



People of African Heritage

Fathers and Sons Program

Facilitator Script

(Read the text in the boxes as you go through the PowerPoint slides)

In today's session you will learn about one group of people from Africa: the Akan people of Ghana *and* one of their cultural practices of making Adinkra cloth. We are going to explore the meaning of some of the Adinkra symbols and show you how the Ghanaian people used them in making Adinkra cloth. Using paints and construction paper, you will have the opportunity to make your very own Adinkra cloth.

Each family will create their own special cloth to represent what they mean to each other. We are going to take most of today's session to do this, so be prepared to have some fun!

Adinkra Cloth



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- Its origin is traced to the Asante people of Ghana

Adinkra is one of the hand-printed and hand-embroidered cloths in Africa. Its origin is traced to the Asante (ASH-AHNTI) people of Ghana.¹

The origin of the Adinkra cloth is also traced to the Gyaman (GUY-AY-MAHN) people of the Ivory Coast.¹ However, its creation and use have come to be more associated with the Asante (ASH-AHNTI) people than any other group of people.¹

This picture represents an example of Adinkra cloth.

Continent of Africa



Looking at your map of Africa, locate Ghana and the Ivory Coast.

What part of Africa are these two countries in?

Hint: Not East!

Before we go any further let's get a picture in our minds of where Ghana and the Ivory Coast are located. I am passing out a copy of a map of Africa. On the map tell me what part of Africa these two countries are located in.

Answer: WEST AFRICA

We can also understand that because these two countries are located in the same area, that their cultures are VERY SIMILAR.

Cultures are things that make people unique within a certain group. For instance, HIP HOP is a culture specific to particular African American generations. Policemen and women are considered a part of the same culture, so are people in the church.

Let's talk about some things that make up culture. Can anyone tell me what they think makes up a culture?

Answer: Things such as clothing, music, and food make up a culture. But one of the most important things that is a part of culture is LANGUAGE. It is how people communicate with each other. Language allows me to speak to you and allows you to understand what I trying to say to you.

People from both of these countries, for example, speak to each other in a unique way—through symbols! They also share a common language such as French and Twi.

So what we will learn today is another unique way the people in these West African countries communicate, by using ADINKRA (AH-DINK-KRAH) symbols.

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Africa

Does anyone know
any other
countries in
Africa?



Does anyone know any other countries in Africa?

Many Uses of Adinkra

In Clothing:

- Weddings
- Naming Ceremonies
- Initiation Rites



Around the 19th century, the Asante people created this unique art of Adinkra printing.¹

In those days, Adinkra cloths were made and used exclusively by royalty and spiritual leaders for very important sacred ceremonies and rituals.¹

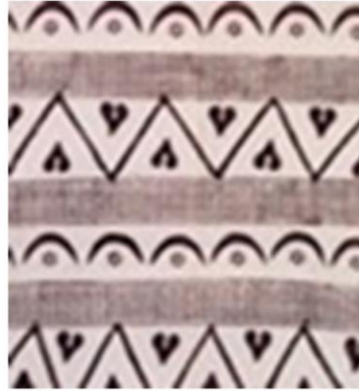
Today, Adinkra cloths are used for a wide range of social activities. In addition to its sacred usage, it is also used to make clothing for special occasions such as weddings, naming ceremonies, and initiation rites.¹

Love and Affection

MAH-KO-MAH MOO TOH-FAY

To communicate without words using symbols in cloth

- Symbol of **LOVE** and **AFFECTION**
- From the expression:
M'akoma mu tofe
- Literal translation:
My sweetheart



The symbol printed onto fabrics may convey different kinds of messages. Colors, shapes of symbols, and orientation of symbols on the fabric convey different important messages.

For instance the combination of Adinkra symbols here symbolizes LOVE and AFFECTION.² So this may be something you would give to someone you want to express love and affection to (like your family).

Remember, this is a Ghanaian language, but all you need to focus on is the LITERAL translation of the word.

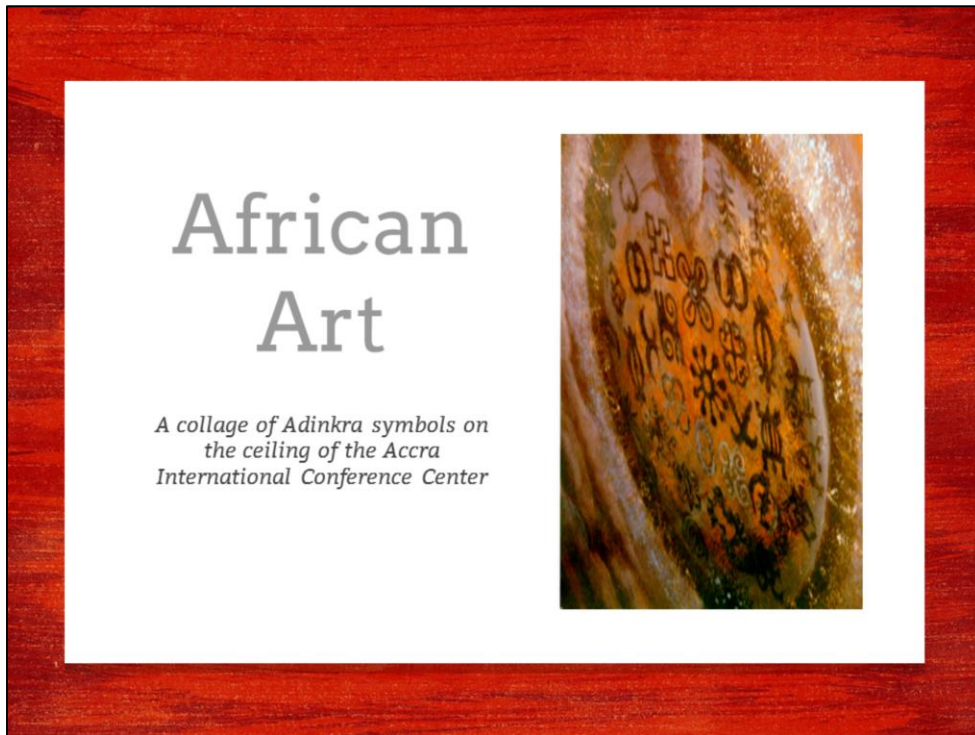
Rainbow or Kontonkrowi

cone-tone-CROW-wee

- From an African proverb (or wise saying or story)
- Literal translation:
The rainbow encircles all nations.
- This symbol is used politically to show the nature of the powers of the king in Akan (Ghanaian) society.



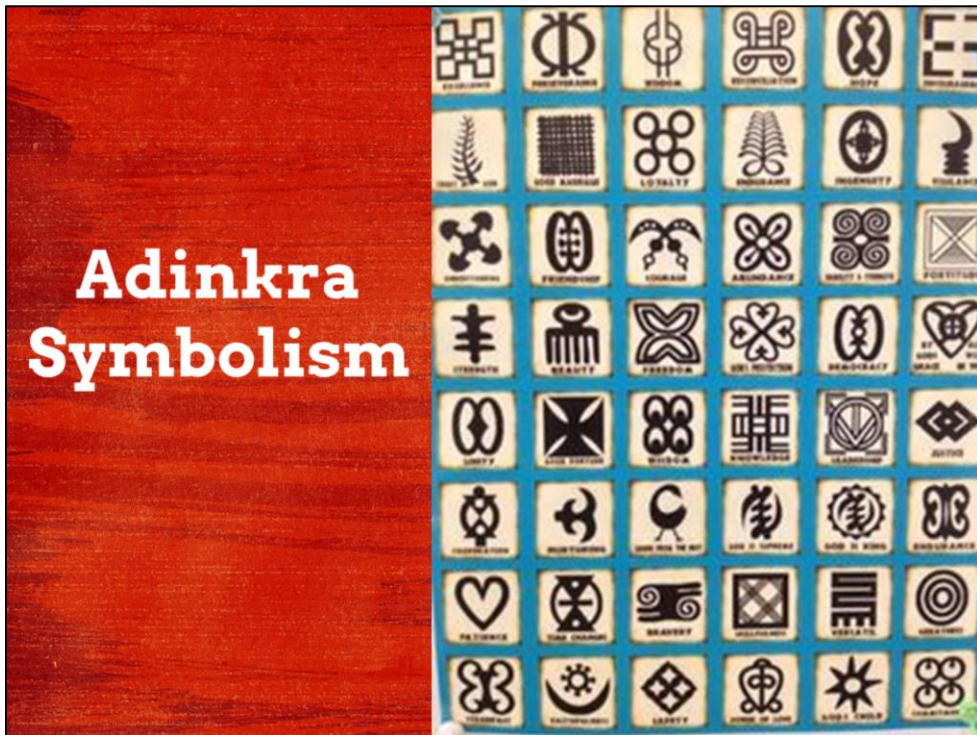
Look carefully and you can see Adinkra symbols here too! These combinations of symbols along with the color GOLD indicate royalty and politics.²



Designers use Adinkra symbols to create a wide range of things like jewelry, book covers, and clothing.² For example, we have used Adinkra symbols to name two Father-Son groups and made t-shirts from those symbols.

Another thing that makes cultures unique is the ART they create. This is picture of a ceiling in a conference center located in South Africa.² If you can see the symbols, imagine! Each symbols has it's own meaning.

As a result of learning about some of the Adinkra symbols and their meanings, you will choose a symbol and design a t-shirt for your father-son group as well.



In this section we are going to talk about the symbolism in this culture.

Gye Nyame

(gee-NAH-may)

- Symbol of the **OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD**
- Proverb: "God is a **Great and All-Knowing Being**. You are great as a people because His Spirit shines through YOU."



This symbol is one representation of GOD in the AKAN (AH-KAHN) culture. It represents what is GREAT!

Sankofa

(san-KOH-fah)

- **Sankofa** - Go back to get it
- Symbol of the wisdom in **LEARNING FROM THE PAST** in building for the future
- Proverb: "It is not taboo to go back and retrieve what you forget."



SAN-KOH-FAH represents learning. One should learn about their past to understand the future.

This symbol is used widely to represent African American people in this country "looking back" to their past to understand who they are today.

The great contributions that Africans have made to this world are limitless!

Odo Nyera Fie Kwan

(oh-doh-nee-AIR-rah fee qwahn)

- **Odo Nyera Fie Kwan** - love does not get lost on its way home
- Symbol of **LOVE, DEVOTION, and FAITHFULNESS**
- Proverb: "Love lights its own path; it never gets lost on its way home."



This symbol is used to convey the strength involved in growing and maturing in this world.

We have to understand that our experiences are unique ones and that if you "train a child in the way that he should go...he will not depart from it."²

Dweni Ni Mmen

(do-wen-nee-NEE-men)

- **Dweni Ni Mmen** - love does not get lost on its way home
- Symbol of **STRENGTH** (of mind, body, and soul) and **HUMILITY**
- Proverb: "The ram may bully, not with its horns, but with his heart."



This symbol is most appropriate to convey messages of strength in a person.²

It shows that we all have something to learn and that love is sometimes called "tough love". But we must honor the lessons we learn from all of our elders, children and parents alike.

Think about your strengths



Recognize your contributions to society

Learn about your culture



Be Proud of You!

The reason we can value Adinkra symbolism in our culture is because our ancestors are from Africa. Ancestors are people who lived many, many years before us. Our ancestors represent a part of our family that is no longer with us. They represent where we originally came from. As a result of our African ancestry, we can add some of that rich African history and meaning to our lives, even today.

Just as the American Flag represents the United States as a country and its people, Adinkra is one way to represent what is African, particularly among the Akan people of Ghana and the Ivory Coast.

So be proud and know that you are of African ancestry and that part of your culture is rooted in the rich soil of Africa. Remember, the Akan people represent only one culture in Africa. There are thousands more cultures from Africa to learn about. We've only just begun to appreciate our greatness!



(END OF PRESENTATION)