

African Traditional Oral Literature and Visual Cultures as Pedagogical Tools in Diverse Classroom Contexts



Edited by
Lewis Asimeng-Boahene
Michael Baffoe

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INTRODUCTION

Voices, Insights and the Future on African Traditional Oral Literature and Visual Cultures

Lewis Asimeng-Boahene and Michael Baffoe

The past decade has witnessed a surge of interest in African traditional oral literature and visual cultures. This renewed interest reflects the fact that what constitutes African traditional oral literature and visual cultures is the bedrock on which African societies stand to function. In African societies, all aspects of life is regulated around such genres as narratives, drums and drumming, poetry, proverbs, drama, riddles or word play, song play, epics, lyrics, poetry and historical contents (Finnegan, 1970; Okpewho, 1992). It is now recognized by many that Africa possesses literary qualities, albeit in unwritten form. African traditional oral literature and visual cultures could thus be seen as an integral part of the culture, history, and philosophies of the many groupings that make up the continent. As its name implies, most African traditional literature and other visual cultures community, which is stored in various forms, are also transmitted through various modes, mostly in oral and visual forms. It is passed from one generation to another, usually by word of mouth and through other cultural rituals. This mode of education around the continent's cultures and traditions has by and large been used as a way of acquiring lifelong learning (Omolewa, 2007).

African Traditional Oral Literature and Visual Cultures as Pedagogical Tools in Diverse Classroom Contexts, pages ix–xiii.

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Some of the European adventurers, travelers, and exploiters who started roaming through Africa from the late fifteenth century had drawn attention to the rich cultures of African kingdoms they encountered in their wanderings. Most of their reports were however swayed by biased and uniformed assumptions that the “non-literate peoples” they encountered could not have had any literature worth paying attention to (Reagan, 2005). More than five hundred years later after the initial European contacts with Africa and the discovery of the richness of its cultures and traditions, there is still the widely-held myth of Africa as continent either devoid of literature until its *engagement with ‘civilized’ nations* which precipitated publications in European languages, or having just *rudimentary* or unrefined literary construct not requiring systematic study (Finnegan, 1970). It was for these reasons that African oral literature and visual cultures were not placed in the context of literature as conceived by western literary experts until recently when interest in this area has been revived, mainly by scholars of African origin. Transmission of African oral literature and visual cultures, and even the study of them, has been classified by some as evolutionist, much in the tradition of Darwinist theory of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life. Because African traditional literature is handed down by word of mouth, most European scholars in the tradition of Darwinism, believed that anything emanating from those they term as primitive people might have lost some of its original qualities and therefore could not be considered authentic literature to qualify to be used as pedagogic tool in the mainstream academia (Okpewho, 1992).

Despite the limited knowledge about Africa in other parts of the world, the diverse oral literatures and visual cultures of the continent can contribute significantly in enriching the arts and cultures of the global landscape. In this context, it is significant to note how the African maxim, *it takes a whole village to raise a child* is now being extensively used to inspire communities around the world in terms of citizenship education (Grant & Asimeng-Boahene, 2006). This ‘village concept’ therefore can be adopted to encourage educators to utilize alternative paradigms for nurturing and mentoring youth around the world. Consequently, we are emphasizing the point and reality that African oral literatures and visual cultures that are fundamental to the African ways of life are worth exploring for their epistemological and pedagogical values.

This book, which is the second attempt by the editors to highlight and illuminate the richness of African traditional oral literature and visual cultures, is therefore part of our ongoing attempts at advocating for the revision of existing western pedagogical practices. This is a therefore a clarion call for the creation and addition of new fora that would provide for the inclusion of thoughts, perspectives and practices of African traditional oral literature and visual arts in the pedagogical tools of content area classrooms around the world. The chapters that are presented in this book provide theoretical frameworks for using African traditional oral literature, visual cultures, and their various tenets as teaching tools. They also explore and examine innovative practices for global education in the

literary and visual arts fields. They bring together new voices of how African literature and visual cultures could be used as helpful tools in classrooms that are becoming increasingly multicultural. The rationale for agitating for the use of these traditional oral literatures and visual cultures as ideal pedagogic tools is the recurrent theme throughout the various chapters in this collection. This anthology is a comprehensive work of experienced and diverse scholars, academicians, and educators with expertise in multicultural education, traditional oral literature, visual arts, urban education, children's literature, and culturally responsive pedagogy that have become the focus of discourses in public education and teacher preparation in educational settings around the world.

This book is divided into two parts: Part 1 explores the richness of African oral literature as pedagogical tools in content area classrooms. In this section, contributing authors share their perspectives on some aspects of African Traditional oral literature and visual arts. In Chapter 1, the author takes readers through what he terms as the Re-crafting of the African indigenous knowledge systems in culturally conscious classroom context. The Western domination of knowledge creation has precipitated the near demise of Africans systems of knowing. In attempting to address the above challenges, the author in chapter 1, attempts to provoke a debate by calling for the re-awakening of African perspectives curriculum of knowledge creation in diverse classroom settings.

Since the reality of today's North American classrooms especially in Grade School is cultural diversity, there is the need to show recognition and value to the cultures of all the children that make up our classrooms. When children feel that their cultures and values are respected and valued, they feel a sense of belonging in the classroom that ultimately contribute to their academic success. The author of Chapter 2 of this collection underscores this reality by advocating for the recognition and celebration of minority cultures in North American classrooms as empowering tools for their academic success.

In Chapter 3, the author explores the significance of *LIBATION* that is prevalent among many traditional African communities as Pedagogical tool for Health and Social Education. The author examines the concept of Libation as a mode of communication that conveys gratitude, complaints, rebuke, bargains, and highlights on the links between the living, God and the deities of African traditional societies. The author of Chapter 4 takes a critical look at the contentious issue of stigmatizing women that are accused of witchcraft in Ghana and explores ways to eradicate the stigma, segregation, and violence that are directed against such women. He is particularly critical of the lack of intervention by governments into the treatment meted out to these women that clearly bothers on human rights abuses.

As a result of a growing questioning by scholars of the dominance of Western epistemologies in African educational systems, the author of this Chapter 5 argues a case for the teaching of African traditional literature in children's education in diverse contexts. He examines the contributions of African Traditional Literature

to the acquisition of core literacy and numeracy skills by children in post-colonial Africa, majority of whom come from what he terms as “print-free homes” who proceed to learn in under-resourced classrooms.

Many of Africa’s great storytellers continue to be denied a place on the literary stage in academia. It is in this light that the authors of Chapter 6 titled: African Traditional Moonlight Tales: A culturally-relevant Tool for discussing social issues with children, attempt to resuscitate the culture of storytelling under moonlight in rural communities in Africa.

Music and Dance are integral part of African cultures. Much of African societies’ cultural expressions are through music and its expressive partner, dance. The author of Chapter 7 of this collection highlights the role of African music and dance as instructional strategy for global education because of their importance as “natural teaching tools”.

Part Two of this collection explores African visual cultures and their importance as pedagogical tools. It starts from Chapter 8 where the author explores the concepts and modes of communication that exist in many African traditional communities. He focuses on the Cultural, ritualistic and pedagogical symbolism of the Morse Codes of ancient African societies using the *Ikoro* & *Ekwe* as typologies and forms of non-verbal communication among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria. The Chieftaincy institution plays very critical roles in the secular, spiritual, and traditional realms in many African societies. The author of Chapter 9 takes a look at an important aspect of African chieftaincy traditions: the role of a Modern Queen Mother in the preservation of cultural heritage of the Akans of Southern Ghana.

The fabrics and wax prints of the people of Ghana have very interesting symbols that carry some traditional messages. The author of Chapter 10 takes a look at the “Adinkra” Symbolism of Ghana and their Pedagogical Implications for Schooling and Education. Puberty and initiation rites of the Akan Ethnic group of Southern Ghana is the subject of exploration by the authors of Chapter Eleven who examine Puberty rites as cultural metaphors for promoting traditional ideals of womanhood among the Akans of Ghana. Chapter Twelve takes a look at one of the traditional pillars of African societies: festivals. The authors examine their pedagogical importance and as teaching resources in Ghanaian as well as other societies that are not familiar with African cultural festivals.

EPILOGUE

In pulling together this anthology, the second in the series, our awareness has been heightened about important aspects of Traditional Indigenous Knowledge systems (TIKS) to which scholars have hitherto paid little attention. The research perspectives of the contributors in this 2nd edition have enhanced the hitherto limited exposure and knowledge about traditional oral literature and visual cultures in Africa. The thrust of this anthology on the pedagogical implications of TIKS is worthy of note and it is our fervent hope that exploration and dissemination of knowledge in this field will continue with the flame from the torch that has been

lighted from this endeavor. For this, we salute and acknowledge the invaluable contributions to this effort by all our contributors as well as our support staff who helped put this together.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

By the launch of this book, we are calling on researchers and disciples of Indigenous Knowledge systems in Africa and elsewhere to seize this opportunity and interest generated by this endeavor to undertake more studies in this area. We wish to underscore the fact that our call to engage with TIKS and the past does not constitute a blanket endorsement or a sentimental, uncritical rendezvous with African traditional customs and values. Indeed, we are all for critical research and analysis into this all-important area. We are of the opinion that these efforts will greatly enhance awareness in an otherwise neglected and almost forgotten, but important aspects of knowledge creation and dissemination, especially about traditional and hitherto unwritten histories and knowledge systems around the world.

Our current efforts were focused mainly on Africa TIKS systems, but we strongly believe that there are similar and equally powerful and important TIKS systems in other parts of the world, Asia, the Far East, Central and Southern America as well as the Caribbean that are longing for exploration and exposition. In doing this, we must not lose sight of the implications of these endeavors for children's lives in terms of their needs, education and the preservation of their histories, values and the sustainability of their cultures. Researchers should be bold to venture more into these areas and we hope they will take up the challenges to broaden the conceptualization of what constitutes global knowledge within the current reality of globalization.

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CHAPTER 1

SANKOFA

Re-Crafting African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Culturally Conscious Classroom Contexts

Lewis Asimeng-Boahene

SANKOFA: BACK TO YOUR ROOT



Symbol of Importance of Learning from the Past

African Traditional Oral Literature and Visual Cultures as Pedagogical Tools in Diverse Classroom Contexts, pages 1–22.

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Listen Ocol, my old Friend/The ways of your ancestors/Are good. Their customs are solid/And not understand/The ways of foreigners/But I do not despise their customs/Why should you despise yours? (p'Bittek, 1967, p. 47).

Martin Luther King Jr. espoused the view: *If we are going to go forward, we must go back and discover those previous values....that all reality hinges on moral foundations, and that all reality has spiritual control.*

INTRODUCTION

I have travelled across the length and breadth of Africa and
I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief such
wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people
of such caliber, that I do not think we would ever conquer this count
and cultural heritage and therefore, I propose that we replace her old
and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Africans think that
all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they
will lose their self-esteem, their native culture and they will become what
we want them, a truly dominated nation.

— Lord MacCaulay's Address to the British Parliament on 2nd Feb. 1835

The intellectual rehabilitation of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) with particular reference to Africa remains an important moral, political, and epistemological project for post-colonial Africa. Western domination of knowledge creation relegated African systems of knowing to crude caricatures precipitating their near demise and a meltdown of African authentic existence and thereby undermining African cultural confidence. The net effect has been that African styles of knowledge creation have been stigmatized, continue to be relegated to the mainstream academic footnote, and remain at the periphery of Western academia: neglected, unexplored, and never becoming a full participant, virtually *terra incognita*. These normative and universalizing tendencies of Western knowledge traditions have been a common criticism of Western scholarship as very few Western individuals have had meaningful exposure to non-Western educational traditions (Dei, 2012a; Reagan, 2005). Thus, the intellectual **rehabilitation** of indigenous knowledge systems remains an important epistemological and pedagogical challenge in the era of globalization, not only for policy makers and stakeholders, but also for progressive scholars/educators who appreciate the value of diverse systems of knowledge construction.

Among others, the goal of this chapter is to provoke and encourage a vigorous debate on this issue. I am situating and advancing the argument that part of the process of colonialism involved the intentional or deliberate process of replacing local knowledge with the knowledge of the colonizer. It was this process that has led to present challenges in the educational systems and curricula of the colonized societies. The argument thus holds that the entire Euro-western based curriculum

reflects settler colonial values. Hence my call for dislodging these colonial narratives in terms of their Euro-western-centric knowledge creation and its relationship to power. This can be achieved by re-centering the perspectives of the epistemological and pedagogical African knowledge systems to foster an alternative vision of reality for knowledge creation and acquisition. Pohlhaus (2002, as cited in Nakata, 2007) argued that “objective knowledge” is not a disinterested perspective. Instead, it “is achieved by struggling to understand one’s experience through a critical stance on the social order within which knowledge is produced” (p. 285, cited in Nakata, 2007). This position entails challenging those disparaging discourses about Africa and its supposed ineptitude that served as pretext for the questionable right of the colonizers to conquest. It is within this context that I have chosen to situate the characteristics of African indigenous knowledge systems.

In offering catalysts for rethinking the roots of the inherently ethnocentric mainstream research paradigm, this paper is partly based on findings from my own culturally-grounded professional practice, through lived experiences/experiential knowledge as an African, shared perspectives gained from dialogue with students, community leaders and colleagues, teaching experiences in both Africa and North America, and from the burgeoning literature on the subject. The findings suggest that discourse on knowledge construction in the mainstream academia does not take into account the critical view of the fundamental changes that the concept of knowledge has undergone in the course of the 21st century. Western Epistemological and pedagogical content knowledge of curricula has little or no bearing on the cultures, traditions, and world views of visible minorities in the Western world (Asimeng-Boahene, 2014). Consequently, it is in line with my academic conviction that it is time to overcome these universalizing Western dominant theoretical and methodological paradigms and allow new forms of dialogue to emerge, resulting in a research and knowledge creation paradigm, which analyzes cultural phenomena from an alternative perspective.

In order to address the above challenges and expectations, this paper argues that the best way to deal with the colonial past and colonialist ignorance about African ontology is to use it as a platform from which to rebuild forms of consciousness and epistemic possibilities that reaffirm African forms of knowing. It must be acknowledged that although Africa is a huge continent that contains many different countries, ethnic groups, languages, religions, and cultural practices, it may be possible to identify some similarities in terms of indigenous practices and philosophies that run through them as a cord binding them and making far-reaching peoples and nations seem contiguous.

The theoretical framework for the relevance of African indigenous knowledge systems will then be examined. Thirdly, epistemological manifestations of African indigenous concepts like proverbs, personal names, storytelling, music/dance, riddles, oral poetry, libation, textile art (cloth), symbols, drums, and secret societies in indigenous educational settings will be explored. The next discussion

highlights the relevance and challenges of African Indigenous knowledge systems in helping to re-envision schooling and education in global context. Finally, I address the epistemological values of the indigenous knowledge systems as pedagogical tools for instructional activities in today's Western classroom settings in the era of globalization.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

The importance of a theoretical framework in research cannot be over-emphasized. This paper is underpinned by a compendium of critical theoretical frameworks that include anti-colonial theory, dependency theory and African renaissance theory as combined theoretical frameworks of analysis. Anti-colonial theory, is a counter-oppositional approach, which calls into question traditionally accepted colonial educational experience as well as its consequences (Dei, 2012a,b). It argues that the encounter between the colonized and the colonizer brought about epistemological ethnocentrism focusing on the colonizer as the encounter sought to transform institutional practices and structures, making the colonizer sovereign, superior, and arbiter of civilizing and all-knowing (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013).

The Western curriculum virtually instructed, more or less conditioned Africans "to amputate a part of themselves" (Tafoya, 1995, p. 27), by being culturally circumcised so as to be able to walk on imported Western clutches, and adorn Western robes, which were not in the first place culturally designed, tailored and built for them. Thus, the colonial take-over of the content, direction and delivery of curriculum and knowledge was an erasure of local socio-cultural and political practices. These then led to real and existential meltdown of indigenous cultural heritages. As a case in point, Africans in the British colonies were taught songs like "In the bleak mid-winter...", when the children (and the societies) had no idea what winter was like, and "London Bridge is falling down...". Instructional Statements like, "vernacular is prohibited" were found in many elementary schools in the British colonies, and I personally experienced such British policy of linguisticism, which was prejudicial and discriminatory during my primary school days in Ghana.

Such statements affected Africans' sense of being as language represents the complete diversity of thought, the arts and literature thereby hindering the progress of the social and cultural fabric of the colonized as the colonial policy created space to center hegemonic Western mentality. This led to the subjugation of African knowledge systems. Matunhu (2011) further argues that the educational system brought about mental impoverishment of Africans *as the school system was used to subvert and invert Africa* by de-emphasizing the importance of African values and cultures at the same time while glorifying those of the Europeans.

This colonial *modus operandi* took Africans away from their cultural universe as all education at the time was European indoctrination leading to unconscious

adaptation of the Western world view, perspective and their attendant conceptual framework, which was dialectically opposed to the African systems of knowing in terms of their ontology, cosmology and axiology. The result of this (mis)education continues to manifest in some African people's behavior, values, and attitudes to the present day. Consequently, the call for re-appropriation of African indigenous epistemologies constitutes in itself, an integral step in fighting the legacies and ills of colonial overlays. The belief systems of such kind of paradigm shift take their strengths from the lived experiences, values, and history of those marginalized by Euro-Western epistemological paradigms.

Pertinent to the foregoing argument is a long-standing literature on cultural and ecological perspectives on learning and development, which is most attributed to the intellectual contributions of scholars like Vygotsky (1978) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) among others. This literature submits that learning and development, which occur within a multi-faced context is a product of the socio-cultural context by which learning is situated. This predisposition was lacking in colonial education. Thus, this anti-colonial perspective that underpins this argument, demands a critical analysis of the colonial educational agenda that are enshrined in social and cultural institutions (Dei, 2000, 2012a).

To this end, this theory denounces the standards of universalizing predispositions of the mainstream Western knowledge tradition of objectivity, certainty, and detachment highlighting only one historically specific and, ultimately slanted way of meeting the disquiets for epistemic rigor. It analyses the social and power relations entrenched in the production, organization, validation and dissemination of knowledge (Dei, 2000). I also lean on the dependency theory, which is of the view that Africa's underdevelopment and by extension the failure of institutions was as a result of the integration and incorporation of the continent into the periphery of global capitalist system to play a submissive role to international capital (Ake, 1981; Rodney, 1982).

African renaissance theory on its own offers a complimentary role in the explanation of the way out of the problem posed by colonialism and neo-colonialism in Africa as held by dependency theorists. Writing on African renaissance theory, Matunhu, (2011) argues that the theory is pillared on African values and norms, which are the very foundations of African life. The muscle of this argument lives in its ability to be adaptable to change and innovations within the social and value systems of the African unity, communalism, and shared purpose for Africa. Thus, the African renaissance theory is all about retrieving Africa's past identity and values with a vision of the continent going back to chart a new course to its greatness. Korten (1990) in his exhaustive look at this theory has said, "transformation for future depends on achieving the transformation of institutions, technology, values, and behavior consistent with ecological and social realities in Africa." (p. 4).

Thus, thoughtful of the historic devaluation of the knowledge systems and epistemologies of the colonized, these theories and frameworks call for a major transformation of the conceptual frameworks, syllabi, language policies, research

methodologies and other frames of reference in use in the mainstream academy, in order to make room for the lived experiences of the colonized (Dei, 2012a,b). It is important to note that, the call to engage with IKS and the past does not constitute the reification nor does it mean a sentimental, uncritical rendezvous with traditional customs. It is in view of this assertion that the next discussion focuses on the characteristics of IKS.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIGENOUS AFRICAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

The concept of IKS has diverse meanings as it is viewed differently by academic disciplines, ranging from social anthropology to sustainable development. Hence, no single definition has captured the allegiance of all scholars. This situation is among others, attributable to the fact that IKS are often referred to in different ways including but exclusive of indigenous technical knowledge, traditional environmental knowledge, local knowledge, traditional knowledge, and folk knowledge (Sillitoe, 1998). In spite of the contested nature of the concept and the varied characterizations it has attracted, highlighting some of the diverse characterization might suffice. Flavie, de Jesus, and Navaro (1995) see the indigenous knowledge system as

the information base for a society, which facilitates communication and decision-making. Indigenous information systems are dynamic, and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems. (p. 479)

Considering the essence of the above iteration, one sees that bodies of indigenous knowledge systems are developed through the processes of acculturation and kinship relations that societal groups form and are handed down to posterity through oral tradition and cultural practices. Notwithstanding the contested nature of the concept and the varied characterizations it has attracted, indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are the adhesives that bind society together as they constitute communicative processes through which knowledge is transmitted, preserved, and acquired by human beings in their societies. In the context of this paper, IKS refer to the long-standing traditions and practices of cultural specific local communities. This encompasses the skills, innovations, wisdom, teachings, experiences, beliefs, language, and insights of the people, produced, and accumulated over years and applied to maintain or improve their livelihood. IKS form the basis of the community's decision-making in agriculture, health, natural resource management, conflict resolution, governance and leadership and other livelihood activities.

It is in this view that I call for a room to be made for the indigenous articulation of reality so as to retrieve the normative epistemic frameworks that can be of value to the present, without complying with the hegemonic tendencies of the

past that were imposed by the West. These bodies of knowledge are developed and adapted continuously to gradually changing circumstances, orally passed on from generation to generation and closely interwoven with people's cultural values. Some forms of IKS such as experiences, wisdom, beliefs, etc., are expressed through stories, legends, proverbs, folklores, rituals, songs, etc. (Cuthbert, 2009). From the above facets of IKS, it can be summarized that African indigenous knowledge refers to the knowledge transmitted orally from generation to generation through innovative practices that tend to take the form of stories, songs, proverbs, riddles, folklore, cultural beliefs, and values. Such forms of learning tools serve as the major attributes of the intellectual training of the African, and are therefore, significant characteristics of African ways of knowing, directly contrasting Western ways.

This is the landscape of IKS, and from a perspective grounded in anti-colonialism, and dependency theories, it should not be subjected to value judgements by Western ideologies, idiosyncrasies and vicissitudes. These non-Western cultural artifacts consisting of tastes, appreciations and understandings, manifest themselves through linguistic code symbols, music, dress styles, and physical gestures, among others, used to protect boundaries around ethnic isolation. It is to this topic on types of epistemological presence in the indigenous knowledge systems that I now turn the discussion.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Although the study of epistemology, which probes into the nature of knowledge and truth is universal, the ways of acquiring knowledge, in terms of the sources and the reliability of these sources for knowledge creation vary according to the perspectives of how a culture understands the world. This is underpinned by the political, ethical, environmental, socio-cultural as well as local and global settings within which knowledge claims are formulated and articulated (Kaphagawani & Malherbe, 2002). This is palpable in divergence of language, value, and philosophy in terms of ontology, methodology, and axiology. It is through this prism that one can seriously talk about African epistemology, which manifests itself through riddles, proverbs, symbols, storytelling, naming, and music to educate and inculcate as Africans have different cognition about the world from their Western counterparts. Communalism, collectivity, social justice, humanity, and pluralism are implicit, as they operate with the feelings of belongingness values and belief systems (Ayittey, 1991). Examples of the key and diverse IKS, especially African IKS that identify and illustrate the epistemological manifestations of indigenous knowledge systems that can contribute to finding solutions to the problems confronting the world are discussed below.

COMMUNITY ELDERS:

Every society has its cognitive “police officers” or gatekeepers who together define the fundamental cognitive orientation of the people and principally oversee the approved characterization and the defense of the societal norms (Assimeng, 2006). Among traditional African societies, this policing or gatekeeping role is performed mostly by the adult members through the acquisition of a library of ideas, because they are believed to have accumulated the knowledge and wisdom of the society. No wonder then, that, the Akan of Ghana has a wise sayings and proverbs, such as “Each time an elderly dies it is as if a library had burned down.”

In addition to acting as guides to the land and its flora and fauna, elders convey knowledge to youngsters individually by telling stories, and thus overseeing their learning process. There is also a reverence of filial piety, the veneration and respect for the elderly that is equated with wisdom. This is poignantly expressed in the famous African (Akan) maxim that states “*Wo ne panyin a due*” (Woe betides anyone who has no elder person to offer him/her advice). (Baffoe, & Asimeng-Boahene, 2013).

In other places in Africa, and Ghana in particular, due to both their declarative and procedural knowledge, elderly women are much revered, hence the popular Akan notion, “*Yekobisa nana aberewa*,” “consulting the old woman” for counsel anytime there is a deadlock or difficulty in making a decision. Thus, manifesting themselves epistemologically, in addition to their role in teaching, community elders are also consulted in assessment of judicial matters/process, such as land-tenure issues and marital affairs (Ansu-Kyereme, 2005). This type of oral knowledge offers diverse ways of understanding the African world and its assumptions that are normally quite different from those seen in Western frames of reference.

AFRICAN SCULPTURE

African sculpture varies widely with location. Each cultural region has a unique style, type of material, purpose and meaning to its sculptures. African sculptures have social, spiritual, and political significance. They are sometimes used to transmit the laws, moral codes, and history to the young. Some serve to facilitate communication between people and super natural forces and beings. Some have religious and social undertones, e.g., the Ghanaian fertility doll. These dolls are apparently devoted to fertility in their representation of the true human form. Masks may often be used for ceremonial purposes. They are also made to indicate the wealth and status of the owner. Sculptures can be found in homes and public places. In sum, their beauty and content combine to make African sculptures a vehicle that ensures the survival of traditions, and protects the community and the individual (Baffoe & Asimeng-Boahene, 2013)