

OSUJANYI QUAICOO ESSEL

Fashion Design and Textiles Education Unit

Department of Art Education

University of Education, Winneba

[eyensempii@gmail.com](mailto:eyensempii@gmail.com)

GRACE DUFIE ASARE

Akroso Senior High Technical School

Eastern Region, Ghana

[asaredufiegrace@gmail.com](mailto:asaredufiegrace@gmail.com)

# Breaking the Academic Silence on Anonymity of Indigenous Textiles: Textile Art of Nana Kwaku Duah II in Focus

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## Abstract

*The study sought to explore the biographical account of Nana Kwaku Duah II and examine his major innovative and creative contributions in textile designing, weaving and Adinkra printing cottage industry. In this study, narrative analysis and oral history methods constituted the form of biographical method used in addition to descriptive research design. Unstructured interview and unobtrusive observation were the forms of instrumentations used for the data collection. Data was analysed using descriptive and narrative analysis tools. It was revealed in the study that Nana Kwaku Duah II is a presidential fabric designer who fuses indigenous adinkra printing technology, kente weaving techniques and embroidery art in creating a unique composite breed of fabrics. His unique fabric designs have received commendation from users and admirers, yet he has remained anonymous in academic circles as the textile designer. For instance, his Nyame na aye design worn by President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo during his 2017 inauguration ceremony. It was highly praised by many as kente, though it was produced with a combination of kente and embroidery stripes. It is recommended that the nation must consider honouring his creative efforts as it persists in other developed nations who honour their creatives. The textile designs of this creative designer must feature in the collections of the Ghana National Museum for art education purposes.*

## Keywords

Nana Kwaku Duah II, textile art, kente, adinkra, presidential fabric designer

## 1.0 Introduction

Textiles have served the clothing needs of humans since the existence of human cultures. Textile designing has been the bedrock of the Ghanaian society since pre-colonial era. Apart from the usage of textiles as body adornment and as means of identification, it is said to be one of the basic necessities of life (Adu-Akwaboa, 1994). Clothing is a visual marker and status defining wearables. As a visual marker, it could easily be detected whether or not one is clothed physically. Per the social standards of society and demands of specific cultures, clothing communicates great deal of information about its wearer. Clothing, in the context of this study, includes all textile wearables produced from either natural or synthetic materials.

Meanings that are ascribed to Ghanaian textiles are integral to the cultures in which they are used. Inspirations for the designs are derived from culture, human activities and events. Textile art, as part of indigenous art, was done to serve the needs of the society. One of the ways the kings, chiefs and other members of the traditional leadership displayed their political power and supremacy was through the display of their beautifully designed fabrics (Essel, 2019). The usage of fabrics goes beyond the merely covering of the body. Motifs for the designs may represent status, identity, among other things, depending on the particular culture that produces and uses it. Textile fabrics such as *adinkra*, *kente* and tie-dye are worn on different occasions such as funeral, durbars and naming ceremonies. *Kente* is a woven fabric which is produced on the traditional loom named *Nsadua Kofi*. The distinctiveness, simplicity and complexity of the designs are determined by the warp and weft preparations. Apart from weaving, embroidery is also used to mimic the *kente* designs. *Kente* design patterns are sometimes produced through screen printing technique. Textile fabrics, if well designed, command admiration and responsiveness.

Studies on locally produced Ghanaian textiles abound. Adinkra printing and *kente* weaving, which are indigenous textile fabric decoration technology in Ghanaian textile art have received considerable scholarly documentation (Essel, 2019). Awuyah (2012) explained that the indigenous hand embroidery known as *nwomu* was developed alongside the *Adinkra* cloth in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the prior aim of decorating and enhancing the beauty of *Adinkra*. Some studies have documented the weave structure and patterns of *kente*, the socio-economic, political, cultural as well as the symbolical and philosophical interpretations of *kente* (Rattary, 1927; Antubam, 1963; Agbenaza, 1965; Asihene, 1978; Hiamey, 1981; Adler & Barnard, 1992; Ofori-Ansa, 1993; Fosu, 1994; Ross, 1998; Picton, 2004; Denis, 2004; Kraamer, 2006; Asmah, 2009; Lloyd, 2017; Cohen, 2019). Adinkra printing has also received scholarly attention (Antubam, 1963; Glover,

1969; Willis, 1998; Ofori-Ansa, 1999; Arthur, 2001; Boateng, 2011). What little or no attention has been paid to is the unmasking the textile artists and producers behind these great textile art. In other words, it is important to break the academic silence on anonymity of indigenous textiles, especially, those who do not have so-called formal education. This calls for the attention to unveil the creativity and artistry of textile artists whose works have received little or no scholarly attention. The study, therefore, focuses on the life and works of Nana Kwaku Duah II, a textile artist of *Tewobaabi* near *Ntonso* in the Kwabere East of the Ashanti region. The study sought to explore the biographical account of Nana Kwaku Duah II and examine his major innovative and creative contributions in textile designing, weaving and Adinkra printing cottage industry.

## 2.0 Theoretical framework

This study adopted the Gorichanaz's (2019) *first-person theory of documentation* synthesized from three models of documentation. As a litmus test for the workability of this theory, Gorichanaz used seven self-portraits of visual artists as a form of documentation in understanding the worldview of the artists. His theoretical model is useful in analyzing documentation experiences. The experiences include thorough observation of the artworks created for deriving empirical commentary in relation to the philosophical thoughts, cultural nuances, styles and techniques of the artist; aesthetics of the artworks and social life of the artist. In this sense, the artworks act as window through which to read the personality, thoughts, beliefs and emotions of the artists. This is because, artists project the 'self' in their artworks.

Artwork in itself is a document. Contents of artworks are embodiment of the life experiences of its creators. Decoding artworks contributes to understanding the experiences and life of the artists. In this sense, artworks are objects of biography. When a biographer writes on a work of art, s/he is reappraising the central concepts of the subject and deconstructing the philosophy entailed in the work for intellectualization.

Using the *first-person theory of documentation*, the lived experiences shared by the artist were interwoven with the researchers' experiences of the visual configurations embedded in the textile artwork of the artist to shape the biographical account. By means of the biographical perspective of seeing artwork as document through which artists narrate the 'self', and the data gathered outside the artworks, which in this case include the researchers' visual experiences of the artworks and the verbal life accounts of the artists formed the theoretical premise for the analysis.

### 3.0 Methodology

The study used biographical research designs under the qualitative research paradigm. Biographical research design is used for activities including narration, life history, oral history, autobiography, biographical interpretive methods, storytelling and ethnography (Bornat, 2007). As pointed out, narrative analysis, biographical interpretive method and oral history include the biographical research method (Bornat, 2007). In this study, narrative analysis and oral history methods constitute the form of biographical method used in addition to descriptive research design. The biographical design catered for exploring the lived story or life experiences of the respondents in a sequential manner in constructing a unified story (Creswell, 2013; Snider, 2010) while the descriptive aided in discussing the artistic activities as well as the textile artworks produced by the respondent. Burns and Grove (2001), explain that descriptive design observes and describes the presence, frequency or absence of characteristics of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs, in order to gain additional information.

The study was centred on Nana Kwaku Duah II, a textile artist who resides in Kwabre East District of the Ashanti Region. As an art practitioner, Nana Kwaku Duah II was knowledgeable in indigenous textile fabrics and designs as well as its uses and symbolisms. He was in a better position to give accurate data about the locally produced fabrics, the use of symbolism and his creative ways of fabric designing and production.

Unstructured interview and unobtrusive observation were the forms of instrumentations used for the data collection. With the permission from the respondents, the face-to-face interview was audio-taped for transcription. The unobtrusive observation was based on the tools and materials used in designing and production, decorative techniques, production processes and the symbolisms used. The fabric designing and production processes were also observed at the studios of the respondent. Data was analysed using descriptive and narrative analysis tools. The works and life of the artist was described through narration and supported with photographs. The transcribed and analysed data was shared with the respondent for verification purposes. The respondent also provided some images and granted the researchers permission to use them for academic purpose.

## 4.0 Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Biographical account of Nana Kwaku Duah II

Known in private life as Baffour Gyimah, Nana Kwaku Duah II (Figure 1) was born in 1947 to Opanyin Yaw Gyimah and Maame Akosua Badu both of *Tewobaabi* near *Ntonso* in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. While the famous *Bonwire* is synonymous with Asante *kente* production, *Tewobaabi* has established its own tradition as the home of quality *Adinkra* prints and *kente*. The *Tewobaabi* town lies few metres just after the *Mamponteng* toll-booth and next after *Aboaso* on the Kumasi-Mampong road. On the *Ntonso* stretch, spectacular display of *Adinkra* and *Kente* fabrics along the sides of the road gracefully welcome road users.

Baffour Gyimah started his elementary education at Ntonso S.D.A Primary School but could not get to Middle School on economic grounds. As the saying goes that every adversity is a blessing in disguise, Baffour Gyimah's strong admiration for *kente* weaving at tender age turned his sensibilities to fall under the influence of his grandfather Opanyin Kwadwo Korankye. His grandfather was a master-weaver who had specialised in weaving smock fabrics of the Northern sector of Ghana, which are characterised with heavy hand spun yarns. Baffour Gyimah learnt the rudiments of weaving from his grandfather at the age of seven and began to improve on it almost immediately through the basics and progressed afterwards. He initially learnt how to make the frames around which the yarn is spun and mastered the looms operations before he finally began to weave the simple patterns. Within a short period of time, he progressed to creating more intricate designs that were mostly reserved for master-weavers because of his dedication and passion for the work. After this, Baffour Gyimah was formally apprenticed to Opanyin Kwame Brobbey, (one of the master-weavers) at the age of seventeen years to learn more about handloom weaving for a year.



*Figure 1: Nana Kwaku Duah II, the Chief of Tewobaabi, near Ntonso in the Ashanti Region.*  
(Image courtesy: Nana Kwaku Duah II's Diaries, 2019).

Nana Kwaku Duah II, *Tewobaabihene* (chief of Tewobaabi), refutes the false impression that culture deals exclusively with the past. As a creative textile artist, he creates new artistic unions in his textile designs. To him, "a weaver is a preserver of knowledge and the way of the people." For this reason, weavers have to learn the art of weaving in its totality and that was what he acquired from Opanyin Brobbey (His master). Within a period of three months he had already attained mastery of the work but was still under the care of his master until one year when he completed the apprenticeship training before he left in 1965. Explaining how kente business was done at the time, he clarified that



young weavers were contracted to weave for a fee and that was what he did until he took a break after he had gained a commission of £24 in 1966, while he had left the apprenticeship of Opanyin Brobbey. Baffour Gyimah was able to accrue such an amount because he was an outstanding weaver amongst his peers. For this reason, one Opanyin Dwamena, who trained Opanyin Brobbey, recommended him to most of the people in higher authorities to transact business with him. He converted this modest commissions into a manageable investment by starting sole proprietor kente fabrics production business in the same year under the guidance of Opanyin Korankye (his uncle). He produced kente fabrics and transported them to Sefwi Bekwai for door-to-door marketing. The products were credited to customers to pay in instalment.

However, Baffour Gyimah had to relocate to new areas to continue the trade due to some family crises. Determined not to be affected by the setback, he began to make regular treks to Dormaa Ahenkro and its suburb where his father was engaged in farming in 1968. His hard work began to yield bountiful results. It was at that time that his *Kente* and *Adinkra* fabrics became a hit. He attracted considerable number of clients including other foreign nationals some of whom were then teaching at Dormaa Ahenkro Senior Secondary School currently in Dormaa Municipal in Bono region of Ghana. Baffour Gyimah undertook the trekking business for five years until he decided to open a shop and quit trekking in 1973. He recalled “instead of going to the people, they came seeking for my products.” By way of attracting more clients he displayed samples of his creative fabric design products in front of his Tewobaabi shop located along the road connecting Tewobaabi to Ntonso in the Kwabre East district of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Indeed, that roadside visual merchandising attracted customers and prominent people including the then manager of Agricultural Development Bank, Mr Aforo who assisted him to access a loan facility of ₵3,000 in 1975 which he paid off within a year (1976). This helped him to expand his business, and bought a pick-up truck which helped him in purchasing and conveying weaving materials from Accra to Kumasi.

Later, Baffour Gyimah realised that the screen printing technology could be used to improve on the making of *Adinkra* printing instead of the stamps. He, therefore, incorporated this idea into how he made his *Adinkra* fabric prints around 1998-99, and that led to improved quality of his products. The usage of quality yarns for his woven fabrics makes them durable.

Baffour Gyimah’s collaboration with Aid to Artisans Ghana brought a dramatic twist to the story because he was introduced to the computer aided design software, which he used to create new patterns and styles. With the computer, “I am able to create many interesting and challenging designs”, Nana pointed

out. The computer aided designs are much seen in Baffour Gyimah's techniques of combining weaving and printing in making intricate patterns. He was invited to the USA in August 2001 to participate in the New York International Gift Fair, which was a unique opportunity for him to learn new ideas and techniques to improve on the existing ideas. "One of the biggest things that came my way was the emphasis on the quality as far as my artistry are concerned", Baffour Gyimah added. He began to experiment with creating a hybrid fabric composed of woven *Kente* with *Adinkra* patterns in 2003. The hybrid fabric he created was a sensation. He gave his first design to a very important person whose identity was not disclosed. With regard *kente Kente* in the Ashanti region, mostly royalty and supreme traditional authorities comes to mind. This implies that the produced design was possibly given to the named category of people in the community.

Possessed by hard work and innovation, Baffour Gyimah expanded his textiles production studios in 2001 to employ more people in his sole proprietorship textiles business. He built dormitories to house more than 40 workers and apprentices. By way of empowering people with physical disabilities, he trains and employs them in his business. He has residential facilities for the disabled as well as wheel chairs to facilitate their movement in work and life. Fifty physically-challenged craftsmen have so far passed through his training programme successfully, while some of them have established their own workshops and employed other people. The fifty trainees were sponsored by Asanteman Council and the World Bank.

Baffour Gyimah was enstooled as the tenth chief of *Tewobaabi* in 1979 in succession to his uncle, Nana Yaw Barima at the age of thirty-three and is still reigning. His main ambition is to continue to assist his town grow and help to uplift the image of mother Ghana through his creative talents. The story of Baffour Gyimah, the seventy-three-year-old chief, reveals creativity and determination.

#### **4.2 Major Creative and Innovative Contributions of Nana Kwaku Duah II in Textile Designing and Adinkra Printing**

Drawing inspiration from Ghanaian indigenous textiles decorative techniques, Baffour Gyimah creates contemporary uniqueness in his novel conflation of adinkra printing technology, kente weaving techniques and embroidery art in making fabrics. Combining more than one technique in creating fabrics, demonstrates his technical finesse and creative impetus. He mesmerised thousands of audiences including high powered international dignitaries who graced the occasion of the inaugural ceremony of the then president-elect, His excellency Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo- Addo on January 7, 2017 with his historic and philosophical fabric design that clothed the president-elect. The



fabric design became talk-of-the-nation during and after the ceremony (Figure 2). Essel (2019, p.46) described the fabric as 'unprecedented in the history of presidential inauguration dress fashion choice in Ghana' due to its uniqueness. The fabric was skilfully composed of stripes of woven kente patterns and embroidered adinkra motifs which were nicely joined to form larger fabric. President Akufo-Addo's fabric gained a lot of publicity to the extent that people who knew he created the fabric called to congratulate him. "I felt great when I saw the president wearing the fabric I produced". According to Nana, the fabric won the affection of some German historians who have read about it on the internet to locate him in Ghana. They came to find out more about his works and bought a sample of the fabric to be kept in a museum in Germany on their return in 2017.

In producing the fabric, Baffour Gyimah carefully features compendium of potent adinkra motifs and symbolic kente patterns that deal with good leadership, good governance, patriotism, democratic principles, probity and accountability, to send praise, caution and or advice to its wearer. This was evident in the fabric he designed for President Akufo Addo (Figure 2) and Former President John Agyekum Kuffour and Her Ladyship, Rebecca Akufo Addo (Figure 3). With the fabric design for the President Nana Akufo Addo, the first stripe downwards showcases *Bese saka* (Bunch of cola nuts) and *aban* adinkra motifs. *Bese saka* symbolises affluence, power, abundance, togetherness and unity (Ofori-Ansa, 1999). The *bese saka* design is made in colours of yellow and green on a white background. It is believed that the cola nut plays important role in the economic life of Ghana. It is a widely used cash crop which is closely associated with affluence and abundance and represents the role of agriculture and trade in bringing people together. The *Aban* motif in turquoise blue and pink on the other hand, symbolises social security, centralised political authority, seat of power, wealth, prosperity and superior quality and wisdom (Ofori-Ansa, 1999).

The second stripe from the selvedge features adinkra motifs namely *Kuronti ne Akwammu* and *Nkyemfre*. *Kuronti ne Akwammu* represents democratic principles, balance of power and duality of essence of life whereas *nkyemfre* (potsherd) symbolises history, recyclability and healing power, knowledge and service (Essel, 2019). *Kuronti ne Akwammu* is indicated by two olive-green and pale-yellow squares and the *nkyemfre* is also seen in deep/pale yellow, wine and olive-green colours respectively. The third stripe displays *fofoo* adinkra symbol. *Fofoo* is a yellow flowering plant grown at the backyards in most Ghanaian communities, and warns against jealousy, envy and covetousness (Ofori-Ansa, 1999). Its presence in the cloth is in a form of advice which is perhaps cautioning Ghanaian citizens to eschew jealousy and envy which is one of the distractors of development.

To complement the work, Baffour Gyimah featured another set of Kente patterns on the fourth stripe. Visible kente patterns and adinkra motifs include *babaduahene* (the vertical strokes in green, yellow and red) *ahoɔfɛ ntua ka* (white pyramidal shape with a shade of blue in the inside), *nkyinkyim* (in red and yellow zigzag lines) and *akokɔbaatan* (in a mixture of yellow-orange in plain weave). *Akokɔbaatan* motif symbolises tender loving care, motherliness and protection, *babaduahene* stands for growth, healing and spiritual protection while *nkyinkyim* represents dynamism, versatility and enterprisingness. *Nkyinkyim*, indicated by zig-zag lines in the fabric has its aesthetic and cultural implications. Life in Akan worldview is characterised by ups and downs, twist and turns and therefore not straight forward. In the journey of life, one may face challenges but the paramount thing is determination to achieve success.

Again, *Akoma* Adinkra design is featured next after the *Kente* patterns. *Akoma* (heart) is a symbol of patience and tolerance. The design rendered in gold and green colours has sandwiched the little cross-like *aban* designs. The introduction of floral patterns in the form of innovative *nkrumakɛse* (big okra) is also uniquely displayed. In colours of orange, yellow and red in the middle, the design beautifully harmonises with other colours in the cloth. *Nkrumakɛse* symbolises supremacy and superiority. It relates the essence of leadership of the President in the country. *Kuronti ne Akwamu* and *mpuanum* adinkra designs are displayed in square-like shapes filled with lemon green and four black squares at the chest region (Figure 2a). In Akan traditional setup, fabrics are chosen for the King to wear bearing in mind the appropriate symbolisms for a particular occasion as an aspect of statecraft and polity (Mato, 1994). The choice of the *Nyame na aye* fabric design and its associative cornucopia of potent motifs for use by President Akufo Addo helped in addressing sensitive issues leadership and political issues obliquely through the use of cultural symbolisms, rather than confront them directly (Mato, 1994).



*Figure 2: President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo in Nyame Na Aye fabric design during his inaugural ceremony as fifth president of the fourth republic of Ghana on January 7, 2017. (Images courtesy: Photo club imaging, 2017 (left); [www.nanaaddo.org](http://www.nanaaddo.org), 2017 (right)).*



Figure 3: Her Ladyship, Rebecca Akufo Addo (right) in *ɔsompɔ* kente fabric.

(Image courtesy: Nana Kwaku Duah II's Diaries, 2019)

Baffour Gyimah's power of creativity and innovation remains unsuppressed even in the use of a single decorative technique in his fabric designs. He has moved beyond weaving kente patterns to adinkra motif. Conventionally, Adinkra motifs are usually printed, embroidered and or applied in fabrics. With his explorative verve and psychedelic designing prowess, he weaves the adinkra motifs repetitively in bright colours to give appearance of kente fabric structure. His fabric design named *Wo nua baa ne wo ka a, na ne mma nnyinee* (which literally translates 'Sisters cherish and love their brothers when their children are not grown') (Figure 4) is a classic example. The stylization of the fabric structure reveals a combination of *Adinkra* and *kente* motifs. Potent motifs used include *Obohema* (diamond), *Mframadan*, *Fihankra* and *Kuronti ne Akwamu*. The fabric (from the right) reveals sequence of the diamonds (*Obohema*), which also happens to be an *adinkra* motif arranged in tint of blue, and yellow on a deep blue background. Counting on a second or third of each of the diamonds is a flat wine shaped symbol connecting the diamond either at the bottom or the tip.

The first design on the stripe after the diamonds appears to be *mframadan* and *fihankra* adinkra designs placed on top of each other. The *mframadan* which is displayed in colours of gold, green and red has two tiny designs like *donno* ('drum' adinkra design) arranged with the sides facing upwards. In the middle is also a reflection of purpled diamonds which adds unique sense of colour combinations in the eyes of the viewer. *Fihankra* is a symbol of security, safety, brotherhood, completeness and solidarity. *Mframadan* symbol on the other hand suggests (a reinforced or a well-built home) that can withstand windy and treacherous conditions. On a golden background, the *fihankra* motif is presented in purple and tint of blue in the inside, and has been displayed beside the *mframadan*. Baffour Gyimah's incorporation of the *fihankra* and the *mframadan* designs, therefore, gives a perfect relation to the name of the cloth which conveys huge message to the society.

To give visual balance to the work, Baffour Gyimah displayed five blue vertical stripes in the fabric (Figure 4a). Featured on the blue vertical stripes are designs which come in the form of letter "H" and a cowry-like object both in gold and red. The "H" designs mimic the *Owuo atwedee* (ladder of death) symbol. Next, is another stripe featuring *Kuronti ne Akwamu* and four series of diamonds (*obohemmaa*) connecting *Kuronti ne Akwamu* (elders of the state) displayed in navy-green and pale-yellow symbolises democracy, sharing of ideas and counsel taking. Its inclusion in the fabric design, according to Baffour Gyimah, connotes that it always deems fit to consult when decisions are been taken in order to come out with the best result. The diamonds on the other hand are displayed repeatedly in other parts of the fabric. The central part of the stripes in the fabric, reflects the rich mineral of Ghana (gold) which symbolises wealth or royalty.





Figure 4. *Wo nua baa ne wo ka a, na ne mma nnyine* kente fabric. The left (a) shows the full weave pattern arrangement while the right (b) depicts the close-up details of the fabric design.

(Image courtesy: Nana Kwaku Duah II's diaries, 2019).

One exciting thing that could also be found in the fabric is the sophisticated use of colours. The vibrant blue, gold, green, yellow and motifs captured in magnificent way in terms of its current nature, reflects the modern aspect of colour usage in relation to fashion. However, the *adinkra* motifs and the generated designs connotes that nature is not static, situations change with time and trend bring improvements upon existing ways of life. The name of the fabric in totality, speaks volumes in the Akan society where families practice matrilineal system of inheritance. Due to the fact that nephews usually succeed their maternal uncles, the family's inheritance rightly belongs to them and that usually spark up quarrels between the uncles and their sisters, especially, when the nephews are grown or matured.



From philosophical point of view, his fabric designs project cultural values which is an epitome of cultural sovereignty, appropriation and continuity. He is influenced by the rich culture and symbolisms of the Ghanaian society in his creations. He borrows from the Ghanaian's repertoire of folktales, mythological narratives, aphorisms, proverbs, symbolisms, conceptual cultural imageries and everyday life experiences, which he creatively composes into metaphorical and philosophical codes in textile design formats. Decoding the designs captured in his designed fabrics reveal that the fabrics have connotative and denotative philosophical messaging relevant to its users. This synchs with the views of Mato (1994) and Arthur (2001) that the Akan cloths are metaphors due to the powerful and symbolic designs featured in them.

Sometimes the designs are custom-made to suit the status and situational realities of the user. Baffour Gyimah's designs combine synecdochical elements of life in Ghanaian society to complement socio-cultural aesthetics of his creations. For example, in Figure 5, the fabric displays the traditional *Adinkra* motifs and symbolic animals in a proverbial way. Expressed in black and white, the designs are arranged in horizontal stripes of layers. Starting from the bottom of the fabric is a motif displaying designs of a snail and tortoise in white on a dark background. In Akan folktales, the snail and the tortoise are considered to be animals that are very slow in movement and yet carry a lot of wisdom. These little creatures represent sensitivity, self-reliance, healing, patience and fertility. The snail in real life has a unique productive system. Snails are hermaphrodite in nature (meaning they have both male and female sex organs which they can utilise for reproduction depending upon the need on the environment that they find themselves). This relates to the balancing of gender roles and reminds us of our relevance when it comes to gender and fertility.

Another unique aspect of the snail is found in its shell. It carries its *home* (shell) at the back; it can wander anywhere and still be at home. According to Behring (2009), the snail secretes a substance called calcium carbonate that actually helps it to create its own shell and that is hugely symbolic. It implies that we should try and make the best out of wherever we find ourselves and create unique opportunities. "Home" is in the heart and we can therefore make our own comfort from within. We can auger a sense of content just by being satisfied with who we are from the inside.

Additional fascinating point about the snail is that, this creature produces two kinds of slime. One kind is used to protect it from external torture and the second type is used to slick up surfaces to make it easier to move. Symbolically, this feature reminds us of the attribute of patience and tolerance that the snail possesses in relation to movement. Its slowness in nature does not deter it from

progressing but with certainty, it is able to reach its destination. The tortoise on the other hand is a symbol of wisdom, security, endurance, peacefulness and longevity. It lives its life in a slow and steady manner. Due to its simple ways of life, it has inspired stories and symbolism in Ghanaian culture. It is known to live more than hundred years and therefore associated with longevity. They are not exceptionally crafty predators or extremely defenceless victims instead, they have very little real attackers that make them more peaceful throughout their lives (Behring, 2009). The tortoise shell gives it extra protection in the wild and that makes it a unique symbol of protection and security. Folktales has it that tortoise do not react readily or do everything on impulse but gives a sense in their thought before they act and that relates to the wisdom aspect of its symbolism.



Figure 5: Nana Kwaku Duah II in *Akyekyedee ne Nwa* (Snail and tortoise) fabric design.

(Source: Nana Kwaku Duah II's diary, 2019).

The inclusion of these animals as motifs in the fabric, in the view of Baffour Gyimah, was due to the unique attributes that they possess. Due to this fact, Baffour Gyimah decided to name the cloth as *akyekyedee ne nnwa* meaning (snail and tortoise). The next stripe after these animal motifs is other interesting features depicting the *nkrumakese* and *nkyemfre adinkra* designs. *Nkyemfre* (potsherd) is a symbol of history, recyclability and healing power, knowledge and service whilst *nkrumakese* (big okra), signifies greatness, superior quality and wisdom. The colours and symbols used for the fabric, makes it suitable for occasions like naming ceremony, funeral thanksgiving and other durbars.

### 4.3 Implications to textiles art education and research

Textile designs are one of the ways of bringing out the philosophies and concepts of a given society into physical form. Usually, it is the philosophies and concepts that become the norms and ethics which keep the society together. It helps to educate people about the mindset of those who made it and the use for which it was intended. Similarly, it could be used to teach others in the society how to make textile fabrics, not just for its aesthetics but also as a way of preserving the culture of the people for subsequent generation. Long before colonialists' exploitation in Ghana, there were creative and innovative indigenous textile artists who created interesting art for the consumption of society. Interestingly, these artists were trained through robust apprenticeship system which was the main form of indigenous formal education. This indigenous system of training remains relevant and continues to produce high calibre of textile artists. However, it has been observed that in spite of the massive role that these textile artists play in the society, there is little academic work about them. Attention is shifted to so-called formal school education trained designers otherwise known as academic artists. Consequently apprenticeship-trained textile artists who have demonstrated their creative prowess largely remain anonymous in the academic circles. The textile artists exhibit many skills which have not been documented to make their creative knowledge available to the public. This means that vital information about their lives and work might not be available to people who might want to take up the profession after their demise. What this article brings to the fore is that there is the need to document their lives and works in order to maintain, preserve, transmit and promote the ideas, skills and styles of the creative and innovative apprenticeship trained textile artists for incoming generations. This has implications to textile art theory, research and practice. The study implies that there is something good about the works of apprenticeship-trained textile artists worthy of documentation and studying by the current and future generations as demonstrated in the case of Nana Kwaku Duah II (alias Baffour Gyimah). It is through research about their works that would help shape their practice and improve their creativity for the benefit

of society, and serve as inspiration for both amateur and professional textile artists.

## 5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

This study explored the biographical account of Nana Kwaku Duah II, who is one of the textile artists in Ghana and examined his major innovative and creative contributions in textile designing, weaving and Adinkra printing cottage industry. Through this explorative documentation, it was established that Nana Kwaku Duah II, known in private life as Baffour Gyimah, is a 74-year-old hardworking apprenticeship-trained textile artist who create stunning textiles designs. His life story attests to the fact that indigenous apprenticeship training is still relevant in producing creative artists. Baffour Gyimah's exposure to his grandfather Opanyin Kwadwo Korankye at the early stage of his life, served as a source of motivation to practice *Kente* weaving and *Adinkra* printing. His creative abilities, accounted for the uniqueness of his work. He operates sole proprietorship medium-scale textiles business in Tewobaabi, near *Ntonso* in the Kwabere East of the Ashanti region that deals with creative and innovative fabric production. He has employed about forty workers and has been in active fabric production services for more than five decades. Based on his designing skills and persevering character, creating a video documentary on his works and life for teaching and learning of textiles art education in schools would help learners to emulate his innovativeness, creativity, style, technique and resourcefulness. This quest for research on textiles designers could be extended to cover other apprentice-trained designers in various communities in Ghana unveil their contributions to society. This is hoped to psych learners that they hold it a duty to make creative contribution to the field.

His major creative and innovative contributions to the field of textiles designing is enormous. He is a Presidential fabric designer who fuses indigenous adinkra printing technology, kente weaving techniques and embroidery art in creating a composite breed of fabrics which is unique. His unique fabric designs have received massive public commendation. For instance, his *Nyame na aye* design worn by President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo for his 2017 inauguration ceremony was highly praised by many as kente, though it was produced with a combination of kente and embroidery stripes. Nana Kwaku Duah II, also designs for equally prominent people including prominent Ghanaian kings and chiefs, Her Ladyship Rebecca Akuffo-Addo, John Agyekum Kuffour, the former President of Ghana and many other high-profile personalities. Judging from the services he has rendered in terms of clothing, Ghana's presidents, traditional authorities and other prominent people of the society, it is recommended that the nation must consider rewarding him with *national honours* for his creative

efforts. Nana Kwaku Duah II must be honoured in that regard as it persist in other developed nations honour their creatives. The textile designs of this creative designer must feature in the collections of the Ghana National Museum for posterity. The museum has a duty to keep works of great textile designers for future reference.

His creative prowess and dynamism remain intact even in the use of only one technique in creating a particular fabric. This is evident in the multi-sectional visual interest he creates to break monotony in the arrangement and construction styles of the motifs. Nana's fabrics are metaphorical with a lot of proverbial meanings. He incorporates adinkra motifs with the kente patterns using solely weaving technique to give appearance of kente fabric structure. This style breaks the convention of weaving with only kente patterns. Since this study did not details how he creates his unique designs, it would be novel for textile academics to research into that to deepen knowledge about his creations.

Nana Kwaku Duah II projects Ghanaian cultural values through his choice of cultural symbols and attributes in making philosophical statements addressed both to users and viewers of his designs. His fabric designs are statement masterpieces that are thought-provoking. The designs make political, social, cultural and economic statement relevant in contemporary times. It is highly philosophical and also promotes the Ghanaian cultural values. Since each design is a statement masterpiece, there is the need for textiles scholars to engage in philosophical analysis of his designs for public education purposes.

He gives great importance to the finishing of his works to make it durable and for that matter to withstand the test of time. He also uses solely embroidery to produce a whole fabric design without the addition of violin (stiff). This technique renders his fabrics the sense of flexibility. Baffour Gyimah's preference to quality of materials for his work is always a satisfaction to his customers and that has accounted for him trading with people in higher positions. Budding textile artists should be resourceful and learn from legendary example of Nana Kwaku Duah II in using quality materials in execution of their works as well as meet other work-related demands of their customers.

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## About the Authors

Dr. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel, a Senior Lecturer, teaches at the Fashion and Textiles Education unit in the Department of Art Education of the University of Education, Winneba. He is an African fashion and textiles historian and a practising textile designer. His research interest is in textiles and fashion history, hair and Afrocentric beauty culture practices.

Grace Dufie Asare is an art educator at Akroso Senior High Technical School located at the Eastern Region of Ghana. She has completed her Master of Arts in Art Education in the University of Education, Winneba and awaiting graduation and certification.

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