



**Noyes**  
Museum of Art  
STOCKTON UNIVERSITY

Education Guide

March 1<sup>st</sup> – March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023

# ***A Taste of Culture – The Republic of Ghana, West Africa***

## **Exhibition Overview:**

During the month of March, we will be showcasing the Ghanaian culture in our space. Get a taste of the history, music, and celebrations. Join us in Atlantic City on March 6<sup>th</sup> at 12:30pm for a flag-raising ceremony at City Hall.

The information below details the objects on display in the pop-up exhibition at the Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University, including historical information.

## **Objects in Exhibition:**

### **1. Cloth**

#### A) Kente

Kente is a Ghanaian textile that is made of handwoven cloth with strips of silk and cotton. Kente cloth is a cultural tradition originally worn by the royals of the Asante (also known as Ashanti), the Ewes, and the Dagbon people. Other names for Kente are nwetoma, kete, and chinchini. These fabrics were initially used exclusively to dress kings, queens, and their courts. Asante royalty limited the use of Kente to special social and sacred functions. Kente has become more easily accessible to outsiders of the royal court, but it continues to be associated with wealth and high social status.

#### B) Ahenema

Ahenema is a traditional Ghanaian slipper. It is a sandal used by chiefs, queens, and elderly people in society. The Akan reserve this footwear for royalty as it symbolizes elegance and class. Historically these sandals were made for chiefs, and it was meant to be named after the King. The name of the King was not supposed to be mentioned in vain, so they named the sandals after the children of the Kings. The name Ahenema translates to "The King's Children."

### C) Beads

Ghanaian beads have a rich history that dates back to ancient times. They were first used as the King's currency for the exchange of textiles and alcohol. In Ghanaian culture, these beads have been considered vessels of spiritual energy. Among the Krobo and Ashanti, wood and glass beads are used for spiritual protection with a design depicting an 'evil eye.' It is a tradition that beads are handed down as family heirlooms. From generation to generation, it is believed that the beads bestow the knowledge and wisdom of family ancestors.

In Ghanaian culture, each colored bead has meaning. In certain parts of Ghana, white-colored beads evoke fertility, blue-colored ones are associated with purity, while golden ones are a symbol of wealth. Bodom beads are a yellow diamond shape, designed with a darker color such as blue. Bodom beads were traditionally worn exclusively by Ghanaian chiefs.

### D) Batakari

The African "fugu", or "smock" is also called Batakari in the local Ghanaian language. A batakari is a traditional men's garment. Originating from Northern Ghana, it gained acceptance throughout the republic. "Fugu" translated from Moshi is the word for "cloth." Beginning in the 19th century the Ashanti military wore batakari as a garment for war. The war dress was made from cotton and covered with leather pouches and metal cases that contained talismans. Ashanti believed the metal from the talismans provided bulletproof protection.

## 2. Music

### E) Dondo

The dondo is an hourglass-shaped drum from West Africa, whose pitch can be regulated to mimic the tone and prosody of human speech. It has two drumheads connected by leather tension cords, which allow the player to change the pitch of the drum by scraping the cords between their arm and body.

### F) Djembe

The djembe can produce a wide variety of sounds, making it an extremely versatile drum. The drum is very loud, allowing it to be heard clearly as a solo instrument over a large percussion ensemble. The player can tell an emotional story. Traditionally, the djembe is played only by men. The drummers and musicians often form a circle, with the center of the circle reserved for dancers. Depending on the rhythm being played, dances may be performed by groups of men and/or women with choreographed steps, or single dancers may take turns at performing short solos.

### G) Maracas

One of the most recognizable percussion instruments is the maracas, a pair of rattles made from gourds. Maracas are used as musical instruments, and they are usually oval or egg-shaped.

### 3. Food

#### H) Mortar & Pestle

One of the most common images of daily African life is a woman pounding food in a wooden mortar. Ghanaians use this as a food processor, but it is more than just a kitchen appliance. The mortar and pestle are considered sacred in many African countries. Pestle and mortar are used to prepare one of Ghana's local delicacies called fufu which is enjoyed by many Ghanaians, especially the Akan. It is prepared with only two ingredients: cassava and plantain or in some other cases yam or cocoyam in place of the cassava. The meal is enjoyed mostly with palm nut soup, ground nut soup, light soup, abunuabunu, or werewere soup. Basically, you peel the two ingredients and boil them for about 15 to 20 mins then pound them with the pestle in a mortar.

#### I) Earthenware & Wooden Grinder

These tools are used as a grinding pot for blending spices and cooking. Also known as Kaaa by the Gas from the Greater Accra region, "Apotoyewaa," "Asanka," or "Ayewa" by Akans and Vegba the Ewes in the Volta region in Ghana. The earthenware is very fragile and may break if dropped because it is made of clay, while the wooden grinder is made with a strong odum tree.

### 4. Tradition

#### J) Traditional Stool

The traditional stool, or "asesedwa" in the Asante Twi language, is a carved wooden seat. The asessedwa is a sacred stool used in royal ceremonies. Asante Queens may be seen in public, sitting on the traditional stool as a seat of authority, communicating messages and providing leadership. The traditional stool is believed to have religious importance. It is carved into different sizes, shapes, and designs to communicate a specific message of authority. It is important in the Akan culture because it highlights the sense of community amongst society and royalty.

#### K) Linguist Staff, "Okyeamepoma"

In the Akan language, the word "okyeamepoma" is a magnificent gold-covered staff, an insignia of the office for a linguist and a high-ranking advisor to an Asante ruler. The Okyeame is traditionally responsible for mediating all verbal exchanges between the King, his subjects, and the people who come to seek his counsel. The decoration of the top of linguist staff typically illustrates Asante proverbs about power and institutional responsibilities. The staff is composed of a long wooden shaft carved in two interlocking sections and a separate finial attached to the base. It is covered entirely with gold foil, a material that alludes to the sun, and to the vital force or soul contained within all living things.

#### L) Traditional Umbrella (Kynie)

The principal function of an umbrella is to create and maintain a cooler shaded environment beneath its coverings during long public events. They are used as a shade only for the King and Queen during a function. They are topped with a finial carved from wood in a variety of abstract and representational forms and covered in gold foil. The subject of an umbrella finial, like other abstract and representational regalia, is intended to call to mind proverbs associated with the strength and wisdom of its chiefly owner.

### 5. Wood Carvings

Wood carving is a traditional artform done throughout Ghana, but it is mostly centered in the Ashanti and Eastern Regions. Its tradition is always an important part of the culture of the ethnic Akan people. The wood carving weaves together the verbal and the visual by illustrating spoken proverbs.

M) Sweet Mother - A mother cares, supports, and knows what the kids will eat.

N) Unity is Strength - Together, we can conquer the world.

O) Teamwork - The way we work together as one people will determine how we will succeed.

P) Music - Music is dynamic, pleasurable, and uplifting.

### Ghana Flag

The flag of Ghana was designed to replace the colonial flag of British Gold Coast (United Kingdom) upon the attainment of independence in 1957. It was flown until 1959, and then reinstated in 1966. It consists of the Pan-African colors of Red, Yellow, and Green, in horizontal stripes, with a black five-pointed star in the center of the gold stripe.

The flag of Ghana was designed by Mrs. Theodosia Salome Okoh. The three colors of red, gold & green were chosen because of the geography of Ghana. Ghana lies in the tropics and is blessed with rich vegetation. Gold was influenced by the mineral-rich nature of our lands. Red commemorates those who died or worked for the country's independence. Then the five-pointed lone star is the symbol of African emancipation and unity in the struggle against colonialism. The Ghanaian flag was the first African flag after the flag of Ethiopia to feature these colors.

GHANA



## Ghana Coat of Arms

It was designed by a Ghanaian called Nii Amon Kotei of blessed memory, and was commissioned by Ghana's first President, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Ghana's Coat of Arms has certain specific meanings. The shield is borne by two golden eagles and their position signifies that the nation is in safe, in strong hands, and is being watched with keen eyes. The golden eagles also have the order of Star of Ghana, which is the highest award given by Ghana, with a black star ribbon hanging from their necks.



The shield has a blue background and is divided into four quarters by a green St. George's cross rimmed with gold and in its center exists a golden lion alluding to the connection and relationship between Ghana and Great Britain (Commonwealth). On the top left quarter is the image of a traditional sword and a linguist's staff and this represents the power of the traditional authorities. The top right quarter is an image of the Christianborg Castle facing the Gulf of Guinea which was once the Seat of Government. The bottom left quadrant has the image of a cocoa tree which embodies the agricultural wealth of Ghana, and the bottom right quadrant has the image of a mine shaft representing the mineral wealth of the country.

On top of the shield is a five-pointed black star with gold-rimmed edges standing on a wreath of red, gold, and green colors and these represent the lodestar of African Freedom. Beneath the shield, is a scroll with the motto: "Freedom and Justice" with grass on each side of the shield.

References:

[www.modernghana.com](http://www.modernghana.com), [www.manhyiapalace.com](http://www.manhyiapalace.com), [www.visitghana.com](http://www.visitghana.com),

<https://en.wikipedia.org>

**The Multicultural Exhibition Series is held in partnership with the  
City of Atlantic City Multicultural Services.**

**This month's exhibition is presented in partnership with the Ghanaian Community**

**City of Atlantic City Multicultural Services [City of Atlantic City Multicultural Services Information](#)  
(609) 347-6492 · Facebook & Instagram: @acmulticulturalservices**

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