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**A CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF THE HISTORY, FUNCTION AND  
LITERARY RELEVANCE OF GHANAIAN WAX PRINTS**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

All praises to the Creator Almighty for my life, my strength and the insight to produce this project. To my family – Thank you for supporting me in this endeavour. To Lanita Morris especially, my liver – Thanks for always being there.

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## **PREFACE**

Before entering into any discussion concerning wax prints and the proverbs embedded in these prints, it is necessary to elaborate briefly on the theory behind such a discussion. Before beginning, I must emphasize the fact that the prints discussed within this document speak for themselves, as they have spoken decades. The proverbs found within these designs do not necessarily belong in a bound text but in the context in which they were found – embedded in the wax prints but even more deeply embedded in the lives of Ghanaians. I am taking these proverbs out into context for the purpose of this academic discussion and must stress the importance of viewing the designs and proverbs with their original context. I am humbly attempting to elaborate on these proverbs as a student of literature and as a resident of Ghana for the past three months. It is my hope that in this discussion and in the translation of these proverbs from Fante to English that any semantic distortions remain insignificant. To reiterate this point, I maintain that any mutilation of these precious gems of wisdom by the English language is purely unintentional.



## **ABSTRACT**

This discussion will identify proverbs which are embedded in the designs of Ghanaian wax prints. It will analyze the function of textiles in the Ghanaian society and discuss how the textiles are used as communication. In addition, this discussion will explore the literary relevance of the proverbs embedded in the wax prints. Lastly, this paper will provide a visual discussion of selected wax prints.

## INTRODUCTION

“Every shut eye ain’t sleep.” As I began this independent study project, I was reminded of these exact words, the words I had heard as a child. This was wisdom from my elders. Beginning the initial thought for this project, I was preoccupied with coming to Ghana to find “the truth.” I wanted to know the history of African people- my people, exactly as it happened. I naively believed I could find my way to some remote village, meet the elders and sit down with my tape recorder to record their life stories. For the last two months, I desperately sought after that truth, but I only found what I knew as silence. Why was everyone acting like the slave trade did not occur. I could not understand the calmness. Although I cannot pinpoint the exact moment, I finally realized that even in silence there is sound. The proverb of my childhood reigns true. Just as “every shut eye ain’t sleep”, every closed mouth is not necessarily silent.

There can never be one way of recording history or preserving tradition. Just because information is not recorded in a book or orally told directly to a child does not mean that history or tradition is forgotten. Remembrance is different for every individual, varies from culture to culture. John Adande emphasizes the elusiveness of African culture and states that “...the African past is not an external thing” (Adande). He elaborates even further and draws attention to the “internal dimension” Within what Adande describes as an internal dimension lays reservoirs of traditional wisdom and history of a people. How surprising is it that a race who has endured over four hundred years of the most unthinkable mental and physical brutality should remember their past in such a way that it is not flashy or overt, not mounted on the museum wall or compartmentalized in any way. Possibly the elusiveness was a part of African culture before the arrival of the Europeans and the beginning of the slave trade. Perhaps it was a direct by-product of the slave trade. May be it is a tool of survival. There is no real way to know in either case, but is necessary to give respect to this elusiveness, not ever taking it for granted or nonchalantly labelling it as silence. The tradition and wisdom previously described by Adande is infused into the lives of every Ghanaian. The tradition and wisdom can be found in the adinkra symbols, the symbolism of gold weights and even in kente cloth. In addition, this tradition, wisdom and history can be found where least expected – the wax prints. This discussion of Ghanaian wax prints will focus primarily on proverbs embedded in the names of wax prints, and their function in the Ghanaian society. In addition, this discussion will explore the use of proverbs and names attached to wax prints as a

form of communication. Lastly, this discussion will identify the titles of wax prints taken from the Cape Coast area.



## METHODOLOGY

Data for this research was primarily gathered through the use of interview and observation. As a starting point, I contacted Isaac Bray of UAC Textile Ltd. in Cape Coast. From him, I received a basic overview and brief history of wax prints in Ghana as well as fifty-seven samples in photographs of wax prints now in circulation. I decided to use the photographs of those samples in conjunction with interview, but I also used these samples to familiarize myself with some of the names and proverbs of wax prints.

I chose the interviewees from the following groups:

- Traders of wax prints located in Kotokuraba Market, the central market of Cape Coast.
- Others traders of wax prints outside of Kotokuraba Market
- Random Ghanaians residing in the Cape Coast area (host family members, neighbours, and friends).
- Seamstresses and tailors who handle wax prints.

Interviews with wax print traders in Kotokuraba Market as well as wax print traders in Cape Coast often took the form of extended interview or discussion. I used their merchandise as samples and asked for the names which were attached to their designs. After each explanation, I took a photograph of the discussed design. Interview of random Ghanaian residents followed a somewhat different format. Quickly, I discovered that these wax prints were everywhere. If I were walking to the taxi rank or through the streets of OLA (my home-stay neighbourhood) and saw someone wearing a particular print, I would approach them inquiring of the cloth they were wearing. I would use the same questions that were used during interviews with the wax print traders, but I would try to personalize the interview. I would ask questions which pertained to their personal attitude towards wax prints and their knowledge of wax prints in Ghana. When interviewing seamstresses and tailors, the same basic format and questioning was used. Often, I would ask questions that were specific to their interaction with customers. For instance, I would ask the tailors and seamstresses if they knew why customers chose specific designs over others. The following is a list of basic questions that were used with all interviewees. At times, the order of the questions would change just as questions would be added or deleted as I gained additional knowledge of the subject.

1. Does this design have meaning?
2. What is the meaning of this design?
3. Is there a proverb attached to the name?
4. What is this meaning translated into English?
5. Can you elaborate more on this meaning?
6. Does the design of the print have anything to do with its meaning?
7. Are these designs used to convey certain messages?
8. To your knowledge, did your ancestors use certain cloth to communicate certain messages?
9. To whom might these messages be sent?
10. How did you learn the meanings of these designs?
11. How do you choose a print-by meaning or design?
12. Where or on what occasions are wax prints worn?
13. Suppose you see a person wearing a particular print, what immediately comes to mind?
14. Do you feel you have ever been a receiver of a message sent through cloth design?
15. To your knowledge, where did the meanings of cloth design originate?

It is important to note that often when asking the questions above, I would paraphrase or ask the question in a way it could be understood by the interviewee. During interviews with merchants of Kotokuraba Market, I made use of a translator. The translator was helpful because the names attached to the designs of wax prints were in Fante, and at times, the interviewees felt these names could not possibly be translated into English. Before obtaining the translator, I found that the interviewees refused to identify the names of the designs because I could not speak Fante. The use of the translator made the interview more comfortable for me as well as the interviewees.

Including all of the interviews, I compiled the names of designs of approximately fifty wax prints. I decided to analyze each design name from a literary perspective paying close attention to the symbolism, allusion and repetition of metaphor. I analyzed each design name as it related to the visual design of the print. As importantly, I analyzed the use of textiles as a form of communication. Lastly, the data was analyzed as it related to the perception of literature. Before beginning fieldwork, I took the opportunity to research the background of textiles as communication in Ghana. I also researched the theory of proverbs and oral tradition Ghana. This background reading proved to be extremely helpful in formulating questions and guided me throughout the analysis of the data.

One important part of the investigation was cross-checking. During the preliminary research, I was informed by Isaac Bray that sometimes each design had more than one name as some did not have names at all. In addition, I learned that interpretation of the design may vary depending on language as well as the geographic location. Often throughout the interview process, I discovered that I received in some instances two or more interpretations of certain designs. Therefore, I found it necessary to inquire about the design name although I already received one interpretation.

As fulfilling and enlightening as this research has been, there have been several limitations. Language was the most difficult obstacle to overcome. Because I am not fluent in Fante and especially since I have only lived in Ghana for three months, understanding the design names was often difficult. The design names and proverbs were eventually broken down so I could understand, but I was always left wondering, "Is that the real meaning?" Time was also a limitation. There are countless number of wax print designs in circulation and even more that are not manufactured anymore. For the purpose of this project, I chose to limit my investigation to fifty, but I would like to have research more. This research proved to be worth continuing in the future, increasing the number of designs and digging deeper into their function as communication and literary merit.

## **THE WAX PRINT: HISTORY AND FUNCTION**

The wax print was introduced to Ghana shortly after World War I. As explained by Isaac Bray manager of UAC Textiles Limited, Ghanaian soldiers who fought for the Dutch and their allies brought wax prints home to Ghana. To this day, a vast majority of wax prints are imported from Holland although substantial amounts are locally manufactured. (Bray) Efua Appiawah, also known as “Queen of Cloth” and who is Queenmother of Kotokuraba Market in Cape Coast, adds more to the history of wax prints in Ghana. Queen Appiawah refers to a Ghanaian designer known as Mr. Enchil. During the 1930’s, Mr. Enchil created designs for wax prints, assigned names to the designs and sent the patterns to be manufactured abroad. In 1957, when Ghana gained independence, Mr. Enchil left Ghana leaving the patterns behind. (Appiawah) Mr. Bray also identified two main corporations which deal in African prints - GTP and ATP. GTP in particular does not categorize the designs by popular names but leaves the naming to the consumer. On the other hand, ATL assigns names to the designs before they are released for sale. The popularity of African prints in Ghana can be attributed to the platform of Ghana’s former leader Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah advocated what has been termed as “africanization” – the idea that Ghana should project a purely African image. (Bray) Part of africanization includes dressing in traditional Ghanaian attire which contains ancestral symbolism. Long after the reign of Kwame Nkrumah, the concept of africanization continues. There has been a sort of africanization of the Dutch print. Although a vast majority of the prints are designed and manufactured in Europe, the titles of these designs reflect the history and social values of Ghana. (Bray)

The African Wax Print is very much integrated into the life of the average Ghanaian. They are worn by men, women and children in casual attire but can also be worn during special occasions. However, one of the most popular uses of the African wax print is funeral attire. Life is sacred in Ghanaian culture and preparation for funerals is often quite elaborate. Choosing funeral attire for the family of the deceased is an important part of ceremony preparation. (Boafo) Within Ghana, the colours red and black signify death and mourning, however this often varies according to the age of the deceased and the circumstances of death. When a person dies at a very old age, after raising a family, their death is considered a “good death”. (Abasi) During the funeral ceremony of someone who has suffered a good death, black may be worn during the burial, but during the vigil or Thanksgiving service, white along with a darker colour such as black and blue can be worn. Traditionally, blue and white are colours of celebrations. A person who dies of

natural causes at a very old age is thought to become an ancestor, and the funeral is often a joyous occasion. In one instance, a woman in Kotokuraba was observed purchasing a cloth which was blue and white. She was asked to name the cloth. That particular cloth was entitled “Lord Have Mercy On Us” and she purchased it for the funeral of her mother. The circumstance of the mother’s death was not determined during that brief discussion although a great deal of insight can be drawn. Perhaps the mother died a good death and the colours of blue and white were selected to express feelings of celebration. On the other hand, perhaps that specific design was chosen to communicate the family’s grief and need for mercy during that time of mourning.

In another instance, George K. Mensah was observed wearing a shirt made out of blue and white fabric very similar to the design described above. Mensah was also asked of he knew the meaning of the name of the design he was wearing. The design was entitled “Thy Will Be Done” and according to Mensah, it was the funeral attire for his grandmother who died two years ago. He admitted that he did not know the exact reason why this design was used but that the entire family gathered to make the decision. Although George Mensah did not state directly the reasoning behind the selection of this design, nor did he elaborate on the circumstances of his grandmother’s death, much can be taken from this short interview. The blue and white combination colour of the design could possible suggest that the grandmother died a good death, while the name, “Thy Will Be Done” is taken from the Lord’s Prayer which is of the Judeo-Christian religious doctrine. A portion of the prayer reads:

“Our Father who art in Heaven  
Hallowed be thy name  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in heaven  
As it is on earth...”

“Thy will’ could refer to the will of a Supreme Being. Perhaps the death of Mensah’s grandmother is more understood as the will of God, and the wearing of this design is a way of rationalizing the death of a loved one. Similarly, the phrase “thy will” could refer to the grandmother, and the use of this particular print reflects the idea that the grandmother led a life that was pleasing in the sight of God. She was abiding by his will. Both situations describe the function of the wax print in the observance of death. Needless to say, there are additional social situations in which the African wax print is used. In Ghanaian culture, the colours blue, white, and gold are used to convey feelings of celebration. (Bray) For instance, during a baby naming

ceremony fabric of blue and white is used because it is seen as a time of joy. Symbolism through textiles is used in the formal setting, such as the enstooling of a chief, but can also be used in the family environment to commemorate the completion of school by a child (Wilson). Even more apparent is the daily use of wax prints as a fashion statement. It is interesting to note that whatever the use or occasion, wax prints hold the history and traditional of Ghana.

## WAX PRINTS AS COMMUNICATION

It appears quite difficult to separate a discussion of the function of wax prints as communication from the previous discussion of wax print occasions because during the aforementioned occasions some sort of communication takes place. More so in the traditional setting, the wearing of wax prints is seen as rhetoric or what Kwesi Yankah refers to as "...a channel for the silent projection of argument". (Yankah:1995:81) The argument Yankah refers to in traditional times often took place between two women who were part of a polygamous household and is used to express the domestic conflict that often surfaces due to rivalry between two co-wives. Yankah cites several examples in which co-wives communicate through the use of textiles. In one example, Yankah describes a situation in which one wife wears a cloth to convey the message, '*Wo ko aware a, bisa*' (Seek counsel before marriage) to the woman who is soon to be a new co-wife. The co-wife is advising the prospective wife to investigate the household she is about to enter. In another example, Yankah cites the cloth which holds the proverb. "*Ahwene pa nkasa*" (Precious Beads are silent) which can also be interpreted as "*empty barrels make the most noise*". Not only does this cloth communicate a message which stresses the importance of silence rather than "empty talk", but it also offers insight into the culture of Ghanaian women. Having aesthetic value, beads are commonly worn by women to uphold under garments during menstruation. It is significant to note that Akan women, specifically, place greater value upon beads that are solid and heavy, which make less noise.

Auntie Owoo of Kotokuraba Market also notes the use of cloth to convey messages during co-wife rivalry. She draws attention to the cloth entitled "The gossip will suffer" (refer to fig 11A). In a situation where one wife gossips about the other or what is termed "adding salt and pepper" to factual information, one co-wife would wear this cloth advising the other to stop. (Owoo) In addition, Aunties Owoo offers insight to a rather unique way in which prints are used to convey messages. During the interview, Auntie Owoo was wearing cloth that looked pieced together, much like a quilt. She was asked if the cloth she was wearing had a name and if she could explain its significance. In Ghanaian culture, wearing a variety of fabrics pieced together is a symbol of affluence as it shows the variety of cloth the person owns. Auntie Owoo compared this to the Biblical story of Joseph and his coat of many colours. According to Auntie Owoo, Joseph's parent presented him with the coat to show their love. Consequently, the gift made his brothers insanely jealous. She notes that this same type of jealousy may occur to day if a young

girl was presented with a piece of cloth that was patched together. Everyone would become jealous of her parents affection. (Owoo) In this situation, it is not only the cloth that communicates a message but also the way in which the clothes worn. This specific example illustrates the complexity of textile rhetoric. In addition, this example puts into context the importance of the person wearing the fabric, the model or performer. In this case, the textile is manipulated in such a way that a meaning separate from the individual meaning of each design is created.

Mrs. Hannah Dodoo, a seamstress of Cape Coast and owner of Handoo Designs offers another aspect of this phenomenon. According to Mrs. Dodoo, if something especially good has happened in her life, she may wear a print which features the adinkra symbol “*Gye Nyame*” which translates into “Except God”. Adinkra is an art form which is believed to have originated in the Ivory Coast but has been a part of Ghanaian culture for centuries. The “*Gye Nyame*” symbol denotes the omnipotence of the Supreme Being.

Mrs. Dodoo would wear this cloth to express that it is only because of God that good things were occurring in her life. In addition, Mrs. Dodoo explains that in a situation in which good things were occurring in her life and peers insisted on gossiping about her, she would wear a print that featured the “*Gye Nyame*” symbol along with a design which means “think about yourself” (refer to fig 4B). When combined this message roughly becomes “It is only because of God that good things are happening in my life so think about yourself” (Dodoo).

The two examples presented by Aunt Owoo and Hannah Dodoo demonstrate the role of the person wearing the wax print. It highlights the control the speaker has over the wax prints as a language. Furthermore, these two examples illustrate specifically how wax prints are premeditatedly, used to convey certain messages. It is important to note that wax prints are not always worn to communicate messages; they are also worn strictly as fashion statements. Isaac Bray contends that one should be mindful of the meaning of the design he or she chooses to wear (Bray). Someone could cause offence by wearing a relatively provocative design. For instance, if a man or woman wore the design entitled “*change your life*” (refer to Fig 11b, right) a number of times to the home of a friend or colleague, if they know the language of wax prints, may feel the wearer of the design is advising them to change the way they are living. This same sense of caution can also be applied to the colour of the fabric. Francis Davidson, a proprietor of a Kingsway Textile shop in Cape Coast explains that if someone wears black or red, Ghanaian colours of mourning, to a home where there is a new born child, offence will definitely be taken (Davidson). Whether the cloth is worn for personal reasons, to give thanks to God, or during times



of bereavement, communication through the use of textiles proves to be remarkably intricate. On a larger scale, the wax print can be viewed as a record of history and tradition. However, before discussing this aspect, it is necessary to analyse the design names as proverbs.

## LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND THE PROVERB

Language can be described as an arbitrary set of agreed upon symbols used for communication. Taking this definition into consideration, it can be said that language can appear in a variety of forms. Because what is known as literature is based on language and the manipulation of that language to convey a particular thought or idea, it can be said that literature can be found in a variety of forms. Presently, a large portion of what is considered literature takes the form of writing – literature which is written with symbols called letters. These letters are no different from the illustrative Egyptian hieroglyphics or hand gestures used by the deaf. Because of this distinct similarity, it is important to broaden the scope of what is considered literature.

Is it possible for literature to be simultaneously oral and visual? One may argue that written literature becomes oral one it is spoken and oral literature becomes written literature once it is formulated into some sort of written symbolism. Perhaps all of this is true, but it is necessary to continue with this discussion. Ruth Finnegan in Oral Literature In Africa, maintains that oral literature is “...dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion...” (Finnegan: 1967:2) If this definition is applied to the literature embedded in wax prints, which as of yet has not be defined as neither oral nor visual, the performer can be compared to the person wearing the wax print. In this case, the literature of the wax print could be considered oral because it is dependent on the person wearing the fabric to formulate the meaning of the design. However, previously in this discussion it was said that the designs and the proverbs embedded with the designs speaks for themselves. Suddenly, there is a confusion. How can the designs of wax prints, the names and proverbs embedded within, be considered literature if on some level it can be treated as visual art? In effort to find a solution to the problem at hand, one must analyse the proverb and its place in the Ghanaian society.

John Simpson describes the proverb as a traditional saying which offers advice or presents a moral. While this definition may be accurate, the proverb takes on another identity in the context of the Akan society. The Akan proverb is referred to as the “Ebe” and “...embraces moral embedded extended metaphors, illustrative anecdotes, and parables...” (Yankah: 1989:88). In comparison to Simpson’s explanation, this definition seems much more inclusive. As previously stated, the proverb by definition offers a moral lesson, therefore it can be concluded that the didactic nature of the proverb in which ever context, oral or visual, acts a teaching tool for Ghanaian history and culture. Whether the lesions concerns courtship and marriage, as

exemplified in the proverb, “*wo ko aware a, bisa*” which translates to “Inquire before marriage” (refer to Fig. 10A) or finance with the symbol of the “money bird” (refer to Fig. 19A0), lessons of life are founding all proverbs.

Language has been said to convey a sense of what is sacred (Hooks: 1993:122). It establishes terms for order and verifies what one considers as priority in their personal world view. The language of wax prints does the very same. Within these designs are geographical and historical references, illustrations which give examples of social norms of Ghana. In addition, these proverbs embedded in these designs exhibit significance of spirituality in Ghana. The symbolism of these wax prints essentially shows the history of an entire people. The following interpretation will feature select proverbs embedded in the wax prints.

### ***Identification***

❖ Figure 1A

*House Marbles* – Out of these marbles a building can be built. If you do not have the marbles you cannot build the house. (Hammond)

❖ Figure 2A

*When life is bad it's like a saw is cutting you.* (Hammond)

❖ Figure 3A

*Death's staircase, everyone will climb.* (Bray)

❖ Figure 4A

*Not all peppers ripe at the same time.* (Hammond)

❖ Figure 5A

*If mouth and mouth come together then there is no confusion.* (Laryea)

❖ Figure 6A

*If you drop a stone into the well, the water will ripple.* (Bray)

❖ Figure 7A

*If I sleep, I don't sleep.* (Appiawah)

❖ Figure 8A

*Blocks - If you don't have money to buy blocks, you cannot build the house.*  
(Appiawah)

- ❖ Figure 9A  
*Stool – If you want to talk about me take a stool and sit down. (Hammond)*
- ❖ Figure 10A  
*Seek counsel before marriage. (Hammond)*
- ❖ Figure 11A  
*The gossip will suffer. (Appiawah)*
- ❖ Figure 12A  
*A mother knows what her child will eat. (Appiawaa)*
- ❖ Figure 13A  
*When an insect bites you it can be from your own cloth. (Bray)*
- ❖ Figure 14A  
*When your eyes are wild there cannot be fire. (Bray)*
- ❖ Figure 15A  
*Some years are good. (Bray)*
- ❖ Figure 16A  
*If one tree stands alone in a storm, it will fall. (Bray)*
- ❖ Figure 17A  
*Everyone has a star. (Laryea)*
- ❖ Figure 18A  
*When you are living good you forget about the past. (Owoo)*
  
- ❖ Figure 19A  
*Money flies like a bird. (Bray)*
- ❖ Figure 20A  
*All human beings have a place to go. (Yorke)*
- ❖ Figure 1B  
*Good Woman. (Hammond)*
- ❖ Figure 2B  
*Good Husband. (Appiawah)*
- ❖ Figure 3B  
*Good Mat. (Yorke)*

- ❖ Figure 4B  
*Think about yourself.* (Dodoo)
- ❖ Figure 5B  
*Half stone, half metal – You are such a strong person.* (Owoo)
- ❖ Figure 6B  
*Sugar Cane Bone.* (Yorke)
- ❖ Figure 7B  
*A bunch of Bananas.* (Yorke)
- ❖ Figure 8B  
*Guinea fowl.* (Bray)
- ❖ Figure 9B  
*Rice.* (Laryea)
- ❖ Figure 10B  
*Big fish of the sea.* (Appiawah)
- ❖ Figure 11B  
*Combination* (left) (Owoo), *leaves of yam* (center) (Bray). *Change your life* (right) (Appiawah)
- 1. Figure 12B  
*The one I do the thinking will is dead.* (Hammond)
- ❖ Figure 13B  
*Tortoise back.* (Bray)
- ❖ Figure 14B  
*Good Shepherd.* (Laryea)
- ❖ Figure 15B  
*The trumpet will sound.* (Appiawah)
- ❖ Figure 16B  
*God will make sure everything is okay.* (Appiawah)
- ❖ Figure 17B  
*Lord Have Mercy.* (Anonymous)
- ❖ Figure 18B  
*Your praises are great.* (Appiawah)

❖ Figure 19B

*I will praise you.* (Appiawah)

❖ Figure 20B

*Akomfo war sword.* (Bray)

❖ Figure 1C

*Ama Serwaa.* (Appiawah)

❖ Figure 2C

*The bridge of Senche.* (Appiawah)

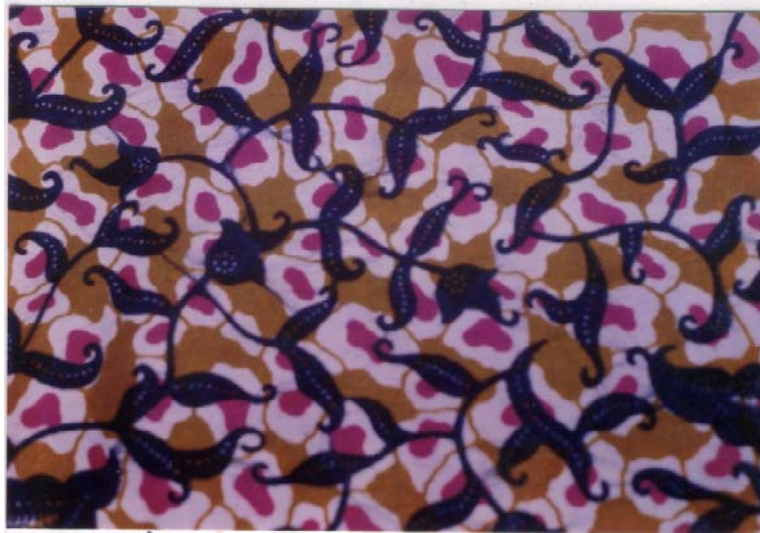
❖ Figure 3C

*City hotel.* (Laryea)

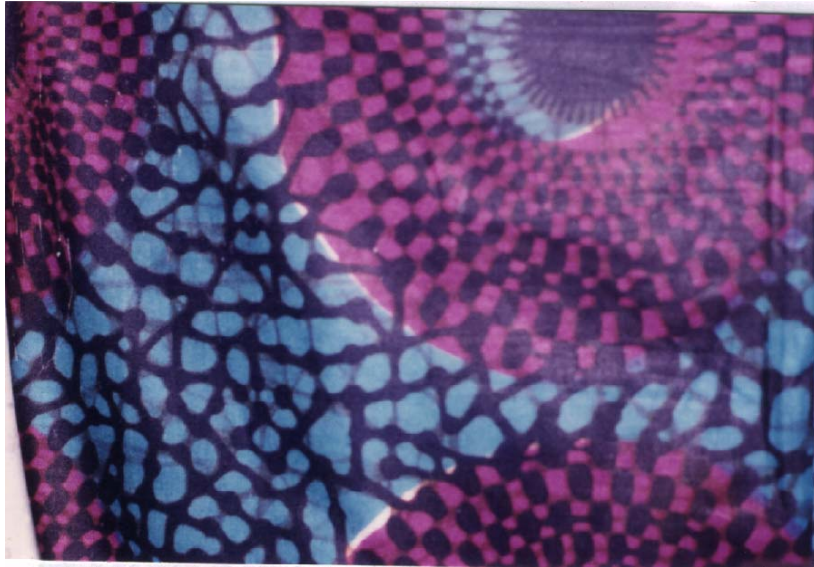
❖ Figure 4C

*ABC.* (Laryea)

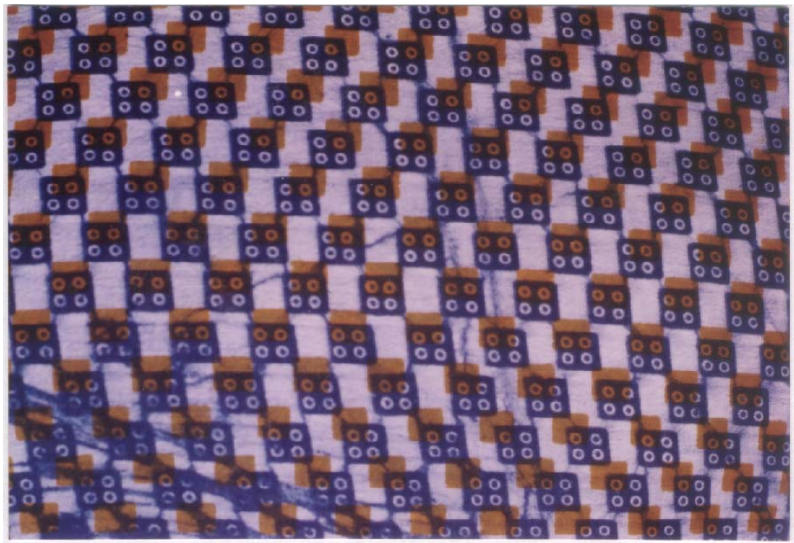


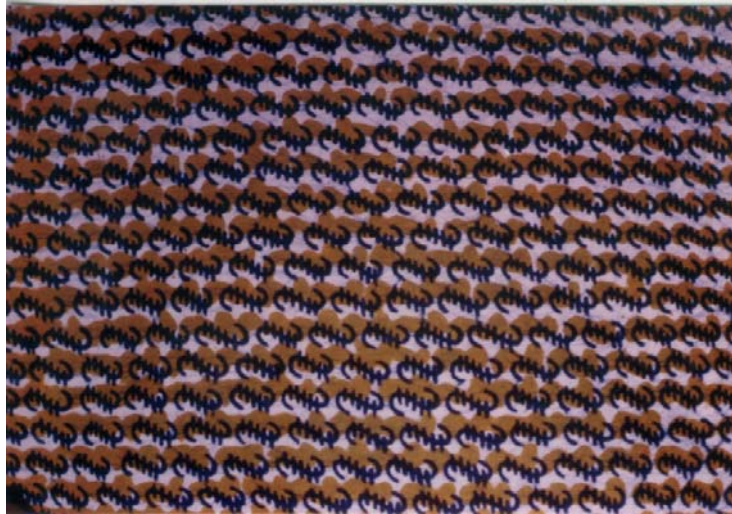




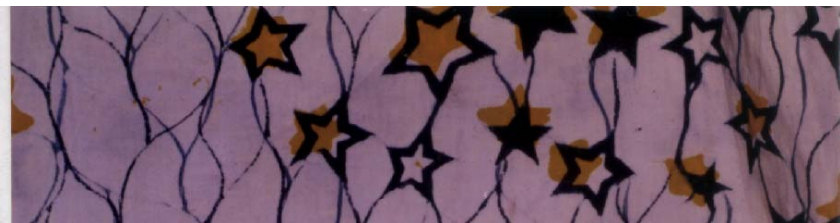
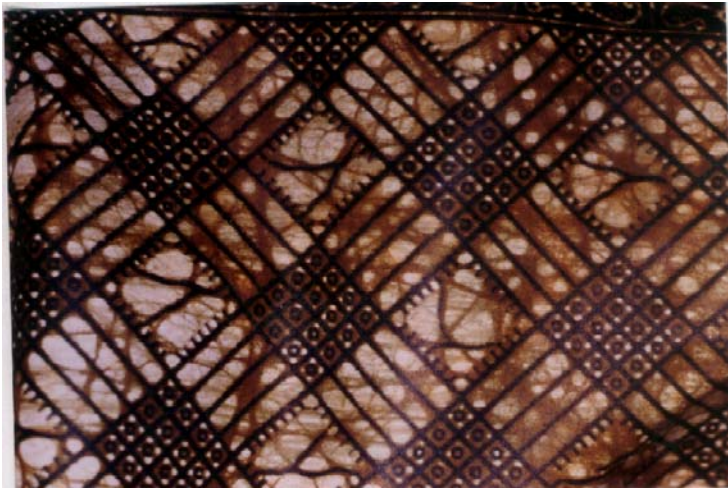






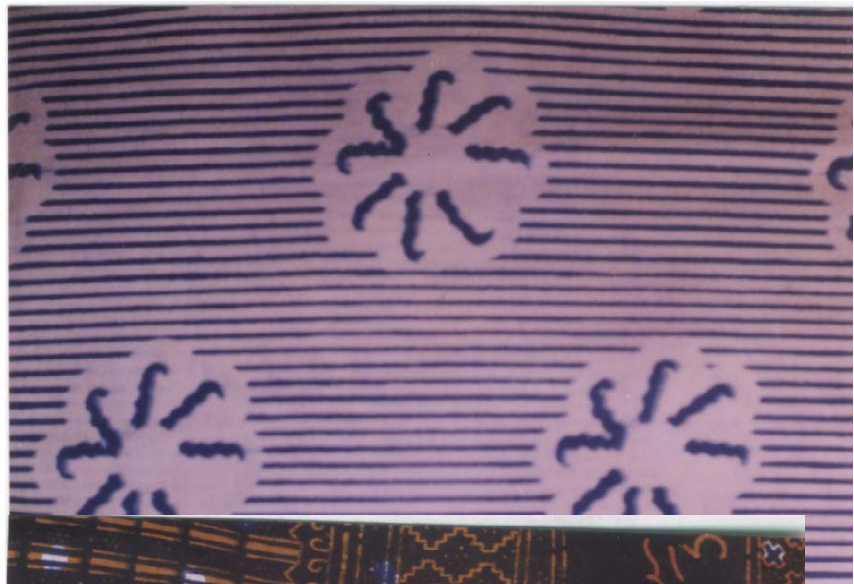


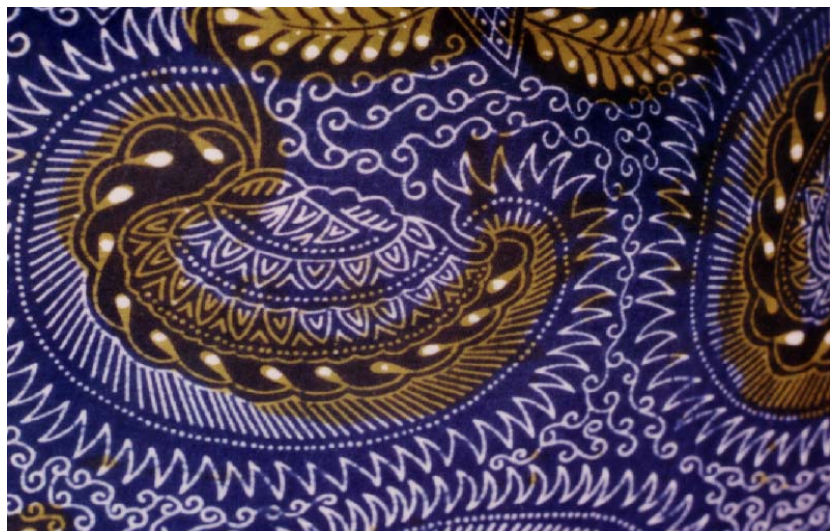
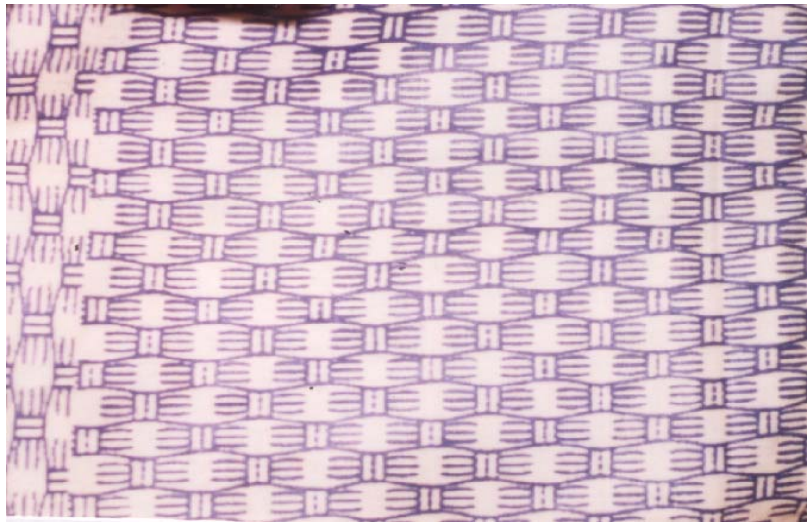












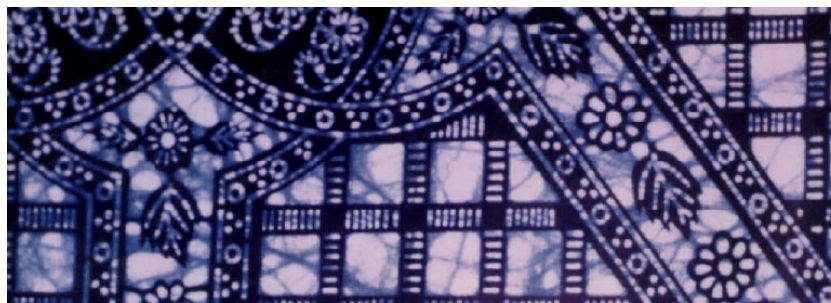
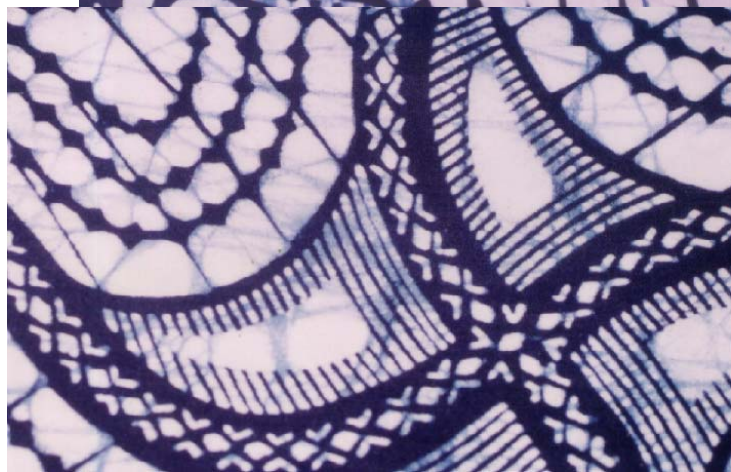
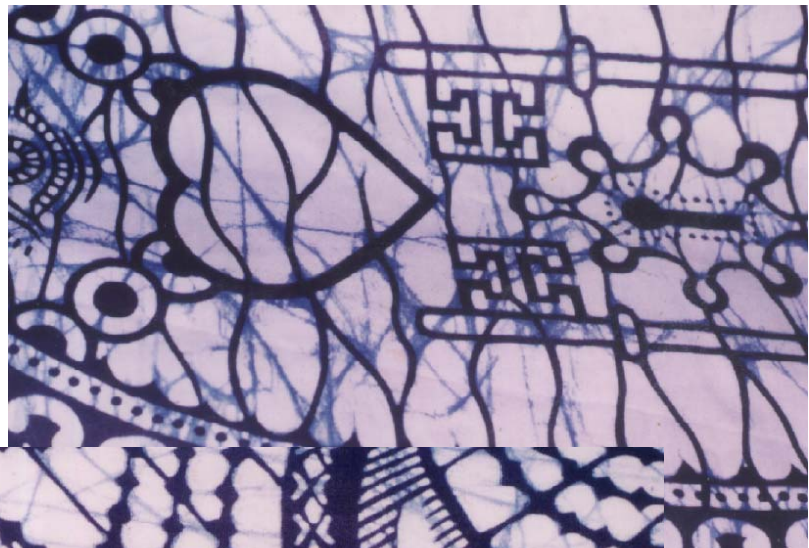
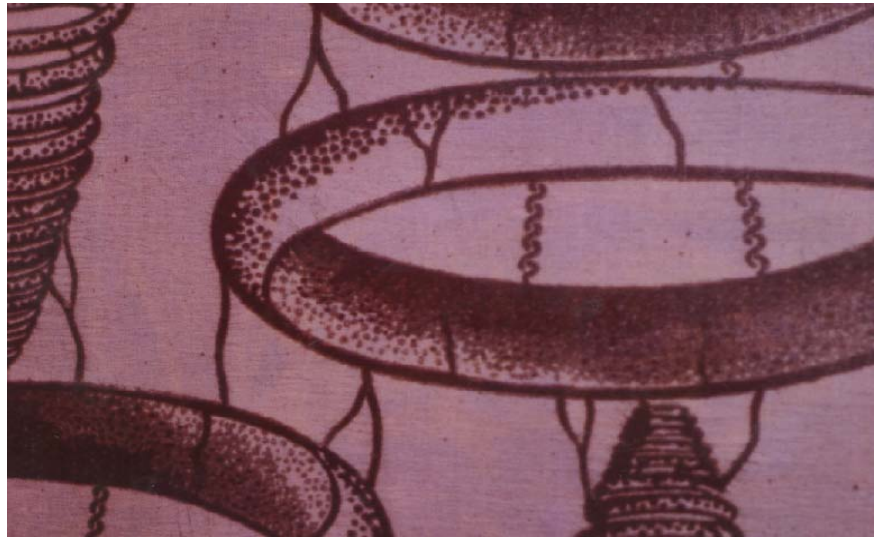




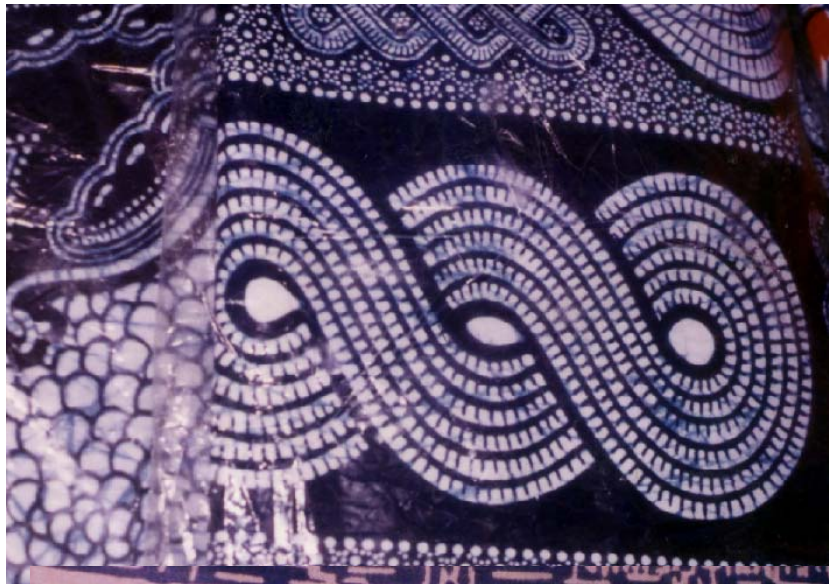


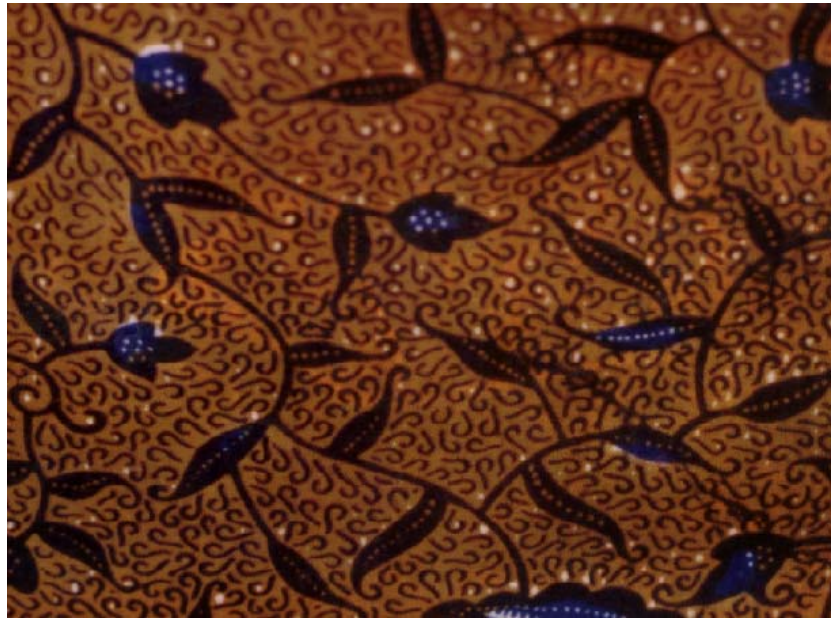














## CONCLUSION

As this discussion proves, there is more to Ghanaian wax prints than meets the eye. Wax prints not only operate as fashion statements, but carry the history and tradition of Ghana. The proverbs embedded in the designs offer insight into the social norms and world view of those living in the Ghanaian society. This discussion has also proved that the proverbs embedded in these designs do have literary merit as they contain symbolism, metaphor, as well as historical and geographic allusion. This discussion can be considered a starting point for further research into the origin of the proverbs assigned to the designs. In its intricacy, the language of Ghanaian wax prints shows that every culture has its own unique way of recording history. To an outsider, this system may seem elusive, but that elusiveness must be given respect. Beginning this research, I considered this elusiveness to be silence, but through my findings, I now know it as symphony of history and tradition.

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