

AKANIZATION OF THE HILL GUAN ARTS

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Abstract

The original inhabitants of the Akuapem Hills were predominantly Guan. From the mid-eighteenth century, they experienced fundamental political changes which marked a transition from the rule of priest-chiefs to secular chiefs. This new political order introduced new art forms and regalia. The cultural contact which took place in Akuapem did not result in an even diffusion of elements of Akan art and culture, but has been one of uneven and unbalanced adoption, modification and even rejection of some new art and religious forms.

This article discusses the process of introducing an Akan type political system and its accompanying art in a group of Guan communities on the Akuapem Hills. Art and regalia in Akuapem portray the acceptance of new art forms, yet preserving some Guan traditional art forms amidst major artistic adoptions from the Akan. It therefore analyses whether the Akanization process was partial or complete.

Introduction

This article examines the impact of Akyem (Akan) rule on the art and regalia of the Guan in Akuapem. Priests, *dede*, or *asɔfo* were the heads of the Guan communities previously called Hill Guan, now known as Akuapem. The Guan were organised militarily and politically under *ɔdede*, or *asɔfo* and *asafohenfo*. The *ɔdede* wielded and exercised legislative, executive and judicial arms of government as well as religious, ceremonial and secular functions. Akyem rule was by invitation of the Hill Guan who allocated them land at the present day Akropong after an earlier site at Amamprobi. The Akyem chief at Akropong then became *Okuapchene*, paramount chief of Akuapem.

In order for the Akyem chief to establish his rule and the Guan also to develop an efficient, unified political and military structure, Akan chieftaincy with its accompanying regalia was introduced to the Guan communities. The Akuapem Hills thereafter became like the social space Mary Louise Pratt terms a "contact zone where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (1948: 4). Akuapem became the place where two cultures met, with the dominant minority establishing a new political machinery—chieftaincy. In this process, art and regalia became the visual instrument for expression and differentiation between Guan priests and Akan chiefs. These were in the form of sculptured figures, swords, staffs, umbrellas and colour used in identifying the new political statuses and positions within Akuapem. For example, during a durbar which all Akuapem chiefs were expected to attend, it is only the *Okuapchene* who can use a two-tier umbrella and only wing chiefs are carried in palanquins. Traditionally minor or smaller chiefs were required to walk, but this has changed as several wealthy young men and women are installed chiefs for various contributions and tend to be carried in palanquins if they are able to afford the crowd to carry them and sing their praises. Art and regalia were therefore used to

distinguish the hierarchical structure of chiefs in Akuapem as well as separate Guan priests from Akan type chiefs.

The towns of Akuapem are in the Eastern Region and situated between longitude 0°15 W – 0°00 and latitude 5°45 – 6°00 N (see Map 1). These towns are located on the Akuapem Ridge, which runs northeastwards across the Volta Region and extends further into Togo. The Akuapem community has different ethnic groups living in seventeen towns, namely, Aseseeso, Berekuso, Aburi, Ahwerease, Obosomase, Tutu, Mampong, Amanokrom, Mamfe, Late-Ahenease, Late-Kubease, Akropong, Abiriw, Dawu, Awukugua, Adukrom and Apirede.

The Akuapem people are heterogeneous as the illustration below indicates. They comprise both Akan and Guan communities. The Guan Okere (Abiriw, Dawu, Awukugua, Adukrom and Apirede) who occupy the northern parts of Akuapem speak Kyerepong, whereas Late-Ahenease and Late-Kubease speak Late, all belonging to the larger Volta-Comoé group of languages (Dolphyne and Kropp Dakubu 1988: 77-79). To illustrate this diversity further, the people of Abiriw comprise different ethnic origins among which are former Akan including Akwamu, Denkyira and Asante (Gilbert 1997: 511-512). The Akan in Akuapem who speak Twi are the descendants of the Akyem people who live at Akropong and their relations at Amanokrom. The people of Aburi are also remnants of Akwamu (Akan) and speak Twi but have intermarried with other ethnic groups. The other southern Guan towns of Tutu, Obosomase, Mamfe, Mampong, Aseseeso, Abonse and Abotakyi are predominantly Guan with some Akwamu, who have assimilated different ethnic groups including Ewe and Krobo, who all now speak Twi. There has also been a great deal of inter-marriage with Ga, Shai and former Ewe captives and several others (Gilbert 1997: 504) in the Akuapem towns. This mixed group of people lived in small independent towns ruled by priests until the Akyem arrived and were given the mandate to rule in 1733.

I argue that the introduction of the Akan political system, chieftaincy,¹ in Akuapem and its accompanying art and regalia gradually separated priestly and political roles. These new art and regalia projected the image, power, and glory of chiefship contrary to the priestly regalia which was based on the dictates of the gods. I also argue further that while chieftaincy art and regalia are dynamic, priestly art and regalia are conservative. This article is organised into four themes namely; Guan art and regalia; the Akyem period and introduction of Akan art; the origin and celebration of Akuapem festival of arts—*Odwira*, and lastly the relationship between Guan priestly art and chieftaincy art.

In 1989, I spent about five months studying art and religion in Akuapem. I consulted chiefs and office holders such as linguists and others recommended to me, by some elders, as knowledgeable in Akuapem culture. I visited several priests and priestesses and participated in many state and shrine festivals.² Priests and priestesses from the shrines of *Bosompra*, Abiriw, *Akonnedi*, Late, *Ntoabea*, Aburi, *Damte*, Mampong, *Kwabi*, Adukrom and *Topre*, Mamfe were interviewed. I have crosschecked their oral information with several published works for verification and alternate points of view. With regard to the history of Guan art, I have relied on archaeological evidence as the starting point of artistic production. In 2002, I reviewed the earlier work done in 1989 and developed aspects as a theme for this article. The selection and re-organisation is based on the history of political and religious art in Akuapem. Since Late and Kyerepong languages are unwritten, I have used Twi words in most instances.

Is There Guan/Akuapem Art?

There is no single word for art in Kyerepong, Late or Twi, (the three dialects spoken in Akuapem). An ironsmith in Late is called *ebirew*³ and *dade dwumfo* in Twi; the carver is called *oyi ohoni* in Late, and *dua dwumfo* in Twi. A potter is called *kutu etwo* in Late and a piece of

sculpture is called *ohoni* in Twi. However, we may refer to all these branches of creative expression under a single heading as art. These works may be viewed as man-made objects, which exhibit skill and order, and convey meaning. Almost every object of political, religious and social importance is decorated. These decorations are consciously added to an original work, and it is within this context that they can be subjected to aesthetic comment and judgements or be considered as art, since those who create them make comments such as *eye fe*, meaning, "it is beautiful." In effect, these works express the identity and values of the people in the form of religious, social and political works, agricultural implements and military equipment acquired over a period and used for both private and public functions.

Traditional clothing and decorations used for ceremonies are called regalia. The origins of many are either based on myth, or captured war items as trophies, inherited collective property and items created by a reigning chief or official. A collection of these ceremonial military, historical, political and religious art works and objects can be broadly divided into apparel or clothing; insignia or status symbols and, lastly, all-purpose regalia which may not necessarily be used for any particular office or activity. Kyerematen's definition of regalia in his book *Panoply of Ghana* broadens the classification to include a wide range of objects from the most sacred such as the Golden Stool of Asante to precious beads and imported items. Regalia not only serve as symbols of chiefly office but also as chronicles of the early history, and evidence of religious and social organisation of a people (1964: 1). Regalia among the Akan are requisites in creating legal, judicial and political authority for chiefs.

Our knowledge of the early history of Akyem regalia is unclear and based on oral tradition. The origins of an Akyem golden ladder, a golden hoe and a golden crown are all believed to be mythical. Oral tradition says they descended from the sky and came to rest on the laps of two sisters of Kuntunkununku, an Akyem Asona leader around the fourteenth century (Attobrah 1976:1). Addo-Fening agrees with the early phases of information on Akyem Abuakwa as "shrouded in myths of obscurity." He confirms that our knowledge of them is mainly from oral tradition (2001: 1). These myths and mysteries help create and sustain the authority and power of chieftaincy.

Akyem oral traditions about regalia include items inherited from early chiefs. For example, between 1560-1580, Agyekum Adu Oware, in addition to his display of military skills made several symbols of gold amounting to about a thousand. Today, some of these symbols are found on Akyem State umbrellas and swords (Attobrah 1976:5).

Some regalia also originate as war trophies. These captured works are added to the victor's regalia as proof of strength. The Akropong *odosu*, *Odwira apafram*, and the *aburukuwa* drum (see fig. 1) are all war regalia seized from the Asante during the Akatamanso war in 1826 and kept to date by *Okuaphehene* as part of his regalia. The Late-Ahenase regalia also comprises of captured war trophies. They are a sword, flywhisk, ritual objects and a war god.

The regalia used by *ɔdede*, priests, in the Nifa division of Akuapem and *asafohenfo*, war leaders or war chiefs, were drums, bells, gongs, beads, necklaces, anklets and sandals. Priests in other parts of Akuapem use almost the same regalia. Before woven fabrics were introduced, the Hill Guan and their priestly leaders wore *dɔw*, a raffia skirt. More recently, the use of white cloth has been introduced. Other art forms expressed on the body are painting, which is still practised by both Guan and Akan. Some herbalists or priests in shrines practise cicatrisation for medicinal purposes. The *asɔfo* depended on art forms to provide abodes for the deities, to commune with them for guidance to rule and to receive blessings and protection for themselves and the state.

The attire of the *ɔdede* or *ɔɔfo* was and still is white cloth. They continue to wear beads on their necks and around their wrists. They abhor blood and therefore have white stools as symbols of authority (Otu 1987: 27). There were other art forms used by priestesses as well as domestic and utilitarian objects by the community for social purposes.

Guan Art and Regalia

The aim of this section is to demonstrate a vibrant Guan artistic culture, combining archaeological evidence and observations while pointing to current specific and definite religious art. Archaeological evidence of works representing some aspects of Guan art in general has been excavated, testifying to their creativity and relations with other people. Archaeologists have found clay works in sites in Akuapem. Terracotta heads about four hundred years old, dating from the sixteenth century (fig. 2), rare in southern parts of Ghana, were found in a midden in Dawu. Similar ones are found elsewhere in Akan gravesites in Ghana (See Gilbert 1989a: 34-38). This archaeological evidence reveals that some of these works were of foreign origin. This is because the Hill Guan produced no pottery locally. They obtained these from Aduku, a fortified hill top village south east of their settlement in the Eastern Accra plains. This evidence of importation of pottery and other works comes to light in Thurston Shaw's book, *Excavation at Dawu*, 1961. He suggests that the beads found in the midden were of foreign origin and probably transported there from lagoons near the coast.

James Anquandah (an archaeologist) and Michael Kwamena-Poh (a historian) both argue that before the eighteenth century the Hill Guan produced abundant food supply for their neighbours—especially the Shai—with whom they exchanged these supplies for pottery. For example in 1848, Widmann and Dieterle⁴ noted that thousands of pots full of palm oil were transported annually from the Hill Guan to the coast (Anquandah 1985: 21; Kwamena-Poh 1973: 96). Anquandah discusses tentative conclusions of test excavations in the Shai Hill sites in Cherekechrete, Hioweyo and Aduku. Much of the pottery found in the sites date c. 1500-1900. Some, exported to urban sites in Akuapem were of the sun-rays motif, the trademark of the Shai potters in about AD 1500-1700 (1985: 19). The engraved decorations on bone combs, ivory bangles and awls were the same as those found in the lower part of the mound excavated at Dawu. The use of engraved decorations in the form of concentric circle and dot design on the combs found at Dawu (fig. 3) may suggest Akan influence or origin (Ozanne 1962: 120). Changes in artistic styles evidenced from the midden showed different kinds of influence from the Akwamu, Shai and Europeans.

Anquandah in discussing Shaw's excavation suggests, on the contrary, that there is evidence that the early development of specialist industries such as textiles, ivory and brass works was not confined to the northern Akan alone. The southern Akan and the Guan living on the Akuapem hills also developed similar industries (1982: 93-94). If the beads, according to Shaw, were of foreign origin, then Anquandah suggests the Hill Guan also produced other art works establishing the fact that they had creative craftsmen. The pottery at the lower part of the midden indicates the possibility of a lively and varied artistic tradition which seemed to become lost with time (Shaw 1961: 87). Kwamena-Poh supports this view and argues that the deterioration in pottery style must have been caused by Akwamu rule, which did not stimulate an environment for creativity (1973: 27). This tradition of use of pottery is seen in several shrines today.

Guan religious practices employed art as a medium to focus on, provide abode for and commune with the ancestors and deities. The Guan state gods, *akpe* (in Kyerepong), are believed to be spirits and therefore no images of them are made. Rather, non-human forms of art works are made as agents through which their assistance is solicited. The stool and *korow*, clay pot (*akorow*, pl.), are used as temporary abodes for the deities. There is a difference between deities localised in pots of water and those enshrined in brass pans. Of those in brass pans, *Atono* are

said to be the oldest. According to Rattray (1923) and Silverman (1987), their source is from the Tano River in the Brong Ahafo Region (in Gilbert 1989b: 41-42). The *korow* is circular in shape. Those placed outside are on top of stands, which are erected out of cement or clay. These stands have square or circular bases. Some *akorow* are placed along side stools. The *Bosomptra* god at Abiriw has no stool in the shrine; instead there are three *akorow*, the biggest being the dwelling place of *Bosomptra* when he visits annually or when his presence is invoked through prayer and the pouring of libation. Other distinctive objects that are in these shrines are brass bowls called *ayowa*.

Guan shrine art varies in composition. Some works consist of objects placed in brass pans or earthenware pots with rainwater. Others take the form of bundles of leaves and some other items, hanging on the wall. In Adukrom, the *korow* in Kwabi shrine contains *nyankonduru*, *onunum*, *obiyimi* leaves and eggs. The pot at Kyenku shrine in Obosomase contains water fetched from river Po Damte amidst prayers. The *korow* at Damte shrine in Mampong contains water from the river called Atwubi, Atwugya or Opiafo, previously known as Opipim (Labi 1989: 120).

Priests and priestesses at the shrines use art works in some practices to identify and protect them from evil forces as well as create abodes for deities. Some *korow* are kept alongside stools. Other shrine objects are *mmena*, flywhisk, *korow*, and *afena*, sword. The *mmena* in Ntoabea's shrine is held together with an *afena* whose handle and blade are painted white. These are works related to the gods and mainly found in shrines (Labi 1989: 119-120).

Some of the shrines have stools as abodes for their gods. The shrines relied on gods who were non-localised until invoked to inhabit the objects intended to be their abodes. Traditional Guan stools did not have any designs in the middle part. They were simple blocks of wood with crescent shaped tops to act as seat with a handle on both sides of it.⁵ At the *Kyenku* shrine in Obosomase, it is a taboo to enter with any stool with symbolic or proverbial meaning. The stools found in this shrine have no symbolic designs on them. Only simple four legged stools are permitted in this shrine. These stools are white. They are ritually washed and painted with white clay during annual festivals. *Ntoabea's* stool in Aburi is believed to have had a bell and a metal chain serving as its handle attached to it when it descended from the sky (Labi 1989: 120).

Private gods are also worshiped. Contrary to the *akpe* or *abosom*, the attributes of private gods and what they perform for their patrons determines their image. For example, a god responsible for giving children may be represented as a human being carrying an *Akuaba*, an Akan fertility doll. Cole and Ross mention a hand pointing to the sky with a snake coiling around it, which was found in a shrine in Late. According to the priestess this carving, which appeared to be in flames underneath a tree at the time, was presented to her by a lunatic she met. The priestess' deity took the staff and kept it in the shrine room. According to Cole and Ross, supplicants had given several other art pieces with most of them showing appreciation for answered requests (Cole and Ross 1977:100-103).

Priestesses, *akɔmfɔ* at the shrines employ art on their bodies, which function prominently during worship and spirit possession. The *akɔmfɔ's* bodies are painted with *hyirew*, white clay, when they are possessed. The bodies of both *asɔfo* and *akɔmfɔ* become supports for creation and display of art. Some also keep their hair in *densikran*, a low cropped hairstyle, or *mpesei*, long hair strands. Their clothing is primarily white calico or patterned cloth with white background. The *akɔmfɔ* add a variety of beads and other protective materials to their dressing which identifies them as *akɔmfɔ*. Beads are used extensively both as décor to ward off evil and as professional identification. In the past, the *akɔmfɔ* wore *dɔw*, raffia skirts and held *bodua*,

flywhisk in their hands. Today, we may still find some *akɔmfo* wearing this. The regalia of the *asofo* and *akɔmfo* are both kept in traditional mud houses, but currently some are constructed with cement.

There are different types of architecture in Akuapem, including those serving as shrines and residences for the *asofo* and deities. These buildings are constructed with swish and roofed with thatch. The introduction of modern technology in building means that building materials now include stone and cement, with aluminium roofs. These buildings may be in linear, semi-compound or compound design. The rooms, sizes and styles vary. The abodes for the deities are either a separate room or in the bedroom of the *asofo*. The ancestral stone seats (fig. 4) are kept in some shrines while others are kept in public places such as in the Late-Kubease plaza (Gilbert 1989: 41; Labi 1989). Art and architecture took into consideration requirements of the gods to enable the priestly leadership to perform their functions as both political and spiritual leaders. But in spite of their service to the gods and belief in the supernatural, they became subjects of Akwamu under which they suffered greatly.

Invitation of Akyem into Guan Politics as the First Phase of the Akanization Process

One weakness of the Guan priest-chief rule was its inability to develop an effective war machinery or defensive force. The Guan lived in small independent chiefdoms and this allowed the Akwamu to subject them to harsh rule without the capability to defend themselves. The origins of Akan art in Akuapem started with Akwamu rule over the Hill Guan from 1681 when the Akwamu initiated steps towards an attack on the Ga who lived in Accra and had been controlling trade among the Hill Guan. It was only after the displacement of the Ga from their control of the Hills that Akwamu rule became a reality on the Hills (Kwamena-Poh 1973: 24).

Because of trade interests and the need for expeditious transactions it was necessary for the Guan to speak the same language, Twi. Akwamu oral tradition narrates that accused persons were usually detained until they learned to speak Twi well enough to defend themselves in Akwamu courts. The towns between Aburi and Mamfe constituted the daily route of the Akwamu and in order for these towns to communicate and trade, they learnt to speak Twi and were therefore more affected linguistically. The towns lying to the north such as Abiriw, Dawu, Awukugwa, Apirede and Late in the east were less affected linguistically. The Late language has remained the same because of their location outside the main hills in Akuapem (Kwamena-Poh 1973: 10-11).

Akwamu rule over the Hill Guan did not last long (1681-1730). After a series of wars with some of the Hill Guan communities in the early eighteenth century, another one broke out in September 1729 with Ansah Sasraku, *Akwamuhene*, coming out victorious. This victory compelled the Guan losers to gather at Abotakyi to swear an oath at the *Kyenku* shrine to unite and expel the Akwamu. Furthermore, it moved them to invite the long-standing enemy of Akwamu, Akyem, to join them in the fight against Akwamu (Kwamena-Poh 1973: 34-37). The situation on the hills changed when Ansah Sasraku plunged into war in September 1730 with the Akyem. Within twenty-four hours the Akwamu were defeated. They were hotly pursued and fled across the Volta River to found their present location called Akwamufie (Wilks 1958: 110).

The continued stay of the Akyem after the fall of Akwamu is recounted in two traditions. One tradition narrates that after the expulsion of Akwamu, the Hill Guans feared that the proverb "if you have no master, someone will seize and sell you" might be fulfilled. So, they sent messengers to the Akyem king to appoint someone to rule over them (Kwamena-Poh 1973: 46). They realised the dangers in their loose federation and were prepared to come under a centralised political authority. The second tradition has it that the Akyem were asked to rule the Guan due to their inability to pay off the debt they had incurred by inviting them to assist in the war. The

negotiations went on until 1733 when the Akyem dynasty finally established itself on the hills. The Guan community met at Abotakyi where an oath was administered with a promise that they would never throw off their allegiance to the Akyem or any of their successors (Reindorf 1966: 89-90). The name of the Hill Guans was changed to Akuapem. The etymology means *nkoa-apem*, a thousand slaves, a name that the Akwamu used to refer to the Hill Guan during their rule, or *akuw-apem*, a thousand companies as they called themselves (Kwamena-Poh 1973:34).

The invitation of Akyem to establish political authority over the Hill Guan was a major turning point both politically and artistically. The Akyem set out to establish an Akan political state with accompanying elaborate art and regalia. This was intended to project, enhance, glorify and enforce the image of chiefship in Akuapem. The Akan black stool became the single most important item of regalia, which transformed the political structure and introduced new art forms among the Guan. This has eventually come to run parallel to the stone seats sometimes used by the Guan *odede* or *asfo* as their politico-religious seats.

Akan Art in Akuapem

This section discusses a few Akan regalia and how some Guan towns came to adopt them. Under this process of Akanizing the Guan, art associated with Guan political leadership became secondary. As stated above, the Akan black stool became a central, political and religious art work that led the process of change. Akan stools are made out of wood, often *osese* (*Funtumia africana*), and believed to be a potential abode for spirits to inhabit. Several other objects such as plates, ladles, combs, shoes, bowls and carved figures are made from this tree (Irvine 1961: 621). Stools are made with various symbols in the central part to communicate Akan values and beliefs.

Chiefs are surrounded with attendants and elaborate paraphernalia so much so that, sitting in state, they become a complete exhibition of the arts of their people. Art projects the chiefs' image and several of these symbols and imagery reflect just that. A chief has spokespersons whose insignia are staffs. On these staffs are a variety of symbols ranging from clan totems to proverbs and historical incidents encoded in abstract or symbolic forms. Sandals, jewellery, headbands and umbrellas all became important during ceremonial functions of chieftaincy. Special minor chiefs were created to be in charge of the chiefs' regalia and were responsible for ordering appropriate ones. Gold, multi-colours, wealth, power, and all forms of symbols depicting these became the mark of this new political institution.

I shall briefly explain some examples of Akan art exemplified in the regalia of the *Okuapehene*, a descendant of Akyem, before discussing how some Guan towns adopted them in the latter part of this section.

The most important paraphernalia of *Okuapehene* is *asesegua* or *egua*, stool. It is his symbol of authority. There are different types of stools; these are ceremonial, ritual and domestic. The *akonwa tuntum*, black stool, is a ritual stool and not displayed in public. These are stools representing the ancestors. A chief, who during his lifetime led a good and upright life according to the ethical and cultural traditions of his society, had his stool blackened after his death. It is a ritual process of smearing the stool with a mixture of human blood, gunpowder and spider's web amidst invocation of ancestral spirits.⁶ The other type is the ceremonial stool, which is displayed in public. One of such stools is *sika gua* (fig. 5). This is a stool covered with gold leaf, and paraded during the *Odwira* festival as a demonstration of *Okuapehene*'s wealth.

The *afena*, sword, is also an important item in *Okuapehene's* regalia. The blade is made out of iron and the handle carved out of *ɔsese*. There are three types of swords for *Okuapehene*, namely, *mpomponso*, a ritual sword, *afena*, ceremonial sword and *akofena*, war sword. The ritual sword is kept beside the *akonwa tuntum* in the stool room. The stool room is a sacred place within a palace or a special room where blackened stools of previous chiefs are kept. The rooms are visited periodically especially on *Awukudae* and *Akwasidae* to venerate the ancestors through the stools. The *Okuapehene's* ritual sword is a war relic captured from the Asante in 1826. The sword (fig. 6) is given further spiritual impetus by being kept in the hide of a leopard. It is believed that the leopard is a fearful and brave animal and its skin possesses some aspects of this. Swords also represent those used by the ancestors: some during war, while others are potential abodes for war gods, ancestors and other deities to inhabit. Because of its believed spiritual powers, the blade is never pointed towards a chief when subordinates come to swear oaths of allegiance to him. Ceremonial swords are usually plated in gold or covered in gold leaf and used by a chief during public functions such as *Odwira*. Ceremonial swords carry proverbial messages in the symbols engraved or cut out of the blades. *Okuapehene* may use *akofena* on special occasion, which have reference to war. This is usually accompanied with the wearing of wardress.

Akyeampoma, linguist staff, is the official insignia of the *ɔkyeame*, linguist, as well as a symbol of the *ɔkyeame's* status as spokesperson, counsellor and advisor to *Okuapehene*. The office of *ɔkyeame* is ascended to by inheritance, with a few exceptional persons attaining it on personal merit. He is expected to modify and present the messages of the *Okuapehene* and elders in public. He is the visible intermediary between the *Okuapehene* and those who wish to speak to him. *Dabehene* or *Nfoahene*, a minor chief responsible for the *Okuapehene's* regalia, orders the *akyeampoma*. There is a vast array of *akyeampoma*. Some are used for rituals and others for ceremony. An example of *Okuapehene's* ritual *akyeampoma* in Akropong is called *asempa ye tia*, meaning, "truth is brief" (fig. 7). It is believed to be the abode of the spirits of ancestors who used to be linguists. This can be taken to the stool room because tradition maintains that gold is not permitted in rituals for ancestors. It has a dark appearance which is either painted or the result of accumulated residue of sacrificial blood after years of use in ancestor veneration.

The ceremonial *akyeampoma* carry proverbial motifs and are often covered with geometric designs and gold leaf. These *akyeampoma* announce in non-verbal form the arrival of a chief. The bearer of *akyeampoma* need not always speak, for the symbols on the *akyeampoma* are intended to communicate. These carry a minimum degree of spiritual power as compared to the *asempa ye tia*. These staffs are intended to "envelope" and enhance the institution and ceremonial aspect of chiefship as well as a chief's aesthetic appearance. For example, a chief may choose to be represented as omnipotent by the benue bird called *sankofa*, meaning, "going back to the past." This bird can bend its head to touch its back. It is used to represent the chief's ability to perceive things that happen in his absence. Another interpretation to this is the chief's ability to tap into ancient wisdom. Other examples of symbols on linguist staffs are an elephant pointing to the sky expresses the concept of authority, powerful, yet so delicate it must be handled with great care. A linguist staff, *ɔmaa ɔmee* (fig. 8) shows the resourcefulness and responsibility of the Queenmother to feed her people.

Abotiri, headbands, are used as part of a chief's accessories in dressing. These are a rich source of aesthetic decoration and proverbial communication. In addition to Akan symbols, animal skin and bones may be added to *abotiri*. These are usually added during funerals and ritual ceremonies. *Akokyew*, war hats, may have the skin of a lion or a leopard attached to it. This is usually worn together with a *hatakari*, smock. *Asafohenfo*, military leaders, and *abrafo*, executioners, wear hats. *Okuapehene* has an *utakrakyew*, feather hat (fig. 9) called *ɔhɔman* worn by his *ɔkra*, soul, represented by a virgin boy who sits in front of him. It is a composite hat

made up of male eagle feathers, gold-covered ram horns and a human skull wrapped in leopard skin (Gilbert 1989a: 75). It also compares the strength of the chief to an eagle.

Sandals, *mpaboa*, (fig. 10) worn by the *Okuapehene* bear symbolic works expressive of his status. They are worn primarily to protect the chief's feet from touching the ground. *Mpaboahene* is the official in charge of the different sandals worn by the *Okuapehene*. It is his duty to select the appropriate sandals accompanying the chief's cloth. Sandals with cocoa beans worn by *Okuapehene* represent the wealth of the state, which is derived from cocoa. Similarly, snail symbolises contentment; *apeɛɛ*, hedgehog symbolises "a feeling of total ownership," and a snail and tortoise symbolise peace. These Akan-type regalia were over a period adopted by Guan towns as the *Okuapehene* set out to create a unified Akuapem state.

Two examples cited below from Abiriw and Late, both Guan towns, demonstrate the Akanization process. The Guan accepted the new political structure, and the need to separate priesthood from chiefship. They made political appointments that eventually used Akan regalia and adopted the black stool as their new source of political authority. This marked the separation of the *asɔfo*'s role and the complete loss of *nnadefo*'s judicial powers to the newly created positions of chiefs. While the chiefs dealt with political matters, the *asɔfo* focused on spiritual concerns.

Otu even dates the Akanization process earlier and argues that Late was the first Guan town to adopt a blackened stool during the Akwamu period in the mid-seventeenth century. This suggests that the process of Akanization began before the Akyem arrived on the Hills in 1733 (Otu 1987: 37-38). At the beginning of Akyem rule, they positioned representatives in some Guan towns, who were called either *Kurontihene* or *Mankrado*, to influence the Guan and ensure the success of Akyem rule.⁷ Blier cites a somewhat similar situation in the Dahomey and Kuba Kingdoms where kings sent potential family rivals to distant territories. These exiles helped to disseminate royal authority and art through the display of courtly regalia (Blier 1998: 29). Similarly in Akuapem, these Akyem representatives provided the Akan style of political leadership to the Guan towns with its art and regalia from which they could copy. The Late *asɔfo* relinquished their political roles and nominated new leaders to assume new political status known as chief who adopted black stools as their source of political power. These new chiefs adopted some regalia from the Akyem representatives in Late. It is said that the Late-Ahenease stool room has a black stool and a brass pan—all adopted from the Akyem while the sword and arrow are war trophies. Late linguist staffs originated from the Akyem rulers (fig 11). Today, Late Kubease and Ahenease chiefs have both ritual and ceremonial staffs. These staffs identify a chief. They precede the chief and are supposed to cast evil spirits away. The Late black and ritual linguist staffs can be taken anywhere and its presence is usually an indication of a problem which needs to be resolved. The ritual staff is called *sunsumakyeampoma*, spiritual staff, because of the sacrificial human or animal blood poured on it. This means the spirit of the dead man have been transformed into the staff.

A Guan chief may have several staffs with various designs referring to proverbs. Examples from Late are as follows: *Wo fro dua pa a na wo pia wo*, means "if you climb a good tree you will be pushed", *akoko batan na nim nia ne mma bede* means "it is the hen which knows what its chicks will eat", and *ti koro nkɔ agyina* means, "two heads are better than one." These are all popular Akan proverbs adopted as symbols on Late linguist staffs. Other regalia which Late adopted were ceremonial stools, palanquins, umbrellas and elaborate dressing with accessories to make the chief the best dressed person present, and a retinue of attendants. Today, Late chiefs possess almost all the stool paraphernalia of an Akan chief. They include state swords (fig. 12),

headgear, bracelets, gold necklaces and finger rings, ankle bangles and musical instruments such as *fontomfrom*, *atumpan*, *twenesin* and horns including *mmentia*. The creation of several Akan-type chiefs in Guan towns introduced new sources of power, namely ancestral stools and their accompanying regalia, as seen in Late and Abiriw.

The Akan political system was adopted in Abiriw in about 1843 (Otu 1987: 31). Prior to this, Abiriw priests from the patrilineal clans sat in a circle on stones to administer justice under the leadership of the Bosompra priest. The Akan who had earlier migrated and joined them with black stools had to put them aside. Gilbert confirms Otu's view that it was only in the mid-nineteenth century that the powers of the Bosompra priest and the Abiriw chief were separated. Since then there has been an increase in the number of chiefs created with black stools. Gilbert gives detailed background to the introduction of black stools in Abiriw. She admits that the "*nnadefo*, who originally governed the town, while not eliminated in the new political order, have had their political functions usurped; they have become subordinate to Akan-type chiefs with Akan paraphernalia such as black stool, linguist staffs, palanquins and umbrellas" (Gilbert 1997:511-513).

An Abiriw elder says that:

Before, all we knew was judgement of the gods, and this judgement was sometimes quick, sometimes slow and always costly: it cost lives and much money. Akuropon people brought a revolution to our society. They told us we should let them settle it civilly with less cost (Gilbert 1997: 509).

Abiriw reformed their political system and accepted Akan chiefship with its accompanying judicial powers. Between 1846 and 1866, one of the Bosompra *asɔfo* nominated his son, Kwadwo Bosompra, to be his successor while he assumed the position of *Ohene* of Abiriw (Otu 1987: 32). Similar situations and changes occurred in all the Guan towns.

It cannot be said that the introduction of Akan art and regalia was an imposition, as some Guan chiefs enjoyed this new political structure. In 1867, the *Benkumhene*, who is from Late arrived in Akropong in magnificent attire. He rode in a palanquin, wore a black silk cap and was shielded by an umbrella (Otu 1987: 7). This supports the acceptance of the new art forms and institution. Furthermore, the protracted dispute between chief Akrofi of Late and *Okuapehene*, Nana Kwasi Akuffo, over the title "King of Larteh," inscribed over a medallion given to him by the colonial government in 1885 is another case of some chiefs wanting to elevate themselves within this new political structure to paramountcy. In July 1885, chief Akrofi even signed a letter as "Frederick Akrofi, King of Larteh." The inscription was later changed to chief of Larteh in 1898 following a long dispute after which the British replaced the medallion (Brokensha 1964: 12-17). Several such disputes of allegiance have plagued Akuapem till today.

In addition to the elaborate regalia and display of wealth, in constitutional terms real power (political, religious, judicial and administrative) was combined with military command in times of war (Kwamena-Poh 1973: 46). These powers were vested in the Akyem chief at Akropong. This centralised authority completely overshadowed the non-centralised Guan priestly political system headed by *ɔdede*, *asɔfo*, *nnadefo* and *asafohenfo* and their regalia, namely white cloth with beads and bangles. In many instances, there was a complete separation of powers between worship of the gods by the priests and ancestor veneration practised by the chiefs.

The traditional Guan art associated with the priests was not integrated in the new political regalia dominated by gold, symbolic imagery and black stools. In fact, it was and still is a taboo for the priests to use gold, which is a mark of wealth and glory frequently displayed in many of the new Akan political ceremonies. They also abhor the use of black stools. The blood used on the stools is a taboo to the *ɔdede* or *asɔfo*. Hence, the Guan priests, for religious reasons passed on this responsibility to the *asafohenfo* or other leaders. The wearing of war regalia in the form

of smocks, hats and the use of swords and knives contradicted the sacredness and sanctity of the position of priesthood. The new chiefs swore allegiance to *Okuapehene* and paid homage annually during the *Odwira* festival whose origins date from the second decade of the nineteenth century. This further cemented the Akanisation process.

The Second Phase of Akanization: Akuapem Captures Asante *Odwira* *suman*

The second stage of the Akanization process began with the Akuapem war with Asante. In the early nineteenth century the Akuapem and Akyem, who were usually allies, went into an alliance with some coastal states, and were supported by the English and Danes and fought the Asante at Nsamankow and Akatamanso in 1824 and 1826 respectively. During the Akatamanso war, the Akuapem captured the Asante war god, *Odwira Apafram*, and the stool regalia connected with the celebration of the *Odwira* festival. The accompanying *odosu*, war deity or magico-religious objects which provide abode for spiritual entities to inhabit when invoked, was also captured from the Asante. This gave the Akuapem the spiritual authority to celebrate the *Odwira* festival. Since then, during the month of September or October every year the Akuapem have been celebrating the *Odwira* festival climaxing in a five-day series of rituals and ceremonies with several small scale pre and post *Odwira* activities.

This second phase of the Akanization process underscores the importance of the *Odwira* festival which brings all Akuapem chiefs together in Akropong to celebrate before they each in turn celebrate their own festivals in their respective towns.

The Akuapem *Odwira* festival is reflective of a community experience made visible through its art. Hence, in the week of the main celebration, all major art works made and acquired throughout their history are displayed. *Odwira* is celebrated to cleanse and purify Akropong and the entire Akuapem State from evil and defilement while venerating the ancestors. It is also to propitiate the stools and ensure that members of the state congregate in joyful fellowship through sacrifice and the eating of a communal meal. During the period, Akuapem chiefs also come to pay homage to the *Okuapehene*. The Sunday preceding the ninth *Awukudae*,⁸ the Akuapem sacred day celebrated every forty-two days which always falls on Wednesday, is when all the stool occupants assemble to celebrate *Odwira*.

The festival begins on Monday, *Akwammo*, clearing of the path to Amamprobi, the royal cemetery. This is to enable the ancestors to be invited for the festival. Libation is poured in the morning to seek permission from the ancestors to lift the ban on drumming which has been imposed six weeks earlier called *adae butuw*, in preparation for the *Odwira*. *Adumfo*, security officers, *Banmufu*, custodians of the royal mausoleum and *Asenfo* pour this libation. This facilitates the invitation of the ancestors to join them in celebrating the festival. The *Akyeamehene* hands over a cutlass to *Banmuhene* who then strikes the ground on both his left and right sides three times each signifying the commencement of weeding of the path to Amamprobi.

At *odum anim*, a site believed to be the spot where one *Okuapehene* died, and also a place for the execution of people in the olden days, the elders prepare the grounds thoroughly for the mat-spreading ritual amidst the sounding of the *nkrawiri*, executioner's drum. They spread *odwen haban* (*Baphia nitida*), also known as camwood leaves on a raised wooden platform with sticks across it to prevent the offering from touching the ground. On this they place, *sapow pa*, plantain fibre sponge used as a towel, *sawee*, chewing sponge, *aburow a watoto*, roasted corn, *mankani a watoto*, roasted cocoayam, *ankaa*, lime, *kwadu*, banana, *abe*, palm fruits and *brode*, plantain, on

the *odwen haban*. After this, they seek permission to enter the sacred grove. They return to the chief's palace and are then given some palm wine to quench their thirst.

Tuesday morning marks outdoorings of new yam. It is after the ceremony on Tuesday that new yam, banned six weeks earlier, is officially brought into the town and eaten. Early in the morning the *Okuapehene's* white stools are washed and lined up in the palace for a while (fig. 13). Later on in the morning, there is procession with sacrificial offerings to Amamprobi led by *Banmuhene*, *Adumhene*, the chief responsible for the security of the person of *Okuapehene* as well as head of *abrafo*, executioners, *Nkowsuafohene*, chief of stool carriers, *Ankobeahene*, chief of traditional counsellors and *Osodohene*, chief cook in the stool house or palace. The dress is a dark smock, a battle dress or dark coloured clothing to signify the importance of the ceremony. *Banmuhene* presents sheep, food and drinks to the ancestors on behalf of the *Omanhene*, and a concoction of sheep blood and herbs is used to mark the forehead of participants during the rituals at Amamprobi. On their way back they are met by a delegation of the *Omanhene* led by the *Akyeamehene* on the outskirts of Akropong to pour libation with water, palm wine and schnapps. When they arrive in the palace, a cloth is wrapped round the *Omanhene* in order for him to secretly receive the *odosu*, war religious items, used to provide physical strength and war strategies to fight and the spiritual strength and authority to celebrate the festival. The *Banmuhene* hands this over to him by marking his forehead with ointment prepared at Amamprobi. The *Omanhene* is dressed in the black cloth traditionally used during mourning. There is a small gathering in the palace later in the evening for the *Omanhene* to perform *dapaa tu*, preparation and announcements for the celebration of *adae kese* or the ninth *adae*, big *adae* and *adae bue*, lifting of the ban on drumming, dancing and noise making imposed six weeks earlier.

Wednesday is the ninth *Awukudae*, a day for mourning the dead. The traditional dressing is black cloth or dark brown, red or other dark patterned cloths. Families cry and mourn their dead relatives of the past year. It is also devoted to feeding the ancestors in the stool room, a sacred indoor rite. *Omanhene* sits in the palace to perform *adae kese*. The linguists pour libation and the *Omanhene* offers drink, which he pours on his left and right hand side. Appeals for funds and donations are made for development projects in the year. Later during the day the *Okuapehene* dresses in war regalia – a smock with amulets and talismans and a war hat, and is paraded through the town joining in the mourning. Some of the oldest forms of art, such as carved stools dating from ca. 1850 (Cole 1975: 17) are brought out and ritually cleansed. During this sacred rite, a curfew is imposed and the public is strictly warned to stay indoors. On Wednesday night, the blackened stools of past *Okuapehenfo*, namely: Satori, Kwapong Kyerefo, Obuobi Atiemo, Kwame Fori I, Asa Krofa and Kwadede I are taken to the Adami river by the *Adumfo* and *Abrafo* to be cleansed and guns are fired at Nsorem.

During the early hours of the following morning, Thursday, the *Adumfo* light a fire to roast some new yam. It is also the day when the *Asona* clan⁹ eat yam, and stool occupants offer food and drinks to the ancestors at Nsorem, the original site of Akropong. The colour of clothing changes from black, red or dark brown used in mourning and worn during the first three days of the festival to colours such as greens, blues, yellows and white to mark the festive mood. This is a day of celebration and the predominant colour of clothing worn is white, meaning joy and peace. The black stools are placed upright and fed with pieces of meat and mashed yam. The *Omanhene* also performs rites for the *Odwira suman* at *Banmuhene's* house, after which the public may consult *Banmuhene* for a ritual bath with a concoction of sacred water and herbs. At the end of the day, the *Omanhene* receives the various groups from Nsorem, with the *Banmuhene* presenting the *Omanhene's* empty food container by placing the container three times on the laps of the *Omanhene* and then taken away to the stool room. After this, the carrier of the food is also placed three times on the lap of the *Omanhene*. The last activity for the day is *Sesadompe* during which leaves and other sacrificial items on the *odosu* are removed and deposited at Nsorem under

the cover of darkness. This rite is finalised with three resounding gunshots (see also Gilbert 1994: 99-108). There is strict curfew and lights are supposed to be turned off. In recent past and during the 2002 *Odwira* festival the Electricity Company turned off the lights but I am unable to ascertain whether it was because of traditional demand or pure coincidence.

Friday is a state durbar to which all the chiefs in the remaining sixteen towns are invited to pay homage to *Okuapehene*. Prior to this the *Asonahene*, head of the *Asona* clan in the morning sends his food, mashed yam and water to Nsorem before the durbar commences. All the communities, their chiefs as well as government officials and well-wishers join in the celebration.¹⁰ In addition to the ritual, military, social and political aspects, it is also a display of elaborate art forms. By the fifth day, the dark coloured clothing, military attire and seriousness attached to the festival has changed to that of bright colours and the use of gold and silver and wearing of elaborate ornaments.

There are a variety of art forms displayed during the *Odwira* durbar because repetitions are avoided and variations encouraged. For example, no chief should wear the same attire, or dress more elaborately than, the *Omanhene*. If a subordinate chief wears the same cloth or dresses with similar regalia to that of a superior chief, the subordinate is advised or encouraged to change the dressing. In the scheme of things no two chiefs dress or embellish themselves identically nor should their entourages have the same number of people (Cole 1975: 22). Each chief sets himself distinctly apart to show that he is the only one possessing that specific regalia. Cole's article summarises the *Odwira* festival as bringing together the various art works and compares their display to a pointillist painting where each minor unit contributes to the impact of the whole (1975: 60). According to Cole, the "artistic impact of the festival stems not from isolated artistic forms of actions but from formally orchestrated interaction of all the aesthetic resources of the community" (1975:61). Each of these art works used during the festival has a specific historical and cultural meaning which creates good reasons for the community to come together and share in the display, values, hope, peace and prosperity of Akuapem.

Gilbert perceives Akuapem art as "deliberately and metaphorically exposed in royal rituals in the politics of chieftaincy affairs and in regalia" (1993: 123). The *Odwira* festival provides an appropriate occasion for the display of art in a ritual and royal setting intended to project the image and status of the *Okuapehene*. She argues that Akropong regalia form an external envelope for the person of the body politic of the *Okuapehene*. Those who provide this external envelope are the various attendants, divisional chiefs, minor chiefs, and the host of art and regalia they use. They are all centred on paying homage to the *Okuapehene*. These historical and cultural works epitomise the artistic life of the Akuapem people as a whole. Art and regalia of the *Okuapehene* and other Akuapem chiefs are summed up as "public representations of the secret power that lies within and behind kingship and the power that holds it together" (Gilbert 1993: 131). Indeed these are more than public presentations of what holds kingship together. They are also representations of the history of art in Akuapem.

The Akropong *Odwira* festival is a great drama, which embraces all the Akan arts in Akuapem. It is an occasion when the spiritual power of the chief is re-charged. It is a celebration of the highest and total expression of culture as horn blowers, drummers, linguists and various state officials display art and regalia. All the wing chiefs in Akuapem have over the years acquired Akan regalia such as palanquins, umbrellas, swords, multi-coloured and patterned cloths, gold plated sandals, linguists staffs with proverbial icons and jewellery made or covered with gold leaf, and come with these to pay homage to the *Okuapehene*. This is perhaps the most significant occasion for the display of art. Dress and other body arts reveal distinctions, changes in status and temporary display of roles as well as personal preferences and affiliations.

During the Akatamanso war, other Akuapem towns also captured war gods and regalia from the Asante. Therefore, Late also celebrates the *Odwira* festival because of the gods and trophies they captured. It also involves the clearing of path to their ancestral home to bring the *Odwira*. It is a festival of purification from war through rituals performed with the *odwira odosu*, cleansing from defilement, evil, and a time when the Late feed and venerate their ancestors. The Late celebration is also associated with rites to make the eating of new yam healthy so that people do not suffer stomach ache and other ailments from eating new yam. In addition to the religious celebration, it is also an artistic display, exhibiting the totality of Akuapem art.

The process of Akanisation separated the Guan priests from participating in the Akropong *Odwira* festival. No gods are worshipped during this festival, rather, it is ancestor veneration. Because of this distinction, priests and priestesses do not participate in it. Their non-participation in chieftaincy is also because of their abhorrence of black stools, gold and works which bear symbols on them, which are emphasised in Akan regalia.

The introduction of the new Akan regalia was only for political reasons, as the Guan were left to practise their beliefs during which the *ɔdede*, *asɔfo* and *akɔmfo* continue to worship their gods and celebrate their festivals. Despite the separation of religious roles from political and judicial functions, there still exists some collaboration between the chiefs and the *ɔdede*, *asɔfo*, *nɔdede* and *akɔmfo* in certain aspects of Guan communal life. For example, in some Guan towns such as Adukrom, Amanokrom, Obosomase and Late-Ahenease, gods are attached to the black stools and the periods for propitiating and feeding these gods are part of the festivals involving chiefs. In Late-Ahenease the god Konkon, which is regarded as male, because it appears as a man with half body and resides in a cemented shrine is worshipped on Tuesdays, Fridays and during the *Ohum* and *Odwira* festivals. In fact, the Konkon *ɔfo* is the *nɔdede kyeame*, and during these festivals, should there be any rituals and rites to be performed it then becomes his responsibility to do so. In Late, the following Wednesday after the *Odwira*, the priests and priestesses of the shrines gather to cook, offer food to the gods and dance. In the night, every house that has a god lights a fire and the head priest goes round to roast a piece of yam in it and throw it to the ground for the gods.

It is evident that Guan priesthood is still active in the Guan communities, going by the number of shrines in Akuapem. During my fieldwork in 1988, I documented as many as ninety-one shrines in Akuapem, though the number may be higher. These communities maintain their altars and still adhere to the traditional regalia and art forms and celebrate their independent festivals (fig 14). They also train priestesses from other towns. The popularity of shrines may be illustrated with the Akonnedi shrine. During the *Asuo Gyebi* festival at the Akonnedi shrine, past trainees of the shrine come from other towns in Ghana and the United States to worship this deity and celebrate the festival.

In Akuapem today, all seventeen towns celebrate annual festivals with Akan regalia during which many of the chiefs are carried in palanquins and paraded through the principal streets on the last day of the festival, culminating in a grand durbar. During the Mamfe *Ohum* for example, the *asɔfo* and other traditional leaders perform traditional rites including the drinking of *asafosa* and the women enact *aworebe*, a ceremony of sweeping and cleansing the town, prior to the durbar, which climaxes the celebration on Saturday afternoon with Akan type regalia.

The Akuapem *Odwira*, Abiriw *Akpe Odwe*, Mamfe *Ohum*, Mampong *Odwira* and Late *Ohum* and *Odwira* are all festivals celebrated in Akuapem in which chiefs display regalia of Akan origin. The new art works introduced in Akuapem articulate new Akan values. These were the use of gold and the display of power, pomp and pageantry. Today all Akuapem chiefs display Akan art. Political and social importance are placed on regalia and reflect the values of the

people of Akuapem as a whole.

Whereas these Akan influences tend to overshadow Guan priestly art a typical Guan religious festival, such as *Asuo Gyebi* of *Akonnedi* shrine and the celebration a week after Late *Odwira* of the priests and priestesses including *Konkon* and *Tshawe* is more a display of various rituals, spirit possession and dance. The priestesses wear white cloths, beads on their necks, wrists, knees and ankles and smear their bodies with white clay. During the *Asuo Gyebi* festival, which I observed in January 1989, the late Nana Oparebea, the then priestess of *Akonnedi* shrine had a special stool on which she sat. The emphasis is on the religious appropriateness, symbolism and suitability for the gods rather than the aesthetics of colour, as well as the projection of the personhood and power of the priest or priestess of the shrine. Some Guan religious festivals are celebrated alongside the state festivals such as *Ohum*, and Akan festivals such as *Awukudae* and *Akwusidae*. The process of introducing a new political order did not entirely wipe out the Guan priestly art and way of relating to and celebrating the gods.

Conclusion

I have argued in this article that Guan politico-religious art and regalia are different from the political regalia the Akyem (Akan) came with. The fundamental differences of positions regarding blood; what constitutes taboos and abhorrence of black stool and symbolic imagery; and the separation of ancestor veneration from worship of gods, detached the art of these two leadership types in the Akanization process. Therefore the Guan who were appointed chiefs use Akan type regalia while the priests maintain their traditional Guan art and regalia without adding any Akan art and regalia. In this concluding section, I recount some of the main differences between Akan and Guan art and regalia as well as areas of co-existence.

Some comparisons may therefore be drawn between the art of the *asɔfo* and *ahenfo* after over two centuries of the Akanization process. The *ahenfo* derived their source of power from blackened stools whereas the *asɔfo* derived their politico-religious position and authority from the principal gods in the communities, sometimes represented through white stools or with *korow* being receptacles for their abodes. In Akuapem today, both blackened and white stools exist. While chiefs use black stools, linguist staffs and other elaborate regalia and colours, priests and priestesses use white stools, *korow*, *ayowa* and other composite objects. Chiefs perform rituals in venerating the ancestors while the *asɔfo* worship state gods and are consulted on social, religious, health and domestic issues.

There is a clear distinction between the attire of the *asɔfo* and *ahenfo*. Whereas the dressing of the *asɔfo* is conservative and resistant to change, i.e. white cloth, beads and flywhisks, chieftaincy regalia is dynamic. Chiefs use multi-coloured clothing including gold, and jewellery, which are taboo to priests. Chiefly regalia are aimed at enhancing the image of the chief and projecting his wealth and power. Therefore, anything including historical and contemporary regalia are used. Wealthier chiefs and queen mothers are able to acquire more regalia for their stools. While all *asɔfo* may wear white cloth at a function, among the chiefs the wearing of a similar cloth by a subordinate chief can be interpreted as insinuation or insubordination, leading to possible sanctions.

Akan influence was only political, with its accompanying regalia. Chiefship and priesthood have been kept separate but co-exist in promoting the interest and development of the community. While the Late-Ahenease chief follows some key elements of the Akropong *Odwira* such as path clearing, bringing the *Odwira*, mourning the dead and a durbar with display of gold

plated regalia and other bright colours, the priests and priestesses gather the following Wednesday to offer yam to the gods. The Guan communities maintain the religious art and regalia used by the *asɔfo* and *akɔmfo*. Their annual festivals are still celebrated with the display of art and regalia associated with priesthood. Some *asɔfo* and *madefo* continue to play important roles in the Akan system of government based on chiefship as in Late. The impact of the Akanization process extends largely to the political domain as the Guan have maintained several aspects of their art associated with priest chiefs.

Today, traditional art forms in Akuapem are primarily from two ethnic groups, Guan and Akan, which are used to sustain both the political and religious needs of the people. Though the Akyem were invited to rule the Guan and introduced several aspects of Akan chiefship and its accompanying regalia, the process did not affect Guan religious beliefs as we find that there is a continued and strong presence of Guan art in the shrines and during some festivals. Guan arts are still upheld to maintain cultural, spiritual unity, and identification within the Guan communities. The Akanization process can therefore not be said to be complete, but partial.

Notes

¹ Chieftaincy includes both chiefs and queen mothers. Since their art and regalia are essentially the same, I shall use the word chief or chieftaincy to refer to both chiefs and queen mothers.

² I acknowledge the kind support and information from *Okuapehene*, Nana Addo Dankwah III, who granted me private interviews at his residence in Osu, Accra, and at his palace in Akropong. Mr. Yeboah Dankwah, a retired Senior Research Fellow of the University of Ghana and a citizen of Abiriw spent several days with me in his office at the Language Centre and provided me useful information on Guan culture. I was the guest of the late Nana Birikorang, *Apcsemakuhene*, Chief of Protocol, Akropong, in his Accra office and he took several hours and days educating me on Akropong and Akuapem culture and art. I am also indebted to the late *Okyeame* Boafo Akusfo, *Ahenemmahene*, chief of all children of chiefs in Akropong and State Linguist. The late Mr. D. A. Attrams, Secretary to the Guan Research Centre, Late, Ankobea Asante of Mamfe and Mr. Lawrence Opare, Benkum Secondary School all need mention for their contribution to the primary material from which this article has been written. I am grateful for their deep insights on the subject, which they shared with me between 1988 and 1989 during my field work gathering material for my Master of Philosophy thesis in African Studies. In writing this article I have also consulted Teacher *Okyeame* Darko of Late for further insight into Late art.

³ The Late words have been spelt as I heard them. *ɛ* is pronounced as in elephant.

⁴ Widman and Dieterle, 1948, Basel Mission archives cited in Anquandah, 1985.

⁵ Interview with *Okyeame* Teacher Darko of Late, September 2002.

⁶ For details of the blackening ceremony, see Kyerematen (1964: 15-21); Sarpong (1971: 36-59); and Labi (1993: 371-376). Gilbert gives specific details on the blackening process in Akropong in Gilbert (1989: 59-90).

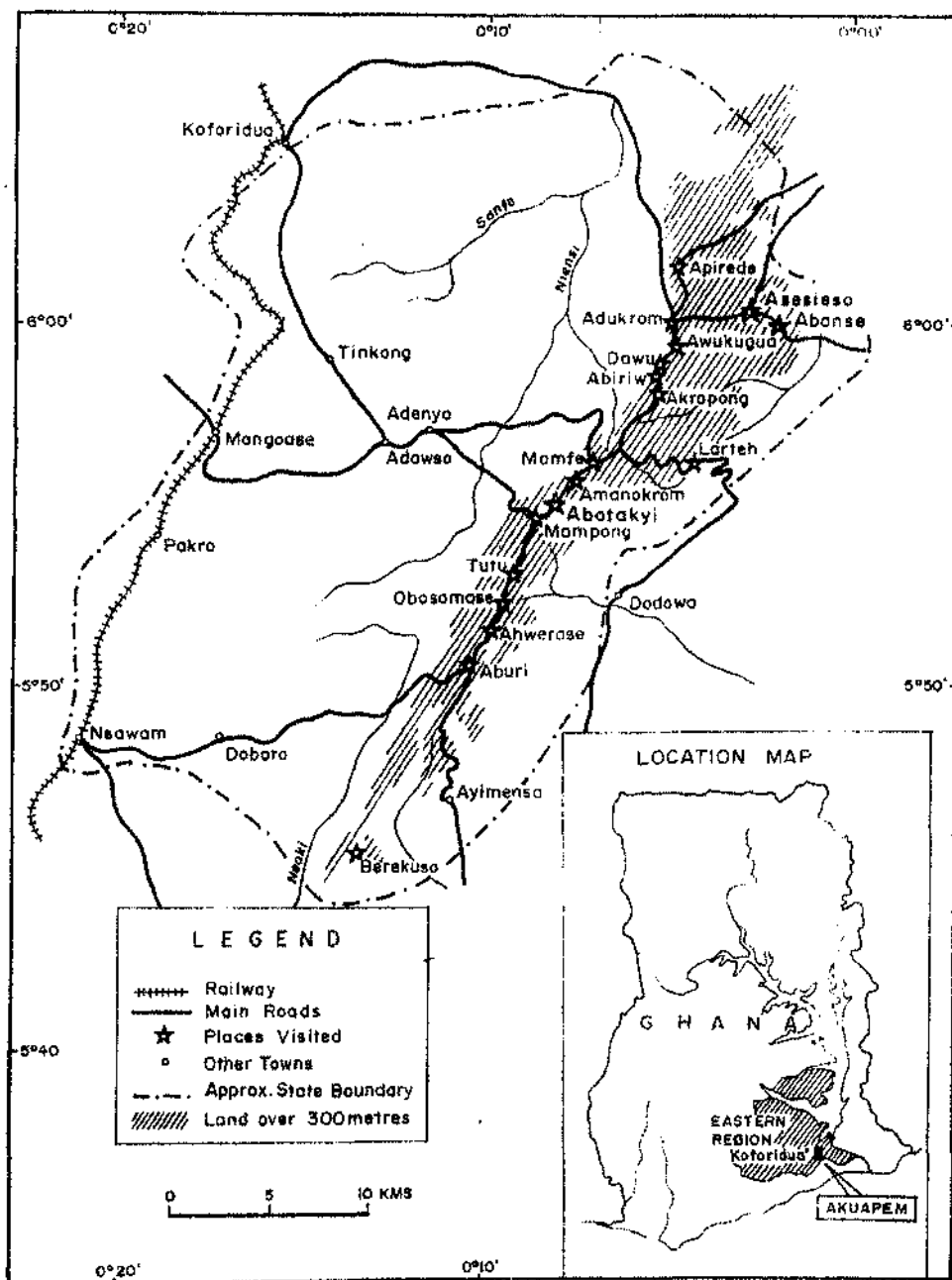
⁷ Interview with *Okyeame* Teacher Darko, Late, 2002.

⁸ This is a forty-two day cycle of computing the Akan calendar year. Nine cycles complete a year. In Akuapem, this cycle fell on Wednesday called *Awukudae* and Sunday called *Akwasidae*. This *Akwasidae* celebration was changed in the mid-nineteenth century to *Awukudae* because of an agreement between the *Okuapehene* and the Christian missionaries to allow Christians to worship on Sundays. Today *Akwasidae* is now celebrated again in addition to *Awukudae*.

⁹ *Asona* is one of the seven Akan matrilineal exogamous clans. Every Akan belongs to one. Clan members consider themselves as blood relations and therefore do not marry. The Akyem royals who came to rule at Akropong are from the *Asona* clan.

¹⁰ Herbert M. Cole's article, "The Art of Festival in Ghana," discusses the *Odwira* festival in detail as well. He says that many festivals in Ghana are total works of art. Cole translates the entire festival into a schematic diagram of the energy flow during the five-day celebration (Cole 1975: 12-15).

MAP 1 AKUAPEM TRADITIONAL AREA



SOURCE Field Sheets 14 & 18, 1:250000 series, and Fieldwork

Sam-Ash 11/88

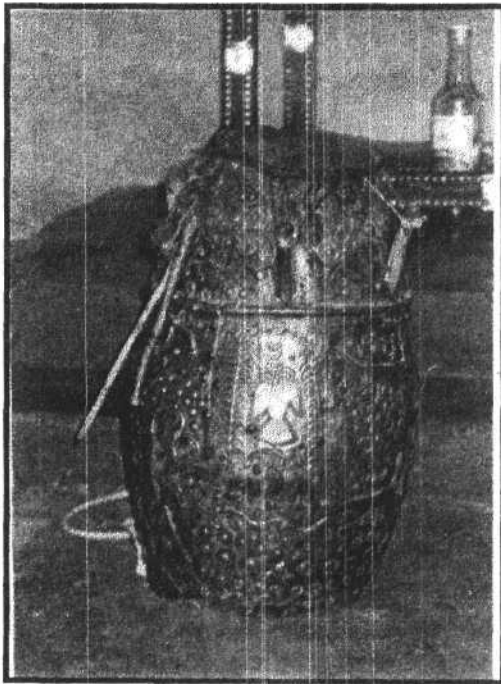


Fig 1 Aburukuwa drum captured from the Asante during the Akatamanso war in 1826. Photograph taken during the 2002 Akropong Odwira festival.

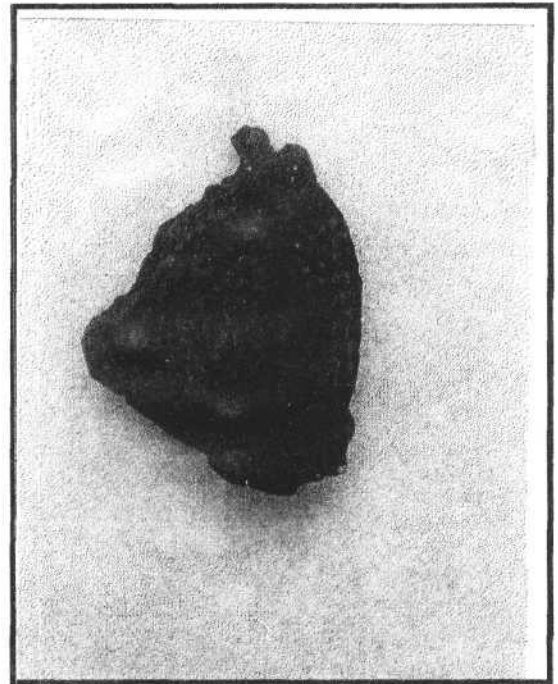


Fig. 2. Funerary terra cotta from Dawu, about sixteenth century. Photograph taken from Ghana National Museum, 1989.

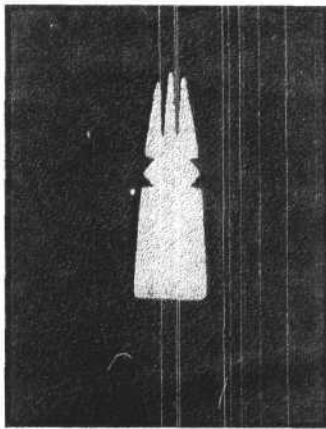


Fig. 3. Decorated ivory comb with circle and dot design, about sixteenth century. Photograph taken from Ghana National Museum, Accra, 1989.



Fig 4. Late-Kubease ancestral stone seats in the Plaza. Photograph taken in 1989.

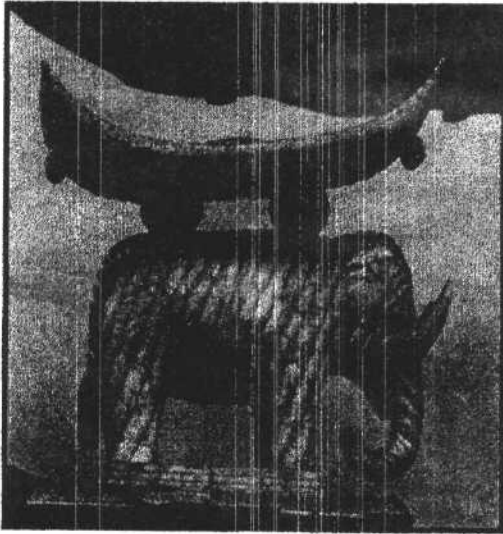


Fig. 5. Sikagua, golden stool, of Akuapem. Photographed 1989 at the Odwira festival, Akropong.

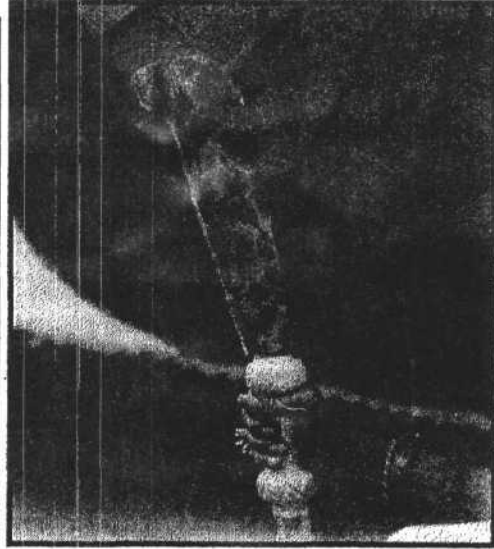


Fig. 6. A sword encased in leopard skin. Photographed from Akropong during the 1989



Fig. 7. Asempa ye tia, truth is brief, linguist staff. Photograph taken during the 1989 Odwira festival, Akropong.



Fig. 8. ɔmaa ɔmee, meaning the queenmother feeds her people adequately. Akropong Akuapem, 1080



Fig. 9. Ntakrakyew, feather hat of Okuapehene of Akuapem. Photograph taken in 1989 during the Odwira



Fig. 10. Gold leaf sandals belonging to a chief in Akuapem. Photographed from Akropong, 1989.



Fig. 11. Linguist staffs of Late-Ahenease chief. Photographed in 2002 during Late Odwira durbar.



Fig. 12 Sword bearers of Late-Ahenease chief seated in front of him during the Late Odwira durbar



Fig 13 Adonnua (white) stools of past Okuapenhene.



Fig. 14. The late Osofo Agyekum, a priest of Late Akonnedi Shrine. Photographed in 1989, Late Kubease.

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