have identifiable symbols that are of significance to them. The older generations are dying with the knowledge of these symbols which the youth are to benefit from. So a gap is created as to how to learn the accumulated knowledge and values from the symbols. Central Ewe symbols are also not generally known and the larger population is generally not familiar with their values. They are implied and need to be explicit for better understanding. To solve the problem, the research sought to identify and discuss the symbols and their aesthetic and educational implications. A structured interview guide was developed in relation to the objectives set. Literature related to the theoretical foundations of the topic was reviewed. Geographically, the study covered ten (10) towns in the Central Volta Region of Ghana. Ten (10) symbols were acknowledged. The symbols have aesthetic and educational implication from which moral lessons are learned as it forms an integral part of their lives. Symbols connect beauty to usefulness. Some of the symbols are similar to that of Akans. It is recommended that in order to achieve cultural unity among the Central Ewes and eventually other cultures, these findings should be exposed to non-Ewes in the country and finally, the symbols should be developed into a written language for easy communication.

Keywords: symbols, proverbs, aesthetic, educational, implication

1. Introduction

In the past, Ghanaians, most especially the people of the Central Volta region of Ghana did not have any written literature of symbols to understand their history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology and their total way of life. Therefore, the philosophy of the study is to arrive at a better understanding of Central Ewe culture.

According to Mamattah (1976), the Ewes migrated from Oyo in Western Nigeria in the 15th Century and settled in Notsie in the Republic of Benin. They migrated again, and this time split in three parties on the way. The first party currently inhabiting Ho traditional area took the middle course. The second party, now in Kpando and Peki, went northward. The third group went to Atiavi, Keta and Anlo along with their culture. There are islands of linguistically distinct ethnic groups in Amedzofe, Logba, Tafi and Akpafu traditional areas who presumably were not part of these groups, but settled at the present dwellings from the Western Region of Ghana.

Symbols are objects, characters, or other concrete representations of ideas, concepts or other abstractions. A symbol, according to Heider (2000), is a visible form of an invisible concept. It could be an idea or mental image of an absent reality. The symbol could be a natural object or man-made or even an abstract form in the cosmos. For example, in Egypt, the sphinx at the entrance of the pyramid is a symbol of security, stability and endurance. Symbols are fascinating, because they stir one's imagination and intuition to help one discover new meanings and insights. They invite one to explore the possibilities, and force one to go beyond a limited definition and literal thinking if one wants to understand the concepts they represent. An object can be described as a symbol of something else if it seems to represent it because it is connected with it in a lot of people's minds. It can be used to represent a quality or idea. For example, a dove is a symbol of peace and the black star in the Ghanaian flag is a symbol of hope for the black race in Africa.

Symbols show that something exists or might happen. Symbols are arbitrary units of meaning, which are directly associated with concrete physical items or activities. A symbol has only the meaning that people have given it. Even a powerful symbol can lose its meaning, value, idea, historical consideration and philosophy if the society dishonours or ignores it for a period of time. In other words, the value of a symbol will depend on the sort of empowerment the people have given it. African traditional symbols are created from proverbs or as a result of paremiology. Though proverbs are symbolic, their symbolism can only be visualized when they are created in the form of symbols. Therefore, it is worth talking about proverbs when it comes to discussions and analyses on symbols in Ghana and Africa as a whole. To Africans in general, a proverb is a short structured saying widely known in a community, which conveys traditional observations on human nature and natural phenomena, moral judgments, mockery and warnings. The people and their culture are therefore responsible for the meaning given to any particular symbol.

The synthetic process of giving meaning to symbols is expressed by proverbs as illustrated, in the saying: “fragile state power held in one hand is safe”. In another form, “power is like an egg, when held tightly, it might break or it will fall and break when held loosely.” Portraying it in a visual form, a hand holding an egg is created as shown in Fig 1.

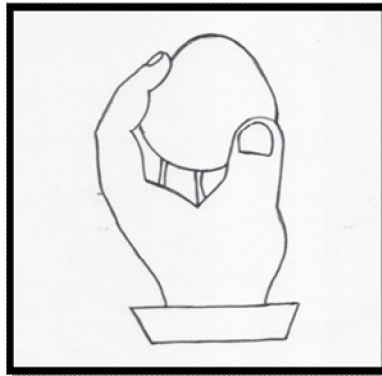


Figure 1: A Linguist Staff Symbol (Peki) – hand holding an egg

Symbols permeate human culture in ways other than language. Objects, arts, and artistic performances may represent powerful cultural ideas and attitudes. People’s behaviour and understanding of the world are based on meanings expressed through symbols. Terms that are symbolically used do not call for action appropriate to their objects. They make one think of their objects in a certain way. A symbol therefore is a vehicle for the conception of an object. It enables one to conceive or form an opinion of an object and for the formation of mental image.

The conception of a symbol is therefore in what it means; for example, a woman is a symbol of peace, creativity, productivity, life, growth and care. The conception of objects is derived from certain unique and relatively enduring traits, noticeable in the objects used as symbols. For example, a snake is a symbol of continuous renewal or rebirth and wisdom to live without hands and legs. The meaning of a symbol is determined by the one using it and so the snake can be a symbol of humility and also a symbol of evil and deceit, as well as resurrected life. The subject and his culture are therefore responsible for the meaning given to any particular symbol; and the synthetic process of giving meaning to a symbol is expressed by a proverb. For example, “the potter, and not the pot, is responsible for the shape of the pot”.

The indigenous cultures of Africa are replete symbols and symbolic expressions. In the indigenous Ghanaian culture, symbols are used in different situations of life, and the context in which they are used. There are symbols that derived their name and popularity from one of the national cloths called ‘adinkra’. The word ‘adinkra’ comes from Akan words ‘di nkra’. This means goodbye. The ‘adinkra’ cloth is a mourning cloth. It is normally worn to express sympathy for the bereaved family and so it is commonly seen at funerals and memorial services. The ‘adinkra’ cloth is used as an appropriate canvas for displaying traditional symbols which express their unique apprehension of reality and of death. The traditional stool of Ghana, like the ‘adinkra’ cloth, is used as a medium for displaying various symbols. The stool itself is a symbol in its own right and considered as the abode of the soul of a nation or an individual. Traditionally, in Hohoe a bride is given a stool by her husband so as to settle her soul in the husband’s house. The middle portion of the stool is carved as a symbolic representation which may be an object or abstract symbol such as elephant, leopard, and porcupine. The stool usually derives its name from the symbol that is used in its middle portion. The particular message of any stool is found in its middle portion.

At the court of any Ghanaian chief, there is always an official called ‘okyeame’. He is a linguist or a spokesman through whom the chief is, in turn spoken to, on both private and public occasions. A linguist has a staff of office which is carved in wood and topped with a symbolic emblem, usually silver or gold-plated. The emblem depicts a proverb, expresses a highly cherished value in the society or communicates to subjects. It has become clear from the preceding discussion that in the indigenous African society, it is evident that symbols were born of religious or philosophical beliefs. All these sum up the indigenous creative view of life, which is an essential component of Africanity. As a means of communication these practices are intimately bound to the peoples’ way of life, tradition and religion. This relationship is a phenomenon which makes the signs and life of the people inseparable. Symbols also reflect the communicative aspects of Ewe culture. Ewes in general have been famous for a long time for their exquisite culture. Ideas and values of this culture are expressed in words that are used in ordinary language, idiomatic expressions, proverbial renditions, songs and minstrel. In all these aspects of life, the aesthetic and educational implications become paramount.

The Central Ewes of Ghana use symbols or images to maintain concepts of reality, to enhance art and to maintain their culture as well as its organization and roles. Like other cultures, Central Ewe symbols are the age-old pictorial presentations of the values that have stood the test of time. Analysis and interpretation of these will reveal their aesthetic appeal and educational values. It is through the arts that symbolism can be studied. The arts should not be consigned into oblivion. They are cultural indices, reflecting the philosophies and beliefs, as well as giving insight into the culture of the Central Ewes and other ethnic groups. Their beliefs and values determine the symbols or the images. Through them, the society recognizes its own values, and thus, offers a means by which members of the community may express and evaluate new elements in their lives. It is evident that their philosophies, beliefs, aesthetic considerations and functionality have been the determining force fortifies the creation of signs, symbols and other images.

A symbol is permanent, accepted and adopted by society so that it becomes a norm. Signs that serve longer purposes also serve as symbols. The moral teaching learnt from a symbol constitutes the educational principles. The Central Ewe concepts of aesthetic and educational principles are used to understand the symbols presented in the photograph that follow.

The study is restricted to aesthetic and educational implications of Central Ewe symbols. Geographically, it is limited to an area of 6857sq km bounded in the north by Hohoe, south by Abutia, west by the Volta Lake and east by Togo.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Definition of Symbol

'Symbol' is derived from the Greek word 'symbolon', which means contract, token, insignia and a means of identification. There are different concepts and definitions of symbol by various authors. Bevin (1977) defines a symbol in a design term as anything that stands for something else. It is a simplified image that because of certain association in the viewer's mind represents a more complex idea or system.

According to Fleming (1986), a symbol is a form, image, sign or subject standing for something else. In the visual art, as he says, a symbol is often an invisible suggestion of something visible. Gilbert (2002) also defines a symbol as an image or sign that represents something else, because of convection, association or resemblance.

On his part, Dzobo (2004) says a symbol is a vehicle for the conception of an object. It enables us to conceive or form an opinion of an object, and for the formation of a mental image. The meaning of symbol is determined by the one using it. Symbol may be presented graphically, for example, as in the cross for Christianity. Symbols are most cherished ideas, which have been presented as a visual image accepted as a norm by a people, and are used symbolically to communicate knowledge, feeling and values.

A symbol can also be defined as "something standing for or calling up something else, especially a concrete object which stands for an intangible object or idea; a character, letter, or cipher, which by convention or arbitrary usage, has come to represent something else, as the name of a chemical element" (World Book Dictionary, 1983:368). Sarpong (1994) debunks the idea that a symbol is an event or a concrete thing. He suggests that, "a symbol generally stands for some abstract notion as power, wisdom, humility, purity, prudence, group solidarity and so on". He therefore explained that symbols enable people to represent abstract ideas which would be impossible for them to represent to themselves directly.

2.2. Symbol

Symbols are expressed through visual artistic means worldwide. It is generally maintained that the most distinctive feature of the human being is the ability to create symbols. Before writing was invented, signs and symbols were used to communicate. They are still used today to indicate, identify and understand almost everything. They are essentially part of our cultural heritage. It has taken years to understand, put them together and interpreting them to the best of ability (Howard, 1988).

Symbols are artistic creations which form an integral part of African culture. It is learnt from one generation to another. Signs and symbols are physical manifestations of man's inner feelings, knowledge, ideas, philosophies, unconscious thoughts and conceptions. In other words, the ideas, philosophies, knowledge and thoughts are given concrete shapes or forms by man to reach one another for development. Existing, or for an extremely long time, ideas and facts are recorded by man in one form of writing or another. It has been observed in many cultures around the world that, the alphabet are used to stand for sounds in the combination of alphabet for words and the combination of words for an idea and the combination of ideas to tell a story, or explain an event. Talking about other societies, what can be compared to the alphabet already represents ideas or facts. Before the third century BC, characters such as: the Chinese, Japanese, Greek, Arabic and adverse do exist. Latin Americans, Melanesians, as well as Polynesians have characters in their symbolism. Commenting on symbolism of characters, Achampong (2007:iv) also notes that: "In some other societies, what is compatible to the alphabet already stands for ideas or facts. And so over the years, we have had such characters as the Greek, Hebrew, Roman, Sanskrit, Arabic, Japanese and Chinese. Even in what are considered to be and called simple societies as the Inca of South America, we have these characters that stand for ideas or even whole stories".

It would be recalled that the evolution of symbols dates back to the prehistoric periods, when cavemen drew images on walls in caves for visual communication. The world has existed for million years and it has been inhabited by different geological, botanical and zoological creatures including human species. Humans are characterized as rational beings and have the capability of thinking and creating things with full will and intellect Human acts vary depending on our environment, personal experiences and psychological disturbances (Olague 2008). He goes on to state that in 1985, a cave in Spain had been discovered with dozens of wall paintings with symbols which dated around 40,000-100,000 years ago. These figures found were graphical representations of bison, deer, horses and other animals painted in black, red, brown and yellow inks.

In Ghana, the popularly known among traditional symbols are the Adinkra Symbols. They are the pictorial representations of the values that have stood the test of time in the Akan culture. But it is believed that the abstract ones may have been of Islamic origin, hence older than the Akan state. There are so many stories in connection with the origin of Adinkra Symbols. The precise dates and origin of the symbols cannot be ascertained. Boateng (1980:15) indicates that: "There is strong evidence to suggest that more abstract ones may have been of Islamic origin and hence older than the Akan State. The most obvious is the crescent moon and star symbol of the Adinkra Symbol which means "faithfulness" and this came as a result of the contact with Islamic traders".

Though the Adinkra Symbols have been documented and widely used, there are symbols of great significance among other ethnic groups, notably, the Fantes who have a lot of symbols in their Asafo flags and on their canoes, depicting bravery, protection, hard

work and so on. The ethnic groups in the Northern and the Upper Regions of Ghana equally have a lot of fascinating symbols which they incorporate in the weaving of their *Fugu* or smock to enhance their beauty as well as to communicate values and beliefs to one another. Some of these symbols are portrayed in their architecture. It is rather regrettable that most of these symbols are not acknowledged and promoted for people to recognize their value.

Ablade Glover explains the word “Adinkra”, the history of origin and also, the process of producing the symbol as a pattern in fabrics with their Akan names and proverbs. Even though these names and proverbs are explained literally in English, the symbols were not originally designed by him. In his compilation of the stool symbols, most of the symbols depict abstract forms and belong to the chiefs of the Akan States. Few proverbs and stool symbols, such as of the Ga State are also his collection. In Glover’s two symbolism charts (1992), he states that apart from stool’s use in everyday life as furniture, they play an important role in social as well as religious matters. Socially, they act as mere seats or symbols of authority. Religiously, they usually become objects of veneration. They are “fed” and “given drinks”. Usually during “Odwira”(Akan) or “Homowo”(Ga) festivals. On Glover’s linguist staff symbolism chart, the symbols are proverbial and pictorial which mainly depict animals such as lion, porcupine, elephant, hawk and many more. He emphasizes that whatever stands on top of a staff, represents the beliefs and aspiration of an entire clan, ethnic group and the state. The symbols on Glover’s chart serve as a source of reference to students, artists, teachers, and researchers.

Owusu-Ansah (1992) is another creative contributor to the promotion and presentation of indigenous symbols. On his part, he created one hundred and thirty-two (132) new Adinkra motifs in Twi with English translations. They look abstract in form and do not relate pictorially to the proverbs or the names given to them. Central Ewes, though they believe in concrete things, with their symbols having expressive and communicative qualities that sometimes influence their pictorial form; they are also represented in abstract form. It is these pictorials and abstracted qualities of symbols with their forms and shapes that make them works of art.

Before the introduction of formal education in Africa for that matter Ghana, symbolism was an effective means of bestowing meaning on artefacts to enhance one’s learning capabilities as humans in comparison with other types of animals. This assertion still holds. The organization of social life in traditional society gives a special place to symbolism, due to a general consciousness of its potential as a vehicle for transmitting or affirming the values of a society. This also strengthens the bonds that bind its members. We have the uniquely human ability to abstract the essence of complex events and patterns, creating images through symbols, and giving them meanings to conform to reasons for their creations. In the traditional set up, it is easier to learn, understand, grasp and disseminate knowledge or information through artistic creations. This has been the order, since illiteracy is predominant. Even though the wind of social change is blowing across the globe, making more people literate, it has not changed their conceptions, ideas and philosophy so much. Symbolism, for that matter, signs and symbols are common denominators for all in terms of meaning, expression and appreciation. Gyekye (2003:27) confirms this idea by adding that, the creation of artifacts prompted symbolism. In the light of this, his writing on African cultural values stresses that: “symbolism was a medium of artistic production, expression or appreciation. The pre-literate cultural context of artistic creation necessitated this symbolism; meanings and ideas were given expression through (symbolic) Art. In general, every artistic product must have meaningful qualities appropriate to the purpose for which it was created”.

Apart from visual images and ordinary objects, there is symbolism in ordinary lines, be it horizontal, broken, bold, thick, parallel, zigzag, vertical and so on, depending on how it is used. These make communication accessible to all. Commenting on symbolism of lines, Rader et al., (1976:57) states that:

In Graphic Design, another area in Visual Art, logotypes, trademarks and crests are all forms of insignias that are noted in symbolism. The use of parallel lines suggests movement and action. Horizontal lines express the idea of stationary and restfulness. The use of broken lines may connote an idea of lack of confidence, timidity and shyness. While bold, thick lines rather, typify courage and aggression. Vertical lines conceptualize a state of stability and conservativeness.

Thus, symbolism may be expressed as the most important representational signs and codes functioning as embodiments of societal concepts, ideas, socio-cultural values, philosophies and imaginations. This is perceived and truthfully expressed by Robbins and Nooter (1989:16), as they state that, “African symbolism supplemented by oral history served as principal means of socio-religious communication within ethnic groups. That, in the absence of written languages in most traditional cultures, these comprised of Africans, a symbolic language.”

Through sculpture, pottery, textiles, architecture, jewellery, and others, the craftsman gave form and outward expression within him to the material in such a way that they capture attention of those who would see it. Coullson (2005:72) seems to agree with Robbins and Nooter (1989), when he posits that:

The Akans of Ghana and La Cote d’Ivoire make extensive use of a system of ideographic and pictographic symbols. Individually each symbol is associated with a specific proverb or saying rooted in Akan experience. Collectively, these symbols form a system of writing that preserves and transmits the accumulated cultural values of the Akan. This ideographic and pictographic writing system can be seen in use extensively in textiles, pottery, metal casting, wood and architecture.

Symbolism simply is the use of symbols in art, literature, and so on to represent ideas. For the purpose of this dissertation, symbolism is the use of visual images and ordinary objects which represent a deeper meaning than the images themselves. This kind of extension of meaning can transform the images into very powerful instruments. It is in this view that, Asare Opoku, (1997:ix) defines symbolism as “the practice of representing things by symbols or of investing things with symbolic meaning.” Symbolism is derived from the word symbol. Fletcher and Gill (2000:657) also opine that: “symbol” is therefore another word for “symbolize”. By the word ‘symbol’, the concepts of representation, typification, and association are very much revealed which is why such words as budge, emblem, figure, image, logo, mark, sign, token and allegory are all associated with symbol”.

Symbolism is the use of visual objects to represent abstract ideas. In many of the indigenous cultural settings symbols are used to represent many ideas. For example, swords are symbols of protection. Some of the symbols may be proverbial symbols and figurative sculptures. Most symbols and signs are created through imagination of people in the communities. Even though the craftsmen produce beautiful and good works, their functionality and symbolism are the most cherished. In this regard, Kyeremanteng (1964:1) also observes that: "some of these signs and symbols show the imagination and ingenuity of the Ghanaian craftsman and rank among the peaks of art design anywhere, while they are important not for their beauty and dignity but for their historical connections, their social and ritual functions or their symbolic meaning".

Symbolism therefore, embraces a people's customs, traditions and culture. These tend to manifest themselves through all the coded messages, communication and actions conduct, institutions, systems, music, art, dances, laws, artefacts, totems, morals, values, aspirations, philosophies, folklore, myths, legends, fables, chieftaincy, history, education, occupations, enterprise, language, food and its preparation and mode of eating, and many more. Symbolism is therefore synonymous with survival and life's sustainability and continuity. This claim is true of Central Ewe culture.

Visual images or symbols represent or reproduce the world from time immemorial, the major goal of the use of symbols is to capture and portray the conceptual frame of both the natural and the spiritual world. No wonder in cultures where the art of writing was not much developed emphasis was put on the use of visual symbols to record their experiences. The meanings of symbols of any cultural tradition are essentially negotiable. That is, each symbol evokes a wide range of meanings among those who accept it. But what that symbol means in any particular situation is obvious. Such matters are cultural dilemmas that people grapple with to solve. Symbols are used to transmit ideas to one another. This is done not only through language but images and objects as well. Every ethnic group in Ghana and Africa at large, place premium on its symbols. Commenting on meanings of symbols, Bruslin (1983:367) stresses that: "a society's cultural symbols themselves, as well as their meanings, are valued-particularly symbols of subjective beliefs and ideologies. The symbol becomes a way to value them. Our symbols tend to have more meaning to us than others do, thus we value other symbols less".

According to Dzobo (1997), Ewe symbols started as myths, and developed into fables, to poems and songs, which later condensed into proverbs before crystallizing into visual forms. Symbols have many beautiful facets of life which encapsulates all that is needed in our lives as political, moral, cultural, social, religious, psychological, and the technical beings. Symbols grow. They come into being by development out of other signs. These mental signs are of mixed nature; the symbol-parts are called concepts. If a man makes a new symbol, it is by thoughts involving concepts. So it is only out of symbols that a new symbol can grow. A symbol, once in being, spreads among the people. In use and in experience, its meaning grows. Symbols have many functions in nature and are appreciated for both their aesthetic and communicative values. They are non-verbal illustrations of proverbs, parables and maxims which portray the philosophical thinking and the way of life of a particular group of people, of which Central Ewes are no exception.

Remarking on multi-functionality and the philosophy that symbols express, Fosu (1993:17) explains through the use of Adinkra symbols that, "the messages may be expressed philosophically, satirically or, allegorically, to depict religious, social or political concerns as well as reflections on issues pertaining to beauty, morality, or other higher values. Almost every Adinkra symbol is a literary and non-verbal illustration of a proverb, a parable or a maxim with profound interpretation".

A symbol, as we have seen, cannot indicate any particular thing; it denotes a kind of thing. Not only that, it is itself a kind and not a single thing. It can be a material object used to represent something invisible. In another way, a symbol is a word, image or object that stands for cultural ideas or sentiments. To buttress this claim, Bonvillain (2006:32), says, "a symbol is a sound or object that represents or stands for an idea, event, meaning or sentiment." Some institutions, nations, ethnic groups, companies and so on, use marks, signs and objects to represent ideas or identify various entities and activities. Symbols reflect and convey perceptions, concepts, ideas, thoughts, proverbs, behaviours, lives and culture.

Human communication is hardly limited to language. We also convey information non-verbally, through gestures, facial expressions, body posture, use of space and touch. Some forms of non-verbal communications may be universal, in that, they mean the same thing to everybody, regardless of culture. Therefore, all the various people in the world employ symbols in all aspects of their lives. As symbol communicates a fact or an idea or stands for an object, some symbols, such as flags and stop signs, are visual. Others, including music and spoken words, involve sounds. Symbols rank among our oldest and most basic inventions. Almost everything can be a symbol. For instance, the letters of the alphabet are among the most important symbols because they form the basis for almost all written and spoken communication. Gestures and sounds made by human beings also symbolize ideas or feelings.

From all that has been said about symbols, it generally stands for something visible: an object, a mark or an abstract idea. Adding to the observation made by Bonvillain (2006) on symbol, Field (1980:453) points out that:

Symbol is a mark or an object used to represent an idea, sentiments, an institution, a nation, or something else. There are many kinds of symbols. They include colour, objects, work and pictures.

Basically, all symbols are for identification. They are used to identify various entities and activities in life, and are therefore synonymous with the things they represent. A typical example is the golden stool of Ashanti, which is a symbol of the Asante people. In respect of this fact, a symbol is an image, an object, a design or colour which has meaning that goes beyond its physical appearance or outside its normal usage. In line with the definition given on symbol by Bonvillain and Field, Schultz, et al., (1998) are also of the same view expressed and therefore say that, "a symbol, be it a word, image, or action is something that stands for something else. It signals the presence of an important domain of experience." For example, the lion is a symbol of courage. This definition tends to emphasize the fact that symbols can serve as catalysts and keys in the realms of encoding and decoding certain messages and secrets. For instance, in some Ewe communities, a chief or a hunter with a leaf in his mouth symbolizes that he is in a state of keeping mute.

In this instance, the symbolic leaf stuck in the mouth assists the communication of the silence state of the chief or the hunter, as in the Central Ewe community.

To the artist, a symbol is a pictorial representation of some abstraction to which is appended a name. It is applicable to any pictorial device, sometimes objects and, sometimes a combination of objects, intended to serve as a chosen object. For instance, if an eagle is represented with two wings and a beak, it would be seen as an eagle. The symbolism is all-pervasive in all categories of art. Mbiti (1998:2), in his contribution to combination of objects to form a symbol, says that, "a symbol can be alone or in combination with other symbols. It has only the meaning that people have given it. Even a powerful symbol can lose its meaning if the society dishonour or ignores it for a period of time."

Many symbols are powerful and often trigger unconscious stimuli of behaviours or emotional states. There is the potency of symbols and the different meanings evoked by the symbols for different people. For instance in Ghana, a thumb pointing to someone is seen as an insult, while it is also seen as an 'encouragement' or 'go-ahead'. In another development, the design and colour on the flag of different countries represent symbolic associations with abstract ideas and concepts, or associated with complex levels of meaning. People can understand those meanings by examining the context of flag use, the way people talk about their national colour, and the way people react to them. Flags are used to symbolically represent a country, a territorial and cultural unit differentiated from all other similarly organized territorial and cultural units. National symbols such as flags, coat of arms, and soon, have the potential for expressing deep-felt emotions in condensed forms. These with their great public visibility, have been an extremely important symbolic medium of political and social communication for some time now. In many countries including Ghana, the desecration of the national flag is considered a crime. Commenting on emotional reactions, stirred by symbols, Turner (1979:19) says that "symbols are 'multi-vocal', suggesting that they have multiple meanings for people within a society." He further says that "symbols have the characteristic of condensation" thus "having the ability to unify many things and actions into a single formation. Destruction of a community's secular symbol will result in serious protest and confrontations."

On symbols' effect on emotions, Rieser (1978) explains that in visual art, human feelings and emotions are expressed in symbolic form using colours and shapes to communicate meanings, which can be conveyed only with difficulty in normal language. Symbols have deeper and more complex meanings than signs, for symbols provide opportunities for analyzing abstract problems. He refers to the circle. O as: 'one of the most significant symbols used universally, for the circle or sphere expresses the totality of human nature and environment.'

Our life philosophy reflects the religious and secular values of our society. Objects and images or artefacts seem to percolate all interstices of the fabric of culture. Moreover the art forms appear to be the "panacea" for all the cultural problems of the people, hence their use in solving religious, political, economic, social, medical and other problems militating against the people. Since the artefacts are functional or for solving problems, their aesthetic and educational values cannot be over looked.

Scupin (2001) observes that religion is a domain with symbolic meanings. Believers invest tremendous importance in objects considered to have religious significance. Ordinary objects and substances used in rituals take on sacred properties. Books, cups, images, pieces of cloth or wood can be symbols of beliefs and can evoke powerful emotions and dramatize sacred actions. Certain symbols in a society are associated with cosmic forces in that society. They may directly represent the deity or deities, or they may symbolize major religious principles and beliefs. Religious symbolism is the use of text, images, procedures, or actual physical objects to represent an idea or belief. The most common example is the use of objects to symbolize the faith itself, as in the use of a cross to represent Christianity, the crescent to Islam, the Star of David to represent Judaism and many others. Various religious symbols have produced fundamental meanings and metaphors for many countries throughout the world. For example, the symbol associated with the Virgin Mary in Roman Catholicism has developed into national symbols of unity for some countries. Mexico is one of such countries.

Certain religious symbols may be universal, but most are culture-specific, and individuals must be conditioned to understand and appreciate them. Conditioning occurs in formal and informal instructions. The power of culture-specific religious symbolism is exemplified in what is perhaps the best known Rastafarian symbol; their long and unkempt hair, their "dreadlocks". The wearing of their hair in this fashion is justified by reference to the Bible in Leviticus 21: 5 which say, "They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cutting in flesh." The dreadlock serves as a powerful public symbol of what the Rastafarian religion is about.

When rituals and sacrifices are performed, these symbols become abodes for spirits. Africans have beliefs and philosophy which are whipped up or enhanced by symbols. In other words, they become sacred images. Ray (1963:64) notes that: "African religion is centred on 'Archetypal symbols', by this, I mean sacred images whether they are gods, ancestors or things which make up the traditional universe. Such images are enshrined and communicated in myth and rituals, provided a net work of symbolic forms, uniting social, ecological and conceptual element into locally bounded cultured systems".

Political symbolism falls under secular values. It is used to represent a political, royal or leadership stand point. It takes the form of banners, acronyms, pictures, flags, mottos, coat of arms, state sword, mace, and many others. Simple colours can also be symbolic, depending on the location, or the context in which they are used. For example in Africa, red, black, brown and white colours are for mourning. Green represents anything which is environmentally friendly. Colours can represent different things depending on the culture in which they are. For example in Asian countries, red symbolizes happiness, marriage and prosperity. Colour symbolism is prominent in the Ghanaian kente cloth. The colours in kente cloth carry meaning. Certain colours are worn to designate status and occasion; for example, a chief might wear a kente cloth of golden yellow, the colour of wealth and joy. In the Central Volta region, yellow is associated with ripe lemon, and wealth in gold. Colour also symbolizes sanctity, preciousness, royalty, abundance, spiritual vitality, and fertility.

White is associated with egg white and a white clay used in spiritual purification, healing, sanctification rites, and festive occasions. Thus, it is worn by priestesses and others involved in religious practice to signify their contact with divine entities. Although white is worn by those who work with spirits of ancestors or deities of various denominations, a queen or any woman might wear white, blue, or silver to signify joy, virtue, or purity. White often is combined with black, green, or yellow to express notions of spiritual vitality and balance. Grey, associated with ash, is used in healing and spiritual cleansing rituals, and rites to promote protection from malevolent spirits. A related colour, silver, is associated with the moon, and represents the female essence of life. Ofori-Ansa (1993) writes that women may wear silver ornaments in the context of spiritual purification, naming and marriage ceremonies, and other community festivals, because it symbolizes serenity, purity, and joy. Associated with blood, shedding of blood, and sacrificial rites, red can signify heightened spiritual and political mood, sacrifice and struggle. A red-eyed mood, according to him, signifies a sense of seriousness, or readiness for a serious spiritual or political encounter. Red, while it can be worn to political meetings if the wearer is angry, is largely considered to be the colour of death, loss, sadness, or dissatisfaction, and also, it is associated with mourning.

Furthermore, black, a funeral colour, may stand for melancholy, vice, strength, old age, death, and history. Holding the notion that new things darken as they get older and spiritual maturity comes with physical maturity, Ewes blacken most of their traditional ritual sacred objects to increase their potency. Black, in this context, represents intensified spiritual energy, potency, and maturity, as well as communion with ancestors, and antiquity. Since Ghana's independence in 1957, black or blackness has come to symbolize Ghanaian pride and power. For instance, the men's national soccer team is named the Black Stars and the women's national soccer team, the Black Queens.

Purple and maroon are related; in that they are both considered earth colours and are used in rituals of healing. Purple is also associated with feminine aspect of life, and is worn largely by females. Maroon, the red-brown colour associated with Mother Earth, can be obtained from clay and is used to repel malevolent spirits. Pink is another colour associated with females. Ofori-Ansa (1993), on his chart of kente meanings explained: "it is viewed as red rendered mild and gentle and therefore associated with tenderness, calmness, pleasantness and sweetness." He went on to state that, in Akan social thought, these attributes are generally considered as essential aspects of the ideal woman. Additionally, the colour green is associated with vegetation, planting, harvesting, and herbal medicine. Young girls sometimes wear green to signify newness, freshness, and puberty. Moreover, tender green leaves are used to sprinkle water during purification rituals. Green symbolizes growth, vitality, fertility, prosperity, fruitfulness, abundance, health and spiritual rejuvenation. As well, blue, the colour of the sky, is associated with the Supreme Creator. In this regard, it is used in different ways in the culture of Ewe as well as other ethnic groups to symbolize spiritual sanctity, harmony, love, good fortune, peacefulness, and related aspects.

In literature, symbolism is used to provide meaning to the writing beyond what is actually being described. Traditionally in Ghana and Africa as a whole, there is symbolism in our indigenous art forms. The objects that are represented in symbolic art forms among the traditional ethnic groups in Ghana are the textiles, pottery, stools, umbrella tops, linguist staffs, jewellery, canoe art, architecture and many more. They are used in everyday life of the people, be it social, religious, political and economic. In the light of this usage, people's identity is revealed or known. As said earlier by Mbiti (1998), some art forms or objects can be put together to have a powerful symbol or symbolism. Very good examples are the stool and the ceremonial sword which signifies power. The stool in its totality is symbolic, while its top arc, the middle, and base separately have also got different symbolism. Amenuke, et al., (1991:151) describing the female version of a stool, say that:

The stool symbolizes the soul of society and serves as a symbolic link between the common people in the society and their head. Every component part of the design of the stool represents one of the main ideas that make a perfect society. The curved top of the stool symbolizes the loving embrace of a mother, thus represents the warmth of the female influence in society. The four rectangular-shaped pillars at the corner of the stool represents the influence of male power in the society. It signifies strength, power and good fortune. The strong circular pillar in the centre of the stool symbolizes the power and the presence of God in society, while the base signifies the stability of the earth.

Fig 2. is the illustration of a female stool. Fig 3 is a ceremonial sword which is a symbol of power. They are frequently decorated with animal motifs, which signify attitudes or social standing of the clan or group.

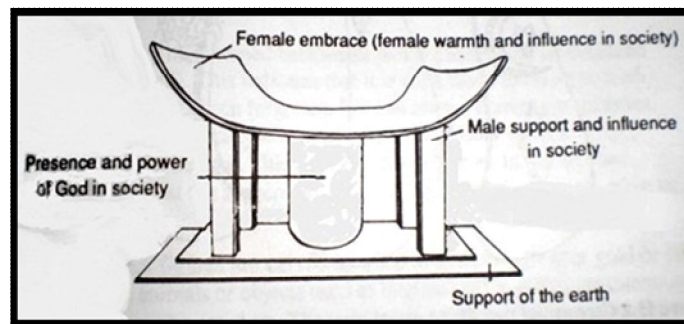


Figure 2: A Central Ewe female stool

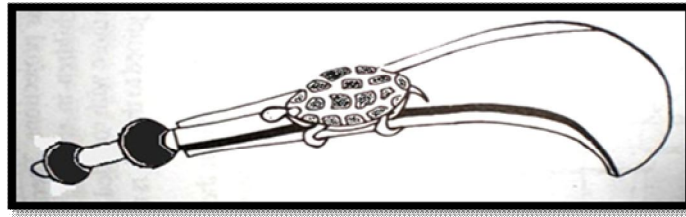


Figure 3: A ceremonial sword

The art of a society reflects the ideas and values. Attitudes, behaviours, habits and beliefs are some of the values which are of importance to one's daily life in terms of practice. For instance, the values which one deems high in life include honesty, respect, honour, hospitality and hard work. Other values deal with the part one plays in society, how to relate with neighbours, dress code and talking to people. Some of the values are also reflected in the people's ideas about religion and the rites of passage. This can also be said of the people of the Central Volta Region of Ghana. Signs and symbols are the basis of their everyday life. The signs and symbols are used to make life much more worthwhile. This goes to prove the theory which says that signs and symbols rule our lives.

The definition of Central Ewe symbols involves a number of fundamental, linguistic, philosophical and historical considerations. These symbols have continued to be a potent medium of expression, and serve as reference points in the Ewe belief system. To the Ghanaian, the meaning of the symbols adds to appreciation and enjoyment of an art work, be it oratorical, dance, music, ritual or decorative art. How symbols are used by the people of Central Volta Region to achieve the purpose of which they are meant for, translates their beauty.

Ewes in general have an elaborate system of symbols which incorporates a lot of meanings. These range from simple everyday items in the environment to very complex ones that are used to explain philosophical, cultural, sociological, mythological and anthropological views about life in general. The meaning of Ewe symbols could in certain situations is highly contextual. In some cases, the meaning of some visual symbols can only be revealed by a special group of people who are authorized to interpret them. It is through the meaning and interpretation of the signs and symbols that education values are learnt.

The human body is one of the supports on which symbols could be made. For example, tribal marks to identify where one comes from. When this is done, it becomes a body mark or body art. So if the impulse to create symbols is one of the defining signs of humanity. One way in which an artistic object and image is symbolic is that, particular artistic elements reflect emotions or meanings. In this case, the symbolism is culturally specific, and one needs knowledge of the particular cultural meaning assigned to a particular artistic element. Symbols represent certain universal aspects of human thoughts, needs and emotions. Freudian psychology for example, assigns certain universal meanings to certain kinds of symbols. Ion Lewis, an anthropologist, stressed the need to consider the emotional meanings of symbols, in addition to the more common cognitive meanings.

Symbols and images or objects in Ghanaian arts are meant to represent the basic social principles of life. These have guided the general outlook to life throughout the ages. As a result, there is no variation between symbols and general ways of living. The functions of symbols in nature are many. This is because they are recognized and understood in terms of their communicative and aesthetic appeals. A lot of visual symbols were used by people in the olden days to communicate their thoughts, besides, to outwit their opponent in war. When the cultural significance of the symbols is not known, ordinary beauty is appreciated. Most symbols are proverbs which are transformed into visible forms to show knowledge, ideas, unconscious thoughts and conceptions of a particular society.

2.2. Proverb

Proverbs cannot be excluded when creating or writing on signs and symbols. In other words, they play important role in symbolism. Paremiology, which is derived from the Greek word *paroimia*, is the study of proverbs and can be dated as far back as Aristotle (Mieder and Alan, 1994). Often a proverb is found in variations in different parts of the world. Literate societies dating to the ancient Egyptians have collected proverbs (Koch, 1994). One cannot tell exactly when proverbs started with the Central Ewes. It is believed to be with their ancestors before the migrated from Ngortsie.

A proverb is a short saying of unknown authorship, expressing some general truth or superstition. Proverbs are found in most cultures, and are often very ancient. The Hebrew Scriptures include proverbs. So proverbs have been in use from time immemorial. Many poets notably Chaucer and William Blake incorporate proverb in their work to add humour and others imitate their condensed form of expression. More homely than aphorisms, proverbs generally refer to common experience and are often expressed in metaphor, alliteration, or rhyme. For example, "a bird in hand is worth two in the bush" (Mieder, 1993:24). This literary means that whatever is already yours is worthier than what one expects to get in future. In Ewe, it means "Nusi su asiwo la nyo wu nusi le gbe me".

A proverb is a succinct and pithy saying that is in general use and expresses commonly held ideas and beliefs. It can also be taken as a verbal vehicle for the conveyance of cultural values. It can also be viewed as a symbol of canon in the large Ewe belief system. Proverbs are part of every spoken language and folk literature originating in oral tradition. A proverb is realized in the Ghanaian society through various channels. It is transmitted both through aural and visual means; the aural can be oral, written or drummed. The visual is conveyed through design, symbol and artefact and also through demeanour and behaviour. Many proverbs act as catalysts of knowledge, wisdom, philosophy, ethics and morals. They provoke further reflection and call for deep thinking which must be understood. On understanding of proverbs, Mbiti (1998), gives an example of South African proverb as "marriage roast" (hardens) in

this case, one is challenged to look at marriage seriously, to reflect on it and see how far this proverbial statement is true, false or both. This proverb is symbolic. This can also be said of the Central Ewe proverbs, known as “Lododo” in the Ewe language. In this study, some of the proverbs are made visible and appreciated.

Agbo (2006: vii) adds to the reason and understanding of proverbs. He intimates that, “proverbs can be likened to riddles, which have puzzling statements or description, mostly intended to make a person use his or her wits. However, in its proper sense, the motive of proverbs must always lend itself for easy understanding.” A proverb is a short sentence, that people often quote, which gives advice or comments on life. It is synonymous with; adage, axiom, maxim, saw and saying. It also tells the truth or useful wisdom in a short sentence. Proverbs are symbolized or become symbols when they are made into two or three – dimensional form. Agbo, (2006: vii) again denotes a proverb as a short statement of wisdom or advice, which has passed into general use. He goes on to say that, “a proverb is a short saying, with word of advice or warning.”

From the various definitions of proverbs, it is obvious that peoples’ judgment and understanding of proverbs are almost similar in one way or the other. Some describe them as short, others crystallized or as a summary. It is also asserted that they are widely held statements, meaning that they are commonly used in everyday language. It is again observed that all definitions recognize that proverbs are words of wisdom, advice, useful thoughts and warning. It must not be forgotten that proverbs require interpretation; else they become ambiguous statements because, whoever created them, experienced the situation which prompted their creation. That idea is true in connection with Central Ewe proverbs.

In a Ghanaian culture, philosophy is translated directly from written language to oral to visual art form. The principal carriers of Ewe philosophy are thousands of proverbs, each of which represents a bit of wisdom designed to guide and shape the society. There are a lot of methods used in communication, in order to get ideas, philosophies, values and beliefs to the people in the community. Proverbs are short sayings which are used in this case. They are symbolic expressions that lead us to conceive of situations, events, ideas, patterns of behaviour and of values. Briefly on Ewe proverbs, Dzobo (2004:6) similarly says: “In the process of communication, various devices are used to get our ideas, feelings and attitudes to people, proverb are some of the devices. A proverb is an indirect way of communicating what people want to say to others. They are generally short and pithy sayings used to express symbolically certain ideas, values and beliefs”.

2.3. *Aesthetics*

The definition and discussion of the origin of the term “aesthetics” is important in this study. Budd (1998) notes that, aesthetic (also spelt esthetic and Aesthetic) is the field of philosophy, which is devoted to the study of beauty and art. Aesthetics owes its name to Alexander Baumgarten, who derived it from the Greek word “aisthanomai” which means perception by means of the sense (Kelly, 1998:521). By its definition and characteristics, aesthetics basically consist of two major parts: the philosophy of art; and the philosophy of aesthetic experience and character of objects or phenomena that are not art. Non-art items include both artefacts that possess objects susceptible to aesthetics, appreciation and phenomena that lack any trait of human design by virtue of being product of nature; not humanity. There are two obvious possibilities that show that in aesthetica, one of the constituents is more fundamental than the other. The first is that the philosophy of art is basic, since the aesthetic appreciation of anything that is not art is the appreciation of it as if it was art.

The second is that, there is a unitary notion of the aesthetic that applies to both art and non-art; this notion defines the ideas of aesthetic appreciation as disinterested delight in the immediately perceptible properties of an object for their own sake; and artistic appreciation is just aesthetic appreciation of works of art. But neither of these possibilities is plausible.

Budd (2002) further indicates that the meaning of aesthetic as adjective may be illuminated by comparing it to aesthetic which is by construction and antonym. By extension, if something is unaesthetic it turns to dull the senses or causes sleepiness. In contrast, aesthetics may be thought of as anything that tends to stimulate or enliven the senses. Aesthetics is used to mean “that which appeals to the senses”. To summarize it, when aesthetics came about as a field of study, prominence was on beauty, taste, transcendence and the sublime. Aesthetically appealing objects were beautiful in and of themselves. What was believed beautiful was differentiated from the sublime. Beautiful symbols might fall into the category of what we perceive today as pretty, pleasant and pleasing to the eye. To the Central Ewes, it is perceived that the environment is the element that induces aesthetic feeling which is defined in terms of its functionality and its symbolic significance.

Dutton (2005:2) asserts that “pure” aesthetics is all about form and structure. It is an intuitive appeal to this formalist way of thinking through aesthetics. Dutton went on further indicates that: “...people who cannot feel pure aesthetics emotions remember pictures by their subjects; whereas people who can, as often as not, have no idea what a subject of a picture is. They have never noticed the representative element, and so when they discuss pictures they talk about shapes of forms and the relations and quantities of colours”.

Traditional Africans, of which Central Ewe is not exception, see beauty in everything around them. This is evident in their philosophy of life. It is the principle underlying these philosophies that control the traditional Africa. Aesthetic is seen as one of the basic aspects of their daily lives, which generally has a moral basis. This is pointed out by the fact that, in many African languages the same word means “beautiful” and “good”. In Ewe, “Enya kpor”, Beautiful, refers to the total out look of a particular animate or inanimate object; and “Enyo”, good, is mostly used to describe inner qualities inherent in an object including human beings.

In humans however, it is judgmental of moral fibre. The manifestation of this aesthetic quality does not conflict with the use and meaning of African art. It should be both beautiful and good, since it is meant not only to please the eye but to uphold moral values. Aesthetics in African artefacts have generally been shown publicly in connection with cultural context and use. In the African aesthetic principles, as well as related moral and religious values, it is worth giving attention to the formal aesthetic aspect of the

objects and the moral and religious ideas they show. On aesthetic values and their characteristics in several other cultures, Gyekye (2003:125) posits that:

The aesthetic is characterized by delight, interest and enjoyment experienced by human beings in response to objects, events and scenes. It holds the attentive eye and ear of the person and arouses his or her appreciation and enjoyment as he or she looks and listens. Aesthetic values refer to those features of objects, events and scenes that are considered worthy of sustained appreciation, attention and interest. The concept or value of beauty is central to aesthetic experience and evaluation and is generally associated with works of art such as painting, sculptures and musical composition, as well as artistry through dance.

2.3. Education

One of the earliest definitions of education was given by the Greek philosopher Plato who saw education as “the turning of the eye of the soul from darkness unto light”. Plato’s definition means the conversion of the immature from what is perceived wrongly into the right forms (Phillips, 2009).

According to Shafritz et al., (1988:168), education in broad terms, is the life-long process of acquiring new knowledge and skills through both formal and informal exposure to information, ideas, and experiences. Similarly, Bown and Olu Tomori (1979:15) state that “education is consciously facilitated learning, that is life- long and can affect young and old.” These writers, therefore, view education as a continuous activity that the individual goes through from infancy to the time that the individual will die.

Additionally, Farrant (1980:18) describes education “as the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed”. Learning is, therefore, taken to mean a change in behaviour, knowledge, understanding and the capabilities that the learner retains for use in other situations.

This large scale change culminating in the development of compulsory schooling for all, and may well have brought about such a radical conceptual tightening up that we now only tend to use the word in connection with the development of knowledge and understanding (Hirst and Peters, 1990:23). Within this purview, the UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education (1995:2) defines education as comprising organized and sustained communication designed to bring about learning. Thompson (1984:23) emphasizes on communication as a basic means of transmission of education. He explains ‘communication’ that it requires a relationship between two or more people involving the transfer of information. ‘Organized’ means planned in a sequence with established aims and curricula, and ‘sustained’ means that the learning experience has duration and continuity and describes ‘learning’ as any change in behaviour, knowledge, understanding, skills and capabilities which the learner retains and which cannot be ascribed simply to physical growth or the development of inherited behaviour patterns. He contends that: what goes on in the institution we call a school is intended to be education in these terms, but equally clearly education may be carried on outside formal schools and that all societies have all times sought to develop appropriate behaviour patterns, spread the possession of knowledge, understanding and skills among their members in ways which possess many of the above characteristics even though the degree of organization and the extent to which aims were articulated tended to be limited.

To Thompson, education is therefore a learning process where knowledge, skills, understanding and critical thinking are acquired (Yawkumah, 2007).

Schultz et al., (1998:116), refer to education as socialization and enculturation, life-long processes by which an individual is incorporated into the group and made capable of behaving in the ways accepted by the society for a person of a particular age, sex, or status. Recently, educationists have begun to refer to such process by which an individual learns the culture of his group as informal education, to distinguish between the processes of learning provided in specially designed learning environment- formal education (Thompson 1984).

To add to, Fafunwa (1982:17) defines education as “the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or a young adult develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the society in which he lives”. Explicit in this definition is the fact that it recognizes the development of individuals and concerns itself which provide total – mental, physical and vocational development of human beings, especially, as they are beneficial to society. This form of education can be related to that which is acquired from Central Ewe signs and symbols.

Aggarwal (1995:5) argues that education is the development of all those capabilities in the individual which enables him to control his environment and fulfil his responsibilities, hence a functional definition that depicts education as an instrument of personal change and challenging to the threat of the environment to show that education is a developmental process in a person that enables him or her to make an original contribution to human life in his or her best capacity. And in this view, it is very essential to note that this definition captures the point that education is a lifelong process; neither is it terminal nor is there age limit to education; hence it is a lifelong process, from the womb to the tomb.

Furthermore, Bowan (1979:12) informs us that “education is the earned virtue, the direct logic, and the resultant effect of individual encounter with a given experience”. This definition is wider and imprecise as it portrays all experience to be educative wherein experience may be of skills, elements of knowledge, the influence of others, the total atmosphere of a social environment, or any experiential encounter of human daily living. To Bowan, whatever the experience, it should be sufficiently deep and dynamic so as to evoke educating effects.

Also, Abosi and Brookman Amisshah (1992) contend that education is an integrated experience which combines not only physical with character training but also manual with intellectual training through observation, imitation of and participation in adult roles. Additionally, Moghadam (2003) sees education as a key part of strategies to improve individuals’ well-being and societies’ economic

and social development. Moghadam sees the development of societies being contingent on the kind of education the individual receives.

After analyzing the available literature on the definition of education, one can say that, education refers to any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of the individual. In this sense education is a lifelong process in which we continue to learn from experience throughout our lives. Hence all kinds of experiences can be education, starting from the ones we learn at home, school, from the radio, television, in news papers and even the ones learnt from society through a process of taking in cultural norms.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The qualitative research paradigm was employed to assemble data for this work. Qualitative research is concerned with non-statistical methods of inquiry and analysis of social phenomena. It draws on an inductive process in which themes and categories emerge through analysis of data collected, (Rubin & Babbie 1993). Grix (2004), believes that qualitative research method generally seeks to amass information from studies on a particular event, decision, institution, geographical location, an issue, a piece of legislation, with a view to discerning patterns, trends and relationship between key variables. He further says that this type of research involves the interpretation of data, whereby the research analyses cases, usually in a few number, in their social and cultural context over a specific period of time, and may develop grounded theories that emphasize tracing the process and sequence of events in a specific setting.

3.2. Descriptive Research

This seeks to observe with close scrutiny the research parameters, after which a recorded version of what the researcher has observed, through photography, can be subjected to critical analysis in order to arrive at the results. In this research, Descriptive techniques for data collection are viewed as compatible with the knowledge and values of the socio-cultural basis of the core zone (Epstein, 1988).

In this study, the Descriptive technique was employed in order to have a clear and logical presentation of ideas and facts. The Descriptive analysis helped the researcher to examine the phenomenon of signs to describe vividly the aesthetic and educational values among the Central Ewes.

3.3. The Target Population

The target population is the people who would benefit from the research. They are comprised of chiefs, queens, elders, linguists, priests and priestesses, knowledgeable individuals, the youth, and the educated elite. Some have faint ideas about signs and symbols. Some have forgotten their facts. Some have used the signs and symbols but do not understand them so about three hundred and fifty (350) people have useful information for the research and these have been classified as the accessible population in order to make the data valid and more acceptable.

3.4. The Accessible Population

People who could be reached for information in this research were the accessible population which consisted of: ninety (90) traditionalists, one hundred and twenty (120) scholars and one hundred and forty (140) youth, totaling three hundred and fifty (350).

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

Data-collection instruments used were observation and structured interviews. They were largely employed in order to have a clear and logical presentation of ideas and facts. Through these research instruments, aesthetic and educational contexts of signs of the Central Ewes of Ghana were assessed, and relevant information gathered.

3.6. Observation

As a qualitative research, observation is a naturalistic research or inquiry into everyday living. In seeking to explore the natural scene, the qualitative researcher aims to be as unobtrusive as possible, so that neither research presence nor methods disturb the situation. This is why observation is one of the favoured approaches. Here the researcher adopted a recognized role within the institution or group. Researchers have become, among other things, teachers, gang-members, pupils, nudists, hippies, bread salesmen, and medical students (Taylor, 1993). Direct observations were made of the signs as to how they look like. Aside this the aesthetic appeal of signs and symbols have been appreciated through direct and critical observations. Insightful and revealing answers were given accordingly when intriguing questions were asked the respondents.

3.7. Interview

As a research method, the interview is a conversation carried out with the definite aim of obtaining certain information. It is designed to gather valid and reliable information through the responses of the interviewee to a planned sequence of questions. The interview can either be structured or unstructured depending on the extent to which the content and the procedures involved are prescribed and standardized in advance. (Asamoah-Gyimah et al. 2007). The researcher employed structured interview to gather data for the research, because of its potential to acquire a higher response rate as well as more objective information, even from children and illiterates. The

interview tapped deep into the reality of the situations and discovered subjects' meanings and understandings. All these were achieved as a result of the empathy developed with the interviewees to win their confidence.

3.8. Library Research

Information on general issues concerning signs and symbols globally was accessed from libraries, while issues of specific study indigenous to the Central Ewe were largely sourced from public enquiry. The Libraries used included- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Libraries, Kumasi, Ho and Hohoe Libraries in the Volta Region, University of Cape Coast Libraries, Cape Coast, the Balm Library of the University of Ghana, Legon. The British Council Library in Accra, Sunyani Polytechnic Library, Sunyani and the Catholic University Library, Fiapre, Sunyani. Also, Libraries of the University of Education at Winneba and Kumasi were visited as well as the Ghana Library Board in Accra. These Libraries and the internet were visited to search for secondary data on signs and symbols, globally and on Ewes. Generally, documentary sources and printed matters such as books, brochures, magazines, periodicals, catalogues, newspapers and thesis were studied. There were also attempts to gather information on Aesthetics and Art Education.

4. Discussion of Finding

The content of each photograph has been described and analyzed. Their interpretation is of their aesthetic and educational values. The discussions include analysis, interpretation of facts leading to conclusions and recommendations.



Kavuvu (a symbol of patience)

'Ati nor agbe nuti ka vuna do'

Figure 4: Literal translation: (It is on a living tree that vine grows)

4.1. Aesthetic Values

The green vine represents the young vegetation and therefore the youth of the society. It symbolizes growth. The respondents attested that the green vine (young) spiraling around a living tree indicates the beauty of the kind of support the older generation provides for the youth in the Ewe communities. To them, individuals are not obliged only to care for their relations, but any one in need of help. Physically the young vine with its green leaves against the background of the grey tree that supports it is a beautiful phenomenon that is a 'perfect' arrangement pleasant to the eye in Ewe 'edze ani' (it is beautiful).

4.2. Educational Values

The Central Ewe community attested that the vine has a life-force in its stem and therefore only spirals around another tree that also has a life-force in it for support. As well, the vulnerable in the society cannot be supported by other vulnerable when they are all not strong. If one is not strong, nothing prevents the weak to "hang on" the strong for support. It is an in-built provision for a welfare system among Central Ewes. The extended system allows for the wealthy members to support the poor.



'Zegbagba' (a symbol of imperfection)
'Tormedelae gbaa ze'

Figure 5: Literal translation: (It is the one who fetches water that breaks the water pot)

The adage goes: it is the one who fetches water that breaks the water pot. The one who carries the water pot is the one responsible for it. But if the unexpected happens and the pot gets broken by accident, the one who fetches the water cannot be blamed. This means that certain mishaps are pardonable.

4.3. Aesthetic Values

This proverb illustrates the beauty in tolerating contradictions in life. The respondents indicated that, evil is unacceptable to society, but it does happen, and therefore provision should be made for it. It is not only the positive aspects of life that are acceptable to man. The beauty is in the ability to accommodate both positive and negative aspects of life.

4.4. Educational Values

It was confirmed that both the good and the evil are tolerable among the Central Ewes, for such is life. In the performance of daily chores, the unexpected could happen. When it does, it is tolerable, no one is blamed. Be on the alert for the good or the bad at all times.



'Nu kple ge' (a symbol of sharing)
'Ne nyo na nua eye wogbana de ge me'

Figure 6: Literal translation: (It is when the mouth is full of food, that some fall into the beard)

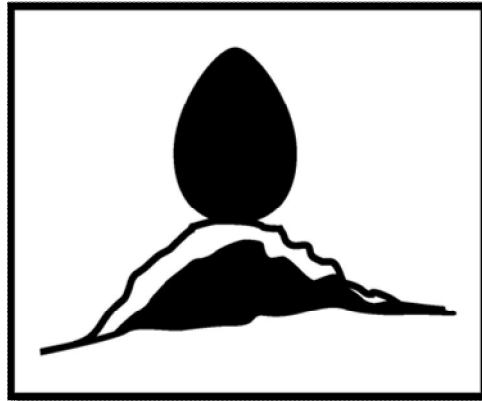
Food 'overflows' the capacity of the mouth and some fall into the beard. When someone struggles to look after his or her children and they grow to become useful citizens and bring great benefits to the house, it is when the struggling parents have enough of benefit that some are shared with others. The mouth and beard are neighbours. When the owner has enough to eat, some are shared with others.

4.5. Aesthetic Values

The Central Ewes believe that it is beautiful to share the fruits of someone's labour. When things in one family become very successful, they flow onto others or relatives. It is beautiful to share the fruit of someone's successes.

4.6. Educational Values

The people disclosed that when someone is encountering difficulties in life the neighbours or relatives are aware but do not help. But when by the benevolence of someone, the person surmounts the difficulties and begins to reap bountiful fruits, the neighbours or relatives benefit.



'Koklozi le kpe dzi' (symbol of cautiousness)

'Koklozi medua xe le kpe dze'

Figure 7: Literal translation: (The egg does not dance on a rock)

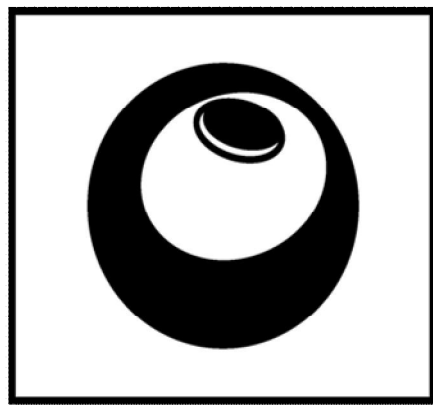
The egg is fragile and needs to be handled cautiously. The egg cannot dance on a rough hard surface, for, the consequences are grave. Issues that need to be handled with care and circumspection should so be handled. Otherwise, disaster occurs.

4.7. Aesthetic Values

The elders of the Central Ewes revealed that the beauty of cautioning people to operate within their capabilities is meant to avoid calamities that could have been avoided. If one fails to heed caution and runs into grave consequences, it is not a beautiful part of life. There is beauty in acceptable behaviour.

4.8. Educational Values

The elders further said everyone knows his or her limit and capabilities. If one attempts to go beyond his or her capability, the proverb is used to caution the person.



'Atamagui' (symbol of kindness)

'Atamagui be ame si nyo dorme na ame la de woxlea efe ta de ati'

Figure 8: Literal translation: (The snuff box says that it is the head of a benefactor that is knocked against a tree)

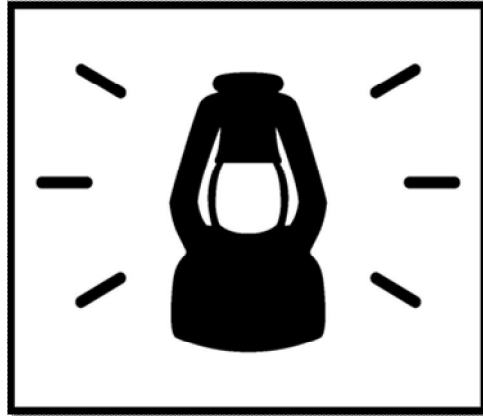
It is the kind person who in turn suffers the consequences of his or her kindness. Sometimes, one attempts to help other members of the community who are in desperate need. In the attempt to help such persons, the benefactor suffers some kind of set back. This is where the proverb is relevant.

4.9. Aesthetic Values

The Central Ewe community expressed that it is beautiful to be kind because kindness breeds good relationships. It is beautiful to 'die' or suffer for another person.

4.10. Educational Values

According to them, one must be kind but must be weary or aware of possible negative consequences. Life is full of ups and downs. Whatever one does, one should beware of positive and negative consequences.



*'Gomekadi' (symbol of light)
'Kekeli'*

Figure 9: Literal translation: (Light in a container)

'Gomekadi' is a lantern. It represents light. Where there is no darkness, there is light. Light overpowers darkness. When the day (light) is gone, night (darkness appears). Light represents clarity, non-ambiguity, transparency, and truthfulness. Also, understanding positive attributes as well as good or shining examples.

4.11. Aesthetic Values

On the words of the people of the Central Volta Region of Ghana, light is considered positive and goodness while darkness is considered negative. Light could mean progress while darkness could also mean backwardness. Light is beautiful when it is applied to positive attributes to life, where there is clarity of issues so that people can 'see' or perceive ideas clearly. Everyone is at peace with light because it signifies normalcy.

4.12. Educational Values

As said by the Central Ewes, reference to light in life is reference to knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment. 'You have not seen the light.' means that 'you are ignorant'.



'Eule kple ator' (symbol of perseverance) 'Eule be degbor nana ator tsina'

Figure 10: Literal translation: (The weaver bird says regular going and coming enable a nest to grow)

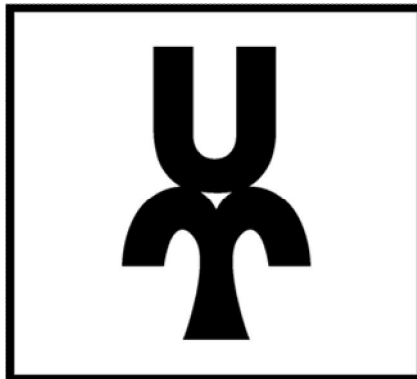
Constant regular building bit by bit enables the nest to grow. It is the same saying 'little drops of water make an ocean'. When one perseveres, one succeeds. When one works hard, one achieves great goals.

4.13. Aesthetic Values

The Central Ewes claimed that there is beauty in persevering, being patient and disciplining oneself to achieve life's purposes. Beauty in organizing oneself to get things done very well is the education message from this proverb.

4.14. Educational Values

To them it does not pay to rush in doing anything; the result of rush may be disastrous. It needs patience and regulated pace of work to attain great results. Young people should learn that it takes calculated and regular steps or stages to carry out a great responsibility.



'Trogbor' (symbol of reversibility)

'Nusianu si yi dzi la gbugborna va anyigba'

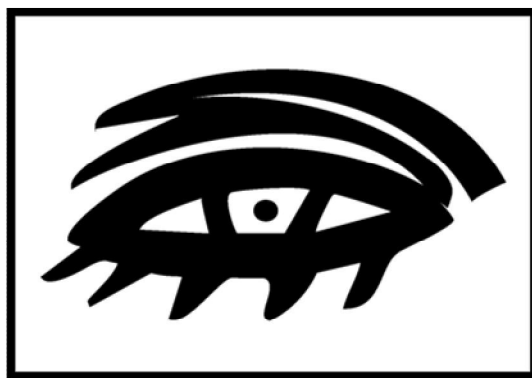
Figure 11: Literal translation: (Whatever goes up comes down)

4.15. Aesthetic Values

The Central Ewes said beauty is in reversibility. Whatever happens can be reversed so that at all times, there is balance in society. Life in the other world must balance with life in this world. This 'balance' is aesthetically beautiful.

4.16. Educational Values

Scientifically, the force of gravity pulls down anything that is thrown up. As per the Central Ewes, naturally God has not made things to hang in the air when thrown up. This means that there are two sides of every issue. Any unpleasant situation that occurs in the community can be corrected. This applies even to death, such that when a person dies, it is believed that the person will eventually reincarnate.



'Nku kple alor' (symbol of tolerance and co operation)

'Dzre mele nku kple alor dome o'

Figure 12: Literal translation: (There is no quarrel between the eye and sleep)

A person does not sleep until the eye lids close. This means that it is difficult to say that a person is asleep when the eyes are still open. This means that it takes the co operation between the eye and sleep to produce the event of sleeping. If the eye and sleep cannot co-exist, there will be no sleep.

4.17. Aesthetic Value

It was disclosed by the Central Ewes that the good relation between the eye and sleep produces positive results. The beauty is in the discord-less life style.

4.18. Educational Value

The Central Ewes also stated that there should be no enmity between any two persons who must come together or counsel to get great or important things done in life. If the fate of the community hangs on the cooperation, co-existence or tolerance of certain members of the community, the situation should not be toyed with.



*'Hliha' (symbol of support)
'Ta gborlo metsoa hliha o'*

Figure 13: Literal translation: (The bare head cannot carry a laterite rock.)

4.19. Aesthetic Values

On the words of the people of the Central Volta Region of Ghana, 'hliha' is a very rough stone. Its texture is a beauty. Carrying 'hliha', on the bare head needs a support to ease the pain the carrier goes through. To surmount great challenges, one needs a support in life. The support therefore makes the challenges surmountable and is beautiful, because it helps to solve a life's problem.

4.20. Educational Values

The people again observed that without a pad on the head, carrying of 'hliha' is difficult. In this case, the pad becomes the support or the help. This stresses the importance of help given to the individuals to enable them start anything where such a help of others is indispensable.

5. Conclusion

The symbols of the Central Ewe as well as their meanings are not known to the majority of the people. The aesthetics underpinning of the symbols are also not well understood by the people. Again, the educational values of symbols and the part they play in the daily activities of the people are not common to the inhabitants. Besides, the symbols have not been fully acknowledged.

The exclusive symbols of the Central Ewes were very important to them in the past because they were effective system of communication, education and presentation of culture. Nonetheless, while the older generation still recognizes and maintains the importance of symbols, the Youth is naïve about them. Only few citizens are aware of the meaning of symbols. This means that the silent, non-verbal medium of transmitting the beliefs, values, attitudes and sense of purpose, as well as philosophical attitudes of Central Ewe life have been considerably deprived.

As well, the undisclosed "language" of symbols which need to be appreciated by the majority of the people so that they go about their daily activities, have been absent over the years. The Youth tend to pay more attention to contemporary issues of the world. Therefore, the need to study the symbols among the Central Ewes so as to unravel the meanings for better understanding and invigoration of development of the area becomes imperative; hence, the need for this research. In order to attempt to resolve these problems, the study sought to:

- i. Identify and describe symbols among Central Ewes.
- ii. Discuss the aesthetic values of symbols.
- iii. Discuss the educational values of symbols.

Central Ewes have peculiar concepts of aesthetics in which beauty is equated with function or usefulness. Their symbols have educational values from which moral lessons are learnt and are used in everyday life. When an event happens especially, each corresponding signs and symbols are used as a normal aspect of life.

In addition, symbols of the Central Ewes constitute part of their visual culture. Despite this fact, the use of symbols is integrated with the theoretic (abstract, philosophical, metaphysical and psychological) aspect of the culture. Besides, symbols carry messages (knowledge) that are spiritual, moral, philosophical, and psychological. As well, they have aesthetic values which educate the viewer. It was also established that when a thing is beautiful, it means it is perfect. It is also identified that:

- a) Central Ewe symbols form an integral part of everyday life. Therefore Central Ewe symbols cannot be separated from everyday life.

- b) It can be concluded that among the Central Ewes, aesthetics is seen in both the visual and theoretic aspect of life.
 c) Finally, it can also be concluded that the Central Ewes have a criteria for determining beauty. For example 'esor', meaning it is complete or well structured.

6. Recommendations

- a) The symbols serve as keys to the understanding of the Central Ewe culture. The traditional councils of the area invigorate efforts to get the majority of the population to understand the use of signs and symbols so as to retain the dynamism of their culture.
 b) Visual significance of signs and symbols should not be done in isolation of the theoretical significance. The two make up life.
 c) Judgment should not be passed about symbols without understanding the underpinning criteria for determining beauty.
 d) Symbols must be used as mechanism.

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