

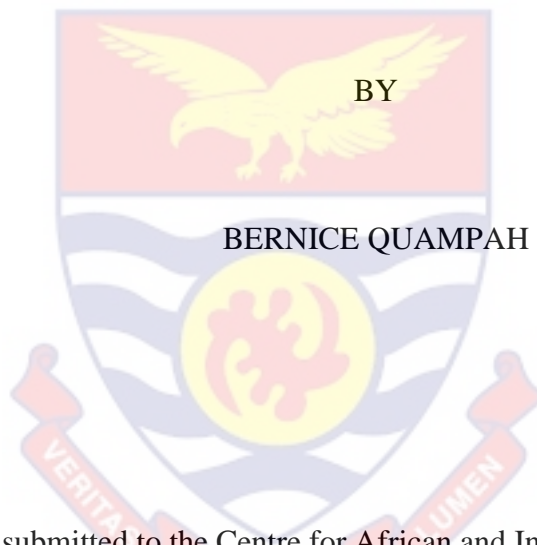


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University of Cape Coast

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES AS ASANTE ART AND CULTURE



A thesis submitted to the Centre for African and International Studies of the College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy degree in African Studies

OCTOBER 2023

## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature..... Date :.....

Name: BERNICE QUAMPAH

### Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised by the guidelines on supervision of the thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: PROFESSOR MODESTA GAVOR

Co-Supervisor's Signature:..... Date:.....

Name: PROFESSOR EMMANUEL SABORO

## ABSTRACT

The systematic and Afroecological description of indigenous hairstyles has gained unparalleled attention among scholars. However, the literature on hairstyles have overlooked the history and art components of indigenous hairstyling among Asantes. In an attempt to unravel how the art forms of indigenous hairstyles can be used as a form of social communication, I relied on qualitative research, making use of ethnographic design which required the use of direct observation and in-depth interview methods to elicit data from chiefs, queens, indigenous priests and priestesses, offsprings of deities' (*abosomma*), executioners, palace servants who had groomed their hairs in indigenous Asante hairstyles. Other categories of respondents included artists, a historian, a curator, a senior staff at the Centre for National Culture in Kumasi, hairstylists and barbers. In all, the fifty-five (55) participants who were purposively sampled were interviewed. The findings of the study revealed that indigenous hairstyles exist in various artforms like sculptures and body art. These forms possess unique histories, elements and principles of art. They also reveal varied identities and cultural symbolisms. However, as a result of exposure to other cultures and the influence of modernity, many Asantes are swayed to embrace modern forms of hairstyles with their associated aesthetics of which some are detrimental to individuals' health. Conclusively, indigenous hairstyles help in identity formation and social communication. The indigenous hair dyes are also of high health benefits. Therefore, ways to preserve and transmit knowledge on indigenous Asante hairstyles were recommended.



## KEYWORDS

Identity

Symbolism,

Communication

Artforms,

Indigenous

Asante

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## **DEDICATION**

To my mother, Rev. Mrs. Olivia Quampah

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**ACRONYMS**

NHM	Natural Hair Movement
AM	Aesthetic Movements
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation
IAA	International Association of Arts
AIA	Artist International Association
GCDN	Global Cultural District Network
WCC	World Cultural Council
WHST	World Heritage Sites and Traditions
AAA	African Artist Association
ACASA	Arts Council of the African Studies Association
AAGA	African Art Gallary Association
HCSA	Heritage and Cultural Society of Africa
ACA	African Cultural Association
MCRA	Ministry for Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs
MTAC	Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture
NCC	National Commission on Culture
FCA	Foundation for Contemporary Art
CNCK	Centre for National Culture, Kumasi
KTA	Kumasi Traditional Area

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis set out to explore indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. The aim of this thesis is to eventually show that these indigenous hairstyles play significant roles in unraveling and projecting the historical and aesthetic values in a number of societies more generally and within Asante specifically. Globally, for development to be achieved, a country's historical values and cultural heritage must not be ignored (Falola, 2022). The reason is that they serve as the bedrock upon which the present endeavour is carried out and for the future to be properly shaped. Indigenous hairstyles which aim at projecting the values of the African continent have been saddled with series of setbacks since historic times. Some European traders and missionaries who visited the African continent denounced African cultural music, festivals, dancing, and hairstyles (Montle, 2020). They rather projected and imposed foreign fashion on the natives (Robinson, 2011). In Ghana, the indoctrination of the indigens against their own culture made some turn their back on several indigenous cultural practices including hairstyles (Asenso, 2019). As a result, people began to disregard some taboos and customs which served as a guide in the adaptation of certain indigenous hairstyles (Abeku, 2018). Similarly, native royal administrative systems where hairstyles portrayed varied identities and knowledge transmission were frowned upon to some extent among Akans (Asenso, 2019). Hence, this study is important to unearth and project the rich practical and theoretical inferences of indigenous hairstyles among the people of Asante in Ghana.

This chapter presents issues on the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose and objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation, limitations, and definition of terms and ends with an outline of the rest of the study.

### **Background to the Study**

Historically, Africans were brainwashed against their customs by some people who migrated into the continent (Abeiku, 2018). The African hair was perceived as having unkempt look whereas the permed or straightened hair of the West was used to represent a more civilised woman causing some women to look down on their indigenous hair and hairstyles (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014). Besides, African traditional practices in general and the study of these practices have been viewed as indicating poverty, paganism, and inward-looking as a course of study in schools (Masolo, 2017) and so, the practitioners and scholars of African culture were sometimes looked down upon.

To address these problems, a series of efforts were made at the indigenous cultural institution level, as well as the formal academic level to inculcate the African culture in individuals. According to Yirenkyi (2019), at the indigenous cultural institution level, occasions such as an institution of chieftaincy, puberty rites, festivals, and funerals were viewed as an avenue for the colourful display of native cultural activities of which indigenous hairstyles were not excluded. It is an opportunity for cultural values to be learned and instilled in individuals. Formally, at the tertiary education level, African Studies (*Afrostats*) is a compulsory course for all first-year students in lots of African universities. Students also get the opportunity to specialise in African Studies as a major programme from the first degree level to the Doctor of Philosophy

(Ph.D.) level. Hence, special departments have been designated solely for the teaching of African studies, during which multidisciplinary courses like Culture, History and Languages are taught. African studies has been a multidisciplinary approach used to promote and project the rich cultural and historical values of Africa. It is an attempt to correct the misconceptions held by both Africans and non-Africans about African identity, traditions, and customs. Unfortunately, little success has been chalked as a result of using the Western educational paradigm to undertake the African studies and project some of the cultural practices (Luke & James, 2015).

Furthermore, efforts have been made at global, continental, and national stages to restore world-endangered cultural and geographical heritages (Yao, 2021). World bodies and movements like the Natural Hair Movement, Aesthetic Movements (Lyon, 2020), United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), International Association of Arts (IAA), Artist International Association, Global Cultural District Network (GCDN), and World Cultural Council (WCC) were formed to tackle cultural issues (Spaskovska, 2020). These conventions set out the duties of State parties in identifying potential sites and cultural ceremonies and their roles in protecting and preserving them (Ellioth & Schmutz, 2012). By signing the convention, each country pledges to conserve not only the World Heritage sites and traditions situated on its territory but also to safeguard its national and local heritage (Ichumbaki & Mapunda, 2017).

At the continental level, mention can be made of the African Artist Association and the Arts Council of the African Studies Association, African Art Gallery Association, Heritage and Cultural Society of Africa and African



Cultural Association. These associations preserve, promote and celebrate African heritage and culture to elevate, unify and create opportunities for socio-economic progress at the continental level. At the national level, two main ministries have been established to foster culturally related issues (Rhisiart, 2013). These are Ministry for Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs and Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture. Other nationally recognised institutions include National Commission on Culture, and Foundation for Contemporary Art (Asare, 2020).

These efforts at the global, continental and national levels to promote culture and art-related heritage have yielded some positive results. However, there seem to be much work to be done. Countries are still saddled with certain cultural challenges which retard the growth of the Culture and Art sector. People in academia have also directed efforts through vigorous research in an attempt to contribute to the restoration of the cultural identity of societies. These efforts have been predominant in religion, language, fashion, music, chieftaincy, festivities, and rites of passage (Awoniyi, 2015; Sibani, 2018). It is in the light of this research-driven effort that I am embarking on this study in order to analyse the concept of indigenous hairstyles and its relationship with local art to augment efforts by earlier researchers in this area in preserving and protecting the African identity.

According to Davies (2008) and Stecker (1996), art has been defined in a number of ways. These variations stem from various interpretations of art, including performing, literary, and fine or visual arts. Hairstyles are regarded as a type of visual art since they capture the key ideas that characterise visual art. Generally, visual arts such as body art, painting, weaving, ceramics, or sculpture

are examples of how human creative abilities and imaginations are expressed or used. These works are primarily produced for their aesthetic value.

Technically, one cannot talk about art without discussing the concept of aesthetics (Lorand, 2002), owing to the fact that, the elements and principles of art reveal the aesthetics of objects. The styling of indigenous hair into different shapes and styles requires tools and media (Sherrow, 2023). According to Amissah and Letcher-Teye (2018), the elements and principles of art behind indigenous hairstyles portray the beauty of culture. The discussion will therefore be incomplete if the concept of culture is not explained. Tylor (1871) defines culture as a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a human as a member of society. Knoeber and Kluckhohn (1952), stress that culture is usually manmade which passes from one generation to the next through time. However, there is always accumulation of ideas on culture. For instance, as time evolves, new elements of culture are added to the existing ones. When there are innovations and new discoveries, the old elements are usually not discarded, but rather they exist side by side with the new ones, if they are still useful to the society. Hairstyles change all the time. What was fashionable a week, a year, or even a generation ago gives way to new forms that eventually become obsolete. Many of the styles portrayed in early pictures or sculptural forms are no longer in use. For example, by the early 1930s, the Shilluk man's look had become "unfashionable" (Seligman, 1932). Unfortunately, much of the history of African hairstyles has been lost to us, with the exception of a few hints. We do not have a choice except to look at the current or review recent records. It is important to remember that observers have occasionally recorded a blip in the

changing cycle. Certain hairstyle alterations were undoubtedly introduced from outside Africa, from Asia and Europe (Montle, 2020).

For culture to provide the most value to members within a particular society, it has to promote identification and help to define the goals and aspirations of the society. It must also promote education and information. It is worthy to note that, human beings are not born with culture but rather they learn the way of life of the community from various agencies of culture such as material and non-material cultures. Members can know the history, traditions, religion and other ethics and aspirations of the people, because they learn them through culture. Furthermore, culture should promote tourism. For example, festivals and chieftaincy institutions as well as arts and crafts which unveil and exhibit various forms of indigenous hairstyles can attract lots of tourists (Falola, 2022). This current study is significant as it sets out to project these goals of culture with respect to its relationship to indigenous hairstyles.

In view of this, art and culture are considered the “obverse and reverse of the same coin” in that they are viewed as a necessary tool for complementing and supplementing each other in the rediscovery, rejuvenation, preservation and utilisation of indigenous African hairstyles in promoting African identity in the contemporary world. According to Stets and Serpe (2013), identity, which is a component of culture, is a collective set of meanings that describe certain clusters of persons or personalities in a society as having specific characteristics that make them unique from others. For instance, some hairstyles found among certain ethnic groups like the Yoruba identify them and make them unique among Nigerians (Falola, 2022). Hair, which according to Trüeb (2006), is a significant aspect of a person’s overall appearance and identity needs to be

elucidated. The reason is that, the face is usually beautified by the styling of an individual's hair, and depending on one's hairdo or haircut, the same face can send different messages (Choe & Ko, 2005; Rogers & Avram, 2008). Hair and its styling are thus important elements that determine a person's physical appeal (Weitz, 2001).

From the perception of Mercer (2000) hair on the scalp has a considerable impact on an individual's self-image. This is because hair is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the human body that can be changed in length, colour, and style (Bolduc & Shapiro, 2001; Trüeb, 2006). Also, the condition and style of scalp hair influence how others perceive the person. Hair can also be used to communicate about oneself, community, and the moral norms that bind them and many others together (Mercer, 2000). Furthermore, Paus and Cotsarelis (1999) indicate that hair plays a major psychosocial role in most human societies. As a result, social acceptability is sometimes influenced by hair growth features and distribution, such as hair loss and/or excessive hair growth (Paus & Cotsarelis, 1999). Hair is associated with aesthetics and symbolic meanings in the negotiation of feminine identities among women. In their view, a woman's crowning glory is her hair, which she offers as a source of beauty with her family and power (Majali, Coetzee, & Rau, 2017 ; Clarke-Jeffers, Keyte & Connabeer, 2024). It helps a woman to express her individuality and social status, particularly in terms of how she wants to be regarded and admired. Chaves and Bacharach (2021) perceives hair as a big concern for majority of people, and that a person's preferred hairstyle is incredibly important and varies according to their cultural background.

Prior to the introduction of Western culture to Africa, chemically relaxed hair, or *perming* as it is known in Ghana, and its related styles were not known in Ghanaian societies. As a result of growing interaction between locals and Europeans, natural hair has fallen out, in favour of straightened hair obtained through perming, hot combing, and chemical relaxing (Maynard, & Jules, 2021; Oduro, Geoffrion & Prah, 2023; Antwi & Bonsu, 2024; Quampah, 2024). However, contemporarily, permed hair is gradually being phased out in favour of wearing natural hairstyles over the last two decades (Darkwa, 2021; Mbilishaka & Hudlin, 2023). The same may not be so with indigenous hairstyles as existing scholarship in this area has not paid much attention to the status of these kinds of hairstyles in present societies. There is a paucity of research on this phenomenon.

Natural hair has been defined as having a natural texture without the usage of texture-altering agents (Randel, 2015). The natural hair styling is a recent stuck-middle attempt that is situated between Westernised hairstyles and African indigenous hairstyles. Most women grow the hair bushy naturally and manipulate them into different non-identified native hairdo or haircut. The indigenous hairstyles, however, is traceable and linked to particular cultural setting. This implies having a natural textured hair or putting the coiffure into different customary artistic shapes and styles with or without adorning the tresses with certain indigenous ornaments while the texture of the hair remains chemically unchanged and could sometimes convey messages of art communication, cultural and spiritual symbolism.

## **Thesis Statement**

Indigenous hairstyles are significant for aesthetics, identity formation and social communication among the Asantes of Ghana.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The beauty of indigenous hairstyles among the Asantes of Ghana cannot be underestimated (Asenso, 2019). However, the aboriginal names and origin (history) of many types of these hairstyles remain unexplored. Also, the art forms and symbolisms of most of these hairstyles have not been documented. Consequently, a number of them are hardly known in contemporary times.

A sizeable number of studies have examined indigenous hairstyles from different academic standpoints and in different geographical settings other than that used in the present study. For example, a study by Lee (2007) explores the evolution and transitions of women's hairstyle fashion in Europe from the renaissance to the 1900s, providing an evolution of hairstyle fashion from medieval periods to contemporary periods. Minarovičová (2005) determines the type of hairdo over time by comparing pictorial or sculpted representations of Empresses on coins from the Roman Empire. Liu, Yang, Huang, Bacchetti, Anderson, Jin and Gandhi (2014) as well as Kangira, (2015) have focused their research on the cost of relaxing kinky Africa hairs among African American women. Also, though Chase (1954) explores the growth of natural hair, his study was limited to whether or not keeping the hair in its natural state affects the growth of the hair. In Africa, some studies on hairstyles include influence of colonialism on African hairstyling (Montle, 2020). Montle claims that because the coloniser and the colonised are inextricably linked, the concept of African beauty cannot be separated from colonial influence.

From language and communication perspective, Akporherhe and Udi (2022) present hairstyles as one of the numerous symbolic representations and communication in African societies. Quampah, Owusu, Adu, Agyemang Opoku, Akyeremfo and Ahiabor (2023) examine how hairstyles were used as a means to communicate escape strategies by the transatlantic slaves.

Domestically, studies of hairstyles have been approached from other perspectives. Tseyi (2018) analyses the various varieties of natural hairstyles in Ghana, as well as the growing desire for natural hair versus chemically altered or adulterated hairstyles. From art perspective, hairstyles have been studied as the basis for fabric design concepts (Aboagye, Ahiabor, Mensah, & Manu, 2017; Manu, 2010). In a study by Kalmoni, Addai, Adjenti, Adutwum-Ofosu, Ahenkorah, Hottor and Blay (2019) emphasis was placed on morphological properties of androgenic hairs in Ghanaian men.

The above literature on indigenous hairstyles have not only ignored the role of art in the preservation of indigenous hairstyles, they have also failed to extensively examine the changes that have occurred in the various indigenous Asante hairstyles and the factors responsible. A study that comes close to the present one is one by Asenso (2019) who examines only *dansinkran* for its socio-cultural significance of this hairstyle in the Akan traditional ruling. His study is limited to only one indigenous hairstyle of the Asantes. There is thus a yawning gap in the scholarship on empirical inquiry into other Asante hairstyles and their artistic forms and components as well as the social change which has characterised indigenous hairstyling among the Asantes. Consequently, I embarked on this research in order to unearth how the art forms of indigenous hair styles are used as a form of social communication and a prove of cultural

identity among the Asante people of Ghana. This is so, because little empirical studies have been conducted and documented about the Asante art and cultural heritage in the aspects of their indigenous hairstyles.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to explore indigenous Asante hairstyles to identify their artistic characteristics and cultural significance in relation to aesthetics, identity formation and social communication among Asantes.

### **Research Objectives**

The study specifically sought to:

- 1) identify the types of indigenous hairstyles among the Asante people.
- 2) investigate the visual art forms of indigenous hairstyles among the Asante people.
- 3) explore the identity and symbolism of indigenous Asante hairstyles
- 4) ascertain the sustainability of indigenous Asante hairstyles amidst modern influences.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) what are the types of indigenous hairstyles among the Asante people?
- 2) what are the visual art forms of indigenous hairstyles among the Asante people?
- 3) what are the identities and symbolisms conveyed through indigenous Asante hairstyles?



- 4) how has indigenous Asante hairstyles thrived amidst modern influences?

### **Significance of the Study**

The study is important for many reasons. First, since the indigenous names of most types of the native hairstyles among Asantes remain unknown, the study will document the Asante-Twi words used to refer to each hairstyle. It will also provide the description and origin of the hairstyles. This will serve as reference material for future researchers and students interested in this area of Akan culture.

In addition, since the documentation of the depictions of the art forms of indigenous hairstyles among Asantes seems to be inadequate in literature, the study will help document some of the elements and principles of art pertaining to the indigenous hairstyles among the Asantes. It will also encourage the representation of more indigenous hairstyles in various visual artforms. This will help in their sustainability and passage onto future generations.

Also, a number of people who do not belong to certain social settings or classifications sometimes adopt the indigenous hairstyles of those groups without taking the cultural implication into consideration. Consequently, this study will unravel and find avenues to educate the public on some culturally branded hairstyles of the Asantes and the role they play in constructing the identities of some people. The findings of the study will also help stakeholders like the Ministry of Art and Culture, as well as traditional rulers to find avenues to educate the public about the importance or benefits of indigenous hairstyles.

Some indigenous hairstyles have stood the test of time. They can be given recognition as unavoidable forms of cultural heritage that must be

protected and projected by traditional institutions like chieftaincy and religious organizations among Asantes in particular and other areas in Ghana that are interested in indigenous hairstyling. Findings from this study will be made accessible to the younger generation through social media. This will enable them cherish and sustain different types of traditional hairstyles because such hairstyles use completely natural and sustainable hair care products that have little or no negative effects on the body.

Since literature also reveals that, exposure to foreign cultures usually affects indigenous cultures, the findings of the study will unravel the evolutions indigenous hairstyles have undergone as a result of exposure to other cultures. It will also document the factors responsible for the various transformations in the indigenous Asante hairstyles. Suggestions on how indigenous hairstyling techniques can be integrated into modern styling procedures will be provided.

### **Delimitations**

Geographically, the scope of the study is the Kumasi Traditional Area (KTA) which is situated within the Ashanti Region. Ashanti Region is part of the Akan Regions of Ghana. This part of the Akan group is selected because of the peoples' ability to preserve many of their cultural practices till present and is considered in many circles as the cultural hub of Ghana. Though other ethnic groups in Ghana do preserve their culture, Aidoo (2022) indicates that the cultural and historical data on Akan people particularly Asantes is very rich and more easily accessible to researchers as compared to the other ethnic groups. Most major cultural events of the Asantes take place in KTA during which artefact (of which some are depicted in the form of indigenous hairstyles) are

displayed for public viewing. The study will not cover other areas outside Kumasi Traditional Area.

Contextually, the study will focus on variables like the art and cultural symbolism of indigenous hairstyles among the Asante people. The study will not focus on the chemical constituents of the native dye meant for some indigenous Asante hairstyles. It will also not cover the period before the confederation of Asante empire under the leadership of the first king, Nana Osei Tutu I.

### **Limitations**

The main challenge encountered during the field work was that, some respondents were initially not willing to avail themselves to be photographed. I had to spend a lot of time to explain the purpose of the research in order to remove any fear from them. Furthermore, interviewing some of the traditional priests required series of rituals like provision of fowls, eggs and schnapps which required money to buy them. Also, Manhyia Palace Museum which was one of the artistic hubs in Kumasi was initially closed to the public for renovation but it was later opened and I had access to the place for data collection.

In addition, the busy schedule of the queens and chiefs due to their multiple tasks of royal duties, household responsibilities and work outside the home, brought about inconvenience in meeting them for the interview sessions. Ideally, the respondents could have been available during the weekends but their social status also made them very well connected and mobile and therefore they had to honour other social invitations such as weddings or funerals which made them equally unavailable during the weekends. This, notwithstanding, the few who participated in the study provided detailed and useful responses which have

offered some broad perspectives on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture.

Another challenge which I encountered but managed to overcome was getting access to “offsprings of deities” (*abosomma*) for interviews. This challenge was overcome when I spent a lot of time with the indigenes in the study area in order to create a meaningful relationship with them. I also treated the offsprings of deities with respect and understood the world in which they were coming from.

### Definition of Terms

- **Indigenous hairstyles** are achieved by putting natural textured hair into various culturally approved styles which mostly communicate identity and symbolisms.
- **Culture** is a particular art, thought and customs of a society. It involves the way of government, music, dressing, norms and behaviour which portray the values of a group of people (Kwadwo, 2002).
- **Aesthetics** is the creation of objects that evoke feelings of beauty based on a pre-existing concept of beauty in the minds, brains and experience of the beholder (Shimamura & Palmer, 2012).
- **Identity** is a set of qualities and beliefs that make one person or group different from others (Stets & Serpe, 2013; Tajfel, 1978).
- **Symbolism** occurs when a thing represents another. For example, the colour red represents love, danger or solemnity.
- **Artforms** include visual arts like ceramics, drawings, paintings, photography, sculpting and body art (Sieber & Hermman, 2000).

- **“Offsprings of deities”** are humans acquired from deities who are required to keep an indigenous form of hairstyle based on the dictates of the gods.
- **Taboos** are forbidden acts in a given society (Colding & Folke, 2001).
- **Afrocentric theory** is a theory which explains that persons of African origin must develop respect for ancient African civilisations and achievements, as well as define their own history and values system. This Afrocentric theory regards African or black cultures as pre-eminent in world views (Asante 1980; Karenga & Tembo, 2012).
- ***Dansinkran*** is a type of hairstyle that is clipped into a moon shape and heavily coloured using traditional hair dye. This type of hairstyle is usually adorned by Akan queens which distinguishes them from women in other Ghanaian communities.

### **Organisation of the Study**

The study is divided into eight chapters. Chapter one includes the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the inquiry, delimitations, and limitations of the study. Chapter two reviews related literature that includes a theoretical review, conceptual framework, and empirical review. The review brings out the gaps in existing literature and how the current study will fill those gaps. The third chapter, discusses the research methodology which comprises the research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, and data processing and analysis. Chapters four to seven present the results and discussions of the field data, while chapter eight

summarises the findings of the study, and gives conclusions, and recommendations.

### **Chapter Summary**

In summary, this chapter introduces the fundamental elements of this study. It presents issues on the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose and objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, definition of terms and ends with an outline of the rest of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Overview**

Literature for this study is obtained from various published online journals, dedicated websites, books and other unpublished studies such as theses. This chapter is organised into three main parts. These are conceptual review, theoretical review and empirical review. The conceptual review section defines and discusses critical topics based on the main themes of this study's objectives like types of indigenous hairstyles, art forms, identity and cultural symbolism as well as social change, while theoretical review discusses mainly Afrocentric theory. This forms the theoretical framework upon which the study is constructed. The final section, empirical review, examines how the study interacts with existing body of research.

#### **Conceptual Review**

The conceptual review identifies and describes the key themes of a particular study (Hulland, 2020). Gaps in previous research are noted in the course of the literature review. It also elucidates the relationships which exist among the ideas. In this study, the conceptual review covers topics like types of indigenous hairstyles, art forms, identity, symbolism and social change.

#### **Types of indigenous hairstyles**

Indigenous hair is mostly naturally grown. The term "natural" denotes something that is organic, derived from nature (biological), and not manufactured or imitated (Maynard & Jules, 2021; Randle, 2015). Indigenous hairstyles, relate to the various forms of haircuts and hairdos which are aboriginal to diverse communities.

### Indigenous haircuts

This involves cutting natural textured hair into various culturally approved or acceptable shapes in societies, implying natural textured hair becomes indigenous to certain ethnic groups depending on how they are trimmed. *Irun dídán* and *irun gígé* are both used to refer to haircutting in the Yoruba language. While *Irun dídán* means scraping of the hair, *irun gígé* refers to barbering of the hair (Shuaib, 2020). The widows of some ethnic groups like the Yoruba and Igbo (of Nigeria) and Ewe (of Togo and Ghana) are noted for their very low clipped haircut (Akinbi, 2015).

Furthermore, according to Sherrow (2023) a clean-shaven head with only a small tuft of hair left at the frontal of the head is noted among the Nigerians particularly Kumaro and Ilorin. Damilare (2021) stresses that this haircut involves trimming the hair very low and leaving a small uncut spot of hair that would continue to grow on a tiny location at the interior of their heads. The projected section which remains uncut, is usually infused with potent medicine. This form of trimming the hair demonstrates self-acceptance and a socio-cultural expression of the people of these communities.

Also, three phases of ritual haircutting are undertaken by the puberty initiates of Kroboland (of Ghana) throughout the puberty ceremony. The first is called *klohuε* which is ring-like in shape. It is done to mark the beginning of the puberty rite. The second is clean-shaven, leaving only a small section at the mid-point. This process qualifies an individual to be able to visit the *Tegbete* (a virginity testing sacred stone). The entire hair is shaved during the last phase. This is done to celebrate the victory of successfully passing the virginity test (Adinku, 2016).



The Asantes of Ghana have the *dansinkran* as one of their indigenous haircuts. According to Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Appiah and Nartey (2016), *dansinkran* reveals a visible blackened circular haircut on the human head. *Dansinkran* haircut and dressing were used to achieve some cultural significance such as preserving and conserving cultural heritage in the Akan traditional setting (Asenso, 2019). Nonetheless, the circumstances and events which necessitated the evolution of *dansinkran* haircut has not been documented.

Aside *dansinkran* haircut, a number of other indigenous haircuts exist among the Asante, which this current study seeks to uncover and document for future references. Hence, the formulation of the first objective which focuses on exploring these types of haircuts with specific emphasis on their features and history.

### **Indigenous hairdos**

Hair can be woven or wrapped in different ways. The manipulation of natural textured hair into different styles, bearing varied names, which usually trace their origin and significance to certain cultural settings is termed as indigenous hairdos (Izibili, 2020). Plaits/braids, dreadlocks and threading are some examples of hairdos.

### **Plaited/braided hairdo**

Braids and plaits are sometimes used interchangeably (Salibi, Souéid & Dancey, 2014). Braids involve interlacing hair strands. Most braided hairstyles trace their origin to Namibia, Nigeria and Egypt. Molamodi, Fajuyigbe, Sewraj, Gichuri, Sijako, Galliano and Laurent (2021) indicate that braids exist in two forms; two-way twist braids and three-way braids. Akingbola (2019)

and Brown (2018) also identify other types of braided hairdos which are cornrows, *erembe*, box braids, micro braids, crochet braids and feed-in-braids. Those who braid their hair more than eight times a year were classified as frequent braiders, whereas those who braid their hair sporadically were classified as occasional braiders (Molamodi et al., 2021). Cornrows, are a classic braiding technique in which the hair is interlaced in a continuous, elevated row, directly on the scalp. In Africa, cornrow hairdo could be traced to 3000 BC among the Egyptians, Algerians and some West Coastal dwellers (Quampah et al., 2023). *Erembe* is a form of braided hairdo which is common among the Himba ethnic group of Namibia. The braiding processes are carried out with the aid of goat or sheep skin and *otjize* paste (McMullen & Dell'Acqua, 2023).

Nigerians particularly the Yoruba are noted for diverse types of indigenous braided hairstyles like *suku adimole* and *koroba* (both resemble cornrows with distinct designs) (Ajíbóyè, Fọlárànmí & Umoru-Òkẹ, 2018). Both braided hairstyles involve the use of three hair strands. While *suku adimole* mostly starts from the edges and ends at the crown or nape in a protrusion, *koroba*, on the other hand, begins from the crown and ends at the edges. It sometimes involves a combination of different sizes of braids done on the same head. The small size takes the shape of an 'X' which appears at the left and right side of the bigger ones with the intersection superimposed on top of the bigger one (Falola, 2022). According to Ajíbóyè et al. (2018), others like *patewo* and *saba* also exist among the Nigerians. *Patewo*, mostly involves weaving from the parietal zones (left and right sides) to the middle, crown and the nape areas in a

linear form. *Saba* resembles a modern zip. *Patewo* has been slightly remade and termed *mohawk* to reflect modern sensibilities (Falola, 2022).

### **Dreadlocks**

Dreadlocks or *mpesempese* are strands of hair that look like ropes and are made by locking tresses. Every hair texture can form locks with time, patience and proper care (Banks, 2021). The origin of dreadlocks has been provided by many different schools of thought. According to authors like Sang (2020) and Glace (2022) it came from Rastafarianism, which is believed to represent a biblical hairstyle worn as a mark of dedication by the *Nazirites* as mentioned in Numbers 6:1-21. It has also been suggested that the term “dreadlocks” dates back to the eras of the slave trade (Essah, 2008), when slave masters said that, twisted hair that had grown out of their kinky, unattended locks, appeared “dreadful”, when Africans emerged from slave ships after months of living in conditions devoid of personal hygiene. However, Byrd and Tharp (2002) contend that the style dates back to the fifteenth century, when Ethiopian Coptic church priests knotted their hair. In Ethiopia, it is sometimes referred to as *goscha* (Sherrow, 2023). Other studies revealed that, the kind of material used in making the dreadlock determines its origin. For instance, the use of cow dung in creating and styling dreadlock originated from Mumuhuila in Southern Angola (Sherrow, 2023).

According to Kuumba and Ajanaku (1998), Ghana has not been an exception to the countless great individuals who have donned dreadlocks throughout history and made significant contributions to development in a variety of ways, yet dreadlock wearers continue to receive a lot of negative comments and perceptions from a large section of the Ghanaian public.

Dreadlock which reveals the uniqueness of indigenous priest and priestesses of the Asantes remain in oblivion in literature.

Boaduo (2011) stresses that among Asantes some children called *bagyina* wear a special dreadlock hairstyle, the name *bagyina* (one specifically catered to survive) is usually given to some children due to the circumstances surrounding their birth. This name is assigned due to successive deaths of previous siblings. With such name, there is no way to escape again. Some of the indigenous medical practitioners and priests even make sure the hair of the child is never combed so that it coils naturally. The hairstyle which is called *mpesempese* (dreadlocks) aids in their survival. Other children with similar hairstyle are referred to as *ntoba* (the child who has been bought from the ancestors). The potency of the recommended hairstyle (*mpesempese*) prevents the child from dying. Other symbolisms associated with dreadlocks in connection to *bagina* and *ntoba* in Kumasi will be revealed by this research.

### **Hair threading**

African hair threading is an indigenous hairstyle which originated among the Yoruba people of Nigeria. The Yoruba people call it *irun kiko*. *Irun* means hair in Yoruba, and *Kiko* means, to gather (Falola, 2022). Therefore, *irun kiko* means gathering hair into tufts and coiling threads around them.

From root to tip, the thread is moved around a portion of hair and knotted at the tip (Quampah, 2024). It is fascinating to note that once the hair is wrapped in thread, the structure can be bent into any shape and fashioned into various designs (Opere-Darko & Dennis 2023). This styling technique aids in maintaining length (Quampah, 2024).

Threaded hairstyles have been adopted by some religious personalities within the Ga-Adangbe ethnic group. Kwakye-Opong (2014) discloses one of the names of the hairstyle as *Okukuli*. He further explained that, it is a form of threaded hairstyle worn by the priestesses of the *kple* deity. The hair is crafted into five tufts with the end of each tuft threaded with raffia and tucked into the base. It is decorated with cowries (Seiber & Herreman, 2000). Many elaborate indigenous hairstyles are currently designed using varieties of coloured threads aside raffia. Others also twist the end instead of using thread. According to Kwakye-Opong (2014), some priestesses of the *kple* gods are also known for wearing *gele*, which is another form of threaded hairstyle. The hair is spirally wrapped with a black cord or twine right from the root to the apex. The process is completed by either holding it up high or letting it fall at the back (Kwakye-Opong, 2014).

The commonest form of hair threading found in the literature involves wrapping a thread around an entire segmented hair from the root to the apex or the tip alone (Falola, 2022; Opare-Darko & Dennis, 2023). Other types of plaited methods exist among the Asantes which remain unexplored. Due to the paucity of information on this aspect of Asante culture, this current study will provide the descriptive features and the historical origins of these hairstyles.

To conclude, indigenous hairstyles usually appear in two main forms: haircuts and hairdos. Haircuts involve shaving natural hair into diverse indigenous shapes. Hairdos are either woven or wrapped with or without skins of animals or raffia. The origin and description of both haircuts and hairdos can be traced to specific ethnic or cultural groups.

### **Indigenous hairstyles as visual art forms (haircuts and hairdos)**

There have been several definitions of art (Davies, 2008; Stecker, 1996). These variations are as a result of different conceptualisations of art – fine or visual art, literary art, and performing art. Hairstyles are considered a form of visual art expression because they reflect the main issues that define art itself. According to Stokstad and Cothorn (2017), visual art is the depiction of innovative skills in visual forms like sculptures and paintings. Generally, visual art includes the expression or application of human creative skills and imaginations in a visual form such as body art (haircuts and hairdos), painting, weaving, pottery, or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional appeal. The expression of these creative skills involves the right application of the elements, principles, media, and tools of art. These will be the focus of the literature review in relation to art forms. The review covers also the representation of hairstyles in the form of body art, drawings, paintings, sculptures and Adinkra symbols. This segment is concluded with a review of literature on aesthetics.

### **Elements of art in indigenous hairstyling**

Indigenous hairstyles possess the basic characteristics of art. One of them is the elements of art. Examples of the elements of art include shape, line, dot, texture, colour and space (Prince, 2008). Prince (2008) discusses the elements of art in relation to some general objects in the United States. Aidoo and Agbeshie (2022) analyse the elements of art found in some images which have been juxtaposed and superimposed on few Adinkra symbols in order to visually communicate certain messages to viewers. However, description of the elements of art in relation to indigenous Asante hairstyles was absent in their

research. This knowledge gap contributed to the creation of the second objective of this current study. The point must be made clear that discovering and documenting the various artistic elements of art in indigenous hairstyles will cause people to understand and appreciate the art works better.

Shape is any enclosed space defined by lines and in contrast to its surroundings (Cordwell, 1983). They can be geometric (squares, ellipses and triangles) or organic shape like plants and animals. Most indigenous hairstyles are composed of shapes (Weitz, 2001). Each strand of African textured hair type grows in a tiny, angle-like helix shape. In central Africa, women hold their hair in long cylindrical shapes (Sherrow, 2023). Seiber and Herreman (2000) remark that the initiation priests of *orisa* (a deity of the Yoruba community) sometimes adopt *osu* which is a circular patch of hair which protrudes at the mid-point of the head. Among Asantes, shapes such as circles, squares, real life objects were employed in the design of Adinkra symbols (Dzokoto, Hill, Twum-Asante & Hayfron, 2018).

Lines are marks that span a distance between two points and can be straight or curved. Lines have a huge impact on the rest of the elements of art. *Didi* is a type of continuous Yoruba braid which sometimes extends linearly-horizontal, on the scalp, from the nape to the frontal of the head (Falola, 2022). According to Weitz (2001), different types of lines like continuous, broken, vertical, jagged, and horizontal lines drastically enhance the psychology of the art work in hairstyles, impacting the viewer greatly. Akporherhe and Udi (2022) opine that, lines in art could be thin, thick, wavy, zig-zag, spiral, curved, diagonal, parallel and contour. It could define the outline of a shape. Cornrows can be styled in a variety of ways, mostly including basic straight lines from the

frontal to the nape of the head (Haskin & Aguh, 2017). Dzokoto, et al. (2018) mention that lines formed an imperative element in the design of Adinkra symbols among Asantes. They can be used to create shapes and forms as well as give a sense of depth and structure. Lines are the foundations of hairstyles and a powerful tool unto themselves.

Texture could be explained as the degree of softness or roughness of an object (Tiest, 2010). It is the perceived surface quality of a work of art or how a surface feels. Djonov and Leeuwen (2011) highlight the two main types of texture: tactile and visual. According to Park (2018), tactile textures are three-dimensional and can be touched and felt. On the other hand, a visual texture is two-dimensional; you can see it, but cannot feel it. A photo of a hairstyle would have a visual texture, while the texture of a sculpted or body art hairstyle would be tactile. The texture of African hair appears denser, tightly coiled, coarse and shorter as compared to the Western hair which is silkier, straighter and smoother (Robinson, 2011; Akingbola, 2019; Sherrow, 2023). According to Johnson (1997), the hair is frequently non-glossy, kinky and dry, with a matte appearance. Combing this type of hair is difficult due to its highly knotted structure, making hair maintenance difficult.

Colour is the aspect of any object that may be described in terms of hue, lightness and saturation (Camgöz, Yener & Güvenç, 2004). It can stand alone as background like the reddish braids (due to the effect of ochre) of the Pokot teenagers (Sherrow, 2023) or be applied to other elements like lines, shapes, texture or typography like *Okukuli* hairdo among the Ga-Adangbe which uses a brownish raffia coil for the apex while the bottom remains blackish and oval (Kwakyie-Opong, 2014). Colour creates a mood within the piece and tells a story



about the band. Mostly, African natural hair appears black but due to modernity, some have been subjected to dyes of different colours which ranges from primary to secondary colours (Patton, 2006). The application of colour is not only a modern element in hairstyling; some indigenous hairstyles include different colours for specific purposes. In central Africa, Mumuhuila tribe women of Angola usually wear a dreadlock hairstyle which is brownish in colour because it is made of dried cow dungs, herbs, trunks, oil and fat (Schefer, 2022). Every colour says something different and combinations of these colours can alter that impression further.

Space refers to the area within, around, above or below an object. This element of art can be manipulated based on how an artist places lines, shapes, forms and colours. The placement of these elements creates space which is either positive, negative, shallow, deep or three-dimensional space. Positive space is an area occupied by an object or form, while negative space refers to the surroundings or background space which is not needed. The Kuramo men of Nigeria are recognised by their partially shaved heads with just one tuft of hair on top (Sherrow, 2023). Similarly, the initiation of Yoruba priest of *Orisa* involves shaving the entire hair to the scalp with only a small rounded tuft of hair left at the top of the head. Hence, the individual must not carry a load on his head except objects which are sacred to the deity (Seiber & Herreman 2000). Hence, the positive space becomes the tuft of hair at the crown region while the plane areas without hair become the negative space. Deep space refers to the part extending far down from the top or surface. The part extending a little down from the top is the shallow space.

Making good use of most of the elements of design explained above will together work to create something that is aesthetically appealing to the eyes. However, these elements have not been discussed in the context of indigenous hairstyles among Asantes. Another important feature which usually garnishes the elements to create stunning artwork but has been minimally described in literature is the principle of art.

### **Principles of art in indigenous hairstyling**

The principles of art are the manner in which the designed elements are organised. They are essentially a set of criteria that are used to explain how the visual elements are arranged in a work of art (Delgado, 2016). Some of the criteria include balance, emphasis, pattern, rhythm, movement, unity, proportion, variety and gradation. These principles aid in expressing moods, feelings, and visual messages in artworks (Amissah & Letcher-Teye, 2018). Delgado (2016), Amissah and Letcher-Teye (2018) discuss the principles of art in the context of costumes and fabrics respectively. Nothing was explained on the subject of hairstyles.

The principle of balance is concerned with the visual distribution of the elements in a work of art. The three main forms of balance are symmetrical, asymmetrical and radial (Zhao, Gao, Jiang, Yao, Chua & Sun, 2014). In symmetrical balance, the elements (line, shapes, colour), used on one side of the hairstyle are similar to those on the other side. In central Africa, for example, the Mumuhuila tribe women of Angola usually wear a dreadlock hairstyle which symmetrically balances with three locks on each side of the head (Sherrow, 2023). With respect to asymmetrical balance, the elements used on one side of the design are dissimilar to those on the other side. In radial balance, the

elements are arranged around a central point and may be similar (Ngo, Samsudin & Abdullah, 2000) to the suku braids among the Nigerians (Ajíbóyè et al., 2018).

With respect to emphasis, it is a way of using elements to stress a certain area in an artwork. It is a way of describing the focal point in the indigenous hairstyles. The artist (or hairstylist) makes a section of the hair stand out in contrast with other areas. Hence, the principle of creating a focal point to make certain elements stand out could be described as emphasis. The area could be different in size, colour, texture and shape. The principle of emphasis is employed in the hairdo of some teenage boys of the Himba ethnic group of Namibia, as they adopt one braided hairstyle at the frontal region of the head. It is the part of the design that catches viewers' attention (Bollig & Heinemann, 2002).

Principle of pattern refers to the repetition of an object or symbol all over the work of art. *Koraba* hairstyle of the Nigerians reveals replication of similar designs (Falola, 2022). Implying that it is the reoccurrence of the same interlace. Repetition, works with pattern of design to make the work of art seem active. The repetition of elements of design in *nontombi* hairstyle creates unity within the work of art (Schefer, 2020). Repetition can lead to rhythm. Rhythm is created when one or more elements of design are used repeatedly to create a feeling of organised movement (Gilmer, 2007). To keep rhythm exciting and active, movement is essential. Hence, movement plays a key role in rhythm. Movement is the path the viewer's eye takes through the work of art, often to the focal areas. Such movement can be directed along lines, edges, shape and colour within the work of art. Most African hairdos reveal repeated patterns

(Sieber & Herreman, 2000). Some are combined in unison. According to Chevreul (1855) unity is the feeling of harmony between all parts of the work of art which creates a sense of completeness. It is separate parts working together in a composition. It creates a sense of wholeness by using similar elements and placing them in a way that creates a feeling of oneness (Koh, 2013). The pattern could also be a mixture of different proportions which reoccur in the hairstyles. Proportion is concerned with the relationship between the various sizes in the art work. Most indigenous hairstyles involve a combination of some of these principles of art. An example is the *koraba* braided hair among the Yoruba people of Nigeria (Falola, 2022).

The principle of variety involves using different sizes, shapes and colours in hairstyles to create visual diversity. Closely related to variety is contrast. Contrast is achieved when opposite elements are arranged together. Although these elements might be opposites, their arrangement can still be appealing (Chevreul, 1855) in hairstyles. For example, even though black is the opposite of white, they could be combined in the same piece of artwork to enhance aesthetics. A case in point are cowries which are mostly white in colour but are found in some dreadlocks which are black in colour (Gumbs, 2022). Sometimes there are elements which may not be opposite but may be completely different from each other (Sieber & Herreman, 2000). For instance, cornrow may not be the opposite of pony hair but they are completely different from each other. Some people style their hair by combining cornrow and pony. To enhance greater beauty, these two hairstyles are sometimes mutually done together. Falola (2022) postulates that Yoruba hairstyling involves mixtures of different styles that demonstrate artistry and artistic choice. For instance, *didi*

(inverted cornrow weaves) can be combined with *biba* (braided attachments) to achieve the principle of variation.

Gradation is the technique of gradually transitioning from one blend of colour to another or from one shade to another or from one texture to another. Anything with a bunch of levels or stages can be considered as gradation (Triana & Pamungkas, 2022). Having a short hair which gradually grows into a longer length can be considered as gradation. Also, weaving procedure which involves smaller units at the beginning which progressively turn into larger tufts can be regarded as gradation (Shuaib, 2020).

The principles of art pertaining to indigenous Asante hairstyles have not been discussed in prior research. Authors like Falola, (2022), Chevreul (1855), Gilmer, (2007), Gumbs, (2022), Weitz (2001), and Triana and Pamungkas (2022) have focused their studies on other ethnic groups. Another essential artistic feature which has been scarcely discussed in literature is media.

### **Media in indigenous hairstyling**

Media form an indispensable component of art. Some indigenous hair cannot be styled without the aid of media. Different media are employed in carrying out the various artworks. For instance, adolescents of the Pokot in Kenya adopt media called animal fat and ochre to smear their braids during the initial stages of their puberty rite. Ochre is an earthly pigment containing ferric oxide, typically with clay, varying from light yellow to brown or red. Furthermore, in Madagascar, *tavo* (a combination of honey and animal fat) has long been used as a fixture for curled braids (Sherrow, 2023). The Hamar ethnic group of Ethiopia use water and resin (a gum-like substance obtained from plants) to make their dreadlocks (Assefa, 2021). According to Byrd and Tharps

(2002), slaves used bacon grease and butter to soften hair. Cornmeal and kerosene served as scalp cleanser. Also, slaves in North America used coffee as the natural dye for women (Patton, 2006).

The indigenous materials required in designing *dansinkran* haircut which were discovered in the literature included charcoal, soot and shea butter (Asenso, 2019). In ceramics works and wood sculpturing, among the Asantes, some of the materials required are clay and wood respectively (Rattray, 1927).

However, other traditional materials exist among the Asantes which have not been documented. This current research will gather data and document some of these materials which are absent in literature. The spiritual and cultural meanings attached to these media will also be explored.

### **Tools in indigenous hairstyling**

Sheep fleece carder, shears, broken bottles, razors, scissors and shaving machines are some examples of implements used in indigenous hairstyling. Byrd and Tharps (2002) highlight that sheep fleece carding tool was used to untangle hair while animal shears were used to cut hair short by slaves. Scissors and shaving machines are the tools required to have most indigenous haircuts done in contemporary era (Sherrow, 2023). Akinbi (2015) iterates that before the introduction of scissors among the Nigerians, particularly the Yoruba and the Igbo, the practice of shaving the hair of widows was carried out with the aid of artistic implements like broken bottles and razors. Similarly, a razor blade (*yi-si-pomi*) is used to shave the hair of the teenage girls of the dipo initiation (Adinku, 2016). Comb is the main artistic tool required for segmenting hair during the making of short and long braids. In Nigeria, the Igbos crafted wooden hair combs for grooming and styling hair while in Nubia a type of iron comb

was developed (Sherrow, 2023). Kwere of Tanzania made ornate hairpins and Hamar girls adorn cornrow hairstyle with beads. Aside the tools used to design hairstyles on the human body, other kinds of implements and materials like graphite pencils, pens, inks, brushes, wax, colour pencils, crayons/pastels, charcoal, and markers are required when drawing (Scott, 2021). Early man used stone and bone tools to scrap surfaces of rocks during drawing (Jones, 2017). More advanced digital techniques are employed in contemporary era. Rattray (1927) identifies local carving tools like *fifiye* (awl), *soso paye* (a hoe for splitting) and *pewa* (a kind of chisel) used in wood carving among Asantes of which sculpted indigenous hairstyles were not excluded.

The above literature revealed that, no study seems to have been done on the indigenous tools required in the shaving and styling of indigenous haircuts and hairdos on the human head among the Asantes. Samples of these tools will be uncovered and documented in this current study.

### **Representation of indigenous hairstyles**

When mention is made of hairstyles, our minds are usually drawn mainly to those on living human heads. Hairstyles have other representations. The hairstyles found on the human scalp are sometimes drawn, tinted, and carved in order to achieve an aesthetic effect or for posterity. This results in the preservation of the culture of a group of people. Paintings, sculptures and photos have contributed significantly to the preservation of indigenous hairstyle practices by maintaining the original nature which could have in some instances become vague and distorted with the passage of time (Dutton, 2009). The visual representation of hairstyles on which literature will be reviewed included body art, drawing, painting, sculpturing and Adinkra symbols.

### **Indigenous hairstyles in the form of body art**

The representation of indigenous hairstyles in the form of body art has gained global attention due to their artistic features (Weitz, 2001). In line with this, Shuaib (2020) and Adinku (2016) stress that hairstyling is a form of body art which portrays the visual values of the African. Beautification such as hairstyling is described as body art because it is found on the body and possesses the characteristics of art. According to Trowel (1960), hairstyling as an artistic creation can be traced to historic times. To support this argument, it is crucial to note that the discovery of archeological proof of mummified bodies and cave paintings dating back to the ancient Egyptian civilisation of 4,000 BC attests to hairstyling as a significant form of body art among the Egyptians of that era (Booth, 2015).

According to Shuaib (2020), one of the most creative and intricate indigenous hairstyles is fashioned by Nigerians. It entails the process of "pleating", braiding, tying and shaving. Falola (2022) further highlights that the elements of art are visible in some of the aforementioned hairstyles. Among the Fulbe and Fulani societies, elaborate application of clay, wax, reeds, grass and oils to the hair is done in order to establish beauty, for those who wear it. The Himba tribe in Northwestern Namibia has fascinating dreadlock hairstyles that have striking appeal and resemblance to the Fulani of Northern Nigeria (Sherrow, 2023).

Though images of some indigenous Asante hairstyles appear in literature yet they have not been discussed in the context of body art. They have been situated in other cultural underpinnings. Hence the need for this research in order to fill this void in literature.



### Indigenous hairstyles in the form of drawings



**Figure 1- Dreadlocks in the form of drawing**

**Source - Pinterest**<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/in-a-moment-sherridon-lyons.html> (Date accessed 5/11/2022).

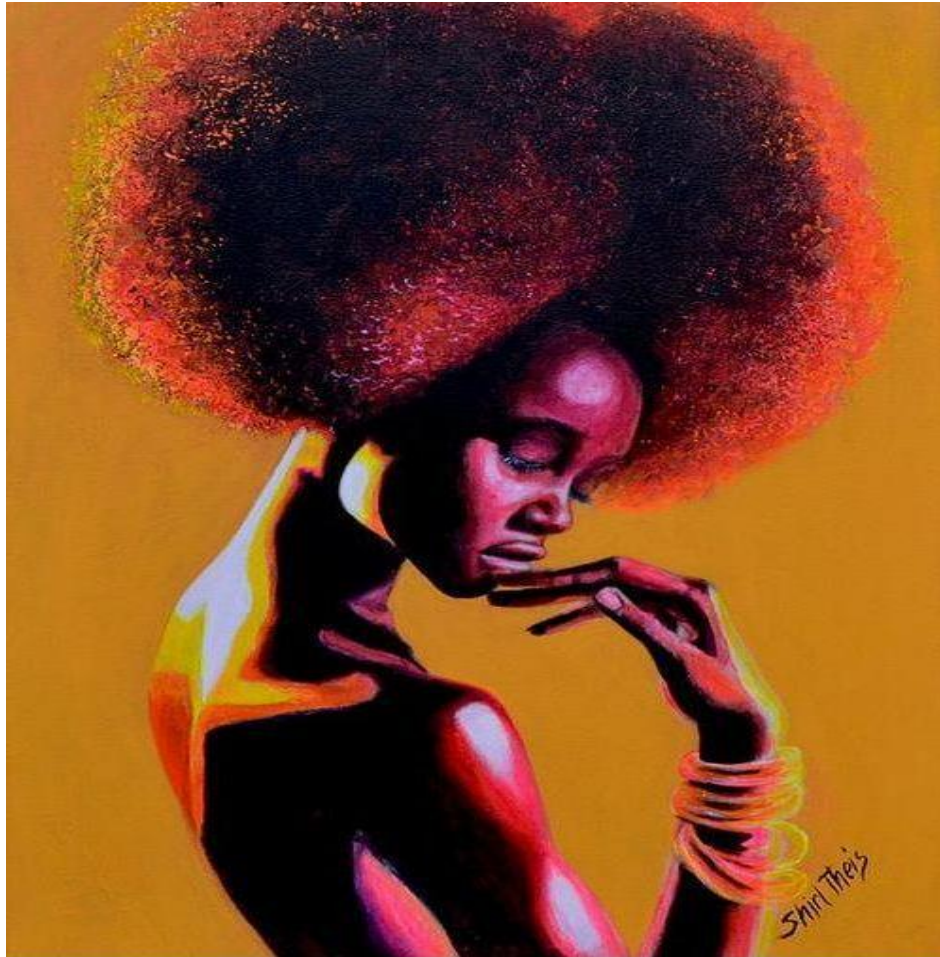
One way of representing indigenous hairstyles is through drawings. Drawing is the process of creating an image with varieties of tools and techniques. It usually entails applying pressure to a surface with a tool while moving the implement across a surface to make marks concurrently. Some of the tools used during the ancient period included bones and stones to scratch surfaces of rocks or clay tablets. As a result, Quampah et al. (2023) attest that, women with cornrows have been seen in Stone Age drawing from the Sahara's Tassili Plateau dating back to 3000 B.C. They also indicate in their work that, as far back as 2000 B.C., representations of some ancient Cushitic inhabitants

of the Horn of Africa in the form of drawing on rocks depicting braided cornrows were uncovered. Later, Egyptians developed thin reed pens used for drawing on papyrus scrolls. Knox, Sorg, Averill and Yaun (2013) highlight that line drawing, hatching, crosshatching, random hatching, scribbling, stippling, and blending are the most common drawing methods. Figure 1 shows a pencil drawing of a dreadlock hairstyle depicting visible lines. Not much has been done with respect to the artistic representation of indigenous Asante hairstyles in the form of drawings. The few ones which exist seem not to have been documented.

### **Indigenous hairstyles in the form of paintings**

Painting is a form of artistic expression. It is the creation of images with the aid of paints. The aptitude for utilising pigments to create pictures could also be referred to as painting. Some native hairstyles are represented in the form of paintings. Early man obtained the painting-colours from nature. These include ochre, limestone and sooth. The pigment is usually in a liquid form and usually applied with the aid of a brush. Different surfaces can be utilised for painting works (Carden & Miotti, 2020). Usually painting done on flat surfaces are two-dimensional art work. The process is mostly commenced by first sketching the image, this is followed by blocking in and finally adding the colour. Paintings of indigenous hairstyles among Africans are believed to have existed during the pre-historic era particularly among the Egyptians (Salvant, Williams, Ganio, Casadio, Daher, Sutherland & Walton, 2018). Modern painters have greatly expanded their approach to include collage and mosaic. Figure 2 portrays an example of an African long natural textured hair in the form of painting. It possesses some elements (shape and colour) and principles (harmony) of art.

The interconnection between the features of art in the paintings of indigenous Asante hairstyles remain in oblivion in literature. The description of the paintings of indigenous Asante hairstyles using an art lens is one of the key hallmarks which this current research seeks to achieve.



**Figure 2 - Painting of a long natural textured hair**

Source - Pinterest <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/562809284660960872/>  
(Date accessed 10/11/2022)

### **Indigenous hairstyles in the form of sculptures**

Neumüller, Reichinger, Rist and Kern (2014) posit that, hairstyles are also preserved through sculpture, which is a form of visual art. Sculpturing involves carving, casting, welding, moulding and plastering (Azaglo, Adom, Adu-Agyem, & Opoku-Mensah, 2022).

Wood carving sculpture is a technique that involves cutting or scraping away from a solid wood material with tools to produce a desired form (Claridge, 2015). Figure 3 shows a wood carving of a young Fante woman whose hair has been styled into a royal coiffure that is worn for a brief period during the final phase of initiation. The initiation is done when ladies attain the age of puberty (Sieber & Herreman, 2000). The main material used is wood while the main tools are chisels, knife and mallet.



**Figure 3 - Wood sculpture of a Fante teen in a royal hairstyle during puberty rite**  
**Source - Sieber and Herreman (2000).**

Casting is a form of sculpturing. A mould is used in the casting procedure to create sculptures (Gardan, 2016). To create the sculpture, either clay, plaster, molten metal or mortar is poured or squeezed into a mould (Mancoff, 2023). A mould, is a hollow cavity of the desired shape within which

the material is poured in. Some tools used in casting are forceps, a hollow cavity and furnace (Sudhakar, 2022).

Modelling is a technique mostly used in ceramic and other forms of sculpture. Ceramic sculpture is created by kneading and manipulating wet clay into diverse forms and then firing the artwork to solidify the earthen in order to make them sturdy (Acero, 2012). The art work could be decorated after heating them. Figurines and bust with diverse hairstyles are some examples of the end products of ceramic sculpture (Johnson, 2008). The main media used is clay while the tools used include steel, scraper, wire clay cutter and wood modelling tool. There are limited artworks on indigenous Asante hairstyles in the form of ceramic sculptures. Block modelling or plastering on the other hand involves mixing water, lime, gypsum, sand, cement and other strengthening materials to form plaster. The resulting paste can be built around armature or applied to walls. It can also be shaped into bricks or blocks and used for construction (Guelberth, Cedar Rose & Dan Chiras, 2003).

Metal parts are joined and shaped together using welding processes to produce a welded sculpture. A procedure called welding includes applying heat, pressure, or a combination of both to melt and fuse two or more pieces of metals together (Zhang, Yang, Zhang & Na, 2020).

A description of how the elements and principles of art appear in indigenous Asante hairstyles (which are in the form of sculptured works like carving, casting, welding and moulding) are absent in all the works of the above mentioned authors. Pictures of these sculptures will therefore be documented and artistically explained during the field survey in this current research.

### Indigenous hairstyles in the form of Adinkra symbols

A number of indigenous hairstyles have been represented in the form of Adinkra symbols. Many scholars have paid attention to the origin of the Adinkra symbols in general with limited literature on the etymology of the individual symbols. For instance, according to Gyekye (2002) the Asantes believe that the ancestors carried messages to and from God since the word 'Adinkra' is derived from the Akan word *nkra* or *nkara*, which means message or intelligence. In view of this, the Akan usually buried their dead relatives with cloth with Adinkra symbols in them. They believed, the Adinkra cloth, worn by the dead was a message to God, hence, the symbols may have been given the name Adinkra. In another version, the term Adinkra is said to have originated during the British exile of the Asantehene, Prempeh I, for refusing to hand over the golden stool (Agbo, 2011). Nana Prempeh I was dressed in *ntiamu ntoma* (stamped cloth), the traditional name for Adinkra fabric, when he was exiled. The fabric, however, came to be known as Adinkra *ntoma*, or parting cloth, when he was banished.

Rattray (1927) discusses Adinkra symbols in relation to stamped cloths. Where cloths were stamped with different adinkra symbols. Rattray (1927) posits that some of these symbols previously existed in the form of haircuts which were later preserved in the form of cyphers. However, in his work, the features and the procedures involved in trimming the hair were not documented. Besides, the description and origin remain unknown. Adom, Opoku, Newton and Yeboah (2018) also examine eleven Adinkra symbols. These include *sankofa* (go back and take), *nkyimkyim* (twisting), *gye nyame* (except God), *bese saka* (Kola nuts), *pempamsie* (preparedness and foresight), *ohene tuo* (the



king's gun), *obi nka obi* (no one should bite the other), *aya* (fern), *duafo* (wooden comb), *nkonsonkonso* (chain) and *akoben* (war horn). Out of these eleven symbols only *obi nka bi* is a haircut which has been preserved in the form of an Adinkra symbol. The study by its focus did not discuss anything on the subject of the relationship between Adinkra symbols and hairstyles. Their research covered Adinkra cultural symbols for sustainable environmental education in Ghana.

### **The concept of aesthetics in relation to indigenous hairstyles**

In today's society, the concept of art cannot be fully articulated and comprehended without first delving into its precursor, aesthetics. Aesthetics, in its broadest sense, defies clear definition, in the sense that authors have used adjectives like beautiful, pleasant, lovely, admirable, and friendly to describe various aspects of nature across time. Aesthetics in the art can be defined as a design's, an artifact's, or an animation's ability to elicit various sensations and emotions in individuals based on its appeal (Schindler, Hosoya, Menninghaus, Beermann, Wagner, Eid & Scherer 2017). To a layman, aesthetics simply connotes an individual's propensity to use phrases that explain the beauty, both visible and invisible of an object.

Hair arrangement is a form of African art that is underappreciated. The exhibition of hair in African art and culture and the accompanying volume serve to introduce the wide variety of coiffures worn by people throughout the continent, as well as to offer a glimpse of African-inspired hairstyles worn by African Americans, through field photographs and traditional sculptures (Herreman & Sieber, 2000). A number of historical and current African and African American hairstyles have a strong aesthetic component. Scholars,

missionaries, colonial officials, and visitors to Africa have long recognised the diversity and artistic depth of both men's and women's hairstyles (Batulukisi, 2000). Fruit seeds, shells, leather, gold, coral, glass beads (typically imported), stone beads (frequently indigenous), and ostrich-eggshell beads were sometimes used in coiffures (always locally manufactured) to enhance their beauty. Priests and priestesses from Ghana's indigenous communities, as well as their assistants, can be recognised by their natural hair, which is fashioned in a variety of ways (Sieber & Herreman, 2000 ; Oyedemi, 2016).

Unfortunately, some of the historical aesthetics of indigenous Asante hairstyles have been lost to us, with the exception of a few. It is important to remember that many observers have mainly recorded a blip in the fashion cycle. Hence, this research is necessary in that it seeks to unravel the aesthetics of indigenous hairstyles among the Asantes.

### **Identity and symbolism of indigenous hairstyles (haircuts and hairdos)**

One major significance of culture is its ability to reveal the identity and symbolism of a group of people in a society (Hall, 1990). Culture, according to Tylor (1871) includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a human as a member of society. Burke and Stets (2009) emphasise that before African contact with European missionaries, hair and hairstyles were used as a symbol of identification in many African societies. Hair, in addition to skin colour, was one of the unique characteristics that distinguished Africans from other races. Hair, in particular, has held a specific place in both male and female body for a long time. The set of qualities and beliefs that make one person or group different from others can be described as identity (Burke & Stets, 2009; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Hair is



used to convey a variety of identities by styling, stressing, and shaving. It sets people apart from other members of the community. Symbolically, hair is a vital component of the human body and therefore performs a range of tasks in communication (Dash, 2006). To put it another way, hair is a cultural feature and natural hair, particularly in Africa, plays an important role in many people's cultural and spiritual lives. It depicts the uniqueness of communities. The identities and symbolisms of both haircuts and hairdos have been explained in the following discussions.

### **Identity and symbolism of indigenous haircuts (trimmed natural hair)**

Natural textured hair provides numerous identities and significance depending on how they have been shaved. This aspect of the study reviews literature on indigenous haircuts and how they depict identities and symbolisms of the wearers as whether they are hunters, widows, puberty girls, married people, or royals.

Damilare (2021) points out that powerful hunters and warriors would shave their hair and leave a small patch of hair that would grow on a spot in the middle of their head infused with potent medicine to boost their body physically and spiritually. Tchenga's (2021) research synchronises with this point when he stresses that, hair was believed to be the conduit for spiritual communication with God because it is located at the highest point on the body, and that God sometimes predetermines the events that would ultimately influence the choice of hairstyles or hair patterns.

Moreover, shaving the entire hair very low is common among some ethnic groups of West African countries. For instance, Nkansah (2008) and Akinbi (2015) postulate that among the Nigerians particularly the Yoruba and

the Igbo, as well as among Ewes and Akans of Ghana, it is identified among widows. This practice is carried out as a sign of severing bonds between her and her late husband. She is therefore expected to unweave her hair, have a low haircut, shave or scrape her hairs entirely off. In a similar vein, the significance of this practice is that, since the husband is dead, there is nobody to beautify her hair for, at least for a period of time (Ilozue, 2007). It also symbolises mourning and bereavement for the deceased husband. Sherrow (2023) indicates that the symbolic shaving of hair is not only restricted to widows; the baby's hair is shaved to mark a transition from the spirit world to the physical world; a dead person's hair is shaved to mark a transition from the physical world to the spiritual world; and among the Akans women and men who are close to the deceased shave their hair to signify respect.

Additionally, in Ghana, one of the most popular puberty rites which is the *dipo* is carried out among the Krobo people of the southern sector. Indigenous haircuts are an integral part of the rite. According to Adinku (2016) the shaving of the *Dipo* candidate's hair is significant to the entire ceremony and is carried out in three stages. During the first phase of the *Dipo* rites, part of the girl's hair is shaved in a ring-like style with a razor blade (*yi-si-pomi*). This design is a characteristic of an ancient Krobo style known as *klohue*. The rite signifies the girl's journey into a new phase of life. Next, shaving takes place before the girl's visit to the *Tegbetε* (sacred stone). Here, a larger expanse of the scalp is clean-shaven, leaving just a small part in a circular form above the forehead, to indicate that the girl is getting close to entering the new world (Adinku, 2016).

Lastly, after a girl's safe return from the *Tegbete*, as a sign that she has successfully passed the test and is now ready to attain the new status of womanhood, the remaining hair on her head is shaved (Adinku, 2016). However, in cases where a parent does not want her daughter's hair to be shaved off, a compensatory fee is paid and the girl's hair is instead parted into small tufts, with the end of each tuft threaded with raffia string and tucked into the base of the hair to hold it firm. This hairstyle, *akukuli*, is also typically worn by priestesses in Kroboland (Kwaky-Opong, 2014).

Among the Asantes, the identities and symbolisms of some shaved hair remain undocumented. *Dansinkran* is a type of haircut. With respect to its identity, Kuwornu-Adjaottor et al. (2016) explain that *dansinkran* is common among Asante adult women especially the queens and puberty rite initiates. It differentiates women from girls. Asenso (2019) reveals that the *dansinkran* haircut, which employs charcoal to cleanse every pollutant in the hair and let the brain to perform at its full potential, improves the cognitive capacity of the Akan queens and plays a significant role of beautifying the hair. However, the spiritual symbolism of charcoal in relation to *dansinkran* remains absent in literature. Additionally, some of the original activities associated with the indigenous hairstyles which aimed at beautifying their aboriginal appearances is what this research also seeks to address.

Asenso (2019) stresses that, traditionally, plant soot and shea butter were mixed together in the right proportion and used to blacken the clipped hair. Though the medical benefits of these indigenous products were mentioned as protecting the scalp from fungal infections, yet, the spiritual and cultural symbolisms of plant soot and sheabutter in connection to *dansinkran* has not

been discussed in the literature. It can therefore be inferred from literature that indigenous beautification of hair is highly medicinal, in contrast, Randle (2015) accentuates that, modernised and modified hair products contain harmful chemicals which are detrimental to the scalp. Aside *dansinkran*, the symbolism associated with a number of haircuts among Asantes have not been documented.

Some ancient haircuts have been incorporated into Adinkra symbols and designs due to their relevance. According to Adom et al. (2018), *obi nka obi* (bite not one another) which is a type of haircut stands for the harmonious coexistence that should exist between people, the environment and its resources. The fundamental meaning of this emblem is to promote living in harmony (Owusu, 2019). In corroboration with this, Kuwornu-Adjaottor et al. (2016) highlight that, the emblem serves as a warning against social vices that might hinder societal development and lead to conflict, such as backbiting, provocation, gossiping, blackmailing, and corruption.

Rattray (1927) stresses that *nkotimsefompuaa* is a haircut worn by the royal female household's attendants of the queens. Martino (2020) mentions *nkotimsefopuaa* in connection to its appearance in clothing, however the local name and the significance of the haircut was not provided. Rattray (1927) elucidates that *sepow* means sword or knife. The knife is pushed through the cheeks of the man or woman about to be executed to prevent him/her from invoking a curse on the king before dying. Rattray (1927) identifies other forms of Adinkra symbols as *mpuaanum* which means five tuft of hair. Similarly, *Gyawu atikɔ* was documented as a haircut in the form of Adinkra symbol in the works of Rattray (1927) however the symbolism was not explained. Some of

the political and socio-cultural significance of most of the haircuts preserved in the form of Adinkra symbols seems to be minimal in literature.

### **Identity and symbolism of indigenous hairdos**

Manipulating and interlacing natural textured hair into different structured hairdos usually provide varied identities and meanings (Peacock, 2019). The identity and symbolism of indigenous hairdos like braids and dreadlocks have been reviewed in the following:

### **Identity and symbolism of braided hairdos**

The Egyptians have a way of differentiating royal boys from other boys within the community. For instance, the royal boys wear braided hairstyle which falls on the right side of their head (Bingen, 2007). Some priests and priestesses are identified with *agogo* (hairstyle done to imitate the cockscomb) hairstyle. The parietal sections of the head have been braided into cornrow while the crown regions to the nape have been threaded like the shape of the cock comb. When conducting the worship rituals of Sango (the mythological god of thunder and lightning in Yoruba mythology), Sango priestesses mostly dress in hairstyles like *agogo* to symbolise their role as Sango's wives (Shuaib, 2020).

Furthermore, adolescents of the Pokot tribe in Kenya depict a unique braided hairstyle during the initial stages of their puberty rite. The hair is usually woven into short braids (Sherrow, 2023). This hairstyle is portrayed in figure 4.



**Figure 4 - A Pokot initiate in an ochered braided hairstyle, Kenya**  
Source-<https://www.holdenluntz.com/artists/carol-beckwithangelafisher/page/2/> (Date accessed 20/12/2022)

From pubescence, boys of the Himba ethnic group of northern Namibia, continue to be identified in one braided hairstyle. Figure 5 portrays a braided hairstyle of a Himba teenage boy (Havenga et al., 2022).





**Figure 5 - A Himba teenage boy in a single braid**

Source- <https://hairstylelaboratory.com/2021/06/21/13-rare-collections-of-kids-tribal-braids/> (Date accessed 1/1/2023).

Teenage girls have many *otjize-textured* hair braids/plaits, some, arranged to veil the girl's face, implying that teenage ladies in some communities in Namibia are identified with their braided hair that falls over their faces. The aim is to reduce male gaze. Once she announces her eligibility for marriage, the plaits/braids are often tied together and held parted back from the face. Unmarried young men continue to wear one braided plait extending to

the rear of the head (Borg & Jacobsohn, 2013). Figure 6 presents a Himba teenager in a braided hairdo.



**Figure 6 - Braided hairstyle of a teenage girl, Himba**  
Source-[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Namibie\\_Himba\\_0705a.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Namibie_Himba_0705a.jpg)(Date accessed 16/1/2023)

Moreover, indigenous hairstyles also serve as a form of social identity for married women. According to Borg and Jacobsohn (2013), newly married women among the Himba wear headdresses made of animal skin. Also, women who have been married for about a year and above wear an ornate headpiece called the *erembe*, obtained from sheepskin, with many streams of braided hair



coloured and put in shape with otjize paste. Otjize (red clay) is a mixture of butter/fat and ochre pigment. Married men on the other hand wear a cap or head-wrap and un-braided hair beneath. Widowed men would remove their cap or head-wrap and expose their un-braided hair (Cole, 2012). The Himba are also accustomed to the use of wood ash for hair cleansing due to water scarcity. For the Himba people, beauty is all natural, and otjize symbolises a cultural preservation of ancient customs. The hairstyle shown in Figure 7 is an example of an *erembe* hairdo.



**Figure 7 - Erembe braid of a Himba woman**

Source-[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Namibie\\_Himba\\_0705a.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Namibie_Himba_0705a.jpg) (Date accessed 16/1/2023)

Another form of braid is the cornrow which comes in a variety of forms. Examples among the Yoruba people include *didì* and *suku*. *Didì* and *suku* are means of expressing one's position (Byrd & Tharp, 2002). Therefore, when European slave smugglers cut their slaves' hair for hygienic reasons, most Africans considered this as a symbol of cultural demise and forfeiture of self-respect, as tresses is a sacred bodily element (Essah, 2008). When the hairs of the African began to grow, the captives started styling them in the form of cornrows. The cornrows were shaped in the form of maps which provided the direction to their freedom. Small amount of gold and seeds were stowed in the hairstyle to aid in their survival after fleeing (Quampah et al., 2023). *Suku*, which involves braiding a hump on top of the head to look like a basket, by making a high ponytail, was the preserve of queens and princes of Nigeria (Falola, 2022).

*Amasunzu* hairstyle is common among the Tutsi and Hutu people of Rwanda. *Amasunzu* was worn by people of many social status. For instance, single young girls wear it as a symbol of their virginity. It is a collection of rows of hair, styled into three different crescent shapes with sharp contours (Sherrow, 2023). As shown in Figure 8, it is an elevated form of cornrow supported with shinny cords.



**Figure 8 - A virgin in *amasunzu* braid, Rwanda**

Source - <https://www.africa.com/ancient-rwandan-hairstyle-amasunzu/>  
(Date accessed 19/1/2023)

### **Distinctiveness and representations of dreadlocks**

The symbolic identity attached to a dreadlock in a society may have a different meaning in another cultural setting. In central Africa, the Mumuhuila tribe women of Angola usually wear *nontombi* locks made of dried cow dungs, herbs, trunks and oil (Schefer, 2020).

Symbols are attached to the number of *nontombi* dreadlocks worn at a time (Sherrow, 2023). Three (3) dreadlocks signify a recent occurrence of death

in the immediate family of the wearer. Four (4) to six (6) dreadlocks indicate a normal style (Schefer, 2020). This dreadlock is called *nontombi*. Cow dung symbolises forgiveness and fruitfulness. Figure 9, shows dreadlocks adorned with cow dungs.



**Figure 9 - *Nontombi* dreadlocks worn by a Mumuhuila woman of Angola**  
Source - <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/485896247292698543/> (Date accessed 19/1/2023)

In the north-eastern part of Africa, the women of the Hamar ethnic group of Ethiopia wear thin dreadlocks, obtained by applying indigenous substances



to small tufts of hair (Assefa, 2021). They create their dreadlocks with water and resin (gum-like substance obtained from plants) (Sherrow, 2023). The women mix ochre, water and resin together. They rub the mixture in the hair and twist each strand again and again to create coppery coloured tresses known as *goscha*. Figure 10 represents *goscha* hairstyle. To add to their distinct look, women wear colourful beaded jewellery on the hair. On the other hand, pre-adolescent girls wear their hair in cornrows which are decorated with beads (Sherrow, 2023).



**Figure 10 - *Goscha* dreadlock of an Ethiopian woman**

**Source - <https://www.facebook.com/historyhub1/photos/a.116360943098877/451596399575328/?type=3> (Date accessed 30/1/2023).**

Among the Yoruba, dreadlocks are used to identify children born after prolonged period of childlessness by couples (Agwuele, 2016). Agwuele unravels that when couples consult oracles for a child because they are not able to produce one, as part of the rituals, they are usually instructed not to cut the child's hair, hence, the hair grows to become locks. Hairstyles have straight linkage with religious practices. Children born with knotted hair (also known as dreadlocks) were considered especially wealthy in Yoruba society. *Dada-olowo eyo*, which signifies a person who is divinely gifted with cowries (money) to attract wealth to their family, would be the child's name, reflecting that belief. As a result, because of the hair's unique powers, their head would not be washed during the naming ceremony. The hair would not even be combed and it usually remains uncut for the rest of their lives (Tchenga, 2021).

In such societies, the cutting or styling of the hair of these unique individuals is considered a taboo. In African traditional civilisations, taboos serve as the primary source of guiding principles that regulate and govern how individuals and the community behave toward the Supreme Being, in particular, the gods and the ancestors (Chemhuru & Masaka, 2010). The religious punishments from the gods and ancestors or directly from the Supreme Being provide and reinforce the motivation for adhering to the normative values (Osei, 2006). Hence, the hairs of children obtained from the gods are not expected to be cut.

Dreadlocks played an important role in the fight against white supremacy as well as the celebration of a resurgence of black pride, physiology and culture. Thus, dreadlocks aim to challenge colonial stereotypes of blackness as inferior to whiteness (Chitando & Chitando, 2004). Some years back,

rastafarians in the Caribbean made a declaration that they were not going to cut their locks until their country was totally liberated and Emperor Ras Tafari Makonnen (also known as Haile Selassie) was released and the emperor returned from exile (Mokoena, 2017).

However, uncut hair is sometimes associated with aggressive or negative behaviour. For instance, according to Edmonds (2012), dreadlocks or Rastafarian hair are associated with levity, criminal activities, marijuana and violence. That notwithstanding, Edmond also pointed out some of the positives and harmless aspects of dreadlocks or Rastafarian hair. He said it symbolises vegetarianism and devotion to God.

Customarily, some royal executioners wear dreadlocks as a mark of identity among the Akans of Ghana (Sieber & Herreman, 2000). Dreadlocks are also used to identify traditional priests. Sieber and Herreman (2000) emphasise that traditional priests' hair was permitted to grow into long matted locks in the manner known as *mpesempese* (sometimes translated as *I do not like it*) among Akans. It serves as an abode for the gods.

To conclude, several authors have perceived identity and symbolism of indigenous hairstyle from varied stand points. Some of these authors include Agwuele, (2016), Falola (2022), Dash (2006), Shuaib (2020), Sherrow (2023), Kwakye-Opong (2014) and Asenso (2019). These authors focused on other communities such as Yoruba, Mumuhuila and Ga. Thorough explanation on identity and symbolism of the indigenous hairstyles among those communities were given. However, little attention was given to the identity and symbolism of the indigenous Asante hairstyles due to the respective focus of the authors.

The identification of this gap served as the basis for the formulation of the third objective of this current study.

### **Social changes in indigenous African hairstyles (haircuts and hairdos)**

In its general sense, social change includes the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterised by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behaviour, social organisations, or value systems of a social group (Nwachukwu, Agu, & Onyishi, 2023). The specific meaning of social change depends first on the social entity considered in terms of size of the group studied (small-, medium-, large-scale), time span of the studies (short-term or long-term). Changes are characteristic of human societies because customs and norms change as new techniques and technologies are invented and this results mostly in environmental changes which spur new adaptations (Bourdieu, Coleman & Coleman, 2019). This universal human potential for social change is rooted in the biological characteristics such as flexibility and adaptability of the human species on one hand and the enormous capacity for learning, symbolising, and creating on the other hand.

Migration and exposure to other cultures can cause an individual to gain new experiences (Gupta, Ong & Feng, 2017). Since Karl, Peluchette and Dawson (2022) explain hair as a changeable part of the human frame, the end result of an experience will provide an informed decision as to whether to change a particular hairstyle or to continue with it (Rosette & Dumas, 2007). Literature pertaining to this section was reviewed on: (1) the impact of social change on indigenous hairstyles, (2) factors influencing the transformation in indigenous African hairstyles and products, and (3) how indigenous hairstyles have managed to thrive in the midst of modernity.



### The impact of social change on indigenous hairstyles

Modernity has influenced indigenous hairstyles in a number of ways. Some widows do not maintain consistency in the depiction of their short haircut as the hair is sometimes covered with wigs (Iheanacho, 2015). According to Shuaib (2020) contemporarily, the practice of *irun dídán* (scraping of the hair) and *irun gígé* (barbering of the hair) particularly among widows in the Yoruba society is not done frequently. Those hairs that have been trimmed, are occasionally dyed with different colours to enhance aesthetic effects. The artistic tools which include razors and broken bottles have been replaced with shaving machines and scissors (Obielosi & Okeyi, 2023).

There is minimal use of cow dung in the formation of *nontombi* dreadlocks worn by a Mumuhuilan women of Angola, however other herbal products from plants are still being used on a large scale (Sherrow, 2023). Some of the herbs have been modified. The modification contains chemicals. Similarly, among the Himba people of Namibia and the Ethiopians, the materials used in the formation of the *erembe* and *goscha* hairstyles respectively which were sourced mainly from plants, animals and mineral deposits have undergone some level of modification with a number of chemical constituents (Shuaib, 2020).

Shuaib (2020) opined that, the Yoruba female traditional hairstyles of western Nigeria such as *kòlẹ̀şẹ̀* (a style of hair woven from the front to the back), *Ìpàkọ̀ ẹ̀lẹ̀d ẹ̀* (the hair woven from the back to the front), *suku* (hair woven from the front of the head to the crest of the head), *Móremí* (hair plaited and tied with local thread to the centre and the sides of the head), *Ògún párí* (spiral plaits with thread to the back of the head), and *Láyípo* (the style of plaiting the hair to

the sides of the head) have undergone major transformations as the standardised indigenous patterns are observed only to a minimal level. In a similar vein, different versions of the threaded hairstyle have been designed. Some resemble the *suku* braids. *Suku* which used to be the reserve of royal Yoruba women can now be worn by anybody. Previously, most threaded styles had names and were symbolic but presently a number of them are not so (Oti & Ayeni, 2013). Lots of synthetic hair extension are used during hair threading and hair braiding.

Patterned brass combs which is a major component of *nkuho* threaded hairstyle of the Efik women of Western Cameroun, is considered as evil. Some churches associate these hair patterns with marine worship (Yta, 2016). This belief has minimised the number of women who adopt *nkuho* threaded hairstyle. The pre-colonial era was marked by the existence of several artistic works of which some are no more. According to Wolff (2004), in sub-Saharan Africa, it is reported that many of these artistic works were stolen by the foreigners who came to trade and colonise the inhabitants. One may guess that these foreigners had never seen such great works before and were drawn to them because of their aesthetic appeal, leaving them with no choice but to take them to their countries for the rest of the world to see (Wolff, 2004).

The use of raffia has been replaced with modern threads of diverse colours. Raffia is considered primitive and outmoded. For instance, *Okukuli*, a hairstyle worn by the priestesses of the *kple* deity strictly relied on raffia to plait the apex segment of the hair. Presently, twine of different colours could be used (Kwakyee-Opong, 2014). More complicated geometric or asymmetrical shapes have emerged.

### **Factors influencing the transformations in indigenous African hairstyles**

Exposure to other cultures and its effect on indigenous hairstyles were reviewed. They were discussed under Christianity, industrialisation, urbanisation and education.

As regards Christianity, Teyegaga (1983) posits that, puberty rites which were commemorated with unique hairstyles and elaborate ceremonies to mark the event were also condemned by some Christians as evil. During such occasions different hairstyles were done for the initiates at different levels of the rite. For instance, among the Krobos, the puberty rite is segmented into levels (Adinku, 2016). The movement from one level of the rite to another is marked by a different indigenous hairstyle (Adinku, 2016). However, Christians, to some extent, have replaced the rite with confirmation which is normally done at churches. During the period of confirmation hairstyles do not play any significant roles; besides, the ceremony does not check morality as much as the puberty rite (Thera, 1995).

With respect to education, some African American children have been kept out of school on the grounds that administrators considered their hairstyles a distraction to other students (Aladesuru, Cheng, Harris, Mindel & Vlasceanu, 2020). In 2018, an 11-year-old girl was sent home from Louisiana private school for breaking the school's dress code (Rosenblatt, 2018). She was wearing braids, a form of hair extensions, commonly used by African American women and girls, and these restrictions reach far beyond the classroom. Several other institutions in the United States have demonstrated a history of policing African Americans' hair and penalising them for wearing hairstyles that maintain their natural texture. For instance, the United States Armed Forces banned women

from wearing their hair in Twists and dreadlocks, calling the styles “exaggerated”, and fired African American employees for wearing their hair in cornrows and dreadlocks (Byrd & Tharps, 2002). In the political sphere, African American women candidates wearing natural hair elicited more negative attitudes than their other female competitors (Lemi & Brown, 2019). And in the workplace, African American women wearing Eurocentric hairstyles were rated more positively than women wearing Afrocentric hairstyles (Adegbembo, 2019). Therefore, African American women wearing their natural hair, considered outside the Eurocentric standard, risk social isolation and limited employment opportunities (Robinson-Moore, 2008). Jenkins (2022) and Allen (2024) stress that African American women with Afrocentric hairstyles were rated as less professional than women with Eurocentric hairstyles. Similarly, with the nature of some works mainly construction and other industrial works, certain hairstyles are affected (Cotsarelis & Millar, 2001).

Also, peer groups play an important role in young people’s lives, particularly during adolescence. ‘Peer pressure’ refers to the influence that these groups can have on how an individual thinks and acts (Ngee Sim & Fen Koh, 2003). Sometimes their peers may proactively influence them to behave in certain ways and at other times they may be just following along. With respect to hairstyles, children mostly copy from their friends. Teenagers’ hairstyles are arguably one of the biggest indicators of this intense level of peer pressure and unwillingness to counteract the fashion of a particular group of friends, or sometimes the whole school, to risk falling out of popularity (Alimolar, 2021). Whereas teenagers regularly use their hair like their clothes and their makeup as a form of expression, it can rarely be called “self-expression” and should be

perhaps re-named as “group-expression”. A good example of this type of expression, which is unique to teenagers, was in the 1960s, when many teenagers, particularly in the United States, put flowers in their hair to represent love and peace, and was meant to be seen as some kind of anti-war statement (Dahal, 2021).

Besides, social media has become very influential in the world of fashion, makeup, hairstyling and trendsetting. Fashion-forward people chat with their friends and peers before changing their hairstyles, buying new wardrobes or pursuing cosmetic strategies to change their appearances (Hamid & Ali, 2021). Boutiques, hairstylists and clothing designers check Facebook and Twitter before introducing new clothing lines and customer services. People now get their beauty ideas from YouTube, Tumblr, Polyvore and other websites, and fashionable men and women share their fashion ideas, get styling tips, learn how to disguise thinning hair and get ideas for accessories, nail art, body tattoos and piercings, and other popular fashion trends. Online videos help resourceful people learn how to braid hair, apply makeup, choose complementary colours and impress their friends, associates and romantic partners (Maynard & Jules, 2021).

### **How indigenous African hairstyles have thrived in the midst of modernity**

The influence of indigenous hairstyles on contemporary hairstyles can be traced as far back as the historic periods when some slaves carried their specially designed combs along with them to their final destination. Their aim was to perpetuate a practice which was valuable and original to their root and if possible, propagate it and influence other people to follow their pattern (Byrd & Tharps, 2002). Similarly, Tseyi (2018) stresses that many are drawn to the

indigenous hairstyle as a conscious attempt to be themselves and counter the dominant ideas of how hair should be kept. Others attach spiritual and health reasons for adopting their native hairstyles. For some, the wearing of indigenous hairstyle is accepting one's original, natural, biological trait and geographical location. Once you are born a certain way, it is imperative to embrace all the natural characteristics. Any other hairstyle that demands chemical straightening was viewed as unnatural and unauthentic and to some extent, a rejection of one's biological or cultural makeup. Some feel it is a confirmation of one's pride which differentiates them from other races.

It is needful to stress that, due to the cultural roles of *mpesempese* hairstyle, some priests are compelled to maintain their hairstyle in this form for the rest of their lives (Agwuele, 2016). Aside the cultural significance, though Rattray (1927) and Yuajah (2015) stress that, the leaves and other herbal mixtures required for cleaning and grooming the hair are obtained within the immediate environment. Their works ignored the fact that the effort required by indigenous priests and priestesses in maintaining their dreadlocks is so minimal. Secondly, the fact that people who are not priests and priestesses desire to wear dreadlocks because it demands virtually little maintenance, and upkeep practices were also not addressed in their works. However, according to Kuumba and Ajanaku (1998), the disadvantages associated with dreadlocks is that, one cannot easily switch to other styles. Along with that, people can assume that the wearers are dirty and a bunch of unhygienic people because the assumption is that they do not wash their hair. This can result in itchy scalp. The reality, however, is that they are ill-informed about the proper maintenance of

dreadlocks as this issue seem to remain minimal in existing literature. This current research will seek to fill this gap.

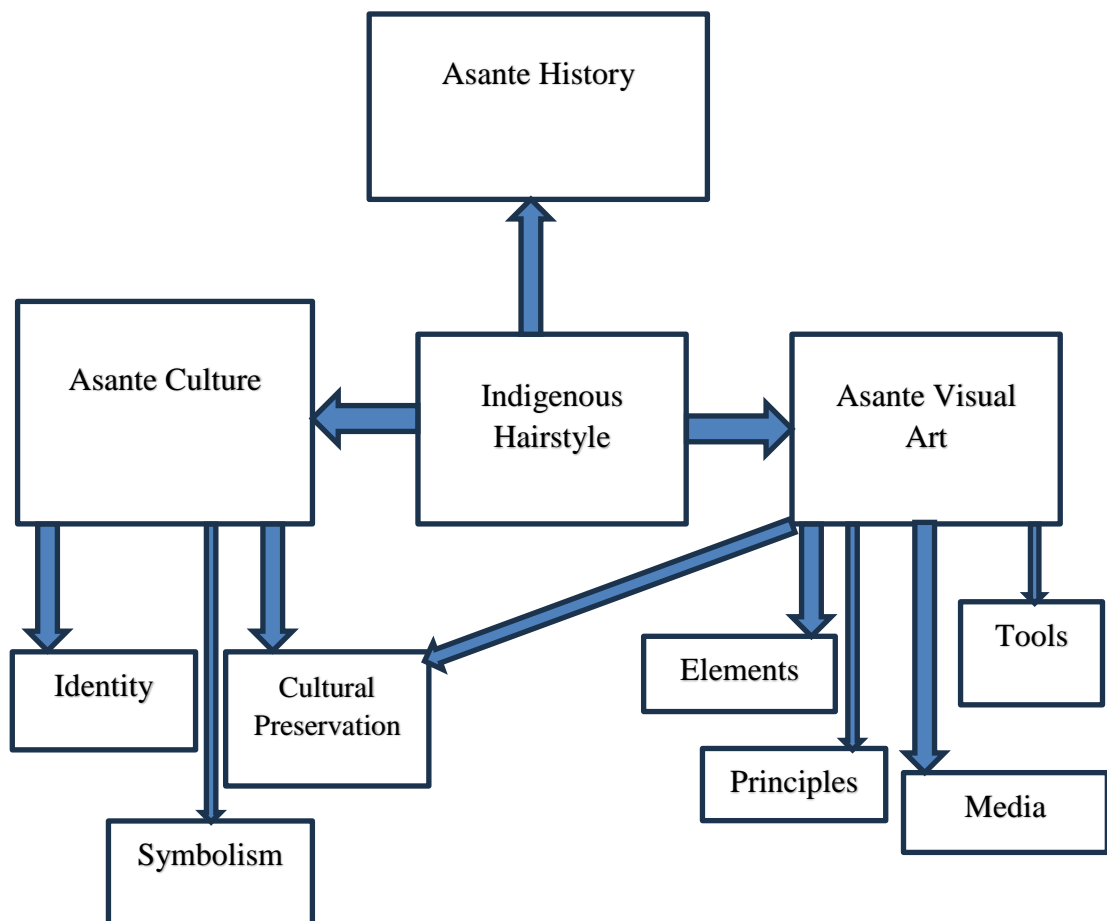
Scott-Ward, Gupta and Greene (2021) highlight that another way by which natural hair has influenced the contemporary ones is through the natural hair movement. The goal of the "natural hair movement" is to persuade people of African heritage to appreciate their naturally curly, afro-textured hair. It first appeared in the United States in the 1960s, and spread to other countries. According to Scott-Ward, Gupta and Greene (2021), in order to promote the beauty of natural hair, certain websites have spread the natural hair movement around the globe.

The impact of indigenous hairstyles is enormous. According to Chitando and Chitando (2004), some afro hairstyles started in Africa and Americans adopted these hairstyles because they were easy styles to manage. Many whites now get their hair braided when they go to the Caribbean Islands. This move, of wearing cornrows at work or even out in public, was the beginning of the African American's cultural pride (Tyler, 1990). African Americans began to feel comfortable enough to wear their hair in any style, without worrying about what the mainstream society deemed acceptable. Many whites and Asian men and women are now getting their hair braided in African inspired styles. There is a perm called "Rasta" that white people put in their hair and in a matter of minutes it turns straight hair into dreadlocks (Byrd & Tharps, 2002).

However, exposure to western cultures through colonialism, neo-colonialism, and globalisation have transformed the meaning of black hair in Africa and around the world, with African cultures coming to be viewed as unconventional and uncivilised (Montle, 2020). Since most authors have

overlooked the specific factors which are responsible for the adaptation of non-indigenous Asante hairstyles, the findings of this current study will unravel the reasons which are causing the people of the Asante kingdom to embrace other forms of hairstyles aside the native ones since it remain understudied in existing literature. Thus, the creation of objective four to help fill this knowledge gap.

### Conceptual Framework on Indigenous Hairstyles as Asante Art and Culture



**Figure 11 - Conceptual framework on indigenous hairstyles as Asante art and culture**

Source - Quampah (2022).

Based on the literature review of existing studies about this current topic, the main variables have been provided in the form of conceptual framework. It



is presented both in a written and visual form below. The conceptual framework looks at the key themes of this present study. According to Van der Waldt (2020), conceptual framework explains either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied: namely the key factors, constructs or variables and the relationship among them.

This conceptual framework in Figure 11 above, graphically reveals the main phenomenon under investigation which is indigenous hairstyles. The concept of indigenous hairstyle is central to this study. Indigenous hairstyle is being studied in the context of Asante visual art and culture. The study also examines the historical background of each of the hairstyles. Hence an arrow connects indigenous hairstyles to Asante visual art on the right, on the left is another arrow which connects indigenous hairstyle to Asante culture while Asante history is linked to the top of indigenous hairstyles. When I focused on indigenous hairstyle as visual art, there were key variables I considered. They include elements, principles, tools and media. With respect to the culture, I looked at identity, symbolism and cultural preservation. Cultural preservation connects to art forms.

With respect to Asante art, elements of art such as shape, colour, texture, size, and lines are the key features in most art works among the Asantes. According to Amissah and Letcher-Teye (2018) elements of art help people to understand the aesthetics of images better. In addition, principles of art like patterns, proportions, symmetrical balance in foot wares, hats and necklaces show how the elements of art are combined to achieve a desired effect. Also, tools which are the implements used to make the art works vary in relation to what one wants to achieve. For instance, drawing requires variety of tools like

pencils, pens, inks and colour pencils. Also, indigenous hairstyles in the form of wood carving, according to Rattray (1927), among the Asantes, require implements such as the *fifiye* (awl), *soso paye* (a splitting hoe), and *pewa* (a type of chisel). Furthermore, hairstyles in the form of body art in Asante culture require the use of *duafi* (wooden comb) (Adom, Opoku, Newton & Yeboah, 2018). Media, which refers to the materials used in designing indigenous hairstyles existed in most visual art works of the Asantes like the body art, clay and wooden sculpture. According to literature, charcoal and shea butter are among the indigenous media needed to create the body art of *dansinkran* haircut (Asenso, 2019). Clay and wood are among the materials needed by the Asantes for wood sculptures and ceramic figurines (Rattray, 1927).

In terms of Asante culture, attention was paid to identity, symbolism and cultural preservation. Identity refers to specific unique characteristics which make people unique from others. Such people belong to certain groups. The group possesses unique features and roles which are symbolic to a particular culture (Burke & Stets, 2009). Food, institution of chieftaincy, language and festivals play key roles in the identity formation of the Asantes. Aside that, some of the bodily adornment like *kente* clothing and foot wear help in the easy identification of royals (Joseph, Hansen, & Donkor, 2023). This enables people to easily identify them and accord them the needed courtesies and respect. Also, Asenso (2019) and Kuwornu-Adjaottor et al. (2016) explain that *dansinkran* haircut is common among Asante adult women especially the queens and puberty rite initiates. It reveals the social status of the females as belonging to a ruling class. *Dansinkran* is also used as a form of showing the last respect to the departed high-ranking royals. Through cultural activities like festivals and

institution of chieftaincy as well as funerals, some of these practices are preserved from generation to generation. In addition to the cultural activities, art forms also play key roles in the sustainability of cultural values. For instance, some of the cultural practices are depicted in visual art forms like Adinkra symbols and sculptures. Therefore, hairstyles portrayed in visual art forms help in preserving the culture of the Asante people. Hence, the link between Asante visual art forms and culture preservation on the chart.

History is crucial for setting the scene, directing present choices, conserving cultural legacy, and promoting a better comprehension of the human condition. In addition to learning from the past, studying history also prepares us to build a more wealthy, just, and informed future. Societies run the risk of forgetting significant events, lessons, and cultural advancements if they don't have history. Historical amnesia may cause detrimental tendencies to be repeated or the underlying reasons of contemporary issues to be misunderstood (Ashworth, 2013). Hence, hairstyles play significant roles in unraveling some of the past events which led to the emergence of the indigenous hairstyles among Asante people. *Dansinkran* reminds the Asantes of the battle which led to their defeat (the battle of Dodowa in 1826). It signifies a possible reoccurrence of a future war, hence, the need to always be on their guard.

In conclusion, the primary phenomenon being studied, indigenous hairstyles, is revealed by the conceptual framework in figure 11. Asante visual art, culture, and history are the main variables being examined in relation to indigenous hairstyles.

## **Theoretical Framework Underpinning the Study**

The study is underpinned by Afrocentric theory. Afrocentric theory is an intellectual framework intended to center African values, history, and experiences in the analysis and interpretation of African cultural phenomena. It emerged as a response to Eurocentric perspectives that marginalised or misrepresented African contributions to global culture. Pioneered by scholars like Molefi Kete Asante in 1980 (Asante, 2020), Afrocentrism seeks to reclaim African heritage by emphasising these key principles: African agency and resistance, centeredness, cultural continuity, and holistic worldview (Asante 2023; Omar, 2020; Fairfax, 2017; Nadezhda, 2016).

Afrocentric theory emphasises African agency in cultural production. Socio-cultural phenomena are seen as acts of self-definition and struggle against colonial and postcolonial erasure of African aesthetics. Asante (2023) explains that Afrocentricity is based on the idea of the centrality of the African experience. It focuses on the Africans as subjects rather than objects defined from outside by White supremacists. Within Africology, issues pertaining to African cosmology, epistemology, axiology, and aesthetic must be raised.

With respect to resistance, the recognition and acceptance of the cultural values of the African is imperative. As a result, Asante (2020), posits that persons of African origin must develop respect for ancient African civilisations' achievements, as well as define their own history and values system. This led to the development of Afrocentric theory (Afrocentrism or Afrocentricity) which constructed a theoretical viewpoint that acknowledges the importance of African values and ideas as beginning points for analysing and synthesising African phenomena. This Afrocentric theory regards African or black cultures

and art as pre-eminent in world views (Karenga & Tembo, 2012; Asante, 2017). Dove (1998) stressed re-Africanisation on the part of women as a solution to challenging alien social structures and inappropriate values.

Afrocentrism is the recognition that Africa is the genesis of humanity (Asante, 2017) and it is defined as a viewpoint that allows Africans to be subjects of historical and cultural events rather than objects on the outside of Europe (Asante, 2020). Afrocentricity was Asante's (2020) way of expressing the critical necessity for Africans to be repositioned historically, socially, economically, philosophically and politically. Thus is necessary because according to Fairfax (2017), Africans have been removed from cultural, religious, economic, social and political terms over the previous 500 years and have lived mostly on the perimeter of Europe. They appear to be decentred and have no knowledge of their own classical background. Many people's way of life has been ruined by exposure to the West, by colonial settlers who imported and forced their way of life on the natives, including hairstyles, to the detriment of the indigenous people.

Therefore, as a theory of transformation, Afrocentricity aims to re-locate the African person as subject, shattering the idea of being objects in the Western project of dominance. Afrocentricity, as a pan-African concept, has ramifications in the intellectual, social, cultural and aesthetic realms and has become the key to healthy child education and the foundation of African cultural rebirth and survival (Asante, 2020). Africans must therefore decolonise the ways by which colonial knowledge undermines Black existence. Asante (2017) postulates that Afrocentricity can help Africans revive their cultural identity, allowing those of African origin to have a greater understanding of their

indigenous art, culture and values. It can also be used to decolonise Western notions of beauty and rather project Asante history and values system through indigenous hairstyles. This constitutes the main tenets of the Afrocentric theory.

In terms of centeredness, Afrocentric theory advocates for viewing African cultural practices, like Asante hairstyles, clothing, music and dance, rites of passage and institution of chieftancy from an internal perspective, privileging African values and traditions over external interpretations (Asante, 2020). This ensures that African culture is understood as a product of African heritage rather than through a Western lens.

In terms of cultural continuity, the theory highlights the enduring legacy of African cultural expressions, tracing their roots to precolonial times. For instance, hairstyles in Asante culture can be seen as a continuation of ancestral practices that communicate identity, status, and spirituality.

With regard to holistic worldview, Afrocentrism indicates that African cultural expressions, including hairstyles, are interpreted within a holistic framework that integrates art, spirituality, social structures, and cosmology. Asante hairstyles, for instance, are deeply intertwined with the community's spiritual beliefs and societal organisation. Afrocentrism argues that for centuries Africans have been dominated, through slavery and colonisation, by Europeans, and that European culture is irrelevant and diametrically opposed to efforts by non-Europeans to achieve self-determination. For this reason people of African descent need to develop an appreciation of the achievements of traditional African civilisations and articulate their own history and system of values.

### **An Afrocentric perspective of indigenous hairstyles as art and culture**

Since Afrocentrism involves reclaiming identity through cultural practices, it interprets these practices, for instance, hairstyles and clothing as symbols of cultural identity. Some schools of thought with similar research objective contributed to the tenets of the theory. For instance, Stets and Serpe (2013), opine that it is a shared set of meanings that define certain groups of people or individuals in a society as having specific characteristics that make them unique from others. Furthermore, Tajfel and Turner (1979) indicate that a person's sense of who he or she is depends on the groups to which the person belongs.

Each cultural practice represents a specific aspect of cultural heritage, such as social roles, and cultural pride. For instance, a hairstyle such as *agogo* identifies the Sango priestesses to symbolise their roles as Sango's wives (Shuaib, 2020). These and other cultural practices, including clothing may signify a social position, such as royal authority, marital status, or age group. Also, wearing traditional styles, like intricate braids or cornrows, affirms a connection to cultural ancestry and cultural pride (Ani, 1994). Hairstyles may also carry some spiritual and symbolic significance (Mazama, 2001).

In Afrocentric thought, some hairstyles in Asante culture, for example, are seen as spiritual expressions. The designs often carry symbolic meanings: cosmology, and ancestral communication. Certain styles reflect Asante cosmological beliefs, such as the connection between the physical and spiritual realms or may be used in rituals and ceremonies to symbolise respect for ancestors and serve as channels of spiritual communication.

Theory of art and beauty which was propounded by Kant in 1790 supports Afrocentric perspective of aesthetics. Both theory of art and beauty and Afrocentric theory see beauty in hairstyles as deeply rooted in function and meaning rather than mere decoration. For instance, Afrocentrism is used to explore aesthetic philosophy in African cultural practices, including hairstyles. Accordingly, artistic features such as balance and harmony in hairstyles reflect an Afrocentric aesthetic that values symmetry, rhythm, and harmonious patterns. Media such as beads, cowries, or gold thread enhance hairstyles, imbuing them with cultural and symbolic significance. These elements of Afrocentricity leverage on Kant's Theory of art. Kant (1790) postulates that natural objects and artificial art can both be considered beautiful, but natural beauty is the purest; works of artificial art are particularly fascinating if they are the outcome of human ingenuity. Despite the fact that, art must be manmade and not natural, Kant embraces the idea that art is beautiful in so far as it imitates the beauty of nature (Kant, 1790). A beautiful piece of art must, in particular, exhibit the "form of purposefulness" that can be found in nature. But what makes great art genuinely wonderful is that it is the outcome of a genius artist. According to Kant (1790), genius is the natural capacity that enables an extraordinary, gifted individual to transform an intangible "aesthetic notion" into a physical work of art. Aesthetic ideas are similar to the ideas of reason where ideas of reason are conceptions for which no sensible intuition is adequate (Guyer, 2008). Aesthetic ideas are depictions of the thoughts for which no idea is sufficient. This corresponds to Kant's assertion that beauty is not determinably conceptualisable. When a genius is successful at exhibiting an aesthetic idea in a beautiful work of art, the work will provoke the "free play"



of the faculties described. Kant (1790) divides the arts into three groups: the art of speech (rhetoric and poetry), pictorial art (sculpture, architecture, and painting), and the art of the play of sensations (music). Out of these three classifications, Kant thinks that pictorial art like painting and sculpture is best at conserving, advancing and prolonging culture than the others.

Among the Asantes, body art forms of indigenous hairstyles are created and shaped out of natural textured hair which are unadulterated and are traditionally valued just as it is treasured in Kant's theory. Furthermore, the indigenous hairstyles which are portrayed in the form of visual art works like sculptures and drawings enable the Asantes to perpetuate and preserve their culture. Moreover, Afrocentric scholars argue that African art forms, including hairstyling, are vehicles for storytelling. Asante hairstyles, for example, often tell stories of lineage, community values, or historical events (Asenso, 2019). Some patterns and designs in hairstyles may symbolise wisdom, unity, or resilience. Specific styles worn during special occasions such as festivals or rites of passage narrate significant cultural milestones.

The concept of identity has been one of the most important areas of theoretical and empirical growth in sociology and social psychology during the last four decades (Burke & Stets, 2009; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Serpe & Stryker, 2011; Stryker, 1980; Stryker & Burke, 2000). This enduring fascination with the concept of identity stems from the critical relevance of comprehending persons as social beings immersed in society. Leveraging on identity theory, Afrocentricism views individuals as social actors having both group and individual identities in addition to role identities. The meanings that arise in interactions with a specific group of people, such as our family, work group, or

clubs define one's group identities. It entails interacting with these people, sharing and seeking to fulfil the expectations that each group member has of the other, as well as engaging in the activities of the group. As a result, group identities entail interacting with individuals within the group towards a common goal such as preservation of a cultural heritage. Within the social set-up, personal identities are founded on a collection of meanings that differentiate a person as a distinct individual, not as a member of a group or a person who performs a specific task (Burke & Stets, 2009). Personal identities are internalised culturally-acknowledged features that distinguish a person in various ways. Thus, people have multiple identities, each of which is distinct. Culture as a way of life helps to distinguish individuals in various ways.

By applying Afrocentric theory, this research can: (1) place hairstyles within their rightful cultural context by interpreting them through African frameworks, (2) recognise the African as an active agent in preserving and evolving their hairstyling traditions, and (3) demonstrate how hairstyles function as cultural markers that endure despite historical disruptions like colonialism. For any research to claim to be Afrocentric, it needs to be focused on and conducted from the standpoint of the African people. This study therefore pays close attention to the history, culture, experience and knowledge of Africans (Davis et al., 2010). The research also has an objective of addressing problems faced by the African people (Schiele, 2000). To operate from an Afrocentric perspective therefore: (1) implies being 'well grounded in a people's understanding, and (2) involves the researchers having an affinity, knowledge and respect for the history, culture and knowledge of people of African descent (Davis et al., 2010). Afrocentric theory provides a robust

framework for studying indigenous hairstyles as art and culture. By centering indigenous values and experiences, it reveals the deeper artistic and cultural meanings and functions of these hairstyles as expressions of identity, spirituality, and resistance. Through this lens, hairstyling is celebrated as both a cultural artifact and a dynamic, living tradition that connects past, present, and future.

The concept of dispensing with indigenous hairstyle has been subsumed under Afrocentric theory in the subsequent discussions. This is due to the fact that Afrocentric theory is imperative in the face of modern influences because before colonisation and foreign contacts, cultural practices like indigenous hairstyles served as symbols of identification. They communicated norms and values of societies (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2021). However, Omar (2020) claims that since Africans interaction with foreigners, most Africans have lived on the periphery of the European world for far too long, and that they have been duped into believing that they are acting in their own best interests when, in fact, they have become Europe's main apologists. Africans' perception of beauty has been harmed by colonial interference, which has led them to believe that having natural hair and keeping indigenous hairstyles are primitive and archaic customs. The belief that Western hairstyles are more appealing than native ones has persuaded some Africans into turning their backs on some of their own indigenous cultural practices, leading to loss of their true African identity (Montle, 2020).

Hence, the local grooming procedures and styling techniques associated with some indigenous hairstyles are giving way to modern methods of hair grooming. Also, some adherents of African culture prefer foreign or modern

hairstyles to indigenous ones, irrespective of the values attached to them (Amemate, 2020). As observed earlier, it is in response to these occurrences, that Afrocentric theory emerged in the 1980s, to propagate the idea that Africans must decolonise the way colonial knowledge undermined black existence and develop respect for ancient African civilisations and also project African values (Asante, 2020). This theory is adopted because if the types of indigenous Asante hairstyles, which are presently oblivion in academic circles, are uncovered and documented, more recognition and respect will be accorded to this aspect of Asante culture.

### **Empirical Review**

This section examines the work of previous studies related to the research. This section is relevant for putting the current thesis into proper perspective. The review of empirical studies is based on two themes: research on indigenous hairstyles around the globe and in Ghana.

#### **Empirical review of indigenous hairstyles around the globe**

The significance of indigenous hairstyles for the preservation of our culture and for development has called for the attention of experts not only in academia but also organisations and governments. With respect to academia, a number of works exist on the subject matter.

Delving into the European continent, Lee (2007) explores the evolution and transitions of women's hairstyle fashion in Europe from the renaissance to the 1900s; in his article: *Transition of Women's Hairstyles after Renaissance to 20th Century*, provided an evolution of hairstyle fashion from medieval periods to contemporary periods. He stated that hair was traditionally covered in the Middle Ages, however, the resurgence of humanism came to expose coiffures.

Hairdos, including *hurluberlu* and *fontanges*, became fashionable throughout the Baroque period. Then, during the Rococo era, massive, brilliant coiffures of unique beauty were developed as a sign of authority, and these hairstyles became an influential force in the period's culture of personal adornment. Hairstyles like pouf and enfant were popular. The influence of historicism prompted a rebirth of a less complicated hairstyles of past Greece and Rome in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as a reaction to the excess of previous types. Vast coiffures, as well as an incredible variety of knots with mixtures of fake knots and chignons, reappeared in the latter part of the 1820s. From the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, there was a period of wavy hair that was a blend of Marcel waves and Art Nouveau. The twentieth century saw the epochal invention of persistent waves powered by electricity. The researcher did not explain the artistic features which characterised the hairstyles during each period.

Minarovičová (2005) in his article: *The History of Hairstyles in the Mirror of Ancient Coins*, emphasises that Roman coins provide an extraordinary gallery of hairstyle fashions. The way of arranging the hair on female coin portraits from the period of the Roman Empire help with identifying and dating individual coins. To determine the type of hairdo over time, he compares pictorial or sculptured representations of women. Portraits of Empresses on coins exhibit outstanding craftsmanship and artistic ability. They properly portray the fashion of the day and the individual appearances of the ladies. Skilled hairdressers are responsible for their outstanding appearance. Their skill is demonstrated by the creative hairstyles of the women in their coin depictions, which range from simple to elaborate. In the years before our age, the Romans wore modest hairstyles under the Roman Republic. Men used to have long hair,

but short hair became fashionable later. Hair was brushed down to the neck, reinforced with ribbons and hairpins, plaited, or wrapped into a bun by young girls. The hair of married Roman ladies was brushed up into a tutulus hairdo. He concluded by emphasising that Roman ladies used haircuts with a centre parting during the commencement of the Empire. During the night, curly hair was coiled up into ringlets. The symbolic representation of these hairstyles were not discussed.

Furthermore, Montle (2020) claims that because the coloniser and the colonised are inextricably linked, the concept of African beauty cannot be separated. According to Montle (2020) European colonisers perpetuated a conventional link of black (Africa) with ugliness and white (the West) with beauty. Hair has evolved into a distinctive feature of beauty among the determinant instruments. Natural hair has long been associated with African identity, with African women being shown with short hair. However, colonial meddling has damaged this African notion of beauty by instilling in Africans the belief that growing short hair is a backward and barbaric tradition. African women have been convinced that Western hairstyles are more attractive than indigenous ones. This essay is strictly theoretical, and it used a qualitative textual analysis design to investigate how colonialism shaped modern-day African perceptions of beauty. It employed Afrocentricity and Black feminism theories to refute colonial preconceptions about black beauty. Though Montle (2020) explains that during the colonial period, the West, among other things, reinforced prejudices against Afrocentric identities of beauty, resulting in the adoption and institutionalisation of Eurocentric ideas of beauty in Africa, yet he

was silent on the types of indigenous hairstyles which existed before the advent of Western hairstyles.

Fashola and Abiodun's (2021) research covered the ontology of hair and identity crises in African Literature. Relying mainly on secondary data, they stressed that in African ontology, the importance of hair is profoundly ingrained. When entirely shaved off, it can occasionally represent grief or a lack of dignity and represents leadership rank. Chiefs in Nigeria's Edo state, primarily men, are distinguished by their distinctive hairstyles in Benin City. It demonstrates their position of authority in society, and all of the men in the kingdom are supposed to shave their hair in remembrance of the deceased monarch. Women's hair is highly valued in the Yoruba culture of Nigeria because it is regarded as a crown of splendor on their heads. They said Chimamanda Adichie's "Americanah," revealed that the culture of hair and its ontological meanings are progressively disappearing as a result of increased globalization and intercultural interactions. Because of this, the hair, a highly significant cultural identification symbol, has emerged as a crucial component in comprehending Africa's identity crises. The study therefore examines the ontological meanings of hair in Africa, assesses the problems associated with the inaccurate portrayal of African hair in certain African works of literature, and investigates the identity crises brought on by African hair. However, the aesthetic characteristics of indigenous hairstyles particularly among Asante people were not discussed in their work.

Clearly, one can identify that the subject matter of the aesthetics, cultural symbolism and identity of indigenous hairstyles appears to be minimal in the thought of researchers around the globe. Since these studies are outside the scope of the Ghanaian context, the next topic brings the arguments more

specifically to the Ghanaian setting in order to identify the gaps in the literature so as to provide a more solid ground for my study.

### **Empirical review of indigenous hairstyles in Ghana**

An empirical overview of indigenous hairstyle in Ghana reveals that most of these studies have left out the fact that the art aspect of hair makes it possible for the younger generation to appreciate their culture and not to be always imitating that of the other side of the world. Little is said about the significance of indigenous hairstyles when the history of slave trade and foreign domination is being narrated or taught in schools even though it played a significant role in its abolition.

Tseyi (2018) analyses the various varieties of natural hairstyles in Ghana, as well as the growing desire for natural hair versus chemically altered or adulterated hairstyles. This study employed a qualitative research by making use of ethnographic field methods like observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussion to collect data from women aged twenty to sixty and natural hair specialists. Though Tseyi (2018) identifies six types of natural hairstyles in her findings as Afro short, Afro long length, twist, cornrow, braids, and locks, yet the artistic representations of these hairstyles were not explained.

A study by Kwakye-Opong (2014) reveals some indigenous hairstyles among the Gas of Ghana, however, there appears to be no empirical study on indigenous hairstyles as Asante art and culture, past and present. As a result of this knowledge vacuum, a study investigating indigenous hairstyles as Asante art and culture will be undertaken.

In a separate Ghanaian study on hairstyles by Asenso (2019), his main objective of the study was to investigate socio-cultural importance of



*dansinkran* in Akan traditional ruling. Since his investigation was conducted using a case study design, the current study on the other hand will employed ethnographic design in order to spend more time with the various respondents so as to obtain more detailed data about the phenomena currently under study. Furthermore, Asenso (2019) focuses only on one type of hairstyle which happens to be *dansinkran* haircut. This current research will therefore widen the scope by paying attention to many types of hairstyles which are indigenous to the Asantes. This will serve as a broader eye opener to those interested in this aspect of Asante culture. The art component of *dansinkran* was also absent in his work.

### **Chapter Summary**

The sustainability of the history and cultural activities of a nation is necessary for the progression of a country's socio-political endeavours. Indigenous hairstyles which is interwoven in the Ghanaian cultural fabric has overwhelming significance. The review of related literature has brought to the fore the various international and national efforts that are being implemented to promote indigenous hairstyles in Ghana. It has also highlighted knowledge gaps that need to be filled in areas such as presentation of hairstyle as an art, factors contributing to the demeaning of indigenous beautification of hairstyles, driving force compelling people to change their indigenous identity, relevant taboos associated with indigenous hairstyles. Assessing the indigenous hairstyles as art and culture will enlighten the nation's understanding on how they are presented in various visual art forms, its symbolisms as well as the various approaches which can be adopted to promote and sustain home-grown hairstyles.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **Overview**

This study elucidates indigenous hairstyles as a means of providing identity and symbolism among the people of Asante. Hence, this chapter explains and justifies the research methods employed in data collection and analysis. It is organised under sub-themes such as research design, study area, population, sampling procedure, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, processing and analysis.

#### **Research Design**

This study used ethnographic research design under qualitative research approach. The research design generally refers to the overall plan that is chosen to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, ensuring that the research problem is effectively addressed. It constitutes the blueprint for the collection and analysis of data (Tracy, 2019). Research approach is a framework for conducting a study, which includes a set of assumptions, beliefs and values that guide a researcher. Three key components of research approach include philosophical world view (positivism, post positivism, pragmatism, constructivism, interpretivism, and transformativism), research design, and research methods. The world views merge into three types of research approaches, namely: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods, and each of these approaches merge into different research designs (Tamminen & Poucher, 2020). Qualitative research approach is connected to constructivist, and transformative world views and merges into designs

such as case study, ethnography, historical research, narrative inquiry, action research, grounded theory, and phenomenology (Gabrielian, 1999).

The selection of ethnography as a research design for this study was based on a careful consideration of the variables of the study. Ethnography is the study of cultures and the group of people who live within them in their natural environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The key principles of ethnographic design include naturalism, setting, empathy, multiple data sources, small case numbers, emic and etic perspectives and ethical consideration (Susanto, Yuntina, Saribanon, Soehaditama & Liana, 2024; Tracy, 2024). Data are collected using methods such as direct observation, in-depth interview, and review of documentary, which are then used to draw conclusions about how societies and individuals function.

The ethnographic research design was chosen based on the research questions and objectives, the level of existing knowledge on the subject area being researched, the time frame for completion of the research, the resources available, and the researcher's philosophical foundations. Unlike a quantitative research design (experimental, quasi-experimental, comparative, and correlational) which stresses on large sample sizes, deductive reasoning and random sampling, the present design (which is qualitative) examines social phenomenon that stresses on how people interpret and make sense of their experiences to understand the social reality of these individuals. In other words, the purpose of such research design is to figure out how people construct meaning, or how they make sense of their surrounding and their experiences. In qualitative research designs, purposive, convenience, snowball, or theoretical

sampling is common, implying that participants are often not chosen at random and it also requires small sample size.

The study relied on ethnographic design to collect data because the demand of the study's objectives required in-depth understanding of indigenous hairstyles within the natural setting of KTA within the larger Asante group. Since the tenets of the study's objectives and questions synchronise with the principles of ethnographic research design, ethnography was deemed suitable. Employing the key principles of ethnography, the social phenomenon was largely explored which aided in effectively understanding and documenting data on the origin of indigenous hairstyles and social change among the natives of the study area. Thus, I stayed in the study area for a duration, during which the respondents of this current study were interviewed and some of their hairstyles and artworks were directly observed. With respect to the ethnographic principle of empathy, the researcher comprehended the feelings of respondents and perceived issues from their point of view. Similarly, the interviewees were treated with respect and the world in which they were coming from was largely understood. This approach helped to gain holistic discourse on the symbolism of indigenous hairstyles as portrayed in the form of art among the Asantes.

The main challenge which I encountered in the use of this design was that it was time consuming as it took time to get some of the respondents set for the interviews. For instance, some queens had the black pigments of their *dansinkran* hair faded so I had to wait for an appointed day, for their hair to be reblackened during a scheduled funeral period before the commencement of the discussion under study. Though, this step accomplished the naturalism principle of ethnography, however, this process took a lot of time. The design also

involved a greater cost due to the need for transportation, accommodation, and time that was spent in the field with the participants.

### **Study Area**

Kumasi Traditional Area is the locality chosen for the study. It consists of eleven sub-divisions. These are Oforikrom, Asokwa, Tafo, Suame, Kwadaso, Bantama, Subin, Nhyiaeso, Asawase, Manhyia, and Asokore Mampong. Asante-Twi is their main dialect. Asantes belong to the Akan ethnic group, which is the largest ethnic group in Ghana and one of the few matrilineal societies in West Africa (Owusu & Agyei-Mensah, 2011). The study area is noted for its rich cultural heritage. Kumasi Traditional Area constitutes one of the branches of Asanteman. The Asanteman Council, headed by the Asantehene, consists of representatives from several traditional areas of which Kumasi is part. Kumasi is located in the forest ecological zone of Ghana. It is bounded to the north by the Kwabre, to the south by Bosomtwe, to the east by Ejisu and Juaben, and to the west by Atwima. The area's strategic location made it an important commercial hub in the country during the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial periods (Owusu-Ansah & Braimah, 2013; Owusu & Agyei-Mensah, 2011; Owusu-Ansah & O'Connor, 2010).

The area can boast of three major museums, namely: Manhyia Palace Museum, Prempeh II Jubilee Museum and Kumasi Military Museum (Ghana Armed Forces Museum), which contain historical artifacts relevant to this study. The Centre for National Culture, Kumasi (CNCK) which is also found within the traditional area contains sculpted indigenous hairstyles which have the power to artistically communicate to the public since historic times. Furthermore, the existence of native courts consistently presided over by the

traditional rulers and their assistants who sometimes adorn themselves with age-long ancient hairstyles such as *dansinkran*, necessitated the choice of this area. Indigenous salons which specialise in the maintenance of local hairstyles meant for “offsprings of deities” (*abomsomma*) and other indigenous personalities also exist within the area. Major festivals of Asanteman occur in Kumasi specifically in Manhyia during which many adherents of Asante culture are seen in various indigenous Asante hairstyles. Assorted galleries and visual art hubs abound in the study area particularly Bantama. Figure 12 shows the map of KTA.



**Figure 12 - Map of Kumasi Traditional Area**  
Source - Ghana Information Service

## Population

This section discusses information on the population of Kumasi Traditional Area. According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census by the Ghana Statistical Service, the study's population comprising individuals aged 25 years and above within the Kumasi Traditional Area was 847,146 (GSS, 2021). However, the target population (i.e. candidates who could describe their experiences to address the research goal) consisted of people who had culturally groomed their hair in indigenous Asante hairstyles. They included chiefs, queens, indigenous priests and priestesses, executioners, widows, "offsprings of deities" (*abosomma*), servants of both chiefs and queens within the study area, as well as other individuals, who are highly knowledgeable in the art, history and culture of indigenous Asante hairstyles, who are located within the target area of the study. Hence, other categories of the target population included indigenous expert hairstylists, barbers, artists, a senior staff at the Centre for National Culture in Kumasi (CNCK), a historian and a curator at Manhyia Palace Museum. Of these, the accessible population, which is the portion of the target population that I had reasonable access to and were willing to participate in the study, truly reflected the characteristics of the target population. I had access to all the components of the target population that I had in mind. This enabled me to successfully investigate about the history, art and symbolism of indigenous hairstyles in KTA. In summary, clarity on how the accessible population reflects the characteristics of the target population and its associated limitations were indicated.

### **Sample Population and Sampling Procedure**

This segment provides justification for the sample population and the sampling procedure. The sample population consisted of fifty-five (55) adults of not less than twenty-five (25) years old, who volunteered to participate in the study. The choice of fifty-five (55) is based on Morse's (1994) suggestion that in ethnographic research, a sample size of 30-50 is appropriate. I chose a sample size which is a little bit above Morse's suggestion in order to obtain more detailed data on the subject matter.

The inclusive participants were respondents who were twenty-five (25) years and older (i.e., persons born in the 1990s and earlier). They were more inclined with indigenous hairstyles and therefore provided detailed data on the subject area. Besides, a number of the respondents who had indigenous Asante hairstyles were people who were not educated or had completed school at various levels, since most of such hairstyles are not usually entertained in most basic and second cycle institutions. The exclusive population, who were below the age of 25 were not part of the sampled population. The exclusive category appeared not to be familiar with a number of native Asante hairstyles and their rationale, of which their age bracket was a contributory factor.

Sampling procedure, which was mainly purposive (or selective) was used to select the fifty-five (55) participants for the study. With respect to this sampling technique, I relied on my own judgment to choose members of the population to participate in the study. This implies that participants were selected due to the characteristics they possess and their knowledge about indigenous hairstyles. A senior staff (SS) at the Centre for National Culture in Kumasi (CNCK), a curator at Manhyia Palace Museum, artists (who have



artworks portraying indigenous hairstyles), a historian at Manhyia Palace (who is well versed in Asante history), widows, palace servants, royal executioners, queens, chiefs, “offsprings of deities”, priests and priestesses (wearing indigenous hairstyles and who are well informed about the significance of the native Asante hairstyles), hairstylists, barbers (who mostly style, trim and maintain indigenous Asante hairstyles) were purposively sampled. Generally, the aforementioned categories of respondents were purposively sampled because they have some amount of knowledge and experiences about the history of indigenous hairstyles among the Asantes and how these hairstyles relate with the Asante art and culture. A breakdown of the sample size is portrayed below in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Sample population (Number of categories of respondents)**

Serial no.	Categories of respondents	Number interviewed
1.	People who are required to groom their hair in indigenous Asante hairstyles:	
	i. Chiefs ( <i>ahenfo</i> )	4
	ii. Queens ( <i>ahemaa</i> )	8
	iii. Spokespersons of the queens ( <i>ahemaa kyeame</i> )	2
	iv. Male servants of chiefs ( <i>ahennkoa</i> )	4
	v. Female servants of the queens ( <i>nkotimsefo</i> )	8
	vi. indigenous priests/priestesses ( <i>Komfo barima/komfo ba</i> ) (2 each)	4
	vii. Executioners ( <i>abrafo</i> )	3
	viii. Widows	2
	ix. Offspring of deities ( <i>abosomma</i> )	3
2	Indigenous hairstylists and barbers (3 each)	6
3	Artists	8
4	A senior staff (SS) at the Centre for National Culture, Kumasi (CNCK)	1
5	A curator at Manhyia Palace Museum	1
6	Historian at Manhyia Palace	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>55</b>

Source - Quampah (2022)

The sampling technique of this current study synchronises with Tongco (2007), when he referred to purposive sampling as a judgmental technique used by researchers to select specific key informants of a population. Most of the respondents are located at key cultural settings in Kumasi, including the Centre for National Culture, Manhyia Palace museum, the Manhyia Palace, and the immediate environs of the palace. The respondents were first contacted to seek their consent for participation in this study. At the convenience of each respondent, I held interview sessions with them. In summary, with the aid of purposive technique, fifty-five (55) respondents were selected to provide the requisite data needed for the study at their own convenient time. The entire sample was chosen from KTA.

The age range of the sample population covered people from twenty-five years and above who are located within the KTA, who possess data about indigenous hairstyles. The sex was made up of both male and female (the total number of women were twenty-nine (29) while men were twenty-six (26)). The educational characteristics consisted of people who were both educated (49) and not educated (6). The employment status of the sample population largely included indigenous vicars, palace servants, expert indigenous hairstylists, barbers, artists, curator of Manhyia Palace Museum and Senior Staff of CNCK. However, the study extended to cover people who are not working since they were knowledgeable enough to provide the necessary data relevant for the study.

## **Data Collection Instruments**

This section discusses the various instruments employed in the data collection of this study. Two key instruments were used – interview and observation – for the purpose of triangulation.

### **Interview**

As a qualitative research data collection instrument or method, interview is used to collect data by asking questions. Kothari (2004) outlines the types of interviews as structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews. The structured interview involves rigid use of a set of predetermined questions and of highly standardised techniques of recording. The unstructured interview, according to Kothari, involves a flexibility of approach to questioning, in which the interviewer is allowed much greater freedom to ask, in case of need, supplementary questions or at times he/she may omit certain questions if the situation so requires. He/She may even change the sequence of the questions. The semi-structured interview type, which falls between the structured and unstructured in a continuum, involves the use of questions that are pre-planned prior to the interview, but the interviewer gives the interviewee the chance to elaborate and explain particular issues through the use of open-ended questions. A “semi-structured interviewing are used so that the researcher can keep an open mind about the shape of what he or she needs to know about, so that concepts and theories can emerge out of the data” (Bryman, 2008, p. 10).

The item format of the in-depth interview guides for all the thirteen (13) categories of respondents of this study were semi-structured. The choice of the semi-structured interview is informed by the nature, scope, and objectives of the study. In the view of Kothari (2004), the data collection instrument selected

should be such that it suits the type of enquiry that is to be conducted by the researcher. By nature, this enquiry used primary source (not yet available) data. Using these semi-structured interview guides as a qualitative data collection instrument, I asked respondents (both literate and illiterate) a series of predetermined but open-ended questions. This type is appropriate to researchers who have an overview of their topic so that they can ask further probing questions (Bryman, 2008). However, they do not prefer to use a structured format which may hinder the depth and richness of the responses (Alsaawi, 2014). The semi-structured interview format was used because it facilitated an efficient two-sided communication which allowed the interviewer to probe further in order to understand answers to all questions and the reasons behind the answers (Opdenakker, 2006). It also allowed respondents time to open up on sensitive issues. Besides, it gave room for me to compare current data to previous data and to be able to predict future occurrences. Furthermore, with this instrument, I was also able to interpret the non-verbal behaviours of the respondents.

### **Interview guides**

Based on the requirement of this study, thirteen separate in-depth semi-structured interview guides – A,B,C,D,E,F, and G – were developed. Interview Guide “A” which is identified as 1A at the Appendix was classified into seven categories of people (1Ai -1Avii). These classes were specifically designed to elicit responses from seven different groups who wear indigenous Asante hairstyles. They include Queens (1Ai), Chiefs (1Aii), Executioners (1Aiii), Servants (1Aiv), Indigenous Priests and Priestesses (1Av), “Offsprings of Deities” (*abosomma*) (1Avi), Spokespersons of Queens (1Avii) and Widows

(1Aviii). Interview Guide “B” was for artists, Interview Guide “C” was for the historian of Manhyia Palace, Interview Guide “D” was for the Curator of the Manhyia Palace Museum, Interview Guide “E” was for the senior staff of the CNCK, Interview Guide “F” was for the indigenous hairstylists and Interview Guide “G” was for barbers (See Appendix 1Ai - Appendix 1G).

Interview Guide “A” was made up of four segments. Section A was used to generate detailed historical narratives of the respondents’ account of an indigenous Asante hairstyle found on their scalp. In addition, it also explored other forms of hairstyles known to the respondents. Section B highlighted the artistic tools and materials used in shaping and styling the indigenous hairstyles coupled with their aesthetic qualities. Section C focused on identity and cultural symbolism of indigenous hairstyles. Section D accentuated how migration and exposure to other cultures have influenced indigenous hairstyles. Their views on whether these styles are still used as much as during the olden days were also investigated into.

The Interview Guide “B” to “E” (i.e., for artists, historian, curator of Manhyia Palace Museum and a senior staff (SS) at the CNCK, respectively) was meant to explore indigenous Asante hairstyles in the form of artefacts, which have been sculpted, painted or drawn, or presented in the form of body art. It also had four sections. In lieu of this, aside the types of indigenous Asante hairstyles with emphasis on the name and the history (section A ), the content of the section B, C and D centred mainly on the definition and meaning of art as well as how indigenous hairstyles are represented in the form of art. The elements, principles and media of art constituted an integral part of the interview guide. Other questions also centred on the names of the people who carved or

painted the visual objects in the form as indigenous hairstyles, the years in which they were produced and the rationale behind the production. It also stressed on the kind of people who wear the sculpted or painted hairstyles as well as the artistic tools and materials used in carving or painting them. The identity and cultural significance of the hairstyles were enquired. Perception of the contemporary impact on indigenous Asante hairstyles was also solicited.

Interview guides “F” and “G” were for indigenous expert hairstylists and barbers. The purpose of this interview guide was to make enquiries about the names and significance of the indigenous tools and materials used in styling the traditional hairstyles prior to the advent of modern ones. Hence, they answered questions like the types of indigenous hairstyles which are often styled and trimmed. It also covered the tools and materials used in styling the hair. The history and contemporary perspective of those tools and media were also interrogated. A thorough understanding of the cultural symbolisms associated with these native hairstyles under investigation also formed part of the content. As a result, I studied things in their cultural and natural settings, attempting to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. The questions also encompass some of the modern tools used at the salons and barbering shops.

### **Observation**

Observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching phenomenon and listening to an interaction as they take place. There are two main types of observation: participant observation and non-participant observation (Kothari, 2004). The participant observation requires the involvement of the observer while the non-participant observation does not need

the observer to take part of the activity being observed (Baker, 2006). We often talk about participant and non-participant types of observation in the context of social sciences. The participant observers make themselves, more or less, a member of the group they are observing so that they can experience what the members of the group experience. On the other hand, the non-participant observers endeavour to stay neutral to the emotions, feelings, and experiences of the object of study.

This study adopted the non-participant observation. This form of observation is consistent with the study objective of establishing indigenous hairstyles as art forms. Aesthetic characteristics like elements, principles, materials and tools for creating the art forms were observed. The choice of the non-participant observation is as a result of the fact that I was able to study the phenomenon under investigation (consisting of approximately seventy (70) art forms) from a neutral and objective position with emotional detachment. Observation check-list was used in this regard, making the observation structured. The observation was characterised by a careful definition of the units to be observed, the style of recording the observed information, standardised conditions of observation and the selection of pertinent data of observation. The observation checklist contained a list of structured items which are relevant to the study's objectives (types of indigenous hairstyles, their artforms and social change) that needed to be observed during the data collection process. It helped to mark (tick) the presence or absence of items (Sadan, 2017). The observation took place in the natural settings of the phenomenon, key among which are funerals, festivals, exhibitions, and museums at multiple and different times.

### **Observation check list**

I developed one observational checklist (See Appendix 1H) that was used to document perceived facts and artworks during the field work. The instrument was developed based on the objectives of the study, the research questions and key knowledge gap issues identified during the literature review. The content of the observation checklist is composed of three sections: Sections A, B, and C. Section A was used to identify the types of indigenous hairstyles; Section B gathered the art forms in the indigenous hairstyles; and Section C was used to gather data on the observable social change with respect to the people who wear indigenous Asante hairstyles.

With respect to section A, which dealt with types of indigenous hairstyles, some of the observed issues included; the structure of the hairstyle, number of tufts on the head, arrangements of the hairstyle, the kind and number of ornaments used to adorn the hairstyle, were observed and duly recorded for analysis.

In relation to section B, I observed the artistic elements; colour, shape, design, styles and principles; balance, rhythm, composition of some displayed artworks (sculptures, ceramic figurines, drawings, fibre glass sculpture, and paintings) with indigenous hairstyles in the setting within which the artists were interviewed. The media and tools were also noticed. What was observed with respect to indigenous expert hairstylists and barbers included the process of hairstyling and haircutting, the tools used in the hairdo, the materials and products used to style the hair.

The observed facts with respect to modified indigenous Asante hair wearers included the design of modified indigenous Asante hairstyles found on



their scalp. The appearance and arrangement of the hairstyles were also noticed. Also observed were the products, materials and thread used for the hairstyles.

### **Reliability and validity of the research**

Steps were taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the research instruments. Reliability and validity are the two most important and fundamental features in the evaluation of any instrument or tool for a good research. Validity is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of scientific findings, while reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability and repeatability of an instrument to collect and record information accurately (Mohajan, 2017; Brink, 1993; Le Compe & Goetz 1982; Selltiz et al., 1976). While the terms Reliability and Validity are essential criteria for quality in quantitative paradigms, in qualitative paradigms the terms Credibility, Neutrality or Confirmability, Consistency or Dependability and Applicability or Transferability are to be the essential criteria for quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The quality of a research is related to generalisability of the result and thereby to the testing and increasing the validity or trustworthiness of the research.

Data collection instruments were pre-tested during which they were administered on members of a population with similar demographic information as the target population to evaluate the reliability and validity of the research instruments prior to their final distribution. Fourteen (14) respondents from Oguaa Traditional Area were involved in this to solicit their views on indigenous hairstyles. Oguaa was selected for the pilot study because they originated from the same place (Bono) as the Asantes. In addition, the Fante people possess a number of similar socio-cultural characteristics as the Asantes.

The outcome of the pre-test results reflected the major components of the four objectives of the study with minimal errors. The results revealed that some indigenous hairstyles originated among the Fantes. Some of these hairstyles include *tekua* and *ntekua*. *Tekua* is a single wig-like cone worn on the head. It is used by high-ranking women like royals on special occasions like festivals. The *ntekua* also involves tying the base of the hair into more than one tufts. The meaning of *ntekua* as was said can be derived from conjoined two Fante words (*Nte* and *kua*). *Nte* means head while *kua* means little groups. Hence, *ntekua* means little hair groupings. An artform (sculpture) depicting a puberty initiate of a Fante girl in two tufts of hair can be found in Cape Coast Castle Museum.

Apart from these, other hairstyles which do not trace their origin to Oguaa Traditional Area have been adopted by the Fantes. Some of these hairstyles include twist, cornrow and *alata*. The Fantes had come into contact with these hairstyles as a result of migration and cultural interaction. It was further unraveled that some of the hairstyles created by the Fantes themselves are not patronised today as much as they were during the olden days. In addition, since culture is dynamic, the indigenous materials, herbs and oils used to maintain, manage and beautify the hair have undergone some changes.

Triangulation is typically a strategy (test) for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings. This approach was employed during the pre-test period and the actual research work. According to Mathison (1988), triangulation is an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluate certain phenomena for the purpose of controlling bias and establishing valid propositions. Triangulation generally means using multiple methods for data collection, and Patton (2001) argues that

triangulation strengthens a study through employing more than one method of data collection. Barbour (1998) regards the notion of triangulation in qualitative paradigm also in several data sources. The present study triangulated both the methods or instruments of data collection as well as the sources of the data as the same information were elicited from different categories of respondents. The adoption of triangulation was imperative during the actual field work of this current research.

In conclusion, during the pre-test, inevitable mistakes were identified and adequately corrected. For instance, questions which were not measuring what the objective of the study sought to measure were removed. A case in point, is the removal of questions on the use of chemical relaxers and its effect on the scalp. It helped to guarantee an error-free interview guide. Finally, before the interview guides and the observation checklist were used to collect data for this study, they were verified and endorsed by my supervisors.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection procedure involved information pertaining to where, how, who and when data were collected with emphasis on the dates and times of the day. Additionally, this part stressed on the duration and the personality involved in collecting the data. It also pointed out problems encountered in collecting the data. This section includes: the community entry, data collection, data processing, and the odds faced.

An introductory letter and ethical clearance letter were obtained from the Centre for African and International Studies, University of Cape Coast, to facilitate entry into the study sites. Copies of the letter were sent in advance to Manhyia Palace Museum and the CNCK. The rationale was to inform them of

the researcher's intended visit to the traditional area, explaining the objectives of the study and seeking their permission, consent and support during the data collection period of the study. This period was also used to give the research assistants a two-day intensive training on: (1) the use of the interview guides to elicit data, (2) some interviewing skills, (3) ethical issues during interviewing, and (4) the use of the observation checklist. The assistants first put the knowledge gained to practice in the pre-test evaluation of the research instruments. This lasted a week from 1st to 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 under my full supervision.

The main qualitative data collection methods used during this phase of the process were in-depth interviews and observation. In order to obtain responses from a cross-section of respondents in the entire indigenous area, I decided to obtain data from all the eleven communities within KTA. The primary data collection session commenced on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2023 through to Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2023. Additional one month was used for transcription and analysis of the interviews.

The first phase of the fieldwork involved the conduct of interviews with two respondents within two main cultural institutions of KTA during the first week of April. A senior staff of the CNCK was contacted during the early hours of Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, 2023. An appointment was booked with him for an interview the following day (Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> April), which started at 10am and ended at 10:57am. The interview was conducted by myself. I also conducted an interview with the curator of Manhyia Palace Museum at approximately 2:32pm and ended at 3:30pm on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> of April. All these interviews were conducted in the offices of the respondents.

In addition to the interviews, some artefacts of indigenous Asante hairstyles were also noticed at the CNCK and the Manhyia Palace Museum. The designs of these objects were observed. The research assistants collected the observable data, such as the stylistic components of the hairstyles, concurrently, during the interviews using the observation checklist. The time taken to observe these artworks was about two (2) to three (3) minutes. With permission from the interviewees, pictures of these images were taken.

The second and third week of April was devoted to interviewing eight (8) artists within the study area. Once it was established that the artists met the inclusion criteria, they were interviewed. Before the interview, I established rapport with the respondents by explaining the purpose of the visit and the research project. The average time spent with each respondent ranged between 45 and 58 minutes.

Aside the interviews with the artists, I observed the artistic elements of colour, shapes, dots and designs in some of the displayed visual artworks (sculptures, ceramic figurines, paintings, and photos) in the form of indigenous hairstyle. Also observed were the media and tools used in making the various artworks and therefore sought to synchronise and document, in detail, patterns of social interaction and the observed facts, which enhanced understanding of views in their local contexts. Observation of each artwork lasted for about three (3) minutes.

The fourth week of April was dedicated to interviewing the servants at the various palaces located in KTA. Each of the interview sessions lasted between 40 and 50 minutes. The widows were also identified and interviewed during the fourth week of April.

In addition to the interviews, I observed their hairstyles and with the full consent of the servants, took pictures of some of them. I also photographed the widows' hairstyles. The structure and arrangement of the hair were the main issues observed. The observed features were ticked on the observation checklist with the help of the research assistants.

The first and second week of May (1<sup>st</sup> -14<sup>th</sup>) was devoted to interviewing queens. Certain traditional protocols were observed before the various interview sessions. This was followed by me establishing rapport with the respondents by explaining the purpose of the visit and the research project. Each session lasted for about an hour.

Apart from conducting the interviews, I also observed the queens' hairstyles and obtained their approval before taking photographs of a few of them. Features such as the texture, shape, colour and pattern were noticed.

In obtaining data about the spirituality and foundation of the native hairstyles from the indigenous priests, I booked an appointment and interviewed them between the 15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> of May. They were approached with the help of an indigene of the land who was in his early forties. With all cultural rules and norms duly observed, permission was granted to meet the priests. Me and my research assistants' ability to communicate fluently in the local language, Asante Twi, as well as the use of certain appellations promoted the effectiveness of the field research. However, the main challenge was the sacrificial offering required to enable the necessary rituals to be performed in order to be able to interview the indigenous priests and priestesses within their natural setting.

During the interviews, the research assistants used the observation checklist to collect the observable data, including the artistic elements of the

hairstyles. The direct observation approach enabled the us to understand the indigenous hairstyles of the Asantes very closely and precisely. For instance, our direct observation during the *akwasidae* festival exposed us to some traditional priestesses adorned in the historical *dansinkran* hairstyle. Upon observation, we realised that the hair of the traditional priests/priestesses were naturally grown. Most of the observed activities synchronised with the facts obtained during the in-depth interviews.

The next category of respondents to be interviewed were the “offsprings of deities” (*abosomma*). Twenty fourth to thirtieth (24<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>) of May was devoted to interviewing them. Three (3) “offsprings of deities” were interviewed in their homes. In each of the towns, the location of the “offsprings of deities” (*abosomma*) was identified and an appointment was booked with them. The main challenge which I encountered but managed to overcome was getting access to interview this category of respondents. I overcame this obstacle when I invested a lot of time in creating genuine acquaintances with the local people in the study area. Additionally, I treated the *abosomma* with dignity and recognised their cultural background.

The structure of the indigenous hairstyles of the “offsprings of deities” (*abosomma*) were perceived. The number of tresses on their scalp were also counted. Also observed were the texture and colour of their hair.

Some selected days within the first week of June (3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>) were devoted to interviewing three (3) indigenous hairstylists and three (3) barbers. It started on Wednesday and ended on Saturday. The interview session for each participant lasted for about 50 to 55 minutes.

Also observed were the processes involved in styling, trimming and blackening the hairstyle. Averagely, it took approximately one hour from start to finish to do a hairstyle. The tools and materials used in carrying out the hairstyling and haircutting process were also observed.

Interviewing the historian at Manhyia Palace occurred during the second week (10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>) of June. He provided a lot of historical data about most of the indigenous Asante hairstyles. The interview session occurred mainly in the afternoon, at the Manhyia Palace.

Executioners and chiefs were interviewed during the third week (18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>) of June 2023. While the interview sessions for the chiefs lasted for about an hour per session, those of the executioners lasted for about 30 to 40 minutes.

Likewise, I was able to gain a detailed and up-close understanding of the indigenous Asante hairstyles of the chiefs and executioners through the use of first-hand observation. The research assistants gathered observable data, such as the aesthetic components of the haircuts, alongside the interviews using the observation checklist. Most of the observed activities synced with the facts gathered during the in-depth interviews.

To conclude, all the interviews were conducted in the Twi (the local language) or English depending on the preferred language of a respondent. In addition, all the responses were digitally recorded and hand notes taken on some pertinent issues that emerged in the course of the data collection. Transcribing the gathered data was done in July, 2023.

### **Ethical issues**

Studies of this kind raise a variety of ethical concerns that need to be handled properly in order to protect study subjects and the research community.



The Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast (UCCIRB) granted ethical approval. The Informed Consent form made it clear what the study's purpose was, how long it was expected to take to conduct the interviews, and that, a respondent could skip any questions or decide to forego participating in the study altogether at any time. The document also included parts that guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of the study subjects, as well as the contact information for the major supervisor, giving the respondents the chance to get in touch with him if they needed further information. Respondents who could not read the content themselves were given a complete reading of the informed consent document and an explanation of its content in a language they could understand. Before asking them the specific questions pertaining to the study, they were asked to verbally assent, sign, or initial the form. Other respondents who desired to read the consent forms for themselves and to keep them were also given copies. Additionally, this assisted in assuaging respondents' uncertainties and gave them the confidence to openly discuss their experiences.

I read the contents of the data I had gathered to the respondents before concluding an interview session with each respondent to make sure that the latter was fully aware of the data that they had provided. This also gave the participants another chance to provide additional information that may have escaped their thought. Additionally, this made sure that the information recorded accurately reflected the topics that the interviewee and the interviewer had addressed.

Data collection with digital tools like cameras and audio recorders can occasionally provide ethical problems, particularly when it comes to data

storage or archiving and the requirement to make research data and findings available to the public. To do this, prior to using such data capturing devices to record the interviews and conversations, all respondents were informed in advance and their consents were requested. Additionally, the digital recordings have been fully removed from the recorder during transcription and preserved with a password for security. All paper transcripts have also been destroyed. All electronic copies of the transcripts have been stored for at least five years with a password that is only known to me, after which they will also be totally cleaned.

To ensure anonymity, the actual names of the respondents were not used. They were coded using numbers for identifications and for the purpose of in-text citation in the analysis. All the eight queens interviewed were coded as Queen 1, Queen 2, Queen 3, Queen 4, Queen 5, Queen 6 Queen 7 and Queen 8. Spokesperson 1 and Spokesperson 2 of some Queens were contacted and interviewed. In a similar vein, the chiefs were identified as Chief 1, Chief 2, Chief 3 and Chief 4. Executioner 1, Executioner 2, Executioner 3, Widow 1 and Widow 2 were also interviewed. Interviews were conducted for Barber 1, Barber 2 and Barber 3 as well as Hairstylist 1, Hairstylist 2 and Hairstylist 3. Others include Offspring of a deity 1 (*bosomba* 1), Offspring of a deity 2 (*bosomba* 2), Offspring of a deity 3 (*bosomma* 3), Indigenous Priest 1, Indigenous Priest 2, Indigenous Priestess 1, Indigenous Priestess 2, Female Servant 1, Female Servant 2, Female Servant 3, Female Servant 4, Female Servant 5, Female servant 6, Female servant 7, female servant 8, Male Servant 1, Male Servant 2, Male servant 3, Male servant 4, Artist 1, Artist 2, Artist 3, Artist 4, Artist 5, Artist 6, Artist 7 and Artist 8. A Senior Staff at the CNCK, a

Curator at Manhyia Palace Museum and a Historian at Manhyia Palace were also interviewed.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The data from the interviews, observations, photographs and videos of indigenous hairstyles as well as other relevant documents were collected and coded to generate themes for the analysis. I relied on the six-step process developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This includes: interviewing/observation, transcribing or familiarisation, code formation, theme development, recoding or retheming, and discussion.

All the digital recordings of the in-depth interviews were first transcribed (converted into text) verbatim from the local language into English but leaving key terminologies in the original local language. All the digital recordings were played several times and cross-checked with each of the draft transcripts. In the process, some were edited to correct grammatical errors, omissions, accuracy and consistency of translations. Similarly, all the handwritten notes were typed and added to the appropriate sections of the transcripts. Subsequently, all the transcripts were read and re-read to identify emerging themes.

The transcripts were therefore manually coded according to these themes. Coding helped to successfully organise and develop the meaning of the data in a more structured way. I utilised a Microsoft Word for the colour coding to generate the primary themes that were more pronounced in the data.

Some salient quotes in the responses were noted and used to reinforce the research findings. The data analysis was therefore thematic and inductive in nature. The analysis was also organised to highlight the similarities or

differences on the perception of indigenous hairstyles and social change among the natives of KTA. All potential identifying details of the respondents have been altered or omitted to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants. This was achieved by assigning numbers to participants instead of indicating their names.

### **Chapter Summary**

In summary, the key principles of ethnography were utilised in unravelling the origin and symbolism of indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture, during which the study employed purposive sampling technique to select fifty-five (55) respondents (within KTA) whose views were elicited using in-depth semi-structured interview and observation as instruments. The interviews were conducted at the convenience of the interviewees. Observation played a cardinal role in the acquisition of data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TYPES OF INDEGINOUS ASANTE HAIRSTYLES

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the types of indigenous hairstyles among Asantes. Through observations and in-depth interviews, data on the types of indigenous hairstyles were gathered from the 55 respondents. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the gathered data from the field. This chapter presents results of the findings on the types of indigenous Asante hairstyles and the discussion of the results in relation to previous related studies.

#### Findings on Types of Indigenous Asante Hairstyles

The findings of this study revealed the approximate period for the commencement and the creation of most indigenous Asante hairstyles. According to a curator of Manhyia Palace Museum, a number of indigenous hairstyles originated among the Asantes from around 1695 onwards, that was from the time they confederated or formed the Asante Empire under the leadership of their first king, Nana Osei Tutu I. Hairstyles of this period onwards are referred to as indigenous Asante hairstyles in this study. Thus, indigenous Asante hairstyles are haircuts and hairdos which are of Asante origin and are symbolic to their culture. The hairstyles are discussed under two subthemes: haircuts and hairdos.

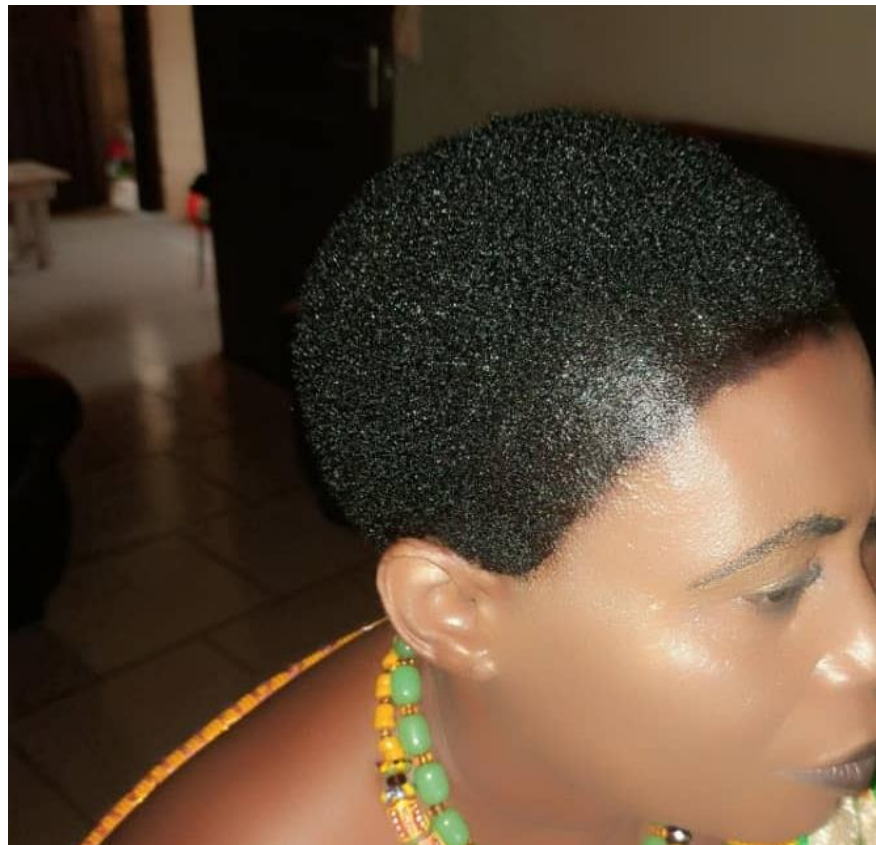
#### Haircuts

A haircut is a type of style in which a person's hair is clipped or trimmed into a particular shape or design. Haircuts that trace their origin to Asanteman include *dansinkran*, *asakyimakan atikɔpuaaa*, *ahenfo ti ho were*, *ntitabo*, *sepow*, *obi nka obi*, *Gyawu atikɔ* (*Kwatakye atikɔ*), *nkotimsefompuaa* (*ɔkɔdeɛ*

*mmower*), and *okunafoɔ ti-yi*. In the following sub-sections, each haircut is examined with emphasis on subthematic areas: description and origin.

### ***Dansinkran***

With respect to the description of *dansinkran*, observation from the field revealed that, it is a low-clipped haircut with a spherical shape and is heavily coloured using traditional black pigment hair dye. The hair appears shiny black. The glittery nature of the hair is caused by the presence of shea butter as one key ingredient in the preparation of the indigenous black mixture. The hair at the frontal part of the head, back of the ear region and the nape is lower than the middle (crown) part of the head. Figure 13 presents the *dansinkran* hairstyle.



**Figure 13 - A queen in *dansinkran* haircut**  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

Some queens and the historian in this current study gave varying accounts regarding the origin or history of the name of the *dansinkran* haircut.

Queen 1, Queen 4 and Queen 5 were of the view that the hairstyle was originally called *Gyese Nkran* (translating ‘except Accra’). In this regard, the history or origin of *dansinkran* hairstyle is traced to the Katamanso war. Respondents claim that the hairstyle was fashioned after the Katamanso war (also called the battle of Dodowa). According to the respondents, the Katamanso war was a battle in which the Ga-Adangbe defeated and prevented the Asantes from dominating the Coast in 1826. The Ga-Adangbe people of modern-day Greater Accra are said to have collaborated with the British as well as other ethnic groups in the Gold Coast such as Fantis, Akyems, Denkyiras and Akuamus to fight and defeat the Asantes. This led to the evolution of the name *Gyese Nkran* (meaning ‘except Accra’). By “Gyese Nkran”, the Asantes meant to say that no one could defeat them except the people of Accra. However, the name over the centuries has undergone some transformation and has since been corrupted into *dansinkran*. Literally, according to the narrative by the respondents, the defeat suffered was the first of its kind to the Asantes. A respondent narrates:

*This was perhaps the most painful defeat we, Asantes, ever suffered in history. My daughter, of all the battles that we fought since the Asante kingdom was built, the one that proved to be the deadliest was the Katamanso war. The priestesses had had their hair cut as a sign of mourning in relation to the Katamanso experience (Queen 3, 2023).*

In another account of the origin of the name *dansinkran*, the Historian at the Manhyia Palace explained that, at first, the hairstyle was referred to as *kentenkrye* (translating ‘basket hat’: the haircut resembled the shape of a basket-like hat on the head) until Nana Kwaadu Yiadom I, the queen of the Asante kingdom and

sister of Nana Prempeh 1, performed the noble *adowa* dance during the Asante Confederacy restoration in 1935. The then governor, Sir Arnold Weinholt Hodson, observed her *kentenkye* hairstyle when she was dancing and he referred to it as a beautiful dancing crown. The term *dancing crown* was verbally altered to become *dansinkran* which has since become the name of the haircut up till today. Hence, *kentenkye* is scarcely used to address the royal haircut.

***Asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* (translating ‘occipital hair tuft of puberty rite initiates’)**

The current findings of this research show that *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* haircut is worn during one of the stages of puberty rite. It was gathered from the historian of Manhyia Palace that the origin of the name of this haircut is premised on menstruation (*Asakyima*) while *kan* means first. *Atikɔpuaa* represent a tuft of hair found at the occiput of the head. Thus, *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* signifies a tuft hair located at the occiput of a girl who has had her first menstruation.

With respect to the description of *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa*, I noticed that a greater section of the hair is shaved to the scalp, leaving a small portion of hair at the back of the head. Hence, *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* involves leaving a small protruding portion of hair at the occiput while other parts of the head remain shaved to the scalp as shown in Figure 14. Further description of this hairstyle by a respondent has been provided as follows:

*In carrying out asakyimakan atikɔpuaa, the entire hair is shaved leaving only a small section. The shaved hair is sometimes kept in the abusua kuruwa (family pot) of the initiate. It is a pot that ritually binds members of a family together. Other family members place strands of hair inside*



*the pot alongside the hair of their departed loved ones. The pot is kept at a secured place like the shrine or special rooms. The origin of this haircut remains unknown (Queen 6, 2023).*

It can be inferred from the foregoing that, the size of the hair which remains uncut at the back appears very small. Indigenously, the hair is kept at a secured place as if to hide it from people.



**Figure 14 -Asakyimakan atikɔpuaa haircut**  
Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).

#### ***Ahenfo ti ho werɛ* (translating ‘a chief’s haircut’)**

A haircut called *ahenfo ti ho werɛ* was also observed during the field work. I noticed that this hairstyle is a clean-shaven haircut. The entire head is clipped with no hair on the scalp. The scalp appears completely hairless. Figure 15 presents a chief in *ahenfo ti ho werɛ*. As regards its origin, a respondent says:

*The first monarch of Asante Empire to have worn this type of haircut was Otumfuo Nana Osei Tutu Opemsoo I. He happens to be the first king after the Asante empire was confederated. Other succeeding kings also adopted ahenfo ti ho were (Chief 2, 2023)*

Another respondent adds that:

*I must stress that this haircut was done few days before the coronation of Otumfuo Nana Osei Tutu Opemsoo I. It has since become the mainstay of the Asante kings and chiefs till today (Chief 4, 2023).*

In summary, the origin of *ahenfo ti ho were* haircut can be traced to the first king of Asanteman. It constituted one of the activities before his coronation. The haircut has served as a precedent to subsequent kings and chiefs.

However, other interviews with some participants of this study show that presently, the haircut could be done after the installation of a chief. The timing could be determined by the chief. A respondent emphasises on the paliability of the timing of this haircut in as follows:

*There is flexibility in the determination of the time for wearing the chiefs haircut so far as coronation is concerned. It could be before or after enstoolment (Chief 3, 2023).*

Other notable events such as festivals are also marked by *ahenfo ti ho were*. A respondent stresses on some occasions during which *ahenfo ti ho were* is required:

*Ahenfo ti ho were is worn before the occurrence of major festivals like Awukudae, Akwasidae and other cardinal events in Asanteman (Historian, 2023).*

To conclude, an examination of the two extracts above show that a chiefs' enstoolment could precede *ahenfo ti ho were*. This haircut could also be worn to mark special events. Such events are usually periodic.



**Figure 15 - A chief in *ahenfo ti ho were***  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

***Ntitabo* (Haircut done in minutes)**

Figure 16 shows the *ntitabo* haircut. A deep small space is visible at the frontal region of the head. The field work revealed that this haircut requires the removal of a minor section of the hair. This can be achieved when the hair is allowed to grow to an average length (*adantam tiri nwi*). A portion of the hair

at the frontal region is then shaved to the scalp. The rest is allowed to grow in long strands which are brushed backward over the head.



**Figure 16- Ntitabo haircut**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

The origin of *ntitabo* remains unknown. A respondent comments on the description of this haircut:

*Ntitabo haircut appears at the anterior zone of the head. It is an age long haircut. The person who originated it is unknown. One needs to be patient for his hair to attain a particular length before this design can be done. The required hair length deters a number of people from adopting it (Chief 1, 2024).*

In summary, *ntitabo* haircut appears at the front part of the head. When the hair is able to reach a reasonable length, this hairstyle can be designed.

### ***Sepow* (Executioner's sword)**

Observation reveals another type of haircut in the shape of a sword (*afona*). This haircut is called *sepow*. As regards the description, *sepow* consists of a triangle, with one of the sides attached to a circle. The clean-shaven area (i.e., negative space) covers the wider portion of the head and elevates the designed region (*sepow*) in comparison. Figure 17 presents the *sepow* haircut.

The origin of this haircut can be traced to an executioner called Brafoo Nyam. He is believed to have been the first executioner to have shaved his hair in this shape. This design has since been adopted by some other executioners. A respondent, threw light on the description of the *sepow* haircut as follows:

*As executioners, we sometimes get our hair trimmed in the form of sepow. It is designed like our swords particularly the one used to transfix the cheeks of victims. When I visit the barber, I notice that my hair will be combed to enhance uniformity. After that the barber will draw the style on my head. This is followed by carefully shaving out the areas outside the design. I was informed by my grandfather that the first executioner to have adopted this haircut was called ɔbrafo Nyam (Executioner 3, 2023).*

It can be inferred from the above extract that *sepow* haircut is fashioned like the shape of one of the executioner's swords. The shape of the haircut can also be seen in Adinkra symbols; however, the point must be made that the haircut preexisted the invention of that Adinkra symbol which is mostly depicted at



the back of the head. Besides, the origin is traced to an executioner called Brafo Nyam



**Figure 17 - *Sepow* as a haircut**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

***Obi nka obi* (Bite not one another)**

*Obi nka obi*, as portrayed in Figure 18, is another unique haircut. Observations revealed that it integrates different shapes. The middle (circular side) and the outer (tick lines) features are visible. From the interviews conducted, all the three barbers in the study revealed that the shaving of *obi nka obi* occurs at three phases. These include the sketching phase, shaving phase and the dying phase. The sketching phase is the first step involved in carrying out the haircutting process of *obi nka obi*, where the image is drawn on the head.

The second phase involves shaving the unwanted parts in order to reveal the *obi nka obi* shape. The third phase is the dying of the designed haircut, which is optional.

The origin of *obi nka obi* can be traced to the reign of Asantehene Osei Kwadwo Okoawia I (1764 -1777). This hairstyle evolved as a result of his attempt to combat an external attack on some indigenes of Asante. A respondent accentuated on the origin of *obi nka obi* as follows:

*The people of Banda in the Bono East Region of Ghana, attacked Asante unprovoked. Bandahene ignored all warnings by Asantehene and kept attacking the Asante traders, as a result, the then, Asantehene (Nana Osei Kwadwo Okoawia I) went to war against Banda upon the message “obi nnkaa obi a obi nnka obi” meaning “trouble will not have come if somebody had not started the trouble”. This message which he framed became the slogan and motivation for the war. A painting was later developed to symbolise this slogan as a memorial for the Asante victory and has since been recommended as a haircut design mostly depicted by the male servants of kings and chiefs. Later the name became shortened as “obi nka obi” (Historian, 2023).*

Another respondent adds that:

*An artist from Ahwia; a sub town in Kumasi was tasked to put the concept of the Nana Osei Kwadwo Okoawia I of Asante into a nice artistic design in 1770. Due to the values of the design, it became a hairstyle which is usually portrayed by the male servants of the king. Servants of subsequent kings and chiefs later adopted it (SS of CNCK, 2023).*

To conclude, the concept of *obi nka obi* was originated by an Asantehene (Nana Osei Kwadwo Okoawia I). This concept was translated into an artistic piece.

The design later became a recommended haircut for the male servants of the reigning king and subsequent ones.



**Figure 18 - *Obi nka obi* as a haircut**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

### **Gyawu atikɔ (Occiput of Gyawu)**

Another observed haircut is *Gyawu atikɔ*. As regards the description, two spring-like outlines and two elongated boxes with one opened side were observed by me. In carrying out the shaving process, Barber 2 explained that a sketch of *Gyawu atikɔ* design is done on the head. With the sketch serving as a guide, the hair is trimmed into the required shape. Figure 19 shows the *Gyawu atikɔ* haircut.





**Figure 19 - *Gyawu atikɔ* haircut**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

From the interviews conducted, participants elucidated that the origin of this haircut can be traced to a man called *Gyawu*. I was made to understand that *Gyawu*, was the name of a warrior and *atikɔ* is the Asante Twi term for the occiput (i.e., back of the human head). The name *Gyawu atikɔ* simply translates “occiput of *Gyawu*”. It was used to describe the warrior’s haircut. The extract below throws more light on the origin of *Gyawu atikɔ*.

*Gyawu, who was a chief of Bantama, a suburb of Kumasi, was the first to do this type of hairstyle. At the annual Odwira ceremony, he had his hair shaved in this fashion. Gyawu atikɔ is also referred to as Kwatakye atikɔ. Kwatakye is an appellation used to describe Gyawu as a result of his gallantry in battle (Chief 1, 2023).*

It can be inferred from the quote above that, *Gyawu* is the originator of *Gyawu atikɔ*. Some other warriors adopted this type of haircut.

#### ***Nkotimsefompuaa* (Female attendants' haircut)**

From the interviews conducted, Queen 3, Queen 4 and Queen 7 explained that *nkotimsefompuaa* is also referred to as *ɔkɔdeɛ mmɔwerɛ* (talons of an eagle). The haircut depicts the talons of an eagle.

The researcher observed that the haircut consists of four linear curves, facing a clockwise direction as portrayed in Figure 20. Barber 3 elucidated that with the aid of an outline, the hair is trimmed to take the shape of the four talons of an eagle. The respondents stressed that though the origin of this haircut is traced to Asanteman, the name of the originator remains unknown.



**Figure 20 - *Nkotimsefompuaa* (ᵗᵏᵒᵈᵉᵑ ᵐᵐᵒᵂᵉᵑ) haircut**  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

***Okunafoɔ ti-yi* (Widow's haircut)**

Figure 21 shows *okunafoɔ ti-yi*, which was also observed during the field survey. It is a low clipped haircut. It is not completely clean-shaven as it used to be in the olden days. This haircut is mostly accompanied with black attire as depicted in Figure 21. Sometimes, the haircut is followed by the robbing of specially prepared red clay on the head during a brief period within the time frame when the widow is under the epoch of confinement. Aside the head, the clay is also robbed on certain required portions of the body. The clay is washed off after the period of confinement. A respondent narrates:

*I have a short-trimmed hair devoid of chemicals. My hair was trimmed during my period of widowhood rite. This*

*happened some years ago. Since then, I have decided to keep the hair in that shape* (Widow 1, 2023).

*Okunafɔɔ ti-yi* mostly requires shaving the entire hair. The shaving is carried out throughout the period of mourning.



**Figure 21 - *Okunafɔɔ ti-yi* haircut**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

### **Hairdos**

With respect to the hairdos, trimming usually does not take place. The hair is often put into diverse structured forms with the aid of threads or allowed to lock on their own. Hairdos which trace their origin to Asanteman include *tirasa ahoma tire*, *nsuman nsedieɛ mpesempesɛ*, *puaa baako*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaansa*, *mpuaanan*, and *mpuaanum*. Each hairdo is examined based on the subthematic areas: name, description and origin. Direct quotations of respondents' narratives are provided occasionally to support findings.

***Tirasa ahoma tire* (A threaded hairdo)**

*Tirasa ahoma tire* is a type of hairdo which was noticed during the field work. I uncovered that depending on the length of ones' hair, *tirasa ahoma tire* could be made up of only a single or several tufts of hair. The description has been provided under two sub-thematic areas: single tuft and several tufts.

With respect to a single tuft of *tirasa*, I observed that, the entire hair is held together into one unit, which is then segmented into three sections (bottom, middle and the tip) with the aid of a thread as shown in Figure 22. This hairdo involves tying the bottom by using one hand to spin or move the tread around the hair that is held in the other hand. After that, the middle part remains unfastened. The process is concluded with the tying of the apex into a reasonable length based on the person's choice and the length of hair. In most cases, the tied-tip is longer than the bottom. The tip is knotted at the extreme end to prevent it from loosening. Knotting is achieved by passing one free end through a loop and drawing it tight. After the process is complete, the tip is sometimes curved downwards or left to stand straight (see figure 22).



**Figure 22 - *Tirasa ahoma tire* (threaded hairdo made up of a single tuft)**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

With regard to the several tufts of *tirasa ahoma tire*, the hair is demarcated into many parts (depending on the length of hair). Each portion goes through the same process as explained under the single tuft of *tirasa*. The style is so simple that it could be self-made. Figure 23 presents *tirasa ahoma tire* which consists of several tufts.



In reference to the origin, *tirasa ahoma tire* (single tuft and several tufts) could be traced to an old woman who was once a resident of Bantama, a suburb in Kumasi. From the perspective of the SS of CNCK and the Historian, an elderly woman in Bantama who desired so much to have the threaded style done, realised she did not have enough thread for the style, so she devised a means of plaiting the bottom and the apex while leaving the middle untouched. This developed into a new style called *tirasa ahoma tire*. This name is chosen for the hair because each strand of the style is segmented into three parts; the foundation, midpoint and the topmost.



**Figure 23 - *Tirasa ahoma tire* (threaded hairdo made up of several tufts)**  
Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).

***Nsuman nsodieƐ mpesempesε* (translating ‘sacred cowries dreadlock’)**

Observation from the field points to another indigenous Asante hairstyle which is known as *nsuman nsodieƐ mpesempesε* (translating ‘sacred cowries dreadlock’). It is also recognised as *nsuman nserewa mpesempesε*. The hair is left uncombed and allowed to twist and lock on its own into strands, forming *mpesempesε* (dreadlock). The *mpesempesε* is usually permanent and cannot easily be disentangled. It is devoid of hair extensions. Cowries (*nsodieƐ* or *nserewa*) were perceived to be an indispensable component of this indigenous hairstyle as shown in Figure 24.



**Figure 24 - *Nsuman nsodieƐ mpesempesε* hairdo**  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**



The origin of *nsuman nsedie* *mpesempese* hairdo is traced to an indigenous priest. He had an encounter with a dwarf. The dwarf exposed him to some potent cowries which were later stuck in his hair. The acquired knowledge of using dreadlocks stuck with cowries for health and religious purposes was transmitted to others. A respondent comments:

*History has it that during the era when cowries were used as a medium of exchange, an indigenous priest in Kumasi once went to the forest in search of more potent herbs to treat his sick mother. In the process he fell asleep, he was awakened by an aboatia (a dwarf) only to be given nsedie with specific instructions and taboos. The cowries were stuck on his mpesempese (dreadlocks). The nsedie (cowries) became the medium and eye opener (ahunum) through which the herbalist's mother was cured. Since then, other apprentices (akɔmsuafoɔ) who received training from the herbalist were introduced to nsedie. Mpesempese became a necessary requirement for the activation of the nsuman in the nsedie (Indigenous priest 1, 2023).*

In sum, a dwarf disclosed this hairstyle to an indigenous priest of Kumasi. The successful healing of the priest's mother as a result of the potency of this hairdo led to the perpetuation of this hairstyle by other indigenous priests.

*Nsuman mpesempese*, hairstyle known globally as sacred dreadlocks without cowries also exists among Asantes. The hair is allowed to grow uncombed into strands that twist and lock naturally.

**Puaa, mpuaanu, mpuaansa, mpuaanan and mpuaanum (one, two, three, four and five hair tufts)**

Also observed from the field work were *puaa*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaansa*, *mpuaanan* and *mpuanum*. Observation during the field work showed that all the

above-mentioned hairdos belong to the *puaa* family, where the process involves tying the bottom sections of the hair, while the upper portions of each tuft remain untied. Secondly, all the *puaa* hairdos could be traced to the same source. A respondent comments on the origin of the *puaa* hairdos:

*The origin of all the mentioned puaa hairdos could be traced to Nana Nyarko Kusiamoa I. She was the Queen of Asanteman who reigned from 1697 to 1722. She originated these hairdos and she encouraged her servants to wear them. The successive queens urged their servants to adopt them (Historian, 2023).*

In sum, the origin of *puaa* hairdos can be traced to a queen of Asanteman (Nana Nyarko Kusiamoa I). She introduced it during her reign. These hairdos have been transferred from one generation to another.

Data gathered from the field show that some adherents of Asante culture in this current study who appeared to have limited knowledge on the origin of the *puaa* family hairstyles made certain suggestions in order to prevent this aspect of history from getting extinct.

A respondent says:

*Some of our cultural facts are gradually getting lost. I cannot even remember some of them. I know puaa stands for one tuft of hair while mpuaanu represent two tufts of hair but I cannot recollect how it all started. Since historical facts serve as basis for carrying out present activities appropriately, I think platforms like social media, TV, Radio can be used to educate the public about the histories of the Asantes. Also, reality shows could be organised to reward personalities who are able to recount historical facts accurately. It can also be written in books and studied in school (Queen 1, 2013).*

An examination of the above extract shows a number of suggestions on how historical facts on *puaa* hairstyles can be disseminated to the public. These proposals could be applied in curbing the extinction of cultural values.

Aside the similarities, the *puaa* hairstyles portray few variances. The conspicuous main difference which exists among them as was observed during the field work is the number of tufts which are present on the scalp at a particular point in time. The number of tufts determines the name of the hairdo.

*Puaa* hairstyle is shown in Figure 25. With respect to the description, the entire hair is secured (held together) into one single unit with the aid of a scrunchie. Observation of Figure 25 reveals that the tuft is positioned at the occipital zone of the head. This hairstyle is also called Afro pony since it appears like the tail of a pony. A respondent comments on the process of designing *puaa* hairstyle as follows:

*Puaa hairstyle is a simple hairdo which resembles a circular heap with a narrow base. It also resembles an inflated balloon or cabbage. It can be self-made. In carrying out the process, I have to massage my hair which has already been sprinkled with water. The aim of the water is to wet and soften the hair to facilitate easy combing. This is followed by holding the entire hair together and tying it with a rubber band or thread (Female servant 1, 2023).*

Another respondent adds that:

*I think that, the application of water to the hair precedes the smearing of sheabutter. I prefer sheabutter due to its medicinal benefits. Further softening is achieved with the application of sheabutter. The hair is then combed after which the bottom is tied with a thread. The whole hair is held in union before the tying is done. Only the bottom section of the*

*hair is tied. This process applies to all the puaa hairstyles, only the number of tufts vary* (Female servant 6, 2023).

To conclude, *puaa* hairstyle involves putting the entire hair together into one tuft with only the bottom part secured with a thread or hair band. The hair is often softened with water and sheabutter before it is tied. This could be self-made



**Figure 25 - Puaa hairdo**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

*Mpuaanu* is a category of the *puaa* hairstyles, where two tufts of hair are observed on the head. *Mpuaanu* is derived from the Twi word *mmiɛnu* (two). Figure 26 presents *mpuaanu* hairdo.



**Figure 26 - *Mpuaanu* hairdo**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

*Mpuaansa* is a type of *puaa* which consists of three tufts of hair. *Mpuaansa* derives its name from the Twi word *mmiɛnsa* (three) signaling the segmentation of the hair into three parts (see Figure 27).



**Figure 27- *Mpuaansa* hairdo**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

Again, another form of the *puaa* is the *mpuaanan*. For *mpuaanan*, four tufts of hair are observed on the head as depicted in Figure 28. *Mpuaanan* is derived from the Twi word *ɛnan* (four).





**Figure 28 - *Mpuaanan* hairdo**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

*Mpuaanum* was also identified during the field work as one of the *puaa* hairstyles. For *mpuaanum*, five tufts of hair are observed by me as shown in Figure 29. *Mpuaanum* is derived from the Twi word *Enum* (five).



**Figure 29 - *Mpuaanum* hairdo**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

### **Adantam tiri nwi**

*Adantam tiri nwi* is a natural textured hair of an average length as shown in Figure 30. It is midway between short and long tresses, achieved by allowing the hair to grow up to a moderate length and often combed to enhance uniformity.



The origin of the name of this hairstyle (*adantam tiri nwi*) is premised on the length of the hair. A respondent has this to say:

*“Da” denotes lie while “ntam” means middle. Consequently, the two words put together (adantam) denotes lying in the middle. “Tiri nwi” on the other hand means hair. Therefore, adantam tiri nwi means average length hair (Female servant 7, 2023).*

To sum up, the height of the hair determines the name of this style. The hair is halfway between short and long hair.



**Figure 30 - *Adantam tiri nwi***

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

## Discussions of Findings on Types of Indigenous Asante Hairstyles

This section discusses the results of the field work of the present study and other related earlier studies. Hence, synchronisations are established and contrasts are also drawn between the former and the latter. The first objective (types of indigenous Asante hairstyles) is discussed with specific reference to the conceptual and theoretical reviews.

Samples of artefacts including portraits, Adinkra symbols, sculptures, and some historical narratives from respondents have affirmed the originality of the hairstyles presented in the findings of this study. However, how do we confirm the veracity of these claims as it is natural that one's claims are unchallenged, they may be held as true accounts until such times when counter-claims are made. The veracity of such unchallenged accounts is testable through in-depth interviews which revisit the same inquiry from varied sources: historical archives, triangulated data collection and documents. Reliance on the triangulated data collection proved very useful in this study because of a number of reasons. First, there is very little literature on the Asante hairstyles as part of the documentation of the culture of the Kingdom. Second, Asante cultural norms have been effectively transmitted orally and as such these narratives have led to the preservation of key institutional frameworks that establish Asante as a kingdom. Asanteman has thrived on the honest account of themselves as a people even when it comes to admitting to some negative experiences such as the defeat suffered in the hands of the Ga Dangbe in the Akatamanso which led to the institutionalisation of the *dansinkran* as a monumental reminder of whatever pain they had suffered and the strive they had and have to make to avert any possible recurrence of the same. Account from such individuals on the

merit of the facts of the data and the sincerity of heart with which respondents volunteered participation and information is enough to authenticate their claims. Since all submissions were also crosschecked among respondents.

These hairstyles have originated from Asantes. Many of them are ceremonial even in their present states. These ceremonies are Asante-specific. For instance, Aday Kase (i.e. Akwasidae and Awukudae) are observed by only Asantes (Clarke-Ekong, 1997) even among larger Akan ethnic block. *dansinkran* and *ahenfo ti ho were* are mostly associated with Aday Kase. Also *Gyawu atiko* is associated with Odwira festival as it was the hairstyle of the then Bantamahene, Gyawu, and this haircut has come to be adopted as a symbol of bravery and heroism in Asanteman.

As the study data shows, all the indigenous Asante hairstyles require the use of natural hair, implying people who are expected to be in indigenous hairstyles are not to alter the texture of their hair. In other words, ideally, chemical straightening of hair is not customarily encouraged. Falola (2022) confirms that unadulterated natural hair was a prerequisite for making all indigenous hairstyles of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. This was further accentuated by Sherow (2023) that *erembe* hairstyle of the Himba people of Namibia and the *goscha* coiffure of Ethiopia require natural hair as the basis for their styling. It can therefore be deduced that, similarity prevails in the fundamental requirement for moulding and shaving indigenous hairstyles among most ethnic groups in Africa.

With respect to the history of these indigenous hairstyles, some of their original names seem to be fading out. For instance, the haircut which was originally known as “*obi nnkaa obi a obi nnka obi*” (translating: ‘trouble would

not have come if somebody had not started the trouble’) *has been shorten to* “*obi nka obi*” (translating ‘bit not one another’).

Moreover, the origin of most indigenous African hairstyles has connection with some socio-cultural events. For instance, the current data shows that, the resemblance between the features of the Asante queens’ haircut and a basket gave rise to the name *kɛntɛnkyɛ* while the aftermath of the battle of Dodowa of 1826 gave birth to the name *dansinkran*. Elsewhere, the origin of *nontombi* hairstyle among the Mumuhuila women of Angola, according to Schefer (2020), is traced to the symbolism of the cow dung used to mould the hair. The main occupation (herdsmen) of the Himba people of Namibia explains the history behind their *erembe* hairstyle (Borg & Jacobsohn, 2013).

The origin of *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* as an Asante hairstyle is associated with girls when they have had their first menstruation. It involves shaving the entire hair and leaving a small tuft at the occiput of the head. It shares similarity with the shaving which is done to Krobo girls before they visit the *Tɛgbetɛ* (sacred stone) during their puberty initiation. Here, a larger expanse of the scalp is clean-shaven, leaving just a small part in a circular form above the forehead, to indicate that the girl is getting close to entering the new world (Adinku, 2016). Therefore, while the *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* is found at the occiput, that of the *dipo* initiate of Krobo is mostly located at the crown of the head.

As the study data shows, observation of the characteristics associated with the body part of certain categories of animals led to the birth of certain haircuts. A case in point is the *nkotimsefompuaa* (female attendants’ haircut; it is shaped like the talons of an eagle). Martino (2020) and Rattray (1927) mention *nkotsimsefompuaa* mainly in the context of textiles. Another haircut

which is *obi nka obi* (bite not one another) depicts two fishes biting the tail of each other. Though *obi nka obi* was mentioned in the works of Adom et al. (2018), its description and origin were not documented. Besides, it was not discussed in the perspective of hairstyles. In their work, *obi nka obi* depicted the harmonious coexistence that should exist between people, the environment, and its resources. That notwithstanding, the creation of hairstyle based on an observation of an animal is visible in the works of Shuaib (2020). In his research, some priests and priestesses of *Sango* deity in Nigeria are identified with *agogo* (hairstyle done to imitate the cockscomb) hairstyle.

Description and origin of *puaa*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaansa*, *mpuaanan* and *mpuaanum* were documented during the field work. Some of the adherents of Asante culture with mediocre knowledge on the origin of *puaa* hairstyles proposed steps which could be taken in order to prevent historical facts from getting extinct. Secondly, *puaa* family hairstyles seem to be scarcely discussed in existing literature except for the *mpuaanum* which appeared faintly in just a single sentence in the work of Rattray (1927) who only mentions that it stands for five tufts of hair. Long or average natural hair length was also noticed during the fieldwork. It served as a prerequisite for the moulding and styling of most indigenous Asante hairstyles. The long natural hairstyle (translating “tirikusu”) was a famous hairdo among artists, political activists in the late 60s and early 70s in Ghana during which Afro hair was combed out and looked bushy (Craig, 2002).

The field work showed that hairdos like *puaa*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaansa*, *mpuaanan* and *mpuaanum* involve tying the bottom sections of the hair, while the upper portions of each tuft remain untied. In contrast, Kwakye-Opong

(2014) discloses that *okukuli* hairdo of the Ga-Adangbe ethnic group is a form of threaded hairstyle where the hair is crafted into tufts with the end of each tuft threaded with raffia or thread. Thus, while the *puaa* family hairdos involves tying only the bottom, *okukuli* involves tying solely the apex section of the tuft while the bottom remains untied. *Tirasa ahoma tire* was also identified during the field work. It involves spinning a thread around the bottom and the apex sections of the tuft hair while the middle remains untied. *Gele*, which is a threaded hairdo noted among the Ga-Adangbe ethnic group, appear quite similar to *tirasa ahoma tire*, yet some few variances are conspicuous between them. According to Kwakye-Opong (2014), *gele*, is a form of threaded hairdo in which a thread is wrapped around the entire section of the tuft from the bottom to the tip of the tuft. It can therefore be concluded that while *tirasa* involves tying some sections of a hair tuft, *gele* requires spinning a thread around an entire hair tuft.

It can be inferred from respondents' explanations that washing of hair with water is a necessity in most of the identified indigenous hairstyles in order to keep the hair clean. However, according to Cole (2012), the Himba people of Namibia are accustomed to the use of wood ash for hair cleansing due to water scarcity. Data showed that, natural and indigenous procedures are employed in carrying out these hairdos and haircuts from start to finish. These methods involve grooming the hair through regular washing with water, combing it to enhance its uniformity before trimming it into various shapes or styling. Combing is not an option but a necessary requirement for removing unwanted strands and foreign particles from the hair and to keep it from knotting. For

some hairstyles such as *mpesempese*, some organic solutions are used to maintain their growth and styling in order to attain the desired outcome.

Usually, natural textured hair of an average or long length is grown first among some communities before some part or all is trimmed. It is common among the Akans (typically the Asantes) of Ghana and serves as a catalyst and spring board for most indigenous Asante hairstyles. Thus, some hairstyles such as the *adantam tiri nwi* (average length hair) often serve as the preparation of the hair for another more ceremonial hairstyle like the *dansinkran*.

*Tirikusu* (afro long hair) serves as the basis for *puaa* family hairstyles. From the responses of the respondents and a personal observation, the interconnectedness of these hairstyles proves their Asante originality and indigenesness.

### Chapter Summary

In summary, some beliefs, practices and norms of the Asantes have been depicted in various hairstyles. Some of these hairstyles include *dansinkran*, *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa*, *ahenfo ti ho were*, *okunafoɔ ti-yi* and *sepow*. Aside their distinctive histories, they portray unique features which have been handed down from generation to generation.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### VISUAL ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS ASANTE HAIRSTYLES

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the indigenous Asante hairstyles as visual art forms. Relying mainly on purposive sampling method, the respondents in this study were interviewed and some of their hairstyles and artworks were directly observed and analysed. This chapter presents findings on the visual art forms of indigenous Asante hairstyles and the discussions of the results.

#### Findings on the Visual Art Forms of Indigenous Asante Hairstyles

In-depth interviews with the artists of this study show that the act of skillfully creating visuals can be described as art. The respondents further elucidated that art is also a means through which the culture and values of societies are learnt. This is usually done by observing paintings, sculptures, drawings, and body designs and adornments. Observation from the field unraveled that most of the indigenous hairstyles are depicted in various kinds of art forms. These are body arts, wood sculptures, cement constructs, drawings, mosaics, paintings, Adinkra symbols, ceramic figurines and fibre glass sculpture. While some appear only in the form of body art, others are both in the form of body art and other visual forms of representations. These art forms of indigenous Asante hairstyles are explained under two sub-topics: haircuts and hairdos.

#### Visual art forms of indigenous Asante haircuts

Haircuts reveal diverse forms of art. The art form of each haircut (*dansinkran*, *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa*, *ahenfo ti ho were*, *ntitabo*, *sepow*, *obi nka obi*, *Gyawu atikɔ*, *nkotimsefompuaa* and *okunafoɔ ti-yi*) is explained with



emphasis on sub-thematic areas, namely: artistic elements (shape, line, dot, texture, colour and space), principles (balance, emphasis, pattern, repetition, rhythm, movement, unity, proportion, variety and gradation), tools (implements or equipment) and media (materials).

### **Body art of *dansinkran***

Elements of art such as shapes and colours are observed in the *dansinkran* haircut. As regards shape, it is a three-dimensional art. It was observed that geometric shapes play key role in the *dansinkran* haircut. For example, the frontal design of *dansinkran* is strictly semi-circular. Additionally, from the edge of the semi-circle to the back of the ears (left and right portions of the parietal areas), to the back of the neck (nape zone) reveals a circular shape, giving the head a pot-like look. The hair is dyed with a black colour as shown in Figure 13.

Some principles of art were observed in the *dansinkran* haircut. In a series of interviews conducted, Artist 2, Artist 3 and Artist 6 explained that principles of art refer to how the elements of art are combined to achieve a desired effect. The main principles of art which were observed in this haircut are diversity, gradation, circular composition and patterns. The different heights of hair at the edges and crown create visual diversity in order to reflect the gradation principle of art. These heights are integrated and blended together to achieve the principle of circular composition. The pattern adopted is a two-step circular haircut, where a downsize is visible at the circumference while a higher length of hair is apparent at the mid-point.

Through observation, it was revealed that one artistic tool used in trimming *dansinkran* on the scalp is the scissors. The researcher was made to

understand by Barber 3 that prior to the introduction of scissors, a locally manufactured tool, called *yiwan* (fashioned from iron) was used. Figure 31 depicts *yiwan*. The process involved in making the *yiwan* was discovered during in-depth interviews. A description of the process by a respondent is as follows:

*With the aid of fire, powered by palm kernel hacks, iron is heated at about 1500<sup>0</sup> C and above and shaped into yiwan*  
(Artist 4, 2023).

The innovation and skills of the Asantes is extended to cover metal production.

The *yiwan* aided in the shaving of hair as well as other domestic activities.



**Figure 31 - *Yiwan***

**Source - By author (2023) and used with permission.**

Additionally, other interviews unraveled that even before the discovery of *yiwan*, clam shells and stones were sharpened and used for cutting or trimming hair. Clam shells are presented in Figure 32.



**Figure 32 - Clam shells**

**Source - Field work, Quampah (2023).**

From the description of Artist 5, Artist 6 and Artist 7, I understood during the field work that media are the materials and products used in making or designing artwork. Sometimes different materials and products could be combined, known as mixed media for artwork. For instance, all the queens, Hairstylist 2 and Barber 3 of this study pointed out that the local artistic media used to make the indigenous black hair dye among the Asantes are *pupunuwisie* (soot), *bidie* (charcoal) and *nkuto* (sheabutter). According to Queen 4 and Queen 8, the end product of the mixture is locally referred to as *abiiwa*.

The soot, according to Barber 1 and Barber 3, is obtained from three main sources – the ceiling of the traditional kitchen, cooking pots, and fire lamp. In the first place, the soot is gathered from the smoke which usually comes from

firewood and accumulate on the ceiling over the traditional hearth or tripod. The soot also forms as the black substance on cooking pots, and this is scrapped and ground. Others obtain the soot in a form of accumulated smoke from the roof of lanterns.

Charcoal, as another component in the dye, is ground on a bigger grinding stone or pounded in traditional mortar into powder. The two powdered substances, that is soot and charcoal, are mixed together in shea butter into the dye. The processes of the mixing and utilisation of the indigenous products are captured by one interviewee as follows:

*To achieve a perfect finish of the dansinkran haircut, the pupunuwisie (soot), nkuto (sheabutter) and bidie (charcoal) are mixed together in their right proportions and meticulously applied on the hair. We inherited this knowledge from our progenitors. The sheabutter is melted before being added to the other substances. The sheabutter helps the charcoal to stick to the hair and also causes it to be shinny. The mixing can also be done in a calabash or any bowl (Barber 1, 2023).*

It can be inferred from the foregone quote that, artistic media such as sheabutter, charcoal and soot (from burning fuel) used by the ancestors of Asantes have been handed down to this present generation. These materials are combined in their right quantity to achieve the black hair dye used to adorn the *dansinkran* haircut.

### **Wood sculpture of *dansinkran***

Sculptures are some of the art forms used in preserving the rich cultural heritage of the Asantes. At the Manhyia Palace Museum, there are sculptures (wood carvings) depicting the *dansinkran* haircut. Artist 4 revealed that the wood used in carving them is known as *osese* (*Funtumia* sp.). Through

observation, natural black colour was noticed to have been used to design the hair of the sculptures in a circular form. It was also observed that the tools used for sculpturing *dansinkran* are different from those used for the body art. These tools – *dawutruwa* and *ahorn* – are types of indigenous chisels used in carving the objects. Linear cracks were detected at the frontal segments of the head of some of the wood sculptures. It was explained that the wood was not properly dried before it was utilised for the art work. Hence, cracks occurred after they had begun to dry up properly. According to Artist 4, the cracked sculptures, do not reveal the actual reflection of the *dansinkran* haircut. Hence, more wood sculptures of *dansinkran* will be carved in order to replace the cracked ones.

It was observed that the elements and principles of the *dansinkran* wood sculpture are the same as that of the *dansinkran* body art of figure 13. However, the tools and media are different. Figure 33 presents *dansinkran* in the form of a wooden sculpture.



**Figure 33 - Wood sculpture depicting *dansinkran***  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

### Cement sculpture of *dansinkran*

Cement sculpture involves making sculptures with materials like cement, sand and water which are mixed together in their right proportions. Cement is usually the base material in the mortar or mixture. The main tools employed are mould, shovel and trowel. Cement casting was used to achieve this *dansinkran* artwork of Figure 34. Aside colour, other elements and principles of art were observed to be similar to those in the body art of Figure 13. Data revealed that one of the aims of this artwork, is to preserve one of the indigenous beliefs and practices of the Asantes in a more durable way. A representation of other indigenous Asante hairstyles in artforms were suggested by some artists. A respondent comments:

*In creating indigenous hairstyles in the form of cement sculpture, cement is an integral ingredient. A mixture of cement (a binder), sand and water, which is referred to as mortar is used to make this artwork. Cement sculpture of dansinkran has been creatively crafted to portray the headship qualities of the Asante queens. It is done for public viewing and to preserve this aspect of Asante culture a bit more permanently (Artist 8, 2023).*

Another respondent comments on the process:

*Dansinkran cement sculpturing through casting, involves pouring mortar into a mould. It is then left to solidify. Tools like shovel, pan, rolling tape and trowel are used in creating this artwork (Artist 2, 2023).*

An examination of the two quotes show that cement sculpture of *dansinkran* is achieved with a combination of cement, sand and water in their right proportions. These materials are thoroughly mixed together with the aid of

implements. One of the cardinal reasons for producing this artwork is to conserve and project Asante culture



**Figure 34 - *Dansinkran* in the form of a cement sculpture**  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

#### ***Dansinkran* in the form of drawing**

Figure 35 depicts *dansinkran* in the form of a drawing. It is a two dimensional artwork. The main medium used in designing this artwork was pencil. Different shades of pencils were used.





**Figure 35 - *Dansinkran* in the form of drawing**  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

#### **Body art of *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa***

I made some observations about the elements of art in relation to *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa*. It was observed that, the *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* is a clean-shaven head surrounding a small round tuft of hair of about one and a half inches in diameter and one inch in height sitting on the occiput of the head. Also, concerning the principles of art, the hair on the occiput forms the emphasis of the hairstyle. Proportionally, the shaved region (i.e., negative space) covers the broader area of the head and by contrast, elevates the tuft region (i.e., positive space) as shown in Figure 36.

Barber 3 mentioned that this haircut is achieved with the aid of an indigenous implement, *yiwan*, or modern tools (a pair of scissors and a shaving



machine). The shaved portion usually grows after a period of time. This enables the hair of the initiates to be reshaped into another style. This second style is trimmed to mark the final stage of the puberty rite.



**Figure 36 - *Asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* as a body art**  
Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).

An observation shows that *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* exists in the form of body art and photographs. In view of this, some of the artists and queens in this current study mentioned that having a sculptural representation of *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* would be of additional educational and historical interest to the public. It could also enhance tourists attraction.

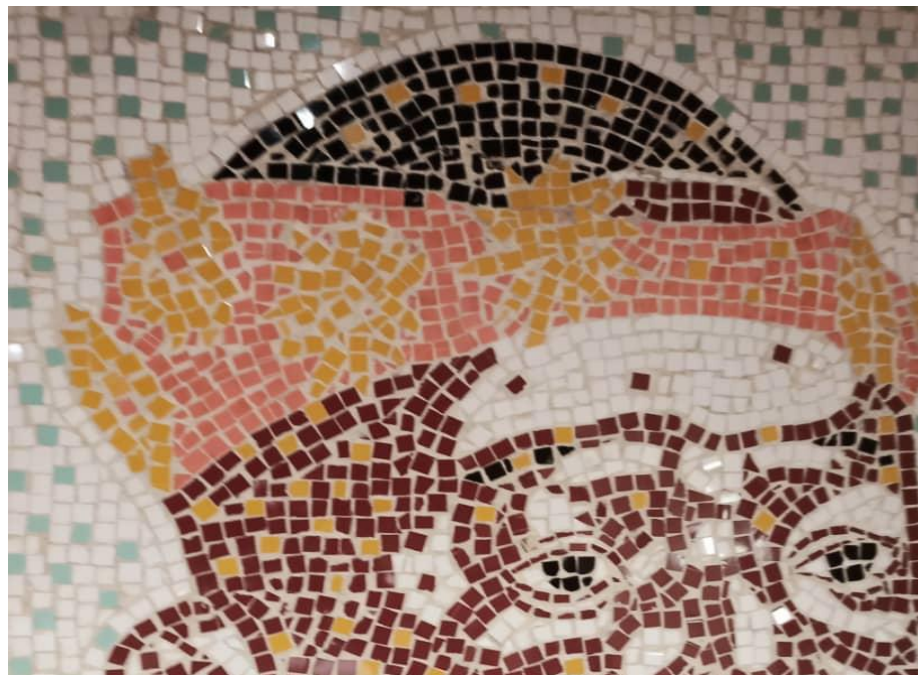
#### **Body art of *ahenfo ti ho werɛ***

Shape was the main element observed in *ahenfo ti ho werɛ*. As shown in Figure 15, the hair is completely shaved, giving it a plane shape. The head

appears brown in colour. All sides are proportionally shaved to the scalp. This haircut is sometimes hidden as they are mostly covered with crowns during cultural occasions. The tools used are similar to those of the *dansinkran* body art.

### **Mosaic art of *ahenfo ti ho were***

A mosaic art of *ahenfo ti ho were* was observed at Manhyia Palace Museum. According to Artist 2, pieces of broken tiles were joined together to achieve this design. Tile cement was used to bind the tiles together. The haircut section appears predominantly black with brown and white spots used to form a unique pattern. A section of the head is covered with a pinkish and brownish crown. Aside colour, the element of shape and the principle of proportion appears to be similar to the body art of Figure 15. Additionally, unlike Figure 37 which is a two dimensional artwork, that of Figure 15 is a three dimensional design.



**Figure 37 - *Ahenfo ti ho were* as a mosaic art**  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

### Painting of *ahenfo ti ho were*

Water colour paint was used to create this artwork. Brown and white are the two main colours which are visible in this haircut. Observation of the haircut in Figure 38 shows that it is partially covered with a crown.



**Figure 38 - *Ahenfo ti ho were* as a painting**  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

### Body art of *ntitabo* or *abrafo sima*

As was observed during the field work, *ntitabo* or *abrafo sima* is a type of haircut where artistic elements like space, shape and scale are conspicuous. A small section of the edge of the frontal part of the scalp is trimmed almost to the scalp, creating a deep positive space which usually takes a rectangular shape.

The length (the two long sides) extends two inches long. The breadth (the two sides) are one and a half inches wide. The rest of the hair is brushed backwards. The deep space is what creates the emphasis, which is a principle of art used to create the focus of attention. Sunken or intaglio relief technique is used to achieve this art work. Figure 16 portrays a miniature artificial baldness created to achieve a cultural effect.

Aside body art, other visual forms of representation of *ntitabo* were suggested by some respondents. A respondent comments:

*Some indigenous hairstyles have been presented in a number of art forms, however, I have not yet seen ntitabo in the form of any artefact. If really it does not exist, then I think artists can be contracted to present this historic hairstyle in an artform. Therefore apart from the hairstyle been depicted on the living human head, it can be portrayed in the form of painting or sculptures or even symbols for constant public viewing. Even students who would like to study about it, can easily have access to the image. The artistic image can also boost the art and tourism sector (Artist 2, 2023).*

In sum, an examination of the above extract shows some historic haircut can still being depicted in various artforms. It will enable people to have access to it all the time.

### **Body art of *sepow***

*Sepow* haircut, as portrayed in Figure 17 was noticed during an *Akwasidae* festival. The elements of art that I observed in this haircut are shapes. A triangle is superimposed on a circle to form a design at the back region of the head.



The principle of contrast is visible as the design stands sharply in contrast with the remaining section (the negative space) of the hair shaved almost to the scalp. The different shapes (triangle and circle) in the artwork are used to create a visual diversity. The two shapes are joined together. The connection between the triangular and the circular parts, create a composition.

### ***Sepow* as an Adinkra symbol**

*Sepow* has been preserved in the form of an Adinkra symbol. According to a curator of Manhyia Palace Museum and a senior staff of the CNCK, the incorporation of *sepow* into the legendary Adinkra symbols is informed by the haircut. With the exception of colour (brownish dark), other elements and principles of art in the *sepow* symbol of Figure 39 are similar to those in the body art of Figure 17.



**Figure 39 - *Sepow* as a symbol**  
**Source - Field survey, Quampah (2023).**

### **Body art of *obi nka obi***

Shapes and thick lines are the main elements of art which are present in *obi nka obi* haircut. The central part consists of a broad wavy S-like shape. Twelve (12) linear parts extend from the centre as portrayed in Figure 18.

With respect to the artistic principles; radial symmetry, rhythm and unity are obvious in this design. The radial principle of art resonates with *Obi nka obi* haircut design because the linear shapes are arranged around a common centre like the strokes on a bicycle wheel. Repeated lines of different proportions depict a rhythm. All the different elements of art are combined to create a composition. A respondent accentuated the principle of art as follows:

*In fact, I must say the design of this haircut is a masterpiece,. in that the principle of rhythm and movement plays a key role in this object. The reason is that the design will cause the viewer to navigate his/her eye from the linear strokes through to the central point*  
(Artist 2, 2023).

It can be inferred from the foregone that, the principle of centrifugal balance is noticeable in the artwork. Repetition of different sizes of thick lines is also noticeable.

### ***Obi nka obi* as an Adinkra symbol**

This haircut has been preserved as an Adinkra symbol as shown in Figure 40. The elements and principles of art found in *obi nka obi* symbol resonate with the body art of Figure 18.

According to the artists in this current study, the symbolic representation of some indigenous haircuts like *obi nka obi* has enabled Asantes to appreciate their culture better. It has promoted patriotism.



**Figure 40 - *Obi nka obi* as an Adinkra symbol**  
**Source - Field survey, Quampah (2023).**

#### **Body art of *Gyawu atikɔ***

Elements of art such as shapes and lines were observed in *Gyawu atikɔ* haircut. In all, four shapes exist within the *Gyawu atikɔ* haircut. Two of them, which are analogous, are spirally shaped, and are diagonally opposite to each other, while the remaining two (rectangular shape) are also analogous and diagonally opposite to each other. Within the haircut, the double spiral-shaped images have a starting point. The centre or starting point of the spiral is the origin or nucleus. The line winding away from the nucleus is the tail. The spirals are infinite, implying they do not have a finite ending point. Besides, the two diagonal rectangular shapes are characterised by two dimensions: length and

breath. The length is three (3) inches long while the breath is one (1) inch wide. Therefore, the opposite sides of the rectangle are equal and parallel.

The main principles of art observed in this haircut are balance, unity, rhythm, pattern and proportion. As shown in Figure 19, there is a thick vertical line dividing the left-side and the right-side images. This reveals a balanced symmetry of the image. Both the left and the right sides are a necessary requirement for the full actualisation of the *Gyawu atikɔ* symbol. The principle of rhythm is visible as shapes are used repeatedly to create a feeling of organised movement. The *Gyawu atikɔ* image portrays dual diagonal patterns with the images appearing in opposite directions of each other. All the analogous shapes look proportional to each other.

A warrior spotted during the field survey had his hair shaved into the *Gyawu atikɔ* haircut. It appeared at the back of the head as implied by the name *atikɔ* (back of the head). The haircut measured half an inch long from the root of the hair to the apex. The unwanted portions of the hair have been shaved to the scalp level. I understood during some interviews that for the style to be visible, it required the growth of the hair up to a certain level (*adantam tiri nwi*).

### ***Gyawu atikɔ* as an Adinkra symbol**

Observation points to the *Gyawu atikɔ* haircut in the form of an Adinkra symbol as depicted in Figure 41. This Adinkra symbol portrays the same elements and principles of art as the body art of Figure 19.





**Figure 41 - Gyawu atikɔ as a symbol**  
**Source - Field survey, Quampah (2023).**

#### **Body art of *nkotimsefompuaa***

*Nkotimsefompuaa* or *ɔkɔdeɛ mmɔwerɛ* is presented in Figure 20 as a body art. Lines were observed to be the main artistic elements in the design. Four linear curves with one intersection are conspicuous in this artwork. The picture taken during the field survey reveals an *ɔkɔdeɛ mmɔwerɛ* haircut of a quarter inch long from the root of the scalp to the top. The curves are bent at right angles, all in the same rotary direction, usually clockwise. It depicts the direction of the clock. The haircut is found at the parietal zone of the head.

The principle of radial balance is visible in the object as the four curvy lines extend from one common centre. Symmetrical reflection is also obvious

in the image. The linear curves work in harmony to achieve common results (composition).

### ***Nkotimsefompuaa* as an Adinkra symbol**

*Nkotimsefompuaa* haircut has been preserved in the form of an Adinkra symbol, as depicted in Figure 42. All the linear curves were noticed to be similar to the body art of Figure 20.



**Figure 42 - *Nkotimsefompuaa* (ɔkɔdeɛ mmɔwerɛ) as an Adinkra symbol**  
**Source - By author (2023) and used with permission.**

### **Body art of *okunafɔɔ ti-yi***

The conspicuous element of art which was noticed in *okunafɔɔ ti-yi* was scale. The height of the entire hair is very low. Proportionally, the body art of

*okunafoɔ ti-yi* appears to be uniform throughout the head. The tool used in carrying out the shaving is similar to that of the *dansinkran* body art. Body art of *okunafoɔ ti-yi* is depicted in Figure 16.

### **Wood sculpture of *okunafoɔ ti-yi***

A wood sculpture depicting an *okunafoɔ ti-yi* was identified at the Centre for National Culture in Kumasi. Scale, texture and colour were observed to be the main artistic elements in the hairdo. The hair measured a quarter of an inch from the scalp to the top of the hair. It resembled a short afro hairstyle.

In Figure 43, tinny holes are created in the hair of the image to depict the texture of the hair and also to contrast the hair portion from the remaining part of the head since the entire figure is painted in one colour, black. The hair is proportionately sculptured to enhance uniformity on the entire scalp. The main artistic tools used include chisel, knife, brush and mallet. The artistic media are wood and paint.



**Figure 43 - Sculpture of *okunafoɔ ti-yi***  
**Source: Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

## Visual art forms of indigenous Asante hairdos

Hairdos usually display varieties of artistic qualities. The field work reveals that, the indigenous Asante hairdos have outstanding artistic essentials, based on how they have been arranged and created. With an emphasis on creative elements, principles, tools, and media, each hairdo's (*tirasa*, *nserewa ahunum mpesempese*, *puaa*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaansa*, *mpuaanan*, *mpuaanum* and *adantam tiri nwi*) artistic expression is thoroughly discussed.

### Body art of *tirasa ahoma tire*

The body art of *tirasa ahoma tire* was noticed during the field survey. It has been threaded to stand upright (see Figure 21). The researcher noticed that *tirasa ahoma tire* can either appear upright or horizontal. The main element of art present in this hairstyle is shape. The bottom and apex portray a linear shape while the middle part is oval in shape. The apex also depicts a stretched narrow-like upside down V-shape. The bottom portrays a miniature cone. The two main principles of art in this hairdo are pattern and proportion. Each hair tuft represents a pattern of two threaded regions at both ends, separated by a threadless zone. Most of the hair tufts are mostly proportional to each other as portrayed in Figure 22.

Some of the artistic materials and tools used in making *tirasa ahoma tire* on the scalp include thread and comb. Through in-depth interviews, it was revealed that prior to European contact with Africans, the indigenes had discovered their own way of wrapping a thread-like object around their hair. An example of the material is raffia. It is shown in Figure 44. A respondent comments:



*Fibre obtained from raffia palm was used for tying the hair. Raffia fibre was made by cutting the raffia palm leaves and drying them in the sun. They turned into strands and the green colour of the fresh raffia palm leaves turns into brownish raffia threads. In addition to this, skins of animals were also scrapped, dried and cut into strips and used for tying the hair (Historian, 2023).*

In sum, raffia was processed locally and used for tying hair. Aside raffia, skins of animals were also used.



**Figure 44 - Dry Raffia leaves**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

It was gathered from the field work that historically, simple tools served as the original implements for detangling hair. A respondent threw light on the chronological evolution of hair tools from earliest times to present. He says:

*People used dried bones and sticks with sharp edges to comb their hair in the olden days. Later, wooden combs were carved from wood. With the aid of sharp stones, combs were fashioned and shaped out of wood (Artist 5, 2023).*

These historical artistic tools and media played vital roles in the lives of the indigenes. They aided in untangling and grooming hair. Figure 45 shows a wooden comb fashioned with a stool on top.

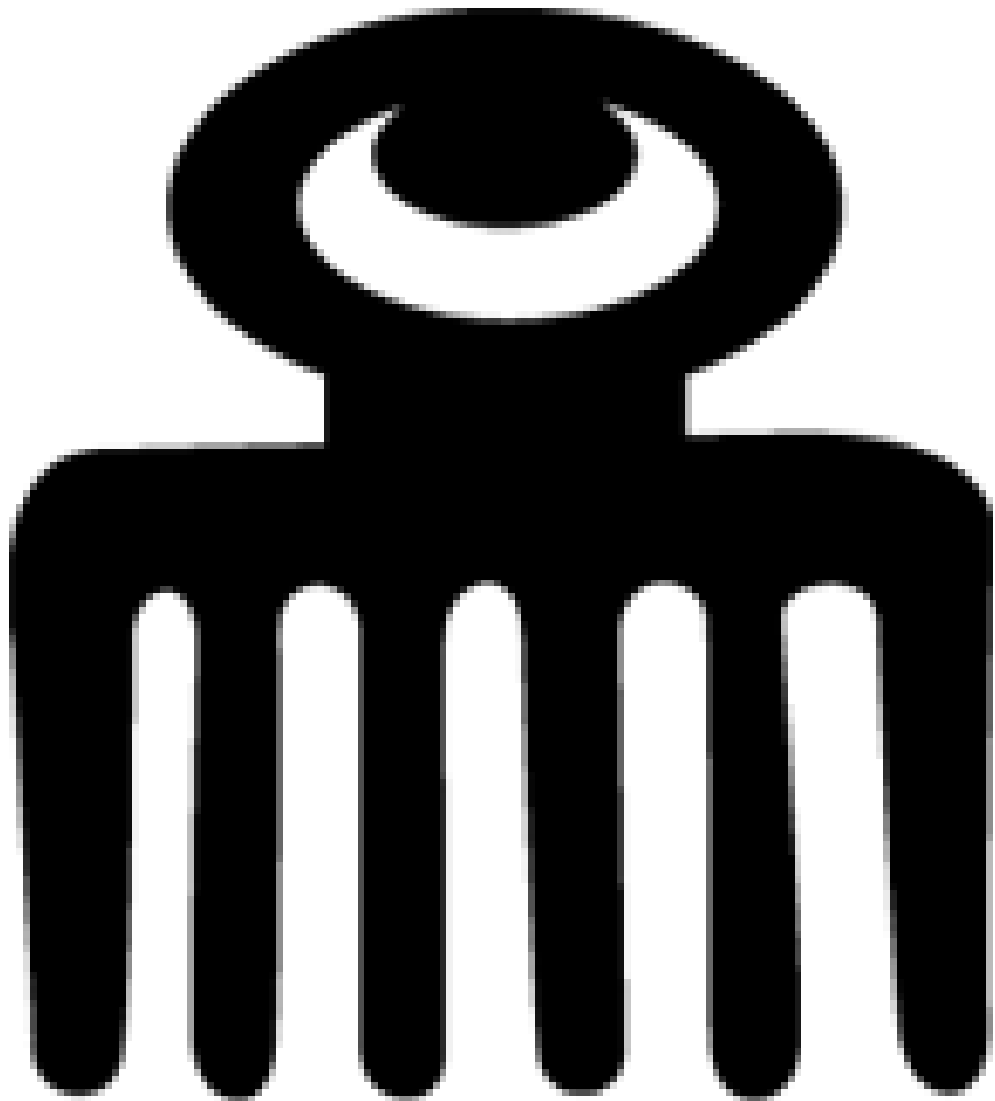


**Figure 45 - Duafe (wooden comb)**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

The regular use of combs led to its incorporation into the Adinkra symbols. This symbol is known as the *duafe* (translating ‘wooden comb’). From

the collection of Adinkra symbols observed on a chart at the Manhyia Palace Museum, *duafe* was identified. The curator explained that the symbol was informed by the indigenous comb. It is characterised with a circle superimposed on top of six straight lines. Figure 46 presents the *duafe*.



**Figure 46 - *Duafe* as an Adinkra symbol**  
**Source - Field survey, Quampah (2023).**

#### **Ceramic figurine of *tirasa ahoma tire***

*Tirasa ahoma tire* can be depicted in the form of a ceramic figurine. This hairdo was observed to depict elements of art as it possesses a natural brownish clay colour. The principle of contrast is also conspicuous as a thin pencil-like

shape appears at the apex which differs from a balloon-like puffy form at the middle. The moulder remains unknown. I understood that some of the materials used in making the ceramic figurine include water, slip and clay. A small knife, foam, cutting wire, scooping tool, metal brush, fork, firewood, heating system, spoon were other identified equipment. Figure 47 shows *tirasa ahoma tire* in the form of a ceramic figurine. It is a single tuft which is moulded to stand upright. The process involved in carrying out the artwork was narrated by Artist 3 as follows:

*Ceramic sculpture is an artform used to preserve some of the indigenous Asante hairstyles. It reflects some elements and principles of art. In carrying out the artwork process, extracted clay is mixed with water and pounded. Later the clay is kneaded on a board to remove impurities in order to make it durable and workable. With the aid of an armature, the clay is fashioned into tirasa ahoma tire. This is followed by using a knife to cut surfaces so that the detailed shape can come out clearly. The next process involves scooping, foaming and firing (Artist 3, 2023).*

It can be inferred from the above that ceramic art is another way by which the values of the Asantes are preserved. The elements, principles, media and tools are present in the art work. The main medium used is clay. Exposure to fire hardens the clay and keeps it durable.





**Figure 47 - A ceramic figurine of *tirasa ahoma tire***  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

Data show some suggestions which could further enhance the flourishing of the art industry. Organisation of more exhibition shows was proposed. Secondly, the unemployed could learn the skills of ceramic artworks. Benefits could be reaped as a result of this undertaking.

A respondent says:

*Cultural institutions such as Centre for National Culture in collaboration with other interested groups could increase the number of times exhibition shows are organised. This step can enhance more awareness creation, partnerships and expose the artists to larger number of clients. At the moment, exhibition shows are done once in a year and it spans for*

*about a month. Personally I think it is not enough* (Artist 8, 2023).

Another respondent comments:

*The skills of using clay to mould indigenous hairstyles is not difficult to learn. In the course of the moulding we impart skills like the right combination of the elements and principles of art in order to achieve aesthetic effect. People can be encouraged to venture into ceramic art. When many people learn the skills of ceramic art, it will result in the large scale production of more indigenous artworks, which can generate income to help alleviate unemployment challenge in Ghana* (Artust 5, 2023).

In sum, since ceramic figurine constitutes an integral part of art, suggestions were made to promote the sector. They included organisation of exhibition shows and motivating people to learn the skills of ceramic art.

### **Wood sculpture of *tirasa ahoma tire***

Noticeable at the CNCK is a sculpture depicting *tirasa ahoma tire*. A deep brown colour is perceptible on the image. Each hair strand is four (4) inches long. Conspicuously, it is curved to lie down horizontally. It is segmented into eight strands. Figure 48 portrays *tirasa ahoma tire* in the form of a wood sculpture. The tools and materials used in creating the wood sculpture of *tirasa ahoma tire* are different from those used to make ceramic sculpture. The extract below provides data on the origin, tools and medium used to carve *tirasa ahoma tire*:

*The sculptured tirasa ahoma tire was carved by J.R. Ashong in 1980. The tools used in carving it were asene sosowa (a small chipping hoe) and a chisel. It was carved out of osese wood* (SS of CNCK, 2023)

Wood carvings were carried out with the aid of indigenous tools before the advent of modern ones. Wood was the main medium. It gave specific visual forms with unique artistic features.



**Figure 48 - Sculpted *tirasa ahoma tire***

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

#### **Body art of *nsuman nsedie* & *mpesempese***

Elements (such as lines, shapes and colour) and principle (contrast) of art were observed in *nsedie* & *ahunum mpesempese* hairstyle. The *mpesempese* is mostly linear, extending from the root to the nape regions of the head and in some instances even beyond. Oval shapes were observed in the cowries. This hairstyle consist of two main colours – black and white. The *nsedie* (cowries)

form white minority colour in the black majority background and contrast with the black colour of the hair as shown in Figure 49.



**Figure 49 - Body art of *nsuman nsedieƐ mpɛsɛmpɛsɛ***  
Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).

#### **Fibre glass sculpture of *nsuman nsedieƐ mpɛsɛmpɛsɛ***

Observation during the field work shows that fibre glass sculpture is one of the artistic representations of *nsuman nsedieƐ mpɛsɛmpɛsɛ* as shown in Figure 50. Fibre glass sculpture is the process of making statue using glass fibre as the base material. The main technique employed is casting.





**Figure 50-***Nsuman nsedieƐ mpɛsɛmpɛsɛ* in the form of fibre glass sculpture  
Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).

Three main processes are required in fibre glass casting. The first step mostly involves creating a mould and dividing it into two parts. The mould which contains the most and varied details (facial zone) is worked on first. This is followed by the second mould. The process begins by laminating the inner part of the mould. Grease, sheabutter, and other types of oil are the main laminating materials. A respondent comments:

*Before the lamination is done, the mould is cleaned to eliminate every form of dirt. The lamination process involves coating the inner sections of the mould with laminating*

*material. The aim of the coating is to lubricate the surface to enable the finished cast to easily separate itself from the mould. (Artist 3, 2023)*

An examination of the above quote shows that any object which is cast with the aid of a mould must be able to separate itself from the mould. This necessitates the use of laminating materials to make the detachment easy.

The second step requires the construction of two strata. The first stratum is made up of a mixture of resin, smooth powder, accelerator and hardener. The combined material is carefully placed on the details of the laminated mould. It is then allowed to dry. The second stratum requires all the components of the first mixture except the powder. Details of how the second stratum is done is provided by the quote below:

*Prepare a second mixture with resin, accelerator and hardener but without the powder. Place a fibre glass in the mould containing the first stratum. Dub the mixture with brush to soak the fibre in the mould. This process helps to bind the fibre to the first stratum with the powder. When it dries, separate the cast from the mould. Go through the same process with the second mould (Artist 3, 2023).*

In sum, the two layers are the requirement for the second level. The media required for the two layers are the same except the use of powder which is only required during the first stratum.

The third step requires joining the two cast together. The joining is done with the aid of resin, accelerator, hardener and fibre glass. Sand paper is used to smoothen it. The final part is the application of paint. A respondent adds:

*Resin, accelerator, hardener and fibre glass are the main materials required for making fibre glass casting right from*

*the beginning to the end. Painting it makes it appear nicer, however, it is usually optional. A number of people will prefer this art work over others due to its portability, durability and weather resistant (Artist 3, 2023).*

In sum, materials such as glass filaments, resin, accelerator are indispensable components of glass fibre casting. The benefits associated with this artwork usually motivate people to choose this creation over others.

***Puaa, mpuaanu, mpuaansa, mpuaanan and mpuaanum as body art***

Element of shape is present in *puaa* hairdo. It was observed during the field work that the *puaa* hairstyle is in the form of a three-dimensional solid shape, like a mound held in place at the base with a thread or a scrunchie, creating a division between the base and the tuft. Figure 24 presents a *puaa* hairdo which is held together with a scrunchie to depict the principle of unison.

A respondent comments:

*Puaa hairstyle is one of the hairstyles required of the female servants. When you take a close look at it you would notice some artistic features in the hairstyle. Aside the elements of art, the principles of art are also present (Artist 8, 2023).*

Field observations show that *mpuaanu* exhibits some elements (shape) and principles (symmetrical balance and proportion) of art. This hairstyle is a variation of the *puaa* in that the method used in achieving the shapes is the same. The difference is that the *mpuaanu* is of two equal pieces created by a line running from the frontal through the crown to the nape of the scalp. This makes use of the principles of symmetrical balance to divide the hair into two equal halves which is mostly proportional to each other such that they are identical. Figure 25 depicts *mpuaanu* hairdo.

As a variety of *puaa*, *mpuaansa* involves division of the hair into three bundles of similar design as the *puaa*. The three tufts are proportional to each other as depicted in Figure 26. It resembles *bokyea* (a three-legged local earthen cook-stove) used mostly in the rural communities. It is sometimes called a tripod. This type of artwork is called triangular composition, because *mpuaansa* has been arranged on the surface of the head like a trilateral mound. Aesthetically, these hairstyles are sometimes adorned with golden ornaments.

Four equidistant lines are observable on the head of an *mpuaanan* hairstyle. It reveals four positive shapes (tufts) of equal size and length. Like the *mpuaanu*, this hairstyle makes use of the principle of symmetrical balance, with the division of the hair into four equal parts which are mostly proportional to one another, such that they are identical, and each two halves form a symmetry (front-back or right-left) with the other two from whichever angle of view. The re-occurrence of the same shape gives the art work a repetition. Figure 27, portrays *mpuaanan*.

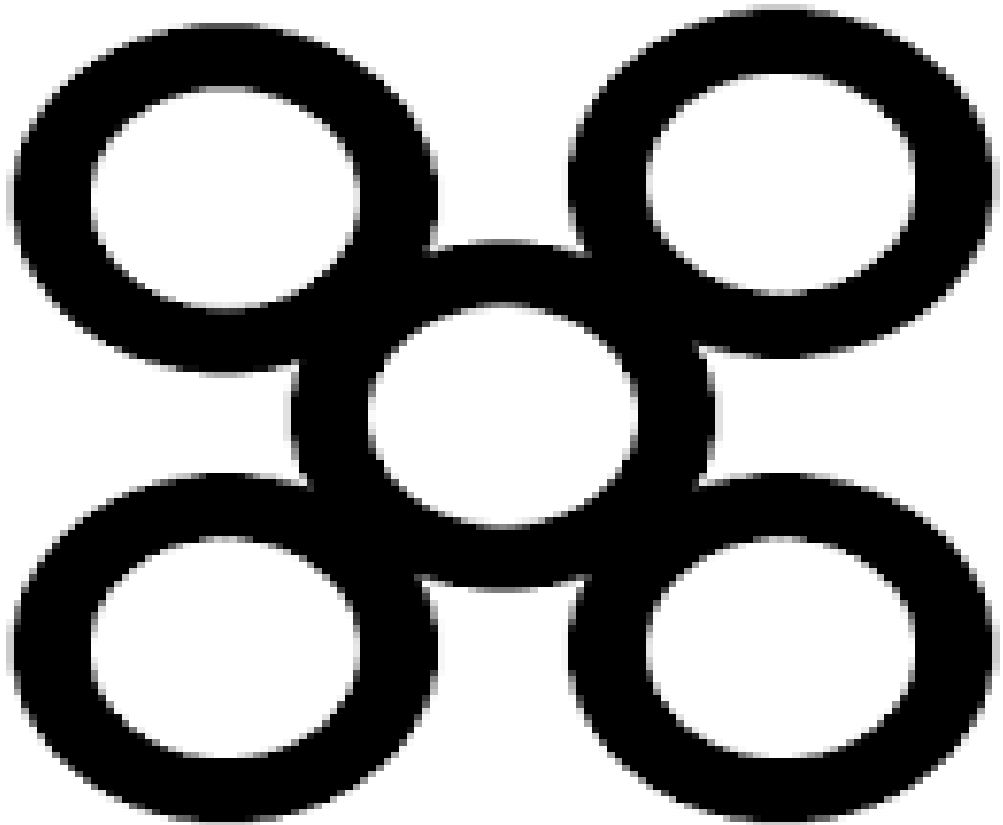
### ***Mpuaanum* as an Adinkra symbol**

From the explanation provided by the Historian at Manhyia Palace, only *mpuaanum* hairstyle is presented in a form of an artistic symbol out of all the *puaa* family of hairstyles. The rest exist only in the form of body art. Figure 51 shows that the symbol *mpuaanum* hairstyle is made up of five circles (depicting five tufts). Also, I identified the *mpuaanum* Adinkra symbol from the collection of Adinkra symbols from a chart at the Manhyia Palace Museum. The quotation below describes the artistic characteristics of *mpuaanum* Adinkra symbol.



*Mpuaanum* symbol was informed by the hairstyle. All the five circles appear black in colour. One tussock is at the centre and surrounded by the remaining four tufts symmetrically with two to the front and the other two to the back (Curator of Manhyia Palace Museum, 2023).

All the five tufts form a circular shape like the other *puaa* family of hairstyles. The image is black in colour. A section of each of the four circles is attached to one circle in the centre. The connection between the circles reveals the principle of visual composition.



**Figure 51 - *Mpuaanum* as an Adinkra symbol**  
Source - Field survey, Quampah (2023).

### ***Adantam tiri nwi* as body art**

The texture of *adantam tiri nwi* is tightly coiled, coarse and wiry. It appears erect as it mostly grows upwards. S-shape coils or Z-shape spirals are visible. It is mostly black in colour.

### **Aesthetics**

Styling the hair aesthetically into diverse shapes is an integral part of art. Aesthetics is understood to mean beauty of the hairstyles. Participants identified some characteristics which reveal the splendor of aesthetics. The characteristics are discussed under three sub-thematic areas: colour, good arrangements and good dieting.

As regards the colour of a hairstyle, the main colour which is culturally required in the dyeing of some of the indigenous hairstyles like the *dansinkran* is black. This colour illuminates the beauty of the haircut. The black dye is traditionally produced as the ingredients used, are obtained from the immediate environment. A respondent explains how colour relates to the beauty of indigenous hairstyles:

*Natural materials can be combined to make indigenous hair dyes. Aside making the hair to be shiny, it also heals the scalp. The main pigment used in dyeing hair, traditionally, is the black colour which is made from locally prepared natural media devoid of chemical constituents (Artist 5, 2023).*

To sum up, black colour, which is created from locally prepared media, (namely shea butter, charcoal and soot) is typically the main pigment used when dyeing some indigenous hairstyles. The dye makes hair beautiful and healthy. There are no chemical components in it.

The arrangement of hair also unveils its aesthetic values. An example is *mpuaanan* which is of Asante origin. I understood that this hairstyle is sometimes looked down upon by some members of the society. Therefore, some female servants who make *mpuaanan* have to cover them with scarves since it is not nice enough to be viewed by the public. Other interviewees, on the contrary, reiterated and emphasised that, if it is presentably done on the scalp, there would not be the need to hide the style. Hence, a lot of skills, innovation and creativity is required to make the style. Figure 52 shows *mpuaanan* which has been arranged and styled in a linear form.



**Figure 52 - *Mpuaanan* creatively styled**  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

The respondents also explained that eating diet with all the required nutrients present in the food does not only revitalise the human system, but also nourishes the hair for healthy and beautiful natural hair growth devoid of breakages and diseases. A hairstylist threw more light on the dieting and its relationship with hair health.

*Green leafy vegetables and fruits are essential in maintaining a healthy hair as it enhances hair growth and minimises fungal and bacterial infections. I must say that, aside consuming the food orally, some can be applied to the scalp* (Hairstylist 2, 2023).

In examining the factors which can promote aesthetics, dieting cannot be overlooked. Hence, good hair grooming also requires appropriate eating habits.

### **Discussions of Results on the Visual Art Forms of Indigenous Hairstyles**

A greater percentage of the components of this research is based on natural objects which Kant (1790) describes as the purest. When it comes to preservation of culture, Kant (1790) also perceives visual art as the best in that direction. This study reveals different types of indigenous hairstyles among Asantes and are presented in various art forms (body art, sculptures, ceramic figurine and Adinkra symbols). The elements, principles, tools and media of these artforms are discussed in relation to already existing conceptual and theoretical reviews.

Some of the elements of art identified in indigenous Asante hairstyles include shapes, lines, colours, texture and space. The main shape which runs throughout the indigenous hairstyles designs is geometric shapes. Shapes like a rectangle in *ntitabo*, a triangle in the *sepow* and an oval in the *trasa ahoma tire* were noticed during the field work.

The present data show some artistic elements of lines. While the *Gyawu atiko* shows both spiral and parallel lines, the *mpesempese* presents only parallel lines. The *obi nka obi* reveals twelve (12) irregular thick lines surrounding a central thick wavy line. According to Weitz (2001), different types of lines like continuous, broken, vertical, jagged and horizontal drastically enhance the psychology of the artwork in hairstyles, thereby greatly impacting the viewer.

Element of colour was also noticed during the field work. The main colours prevalent throughout the hairstyles ranges from dark brown to black. In the *dansinkran body art*, black appears glossy due to the presence of sheabutter. Other colours were detected in other indigenous hairstyles among other African countries during literature reviews. For instance, Sherrow (2023) opines that adolescent of the Pokot in Kenya usually smear their braids with ochre or natural clay with the colour varying from light yellow to brown or red during the initial stages of their puberty rite. This gives the braid a brownish or red colour. Brownish pigment seems to be a predominant colour in most of the sculptured hairstyles. For instance, the current data show that the wood sculpture of *tirasa ahoma tire* is deep brown in colour while the ceramic figurine of the same hairstyle portrays a light brown colour. Fibre glass casting of *nsuman nsodie* *mpesempese* also appears brown and white. The texture of the body art of all the indigenous Asante hairstyles are hard and rough. In corroboration with this, Robinson (2011) stresses that the texture of the African hair appears denser, tightly coiled, coarse and shorter as compared to the Western hair which is silkier, straighter and smoother. Likewise, some scholars are of the view that the hair texture is frequently non-glossy, kinky and dry, with a matte appearance (Johnson, 1997; Teri, 2010). Data show that combing this type of hair is difficult

due to its highly knotted structure, making hair maintenance difficult. In line with this, Johnson (1997) indicates that grooming operations for African hair require more significant force than grooming procedures for hair of other continents. Kamath, Dansizer and Weigmann (1984) also posit that, hair texture of other continents appears silkier. Moreover, positive, negative, shallow and three-dimensional spaces/shapes were employed in most of the art works.

The principles of proportion, pattern, emphasis, variety, harmony and gradation were observed in some of the hairstyles during the field work. The *Gyawu atikɔ* shows two proportionally equal rectangles. Proportion was employed when trimming *ahenfo ti ho were*, as uniformity was enhanced in all the parts of the hair, making the head to symmetrically balance. *Mpuaanu* and *mpuaanan* were proportionally tied. The created lines between them are equidistant to each other. Patterns were seen in the *trasa ahoma tire* as the bottom and apex were covered with thread, while the middle part remains threadless. A mirror reflexive pattern prevails in the *Gyawu atikɔ* hairstyle creating symmetrical balance. In line with this, Zhao et al. (2014) posit that symmetrical balance is achieved when images in an artwork are equally distributed. The *nkotimsefompuaa* has a pattern of four curved lines with a common centre. Though the *nkotimsefompuaa* is a haircut, the pattern resembles the *suku* braids of Nigeria to some extent as both styles are also arranged around a common centre (Ajíbóyè et al., 2018).

The principle of emphasis was employed in some of the haircuts, as the main designs (a small round tuft of hair) is elevated on the head by contrasting it with the negative sections (clean-shaven). For instance, the *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* is emphasised at the occiput of the head with the aim of catching

viewers' attention. Consequently, the *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* is shaped with the concept of emphasis as the focal principle. Similarly, Sherrow (2023) stresses that the Kuramo men of Nigeria are recognised by their partially shaved heads with just one tuft of hair on top of their heads. The difference is that while the *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* is located at the occiput, that of the Kuramo men is located at the mid-point of the head. Moreover, cowries are unevenly distributed on *nsuman nsedieɛ mpesempesɛ* to create a visual diversity principle of art. The linear patterns connecting to oval shapes in *obi nka obi* hairstyle are dissimilar in length, yet they are joined at the central point in harmony. The main idea is the unity which is created at the central part of the object. Hence, through the principle of rhythm, the viewer's eye will navigate within this piece of artwork to the focal point. Gradation is seen in *dansinkran* as a shorter height of hair appears at the peripheral while a longer length is visible at the crown region.

Techniques and tools were conspicuous in the visual artworks (indigenous Asante hairstyles). For instance, the technique employed in wood carving involves drawing a reference line on a wood. The line serves as a guide in shaping or fashioning the requisite shape. The negative portion of the wood is subtracted while the positive part stands out. For tools, contrary to some perceptions, pencils are not only dominant during paper works but they also play key roles in wood work, particularly in sketching the contour line to cut. Rattray (1927) identifies other local carving tools like *fifiye* (awl), *soso paye* (a hoe for splitting) and *pewa* (a kind of chisel).

On the other hand, tools which are usually employed in carrying out the indigenous haircut on the human body are the *yiwan*, calico, comb and neck liner. The use of indigenous sharp implements in hair cutting which were

noticed during the field work, harmonises with Essah's (2008) research, in which he pointed out that the indigenous people were shaving of some parts of their hair long before the introduction of scissors. Schmidt (1926) also highlights that the primary tools for shaping and teasing the indigenous hair of the African is comb and razor which appeared in various forms. Contrary to the perception of some researchers like Spengane, Korsman, Mkentane, Davids, Zemanay, Africa and Khumalo (2018) the field work unfolded that traditional forms of sterilisation of implements existed before the introduction of modern ones. Indigenously, these tools were sterilised in boiling water or water vapour before the advent of modern forms of sterilisation. Unlike the haircut implements which relied mainly on physical purification in order to safeguard the lives of the users, both spiritual and physical measures were carried out to avoid being hurt by the wood carving implements.

Besides, when art is mentioned many people's attention is tuned to the conventional medium where wood, stone or clay are used to produce various images or where paintings and drawings are done on various inanimate surfaces. Art is not limited to only these media. It goes beyond that to include cowries, charcoal, shea butter and plant soot. A case in point is its usage in the *dansinkran* haircut. After the hair is clipped into a moonlike shape, the next process involves blackening the hair using indigenous visual substances. This point is justified by Asenso (2019). According to him, the putting of mixed local substances in the hair is a widespread practice in Africa. This corroborates the field work as traditional hair products like *nkoto* (sheabutter), *pupunuwisie* (soot), *bidie* (charcoal) and *ahina akyi tuntum* (blackened part of a pot) were used to blacken the *dansinkran* hairstyle. My study of different cultures through literature across



the continent of Africa reveals some level of resemblance to each other. A cross cultural examination of the indigenous aesthetics of the *dansinkran* hairstyle of the Asantes, the *erembe* hairstyles of the Himba ethnic group of Namibia and the *goscha* hairstyle of the Hamar ethnic group of Ethiopia reveal the ingenuity of the African's ability to use the natural artistic materials within their immediate environment to beautify their hair. Asenso (2019) stresses that soot and charcoal obtained from firewood is used to blacken and beautify their royal hairstyle. In a similar vein, red clay and goat fat found in their immediate environment, according to Cole (2012), are used by the Himba to adorn their hair. Other media they use include thread and raffia.

So long as this research is concerned, the surface on which these body art forms are carried out is the head. The head usually consists of *adantam tiri nwi*. *Adantam tiri nwi* is achieved by allowing the hair to grow into an average length. The hair length facilitates accurate cutting of the *dansinkran* to the right dimension or proportion. By implication, an amount of hair length is required to achieve a precise shape of the *dansinkran* haircut. Likewise, most indigenous Asante haircuts make use of this hair surface. On the other hand, most of the sculptured hairstyles were done on wood surfaces.

The current study found that, among the *Puaa* hairstyles of the Asantes, only *mpuaanum* hairstyle is presented in a form of an artistic symbol. This means that, less attention is being given to the other *puaa* family hairstyles (*puaa*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaansa*, *mpuaanan*). The possible reason behind this finding could be that, the artistic representation of the *mpuaanum* hairstyle among the Asantes, particularly worn by traditional priestesses and some palace servants might be influenced by cultural or religious significance associated

with these roles. The distinctive nature of the *mpuaanum* hairstyle might hold symbolic importance in conveying a specific status, authority or spiritual role which may not be as pronounced in the other “*puaa*” hairstyles worn by female servants. The current findings could reflect the cultural nuances and hierarchical structures within the Asante society. However, the current findings contrast that of Kant (1790) recommendation that most indigenous hairstyles should be preserved in an artform. The implications of the current findings are that, there is a possibility of the other *puaa* hairstyles going extinct if prompt actions are not put in place to represent them in an artform.

### **Chapter Summary**

In conclusion, for a hairstyle to be classified as art, it must possess a number of cardinal features. Some of them include artistic elements, principles, tools and media. These features were conspicuous in all the hairstyles discovered during the field survey.

## CHAPTER SIX

### IDENTITY AND SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS ASANTE

#### HAIRSTYLES

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how indigenous Asante hairstyles communicate identity and symbolism. The findings are presented based on observations and series of in-depth interviews during the field survey. This is followed by discussions of the results.

#### **Findings on Identity and Symbolism of Indigenous Asante Hairstyles**

Observation shows that indigenous Asante hairstyles make people unique. They also represent values enshrined in Asante culture. Results regarding the identity and symbolic representation of indigenous hairstyles (haircuts and hairdos) among the Asantes are documented and presented in the following sub-sections.

#### **Identity and symbolism of indigenous Asante haircuts**

Indigenous haircuts such as *dansinkran*, *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa*, *ahenfo ti ho were*, *ntitabo*, *sepow*, *obi nka obi*, *Gyawu atikɔ*, *nkotimsefompuaa* and *okunafoɔ ti-yi* were discovered during the field work to possess unique identities and symbolism. In the following sub-sections, the identity and symbolism associated with each haircut is explained.

#### **Identity and cultural symbolism of *dansinkran***

In-depth interviews revealed that the *dansinkran* is mostly identified with female royals (queens) and their royal entourage as well as prominent females elevated to traditionally recognised queenship positions (such as *Krontihemaa*, *Ankobeahemaa*, *Tufohemaa*), *bragorɔ* initiates and some traditional priestesses. The eight queens of this current study provided the

majority of the data about the relevance of *dansinkran* haircut with respect to the queens of Asanteman. These symbols connote social status, ethics and customs.

*Dansinkran*, in the Asante cultural setup, indicates the social status of the wearer as belonging to the higher ruling class. It is a mark of leadership. Hence, the *dansinkran* haircut is one of the key features required of female royals before they can be eligible to be enstooled. The haircut constitutes a cardinal element of the entire regalia. It attracts easy recognition and respect. A respondent has this to say on the social status:

*Dansinkran reveals the position of the wearers. This haircut is usually peculiar to female rulers and helps in quick identification so that the queens are accorded the due courtesies during functions and even in the general society. Also, without dansinkran a woman cannot ascend the throne (Queen 2, 2023).*

In sum, *dansinkran* is one of the factors which portray the social rank of Asante queens. It attracts recognition and respect. It is a necessary tradition to enable a queen to be enthroned.

Ethically, appearing publicly in *dansinkran* haircut usually alerts queens that people are watching them and, therefore, they must comport themselves well. A queen is supposed to live a good life that would portray her as a good figurehead among members in her community. This was confirmed by a respondent who is also a queen:

*As a queen, once you step out in dansinkran haircut, a lot of eyes will be on you. As a result people expect you to be of good behaviour. You cannot engage in public brawls no matter the extent of provocation. So the haircut plays a role*

*in causing us to be conscious of what we are doing* (Queen 5, 2023).

To conclude, when a queen appears in public in *dansinkran* haircut, she usually knows that people are watching her and that she ought to act appropriately. A queen is expected to lead a decent life that positions her as a positive role model for others in her local area and even beyond.

Customarily, with the *dansinkran* haircut, one can enjoy the honour of being carried in a palanquin. The past and the current queens wear the *dansinkran* haircut before sitting in the palanquin. This assertion was confirmed by two interviews as follows:

*History has it that since the inception of dansinkran, most queens have been seen in dansinkran while in their various palanquins. It is a taboo to sit in a palanquin in any other hairstyle apart from dansinkran. Nana Ama Serwaa Nyarko II, who ruled from 1945 to 1977, was a queen who loved to wear dansinkran most of the time, particularly while in the palanquin* (Queen 8, 2023).

Another respondent says:

*Sitting in a palanquin while in the dansinkan is a customary practice which has been transmitted from one generation to the other. Recently, during the Aday kesse, which happened on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December 2022, Nana Konadu Yiadom III, the current Asentehemaa, was carried in a palanquin to the durbar ground while in dansinkran haircut* (Queen 5, 2023).

Wearing *dansinkran* among queens before mounting a palanquin has a long history in the Asante culture. The *dansinkran* hairstyle is among the obligatory requirements for queens who mount a palanquin. The use of *dansinkran* is the routine for all queens who sit in palanquins.

Another customary practice is that, *dansinkran* hairstyle is used as a way of showing the last respect to a departed high-ranking royal. Its use is compulsory during the mourning of high-ranking royals. Figure 53 portrays queens in *dansinkran* during the funeral of a royal in Kumasi.



**Figure 53 - Queens in *dansinkran* during a funeral of a royal**  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

Observation during the field work revealed that the *akyeame* (spokespersons) of the *ahemaa* (queens) are supposed to adopt the *dansinkran* hairstyle. It was explained that the spokespersons act on behalf of the queens. *Dansinkran* haircut, is more or less like a linguist staff. Sometimes, even without the indigenous outfit, when *akyeame* (spokespersons) are sent on errands, be it official or unofficial, once the hairstyle is seen, it communicates

and alerts people to attend to them promptly. Spokesperson 1 of Queen 5 confirmed this observation:

*Some time ago, I was sent on an errand. That day, I just decided to be in a scarf. When I got to my destination in the name of the queen [Queen mother 5], the people started doubting my credibility as a messenger of the queen. There and then, I had to validate my position by untying my scarf. Without any further delay, my demand was granted (Spokesperson 1, 2023).*

The *dansinkran* haircut is also identified with the spokespersons of the queens. The spokespersons enjoy certain privileges and recognitions as a result of the haircut.

In addition, in the view of Queen 4, the adaptation of the *dansinkran* extends to cover all females occupying positions or offices at the palaces. Not all of them belong to the royal family, but it is required of them to adorn themselves with the *dansinkran* hairstyle. The position conferred on some of them is based on merits while others are selected from some of the eight families/clans of the Asante kingdom. Some of these workers, include the following: *krontihemaa, ankobeahemaa, tufohemaa, Asafohemaa, Manwherehemaa, sanahemaa, adontenhemaa, kyidomhemaa, nifahemaa, benkumhemaa, Akyempimhemaa, mankradohemaa, dwantuahemaa, nsumankwahemaa and nkosuohemaa*. Symbolically, the *dansinkran* haircut provides reverence to these people as office holders in the palaces of the queens. Though different categories of people wear the *dansinkran*, the Asantehemaa's dressing like her necklaces and anklets distinguishes her from the others who wear the same haircut.

A respondent comments:

*What differentiates the ahemaa (queens) from other people is the ornaments (like necklaces, bracelets and anklets) which go with the haircut (Queen 4, 2023).*

Again, in-depth interviews revealed that the *dansinkran* hairstyle is temporarily adorned by some teenagers during the final stage of their *bragorɔ* (puberty) rite. During this period, the girls' hairs are shaped in the form of a moon. Based on the explanations provided by the queens, the symbolism of this haircut has social and moral connotation.

Socially, data gathered revealed that the *dansinkran* haircut for *bragorɔ* initiates provides ladies with a prestigious queenly treatment for preserving their chastity up to this stage. The desire for parents to have their children go through the queenly treatment made them constantly keep an eye on the decent development of their girls.

Morally, the prestige attached to this haircut, serves to encourage girls yet to reach the puberty stage to aspire to moral purity. Thus, sex before marriage, which can result in teenage pregnancy, is avoided. One queen provides the significance of the puberty rites as follows:

*The dansinkran haircut is a key component of the bragorɔ initiation rite. It is a great honour to the girls. It is done to climax the occasion. It happens once in their life time. The dansinkran haircut and other glamorous activities that go with the ceremony cause the girls to become examples to younger girls yet to attain the age of puberty (Queen 6, 2023).*

To conclude, adaptation of the *dansinkran* haircut among the puberty rite initiates reveals both social and moral significance. Unlike the queens and other



office holders, the haircutting is done only once in the life time of the puberty rite initiates.

The *dansinkran*, as was gathered from the field study, is identified among some indigenous priestesses in Asanteman. The hairstyle is usually trimmed by their attendants who learn the skill during their period of *akomsuammre* (apprenticeship). As regards the symbolism, from the data collected, *dansinkran* originated as a symbol of mourning among the Asantes. In the olden days, when the indigenes could not write, *dansinkran* became the symbol with which some traditional priestesses reminded themselves and their communities of the Katamanso war (i.e., outcome of the Katamanso war). Consequently, I understood that in an attempt to preserve the culture of the Asantes, some indigenous priestesses of Asanteman still maintain the *dansinkran* hairstyle up to date. In the priestly profession, it represents one of a very high status.

The social significance of the materials (sheabutter, charcoal and soot) used in making the indigenous dye were also noted during the field work. The two extracts below throw more light on the significance of these local products.

*Sheabutter is helpful in a number of ways. It signifies physical, emotional and spiritual healing. Therefore, it was used in order to heal the Asantes of the bitterness they experienced during their defeat by the people of Nkran [Accra] (Queen 2, 2023).*

*Charcoal and soot have the potency of cleansing and driving evil forces away. Therefore, the aim of applying the charcoal or soot was to purify themselves just in case their defeat was as a result of incurring the anger of the gods so they could be forgiven and fortified. This is to enable them drive away any*

*evil forces and outside dangers which may contribute to their defeat in the subsequent wars (Historian, 2023).*

In summary, an examination of the above citations show that the efficacy of the media (materials) used in making indigenous dyes is not only limited to the physical benefits but it extends to embrace the emotional and the spiritual as well. While sheabutter heals, charcoal and soot purify.

It was discovered from the field data that the roundness symbolises unity and reoccurrence of events. With respect to unity, a respondent has this to say:

*The choice of roundness was intended to communicate to the Asante community that even though they come from different clans, they should still stay together all the time. They must be united even in difficult times such as the loss of the battle of Dodowa (Queen 2, 2023).*

To conclude, the choice of shapes sometimes depends on the kind of message people want to communicate. As regards Asantes, the round shape was chosen to constantly remind themselves of the need to remain united at all times.

Likewise, the roundness of the haircut signifies a possible reoccurrence of a future war, hence, the need to always be on their guard. A respondent says the following on a possible reoccurrence of war:

*In fact, other battles occurred even before the battle of Dodowa (the aftermath of this battle gave rise to the dansinkran haircut). In fact, the chances of more wars happening was high. There was, therefore, the need for Asantes to be reminded from time to time by showcasing this circular haircut so that the indigenes can always prepare themselves and to present a more united front to combat any further external attacks (Chief 3, 2023).*

In sum, the choice of certain shapes portrayed the significance of Asante's notion and culture. The roundness of the *dansinkran* haircut educated public about unity and the need to take precautionary measures in order to safeguard against the possible reoccurrence of any unfortunate event.

### **Identity and symbolism of *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa***

I was made to understand that the category of people who are identified with this type of hairstyle are the puberty rite initiates. This haircut is carried out as part of the first phase of the initiation rite. The symbolism of this haircut is discussed under social and economic perspectives.

Socially, the findings from Queen 6 show that it brings respect, honour and prestige to the girls' families since failure to provide the resources will bring an embarrassment to the families. The girls have peace of mind to go through the rite when the resources are provided.

Economically, the main significance of *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa*, as was explained by respondents, is to provide opportunity for friends, guardians and loved ones to contribute something, either in the form of cash or kind, to the puberty rite initiates before the protruding part of the hair will be shaved off. The hairstyle is considered sacred. Therefore, only a designated elderly woman has the customary right to shave it off.

A respondent says:

*The continued existence of the hair shows that the relatives are in debt. The money raised and the donations provided are used to finance the activities of the puberty rite. Most families and friends will not be happy to see their initiates in that hairstyle for a long period so they quickly organise themselves in order to mobilise money to contribute towards the fund (Historian, 2023).*

Another respondent indicates:

*The need to enable some parents to be more responsible necessitated this type of haircut. The celebration of puberty rites is supposed to be a joint effort between the indigenous elderly women of Asanteman and the relatives of the initiates ... (Queen 8, 2023).*

In sum, relatives are required to provide resources for the celebration of the initiation rite. This was a mandatory requirement to enable the *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* haircut to be shaved off. The provision of the requisite fund also served as a startup capital to enable the *mmabunu* (adolescent virgin girls) to learn a craft like pottery.

### **Identity and symbolism of *ahenfo ti ho were* (chiefs' haircut)**

It was gathered from the field that the *ahenfo ti ho were* is identified with the Asantehene, *amanhene* (paramount chiefs) and other categories of chiefs in the Asante kingdom. The clean-shaven haircut together with other regalia (like cloth, footwear, bracelet and anklets) helps in the easy identification of the chiefs aside the crown. Based on the explanations provided by the respondents, the significance of this haircut is discussed under spirituality, hygiene, fitness and social perspectives.

The spiritual symbolism associated with this haircut which was uncovered during the field work stressed on submissiveness on the part of the traditional leaders in relation to the divinity. The kings mediate between the living and the ancestors in such a hairstyle. The hairstyle reveal virtues like humility while in the presence of their ancestors. This act attracts the attention of the ancestors better. A respondent has this to say:

*Kingship requires submissiveness to the ancestors. One of the ways of demonstrating such submissiveness is through the wearing of a clean-shaven hair. Even approaching the stool room in such a hairstyle is an ideal thing to do as a chief (Chief 2, 2023).*

A second respondent adds that:

*Just as sandals are removed in some instances before approaching an object of worship, ahenfo ti ho were is an act of reverence to the ancestors (Chief 4, 2023).*

To conclude, the symbolism of *ahenfo ti ho were* could be religious and sacred. It enables chiefs to have an effective interaction with the ancestors.

Regarding the maintenance of hygiene, data show that the chiefs haircut (*ahenfo ti ho were*) makes the chiefs clean. They appear presentable before their subjects. They are public figures so they must appear decent and neat all the time. For instance, how one appears after confinement matters a lot to a number of chiefs in Asanteman. A respondent confirms this claim by saying that:

*As part of the activities to enhance the effective performance of the kingship roles, the traditional male rulers of Asanteman, are confined for forty days to enable them learn the customs associated with the throne. During the period of confinement, the length of their hair and beard increases and becomes unkempt. This is usually the case because their hairs are not supposed to be shaved during the period of seclusion. Shaving occurs after the forty days just to maintain cleanliness. To some, it is an opportunity for their baldness to be covered (Queen 2, 2023).*

In conclusion, the chiefs' haircut (*ahenfo ti ho were*) helps in maintaining decency among traditional male rulers. Good grooming is a characteristic feature of chiefs.

With reference to fitness, overgrown hair does not allow a crown, which one is already used to wearing, to fit perfectly on their head. *Ahenfo ti ho were* enables the crown to successfully fit the head at all times. This corresponds to the respondent's comments below:

*With a clean shaven hairstyle, the head is smooth enough to contain crowns. So one crown can be used for a long time. Wearing a crown on a bushy hair does not even appear nice* (Chief 1, 2023).

*Ahenfo ti ho were* portrays a physical significance. The way the hair is trimmed allows the head to always fit the crown.

Socially, I was made to understand that the shaving symbolises renunciation of activities in the past and continuous total allegiance to the kingship roles. It signifies freedom from any undesirable traits of the past and moving on to a future full of newness, nobility and leadership.

One respondent has this to say on the social significance:

*The haircutting symbolises freshness and headship. Nomination, selection, enstoolment and rulership processes involve certain rituals and ceremonies of which consistent hair trimming is part. The hair shaving allows easy recognition and acceptance by society* (Chief 3, 2023).

Another respondent supports this claim as follows:

*Some of the key festivals among the Asantes include Awukudae and Akwasidae. It is usually expected of chiefs to shave their hair a day or two before the ceremony in order to mark these events. It periodically reminds and gingers them in the performance of their kingship roles* (A Historian, 2023).

To sum up, the *ahenfo ti ho were* is worn by chiefs of Asante kingdom throughout the period of their ruling. This is due to the symbolic meaning attached to

the haircut. The *ahenfo ti ho* were causes an individual to break ties with old practices in order to be persistently reminded and to work towards a new life of authority and rulership.

### **Identity and symbolism of *ntitabo***

*Ntitabo* was also noticed during the field work. It was observed that the *ntitabo* haircut is identified with executioners. Current findings show that, at the time of the field work only one respondent had trimmed this type of haircut. A respondent comments on the symbolism of *ntitabo*:

*Ntitabo hairstyle is also referred to as abrafo sima. Sima means minutes in Twi. Sima is associated with the hairstyle because it is so simple that it can be shaved within few minutes. It also teaches a moral lesson that procrastination and delay in carrying out a task can have serious repercussions on the advancement of an individual (Historian, 2023).*

In sum, because of how easy and quick it is to trim and design this style in a matter of minutes, *sima* is linked to this particular haircut. Additionally, it imparts values.

### **Identity and symbolism of *sepow***

I understood from the field study that *sepow* is a haircut usually worn by executioners. Socially, *sepow* represents an executioner's sword which deters people from unacceptable behaviours. Politically, it teaches the public that laws are necessary in governing a people. Individuals are to endeavour to refrain from all forbidden acts within the society. Similarly, members within the community are obliged to observe all indigenous laws. Failure to abide by such laws can cause an individual to face the full rigours of the law. Also, it educates the public on the need for justice to prevail in all situations.

A respondent says:

*People who went contrary to the laws of the land were punished. For instance, criminals had sepow driven through their cheeks. Usually, people who were sentenced to death were transfixed this way in order to prevent them from invoking curses upon the king. The sepow haircut symbolises justice (Executioner 3, 2023).*

To sum up, the *sepow* haircut provides significant education to the public. It teaches people about the need to refrain from criminal activities in society.

### **Identity and symbolism of *obi nka obi***

*Obi nka obi* was noticed during an *Akwasidae* festival, where few palace male servants of Asantehene and the servants of other paramount chiefs known as *ahenkwa* had designed their hair in this hairstyle. It means that the haircut has not totally gone extinct from the Asante society. The views of the historian concerning the symbolism of this hairstyle have been presented under communal and environmental domain.

Communally, the *obi nka obi* symbol, which translates as ‘bite not one another’, represents harmony. It connotes the idea that living in peace with each other facilitates easy accomplishments of tasks at the king’s palace. The linear shape of the haircut appears irregular. A respondent had this to say about the significance of the irregularity of the shape:

*The irregularity of the image indicates that we may have differences in status, ages, family backgrounds, educational attainments and opinion, yet, we must learn to accommodate and respect one another (Historian, 2023).*

An examination of the above extract reveals that, the sizes and lengths of the extended lines on the haircut design are not the same. It follows that the talents,



capabilities and strengths of people in every group may not be similar. Irrespective of the differences in competences, people must learn to accommodate and tolerate one another for the sake of peace

Environmentally, explanations from the historian of Manhyia Palace, show that the haircut symbolises the respect that must be accorded the environment. It means that human beings must not litter around unnecessarily. Rubbish needs to be dropped off appropriately.

Due to the significance of *obi nka obi*, some of the servants and a chief made the following recommendation which can cause the palace attendants and others to appreciate the values associated with it more. A respondent says:

*Perhaps through documentaries, videos, durbars, social media and community meetings, such information can be made available for us to learn. This will enable the present generation to appreciate our culture better and it will enhance people's critical thinking capabilities* (Male Servant 3, 2023)

A respondent adds that:

*Since obi nka obi teaches peaceful co-existence, knowledge about this fact can foster unity in promoting nation-building. The servants should continually be made to portray this haircut periodically. It can attract tourists. Also, during cultural activities like the various rites of passage, efforts should be made to imbibe this culture in our youth* (Chief 1, 2023).

A respondent says:

*I think it is interesting and should be part of our curricular. This will help us gain more insight into Asante culture. Also, indigenous club societies can be formed in schools for such information to be impacted. The linkage of hairstyles to*

*cultural practices can be learnt by the present generation so that they can also associate hairstyle with events so as to avoid loss of valuable information* (Female servant 2, 2023).

The desire to get to know more about the nature and relevance of the haircut is expressed in the various provided extracts. This can promote harmony.

### **Identity and symbolism of *Gyawu atikɔ***

It was observed that the *Gyawu atikɔ* haircut is usually worn by some Asante war generals. With this haircut, it is easy to recognise an individual as a war general. As I was informed, *Gyawu atikɔ* teaches the public about valour, service to the community and unity.

As regards valour, this haircut educates the public that the generals have the political power and authority to issue certain measures and orders. Since the war generals have military prowess, they impact their skills on the watch dog committee members and the *abrafoɔ* (translate “executioners”).

Concerning service, the symbol signifies that, roles in society are not limited to war generals alone. For instance, just as Asantehene (king of Asanteman) sometimes delegates the war generals to represent him at important gatherings and also engage in the settlement of disputes, members of the public are also required to be committed to their services or responsibilities no matter where they find themselves.

The spring-like section of the design symbolises unending unity. This informs the community that with togetherness, their society will experience progress.

### **Identity and symbolism of *nkotimsefompuaa***

From the interviews conducted, participants said that the *nkotimsefompuaa* is a type of haircut worn by female court attendants or

servants (*nkotimsefoɔ*) of the queens' palaces. It resembles the talons of an eagle. Data gathered from the queens and female servants of this study shows that *nkotimsefompuaa* teaches the public about risk taking, leadership and cautiousness.

As regards risk taking, maximum utilisation of one's strength and power during perilous circumstances results in far reaching consequences. For instance, the eagle's talons reflect the need to successfully utilise the things of this earth. I further understood that similar to how eagles risk themselves for the survival of their families, servants must not be afraid to put themselves on the line. One female servant says:

*The symbolic representation of our roles in the form of a haircut (nkotimsefompuaa) provides education to us (servants), as well as the entire public. Nkotimsefoɔ (female servants) who are willing to take risks, while staying loyal and determined, are sometimes noticed and rewarded accordingly (Female servant 4, 2023).*

Another respondent adds that:

*Risk taking requires consistency and commitment to one's community. The symbol encourages people to stay faithful to their country and society and to serve it with the highest dignity and respect (Female servant 8, 2023).*

Just as eagles use their talons or claws which are curved and razor-sharp to risk themselves for the survival of their families, one must not be afraid to utilise his or her capabilities to accomplish any requisite task in life.

In addition to the linkage of the qualities of *nkotimsefompuaa* to the risk taking of the servants, it also portrays the capabilities of leaders. Successful leaders are fearless. Queens are expected to face problems head on. It was

gathered that no matter the size of a problem, a good leader attacks it without regard for themselves or running away from them.

A respondent says:

*We, the queens are expected to be bold and courageous in the discharge of our managerial and administrative roles. The representation of our boldness in the form of the talon of an eagle always serves as a reminder to us of the need to be brave. The servants are made to portray this type of haircut because of the symbolism associated with it (Queen 4, 2023).*

An examination of the foregoing words reveals that as a result of the significance of the eagle talons, queens and chiefs will not be afraid because their instinct is to protect the stool as well as that which they love and cherish. The reason is that others take note of the passion and determination of the queens and draw strength from their bravery.

Furthermore, this haircut also teaches individuals to be cautious of people who appear to be stronger than them. In view of this, an Akan adage was provided by an interviewee to further illustrate this stand point:

*“Sɛ ɔtumifoɔ tumi wo a, ɔworɔ wo kawa firi wabati,” which translates “the mightier one can overpower a weakling and remove his or her secured treasure.” It follows that if someone is stronger than you, he/she can do anything to you (Queen 3, 2023).*

Thus, the eagle’s talons can be destructive sometimes to the weaker ones, hence, the need to safeguard oneself against difficulties. Safeguarding requires being on the lookout all the time.

### Identity and symbolism of *okunafoɔ ti-yi*

*Okunafoɔ ti-yi* is a haircut meant for *widows*. It is done to reveal the indigenous beliefs and practices of the Asantes. The main symbolisms associated with this haircut have been discussed under social and spiritual perspectives.

Socially, a respondent has this to say:

*Okunafoɔ ti-yi symbolises a widow mourning the death of her husband. This haircut is often worn by women upon the death of their husbands (Widow 2, 2023).*

Another respondent also comments on the social dimension:

*It is an outward show of grief. It is a sign of respect and honour for the dead (Widow 1, 2023).*

A third respondent adds:

*Traditionally, a man is the honour of the woman, which is synonymous with the glory of her hair. Therefore, if the man is dead, the woman's hair must be shaved to signify the termination of her honour (Queen 1, 2023).*

The spiritual dimension was provided by another respondent:

*Spiritually, the death of a man does not mark the end of the relationship between the woman and the deceased husband. Therefore, if the hair is not shaved, coupled with other rituals, the deceased husband will continually come and have sexual intercourse with the woman. This type of sexual affair can have serious repercussion on the widow (Historian, 2023)*

A respondent has this to say on the spiritual perspective:

*It is of paramount importance to terminate the relationship by causing the woman to undergo the ritual*

*hair-shaving. The reason is that if the husband continues to have sexual relationship with the woman, it can lead to barrenness and other forms of sicknesses* (SS of CNCK, 2023).

To sum up, *okunafoɔ ti-yi* is carried out not just to express grief and to mourn the death of the departed soul but also done to protect the life of the widows and to deliver them from sicknesses.

### **Identity and cultural symbolism of indigenous Asante hairdos**

Hairdos among Asantes provide unique identities and symbolisms. During the field work, hairdos (*tirasa*, *nserewa ahunum*, *puaa*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaansa*, *mpuaanan*, *mpuaanum* and *adantam tiri nwi*) were found to be associated with people like servants, priests and offsprings of deities (*abosomma*). These hairdos provide education to the public on the values of Asante culture.

### **Identity and symbolism of *tirasa ahoma tire***

In the views of the historian of Manhyia Palace (a key informant of this current study), *tirasa ahoma tire* provides unique identity among the Asantes. Traditionally, the category of people who dress their hair this way are the old women. The name *tirasa* was derived from the term *mmiɛnsa*, which means three in Twi. According to him, *tirasa ahoma tire* is chosen for the hairstyle because each tuft of the style is segmented into three parts: the root, middle and the apex. It represents the Asante concept of trinity: the Golden Stool, Asantehene and the Twi language.

The Golden Stool is believed to be the root or the base of the hairstyle. Asantes all over the world are bonded to the Golden Stool. It is believed that the day the Golden Stool would be destroyed, the unity of the Asantes will be

disintegrated or destroyed. This finding is highlighted by one of the respondents as follows:

*As a sacred symbol of oneness, the golden stool represents the Asante nation, which is thought to hold the Asante people's souls. The depiction of this fact with a symbolic hairstyle keeps such historical information fresh in our memories all the time* (Queen 5, 2023).

The middle part symbolises the fact that the Asante people have one common leader, the Asantehene (the occupant of the Golden Stool), irrespective of where they are located. The Asantehene owes allegiance to the Golden Stool.

The apex, which is also the topmost part of the tuft symbolises the upper part of the body which contains the mouth out of which emanates utterances using the Twi language. This hairstyle was mostly adopted by the old women because they perceived themselves as the repository of history. It is not surprising that when there are complicated issues, old women are often consulted. The statement which is often made in times of difficulty is “Yɛnko hu abrewa” (Let us consult the old lady). A respondent narrates:

*The Golden Stool, Asantehene and the Twi Language are the three key features which constitute the indigenous trinity of the Asantes. A hairstyle has been used to represent these three elements. This is to enable the next generation to understand the concept of the traditional trinity of the Asantes* (Historian, 2023).

It can therefore be inferred that, *tirasa ahoma tire* found among the Asantes conveys rich cultural and historical information about the Asante people. Even without words, it could send deep messages of social communication to the younger generation and learners of Asante culture.

### Identity and symbolism of *nsuman nsedie mpesempese*

*Nsuman nsedie mpesempese* is a type of dreadlock with cowries. This type of hairstyle plays a spiritual role of empowering the indigenous priests and priestesses. The empowerment enables the religious personalities to perform numerous tasks. Indigenous Priest 1 and Indigenous Priest 2 explained that, though rastafarians and other categories of people wear dreadlocks, when used by indigenous Asante priest and priestesses, it is indigenously referred to as, *nsuman nsedie mpesempese* (sacred cowries dreadlocks), while those without cowries are called *nsuman mpesempese*. The field survey further revealed that dreadlocks are traditionally used by some people recognised as adherents of the Asante culture. Data is examined based on the symbolisms of dreadlocks in connection to its association with *akomfo* (priests/priestesses), *abrafo* (executioners) and *abosomma* (offsprings of deities).

Direct observation during the field work revealed that *nsuman nsedie mpesempese* is identified with some indigenous priests/priestesses of Asanteman. Various number of cowries are used by different categories of priests and priestesses. In-depth interviews with indigenous priests revealed that the number of cowries depends on the level of maturity one has attained in the priesthood profession.

Three (3) cowries are normally used by beginners/apprentices. Based on the interviews conducted, participants explained why new indigenous priests (*akomfo foforo*) often wear three (3) cowries or two-digit numbers, where a combination of the unit in the digit add up to 3 (like 12: 1+2=3) or twenty-one (21: 2+1=3). Three (3) is chosen, because the survival and existence of any individual depends on three main elements. For instance, it takes three main



components to come together for anyone to be alive. These are the soul, spirit and body (*ɔkra*, *sunsum* and *hunam*). These fundamental elements are so essential that when one of these is taken out, an individual would not even have life and power to be able to start the priesthood career.

Moving away from three, the respondents provided explanation to the use of seven cowries. Seven (7) or two-digit numbers, where a combination of the unit in the digit add up to 7 (like 43:  $4+3=7$ ) or fifty-two (52:  $5+2=7$ ) or sixty-one (61:  $6+1=7$ ) possesses unique symbolisms. Seven is chosen because it signifies high levels of spirituality and perfection. People who usually attain this height live alone, possess their own shrine and delve more into deeper supernatural things. Figure 54 portrays an indigenous priest wearing seven (7) cowries. Seven (7) therefore marks the end of apprenticeship and a beginning of a new stage of manifestation. The cowries in the hairstyle become the conduit through which the priests/priestesses are empowered to serve as counselors and wise people of the society. Consequently, I understood that, the priests are consulted on every important issue affecting the people such as embarking on projects, enstooling and destooling of chiefs. Medically, I understood that with the hairstyle which serves as a channel for conveying supernatural powers, equip the wearers to diagnose and heal diseases both physically and spiritually. The extract below shows the importance of numbers in relation to cowries in *nsuman mpesempese*:

*I have served as a traditional priest for about twenty (20) years. I can testify that hairstyles play important roles in the performance of our duties. Different interpretations are given to various number of cowries in our hair. For instance, a minimum of three cowries is meant for*

*beginners of the priesthood. Seven on the other hand is the point that marks the end of apprenticeship and a beginning of a new stage of manifestation like me. This explains why I have seven cowries in my hair. The maturity level enables me to perform a lot of functions like healing and protection* (Indigenous Priest 2, 2023).

To sum up, an examination of the data reveals that, the number of cowries in priests'/priestesses' hair at a particular point in time has significant implication. A minimum of three cowries is meant for beginners of the priesthood career, while seven on the other side, signifies the conclusion of the preparation period and the start of an advanced stage of the vocation.

*Nsuman mpesempese* (sacred dreadlock) was noticed on the head of some other indigenous priests and priestesses during the field work. This particular type of dreadlock has no cowries. As was explained by the indigenous priests, every deity has a particular hairstyle it prefers. For instance, some gods prefer *nsuman nsedieɛ mpesempese* (sacred cowries dreadlock) while others like only the *nsuman mpesempese* (sacred dreadlocks without cowries). Religiously, in-depth interviews with members revealed that, some dreadlocks without cowries are believed to be sacred. Just like the dreadlock with cowries, *nsuman mpesempese* is also empowered to enable priests and priestesses to perform certain spiritual roles. The extract below shows the religious significance of *nsuman mpesempese*:

*I wear dreadlocks because of the spiritual significance attached to it. Cutting this hairstyle will not enable me to perform my divine roles properly. The dreadlocks enable me to mediate between the living and the deity. They serve as channels for us to receive messages from the deity. Dreadlocks help individuals feel connected to their*

*spiritual energy. It aids in incantations* (Indigenous Priest 1, 2023).

*Nsuman mpeɛmpɛɛ* propels indigenous priests to carry out their religious roles effectively. It follows that, dreadlocks are indispensable in the performance of their roles like sacrifices, mediation and propitiation.

Through observations, I discovered that *nsuman mpeɛmpɛɛ* (sacred dreadlock) are also identified with “offsprings of deities” (*abosomma*). Figure 54 depicts *nsuman mpeɛmpɛɛ* of a person who was sought from a deity and she is made to wear dreadlocks so that she can live or stay in the world devoid of frequent occurrences of sicknesses. It came to the fore that *ɔbosomba* (offspring of a deity) is a person born after consultation with a deity and their hairs form locks as they are left uncut and the dreadlocks are sometimes adorned with cowries, depending on the demand of a particular deity. It is usually the parents who do the consultation after a period of childlessness.

Socially, I was informed that the hairstyle usually prevents the child from falling sick and dying. A respondent has this to say:

*I was told a lot of supernatural things about my hair. I was informed that my hair is not ordinary. Due to the supernatural powers enshrined in my hair, it is capable of preserving my life and delivering me from any form of misfortune* (Bosomba 1, 2023).

The hairstyles of the Asantes serve as a means of providing spiritual fortifications to the wearers. *Nsuman mpeɛmpɛɛ* which serves as a spiritual fortification usually delivers the *bosomba* from trouble, sicknesses and death.

A respondent comments:

*People visit my shrine based on a number of reasons.  
Parents who visit my shrine after a prolong period of*

*childlessness have to abide by specific regulations. After such children are born, they need to be protected against sicknesses and premature death. So far as protection for such children is concerned, so many ways exist to guard them. One of the ways is to caution the said parents to avoid cutting the child's hair. The hair cutting usually eliminates the protective mechanism equipped to protect the child (Indigenous Priestess 2, 2023).*

Economically, Indigenous Priest 1 explained that , among the Asantes, children with knotted hair or dreadlocks were considered wealthy with the view that the person is divinely gifted with money to attract wealth to their family. The termination or removal of the hairstyle requires performance of certain rituals in order to appease the gods.



**Figure 54 - *Bosomba* (a deity's child) in *suman mpesempese***  
Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).

It was observed during an *Akwasidae* and *Awukudae* festivals that some executioners of Asanteman maintain *mpesempese* without the *nserewa/nsedie* (cowries). Figure 55 portrays an *ɔbrafo* (executioner) in *mpesempese*. It is a wig in the form of dreadlocks, This hairstyle is usually worn alongside dark painted faces to make the executioners appear unique and easily identifiable like the one depicted in Figure 55. My observation was authenticated by Executioner 2 who said that such dreadlocks are usually worn during cultural events like festivals and funerals. Their main responsibilities during festivals and funerals, as was observed, are to maintain peace and order. Their appearance alone frightens people and prove that the executioners symbolise reverence for the Asante kingdom. A distinction exist between the *mpesempese* worn by the indigenous priests and priestesses and that of the executioners. Executioner 1 and Executioner 3 revealed that the dreadlocks of most executioners are in the form of wigs while those of the priest and priest are naturally grown.



**Figure 55 - An *ɔbrafo* (Executioner) in *mpesempese***  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

### **Representation of *puaa*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaansa*, *mpuaanan* and *mpuaanum***

The curator at Manhyia Palace Museum mentioned that the Female servants of the queens of Asante kingdom are a category of people who wear *puaa*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaansa*, *mpuaanan* and *mpuaanum*. He further postulated that the progenitors of Asantes did well by representing some cultural beliefs and practices with the *puaa* family hairstyles.

A respondent comments:

*Even presently, with puaa family hairstyles one does not need to read much. Just the appearance or visibility of the symbol can cause people to recount a whole history and appreciate issues faster. Puaa hairstyles have helped to recognise the status of people and caused others to interact with them accordingly. Consequently, I will suggest that the ideals of our ancestors can be learnt by the present generation so that we in this contemporary era can use hairstyles to represent values and occurrences in our society (Historian, 2023).*

In sum, hairstyles like the *puaa* family hairdos are very significant. They represent some principles in Asante culture. The present day generation can learn from the adroitness of how ancestors used hairstyles to represent the Asante way of life.

Field observation points to *puaa* as a hairstyle that educates the public that it is God alone who is all wise and supreme in all situations. A respondent comments about the *puaa* hairstyle:

*Puaa is one of the hairstyles that the female servants wear. It teaches religious lessons to the society. For instance, when issues get out of control, the divine intervention of the Supreme Being is required to calm turbulent situations. The*

*projection of the supremacy of God has necessitated this type of hairdo* (Curator at Manhyia Palace Museum, 2023).

An examination of the quote on *puaa* reveals that power and authority is enshrined in the hands of just one being, which is the Supreme Being (God) and his intermediaries or representatives. Individuals can tap into this power in difficult and challenging moments.

Besides the *puaa*, *mpuaanu* is also identified with female servants of the *ahemaa* (queens). Data shows that, *mpuaanu* signifies complete, boundless, unchanging and unconditional love. A respondent comments:

*Demonstrating unconditional love is very difficult and painful to achieve. So, the enactment of a hairstyle to encourage people to express it, is a step in the right direction. I have been keeping this style for some years now. I will recommend this type of hairstyle to other female servants in other jurisdictions* (Female Servant 3, 2023).

*Mpuaanu* serves as a symbol to motivate servants to show unconditional love to their masters. It extends to encourage other people to show similar love to others.

I understood further that the *mpuaansa* symbolises harmony. It represents unity of the body, soul and mind. It extends to embrace unity among social groups like servants of the traditional rulers and leaders. It was explained that the entire Asanteman requires harmony in order to perpetuate developmental agenda. During moments when dissatisfied people desire to disassociate themselves from organisations or groups, such hairstyles are depicted to send signals in order to help people to remain calm and reconsider certain actions. The source of this hairstyle is traced to the indispensability of



forgiveness. The symbolism associated with this hairdo is synonymous to that of *Obi nka obi* which is peculiar among the male servants. Conflict management can be achieved through publicity of the significance of the *mpuaansa* hairdo. This hairstyle unites and brings an end to disunity.

In addition, from the in-depth interviews, it became clear that, the *mpuaanan* communicates stability of harmony particularly towards sustainability of the unity of the Asante empire after its confederation. The symbolic hairstyle also extends to embrace perpetual harmony among families. A respondent comments on the *mpuaanan* as follows:

*Due to the importance of mpuaanan, it will be expedient for us (Asantes) to go back to our roots (originality) for the sake of everlasting peace. We need to project what we have and has been handed down to us by our ancestors. If we do so, we can even influence the whole world with our values (Female servant 1, 2023).*

An unending harmonious co-existence is the hallmark of *mpuaanan*. Living and spending time in a loving, secure and stable environment is incredibly important for people in the Asante kingdom and the world as a whole.

Furthermore, I understood that the *mpuaanum* which involves the division of the hair into five tufts is carried out by both female servants and some indigenous female priests. When used by the Asante priestesses, it signifies religious joy. Additionally, it symbolises the priestesses' fidelity and devotion to their work. This hairstyle is a requirement by the deities of certain shrines. It also symbolises trustworthiness or the actualisation of high obligation towards a desired outcome among the servants.



### **Identity and symbolism of *adantam tiri nwi***

*Adantam tiri nwi* is a requirement for achieving the correct shape of the *dansinkran* hairstyle and some other indigenous Asante hairstyles. I understood during series of interviews that *adantam tiri nwi* is temporarily adopted by some servants to enable them trim prescribed indigenous haircuts out of them like *obi nka obi*. Most hairdos among Asantes also require *adantam tiri nwi* in order to achieve appropriate styling. Some indigenous priests were identified in *adantam tiri nwi* during an *Akwasidae* festival. From the explanation provided by the Historian of the study, the deities of their shrine specifically instructed such priests to maintain this type of hairstyle. The hair, according to the respondent, has been kept since childhood and that, the gods themselves have been maintaining the hair in that size and shape for a long time. Observance of taboos associated with the hair enables them to duly carry out their priestly activities.

### **Discussions of Results on Identity and Symbolism of Indigenous Asante Hairstyles**

Stets and Serpe (2013) define identity as a shared set of meanings that define certain groups of people or individuals in a society as having specific characteristics that make them unique from others. This definition supports the findings from the field work as the *sepow* and *ntitabo* haircuts make executioners visibly outstanding. Justice and fearlessness are the hallmarks of these distinctive hairstyles.

Furthermore, Tajfel and Turner (1979) indicate that a person's sense of who he or she is depends on the groups to which the person belongs. Consequently, it was discovered from the field survey that wearers of hairstyles such as the *Gyawu atikɔ* makes the adopters feel a sense of belongingness to

war generals. Symbolisms such as valour, service and unity are communicated by the *Gyawu atikɔ* haircut.

The discovery from the field showed that *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* can be shaved off only after a stipulated fee has been paid. However, the required fee (compensation fee) of the puberty rite initiates among the Gas occurs when some parents of the participants decide to avoid the clean-shaven haircut which occurs before and after the initiates' visit to *Tegbetɛ* (sacred stone). Consequently, the girls' hair is instead parted into small tufts, with the end of each tuft threaded with raffia string or thread and tucked into the base of the hair to hold it firm (Adinku, 2016). This hairstyle, *akukuli*, is also typically worn by priestesses in Kroboland (Kwakyee-Opong, 2014).

Moreover, hairstyles such as the *dansinkran* which are worn by some female leaders identifies them as Asante queens in a way that when one sees a woman in the *dansinkran* hairstyle, it connotes the role which the woman plays as a queen or one from the royal line. In agreement with the current finding, Asenso (2019) stresses that this hairstyle identifies and illuminates women as royals. Furthermore, Stoeltje (1997) remarks that hairstyles prompt people to automatically assume certain responsibilities. In this regard, Oldmeadow and Dixson (2016) observe that, hairstyle communicates obligation, task, rank, behaviour, and serves a practical purpose on a daily basis. Hairstyle is therefore a vital component of the human body and it performs a range of tasks in communication.

It could also be inferred from findings that the *dansinkran* hairstyle identifies teenage girls (*mmabunu*). As part of the last stage of the puberty rite ceremony, girls who have reached the age of adolescence usually have their hair

shaved into a moon-like shape. This supports Asare-Danso's (2018) findings that, the teenagers are given royal treatment to honour them for their chastity. The hairstyle is intended to provide a sense of identity during which Asante values were also taught to the girls during the initiation rite. In a similar vein, Rattray (1927) indicates that morality was upheld and enforced with the help of this haircut. The wearing of a ring-like haircut is common among the puberty rite initiates of Krobo, however unlike the Asantes, the trimmed hair of the Krobos is usually not blackened. According to Adinku (2016) during the first phase of the Dipo rites, part of the girl's hair is shaved in a ring-like style known as *klohue* which signifies the girl's journey into a new phase of life. It is worthy of note that, the wearing of this type of haircut by the Dipo girls (puberty rite initiates of Krobo) usually occurs at the initial stages of the puberty rite, while among the Asante teenagers this haircut is done to climax the entire ceremony.

Aside the *dansinkran* paving the way for the puberty girls to renounce their old practices and to be given a queenly treat, it is also used to symbolise that they are true indigenes of the Asante empire. Irrespective of these benefits, the ceremony is not as elaborate as it used to be in the olden days. The issue of letting go of the past by symbolically cutting off the hair of the initiates has been adopted by people who go through a number of situations in life as portrayed in the findings. When women go through times of transition or crisis, they will often cut off their hair. It is symbolic of letting go of the past, getting out of whatever has been troubling them and cutting old ties and ushering in a fresh beginning.

It was however, gathered from the field that, some other occasions and stages in life are marked by the celebrants not cutting their hair at all. In fact, it

is a taboo sometimes to get the haircut. From the religious perspective, an analogy was drawn between Christian priests and the traditional priests that, leaving the hair uncut is a sign of strength and power. The Bible forbade, certain categories of people regarded as devoted to God from cutting their hair. For instance, Sampson (Judges 13: 5) and some other nazirites (Numbers 6:1-21) in the Bible were specifically instructed not to cut their hair. This practice is similar to some traditional priests of the Asante who do not cut their hair and adopt the *mpesempese*.

*Nsuman nsodie* *mpesempese* is a mark of religious identity in the context of Asante traditional religion. Knoeber and Kluckhohn (1952) assert that culture is a man-made activity brought into existence by the ability to use symbols, hence, the creation of more symbolic styles using the natural hair, with the aim of identifying people as belonging to different cultural settings and ethnic groups. Indigenous hairstyles can supplement and compliment other forms of ethnic and cultural identity. Through direct observation and in-depth interviews, the researcher discovered that many regard the traditional priest of the Asantes as very powerful religious leaders who wield many powers, recognition, and acceptability from citizens of Asante and beyond. Historically, dreadlocks were mostly worn by indigenous priests and priestesses. The dreadlocks are believed to be fashioned according to the dictates of the gods. The traditional ornaments sometimes served as a symbol of identification. It is believed to possess spiritual powers. This hairstyle is usually left uncombed. Sometimes cowries were used to adorn the hair. Sieber and Herrman (2000) identify other local items which can be used to adorn the hair. These include coral, glass, wood beads, ceramic beads, stone beads, ostrich egg shell and fruit

seed. Data shows that the number of cowries in most dreadlocks play key roles in defining the status of the priest. Three symbolises a stage of apprenticeship while seven signifies a stage of professionalism. Spiritually, three represents the trio fundamental components (body, soul and spirit) that need to be in place for anyone to be alive to be able to practice the priesthood profession. Seven on the other hand signifies high levels of spirituality which enable the wearers to possess their own shrine and delve more into deeper supernatural things.

The significance of the indigenous Asante concept of trinity led its association with an indigenous hairstyle in order to preserve the concept. Hence the hairstyle which is called *tirasa* involves the division of each hair tuft into three segments. The bottom represents the Golden Stool, the middle represents the Asantehene and the apex stands for the Twi language. According to Gedzi, (2014) the golden stool is known in the Twi language as *Sika dwa Kofi*. It is called Kofi because it was brought into view on Friday. It is the royal and divine throne of kings of the Asante people and the ultimate symbol of power in Asante. It is believed that Okomfo Anokye caused the stool to descend from the sky and it landed on the lap of the first Asante king, Osei Tutu 1. The landing of the Golden stool on King Osei Tutu I's lap served as a sign from the ancestors showing that, he was the chosen king to lead the Asante Kingdom (Hale, 2013).

The sacredness and importance of the Golden Stool led to its association with an indigenous hairstyle. The Golden Stool is believed to house the spirit of the Asante nation which comprises the living, the dead and the unborn. Consequently, Appiah-Kubi, Inkum, Owusu-Ansah, Akomeah, Agyakwa, Wu and Feng (2022) stress that the Golden Stool is the sole unifying symbol of the Asantes. All Asante authorities including the Asantehene pledge allegiance to

the Golden Stool. Asantehene who is a component of the trinity is represented by the oval section of the segmented *tirasa* hair tuft. The Asante empire is headed by the Asantehene. The Asantehene, is the chief judge, chief administrator and commander-in chief of the Asante army. The apex section stands for Asante Twi language (the third aspect of the trinity). Asante Twi is one of the principal members of the Akan dialect. It is identified mainly with the people of the Asante Empire. *Tirasa ahoma tire* carried messages which communicated historical values of the Asantes. Maintaining a hairstyle which conveys messages to the next generation is expedient for the growth of the Asante society. These are the qualities which *tirasa ahoma tire* possesses as it conveys three significant messages about the Golden Stool, the Asantehene and the Twi language.

*Puaa baako, mpuaanu, mpuaansa and mpuaanan* are unique hairstyles and their names trace their origin to Asanteman and were mostly adorned by the female servants of the queens (*ahemaa*) based on the instructions of the traditional female rulers. Each aforementioned hairdo possesses its own style, meaning and significance. On the subject of the *puaa* family hairstyles, data shows that social construction can be adopted by creating more hairstyles which can be aligned to practices of people and special events. The symbolic hairstyles can communicate to the public without verbal utterances. Correspondingly, Gagnon and Simon (1974) stress that social construction is achieved based on factors like education contingent on cultural values.

Aside the *puaa* hairstyles, some of the female servants also adopt *nkotimsefompuaa*. This haircut educates the public about the necessity of risk taking, courage and cautiousness. Rattray's (1927) research close to a century

ago supports this finding as he remarked that it is a hairstyle implemented by the female servants of the queens. However, detailed explanation of its symbolism is absent from his research.

Among some West African countries, during the period of widowhood, letting go of one's usually, well-coiffured hair (*Okunafoc ti-yi*) is a common sign of mourning. What is usually observed at the initial stages of mourning is that a great weeping takes place in the house as soon as a person dies and the women hurry into the streets with disorganised clothing and dishevelled hair, yelling and weeping (Nkansah, 2008). In other African countries, the announcement and mourning of the dead through hairstyles is not limited to only the demise of one's husband but incorporates other family members. For instance, according to Schefer (2020), in Central Africa, Mumuhuila group of women of Angola usually wear a dreadlock hairstyle made of dried cow dungs, herbs, trunks, oil and fat. The number of big dreadlocks has a meaning: three (3) dreadlocks mean there is a recent dead person in the immediate family. Four (4) to six (6) dreadlocks indicates a normal style (Schefer, 2020). Moreover, afro short hair symbolises a widow mourning the death of her husband. In a similar vein, cutting off the hair especially among new born babies is intended to sever the link between the spiritual world and the physical world (Sherrow, 2023).

*Adantam tiri nwi* serves as a prerequisite for cutting a queen's hair proportionally. Observation during the field work showed that aside queens, some priests also adopt it. It is a preferred hairstyle of some deities. Some individuals have also adopted the *Adantam tiri nwi* hairstyle due to various reasons. To some, it serves as a support for work. For instance, when carrying heavy loads, the thick medium afro hair can serve as a support in lessening the

burden or heaviness of it on the scalp. In the absence of the usual head supporting piece of moulded cloth (*kahyire*), the hair can easily perform such a function. Others stick pencils and pen in the hair. It enables them to perform tasks with ease. Afro medium is also maintained by some traditional priests based on the dictate of the gods. Irrespective of the merits of *adantam tiri nwi* (African textured hair of an average length), some Africans are convinced that Western hair texture and hairstyles are more attractive than indigenous ones (Montle, 2020). According to Montle (2020), European colonisers perpetuated a conventional link of black (Africa) with ugliness and white (the West) with beauty.

The trimming of *dansinkran* and *ahenfo ti ho wer* are mostly done by barbers who operate within the royal Asante households. They are servants and representatives of royal leaders. This finding synchronises with Seiber and Herreman's (2000) assertion of entrusting haircutting to trusted and close associates. The reason is that if it falls into an enemy's hands, the hair could be used to inflict harm.

### Chapter Summary

To conclude, the adaptation of certain hairstyles served as an eye opener to certain activities which connect the present to the past. It also facilitated easy identification of certain categories of people in societies. Such people could easily be contacted for peculiar issues within their domain to be addressed. Various suggestions were provided in order to increase the knowledge level of people on indigenous hairstyles. Similarly, the practice of associating hairstyles to certain values and events can be adopted by the present generation.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### INDIGENOUS ASANTE HAIRSTYLES AMIDST MODERNITY

The purpose of this chapter is to examine indigenous Asante hairstyles in the face of modernity. Since modernisation may result in new adaptation by humans, this chapter focuses on the presentation of findings on indigenous Asante hairstyles amidst modernity. This is followed by discussions of results in relation to previous literature.

#### **Findings on Indigenous Asante Hairstyles Amidst Modernity**

The field work uncovered and documented some of the changes which indigenous Asante hairstyles have undergone. Findings in this section are presented on two thematic areas: influence of modernity on indigenous Asante hairstyles and factors responsible, as well as how some indigenous hairstyles have thrived amidst modernity.

#### **Influence of modernity on indigenous Asante hairstyles and factors responsible**

Social change on indigenous Asante hairstyles are enormous. The present data show a number of changes that have affected each indigenous Asante hairstyle in terms of popularity and appearance of the hairstyle as well as the media and tools used over the years. The factors responsible for the changes have also been documented. Moreover, the current study found some instances where changes did not occur at all with respect to some of the indigenous Asante hairstyles.

#### **Influence of modernity on *dansinkran* and factors responsible**

The popularity of the use of *dansinkran* in the contemporary era according to the present data, is gradually diminishing even among queens and

other female indigenous office holders. Although *dansinkran* was very common in the olden days, presently due to exposure to other cultures and hairstyles, its use is compulsory during certain designated cultural events like the mourning of high-ranking royals (Asantehene, Asantehemaa, a paramount chief or a queen). Hence, a high-ranking royal's dernier rites are typically expressed by the *dansinkran* hairdo.

In terms of materials used in the preparation of the local dye, participants explained that indigenous media – sheabutter, charcoal, and plant soot – even though are of high medicinal value, are less used. The fact that the dye easily stains pillows and outfits was identified as one of the reasons for the less patronage of the indigenous dye. Consequently, the regalia and other attires that come in contact with the dye are subjected to frequent washing. A respondent comments:

*I am a queen and I am expected to be in dansinkran most of the times as depicted on my head. However, as a result of the fact that the mixture easily stains regalia, it discourages me from using it (Queen 7, 2023).*

To summarise one of the reasons which deter the use of indigenous hair dye by queens who wear *dansinkran* is due to its staining characteristic. Besides, prior experiences with the staining characteristic of indigenous hair dyes reduce the likelihood of its usage among queens.

Secondly, the strenuous efforts required in the preparation of the dye deter people from using it. The energy, vigour and time associated with the production of the indigenous hair dye discourage many women from using the local products. A respondent comments:

*.... like the time and strength it takes for the preparation to be completed forces us to use the foreign products (Queen 3, 2023).*

In sum, compared to local dyes that usually require strenuous efforts to prepare, foreign dyes are usually finished goods which save time that may have been spent in preparing a new dye.

Thirdly, some participants were of the view that foreign dyes are easily available and accessible in nearby markets which influence their choice of foreign dyes over local ones. The extract below shows a reason for the preference of foreign dyes to local ones:

*I must admit that most foreign dyes or non-indigenous Asante hair dyes have already been prepared and well packaged. They are in the market in large quantities with assorted brands. All that one needs to do is to walk to a cosmetic shop and purchase them. Though indigenous dyes are more medicinal and organic, yet, some queens prefer the foreign dyes. I understand they contain chemicals which can affect our scalp but some royals patronise them due to the other comforts they provide. Others even wear scarfs instead of getting the hair dyed (Queen 6, 2023).*

It can be concluded that, local products, which have high cultural symbolisms and medicinal values were utilised in dying and beautifying indigenous haircut in order to achieve their aesthetic effects. However, these materials are no longer patronised much due to modernisation and inconveniences in their preparation.

Despite the inconveniences associated with the use of indigenous hair dyes, the hairstylists of this study acknowledged the benefits of using such products. A respondent says:

*The charcoal cleanses the scalp by removing dirt and toxins from the hair. It enables the brain to function to its maximum capacity as it can travel to the brain to detoxify it. Sheabutter eases itchy scalp and treats dandruff (Hairstylist 2, 2023).*

In view of the benefits of the traditional dye, participants acknowledged that, there are possible ways to reduce the disadvantages associated with the use of indigenous hair dyes. Most of the queens, barbers and hairstylists of this study stressed that lessening the short comings of the product will enhance its patronage. A respondent provided a solution to the demerits associated with indigenous dyes:

*To ensure the mixture remains stainless, you can add a natural preservative such as vitamin E oil or grape fruit seed extract. These ingredients will help to extend the shelf life of the product and prevent any bacterial growth. Once the mixture is thoroughly mixed and the desired consistency is achieved, transfer it to a clean, airtight container for storage (Hairstylist 1, 2023)*

Another respondent also indicates that:

*Locally prepared dye should be stored for a longer period of time. Storing products for a longer time enhances its easy accessibility. This can reduce the time spent in going through the laborious process of always getting the mixture done before applying it on the hair. It will also reduce the patronage of foreign ones (Queen 3, 2023).*

A third respondent adds that:

*Major stakeholders like traditional rulers in collaboration with the head of CNC in Kumasi and investors who are interested in these products can set up factories or industries that will go into the modification of such products. It can also be produced in large quantities. Not only will it generate income for the indigenes who will be employed in such*

*ventures, it will also generate revenue for the government. This can even reduce importation of foreign hair pomade (Hairstylist 1, 2023).*

It can be deduced that, traditional dyes ensure adequate brain functions and also ensure healthy hair. Also, to reduce the demerits associated with the indigenous hair dyes, natural preservatives should be used in its preparation. Moreover, indigenous hair dyes should be prepared in large quantities to ensure their availability for use all the time.

With regard to instruments used in trimming the *dansinkran* and other haircuts, the main instrument, *yiwan*, is substituted with a pair of scissors and other shaving machines in modern times. These instruments are relatively more portable, easily available and operate faster. Besides, the use of the *yiwan* requires more skills to use unlike the modern shaving equipment. Moreover, it seems some modern barbers do not have the requisite skills and knowledge to use the *yiwan* in haircuts. Some of the barbers interviewed admitted they have never used the *yiwan* before and could not be sure they would be able to try one. A respondent says:

*I have been a barber for a number of years now. I carry out the procedure with the aid of either a pair of scissors, a blade or shaving machine. I was once informed by my grandfather some time ago that the yiwan was the dominant shaving tool used in the olden days. In fact, during my period of apprenticeship I was never introduced to the skills involved in using the yiwan. I do not think I can use it now. As compared to the yiwan, the use of scissors and shaving machines are modern ways of getting the haircut done faster (Barber 2, 2023).*

The skills required to use some of the indigenous tools for shaving hair are not known to a number of contemporary barbers. Those with a relative skill do not wish to use the *yiwan* in trimming the hair of their customers as the tool is heavy and does not facilitate faster accomplishment of task.

### **Influence of modernity on *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* and factors responsible**

Data gathered from the queens of this study showed that the *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* is not patronised much during this contemporary era. As a haircut associated with puberty rites, its popularity among the Asantes has dwindled with the decline in the observation of the ceremony.

Few girls undergo puberty rites in recent times because some people in the Asante societies see the practice as outmoded. They perceive it as out-of-date.

A respondent says:

*The few Asante societies that perform puberty rites for their girls usually do not consider giving their wards the asakyimakan atikɔpuaa haircut since it is considered as an odd and an archaic practice, hence, the gradual decline of the asakyimakan atikɔpuaa (Queen 7, 2023).*

Also, others believe that, the increasing rate of migration in the Asante societies has affected such practice because more indigenous Asantes are now living in other societies that do not appreciate such hairstyle.

A respondent has this to say:

*As compared to the olden days, there is a gradual decline in the performance of puberty rites due to migration. A number of people leave Asante jurisdiction to settle elsewhere. Most often those societies may not appreciate the asakyimakan atikɔpuaa hairstyle. I do not blame them because, usually they don't know the history behind such hairstyle. Imagine you are*

*in other societies where they don't know about such hairstyle and you put on one. They will laugh at you and that I think discourages people from wearing such hairstyle (Queen 3, 2023).*

Influence of Christianity is also one of the reasons why the *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* haircut is not patronised much. The conversion of some indigenes of Asante to Christianity has impacted the indigenous rites of passage. For instance, *bragorɔ* (puberty rite) is now celebrated at a minimal level.

A respondent indicates that:

*The spread of Christianity has minimised the adaptation of some indigenous Asante hairstyles. Hence, bragorɔ ti-yi and asakyimakan atikɔpuaa hairstyles are therefore relegated to the background. It is carried out on a nominal scale (Queen 5, 2023).*

Influence of formal education is another reason why the patronage of *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* haircut is very minimal.

A respondent has this to say:

*Many of our girls are not available during this contemporary era to undergo the puberty rites due to education. Hence, the minimal patronage of its associated practices like the shaving of asakyimakan atikɔpuaa, since most of them are in school. Those who receive formal education feel too enlightened to undergo such rites (Queen 1, 2023).*

An examination of the above extracts shows that migration, Christianity and formal education might have affected the number of youths going through the *bragorɔ* ceremony and by extension those donning the *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* hairstyles.

### **Influence of modernity on *ahenfo ti ho were* and factors responsible**

The adoption of *ahenfo ti ho were* (a clean-shaven scalp) does not seem to have undergone much transformation. Unlike the *dansinkran*, most chiefs were identified to be in *ahenfo ti ho were* throughout the field work. The *ahenfo ti ho were* is associated with the coronation of a chief and observation of some key festivals such as the *Akwasidae* and *Awukudae*. However, some chiefs prefer to keep their hair low all the times. Two respondents comment as follows:

*I keep my hair low all the time because, aside the cultural requirement, it enables me to reap the physical benefits associated with it. They include time saving and looking younger (Chief 1, 2023).*

*Keeping my hair extremely low is a nice experience. Medically, it vitalises my systems and prevents me from getting certain sicknesses (Chief 3, 2023).*

It can be deduced that, persistent shaving of the hair marks a peculiar cultural representation which illuminates the values of the Asantes. Physical and medical benefits are also reaped.

### **Influence of modernity on *ntitabo* and factors responsible**

Data revealed that some of the executioners prefer to weave the front part of the hair instead of having it trimmed into a rectangular shape. Participants of the series of conducted interviews explained that very few executioners are able to grow the hair up to the required length needed for shaving the *ntitabo* haircut. Others too would not like to get the frontal part of their hair shaved because it makes them appear weird in society. Thus, instead of having it trimmed, they would rather weave it. The preferred woven style is either the twist or cornrow (both of which are not of Asante origin). This style



is designed to fit into the *ntitabo* shape by giving it the requisite length and breath as shown in Figure 56. This is done during cultural events like *Awukudae*. When the traditional event is over, the braided part is loosened. A respondent throws light on *ntitabo* and social change as follows:

*The practice of weaving a section of the hair has been ongoing for some time now among some executioners. When we are spotted and questioned by both natives and non-indigenes, we try to explain the original style of this hairstyle as well as the reasons behind the modification* (Executioner 1, 2023).

The main transformation which has occurred in the *ntitabo* is the weaving of the section meant to be shaved. This is done as a result of the convenience associated with it. The weaving is able to show the deep space at the frontal section of the hair.



**Figure 56 - Modified form of *ntitabo***  
**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

### **Influence of modernity on *sepow* and factors responsible**

Furthermore, from the interviews conducted, participants explained that executioners have the option to shave *sepow* haircut or even use a designated hat (*etwie/ɔsebo kyɛ*). Out of these options, the *abrafoɔ* (executioners) mostly prefer using the hats (*etwie/ɔsebo kyɛ*) to the *sepow* during cultural events in this contemporary era. This was observed during series of cultural events that I attended in Kumasi. The *abrafoɔ* prefer using the hats to shaving *sepow* due to the comfort associated with wearing the hat. The hat is made of leopard skin. Light-brown was observed to be the background colour of the hat with a cluster of small densely packed deep-brown spots on the surface of the hat. Black pigment is noticed at the edge of the hat. Figure 57 depicts a picture of *ɔsebo kyɛ*.



**Figure 57 - The *ɔsebo kyɛ* (hat made from leopard skin)  
Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

### **Influence of modernity on *obi nka obi* and factors responsible**

Presently, only few people wear *obi nka obi* haircut due to the cost involved. It is usually worn on special occasions such as *Akwasidae* and *Awukudae*. Two respondents comments that the *obi nka obi* is quite an expensive haircut. A male servant says:

*It costs us a lot of money to get the hair trimmed in the obi nka obi haircut. The trimming costs 50 to 100 Ghana cedis. My sister, you can confirm this from the barbers around. The high cost is due to the intricate nature of the design. Besides, the style does not last for long, making it difficult to keep such hairstyle all the time (Male Servant 2, 2023).*

A barber agrees with the male servant as follows:

*I charge a bit higher when designing “obi nka obi” than other regular haircut because one requires a lot of artistic skills to get this haircut done. The drawing of the contour lines alone needs patience and adroitness. This explains why we charge higher than we do for the usual haircuts. In addition, it takes time to get the haircut done. It is usually not common. Few people come around to get this haircut done during festivals. If the process is not well carried out, the customer will not appreciate it (Barber 1, 2023).*

Examination of the two direct comments on *obi nka obi* haircut, reveals that it is a complex haircut which is usually done on a minimal scale due to its cost. This haircut is usually worn during festivals.

Aside cost, peer influence also causes people to refrain from adopting the indigenous haircut. As was explained, when colleagues conform to certain patterns of fashion, others become enticed to do similar things. Some respondents revealed that they got the exposure to use non-indigenous Asante hairstyles through friends and age mates. A respondent narrates as follows:

*I am a male servant at a palace. One of the names of the indigenous haircuts which we sometimes adopt is the obi nka obi haircut. We as peers sometimes meet and influence each other based on hairstyle choices. As you can see, I am in a three-step haircut which is a non-indigenous haircut which my friends motivated me to go for (Male servant 1, 2023).*

Peer influence plays a key role in the adaptation of haircuts. People in the same peer group usually promote similar interest. Hairstyles are one of the ways through which members in a peer group can be influenced.

### **Influence of modernity on *Gyawu atikɔ* and factors responsible**

Participants in the interviews revealed that the *Gyawu atikɔ* is a haircut meant for war generals. Some generals do not shave the *Gyawu atikɔ* but rather wear hats particularly during ceremonies. Besides, wearing a hat is more comfortable than trimming the hair. Furthermore, unlike the haircut, the hat safeguards the wearer against evil, peril, or illness. The hat as depicted in Figure 58 is known as *nsebe kyɛ* (amulet hat). The hat is cream in color and designed with some square-like shapes. An elongated apex is visible on the hat.





**Figure 58 - *Nsebe kye* (amulet hat)**

**Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).**

### **Influence of modernity on *nkotimsefompuaa/ɔkɔdeɛ mmɔwɛɛ* and factors responsible**

*ɔkɔdeɛ mmɔwɛɛ* (eagle's talons), was found to be less popular among the female servants since the activities of the servants are no longer restricted to the palace. They have to attend school or go out and trade. In some instances,

the portion meant to be shaved is rather woven to take the shape of the haircut as shown in Figure 59. A respondent says:

*I have completed school and I engage in trading activities along serving as a servant to a queen. Sending this haircut to the market is odd. Everybody will be looking at me. Some may not even buy my product. Therefore, occasionally I cut my hair in the form of nkotimsefompuaa to mark some traditional ceremonies, at the end of which I resort to my normal hairdo. Other female servants may also cut their hair this way to mark the occasion (Female Servant 2, 2023).*

Currently, Kumasi is inhabited by people from different backgrounds. Hence, many people may not be able to understand the basis for certain haircuts. Therefore, some people associate such haircuts to deviants and weird people. People are not patient enough to relate the haircut to the culture behind it.



**Figure 59 - Modern form of nkotimsefompuaa/ɔkɔdeɛ mmɔwɛɛ**  
Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).

### **Influence of modernity on *okunafoɔ ti-yi* and factors responsible**

From the interviews conducted, it was uncovered that the motive for *okunafoɔ ti-yi* among Asantes has shifted considerably; some widows have maintained their hair trimmed even several years after the observation of their widowhood rites (i.e., mourning their husbands) for several reasons: first, it makes them look younger and to cut cost associated with modern hair do. Second, the widows perceive hair extensions as servitude to foreign culture. The short-trimmed hair also appeals to some men as the widows would want to remarry. They adopt short trimmed hair as it is perceived as fashionable. The nature of this haircut seems to have been adopted into a form of modern haircut among ladies who have not lost a husband at all. With the decline in some practices associated with widowhood rites in modern Asante, the shaving of *Okunafoɔ ti-yi* by widows is on a minimal scale. A respondent comments:

*United Nations Decade for Women and other world bodies exist to fight for the fundamental rights of women. Therefore, widowhood rites which involve hair shaving is declining (Widow 1, 2023).*

### **Influence of modernity on *tirasa ahoma tire* and factors responsible**

I was made to understand that the *trasa ahoma tire* hairstyle is no longer restricted to old ladies. Presently, younger ladies adopt it. Strictly natural textured hair was used to make this style but now chemically textured hair is preferred. In some instances, hair extensions are added. Other intricate designs have evolved from the *tirasa ahoma tire* to make it more attractive as shown in Figure 60. The main artistic material which was used for the *tirasa ahoma tire* is the raffia. Currently, the use of raffia is replaced with either the black thread

or other modernised forms of multi-coloured threads. Sometimes other styles are combined with the *tirasa ahoma tire* to make it more appealing.



**Figure 60 - Modernised form of *tirasa ahoma tire***  
Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).

### **Influence of modernity on *nsuman nsodie* *mpesempese* and factors responsible**

Previously, the *mpesempese* with cowries worn by the offsprings of deities (*abosomma*) were managed by their mothers and close relatives. Data, however, showed that presently some of them go to salons and hairstylists to get the dreadlocks arranged and managed for them. The management of this hairstyle by professionals makes them look more attractive.



Furthermore, data showed that, as a result of the requirements of formal educational institutions, the offsprings of deities (*abosomma*) and other wearers of dreadlocks in Asanteman are compelled to shave off their locks. Before contact with Europeans, Asantes had an informal way of educating the younger ones. As was explained during the field work, parents and other adept individuals had the responsibility of educating younger ones in various vocations through apprenticeship. Parents more or less acted as teachers. This informal education did not require one to change one's hairstyle before receiving training, making it easier for all people including the offsprings of deities (*abosomma*) to also attain training without interference. Data, however, revealed that with the establishment of European formal education, people who were sent to European schools were made to change their hairstyles to meet the requirement of the schools' rules and regulations. For instance, the offsprings of deities (*abosomma*) were not allowed to keep their *mpesempese* (dreadlocks) and were asked to cut them because it was deemed unkempt. One respondent says:

*My customary background was not taken into consideration by the school authorities. The problem I have is, what has impacting of knowledge got to do with my hair? At the end, I had to learn a trade. I was very successful in the process. I have not regretted learning a trade. The owner of the trade does not care about the kind of hairstyle people wear*  
(Bosomba 2, 2023).

Analytically, rules that govern skills acquisition in relation to trading is more flexible than formal education. Additionally, if one wants to impact knowledge, the immediate culture of the recipient of the knowledge must also be factored in but it is not so in most schools in Ghana.

Aside school authorities denying some group of people with indigenous hairstyles the freedom to be educated, the field survey revealed that formal education also gives some Asantes the exposure to other cultures and they tend to copy the hairstyles (braids, hair extensions and chemically relaxed hair) in order to fit into a peer group.

Contemporarily, observation from the field also revealed that, dreadlocks with cowries are not exclusive to traditional priests. Some individuals wear it as it is deemed as fashionable. However, some indigenous priests and priestesses explained that, people who adorn their dreadlocks with cowries in the name of fashion may suffer the cultural implication associated with it.

From the interviews conducted, participants affirmed the cultural repercussions of *nsuman nsedieɛ mpɛsɛmpɛsɛ* adorned by non-indigenous priests. Implying, *nsuman nsedieɛ mpɛsɛmpɛsɛ* and certain hairstyles are culturally meant for certain members within the society. Specific norms and rules are supposed to be observed as one wears such hairstyles. However, people wear such hairstyles in the name of fashion without taking the consequences into consideration. A respondent has this to say:

*I once adopted dreadlocks with extensions as well as cowries and suffered severe sickness during which I was conveyed to a shrine. My sickness disappeared after I had performed the necessary rituals and had my dreadlocks cut off (Female servant 4, 2023).*

Another respondent comments:

*Hair styles have cultural symbolisms which must be valued. It plays a role of defining certain members within a society. The wearing of dreadlocks with cowries symbolises a religious*

*function. It speaks to everybody about the identity and functions of the indigenous priests. This therefore requires strict adherence to the requisite restrictions or rules associated with it in order to reap the full benefit connected with it* (Indigenous priest 1, 2023).

It can be deduced that, the consequences of breaking a traditional law can have both physical and spiritual repercussions. The extracts also laid bare the effects of cross-cultural hairstyle adaptation.

### **Influence of modernity on *puaa*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaasa*, *mpuaanan* and *mpuaanum* and factors responsible**

It was discovered during in-depth interviews that contemporarily, *puaa*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaasa*, *mpuaanan* and *mpuaanum* are sometimes dyed which has now become the norm, but culturally should not have been the case. Dyeing of hair has become very fashionable in recent times. Figure 61 shows a dyed *mpuaanu* hairdo.



**Figure 61 - Dyed *mpuaanu* hairdo adorned by a female servant**  
Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).

Such hairstyles are rarely portrayed during major cultural events, for several reasons. One of the reasons provided was that long hair is needed for some of these hairstyles. Therefore, a number of months or years is required for the hair to attain that level of growth or maturity. This creates a lot of inconveniences to the servants. Also, some of the married servants are occasionally influenced by their husbands to vary their hairstyles to conform to modern trends. This leads to the adaptation of modern hairstyles.

Secondly, some female servants adopt varieties of non-indigenous Asante hairstyles only to cover them with nets during cultural events. This implies that, the *puaa*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaasa*, *mpuanan* and *mpuaanum* meant for the servants are not adopted very often.

The servants explained that they got exposed to non-indigenous Asante hairstyles through social media. Data gathered from the female servants showed that social media has become an avenue for people to be informed about contemporary hair products and services. Hence, it was observed during the field work that, hair extensions and wigs are occasionally used by female palace servants and other indigenous hair wearers and social media has contributed greatly towards these new trends. A respondent has this to say:

*I mostly access the social media through my phone. A number of factors attract me to use social media. One of them is to find out about current trend of hairstyles. On social media I will find numerous pictures of hair products and fashionable hairstyles. I sometimes get enticed to use them. Sometimes wigs of different shapes and forms are also seen on social media. The social media exposure causes us, the servants, and others to be dynamic in the choice of our hairstyles (Female servant 4, 2023).*

Another respondent comments:

*I like social media because it is beneficial in so many ways. For example, social media helps in notifying people about the existence of hair products and diverse forms of hairstyles. The platform also convinces customers about the quality and the indispensability of the hair products and the hairstyles. Additionally, demonstration of new uses for established hair products and hairstyles is also carried out (Female servant 6, 2023).*

An assessment of the two extracts above shows that social media plays a significant role in hairstyle choices among some female servants. This causes them to occasionally vary their hairstyles.

Other people who are not servants of the queens were also observed to have adopted the *puaa* hairstyles because it is simple, easy to do and less costly. It also causes an individual to appear more African. A respondent has this to say:

*I have noticed that, many people who are not servants are seen in puaa hairstyles. They sometimes provide reasons like they desire to appear African and also look less sophisticated (Queen 2, 2023).*

In summary, data show that aside the palace servants, other people wear the *puaa* styles. The desire to appear simple and African were some of the reasons which were provided during the field work.

### **How some indigenous hairstyles have thrived amidst modernity**

Many factors have contributed to the continual patronage of indigenous hairstyles amidst modernity. Some of these factors include; the development of cultural centres, cumulative nature of culture, the texture of the hair, social

media, impact of indigenous leaders, cultural activities, health consciousness, cost-effectiveness, the indispensability of cultural roles of certain indigenous hairstyles and disadvantages of non-indigenous hairstyles.

### **Establishment of cultural centres and museums**

It was uncovered from the field that some of the solutions to our cultural related issues started around 1950s. Due to the craving for colonial culture by the natives of the land, some leaders in Ghana took certain initiatives to establish avenues to project and promote Asante culture. Some of these include the Centre for National Culture and the Manhyia Palace Museum. A senior staff of the CNCK comments:

*Mr. Kyeremanten established a cultural centre in 1951 in Kumasi with the primary aim of preserving the indigenous cultures. Some of these material cultures include traditional artworks which have been created to preserve records for the future generation about indigenous Ghanaian societies (SS of CNCK, 2023).*

The curator of Manhyia Palace Museum adds:

*As the main curator of Manhyia palace museum, I have noticed that efforts have been made to promote our native culture. One of the ways is the conversion of a palace built in 1925 into a museum in 1974. It has since served as an exhibition centre and a learning centre for many academicians undertaking research on issues related to Asante culture, some of which are sculptured hairstyles. Presently, a major renovation has been carried out at the museum to make it more spacious and attractive (Curator of Manhyia Palace Museum, 2023)*

In sum, cultural activities were boosted through the establishment, renovation and expansion of indigenous institutions. Some of them include Centre for National Culture and Manhyia Palace Museum.

### **Cumulative nature of culture**

Cumulative culture, as was understood during the field work, refers to the amassing of new ideas in order to refine an already existing hairstyle. It was gathered during series of interviews that as time goes on, new elements of styles are used to modify the existing ones. This implies that when there are innovations and new discoveries, some of the old elements are not discarded but they are blended together to achieve a better effect. A case in point is the *tirasa ahoma tire* (Figure 60) which traces its roots to Asanteman. A respondent comments:

*Originally, the style involved tying the base and the apex. With time, new ideas had evolved leading to the interlacing of tirasa ahoma tire into more intricate designs while its originality remains intact. It goes beyond just allowing the hair to remain erect and upright. As a result, both young and old females are spotted in the trasa ahoma tire (Hairstylist 3, 2023).*

It can be inferred that the additional beauty attached to the *trasa ahoma tire* has attracted more people to adopt this hairstyle. The structured straight tuft can be bent and designed into various shapes. Presently, it is not restricted only to old women. Figure 59 shows a modified form of *trasa ahoma tire*.

### **Wash-and-wear texture**

It was gathered during the field survey that wash-and-wear is a terminology which is borrowed from laundry services where some clothes are

washed and worn without ironing them. In the same vein, data showed that natural textured hair can withstand water. The texture does not damage when it comes into contact with water.

A respondent says:

*Natural hair is the texture required for styling my indigenous hairdo. The natural hair can be washed and trimmed and used for many occasions. The wash-and-wear texture makes it convenient for me to adopt it. When it is washed with water, the texture does not get damaged unlike the chemically straightened ones which get damaged when it comes into contact with water (Female servant 6, 2023).*

Another respondent comments:

*Aside the royal identity that the dansinkran haircut provides, some of the queens just like the style because it involves the use of the African hair texture which can be described as possessing a wash-and-wear quality. It can withstand and contain water without any cause for alarm. This is not limited to the dansinkran alone. Other indigenous hairstyles possess the same quality (Hairstylist 1, 2023).*

A third respondent adds that:

*Washing can be done at regular intervals to keep the hair nice and clean. When the African textured hair even gets into contact with unexpected rainfall, the texture does not change. Only the dye gets washed off (Queen 8, 2023).*

In the end, the natural hair texture required for styling indigenous hairdo makes it easier for a number of people to adapt the style. This is because it can withstand water.



### Indigenous hairstyles during the COVID-19 lockdown period

During the COVID-19 lockdown period, some people decided to style and shape their hair while indoors. The easy accessibility of indigenous products also facilitated this self-made venture. A respondent says:

*During this period, a number of queens maintained the dansinkran as some of the barbers were the servants and the representatives of the queens who were well versed in the skills of trimming the hair. So, their services were utilised a lot. The preparation of the traditional black pigment used for the dyeing was also done at home as the ingredients are always acquired in bulk. Under normal circumstances, these ingredients serve other household purposes so they were always available and were utilised for the dansinkran hairstyle (Queen 8, 2023).*

In sum, during the lockdown period, maintaining the *dansinkran* hairstyle became a necessity, especially when going out was restricted. The resources for the hairstyles were easily accessible, which made the activity easier to carry out.

### Social media

A number of different interviews revealed social media as a means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information, pictures and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Data gathered from chiefs, queens and the senior staff at the CNCK show that social media promotes indigenous culture of the Asantes because it is an avenue for traditional activities to be showcased, learned and perpetuated.

A respondent says:

*Social media plays significant role in projecting the identity and culture of the Asantes to the rest of the world. For instance, recently, Otumfo Osei Tutu II's picture went*

*viral as he attended the coronation of King Charles III in his ahenfo ti ho were hairstyle and other regalia on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2023. The culture and identity of Asante people were well represented. The whole world got the opportunity to see the material culture of the Asante, like the ahenfo ti ho were. Social media has also revealed that this haircut has been worn by past chiefs. For example, ahenfo ti ho were was won by Nana Kusi Apea I (Wankyihene: chief of a sub town of Asanteman) when the then Asantehene Otumfo Agyemang Prempeh II delegated him as his representative to the coronation event of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 (Chief 4, 2023).*

Another respondent adds:

*I have noticed that, herbal medicines like barks of trees, roots and leaves which help in hair management are present on social media. The significance of the use of soot, sheabutter and charcoal in beautifying the dansinkran hairstyle is also being promoted on social media (Queen 5, 2023).*

A third respondent says:

*The exposure to certain cultural events on social media has enhanced my pride in them. Maintaining my hair this way has become a great privilege as it is known worldwide. I believe my ancestors are also happy about my decision to continually maintain the dansinkran hairstyle. My grandchildren delight in our rich culture (Queen 7, 2023).*

A fourth respondent comments:

*With the development of technology, histories of past civilisations and societies are easily accessible on the internet such as social media platforms. For instance, “The Asante Nation” on both Facebook and X App*

*(formally called Twitter) are used to educate the world about the Asante people and their rich culture which include indigenous hairstyles (SS of CNCK, 2023).*

Social media has become one of the contemporary avenues of preserving and propagating Asante culture to the world. The use of social media has exposed people to varieties of indigenous hairstyles. Also, social media has exposed some people to the available indigenous products effective in maintaining indigenous hairstyles. Besides, the availability of social media has made people proud of their indigenous hairstyles as they witness them being displayed on social media.

### **Impact of indigenous leaders**

Indigenous leaders who are heads of various social units or groups in Asante have also played a significant role in the preservation of the Asante culture. Observations made during the field work point to the fact that the leadership of Asanteman play significant roles in preserving their cultural heritage. Their lifestyles motivate their subjects to follow their good example.

One respondent says:

*The ɔbrafohene (head of the abrafoɔ) is mostly seen in the indigenous hairstyle meant for the abrafoɔ. Some of these include sepow and mpesempesɛ. This sometimes influences and motivates his subordinates (abrafoɔ) to adopt the same hairstyle (Executioner 3, 2023).*

Another respondent adds:

*The persistent adornment of the dansinkran haircut by the current Asantehemaa (Nana Konadu Yiadom III) and Ahenfo ti ho were by Asantehene (Otumfuo Nana Osei Tutu II) attest to the fact that they act as pace-setters as*

*well as the embodiment and custodians of Asante culture*

(Queen 2, 2023)

In conclusion, most leaders in Asante portray the requisite indigenous hairstyle.

This leadership style serves as example to others.

### **Cultural activities**

Data from the field work revealed that any organised event or activity which reveals the indigenous beliefs and practices of a group of people could be regarded as cultural activities. Cultural activities have played a significant role in sustaining indigenous Asante hairstyles. Periodic organisation of cultural activities such as festivals, naming ceremonies, puberty rites, marriage rites, funerals and chieftaincy activities, are occasions for people to consistently learn about some of the types of indigenous Asante hairstyles and their relevance. Some adherents of Asante culture usually attend cultural events in indigenous hairstyles. Figure 62 depicts some chiefs in *ahenfo ti ho wer* during during an *Awukudae* festival.

A respondent comments:

*During festivals, some of us, the servants, are seen in indigenous Asante hairstyles like puaa, mpuaanu and mpuaansa. Other categories of people also do other hairstyles to commemorate the event. In fact, these events prevent the native hairstyles from going extinct. Data regarding the history surrounding the origin as well as its significance are gathered during such events. Though some decide to be in other types of hairstyles, the few existing ones are still worthy of learning* (Female Servant 6, 2023)

Another respondent says:

*I have been present at so many traditional ceremonies both within and outside Kumasi. During such activities foreigners come around to witness our arts and crafts which exhibit various forms of indigenous hairstyles. They also observe the hairstyles on the living human scalp. As they interact with us and the tour guides, the history behind our hairstyles are told to some of them (Chief 4, 2023).*

A third respondent adds that:

*Indigenous Asante hairstyles should consistently be accorded the necessary recognition and acknowledgement. That is the only way outsiders would desire to imitate us. Some even take pictures with us. We as custodians of tradition should not be quick to transform ourselves to conform to contemporary trends of life. Some foreigners love Asantes just because of the indigenous cultural practices and will offer money to be like the indigenous people (Executioner 1, 2023).*

A fourth respondent adds that:

*Indigenous institutions provide avenues for various traditional norms and values to be impacted both on the indigenes and outsiders. The institutions are usually organised establishments and activities (Male servant 4, 2023).*

To sum up, cultural activities are planned periodically among Asantes. During such periods, the indigenous practices of the Asantes such as their unique hairstyles become a tool of communication and influence. The events help in preventing the culture from getting extinct.



**Figure 62 - Some chiefs in *ahenfo ti ho wer* during a cultural activity**  
Source - Author, Photo used with permission (2023).

#### **Minimal health risks and easy maintenance**

Most indigenous hairstyles pose minimal health risk to the scalp. They are also easy to maintain. Data gathered from barbers, hairstylists, and queens of this study attested to this fact.



A respondent says:

*Haircuts like sepow and asakyimakan atikɔpuaa do not have any health implications in the process of shaping them so long as the implements used are properly sterilised. Some of my customers keep the aforementioned hairstyles due to the health benefits associated with them (Barber 2, 2023).*

Another respondent adds that:

*Tying the hair into tirasa ahoma tire, mpuaanu, mpuaansa, inflict minimal or no pain on the scalp. It involves tying the hair into demarcated sections. If the base of the hair is tightened loosely, it will not have any painful or other negative effect on the scalp. Therefore, the resultant effect of tight hair such as alopecia and headaches are avoided. Some of my customers prefer this hairstyle due to the health benefits it provides (Hairstylist 1, 2023).*

A third respondent comments:

*Traditional products used to beautify the dansinkran as mentioned earlier include plant soot, sheabutter and charcoal. These products nourish and heal the scalp. The health benefits associated with it motivate me to wear it all the time (Queen 4, 2023).*

A fourth respondent adds:

*Adorning the hair with nserewa/nsedieɛ (cowries) on nsuman mpesempese is easy to maintain. It is also healthy to keep such styles (Indigenous Priest 2, 2023).*

To conclude, indigenous hairstyles are easy to maintain. Also, indigenous hairdos are sustainable and their continuous patronage by health-conscious Asantes will keep them from generation to generation.

### It saves cost and time

Managing and maintaining some of the indigenous hairstyles are cost effective. For instance, data from the indigenous priests show that, managing *mpesempese* (dreadlock) with herbal products like *nyenya* leaves (*Momordica charantia* sp), *tuantini* roots (*Paullinia pinnata* sp), cost very little as these parts of the plants are obtained from the immediate environment. Moreover, the *nserewa* (cowries) used to adorn the *mpesempese* can be used over and over again. It does not easily get damaged. In some instances, it is not even removed at all, it is stuck in the hair forever. The queens revealed that indigenously, the management of the *dansinkran* is devoid of sophisticated pomade and other hair products. The local products normally used are also cost effective. In addition, when dreadlocks, mature they become tighter and smoother and they require less maintenance. Some respondents threw more light on the cost and time involved in indigenous hairstyles management as follows:

*Some people could make the indigenous hairstyles themselves since they are simple and easy to learn. Some of the indigenous hairstyles like the trasa ahoma tire, puaa and mpuaanu are simple to style and less expensive. However, some of the hair extensions are very expensive. They could cost as much as GHC1200. These exclude the workmanship* (Hairstylist 1, 2023).

When a woman decides to go indigenous, she will no longer need to visit a hairdresser as frequently as she did with relaxed hair because caring for her own hair will be much easier. A trip to the salon on weekly basis can be costly and time consuming, and relaxed hair must be maintained to avoid damage.



### **Indispensability of cultural roles of certain indigenous hairstyles**

The imperative use of some indigenous Asante hairstyles aid in their sustainability. Dreadlocks carry a lot of allegories and significance. A respondent had this to share:

*Nsuman nsodieƐ mpesempese [dreadlocks with cowries] which enables one to see in the spiritual realm, connects me to the supernatural. It enables me to perform my priestly duties effectively. Without it, I become like an unplugged cable from its source of power. Similarly, children born with knotted hair or dreadlocks are protected by the powers enshrined in the dreadlocks. They are protected from sicknesses and death as a result of the dreadlocks. They are also endowed by the gods with money to bring wealth to their families (Indigenous Priest 2, 2023).*

Another respondent said this:

*Due to the cultural benefits attached to dreadlocks, many people do not desire to switch to other hairstyles. Also, the stereotypical idea society use to form about mpesempese have been minimised and some people even adopt it as fashion (Indigenous Priest 1, 2023).*

An analysis of these responses reveals that dreadlocks are interwoven in the socio-cultural fabric of the roles of certain indigenous personalities in Asante society. Hairstyles work hand-in-hand in the performance of certain priestly duties. The indispensability of these hairstyles prevents them from going extinct.

### **Disadvantages of some non-indigenous Asante hairstyles**

Indigenous hairstyles are still thriving as a result of the discomfort associated with some non-indigenous Asante hairstyles. These disadvantages

discourage people from patronising them. This problem entices some people to stick to their age long indigenous Asante hairstyles. The following responses throw more light on this fact:

*Some of the hairstyles prevent people from doing high intensity exercise or work. Heavy hair extensions can cause headaches and irritations. In some instances, only professionals can fix them. They are expensive and they take lot of time to get done. People suffer from scalp itching (Hairstylist 3, 2023).*

Another respondent said this:

*People are discouraged from relaxing their hair with chemicals due to certain disadvantages associated with them. Some chemical relaxers leave the hair weak, brittle and prone to breakage. It can also burn your skin, cause permanent damage to the scalp and lead to hair loss. In order to restore one's hair to its original form, a person must go through an additional difficult step after the chemically relaxed style is destroyed by rain and other factors (Hairstylist 1, 2023).*

Also, another respondent said this:

*In fact, I am sick and weary of relaxers and other hair extensions. I view them as servitude and being held in captivity. I prefer to keep my hair short, even after observing my widowhood rite. It makes me look fifteen years younger than my age. The style of this haircut has even become popular among women who are busy with their careers (Widow 1, 2023).*

Others had this to say:

*At my age I do not want to subject myself to certain hairstyles in the name of fashion. I prefer the simple way of keeping my hair. I always thank our ancestors who initiated this dansinkran haircut. I feel free to do whatever I want to do. I*

*use to keep hair extensions in order to look more presentable but I think the disadvantages associated with it are enormous and make me uncomfortable (Queen 3, 2023).*

*The adoption of non-indigenous Asante hairstyles is tantamount to neo-colonialism, which to me, is a new form of ripping the Asantes off their indigenous belief systems and inculcating foreign ways. The reasons are that some of these non-indigenous Asante hairstyles require the use of foreign hair extensions and products (Artist 7, 2023).*

These responses provide clear indications that some people are still glued to indigenous Asante hairstyles due to the discomfort associated with a number of the non-indigenous ones. Sticking to indigenous Asante hairstyles enables them reap the full benefits associated with them.

### **Discussions of Results on Indigenous Asante Hairstyles Amidst Modernity**

Data show that many indigenous Asante hairstyles have undergone modifications. For instance, the indigenous dye used to blacken the *dansinkran* is no longer used much due to the strenuous efforts required in its production. Many indigenes prefer the foreign dyes due to their easy accessibility. They also have minimal staining characteristics. In line with this, Asenso (2019) posits that contemporarily, many queens use foreign dyes. Data show that the *yiwan* which is an indigenous tool used for haircutting among Asantes has been replaced with scissors and shaving machines because the latter operate faster. Thus, Mazumdar (1966) stresses that social change involves replacing one thing with another as the latter performs better.

Also, instead of trimming the *sepow*, most executioners prefer to wear *ɔsebo kyɛ*, *nsebe kyɛ* was likewise common among the war generals. *Nsebe kyɛ* is mostly used instead of *Gyawu atiko* due to the convenience associated with

it. Moreover, instead of shaving *ntitabo* and *nkotimsefompuaa*, the section meant to be shaved was rather woven. This transformation identified in the current study is in line with Boyd and Richardson (1985) assertion that, social change is a constantly occurring phenomenon and that every society undergoes changes with time as they make contact with other cultures. Also, it could be deduced from the current findings that, the few Asante societies that perform puberty rites for their girls usually do not consider shaving their wards *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* haircut. Perhaps, some Asante societies see the *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* as an odd and an archaic practice. The implication is that, the *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* seems to be gradually going extinct. If adequate measures are not put in place to preserve such historical Asante hairstyle, it will totally go extinct with its associated historical values which could lead to the production of unpatriotic generations of the Asante citizens.

It can be inferred from data that in the Asante culture, the movement from one stage to the other in life is sometimes marked by rites and ceremonies to depict throwing away the old and embracing the new. An example of a traditional activity which is used to mark newness is the indigenous hairstyles such as *ahenfo ti ho were* and *bragoro ti yi*. However, the influence of modernity and western civilisation appeared to be replacing old cultural rites of passage with contemporary Christian and secular rites of passage, and the power of the gods and the ancestors has been discredited.

Asantes are compelled to refrain from adopting indigenous Asante hairstyles because some hairstyles deny people certain privileges in society. A case in point is the *mpesempese* (dreadlocks). In corroboration with the above statement, Banks (2023) affirms that the impression people have about

dreadlock wearers is a common occurrence for Black people across Jamaica, the United States and around the world. Since the inception of slavery, black people, specifically black women, have had to risk losing opportunities like their jobs. This situation is not different from what prevails in Ghana as a nation. For example, Koomson (2016) explains that the majority of dreadlock wearers are thought to consume marijuana and look untidy. They are also considered as arrogant, rebellious, wayward and introverts. They are seen as mentally derailed and are often denied jobs. In view of this, the state in conjunction with stakeholders should solve the problems associated with Ghana's justice system against wearers of dreadlocks with stringent measures with immediate effect. This effort will enable dreadlock wearers to have equal access to opportunities enjoyed by non-dreadlock wearers.

Findings on education supports Tchenga (2021) argument that dreadlocks which had traditional values and tenets were not encouraged in most formal schools. Forcing students to cut their dreadlocks was a major disregard to the Asante culture. Offsprings of deities (*abosomma*) for instance, are not supposed to cut their hair according to Asante tradition. This implies that such children had to stop school in an effort not to incur the anger of their deity or object of worship. Similarly, an offspring of a deity (*ɔbosomba*) who was interviewed confirmed Koomson (2016) argument that formal educational systems do not usually entertain such hairstyles. Furthermore, it can be deduced from the field work that *tirasa ahoma tire* is a hairstyle which was originally done using the natural hair texture. However, people with chemically relaxed hair textures have also been adopting the *tirasa ahoma tire*.

Unceasing discussion and exposition of the significance of indigenous Asante hairstyles, has caused some hairstyles to continue to thrive. The works of earlier scholars and this research illuminate the cultural symbolism of some Afrocentric hairstyles found among Asantes which Western superiority and black hair discrimination could not erode after several years of its inception. This research has further accentuated the art component which remains very minimal in the literature on indigenous hairstyles.

Some indigenous hairstyles have stood the test of time. Falola (2022) supports this argument when he stressed that these hairstyles are crucial to the emancipation of the hair paradigm because they are exclusively Afrocentric. Data show that, findings on indigenous hairstyles must be passed onto the younger generation because traditional hairstyling uses completely natural and sustainable hair care products with little to no negative effects on the body. They are viewed as unavoidable forms of cultural heritage that must be protected.

It can be inferred from the data gathered from the field that some respondents still maintain some indigenous Asante hairstyles to date. A number of reasons why this type of hairstyle is chosen over chemically straightened hair or contemporary ones were provided. The reasons include dignity, wash-and-wear texture, health, individual style choices and even religious convictions. It is not surprising that Thompson (2009) indicates that many black females are starting to cherish their natural kinky hair texture rather than having it professionally or chemically straightened, which is equivalent to accepting one's original heritage and the privileges attached to it. It demonstrates self-acceptance as well as a major shift in the political expression of black people. For instance, the wearers of some indigenous hairstyles are easily recognised

and accorded certain treats and privileges during local public gatherings and international conferences. A case in point is the *dansinkran* hairstyle among the Asantes. Some females are easily identified in this type of hairstyle. As a result of these recognitions, they are offered the front and comfortable seats at functions. Hence, the desire of some interviewees to retain this hairstyle.

Moreover, the findings of this study revealed that certain hairstyles activate the functions of the gods and ancestors. As a result, they cannot be changed. In view of this, Akyeampong and Owusu-Ansah (2022) stress that Asanteman has throughout history relied on the gods and ancestors as important contributors to how they define their laws, views, rights and wrongs, and morals. The ancestors and gods are also believed to have brought prosperity, good fortune and happiness (Akyeampong, & Owusu-Ansah, 2022). These roles, according to the data, are performed through the traditional priests/priestesses who mostly adopt hairstyles prescribed by the gods. A case in point is *nsuman nsedieɛ mpesempesɛ*. The present *sumankwahene* (head of the traditional priest) has maintained *nsuman nsedieɛ mpesempesɛ*. Though these hairstyles are meant for traditional priests, certain individuals have adopted them because, they want to remain connected to their African root. In line with the above statement, Chitando and Chitando (2004) accentuate that dreadlocks played an important role in the fight against white supremacy as well as the celebration of a resurgence of black pride, physiology and culture. Thus, dreadlocks are used to challenge colonial stereotypes of blackness as inferior to whiteness.

Evolution of revised forms of indigenous hairstyles is also a factor. *Puaa* is one of the types of indigenous hairstyles among the Asantes. The creation of

artificial afro pony is based on the idea of *puaa* (which involves holding the hair together into one single unit with the aid of a thread, raffia or hairband). Presently, people have invented artificial Afro pony which is used to do pony tail. The Afro pony has the African hair texture. Even though it is used as a hair extension agent, once it has the characteristics of African hair texture it still projects the image of Africa. More innovative styles can be created in order to help the indigenous African hairstyle industry overshadow the contemporary foreign or hybridised ones. Even people with chemically relaxed hair patronise the Afro pony in order to beautify their hair. Similarly, the care of the hair of offsprings of deities (*abosomma*) were originally restricted to mothers. However, some indigenous salon operators testified that they have been managing such types of hairstyles nowadays. This does not make them feel odd anymore just because they do African hairstyle.

### **Chapter Summary**

It can be concluded from the results and discussions that all hairstyles which are indigenous to the Asantes are devoid of chemical alterations to permanently change their texture. They also possess rich cultural values. However, some indigenous Asante hairstyles are not patronised nowadays as much as they were in the past. Besides, the processes and materials involved in styling some of these indigenous hairstyles have undergone some modifications due to modernisation.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine Asante indigenous hairstyles for the cultural, social, political and artistic significance in the African traditional setup. The study sought to explain how the art forms of indigenous hairstyles were used as a form of social communication and a proof of cultural identity as well as social change among the Asante people. With the aid of in-depth semi-structured interviews and structured observation, data was collected in response to four research questions: (1) What are the types of indigenous hairstyles among the Asante people? (2) What are the visual art forms of indigenous hairstyles among the Asante people? (3) What are the identities and symbolisms conveyed through indigenous Asante hairstyles? (4) How has indigenous Asante hairstyles thrived amidst modern influences? Relying on qualitative research approach, with specific focus on ethnographic design, fifty-five (55) respondents were selected purposively for the in-depth interviews while their artworks and hairstyles were observed simultaneously. Thematic analytical technique was used to analyse the data.

This chapter contains a summary of the findings of the study and the conclusions. Recommendations are made with respect to the various ways to improve the patronage of indigenous hairstyles, a mark of our roots and heritage. In addition, suggestions for further studies are outlined.

## Summary of Findings

This section provides a brief account of the main findings. The synopsis of the study was organised around four themes of the research questions, namely: types of indigenous hairstyles, art forms, cultural identity and symbolism, and social change.

Seventeen (17) types of indigenous Asante hairstyles were discovered during the field work. They include indigenous haircuts like *dansinkran*, *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa*, *ahenfo ti ho werɛ*, *ntitabo*, *sepow*, *obi nka obi*, *nkotimsefompuaa* (ɔkɔdeɛ mmɔwerɛ), *Gyawu atikɔ* (*Kwatakye atikɔ*), *okunafoɔ ti-yi* and indigenous hairdos like *tirasa ahoma tire*, *nsuman nsedieɛ mpesempesɛ*, *puaa baako*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaansa*, *mpuaanan*, *mpuaanum* and *adantam tiri nwi*. All the indigenous hairstyles involved the use of natural textured hair which are either trimmed or arranged to meet certain specific cultural standards. Numbers in Asante Twi language played key roles in the derivation of the names of some of the indigenous hairstyles. The term *mpuaanu* was obtained from *mmienu* (2) in Twi while *mpuaansa* was derived from *mmiensa* (3) in Twi, *mpuaanan* and *mpuaanum* were derived from *enan* (4) and *num* (5) tufts of hair. The origin of these hairstyles can be traced to a single individual or a group. Hairstyles such as *puaa baako*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaasa*, *mpuaanan* could be traced to one ancient Asante queen, who used to get her maids to style their hairs these ways. An encounter with a dwarf, by an indigenous priest put *nsuman nsedieɛ mpesempesɛ* to birth. Others have originated as a group hairstyle to mark a social event. For instance, the aftermath of a war led to the birth of the *dansinkran* haircut, which was introduced by some indigenous Asante priestesses. The need to preserve the Asante concept of indigenous trinity resulted in the development

of *tirasa ahoma tire*. The *asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* haircut was derived from the literal meaning “haircut found at the occiput of people who have had their menstruation for the first time”. Names like *kentenkye* and *obi nnkaa obi a obi nnka obi* which used to be associated with certain indigenous hairstyles are no longer used much.

In addition, a summary of the artforms of the Asante indigenous hairstyles are provided. Prominence was placed on the elements, principles, media and tools of art. Some of the elements observed in these hairstyles include shapes, lines, colours, spaces (positive vs negative, deep vs shallow), and textures. *Tirasa ahoma tire* depicts three geometric shapes which are cone, oval and elongated narrow triangle. The *dansinkran* portrayed a 3-D circular shape. The *mpuaanu* is symmetrically shaped. *Sepow* consists of a triangle with a point superimposed on top of a circle. The principles of gradation (parts of the tuft in different sizes) and balance (symmetric) appear in *dansinkran*. The *puaa* is held together in the unison principle of art. Some of the artistic tools and materials used in styling the indigenous hairs include *duafe*, raffia and *yiwan* while local materials like sheabutter, plant soot and charcoal serve as indigenous beautifying agents with health benefits. Visual presentations of indigenous hairstyles in the form of sculptures exists only in the form of the *tirasa ahoma tire* and the *dansinkran* in the study area. The respondents were of the view that more visual representations of indigenous hairstyles can be of great benefit to the society.

As regards the third research theme, identity and symbolism of Asante indigenous hairstyles, the *dansinkran* is not only identified with queens but other people like the *akyeame* (spokespersons) of the *ahemaa* (queens), other

female high-ranking position holders like *Krontihemaa*, *Ankobeahemaa*, *Tufohemaa*, *Asafohemaa*, *Manwherehemaa*, *Sanahemaa*, *Adontenhemaa*, *Nkyidomhemaa*, also adopt it. What differentiates the *ahemaa* from other office holders are the ornaments (anklets, bracelets and necklaces) which go with the haircut. Furthermore, puberty rite initiates who have reached the final stage of the initiation rite and some traditional priestesses are expected to be in the *dansinkran*. The haircut symbolises royalty and higher status. The *tirasa ahoma tire* is associated with the old women of the Asante kingdom. The three divisions in the hair symbolise the indigenous concept of trinity of the Asantes. Some offsprings of deities (*abosomma*), indigenous priests and priestesses are noted for *nsuman nsedieɛ mpesempesɛ*. This hairstyle is one of the ways by which indigenous priests and priestesses are empowered to be involved in decision making on crucial matters of the society. They mediate between the people and the deities of the society. It marks a stage where one can hear from a deity. *Asakyimakan atikɔpuaa* is identified with puberty rite initiates at the first stage of the initiation rite. *Puaa baako*, *mpuaanu*, *mpuaansa*, *mpuaanan* are all associated with the female servants of the *ahemaa* (queens). *Sepow* is associated with executioners and it symbolises justice. While *obi nka obi* is related to the male servants of the chiefs and it signifies peaceful co-existence, *nkotimsefompuaa* (*ɔkɔdeɛ mmɔwere*) is connected to the female servants and it signifies strength. *Gyawu atikɔ* (*Kwatakye atikɔ*) reveals the generals' dread and power as *mpuaanum* portrays priestly tasks. *Dansinkran* and *ahenfo ti ho were* are associated with queens and chiefs respectively. They symbolise higher social status which attracts recognition and respect. The three fundamental components which constitute the Asante kingdom is portrayed in *the tirasa*

*ahoma tire*. Due to the significance of some indigenous hairstyles, recommendations were made on the use of more indigenous hairstyles to represent personalities, current cultural events and other values of Asante culture.

As regards the fourth research question, which dealt with sustainability of indigenous Asante hairstyles amidst modern influences, the data identified some hairstyles which are not of Asante origin but have been adopted by some indigenes. These hairstyles include *irun didi*, *kiko*, *suku*, twist, chemically relaxed hair extensions, wigs and scarfs. Asantes got exposed to these hairstyles through migration and cultural hybridity. People are also influenced to adopt other hairdos as a result of contemporary activities such as Christianity, Islam, industrialisation, exposure to foreign goods, urbanisation, education, peer pressure, and social media. Some respondents were of the opinion that sometimes the stress people go through when managing their natural hair causes them to adopt chemically relaxed hair. Some of the challenges mentioned regarding natural hair include difficulty involved in combing and detangling hair. Therefore, since chemically relaxed hairs are easy to comb and style, people are enticed to go for them. Moreover, colonial influence has damaged the African notion of beauty that growing short hair is a backward tradition. Besides, African hair has been described as dry, unkempt, messy and kinky. It was discovered from the study that some people still maintain indigenous hairstyles in the face of modernity as a result of the cumulative nature of culture like the interlacing of the *tirasa ahoma tire* into more intricate designs while its originality remains intact motivates people to maintain *tirasa ahoma tire*. Its “wash-and-wear” texture is also a factor influencing people to keep such hair

style. Social media displays pictures of some of the Asante indigenous hairstyles. For instance, the picture of Otumfo Osei Tutu II in *ahenfo ti ho were* when he attended the coronation of King Charles III on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2023 was shown on social media. The identity and culture of Asantes were well represented. Indigenous mentors like *abrafoohene* (head of executioners) are mostly seen in the indigenous *abrafo* hairstyles like the *sepow* and *mpesempese*. Another factor is the minimal health hazards these traditional hairstyles pose. For instance, tying the hair into the *tirasa ahoma tire*, *mpuaanu* and *mpuaansa* is not painful. Furthermore, adorning the hair with *nserewa* on *ahunum mpesempese* does not inflict any pain. The fact is that it reduces cost and saves time. The *nserewa* can be used over and over again. Finally, projecting a proud African identity also propels some indigenes of Asante to showcase and retain indigenous hairstyles.

## Conclusions

The indigenous Asante hairstyles portray a rich tapestry of historical roots. These hairstyles, tracing their origin to Asanteman, are not merely aesthetic expressions but possess features which constitute integral components of Asante cultural heritage. The wearing of natural indigenous hairstyles according to specific cultural contexts, underscores a connection to traditional practices. The incorporation of numbers in hairstyle names reflects a deeper linguistic innovation within the Asante Twi language, where numbers are creatively employed to label and differentiate various tufts of hair. Influential figures and social events have influenced the naming and historical trend of hair styling for the Asante people. Further, the Asantes made a conscious effort to preserve some cultural concepts such as rites of passage by introducing some

hairstyles. Overall, the Asante culture and history are intricately woven which is embodied in their hairstyles. This emphasises the role of hairstyling as living artifacts that bridge the past and present within the Asante community. That notwithstanding, the histories and features of some of the indigenous Asante hairstyles can be made known to the public through diverse means.

Although the indigenous Asante hairstyles embody the Asante culture and history, their aesthetic nature has a significant appeal to the Asante people. The indigenous Asante hairstyles have contributed to cultural significance of the Asantes through the combination of elements, principles, media, and tools. There has been a deliberate and artistic approach to designing the indigenous Asante hairstyles by inculcating artistic principles, geometric shapes and elements which emphasise sophisticated artistry. The use of indigenous artistic tools and materials do not only serve aesthetic purposes but also carries significant health benefits. Consequently, underscoring the profound artistic expressions within Asante hairstyling, emphasising their role as cultural artifacts with aesthetic, symbolic, and health-related dimensions is what this research sought to achieve.

The indigenous African hairstyles transcend mere aesthetic expressions, serving as symbolic markers of hierarchical roles and social distinctions within the Asante community. The differentiation between queens, chiefs, servants, and spiritual leaders through specific hairstyles underlines a nuanced societal structure. The diverse hairstyles play pivotal roles in cultural ceremonies and rites of passage, marking significant life transitions and spiritual empowerment. Hairstyles associated with *abosomma* and traditional priests, reflect a unique intersection of spirituality and societal mediation. Additionally, the symbolic

associations of justice, peace, military prowess, and leadership within distinct hairstyles highlight the multifaceted nature of individual roles. Beyond their aesthetic appeal, these hairstyles emerge as living artifacts having cultural, historical, and spiritual dimensions of the Asante identity. Indigenous means of communication through hairstyles can still be utilised to convey messages in this contemporary era.

The Asante hairstyle choices unveil a delicate balance between cultural preservation, practical considerations, and exposure to external influences. There has been cultural resilience as some traditional hairstyles have undergone adaptation to contemporary designs while retaining their authenticity. Nonetheless, the ease of managing chemically relaxed hair contrasting with the perceived difficulties of managing natural hair has affected cultural preservation of Asante hair styling. External factors like migration, colonisation, urbanisation, and exposure to global trends, facilitated by social media, has significantly influenced hairstyle choices. On the other hand, minimal health hazards associated with traditional styles and the cost-effectiveness of adornments lead to their retention. The wearing of indigenous Asante hairstyle by leaders of the Asantes on national and global platforms contribute to cultural representation and pride.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the four main research objectives, namely: types of indigenous hairstyles, art forms, cultural identity and symbolism, and sustainability amidst modern influences.



1. Indigenous hairstyles should be studied as part of academic curricula particularly within African Studies program to promote the African heritage. More books and articles should be published on indigenous hairstyles, since oral tradition could be distorted if customs and traditions are not put in books. Hence, cultural heritages could be preserved for the education of the current and future generations.
2. In addition to periodic organisation of reality shows by cultural institutions like Centre for National Culture and traditional rulers in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture, where personalities who are able to recount historical facts accurately are rewarded, platforms like durbars, social media, TV, Radio can be used to educate the public about the histories of the Asantes particularly those related to indigenous hairstyles. Since historical facts serve as basis for carrying out present activities appropriately. This will prevent histories from getting extinct.
3. Investors and stakeholders should invest in the improvement of the quality and large-scale production of local dye as beautifying agents in contemporary hairstyling.
4. Institutions such as CNCK and the various Visual Art Gallery Units should establish mentorship programs where experienced artists can pass down their knowledge of indigenous hairstyling art to younger generations. This will enhance the creation of more artefacts in the form of indigenous hairstyles. It will also ensure the continuity of artistic traditions and promote the transmission of cultural values.

5. It is recommended that the Local Art and Craft Industries in collaboration with the CNCK should arrange more artistic exhibitions by showcasing the visual representations of indigenous hairstyles, emphasising the diverse shapes, lines, colours, and textures. This could be done through paintings, sculptures, and other visual art forms. More art works portraying indigenous hairstyles can also be displayed at public places.
6. Professional hairstylists and stakeholders should provide educational resources and support to address challenges associated with managing natural hair, such as difficulties in combing and detangling.
7. Queens should educate the public on the health benefits, cost-effectiveness and time efficiency of maintaining traditional hairstyles, such as the reuse of adornments like *nserewa* should be highlighted.
8. Current generation can adopt some indigenous hairstyling into modern styling trends.

### **Suggestions for further research**

1. In all, seventeen (17) different types of hairstyles were discovered during the field work. However, since the study was carried out only in KTA, there is the likelihood that other Traditional Areas could also provide data pertaining to other types of indigenous hairstyles that exist outside the jurisdiction of Kumasi, but could also be peculiar to the Asantes in general. It is therefore recommended that similar research could be carried out in other traditional areas within the domain of

Asanteman in order to unravel more hairstyles which are treasured as the cultural heritage of the Asantes.

2. This current study focused on data pertaining to the art forms and symbolism of indigenous hairstyles which evolved after the Asante empire was confederated around 1695 onwards, under the leadership of their first king, Osei Tutu I. It is therefore recommended that further research could be carried out on earlier period, that is before 1695. This can unravel more ancient hairstyles which existed before Asante empire was confederated and how symbolic they were to certain cultural values.
3. Findings from a section of some queens who were interviewed in Kumasi Traditional Area indicated that the indigenous dye meant for *dansinkran* haircut among the female royal is of high medicinal value. This is because the dye is purported to preventing dandruff, moisturising hair and strengthening hair follicles. In this regard, the current study suggests that further research could be conducted on the chemical constituents of the indigenous dye used for the *dansinkran* haircut and its effect on the human scalp among the people of Asante.

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**Appendix 1Ai - In-depth interview guide for queens**  
(eligible wearers of indigenous Asante hairstyles)

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**Introduction**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

- i) Name of screener:.....
- ii) Date: .....
- iii) Time interview started: ..... Time interview ended: .....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

1. As a queen, is there any indigenous hairstyle which is required of you to wear?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

2. If yes to one (1), what is the name of the hairstyle?.....

3a. Did it originate among the Asantes? Yes [ ] No [ ]

3b. If yes to 3a, provide a brief explanation to why and how this indigenous hairstyle in 2 came into existence .....

4. Are you required to wear it all the time? Yes [ ] No [ ]

5. If no to 4, on which occasions are you required to wear it .....

6. Is the indigenous hairstyle in 2, a haircut or hairdo

7. Provide a brief description of the hairstyle in 2.....

### **SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

8. Is natural hair the texture of hair required to design the hairstyle in 2 or chemically straightened hair?

9. Provide reasons for your answer in 8.....

10. Which processes are involved in making or trimming this type of hairstyle in 2

11a. State the indigenous tools used in designing the hairstyle in 2

11b. Is the hairstyle usually dyed after styling? Yes [ ] No [ ]

11c. If yes to 11b, mention the indigenous materials that are combined to constitute the dye.....

11d. Describe the shape and colour of the hairstyle.....

12. Are there special people in the palace who style or trim the hair or you usually go to the salon? .....

### **SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

13a. Apart from the indigenous hairstyle providing identity to you as a queen, does it

provide identity to any other adherent of Asante culture? Yes [ ] No [ ]

13b. If yes to 13a, mention the categories of people who are culturally required to groom their hair in this type of hairstyle.....

14a. What messages do the indigenous Asante hairstyle in 2 communicate to the public? .....

14b. Provide the spiritual symbolism of the indigenous materials used in making the native dye.....

14c. Mention the cultural symbolism of the shape of the indigenous hairstyle .....

15a. Do you enjoy certain privileges in society due to maintaining the indigenous hairstyle in 2? Yes [ ] No [ ]

15b. If yes to 15a, mention some of the privileges.....

16. Are you denied certain privileges in society due to maintaining the indigenous hairstyle in 2? Yes [ ] No [ ]

17. If yes to 16, mention those privileges you are denied of .....
18. Are there some indigenous forbidden acts which are associated with the indigenous hairstyles in 2? Yes [ ] No [ ]
19. If yes to 18, provide examples of some of the forbidden acts .....
20. Do people maintain the indigenous hairstyle in 2, though they do not belong to a particular social group of recognition? Yes [ ] No [ ]
21. If yes to 20, explain why people who do not belong to your category or certain group maintain the indigenous hairstyle in 2 as well as its consequences thereof

#### **SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

22. Do you think the wearing of the indigenous hairstyle in 2 is as often as it used to be in the oldern days? Yes [ ] No [ ]
23. Provide reasons for your answer in 22 .....
24. Are there any modern changes in the indigenous hairstyle in 2 as compared to the historic times? Yes [ ] No [ ]
25. If yes to 24, in your opinion, how has contemporary ways of life influenced the indigenous hairstyles in 2?.....
26. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of contemporary influence on indigenous hairstyles?.....
27. In which ways has the indigenous hairstyles in 2 also influenced the contemporary ones?.....
28. Has the indigenous Asante hairstyles in 2 gained recognition in global fashion and cultural movements? How do these global interactions affect the authenticity and cultural significance of the hairstyles?
29. In your opinion, which measures can be put in place to enhance the perpetuation of indigenous hairstyles?.....

**Appendix 1Aii - In-depth interview guide for chiefs**  
(eligible wearers of indigenous Asante hairstyles)

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**Introduction**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

- ii) Name of screener:.....
- ii) Date: .....
- iii) Time interview started: ..... Time interview ended: .....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

1. Why are Asante chiefs mostly in clean-shaven haircut? .....
2. Do you know how the indigenous hairstyle on your scalp is called in Asante Twi?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
3. If yes to 2, provide the name and a brief description of the indigenous hairstyle  
on your scalp
4. Were the Asantes the original source of the hairstyle in 3? Yes [ ] No [ ]
5. Who was the first to adopt this hairstyle .....
6. Describe the circumstances that led to the emergence of the Indigenous

Asante hairstyle on your scalp.....

7. For what reason was the native hairstyle mentioned in 3 suggested primarily for chiefs and not any other adherent of Asante culture? .....
8. On which occasion is it mostly worn and why?.....
9. Will you categorise the hairstyle in 3 as hairdo or haircut .....

### **SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

10. What kind of hair texture is needed to create the indigenous hairstyle in 3...
11. Which steps go into creating the indigenous hairstyle in 3?.....
12. List the native tools that were employed to create the hairstyle in 3.....
13. Describe the native implement(s) utilised to create the native hairstyle in 3.
14. What form does the hairstyle take?.....
15. What is the hairstyle's colour?.....
16. Is there a visual representation of the native hairstyle on your scalp in any kind of art? Yes [ ] No [ ]
17. If the answer is yes to 16, list a few visual forms that have been used to depict the indigenous hairstyle in 3 and why .....

### **SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

- 18a. Does the indigenous hairstyle on your scalp provide identification for only chiefs? Yes [ ] No [ ]
- 18b. If no to 18a, mention any other categories of the adherent of Asante culture who also wear the hairstyle in 3
19. Provide the spiritual symbolism of the indigenous hairstyle in 3 .....
20. What are the moral symbolism of the indigenous hairstyle in 3 .....
21. What are the political symbolism of the indigenous hairstyle in 3 .....
22. What are the economic symbolism of the indigenous hairstyle in 3 .....
23. What are the social symbolism of the indigenous hairstyles in 3 .....
24. Do you enjoy or are denied certain privileges in society due to maintaining the indigenous hairstyle in ?.....
- 25a. Are there some taboos associated with the indigenous hairstyles in 3?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

25b. If yes to 25a, list those taboos .....

26. Do people maintain this indigenous hairstyles in 3, though they do not belong to the designated social group of recognition in Asanteman?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

27. If yes to 26, identify those hairstyles and explain why people who do not belong to certain group maintain these types of hairstyles as well as its consequences thereof .....

#### **SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

28. Do you think modern ways have influenced the indigenous hairstyles in 3?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

29. If yes to 28, in your opinion, how has contemporary ways of life influenced the indigenous hairstyles among the Asantes?.....

30. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of contemporary influence on the indigenous hairstyles in 3?.....

31. In which ways has the indigenous hairstyles in 3 also influenced the contemporary ones?.....

32. In your opinion, which measures can be put in place to enhance the perpetuation of the indigenous hairstyle in 3?.....



**Appendix 1Aiii - In-depth interview guide for executioners**

(eligible wearers of indigenous Asante hairstyles)

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST****COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES****FACULTY OF ARTS****CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES****Introduction**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

- iii) Name of screener:.....
- ii) Date: .....
- iii) Time interview started: ..... Time interview ended: .....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

1. As an executioner do you know of any indigenous hairstyle(s) which  
Identify(ies) you and those who belong to your group? Yes [ ] No [ ]
2. If yes to one (1), mention them.....
3. Which of them are hairdos and which of them are haircuts.....
4. On which occasions are these hairstyles mentioned in 2 usually worn?.....
5. Provide a brief description of the mentioned indigenous hairstyles in 2 .....
6. Which circumstances led to the origin of the indigenous hairstyle(s) in 2 .....
7. Who was the first to wear any of the indigenous hairstyles in 2? .....
8. Which processes are involved in designing or trimming the indigenous hairstyles in 2? .....

9. What are the merits and demerits of keeping the indigenous Asante hairstyles in 2?

### **SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

10. What is/are the shape(s) of the indigenous hairstyle(s) in 2?
11. Which texture of hair is required to make or trim the style in 2?
12. State the indigenous materials used in designing the hairstyle(s) in 2.
13. Which indigenous implements are used in trimming or styling the indigenous Hairstyle(s) in 2?
14. Are ornaments required in adorning any of the indigenous hairstyle(s) mentioned in 2? Yes [ ] No [ ]
15. Has the hairstyles mentioned in 2 being represented in any visual art forms? Yes [ ] No [ ]
16. If yes to 15, in which visual art forms have the hairstyles mentioned in one 2 been visually represented in Kumasi Traditional Area? .....
17. Provide reasons for the visual representation of the indigenous hairstyle(s) meant for executioners .....

### **SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

18. If the indigenous hairstyle in 2 provides identity to executioners, then what kind of moral messages do they communicate to the public?.....
19. Identify any social message the indigenous hairstyle(s) communicate to the Public .....
20. Explain any political message(s) the indigenous hairstyle(s) in 2 communicates to the public .....
21. Describe any religious message(s) the indigenous hairstyle(s) in 2 provides to the public. ....
22. Do you enjoy or are denied certain privileges in society due to maintaining the type of indigenous hairstyles in 2?.....
- 23a. Are there some taboos associated with any of the indigenous hairstyles in 2? Yes [ ] No [ ]

23b. If yes to 23a, mention those taboos .....

**SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS  
HAIRSTYLES**

24. Do you think modern ways have influenced the indigenous hairstyles in 2?

Yes [ ☐ ] No [ ☐ ]

25. If yes to 24, in your opinion, how has contemporary ways of life  
influenced the indigenous hairstyles among the Asantes?.....

26. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of contemporary  
influence on indigenous hairstyles?.....

27. Do you think indigenous hairstyles mentioned in 2 has influenced some of  
the foreign hairstyles? Yes [ ☐ ] No [ ☐ ]

28. If yes to 27, in which ways have the indigenous hairstyles influenced the  
contemporary or foreign ones?.....

29. Do you think indigenous Asante hairstyles can be used to preserve the  
culture and history of the Asantes? Yes [ ☐ ] No [ ☐ ]

30. If yes to 29, in your opinion, which measures can be put in place to enhance  
the perpetuation of indigenous Asante hairstyles?.....

**Appendix 1Aiv - In-depth interview guide for palace servants**  
(eligible wearers of indigenous Asante hairstyles)

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**Introduction**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

- iv) Name of screener:.....
- ii) Date: .....
- iii) Time interview started: ..... Time interview ended: .....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

1. Are palace servants identified in any form of indigenous hairstyle which originated from among the Asante people? Yes [ ] No [ ]
2. If yes to one (1), do the indigenous hairstyles used to identify the female royal servants different from that of male royal servants?
3. If yes to 2, state some examples of the indigenous hairstyles which are identified with only the male servants .....
4. State some of the indigenous hairstyles which are identified with only the female servants .....

5. Classify the indigenous hairstykes in 3 and 4 under haircut and hairdo  
.....
6. Are these hairstyles in 3 and 4 worn all the time or only on special events
7. Provide a brief description of the mentioned indigenous hairstyle(s) in  
3and 4.....
8. Which processes are involved in making these types of hairstyles in 3  
and 4.....
9. Describe the origin of the hairstyle(s) mentioned in 3 and 4 .....
10. Identify the hairstyles mentioned in 3 and 4 and state the techniques used  
in creating them .....

### **SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

11. What are the shapes of the indigenous hairstyles identified with the palace  
servants in Kumasi Traditional Area? .....
12. State and describe the indigenous tools used in designing the hairstyles meant  
for the palace servants in 3 and 4 .....
13. Which indigenous materials are used to design the indigenous hairstyles in 3  
and 4.
14. Which texture of the hair is required to make or trim the style in 3 and 4?  
.....
15. In your opinion, can indigenous hairstyles on the human scalp be classified  
as art? .....
16. Aside from representing the indigenous hairstyles of the palace servanrts in the  
form  
of body art on the scalp, identify other forms of visual representation of the  
indigenous hairstyles in Kumasi Traditional Area. ....
17. Will you advocate for more visual representation of indigenous hairstyles of  
the palace servants in art forms? Yes [ ] No [ ]
18. If yes to 17, why? .....

### **SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

19. Do you know of any significance associated with the indigenous hairstyles stated in 3 and 4? Yes [ ] No [ ]
20. If yes to 19, explain the social significance of the indigenous hairstyles in 3 and 4?
21. What are the cultural significance of the the indigenous hairstyles in 3 and 4
22. What are the economic significance of the the indigenous hairstyles in 3 and 4
23. In your opinion, do you think you and the other servants enjoy certain privileges in society due to your maintenance of the indigenous hairstyles in 3 and 4? Yes [ ] No [ ]
24. If yes to 23, what are some of the privileges .....
25. Are you sometimes denied certain opportunities or intimidated by adopting the hairstyles in 3 and 4? Yes [ ] No [ ]
26. If yes to 25, what are the challenges.....

### **SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

27. Do you think modern ways have influenced the indigenous hairstyles in 3 and 4? Yes [ ] No [ ]
28. If yes to 27, in your opinion, how has contemporary ways of life influenced the aesthetic features of indigenous hairstyles in 3 and 4?.....
29. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of contemporary influence on indigenous hairstyles?.....
30. Do you think indigenous hairstyles have also influenced contemporary hairstyles  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
31. If yes to 30, in which ways has indigenous hairstyles also influenced the contemporary ones?.....
32. What policies do you think should be implemented to promote the continuation of native hairstyles?.....

**Appendix 1Av - In-depth interview guide for indigenous priests and priestesses (eligible wearers of indigenous Asante hairstyles)**

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**Introduction**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

- v) Name of screener:.....
- ii) Date: .....
- iii) Time interview started: ..... Time interview ended: .....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

1. Can you provide a brief introduction about yourself and your role in society?.....
2. What is the name of the indigenous Asante hairstyle found on your scalp?
- 3a. Is there any link between your role and your hairstyle? Yes [ ] No [ ]
- 3b. If yes to 3a, describe the linkage .....
- 4a. Provide a brief description of the mentioned indigenous hairstyle in 2 .....
- 4b. What motivated you to keep this type of hairstyle? .....
- 5a. Which processes are involved in making this type of hairstyle in 2 .....
- 5b. What are the sacred grooming practices involved in keeping this hairstyle?  
.....
- 6a. Do you know the origin of this hairstyle?.....

6b.If yes to 6a, provide a brief description of the origin of the hairstyle in 2  
.....

7. Identify any other type of indigenous hairstyle among Asantes which are known to you apart from the one on your scalp which are identified with indigenous priests and priestesses.....

### **SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

8. State the indigenous tools used in designing and maintaining the hairstyle in 2 .....

9. Which texture of hair is required to make or trim the style in 2.....

10. In your opinion, can the indigenous hairstyle in 2 be classified as art?

11. If yes to 10, what type of art is it?.....

12. Are there any religious or spiritual ornament(s) tied to the styling of your hair, either in terms of personal belief or community-wide practices? .....

13a. If yes to 12, what is the name of the ornament(s) in your hair? .....

13b. How many of the ornament(s) in 12 are in your hair?.....

13c. Describe the shape, colour and size of the ornament(s) .....

13d. Is/are the position(s) of the ornament(s) on the hair determined by the deity? Yes [ ] No [ ]

13e. Provide reasons for your answer to 13d.....

14a. Do you think the number of ornament(s) in the hair at a particular point in time, play any significant role? Yes [ ] No [ ]

14b. If yes to 14a, specify the number of ornaments and what they symbolise.....

15a. Has the hairstyle on your scalp been artistically represented in any visual form like drawing, painting, sculpturing etc. Yes [ ] No [ ]

15b. If yes to 15a, state the visual form in which the indigenous hairstyle has been represented .....

16a. Do you think this visual representation of the indigenous hairstyle on your scalp promotes tourism? Yes [ ] No [ ]

16b. If yes to 16a, what other benefits do the visual art forms of the indigenous hairstyle provide?.....



## SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES

17. In your opinion, what is identity?.....
18. Mention the categories of adherents of Asante culture who are usually identified in this type of indigenous Asante hairstyle found on your scalp.....
19. What messages do the indigenous Asante hairstyle on your scalp communicate to the public?
20. Have you ever been denied certain privileges in any society as a result of this type of hairstyle on your scalp? Yes [ ] No [ ]
21. If yes to 20, what were those privileges? .....
22. Have you ever enjoyed certain opportunities or advantages as a result of the hairstyle in 2? Yes [ ] No [ ]
23. If yes to 22, what are those advantages?.....
- 24a. Are there some taboos associated with any indigenous hairstyle? Yes [ ]  
No [ ]
- 24b. If yes to 24a, what are these taboos? .....
25. Do you think people maintain the indigenous hairstyle in 2 though they do not belong to that particular social group of recognition? Yes [ ] No [ ]
26. If yes to 25, identify those hairstyles and explain why people who do not belong to certain group maintain these types of hairstyles as well as its consequences thereof .....

## SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES

27. Do you think modern ways have influenced the indigenous Asante hairstyles in 2? Yes [ ] No [ ]
28. If yes to 27, in your opinion, how have contemporary ways of life influenced the indigenous hairstyles among the Asantes?.....
29. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of contemporary influence on indigenous hairstyles?.....
30. Do you think the indigenous hairstyle on your scalp has also influenced modern or foreign hairstyles in anyway? Yes [ ] No [ ]
31. If yes to 30, in which ways have indigenous hairstyles also influenced the contemporary ones?.....
32. In your opinion, which measures can be put in place to enhance the perpetuation of indigenous hairstyles?.....

**Appendix 1** **Avi - In-depth interview guide for offsprings of deities**  
(eligible wearers of indigenous Asante hairstyles)

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**Introduction**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

- vi) Name of screener:.....
- ii) Date: .....
- iii) Time interview started: ..... Time interview ended: .....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

1. Do you have a special hairstyle on your scalp? Yes [ ] No [ ]
2. If yes to 1, what inspired you to keep such a hairstyle.....
3. Do you know the name of the hairstyle on your head? Yes [ ] No [ ]
4. If yes to 3, provide the name and a brief description of the hairstyle .....
5. How long have you been keeping this hairstyle on your scalp? .....
6. Why have you been keeping it for that period of time? .....
7. Do you have a sacred way of maintaining the hair? Yes [ ] No [ ]
8. If yes to 7, mention some of the divine ways.....
- 9a. Do you sometimes visit the salon to get it groomed Yes [ ] No [ ]
- 9b. Is the hairstyle in 4 a haircut or a hairdo? .....

10. Do you have any idea about the origin of the name of this hairsyle Yes [ ]  
No [ ]

11. If yes to 10, provide a brief description of the history of the hairstyle in 4  
.....

### **SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

12. Do you think a sample of the hairstyle on your scalp has been visually  
represented

in any art forms like sculptures? Yes [ ] No [ ]

13. If yes to 12, identify other forms of visual representation of the indigenous  
hairstyle in 4 within Kumasi Traditional Area. ....

14. If no to 12, do you think a visual representation of the indigenous hairstyle  
in 4 is important? .....

15. If yes to 14, state the ways in which representing this indigenous hairstyle  
in visual art forms can promote this aspect of Asante culture. ....

16. Which texture of hair is required to make or trim the style in 4 on the human  
body?

17. Provide reasons to question 16 .....

18. Are there cowries in your hair? .....

19. If yes to 18, how many cowries are in the hair? .....

20. Do you think the number of cowries in the hair, signify something?  
.....

### **SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

21. The indigenous hairstyle in 4 identifies you as what?.....

22. Is this indigenous hairsyle symbolic? Yes [ ] No [ ]

23. If yes to 22, mention some of the symbolisms associated with this  
hairsyle.....

24. Have you ever been denied certain privileges in any society as a result of  
this type of indigenous hairstyle on your scalp? Yes [ ] No [ ]

25. If yes to 24, what were those privileges? .....

26. Have you ever enjoyed certain opportunities or advantages as a result of the hairstyle in 4? Yes [ ] No [ ]

27. If yes to 26, what are those advantages?.....

28a. Are there some taboos associated with the indigenous hairstyle in 4?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

28b. If yes to 28a, mention some of these taboos .....

29. Do you think people maintain the indigenous hairstyle in 4 though they do not belong to that particular social group of recognition? Yes [ ] No [ ]

30. If yes to 29, explain why people who do not belong to your group maintain the hairstyle in 4 and the consequences thereof? .....

#### **SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

33. Do you think modern ways have influenced the indigenous hairstyles in 4? Yes [ ] No [ ]

34. If yes to 33, in your opinion, how have contemporary ways of life influenced aesthetics and symbolisms of the indigenous Asante hairstyles in 4?.....

35. Do you think the indigenous hairstyle in 4 has also influenced any foreign hairstyle? Yes [ ] No [ ]

36. If yes to 35, in which ways has the indigenous hairstyle in 4 also influenced the contemporary ones?.....

37. In your opinion, which measures can be put in place to enhance the perpetuation of indigenous hairstyles?.....

## Appendix 1Avii - In-depth interview guide for spokespersons of the queens

(eligible wearers of indigenous Asante hairstyles)

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

### Introduction

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

- vii) Name of screener:.....
- ii) Date: .....
- iii) Time interview started: ..... Time interview ended: .....

### SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES

1. As a spokesperson of the queen, is there any indigenous hairstyle which is required of you to wear? Yes [ ☐ ] No [ ☐ ]
2. If yes to 1, what is the name of the hairstyle?.....
- 3a. Did it originate among the Asantes? Yes [ ☐ ] No [ ☐ ]
- 3b. Provide a brief explanation to why and how the indigenous hairstyle in 2 came into existence .....
4. Are you required to wear it all the time? Yes [ ☐ ] No [ ☐ ]
5. If no to 4, on which occasions are you required to wear it? .....
6. Is the indigenous hairstyle in 2 a haircut or hairdo? .....

7. Provide a brief description of the hairstyle in 2.....

### **SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

8. Is natural hair the texture of hair required to design the hairstyle in 2 or chemically straightened hair? .....

9. Provide reasons for your answer in 8.....

10. Which processes are involved in making this type of hairstyle in 2? .....

11. State the tools and materials used in designing the hairstyle in 2 .....

12. Are there special people in the palace who style the hair or you usually go to the salon? .....

### **SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

13a. Aside the indigenous hairstyle providing identity to you as a spokes person of the queen, does it provide identity to any other adherent of Asante culture? Yes [ ] No [ ]

13b. If yes to 13a, mention the categories of people who are culturally required to groom their hair in this type of hairstyle .....

14. What messages do the indigenous Asante hairstyle in 2 communicate to the public? .....

15. Do people enjoy or are denied certain privileges in society due to maintaining the indigenous hairstyle in 2?.....

16. Are there some indigenous forbidden acts which are associated with the indigenous hairstyles in 2? .....

17. Do people maintain the indigenous hairstyle in 2, though they do not belong to a particular social group of recognition? Yes [ ] No [ ]

18. If yes to 17, explain why people who do not belong to your category or certain group maintain the indigenous hairstyle in 2 as well as its consequences thereof? .....

**SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

19. Are there any modern changes in the indigenous hairstyle in 2 as compared to the historic times? Yes [ ] No [ ]
20. If yes to 19, in your opinion, how have contemporary ways of life influenced the indigenous hairstyles in 2?.....
21. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of contemporary influence on indigenous hairstyles?.....
22. In which ways has the indigenous hairstyle in 2 also influenced the contemporary ones?.....
23. In your opinion, which measures can be put in place to enhance the perpetuation of indigenous hairstyles?.....

**Appendix 1Aviii- In-depth interview guide for widows**

(eligible wearers of indigenous Asante hairstyles)

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**Introduction**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

viii) Name of screener:.....

ii) Date: .....

iii) Time interview started: ..... Time interview ended: .....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

1. Do you have a special hairstyle on your scalp? Yes [ ] No [ ]
2. If yes to 1, what inspired you to keep such a hairstyle.....
3. Do you know the name of the hairstyle on your head? Yes [ ] No [ ]
4. If yes to 3, provide the name and a brief description of the hairstyle .....
5. How long have you been keeping this hairstyle on your scalp? .....
6. Why have you been keeping it for that period of time? .....
7. Do you have a sacred way of maintaining the hair? Yes [ ] No [ ]
8. If yes to 7, mention some of the divine ways.....
- 9a. Do you sometimes visit the salon to get it groomed Yes [ ] No [ ]
- 9b. Is the hairstyle in 4 a haircut or a hairdo? .....



10. Do you have any idea about the origin of the name of this hairsyle Yes [ ]  
No [ ]

11. If yes to 10, provide a brief description of the history of the hairstyle in 4  
.....

### **SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

12. Do you think a sample of the hairstyle on your scalp has been visually  
represented

in any art forms like sculptures? Yes [ ] No [ ]

13. If yes to 12, identify other forms of visual representation of the indigenous  
hairstyle in 4 within Kumasi Traditional Area. ....

14. If no to 12, do you think a visual representation of the indigenous hairstyle  
in 4 is important? .....

17. If yes to 14, state the ways in which representing this indigenous hairstyle  
in visual art forms can promote this aspect of Asante culture. ....

18. Which texture of hair is required to make or trim the style in 4 on the human  
body?

17. Provide reasons to question 16 .....

18. Do you use any traditional substance to smear your hair? .....

19. If yes to 18, what is the name of the substance? .....

20. What is the colour of the substance in 19? .....

### **SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

21. The indigenous hairstyle in 4 identifies you as what?.....

22. Is this indigenous hairsyle symbolic? Yes [ ] No [ ]

23. If yes to 22, mention some of the symbolisms associated with this  
hairsyle.....

24. Have you ever been denied certain privileges in any society as a result of  
this type of indigenous hairstyle on your scalp? Yes [ ] No [ ]

25. If yes to 24, what were those privileges? .....

26. Have you ever enjoyed certain opportunities or advantages as a result of  
the hairstyle in 4 Yes [ ] No [ ]

27. If yes to 26, what are those advantages?.....

28a. Are there some taboos associated with the indigenous hairstyle in 4?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

28b. If yes to 28a, mention some of these taboos .....

29. Do you think people maintain the indigenous hairstyle in 4 though they do not belong to that particular social group of recognition? Yes [ ] No [ ]

30. If yes to 29, explain why people who do not belong to your group maintain the hairstyle in 4 and the consequences thereof? .....

#### **SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

38. Do you think modern ways have influenced the indigenous hairstyles in 4? Yes [ ] No [ ]

39. If yes to 33, in your opinion, how have contemporary ways of life influenced aesthetics and symbolisms of the indigenous Asante hairstyles in 4?.....

40. Do you think the indigenous hairstyle in 4 has also influenced any foreign hairstyle? Yes [ ] No [ ]

41. If yes to 35, in which ways has the indigenous hairstyle in 4 also influenced the contemporary ones?.....

42. In your opinion, which measures can be put in place to enhance the perpetuation of indigenous hairstyles?.....

**Appendix 1B - In-depth interview guide for the historian**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**Introductio**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

Name of screener:.....

Date: .....

Time interview started: .....

Time interview ended: .....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

1. How would you define an indigenous hairstyle within the historical context of your community? .....
2. Can you identify any indigenous hairstyles historically associated with the Asante people? .....
3. Describe the features of the indigenous hairstyle(s) mentioned in 2.
4. What are the traditional processes involved in creating the hairstyle(s) identified in 2? .....
5. What is the historical background or origin story of the indigenous hairstyle(s) you identified in 2? .....

**SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

6. How was the concept of media understood or applied in the context of hairstyling in Asante history? .....
7. What tools and materials were used by ancient stylists in crafting the hairstyle(s) mentioned in 2? .....
8. From a historical standpoint, how would you define art within your cultural context? .....
9. Did the ancient Asante people classify indigenous hairstyles on the human scalp as a form of art? .....
10. If yes to Question 9, what category or type of art would they be classified under? .....
11. Apart from hairstyles on the human scalp, what other historical forms of visual representation of indigenous hairstyles can be identified in the Kumasi Traditional Area? .....
12. Who were the individuals or groups responsible for creating the art forms mentioned in 11 in the ancient period? .....
- 13a. What is the historical background or origin of the artwork(s) identified in 11? .....
- 13b. What were the traditional processes involved in creating the artwork(s) in 11? .....
- 13c. What tools and materials were historically used in making or crafting the artwork(s) identified in 11? .....
- 14a. In your view, what were the principles and elements of art understood and applied in historical contexts? .....
- 14b. How were these principles and elements of art reflected in the creation of the artwork(s) mentioned in 11? .....
- 14c. What was the historical rationale or purpose behind the creation of the artwork(s) in 11? .....
- 14d. How was the artwork in 11 presented in the olden days to achieve aesthetic appeal? .....

**SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

15. From a historical perspective, how would you define identity within your cultural context? .....
16. What types of identities were traditionally associated with indigenous Asante hairstyles? .....
17. What messages or meanings did indigenous Asante hairstyles historically communicate to the public? .....

18. Were individuals historically granted or denied certain privileges in society based on the type of indigenous hairstyles they wore? If so, explain. ....
19. Were there any taboos historically associated with specific indigenous hairstyles? .....
20. Did individuals historically adopt hairstyles associated with social groups or identities to which they did not belong? Yes [ ] No [ ]
21. If yes to 20, identify those hairstyles and explain why individuals outside the recognised social group maintained these styles. What were the historical consequences of this practice? .....
22. From a historical perspective, what were the spiritual symbolism of the indigenous Asante hairstyles materials?.....

#### **SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

23. How have Asante hairstyles evolved over the years, especially with the influence of colonisation, globalisation, and modern fashion trends? .....
24. Are there particular historical events (e.g., colonial encounters, slavery, or independence movements) that influenced the way hair was styled within the Asante community? Yes [ ] No [ ]
25. If yes to Question 24, how have historical ways of life influenced indigenous Asante hairstyles? .....
26. What are some of the contemporary influences on indigenous Asante hairstyles? .....
27. In what ways have indigenous hairstyles historically influenced modern ones?
28. What measures were adapted to perpetuate indigenous hairstyles in the olden days? .....

**Appendix 1C - In-depth interview guide for the senior staff of CNCK**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**Introduction**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

- i) Name of screener:
- ii) Date:
- iii) Time interview started: ..... iv) Time interview ended: .....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

1. What do you think an indigenous hairstyle is?.....
2. List any indigenous hairstyles that you are familiar with among the Asantes.
3. Give a succinct description of the indigenous hairstyle or styles listed in 2.

**SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

4. Are there visual artworks in your establishment (Centre for National Culture, Kumasi) which depict indigenous Asante hairstyles? Yes [ ] No [ ]
5. If yes to 4, mention the indigenous hairstyles depicted in the form of visual art which are found at the Centre for National Culture in Kumasi  
.....

6. Describe the features of the artwork(s).....
7. Why have the art works been kept at the Centre for National Culture in Kuamsi?
8. Mention the names of the persons/people who produced the art forms mentioned in 5.....
9. What is the origin or history, behind the artworks in 5?.....
10. What was the rationale behind the creation of the artworks in 5?.....
11. Do you sometimes organise exhibition shows? Yes [ ] No [ ]
12. If yes to 11, how often is it organised?.....
13. Do the exhibition shows showcase visual art works in the form of indigenous Hairstyles? Yes [ ] No [ ]
14. Will you encourage more visual representation of indigenous Asante hairstyles? Yes [ ] No [ ]
15. If yes to 14, why?.....

### **SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

16. The indigenous hairstyles in 5 are identified with which categories of people among the Asantes?.....
17. What messages do the indigenous Asante hairstyles in 5, communicate to the public? .....

### **SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

18. Do people still wear the indigenous hairstyles in 5? Yes [ ] No [ ]
19. If yes to 18, is it all the time or on certain occasions? .....
20. Do you think modern ways have influenced the indigenous hairstyles in 5? Yes [ ] No [ ]
21. If yes to 20, in your opinion, how has contemporary ways of life influenced the indigenous hairstyles among the Asantes?.....
22. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of contemporary influence on indigenous hairstyles?.....
23. In which ways have indigenous hairstyles also influenced the contemporary ones?.....
24. In your opinion, which measures can be put in place to enhance the perpetuation of indigenous hairstyles?.....

**Appendix 1D - In-depth interview guide for the artists**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**Introduction**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

- ii) Name of screener:
- ii) Date:
- iii) Time interview started: ..... iv) Time interview ended: .....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

1. In your opinion, what is an indigenous hairstyle?.....
2. Identify any type of indigenous hairstyles among Asantes which are known to you and are portrayed as body art.....
3. Provide a brief description of the mentioned indigenous hairstyle(s) in 2.  
.....

**SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

- 4a. Does any of your artworks depict indigenous Asante hairstyles? Yes ☐  
No ☐
- 4b. If yes to 4a, mention the indigenous Asante hairstyles which are depicted in visual art forms in your workshop.....
5. Explain the term *media* in the context of art.....



6. Which media was used to create the artwork(s) in 4b? .....
7. Which tool(s) was/were used to create the artwork(s) in 4b? .....
8. In your opinion, what are the principles and elements of art?.....
9. State the principles and elements of art behind the creation in 4b.....
10. What was the rationale behind the creation of the artwork in 4b?.....
11. Explain how the artwork in 4b is aesthetically presented.....
12. Can indigenous hairstyles on the human scalp be classified as art?
13. If yes to 12, what type of art is it?.....
14. Which processes are involved in making this type of hairstyle in 2 on the human scalp? .....
15. State the *media* and tools used in designing the hairstyle in 2 on the human scalp .....
16. What are some of the indigenous artistic tools and materials used in making or creating the body art in 2?.....
17. State the principles and elements of art behind the creation in 2.....

### **SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

18. Which adherent of Asante culture are mostly identified in the indigenous hairstyles of 2? .....
19. Mention the symbolisms of the indigenous hairstyles in 2 .....

### **SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

20. Have changes occurred in the visual representation of the the various art forms in the form of hairstyles? Yes [ ] No [ ]
21. If yes to 20, which changes have occurred in the visual representation of the the various art forms in the form of hairstyles? .....
22. State the transformation in the media used to create the visual art works in 4b in this contemporary era .....
23. How different is/are the current tool(s) used to create the artwork(s) in 4b from those used in the olden days? .....

24. Describe the changes in the principles and elements of art behind the creation in 4b .....
25. What differences exist between the rationale behind the creation of the art work in 4b in contemporary times and previous times?.....
26. Explain how the artwork in 4b is aesthetically presented in both ancient and modern times.....
27. Explain the various transformations which have occurred in the body art in 2...
28. Have international fashion and cultural movements taken notice of the native Asante hairstyles in 2? Yes [ ] No [ ]
29. What impact do these international exchanges have on the haircuts' cultural meaning and authenticity? .....

**Appendix 1E - In-depth interview guide for the curator**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**Introduction**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

- iii) Name of screener:
- ii) Date:
- iii) Time interview started: ..... iv) Time interview ended: .....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

1. Do you think bodily adornments and grooming like indigenous hairstyling can be used to create identity among the adherents of Asante culture? Yes [ ] No [ ]
2. If yes to 1, list any Asante native hairstyles that you are conversant with.....
3. Provide a brief description and history to the list in 2. ....

**SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

4. Are there artefacts in your museum which depict the indigenous hairstyles listed in 2? Yes [ ] No [ ]
5. If yes to 4, mention the artefacts which depict some of the indigenous hairstyles in 2. ....

6. Mention the names of the persons/people who produced the art forms in 5 .....
7. Explain how the artwork in 5 is aesthetically presented.....
8. What was the motive behind the depiction of the artwork in 5 .....
9. Why have these artworks been kept at the Manhyia Palace museum?  
.....
10. Which efforts have been put in place to perpetuate the Asante culture through the production of more artworks in the form of indigenous hairstyles? .....

### **SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

11. Mention the classes of people who are usually identified in the indigenous hairstyles in 2. Can you discuss the connection between the hairstyles and ranks of people within the Asante community?
12. Describe the symbolism associated with each indigenous hairstyle in 2.  
.....
13. How are the social status of individuals communicated through these indigenous hairstyles? .....
14. How do social status indicate roles such as chiefs, warriors, or priests?.....
15. Can you explain how particular hairstyles are linked to rites of passage, such as coming-of-age ceremonies, marriage, or mourning? .....
16. Explain the relevance of spiritual elements which are tied to some indigenous hairstyles? .....
17. How do Asante hairstyles represent gender roles and expectations within society? .....

### **SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

18. Do you think modern ways have influenced indigenous hairstyles in 2?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
19. If yes to 18, in your opinion, how have contemporary ways of life influenced the indigenous hairstyles among the Asantes?.....

20. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of contemporary influence on indigenous hairstyles?.....
21. What do you see for the future of Asante hairstyles? Do you think they will continue to evolve or remain largely unchanged? .....
22. How can younger generations ensure the continuation of these hairstyles and the cultural knowledge behind them? .....
23. How important is it to the Asante community to preserve these traditional hairstyles, especially in the context of increasing modernisation?  
.....
24. Are there efforts within the community or cultural organisations to teach younger generations about the importance of these hairstyles? .....
25. How do these hairstyles foster a sense of cultural pride and continuity, especially in the face of globalised and Western beauty standards?  
.....
26. Have the native Asante hairstyles in 2 become more well-known in international fashion and cultural movements? How are the hairstyles' cultural importance impacted by these international interactions?  
.....

**Appendix 1F - In-depth interview guide for indigenous hairstylist****UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST****COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES****FACULTY OF ARTS****CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES****Introduction**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

- i) Name of screener:
- ii) Date:
- iii) Time interview started: .....iv) Time interview ended: .....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

1. Are you aware that indigenous hairstyles are used by the Asantes for several generations to preserve their history and culture? Yes [ ] No [ ]
2. Identify any type of indigenous hairstyle among Asantes which are known to you.....
3. Which of the hairstyles mentioned in one 2 do you style?.....
4. How long have indigenous hairstyles been a significant part of Asante culture?
5. Can you share any information about the origins or early uses of certain indigenous hairstyles among the Asante people?.....
6. Provide a brief description of the mentioned indigenous hairstyles in 2.  
.....
7. Which processes are involved in making this type of hairstyles in 6?.....

8. What is the origin or history behind the indigenous hairstyles in 2? .....
9. What are the merits and demerits of keeping indigenous hairstyles?.....

#### **SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES<sup>14e</sup>.**

10. Which texture of hair is required to create the style in 2? .....
11. State the indigenous tools used in designing the indigenous hairstyles in 2.....
- 12a. What materials, such as beads, metal, or natural elements, are used in the creation of these hairstyles? .....
- 12b. How do these materials contribute to the overall artistic expression of the style? .....
13. Does any of the indigenous hairstyles aesthetically depict some number of tufts? Yes [ ] No [ ]
14. If yes to 13, identify the number of tufts and state the names assigned to them.
15. Describe the shape, size, proportion and pattern in the stated hairstyles in 2.....

#### **SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

16. Are there any distinctive events, like festivals and rites of passage, that are linked to particular hairstyles? Yes [ ] No [ ]
17. Are there specific hairstyles that are exclusive to certain groups (e.g., palace servants, or brides? Yes [ ] No [ ]
18. If yes to 17, mention the individual indigenous hairstyles in 2 and state the group to which they are identified with.....
19. Are there any symbolic meanings attached to certain hairstyles or hairdos within the Asante community (e.g., moral significance)?.....
20. How do these hairstyles reflect the broader cultural values of the Asante people, such as unity, pride, or wisdom?.....
19. What economic and environmental messages do the indigenous Asante hairstyles known to you communicate to the public? .....
20. How do Asante people use hairstyles to communicate personal or familial

identity?.....

21. Are there spiritual beliefs or practices related to hair in Asante culture? For example, do certain hairstyles have connections to ancestors or gods? .....

22. How do hairstyles reflect the Asante people's relationship with the spiritual world? .....

#### **SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

23. Presently, how is the patronage of indigenous hairstyles in your premises?

.....

24. Do you think modern ways have influenced indigenous hairstyles? Yes [ ]

No [ ]

25. If yes to 24, in your opinion, how have contemporary ways of life influenced the indigenous hairstyles among the Asantes?.....

26. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of contemporary influence on indigenous hairstyles?.....

27. In which ways have indigenous hairstyles also influenced the contemporary ones? .....

28. In your opinion, which measures can be put in place to enhance the perpetuation of indigenous hairstyles? .....

29. How have contemporary Asante people adapted their traditional hairstyles in response to modern influences such as globalisation, urbanisation, and the media? .....

30. Is there a growing interest among younger generations to preserve or reinvent traditional hairstyles, or do they prefer more modern styles?

.....

31. How important is it to the Asante community to preserve these traditional hairstyles, especially in the context of increasing modernisation?

.....

32. Are there efforts within the community or cultural organisations to teach younger generations about the importance of these hairstyles?

.....



**Appendix 1G - In-depth interview guide for indigenous barbers****UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST****COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES****FACULTY OF ARTS****CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES****Introduction**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to ask you some questions to see if you can participate in the study. Your name will not be used in our report nor will it be linked to the data that you will provide. Even if you qualify to be a respondent for the study, you will not be forced to participate in the study.

- ii) Name of screener:
- ii) Date:
- iii) Time interview started: .....iv) Time interview ended: .....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

1. Could you briefly describe yourself and your barbering background?  
.....
2. How long have you been working in this field? .....
3. Do you know about indigenous hairstyles and their cultural indispensability? Yes [ ] No [ ]
4. If yes to 3, Identify some types of indigenous hairstyles among Asantes which are known to you.....
5. Which of the hairstyles mentioned in 4 do you often trim/shave?.....
6. Does working on indigenous hair entail any particular responsibilities, in your opinion? Yes [ ] No [ ]
7. If yes to 6, how do you handle this obligation? .....
8. Identify some of the indigenous hairstyles in 4 and describe the various

- processes involved in trimming the hair from start to finish.....
9. Are you familiar with the history of any of the indigenous hairstyle in 4? .....
  10. If yes to 9, provide the history of any of them.....
  11. Provide a brief description of the mentioned indigenous hairstyles in 4. ....
  12. What advice do you give to some of your indigenous clients on how to maintain their hairstyles at home between visits to the salon? .....
  13. State each indigenous hairstyle and mention how often it is trimmed and why .....

### **SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

14. Which hair type is needed to create or cut the native hairstyles in 4? .....
15. Do you use specific techniques or tools when working with indigenous hairstyles? .....
16. If yes to 15, can you explain what these are and why they are important? .....
17. State the indigenous tools and materials used in designing the indigenous hairstyles in 4. ....
18. Describe the colour, pattern, shape, and composition in each of the identified hairstyles in 4 .....

### **SECTION C: IDENTITY/SYMBOLISM OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES.**

18. What types of identities do indigenous Asante hairstyles in 4 provide? .....
20. What messages do the indigenous Asante hairstyles known to you communicate to the public? .....
- 21a. Are there some taboos associated with any indigenous hairstyle or tool  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
- 21b. If yes to 21a, mention some of the taboos.....

22. Do people maintain some types of hairstyles, though they do not belong to a particular social group of recognition? Yes [ ] No [ ]
23. If yes to 22, identify those hairstyles and explain why people who do not belong to certain group maintain these types of hairstyles as well as its consequences thereof? .....
24. Do you ask them about any specific traditions, meanings, or ways they want their hair styled that are linked to their culture? If so, how do you integrate that into your service?.....

#### **SECTION D: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

25. Do you incorporate traditional hair care practices into your work with clients, or do you suggest modern alternatives? .....
26. Presently, how is the patronage of indigenous hairstyles in your barbering shop?
27. Do you think modern ways of barbering have influenced indigenous trimming methods ? Yes [ ] No [ ]
28. If yes to 27, in your opinion, how have contemporary ways of barbering influenced the indigenous ways of trimming hairstyles among the Asantes?.....
29. Has the contemporary barbering methods changed the appearance of the indigenous hairstyles Yes [ ] No [ ]
30. Provide reasons for your answer in 29.....
31. Has the indigenous dye used in grooming some of the traditional haircuts undergone any changes Yes [ ] No [ ]
32. If yes to 31, provide some of the modifications.....
33. Do customers prefer foreign or modern dyes to the indigenous dye? Yes [ ] No [ ]
34. If yes to 33, why? .....
35. Do you think the cost of barbering indigenous hairstyles deter people from patronising it? Yes [ ] No [ ]
36. Provide reasons to your answer in 35.....
37. Do you think indigenous hairstyles have influenced contemporary ones to some extent? Yes [ ] No [ ]
38. If yes to 37, in which ways have indigenous hairstyles also influenced the

- contemporary ones? .....
39. In your opinion, which measures can be put in place to enhance the perpetuation of indigenous hairstyles?.....
40. Do you promote or educate about indigenous hairstyles and their significance in your shop? How do you share this knowledge with others? .....
41. Have you observed how contemporary fashions are impacting traditional hairstyles? How do you strike a balance between indigenous looks and modern fashions? .....
42. Do you believe that mainstream barbering culture is beginning to acknowledge indigenous hair traditions? .....
43. Do you believe that the role of barbers who trim indigenous hairstyles plays a part in preserving cultural traditions? How? .....
44. What advice would you give to barbers who are just starting to work with indigenous hairstyles? .....

**Appendix 1H - Observation checklist for all respondents**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND LEGAL STUDIES**  
**FACULTY OF ARTS**  
**CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**Introduction**

My name is Bernice Quampah, with an index number of AR/PAS/20/0001. I am from the Center for African and International Studies of the University of Cape Coast. I am conducting research on indigenous hairstyles in Asante art and culture. To make sure I get a cross-section of respondents who have different knowledge and experiences in indigenous hairstyles for this study, I would like to observe your hairstyle or art forms and note down how it looked like. This checklist is to be used to document some hairstyles and how they have been artistically decorated with the aid of indigenous products in Kumasi Traditional Area. Tools and materials required for styling and shaping these hairstyles will be viewed. The nature and aesthetic appearance of the styles will also be watched. The following scenarios would be observed and marked (ticked).

- 1) Date of observation.....
- 2) Name of observer .....
- 3) Person/item observed .....
- 4) Time observation started: ..... Time observation ended: ....

**SECTION A: TYPES OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

**1. Name of indigenous Asante hairstyle**

- a. *Dansinkran* [ ]
- b. *Puaa baako* [ ]
- c. *Mpuaanu* [ ]
- d. *Mpuaasa* [ ]
- e. Others specify.....

**2. Kind of hairstyle**

- a. Haircut [ ]
- b. Hairdo [ ]

## 3. Location of the scalp where the hairstyle can be found

- a. Frontal ☐
- b. Crown ☐
- c. Middle ☐
- d. Occiput ☐
- e. Parietal ☐
- f. Entire scalp ☐
- g. Nape ☐

## 4. Length of time it takes for the styling to be complete.

- a. 1-9 minutes ☐
- b. 10-30 minutes ☐
- c. 30-50 minutes ☐
- d. 1 hour ☐

## 5. Its appearance

- a. Tied ☐
- b. Interlaced ☐
- c. Average length hair (*adantam tiri nwi*) ☐
- d. Afro long hair (*tirikusu*) ☐
- e. Trimmed ☐
- f. Locked ☐

**SECTION B: ART FORMS OF INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES**

## 6. The art form of the indigenous hairstyle in 1.

- a. Body art ☐
- b. Sculptures ☐
- c. Ceramics ☐
- d. Painting ☐
- e. Drawing ☐
- f. Adinkra symbols ☐
- g. Others specify.....

## 7. Elements of design in the art work of the indigenous hairstyle in 1

- a. Shape: triangle ☐ circle ☐ square ☐ rectangle ☐ oval ☐
- b. Lines: vertical ☐ horizontal ☐ diagonal ☐ contour ☐ zig-zag ☐
- c. Dots: ☐
- d. Colour: black ☐ red ☐ white ☐ brown ☐ others.....
- e. Space: deep ☐ shallow ☐ negative ☐ positive ☐
- f. Texture: natural texture ☐ chemically relaxed ☐

## 8. Principles of design in the art work of the indigenous hairstyle in 1

- a. Balance: symmetry ☐ asymmetry ☐ radial ☐
- b. Proportion ☐
- c. Emphasis ☐

- d. Pattern: [ ]
  - e. Unity [ ]
  - f. Contrast [ ]
  - g. Variety [ ] h. Others specify .....
9. The media employed in the indigenous hairstyle in 1
- a. *Nkoto* (sheabutter) [ ]
  - b. *pupunuwisie* (soot) [ ]
  - c. *Bidie* (charcoal) [ ]
  - d. *Ahoma* (thread) [ ]
  - e. *Akaduro* (paint) [ ]
  - f. *Nnɔteɛ* (soil/clay) [ ]
  - g. Cement [ ]
  - h. Sand [ ]
  - i. Others specify .....
10. The tools employed in the indigenous hairstyle in 1
- a. *Dawutruwa* (a type of chisel)
  - b. *Ahorn* (a type of chisel)
  - c. *Sekammoa* (dagger)
  - d. *Twerɛdua* (pencil)
  - e. *Yiwan* (a type of knife)
  - f. Others specify.....

### SECTION C: SOCIAL CHANGE AND INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES

11. Name of non-indigenous Asante hairstyle
- a. *Didi* (inward cornrow) [ ]
  - b. *Kiko* (threaded hairdo) [ ]
  - c. Chemically relaxed hair [ ]
  - d. *Suku* (interlaced heaped hairdo) [ ]
  - e. Twist [ ]
  - f. Hair extentions [ ]
  - g. Wigs [ ]
  - h. Scarfs [ ]
12. Type of hairstyle
- a. Haircut [ ]
  - b. Hairdo [ ]
13. Location of the scalp where the hairstyle can be found
- a. Frontal [ ]
  - b. Crown [ ]
  - c. Middle [ ]
  - d. Occiput [ ]
  - e. Parietal [ ]
  - f. Entire scalp [ ]
  - g. Nape [ ]

**14.** Length of time it takes for the styling to be complete.

- a. 1-9 minutes [ ]
- b. 10-30 minutes [ ]
- c. 30-50 minutes [ ]
- d. 1 hour [ ]
- e. 2-5 hours [ ]

**15.** Its appearance

- a. Tied [ ]
- b. Interlaced [ ]
- c. *Adantam tiri nwi* [ ]
- d. *Tirikusu* [ ]
- e. Trimmed [ ]
- f. Locked [ ]

**16.** Various social changes which indigenous Asante hairstyles have undergone with respect to the following:

- a. Materials [ ]
- b. Techniques [ ]
- c. Tools [ ]
- d. Elements [ ]
- e. Principles [ ]



**Appendix 2: Research Assistants Training Time Table**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**  
**CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**  
**INDIGENOUS HAIRSTYLES IN ASANTE ART AND CULTURE**  
**RESEARCH ASSISTANT TRAINING TIME TABLE**

**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**Session: Theory and Methods**

10:00-11:00	Welcome and introduction, research problem, aims and objectives
11:00-12:00	Artforms
12:00-12:30	Break
12:00-1:30	Methodology: Eligibility criteria, interviewing techniques
1:30- 2:30	wrap and closure

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**Session 2: Ethics**

10:00-11:00	Recording and photography ethics
11:00-12:00	Role play and discussion
12:00-12:30	Lunch
12:00-1:30	General ethics
1:30- 2:30	Discussion and logistics

**Appendix 3: Ethical Clearance**

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SECRETARIAT****TEL: 0558093143 / 0508878309**

E-MAIL: [irb@ucc.edu.gh](mailto:irb@ucc.edu.gh)  
OUR REF: IRB/C3/Vol.1/0031  
YOUR REF:  
OMB NO: 0990-0279  
IORG #: IORG0011497

**13<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2023**

Ms Bernice Quampah

Centre for African and International

Studies University of Cape Coast

Dear Ms Quampah,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE - ID (UCCIRB/CHLS/2022/96)

The University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (UCCIRB) has granted Provisional Approval for the implementation of your research on Indigenous Hairstyles in Asante Art and Culture. This approval is valid from 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023 to 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024. You may apply for a renewal subject to the submission of all the required documents that will be prescribed by the UCCIRB.

Please note that any modification to the project must be submitted to the UCCIRB for review and approval before its implementation. You are required to submit a periodic review of the protocol to the Board and a final full review to the UCCIRB on completion of the research. The UCCIRB may observe or cause to be observed procedures and records of the research during and after implementation.

You are also required to report all serious adverse events related to this study to the UCCIRB within seven days verbally and fourteen days in writing.

Always quote the protocol identification number in all future correspondence with us in relation to this protocol.

Yours faithfully,

Kofi F. Amuquandoh

Ag. UCCIRB Administrator

ADMINISTRATOR  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

#### Appendix 4: Some Selected Snapshots during Field Work



**Figure 63 - Researcher and a queen in dansinkran during an interview session**

**Source - By author (2023) and used with permission**





**Figure 64 - Researcher and some queens in scarfs during an interview session**

**Source - By author (2023) and used with permission**



**Figure 65 - Researcher and some executioners in *ɔsebo kyɛ***  
**Source - By author (2023) and used with permission**





**Figure 66 - Researcher and a sculpted hairstyle**  
**Source - By author (2023) and used with permission**



**Figure 67 - Researcher and some chiefs in *ahenfo ti ho werE***  
**Source - By author (2023) and used with permission.**



**Figure 68 - Researcher and an indigenous priestess with her entourage**  
**Source - By author (2023) and used with permission.**





Figure 69 - Researcher and an indigenous priest in *nsuman nsodieƐ mpesempesɛ*.

Source - By author (2023) and used with permission.