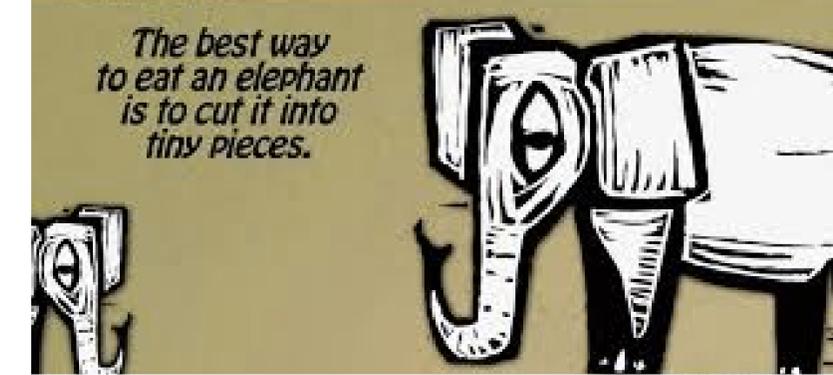




THE BITTER AND THE SWEET: EVERYDAY WISDOM THROUGH CULTURAL ART

BY WILL CRAWFORD AND TINA FAKHRID-DEEN

Overview



- "Intangible" Culture
 - Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.
 - While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.
 - The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next.

- Oral Tradition
- Keepers of the Culture
- Adinkra Symbology and Proverbs
- Nature-based art practice and famous Togolese artists
- Communication of values and beliefs infused into fabric of society

ANANSI

« Anase », « Kwaku Ananse », or « Anacy »

- Akan folktale character, popular in West Africa and Caribbean.
- Anansi means "spider" and the tales of Anansi originate from the Ashanti in Ghana.
- Anansi is present in several novels, collections, series, video games.



Common Knowledge

"Common sense ain't common." African-American proverb

- "My grandmother often hammered home the importance of understanding all parts of a story before we ran away with it." - Prof. Raphael Chijioke Njoku
- Complex means of communication and transference of knowledge - "intangibles" - oral, proverbs, myths, epics/storytelling, drumming/songs, visual communication/pictographic systems, symbols, masquerading/performance, hair styles, clothing, cowrie shells
- Importance of family, elders, and community in passing down cultural knowledge
- To reach people, you must understand the people, their culture, and their needs; this has nothing to do with status --Prof. Adjai Paulin Oloukpona-Yinnon
- Wisdom is connected to memory, history and power.
- Wisdom is readily accessible to the hoi polloi and knowledge is everywhere if you are open, in tune, and able to see and understand it when it presents itself.

Oral Tradition

Ancient and Modern Day Griots

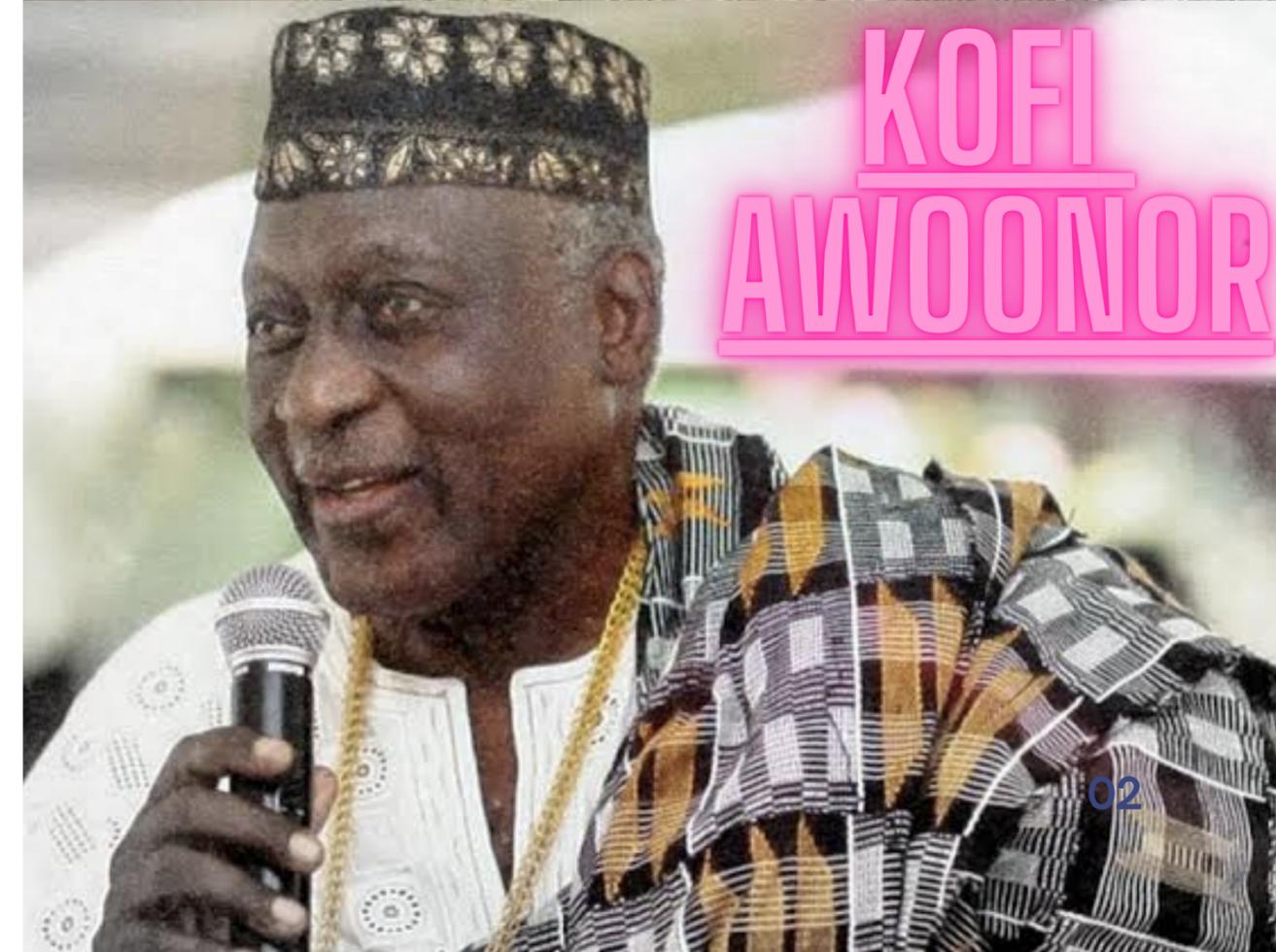
In many African societies, history, literature, and culture have been transmitted orally, through the spoken word. The oral tradition remains alive and meaningful for many Africans. Storytelling is a huge aspect of oral art and historically, the griot was the keeper of stories within the community.

There are many types of oral art such as folklore, songs, spiritual recitations, poems, proverbs, riddles, dramas, short stories, and other narratives. Oral art is more than simply telling or repeating something—it is a carefully crafted performance. (Source: [Geography](#))

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NATIONAL FOLKLORE BOARD OF GHANA

Led by Executive Director, Bernice Ann Deh-Kumah, the NFB promotes and protects the folklore of Ghana and their vision is to preserve, sustain and integrate the legal, traditional, and cultural values and practices to accelerate wealth creation and harmony for total national development.

BISA ABERWA MUSEUM

Founded by filmmaker Nana Kwaw Ansah, BAM is a not-for-profit, non governmental Pan African Museum dedicated to preserving the history of the Black race, promoting African values, celebrating Pan African heroes and inspiring the youth and generations yet unborn.

PA GYA FEST/WRITERS PROJECT OF GHANA

The WPG is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to helping Ghanaian writers explore and affirm their identity and culture.

EWE KENTE WEAVERS, AGOTIME, KPETOE

This area is known for their kente and the annual Kente Festival. They also have a vocational school to ensure that young artists are trained in the craft.





ADINKRA SYMBOLS - WISDOM TRANSMUTED



WHAT ARE ADINKRA SYMBOLS?

Adinkra are symbols from Ghana that represent concepts and observations which have a general truth and they are used extensively in fabrics, logos, and pottery. There are many symbols with distinct meanings often linked with proverbs. In the words of philosopher and culture theorist, Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'they were one of the means for supporting the transmission of a complex and nuanced body of practice and belief'. The adinkra cloths were and are still worn by royals and affluent people in societies. Adinkra symbols were originally created by the Bono people of Gyaman. The King of Gyaman Nana Kwadwo Agyemang Adinkra originally designed these symbols, naming it after himself. The adinkra symbols were largely used on pottery, stools etc. by the people of Bono. Adinkra cloth was worn by the king of Gyaman and its usage spread from Bono to Asante and other Akan kingdoms.

ADINKRA SYMBOLS ARE INTERWOVEN INTO EVERYDAY LIFE.



ADINKRA SYMBOLS ARE OFTEN WOVEN INTO BATIKS.

Batiks are a type of fabric often used in quilting. They are made by a "resist" process where the designer uses wax to prevent dye from penetrating some areas of the cloth, leaving those areas un-dyed. The process can be repeated many times to create complex designs, using many colors.



CULTURE BEARERS TOGO

NIMBLE FEATHERS

The ' Nimble Feathers ' - "Plumes agiles", is an association created by teachers from the Faculty of Letters, Languages and Arts (FLLA) of the University of Lomé to contribute to the development of young writers and artists. They host the annual International Festival of Letters and Arts (Festilarts). This festival gives the public the opportunity to enjoy themselves through writing workshops, declamations of poems, performances by slammers, theatrical performances, literary cafés, exhibitions of works of art (painting, sculpture, music) and discoveries of literary clubs.

UNIVERSITY OF LOME ENGLISH PROFESSORS

Fulbright Scholars, Dr. Prosper Begedou, Dr. Patron Henekou, and Dr. Cal Komla Avono were our gracious hosts in Togo and exposed us to much of the art and historic sites in the capital of Lomé.



PROSPER
BEGEDOU



PATRON HENEKOU



KOMLA AVONO



ASRAFO PLAKOO-MLAPA

PRINCE OF TOGOVILLE - ASRAFO PLAKOO-MLAPA

The Prince used a natural piece of twine and charm of protection (Ayé - meaning life in Ewe and Yoruba) to wrap around the wrists of returning African-Americans and this piece of string jewelry signified our strength and resilience to never be held in bondage again and was a welcome home gift.



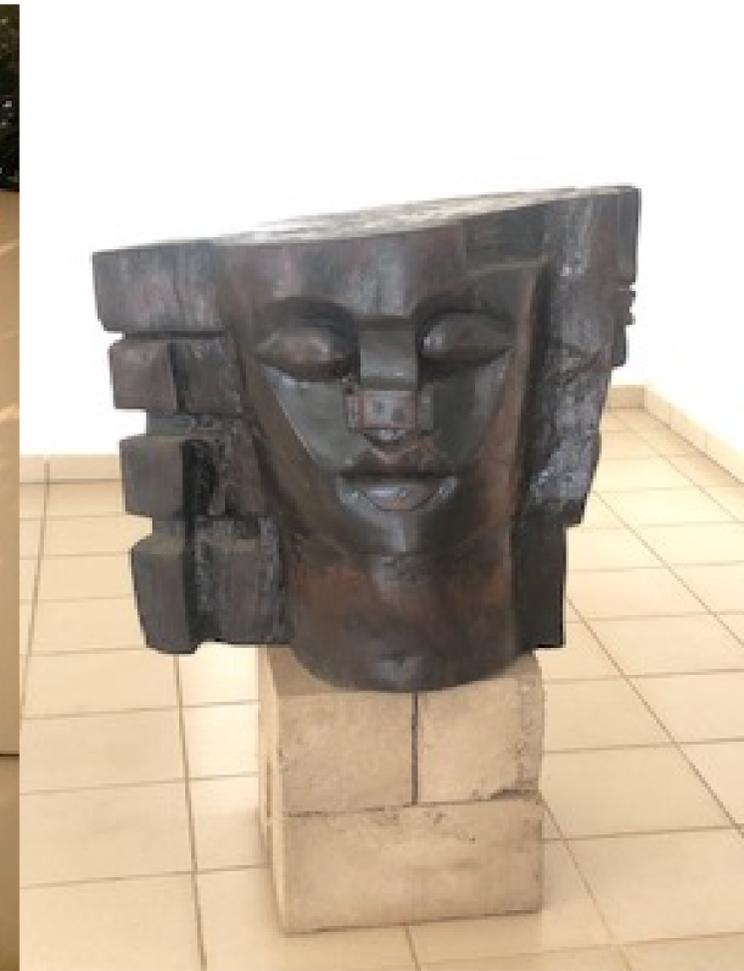
ARTIST PROSPER

NATURAL ART IN KPALIME

This Togolese artist used plants and trees as dye and natural materials such as anthills to create sculptures and paintings.



PAUL AHYI



Born in Benin, Paul Ahyi is one of the most prominent African artists in the world. His painting and sculptures are scattered all throughout the globe. He is also the creator of the Togo flag. He was heavily influenced by Egyptian art and designs and has over 30 pieces of commissioned street art on buildings and walls and in communities around Lomé/Togo.

KOSSI ASSOU



Accomplished contemporary artist, Kossi Assou, is a Vodun Priest, visual artist, cultural entrepreneur, exhibition curator, and a university professor. Born in 1958 in Abidjan, in the Ivory Coast, Assou now resides in Lomé. He is a pioneer of African design and one of the most influential African artists of his generation. He's literally a UNESCO Trésor Humain Vivant, a Living Legend.

