

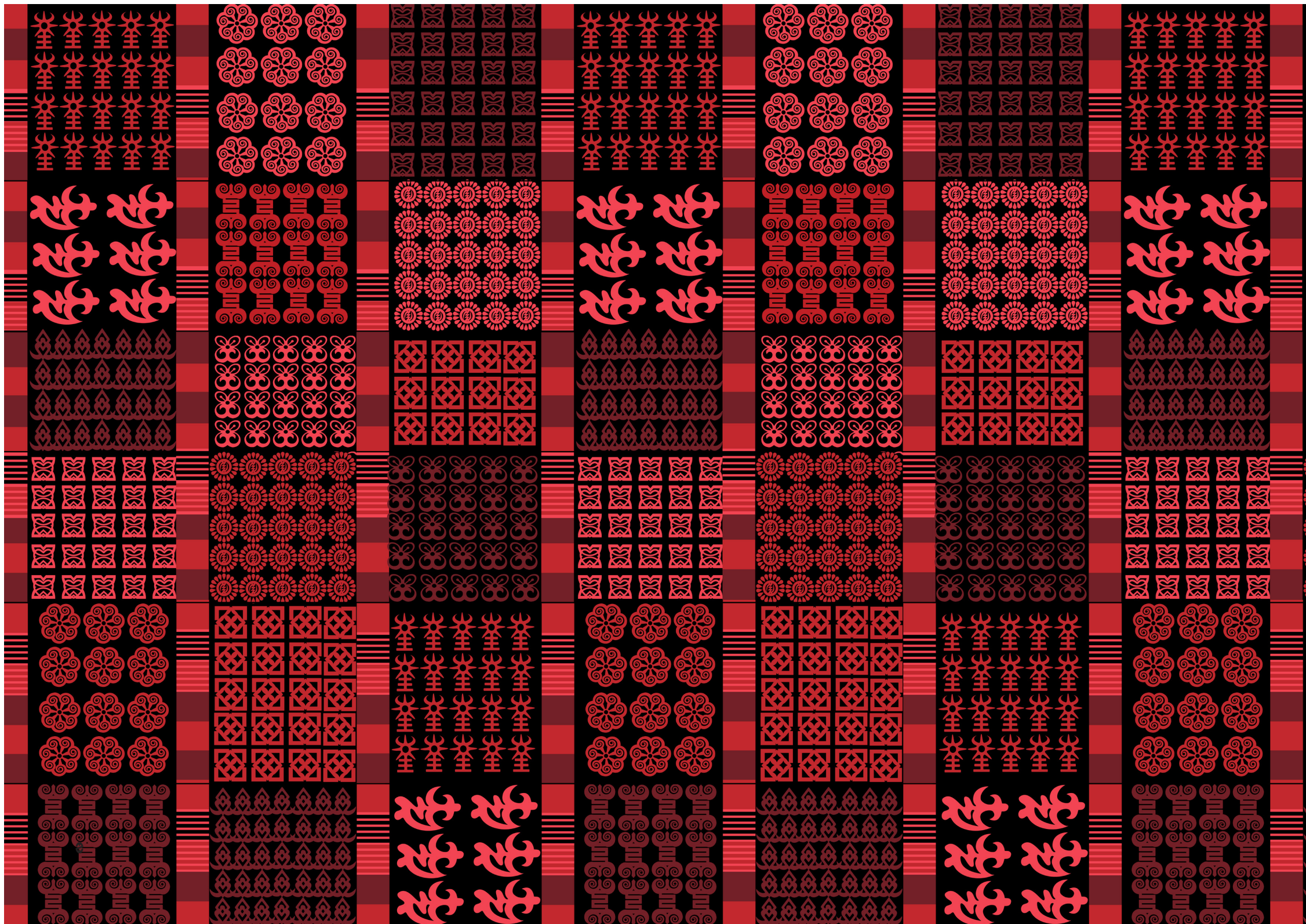


# Reviving Tradition

Contemporary Interpretations of Adinkra Symbols

Nana Araba Abbott







# Acknowledgments

Creating a book is a journey that is never walked alone. This project, “Reviving Tradition: Contemporary Interpretations of Adrinka Symbols,” has been a labour of love and collaboration, and it would not have been possible without the support and contributions of many individuals and organizations.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Adrinka community and the creators of the original symbols that served as the foundation for this project. Your rich heritage and artistic brilliance have inspired me to embark on this creative endeavour, and I am humbled to have had the opportunity to build upon your legacy.

To my mentors, advisors, and experts in the field, your guidance and insights have been invaluable throughout this journey. Your willingness to share your knowledge and expertise has enriched the depth and authenticity of this book.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my family and friends for their unwavering support, encouragement, and patience. Your belief in me has been a constant source of motivation, and your feedback has been instrumental in shaping the final outcome of this project.

Last but not least, I extend my deepest appreciation to the readers of this book. Your curiosity and willingness to explore the world of Adrinka symbols is a testament to the enduring power of cultural expression. May these symbols inspire you, as they have inspired me, to embrace tradition while embracing innovation.

With gratitude,

Nana Araba Abbott  
Graphic Designer  
madabbottdesigns@gmail.com

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# 01

## Introduction

*"From Ghana to the UK, I carry the rich cultural tapestry of Adinkra symbols within me,  
a bridge between two worlds, and a testament to the enduring power of tradition in  
contemporary culture."*



Dear Reader,

It is with great excitement and profound pride that I present to you “Reviving Tradition: Contemporary Interpretations of Adinkra Symbols.” This book is the culmination of a deeply personal journey, one that reflects my dual heritage as a Ghanaian born in the land of vibrant traditions and raised in the diverse melting pot of the United Kingdom.

Adinkra symbols have long been revered in Ghanaian culture, serving as a language of visual storytelling and a conduit for conveying profound wisdom and values. These symbols, infused with centuries of history, possess a timeless allure that transcends borders. As a graphic designer, I have always been captivated by their elegant simplicity and the way they evoke profound emotions within those who encounter them.

In this creative exploration, I sought to breathe new life into these treasured symbols, not to dilute their essence but to augment their relevance in the modern world. Drawing inspiration from my dual upbringing, I embarked on the ambitious task of merging existing Adinkra symbols to form sixteen entirely new ones. These new symbols serve as bridges between tradition and contemporary culture, embodying the fluidity of identity and the dynamism of our globalized society.

Each of the sixteen new symbols is a visual symphony of meaning, a harmonious blend of heritage and innovation. I have endeavoured to infuse them with a sense of universality, allowing them to resonate with people from various cultural backgrounds, encouraging dialogue, understanding, and a celebration of diversity.

“Reviving Tradition” is not merely a design project; it is a heartfelt homage to the enduring legacy of Adinkra symbols and the resilience of cultures in an ever-changing world. My hope is that these symbols will find their way into the fabric of contemporary culture, becoming a source of inspiration, pride, and a connection to our shared human heritage.

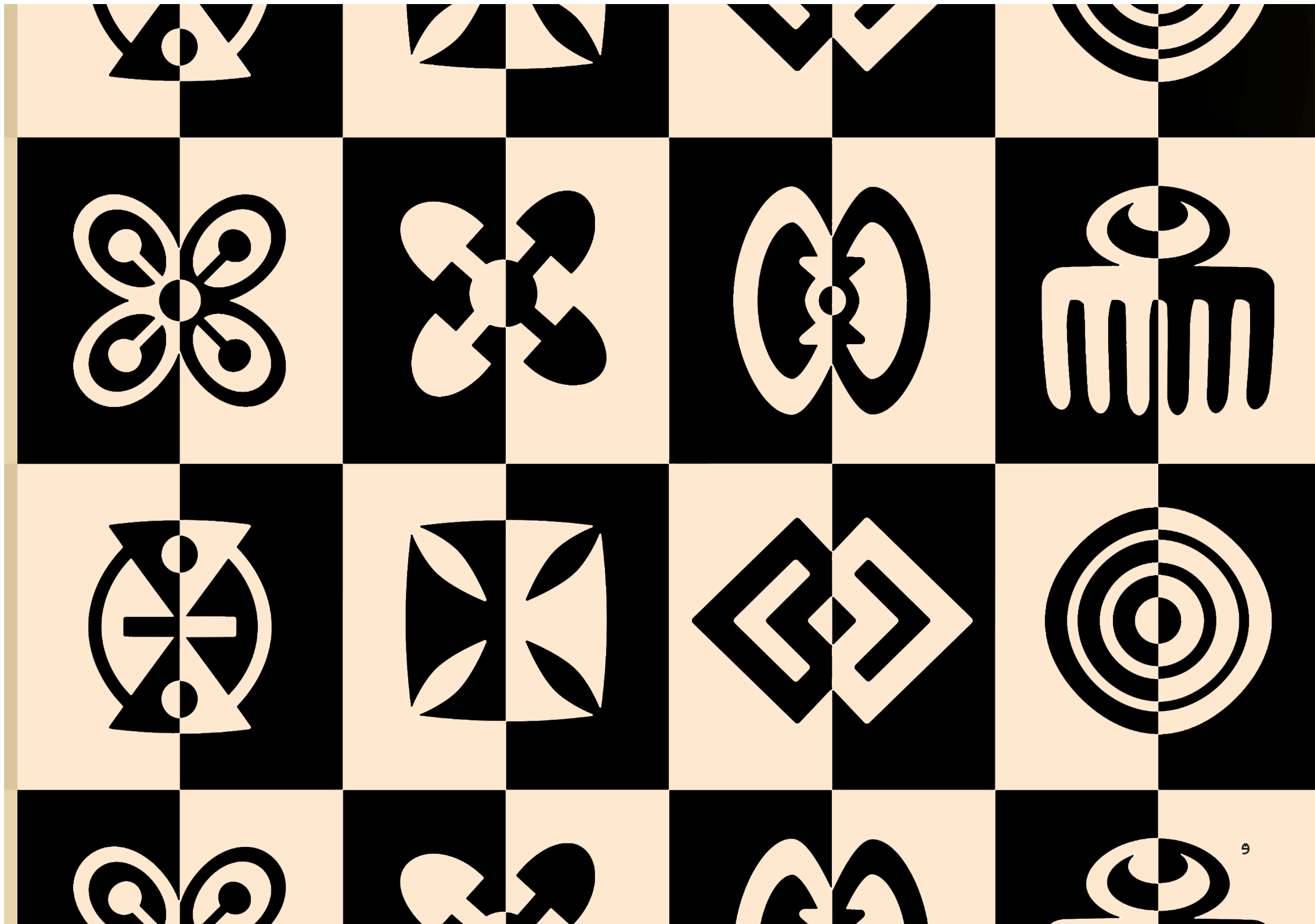
I invite you to embark on this journey with me, as we unravel the significance of each symbol, exploring the stories they tell and the emotions they evoke. Let us celebrate the beauty of tradition and embrace the transformative power of creative reinterpretation. Together, we can forge a path towards a more inclusive and culturally enriched world.





# Understanding Adinkra Symbols

*An Exploration of the original Adinkra Symbols.*





# 4 Tribe of Rich History

The Asante, also known as the Ashanti, are a vibrant and influential tribe hailing from the Ashanti Region of modern-day Ghana. Renowned for their rich cultural heritage, the Asante people have made significant contributions to the history and traditions of Ghana and West Africa. Central to their cultural identity is the art of Adinkra, a unique system of symbols that holds deep spiritual and social significance. This chapter delves into the intricate relationship between the Asante tribe and Adinkra, exploring the origins, meanings, and contemporary relevance of these ancient symbols.

The Asante tribe traces its origins back to the 17th century, emerging as a powerful and influential kingdom in the West African region. Known for their skilled craftsmanship, strong leadership, and elaborate court rituals, the Asante people established a thriving civilization. Asante society was organized into a hierarchical structure, with the Asantehene (King) at the pinnacle of power. The tribe's cultural traditions, including Adinkra symbolism, played a pivotal role in shaping their social cohesion and identity.





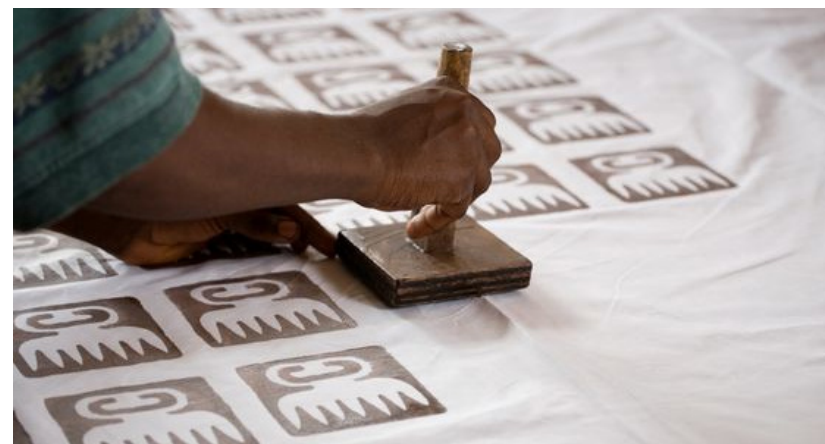


# The Origins of Adinkra Symbols

In the heart of what is now known as Côte d'Ivoire, in a time lost to history, there existed an ancient kingdom called Gyaman. It is within the boundaries of this enigmatic realm that the origins of the captivating Adinkra symbols are believed to have emerged. These intricate and meaningful symbols would go on to become an integral part of Ghanaian culture, leaving a lasting mark on the tapestry of history.

According to the rich lore of the Asante people of Ghana, a remarkable tale was passed down through generations. This story recounted the life of a noble king hailing from the Gyaman people, known as Nana Kofi Adinkra. He was a ruler of great standing, but his ambitions led him to commit an act that would provoke the mighty Asante people.

The Asantes revered the "Golden Stool" as a symbol of absolute authority and unity within their tribe. However, king Adinkra had dared to imitate this revered symbol, and such audacity did not escape the watchful eyes of the Asantes. The insult was grave, and it sparked a fierce conflict between the Gyaman and the Asante, culminating in king Adinkra's capture.







The outcome was dire for the Gyaman king; he met his end at the hands of his adversaries, and the Asante claimed dominion over his kingdom. As the story goes, Nana Adinkra had worn patterned garments, using them to express his sorrow and melancholy during his exile in Kumasi, the Asante capital.

As time marched on, the Asante people adopted a fascinating tradition. At the turn of the 19th century, they began painting their traditional emblems on cloth, emulating the practices of the Gyamans. The Gyamans were renowned for their art of painting symbols that represented their people's heritage on fabric.

Adinkra symbols were initially used as a form of communication and storytelling among the Akan people. The symbols were not just mere patterns but carried specific meanings and messages. They were used on clothing, pottery, and other crafts to convey information about the wearer's identity, beliefs, and social status.

# Adinkra Historical Uses

In the past, Adinkra symbols were exclusively reserved for royalty and the ruling class, but over time, they became more accessible to the broader population. Each symbol had a unique name and was associated with specific proverbs and stories, allowing individuals to express complex ideas and emotions through art and design.

Adinkra symbols also held deep spiritual significance and were frequently incorporated into various rituals and ceremonies. During important occasions such as weddings, funerals, and festivals, the Akan people would wear garments adorned with Adinkra symbols to invoke blessings, protection, and good fortune.

The process of creating Adinkra cloth was itself a ritualistic act. The cloth was made by hand, and the symbols were stamped onto the fabric using carved calabash stamps and a dark dye made from the bark of the Badie tree. This traditional method of production added an extra layer of significance to the symbols, making the cloth not just a beautiful adornment but also a powerful spiritual tool.





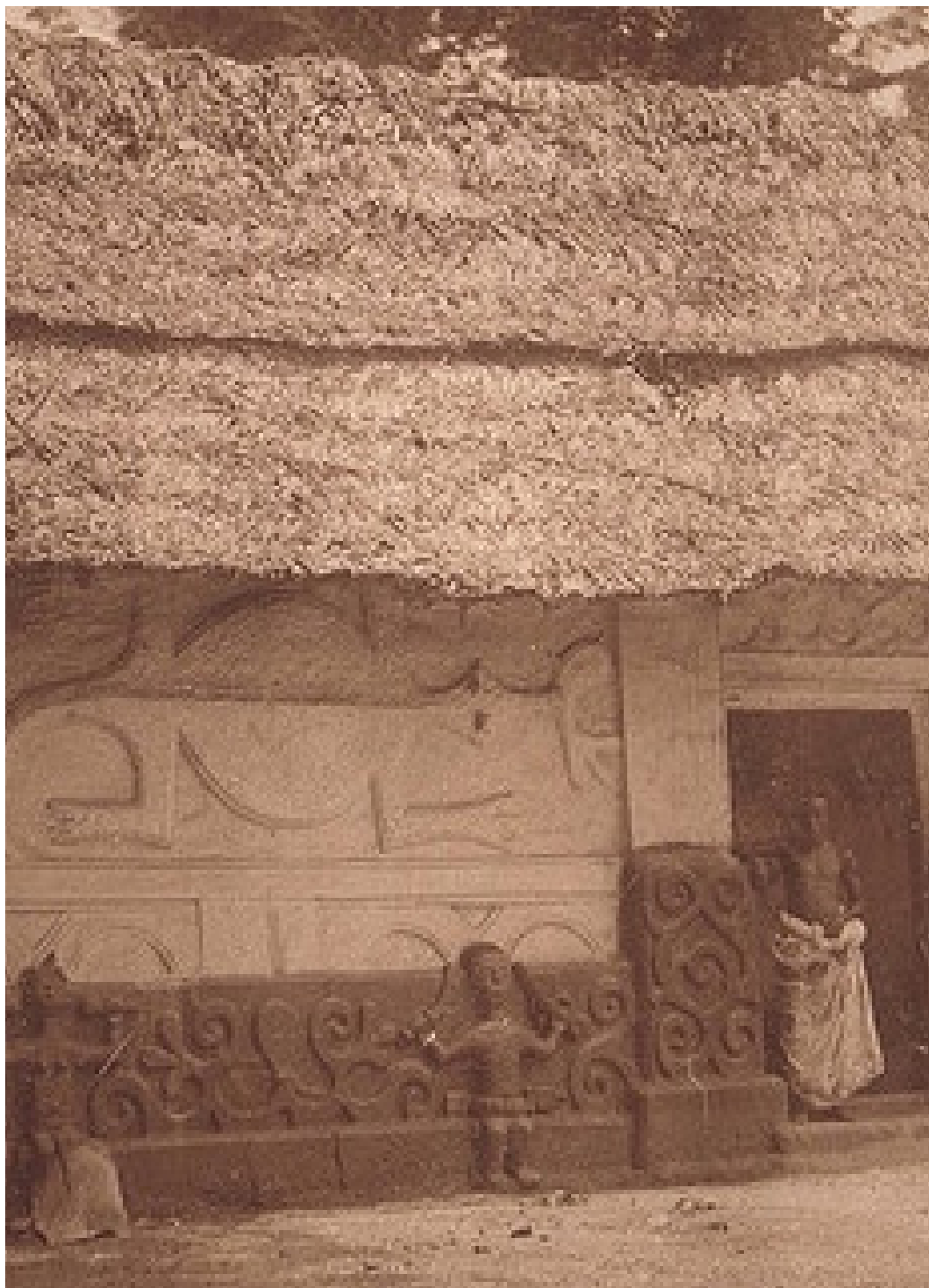






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One of the earliest and most widespread uses of Adinkra symbols outside of block printing is in body art and adornments. The Akan people have a long-standing tradition of decorating their bodies with these symbols during important ceremonies, festivals, and rites of passage. Adinkra symbols are often applied using natural pigments, henna, or even scarification techniques. Each symbol carries a specific meaning, and individuals choose symbols based on their personal beliefs, aspirations, or the occasion they are celebrating. Body adornments with Adinkra symbols serve as a means of expressing cultural identity, spirituality, and aesthetic appreciation.

Adinkra symbols are not limited to fabric and the human body; they have also found their way into the realm of architecture and artifact design. Traditional Akan architecture, such as royal palaces, shrines, and communal buildings, often feature intricate carvings of Adinkra symbols on wooden doors, pillars, and facades. These symbols serve both a decorative purpose and a symbolic one, imbuing the structures with meaning and spiritual protection. Additionally, Adinkra symbols can be found on various everyday objects like pottery, furniture, and household utensils, adding an artistic and cultural touch to utilitarian items.



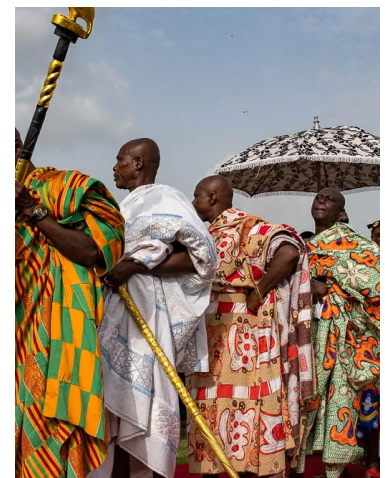
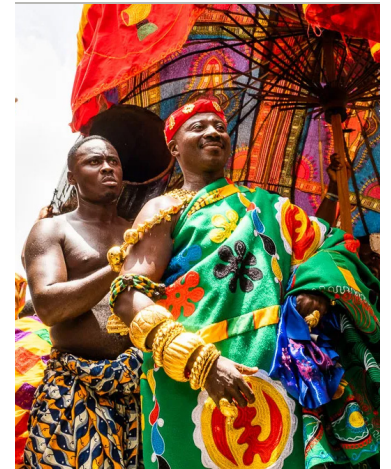
# The Importance of Adinkra Symbols in Ghanaian Culture

## Communication without Words

One of the most remarkable aspects of Adinkra symbols is their ability to convey complex meanings without relying on words. These symbols serve as a unique form of visual language, enabling individuals to express their thoughts, emotions, and aspirations non-verbally. They facilitate communication across diverse linguistic backgrounds, fostering a sense of unity and shared understanding among Ghanaians. Whether adorning clothing, pottery, or architecture, Adinkra symbols become powerful vessels for cultural transmission and preservation.

## Preserving Ancestral Wisdom

Embedded within each Adinkra symbol lies a treasure trove of ancestral wisdom passed down through generations. These symbols encapsulate the accumulated knowledge, experiences, and beliefs of the Akan people. By incorporating Adinkra symbols into various aspects of daily life, Ghanaians uphold and honour their heritage, ensuring that the legacy of their ancestors endures. Each symbol serves as a conduit between past and present, linking contemporary Ghanaians to the ancient symbols.





## Encouraging Positive Values

Adinkra symbols hold profound philosophical meanings, often emphasizing essential virtues and principles for leading a virtuous life. For instance, the Sankofa symbol reminds individuals of the value of learning from the past to shape a better future. The Nyansapo symbol promotes the importance of wisdom and intelligent problem-solving. By frequently encountering these symbols in their surroundings, Ghanaians are continually encouraged to embody these positive values in their actions and decisions.

## Bridging Past and Present

While Adinkra symbols have deep historical roots, they continue to evolve and adapt to contemporary Ghanaian society. Modern designers and artists reinterpret these symbols, incorporating them into contemporary fashion, jewellery, and even digital media. This synthesis of tradition and innovation ensures that Adinkra symbols remain relevant and accessible to younger generations, maintaining their position as an integral part of Ghanaian culture.

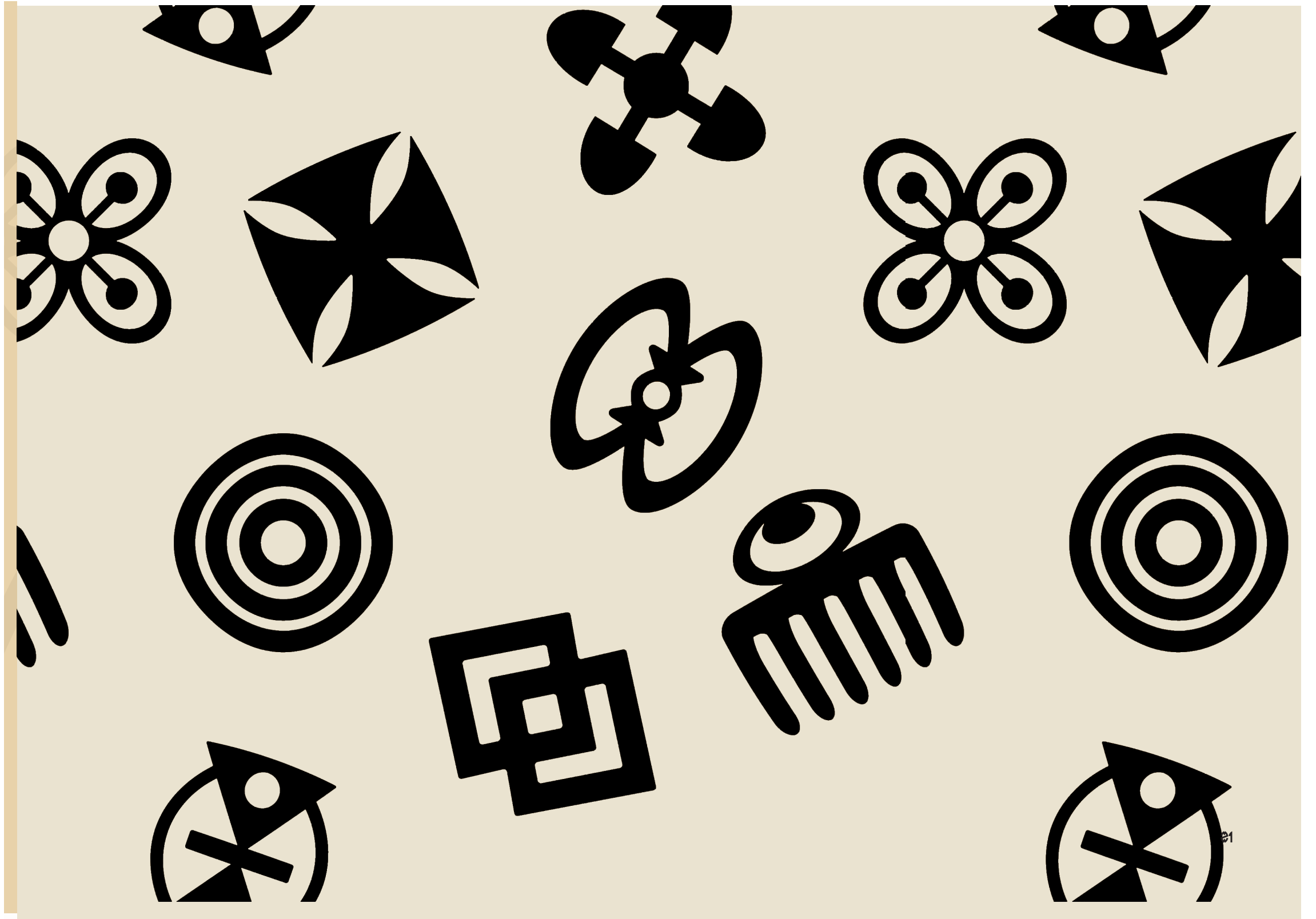




## The Symbolic Language of Adinkra

*Explore the 23 Adinkra Symbols Chosen for the merging and  
creating of the new Symbols*





# Adinkra

## Meanings

Adinkra symbols are a form of symbolic language used by the Akan people of Ghana. Each Adinkra symbol holds a unique meaning and represents a concept, proverb, or philosophical idea. These symbols are traditionally used to communicate important messages, values, and beliefs within Akan culture.

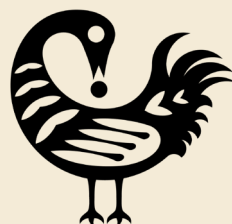
The symbolic language of Adinkra symbols is deeply rooted in the historical and cultural context of the Akan people and is transmitted through the visual representation of each symbol.

Although there are over 100 known Adinkra Symbols, we will look more in-depth at the 23 symbols used in this venture.

### Sankofa

(San-KOH-fah)

*Return and Get It*



The Sankofa symbol is represented by a bird with its head turned backward, taking an egg off its back. It signifies the importance of learning from the past to build a successful future. The word "Sankofa" comes from the Akan language, with "san" meaning "to return," and "ko" meaning "to go." The symbol encourages individuals to reach back into their history, retrieve valuable lessons and wisdom, and use them to make positive progress.

### Dwennimmen

(DWEN-ee-men)

*Ram's Horn*

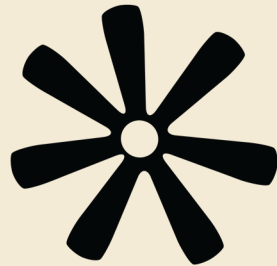


Dwennimmen visual representation a ram's horns, which symbolizes humility, strength, and the idea of "humble strength." The name "Dwennimmen" translates to "ram's horns" in the Akan language. This symbol is often used to encourage individuals to approach life's challenges with a balance of humility and inner strength, embracing the qualities of the ram in their journey of personal growth and achievement.

## Ananse Ntontan

(Ah-NAHN-se N-tohn-tahn)

*Spider Web*



Ananse Ntontan is an Adinkra symbol that represents the mythical spider, Ananse, from the Akan folklore of Ghana.

The symbol depicts a spider's web, symbolizing creativity, wisdom, and the intricate connections in life. It embodies the idea that one must be resourceful, adaptable, and resilient, just like the spider, to navigate life's challenges and achieve success. The Ananse Ntontan is a powerful reminder of the importance of ingenuity and the ability to weave one's destiny amidst the complex and ever-changing nature of existence.

## Adinkrahene

(Ah-DINK-rah-heh-neh)

*Adinkra King*



It is believed that the Adinkrahene symbol served as the motivation behind the creation of all other Adinkra symbols. Known as "Chief of Adinkra symbols" the Adinkrahene symbolizes leadership, power, and authority. Just as a chief holds a central and revered position within a community, this symbol embodies the essence of leadership and the importance of guiding and protecting the people. It serves as a reminder of the cherished traditional and cultural values of the Akan people of Ghana, reflecting the respect and honour given to those in positions of leadership.

## Duafe

(Doo-AH-fay)

*Wooden comb*



The Duafe symbol beautifully embodies the image of a wooden comb, symbolizing not only femininity but also love and concern for others. Moreover, it signifies the importance of maintaining a tidy appearance and practicing proper hygiene. This powerful symbol serves as a gentle reminder to cultivate healthy habits, take care of oneself, and embrace qualities like love and concern for those around us. It encapsulates the essence of both physical and inner beauty, encouraging a harmonious balance between self-care and caring for others.



## Gye Nyame

(je nyah-meh)

*Except God*



Gye Nyame holds profound symbolism, embodying the omnipotence of God and the inherent accountability of individuals to a higher power. Its literal translation is “except God,” and for centuries, this potent symbol has been revered in Africa. Even in modern-day Ghana, Gye Nyame remains widely utilized, underscoring the paramount importance of one’s religious or spiritual convictions. Through this emblem, the everlasting connection to a divine force is acknowledged, reinforcing the reverence and acknowledgment of a greater presence in life’s journey.

## Nyansapo

(N-yahn-sah-poh)

*Wisdom Knot*

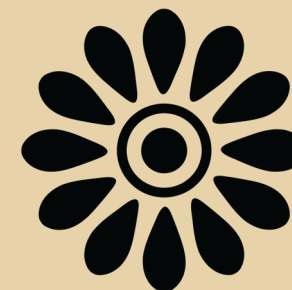


In certain circles, the Nyansapo symbol is known as the “Knot of Wisdom.” It encapsulates virtues like sage leadership, inventiveness, intelligence, and patience. The knot itself comprises intricate interweaving lines forming a captivating spiral, symbolizing the profound interconnection between knowledge and wisdom. Encouragingly, people are inspired to pursue wisdom and understanding in every facet of life through this symbol. It serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of education and learning, prompting individuals to embark on a journey of enlightenment and self-discovery.

## Mako

(Mah-koh)

*Pepper*



The Mako symbol represents the word “pepper,” conveying the idea that peppers do not all mature simultaneously. This symbol personifies the concepts of inequality and uneven development, encouraging people to support those who are less fortunate. It serves as a reminder of the ever-changing nature of fortunes and inspires compassion and generosity among individuals. By embracing the Mako symbol’s message, people are encouraged to extend a helping hand to others and foster a sense of unity and empathy in their communities.

## Mmere Dane

(Ah-NAHN-se N-tohn-tahn)

*Time Changes*

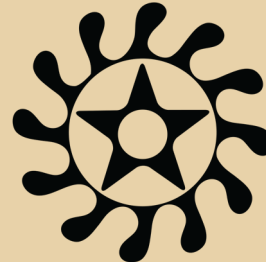


Embodying the essence of “time changes,” the Mmere Dane symbol serves as a potent reminder of life’s impermanence. Its meaning, translated as “time changes,” urges individuals to embrace humility and cherish the present moment, for nothing remains constant forever. This powerful symbol prompts reflection on the fleeting nature of good fortune, emphasizing the inevitability of life’s transitions and uncertainties, encouraging people to appreciate and make the most of the time they have.

## Sesa Wo Suban

(Say-sah woh soo-bahn)

*I Change My Life*

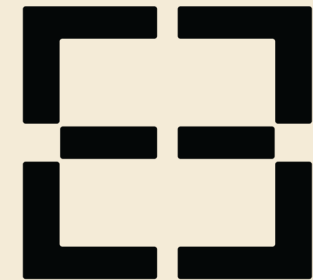


In the Akan language, the phrase “Change or transform your character” is beautifully expressed as “Sesa Wo Suban.” This profound symbol beckons us towards self-improvement and personal growth, urging us to release harmful thoughts and behaviours and embrace constructive paths instead. The image of a butterfly emerging from its cocoon embodies the transformative essence of “Sesa Wo Suban,” symbolizing the liberation and positive change that is within our grasp.

## Woforo Dua Paa

(Woh-FOH-roh DU-ah pah ah)

*When You Climb A Good Tree*



The saying “when you climb a good tree, you are given a push” embodies the powerful symbol of Woforo Dua Pa A, reflecting encouragement, support, and cooperation. This meaningful concept underscores that those who lend their support to noble endeavours will, in turn, receive assistance, emphasizing the importance of collective effort and mutual aid in achieving shared goals.



## Fawohodie

(Fah-woh-hoh-dee)

*Freedom*



The Fawohodie symbolizes emancipation, freedom, and independence, representing the empowerment to forge one's own path and shape one's destiny, free from external constraints. It stands as a powerful emblem of the struggle for African people's liberation from colonialism and various oppressions. It reinforces the idea that individuals possess the agency to take charge of their lives, pursuing their dreams and aspirations unburdened by societal norms. Encouraging self-determination and self-reliance, the Fawohodie inspires people to work resolutely towards their goals, transcending limitations imposed from the outside world.

## Akoma

(Ah-KOH-mah)

*Heart*

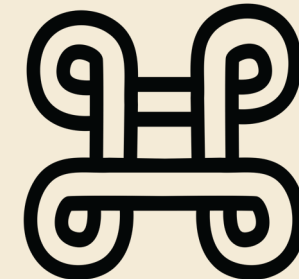


The Akoma symbol, a profound representation in both spoken and written language, exudes qualities of patience and tolerance, akin to the traditional ideograph of a heart. Additionally, it carries the essence of unity, understanding, and agreement. Gazing upon the Adinkra symbol serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of embracing patience and tolerance in everyday situations, even amidst challenges. By embodying these virtues, individuals can foster peace and harmony with those around them, nurturing a more compassionate and harmonious world.

## Mpatapo

(em-pah-TAH-poh)

*Knots Of Reconciliation*



The Mpatapo symbol, characterized by a knot without a distinct beginning or end, embodies the essence of peace, particularly after times of conflict, while also embodying forgiveness and reconciliation. It serves as a powerful reminder that peace can be attained at any moment, even amid formidable challenges, and emphasizes the importance of forgiveness and empathy in fostering enduring harmony.

## Nyame Biribi Wo Soro

(N-yah-meh Bee-ree-bee Woh So-ro)

*God In The Heavens*



The Nyame Biribi Wo Soro symbol encapsulates the phrase “God, there is something in the heavens,” signifying a profound sense of faith, hope, and inspiration within oneself. This symbol acts as a powerful reminder of the presence of a divine force that governs the universe, urging people to place their trust in it for guidance and protection. Furthermore, it conveys the belief that each individual has a predetermined path to follow, emphasizing the importance of embracing destiny’s course.

## Nkonsonkonson

(N-kon-son-kon-son)

*Chain Link*

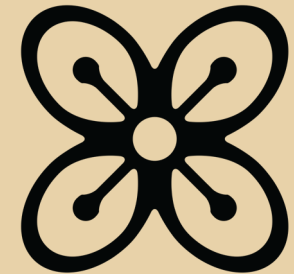


The Nkonsonkonson symbol beautifully portrays two links joined together in a chain, symbolizing the essence of togetherness and community strength. This powerful symbol reminds us that our collective efforts empower us beyond measure, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and peaceful coexistence in reaching our goals. Moreover, it serves as a profound metaphor for the interconnectedness of all things, urging us to acknowledge and cherish the meaningful connections we share with one another.

## Bese Saka

(BAY-say SAH-kah)

*Sack Of Coal Nuts*



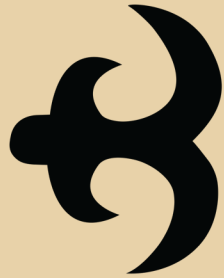
Bese Saka, the captivating symbol of the cola nut, embodying a rich tapestry of wealth, power, and abundant commerce. In West Africa, these prized cola nuts held a prominent place as a valuable cash crop. This emblem celebrates the profound importance of attaining economic success through trade and underscores the advantages of engaging in vibrant commerce and exchange.



## Akoko Nan

(Ah-KOH-koh Nahn)

*The Leg Of The Hen*



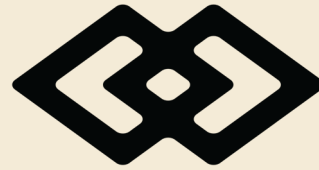
The Akoko Nan, a representation of a chicken's leg, carries a profound African proverb: "The leg of a hen steps on the child chick but it does not kill the chick."

This Adinkra symbol symbolizes the nurturing and disciplining of children, embodying the essence of parental love, care, and guidance. It stands as a powerful reminder of the significance of creating a safe and nurturing atmosphere to raise children, fostering their growth and development with compassion and wisdom.

## Epa

(EH-pah)

*Handcuffs*



The Epa symbol portrays the handcuffs, historically associated with slavery and captivity in West Africa due to colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade. Nevertheless, this symbol holds dual significance as it also represents justice and defiance against slavery, as African communities embraced the handcuffs to uphold and enforce the rule of law. Consequently, the Epa symbol powerfully conveys both the sombre history of enslavement and the enduring struggle for freedom and justice, making it a poignant reminder of the past and a symbol of hope for a better future.

## Nkyinkyim

( In-CHIN-cheem)

*Twisting*



The Nkyinkyim Adinkra symbol embodies the profound proverb, "The path of life is winding," with its name itself, Nkyinkyim, meaning "twisted." Through its contorted and rotating form, this symbol serves as a perpetual reminder of the necessity to adapt and persevere to achieve success in life. It visually underscores the significance of flexibility in confronting challenges and the value of embracing change as we navigate through various situations on our journey.

## Akoben

(Ah-KOH-ben)

*Valour*

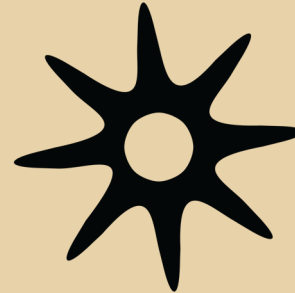


The Akoben symbol portrays a resounding battle horn, embodying the essence of alertness and circumspection. This emblem stands as a constant reminder to stay vigilant, mindful of potential threats, and ever prepared to protect oneself and the community when the need arises.

## Nsoromma

(En-soh-rohm-mah)

*Children Of The Heavens*



The Nsoromma symbol embodies a profound sense of responsibility and vigilant watchfulness. Especially within the context of marriage, it becomes a powerful emblem representing love, unbreakable bonds, and unwavering faithfulness. Derived from the Akan word for "star," the name "Nsoromma" links this symbol to celestial luminosity. It serves as an ever-present reminder of divine providence, assuring us that God's watchful gaze extends over all humanity, uniting us in a sacred, interconnected web.

## Eban

(Eh-bahn)

*Fence*



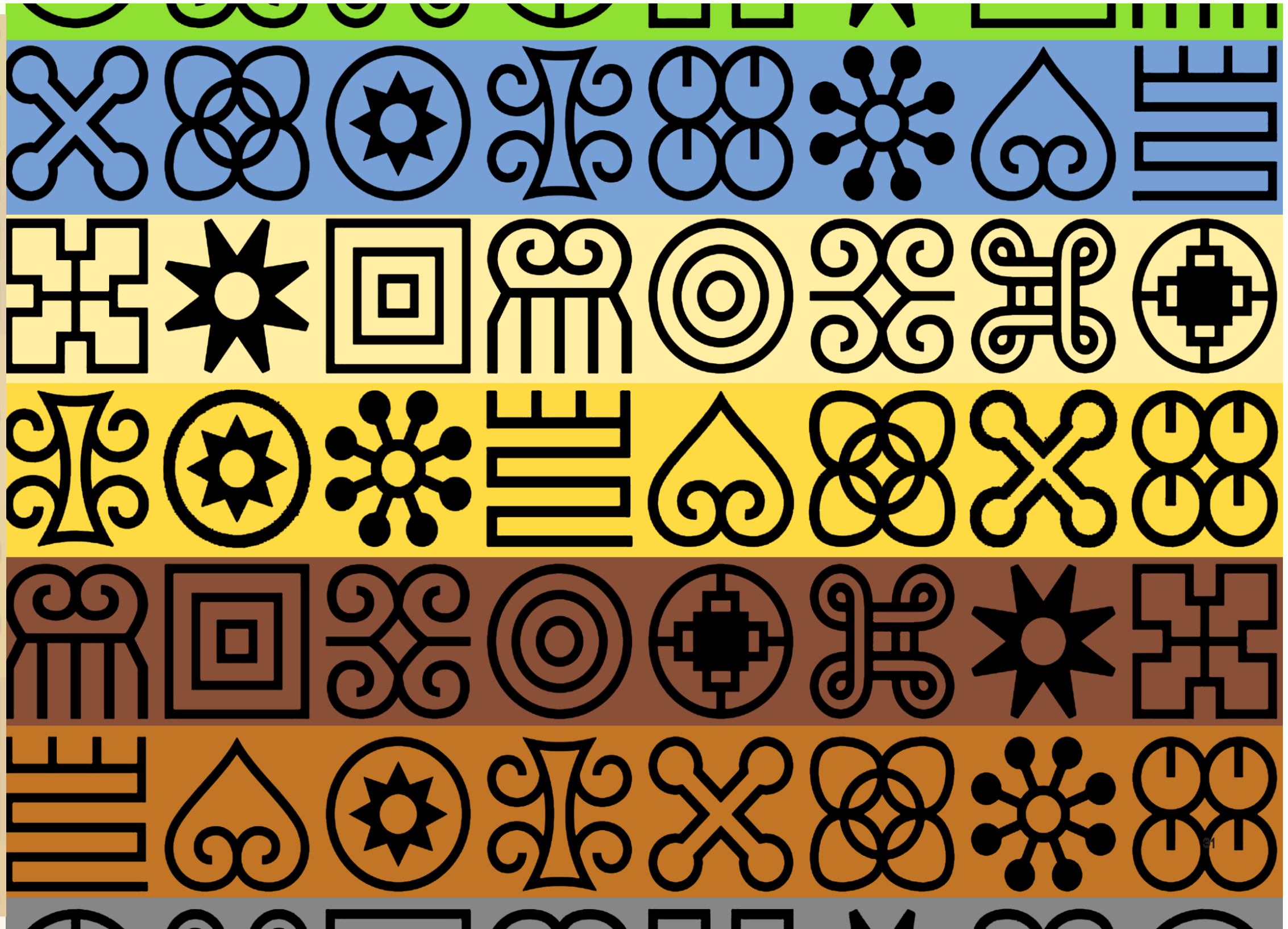
The Eban symbol embodies the literal meaning of "fence," representing the protection and sanctuary that a home offers. This powerful icon conveys the profound concept that a home can envelop a person with feelings of love, comfort, and safety. It serves as a reminder for individuals to cherish their families and recognize the significance of unity, love, and harmony in their lives. In Adinkra textiles and jewelry, the Eban symbol finds frequent usage, symbolizing the importance of family and the sacredness of one's place of residence.



## The Symbolism of Colour

*Exploring the Colours and their symbolic meanings Adinkra Symbols*





# The Significance of Colours in Adinkra Symbols

We have now explored the rich history and symbolism of Adinkra symbols, delving into their significance in Akan culture. Now, we venture into a captivating world of colours that breathe life into these timeless emblems. We unravel the importance of colour in Adinkra and its profound impact on the meanings of each symbol.

Colour, in the realm of Adinkra symbolism, is not merely an aesthetic choice; it is a language of its own, speaking volumes about the essence and interpretation of each symbol. Each hue is thoughtfully selected to amplify the message of the symbol, evoking emotions, and establishing a strong visual connection with the viewer. Colours in Adinkra not only enhance the beauty of the designs but also imbue them with cultural and spiritual significance.

## Black

Black is one of the most significant colours in Adinkra, representing spiritual strength, maturity, and reverence for ancestors. It symbolizes the unknown, the night, and the ancestors' spirits, making it a colour of great spiritual importance.

## White

White signifies purity, peace, and harmony. It is also associated with the spirit world and represents the spirits of the departed. White in Adinkra designs fosters a sense of calmness and spirituality.

## Red

The colour red represents bloodshed, sacrifice, and violence. In Adinkra, it is a potent symbol of the historical struggles of the Akan people and their determination to protect their land and freedom.

<div><div>Green</div><div>80%</div><div>Green signifies growth, vitality, and renewal. It is a representation of Mother Earth's fertility and is associated with agriculture and prosperity</div><div>60%</div><div>40%</div><div>20%</div></div>	<div><div>Brown</div><div>80%</div><div>Brown embodies the earth, humility, and endurance. It connects Adinkra to the soil, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a strong connection with nature.</div><div>60%</div><div>40%</div><div>20%</div></div>	<div><div>Purple</div><div>80%</div><div>Purple is a rare colour in Adinkra, representing spirituality, transformation, and wisdom. It is often used in designs related to initiation and spiritual growth.</div><div>60%</div><div>40%</div><div>20%</div></div>
<div><div>Blue</div><div>100%</div><div>Blue symbolizes love, harmony, and peaceful coexistence. It represents the nurturing qualities of water and reflects the Akan's relationship with their aquatic environment.</div><div>80%</div><div>60%</div><div>40%</div><div>20%</div></div>	<div><div>Gold</div><div>80%</div><div>Gold is highly revered in Adinkra culture. It represents spiritual purity, wealth, and royalty. Gold is a colour reserved for the most sacred and significant designs.</div><div>60%</div><div>40%</div><div>20%</div></div>	<div><div>Orange</div><div>80%</div><div>Orange signifies energy, enthusiasm, and creativity. It is a vibrant and expressive colour used to evoke a sense of optimism and joy.</div><div>60%</div><div>40%</div><div>20%</div></div>
<div><div>Yellow</div><div>100%</div><div>Yellow is a symbol of preciousness, royalty, and wealth. It represents the celebrated Akan gold, which has historically been a source of power and prosperity.</div><div>80%</div><div>60%</div><div>20%</div></div>	<div><div>. Silver</div><div>80%</div><div>Silver symbolizes elegance, serenity, and feminine energy. It represents moonlight and is associated with the feminine divine principle.</div><div>60%</div><div>20%</div></div>	<div><div>Pink</div><div>80%</div><div>Pink is a symbol of love, compassion, and tenderness. In Adinkra, it represents feminine energy and nurturance.</div><div>60%</div><div>20%</div></div>









05

## The New Symbols

*Presenting The 16 new symbols*

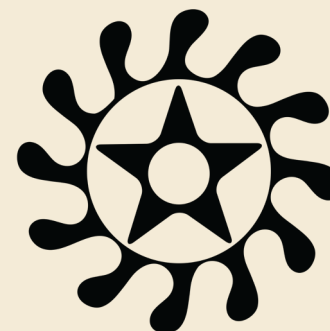








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## Mmere Dane

(Ah-NAHN-se N-tohn-tahn)

*Time Changes*

*Mmere Dane represents the examination of past experiences, allowing wisdom and growth to guide our actions. The symbol features three backward-pointing arrowheads arranged in a circular formation, symbolizing the continuity of wisdom and the cyclical nature of learning.*

## Sesa Wo Suban

(Say-sah woh soo-bahn)

*I Change My Life*

*Sesa wo Suban central idea is that change is inevitable and essential for personal development and success. The symbol portrays a stylized heart-shaped knot with a pointed and curved end, symbolizing the dynamics of life's journey and the openness to change.*

life, growth, and renewal

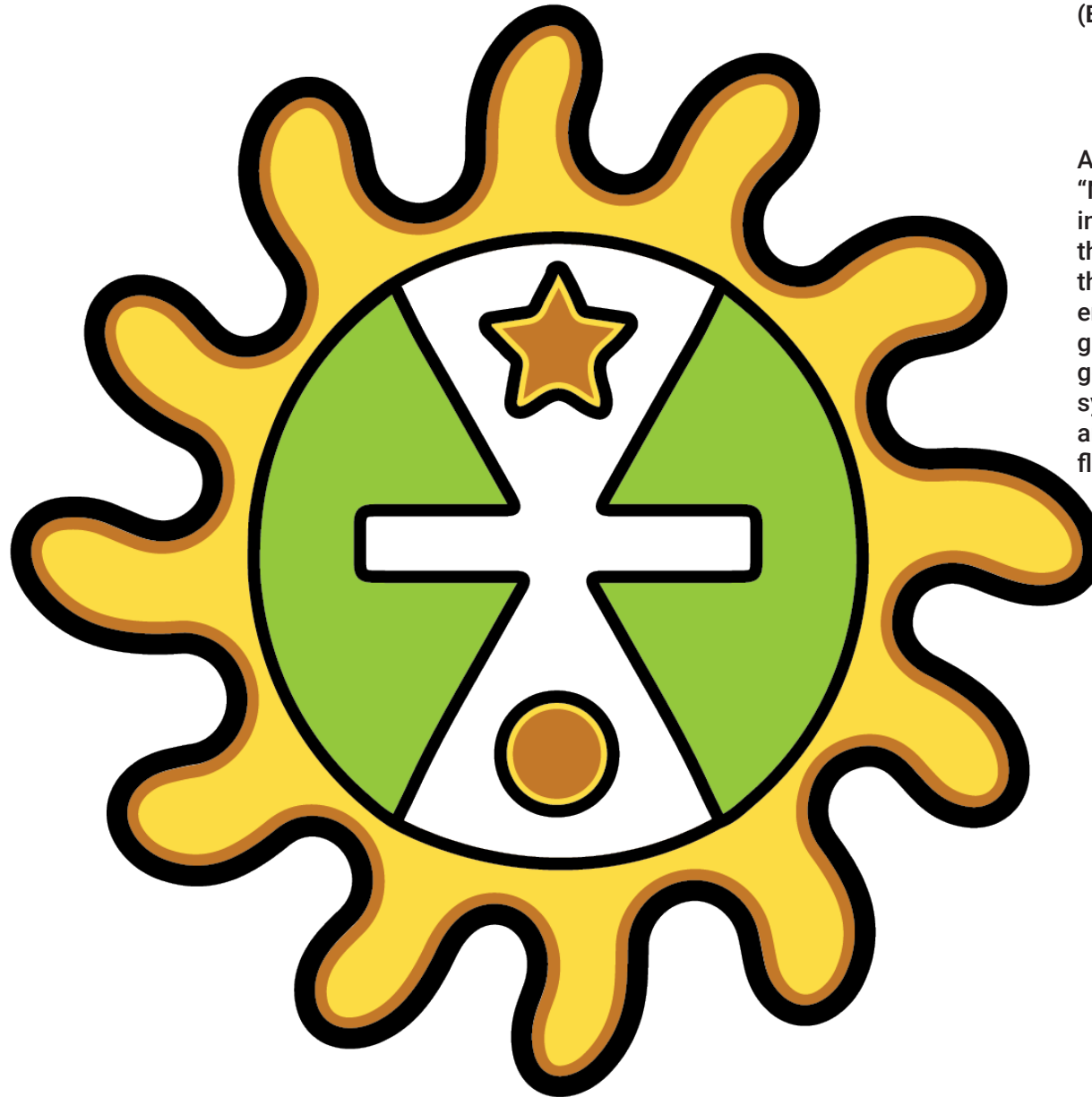
wisdom, enlightenment, prosperity

symbolizing growth, transformation, optimism  
to embrace change

# Nkonta mmere

(*“Change through Change”*)

As societies evolve and face various challenges, “Nkonta mmere” serves as a guiding light, encouraging individuals and communities to adapt, learn, and thrive. “Nkonta mmere” serves as a timeless reminder that change is an integral part of life’s journey, and by embracing it, we can achieve personal and communal growth, allowing us to create a better world for generations to come. This powerful and inspiring symbol is a tribute to the resilience of the human spirit and the potential we all possess to adapt, learn, and flourish through change.







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## Sankofa

(San-KOH-fah)

*Return and Get It*

*The Sankofa bird, depicted with its neck turned backward, reaches for an egg on its back. This egg symbolizes the wisdom and knowledge of our ancestors, emphasizing the importance of understanding our past to navigate the challenges of the present and build a sustainable future.*

## Dwennimmen

(DWEN-ee-men)

*Ram's Horn*

*Dwennimmen symbolizes the resilience and determination required to protect and nurture the Earth, even in the face of daunting challenges posed by environmental issues.*

growth, harmony, life

wealth, abundance,  
preciousness of nature

grounding, stability, foundation



## Nananom Aduane ne

(Nah-nah-nohm Ah-doo-ah-neh neh Ah-sah-seh)  
*"Guardians of the Earth"*

"Nananom Aduane ne Asase" is a profound Adinkra symbol that resonates with modern-day environmental concerns. It combines the wisdom of the past, the strength to overcome challenges, and the responsibility to protect and cherish our planet. As we embrace the spirit of Nananom Aduane ne Asase, we are reminded of our duty as stewards of the Earth and the importance of preserving its beauty and resources for generations to come.



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## Duafe

(Doo-AH-fay)

*Wooden comb*

*Duafe symbolizes beauty, growth, and nurturing care. When woven into the new symbol reinforces the idea that sustainable growth requires tending to our resources, environments, and communities with care and respect, much like one nurture their hair with a comb.*

## Nkonsonkonson

(N-kon-son-kon-son)

*Chain Link*

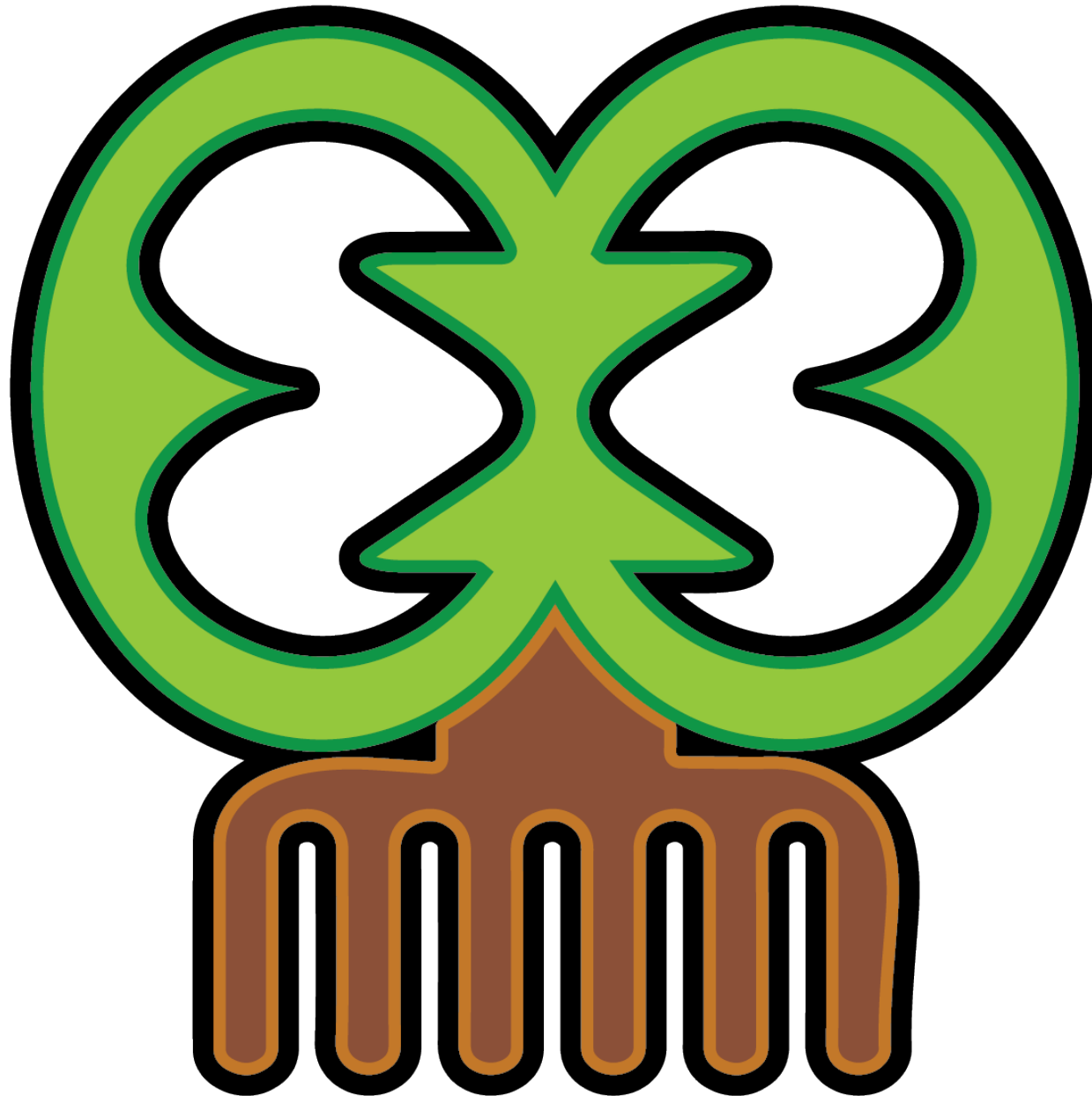
*Nkonsonkonson represents unity, human relations, and the bond that unites all people. By incorporating "Nkonsonkonson" the new design underscores the need for collaboration and shared responsibility in achieving sustainable development, emphasizing that our actions must be interconnected to achieve lasting impact.*



growth, vitality, flourishing of life

worth of nurturing our environment

grounding essence of soil



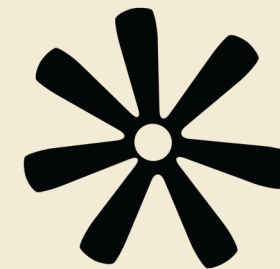
# Nsuaefo Nkonson

(Nsuaefo Nkonson)

The essence of “Nsuaefo Nkonson” lies in its representation of sustainable growth, emphasizing the importance of nurturing and cultivating progress in a manner that respects the delicate equilibrium of nature and human relations. This symbol serves as a timeless reminder of our interconnectedness with the environment and each other, urging us to embrace responsible practices that foster prosperity for present and future generations.



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## Dwennimmen

(DWEN-ee-men)

*Ram's Horn*

*Dwennimmen, the ram's horns, signifies humility, strength, and the courage to overcome challenges..*

## Ananse Ntontan

(Ah-NAHN-se N-tohn-tahn)

*Spider Web*

*Ananse Ntontan, the spider's web, represents wisdom, creativity, and the intricate connections in the universe. It symbolizes how all life forms are interlinked and dependent on each other.*



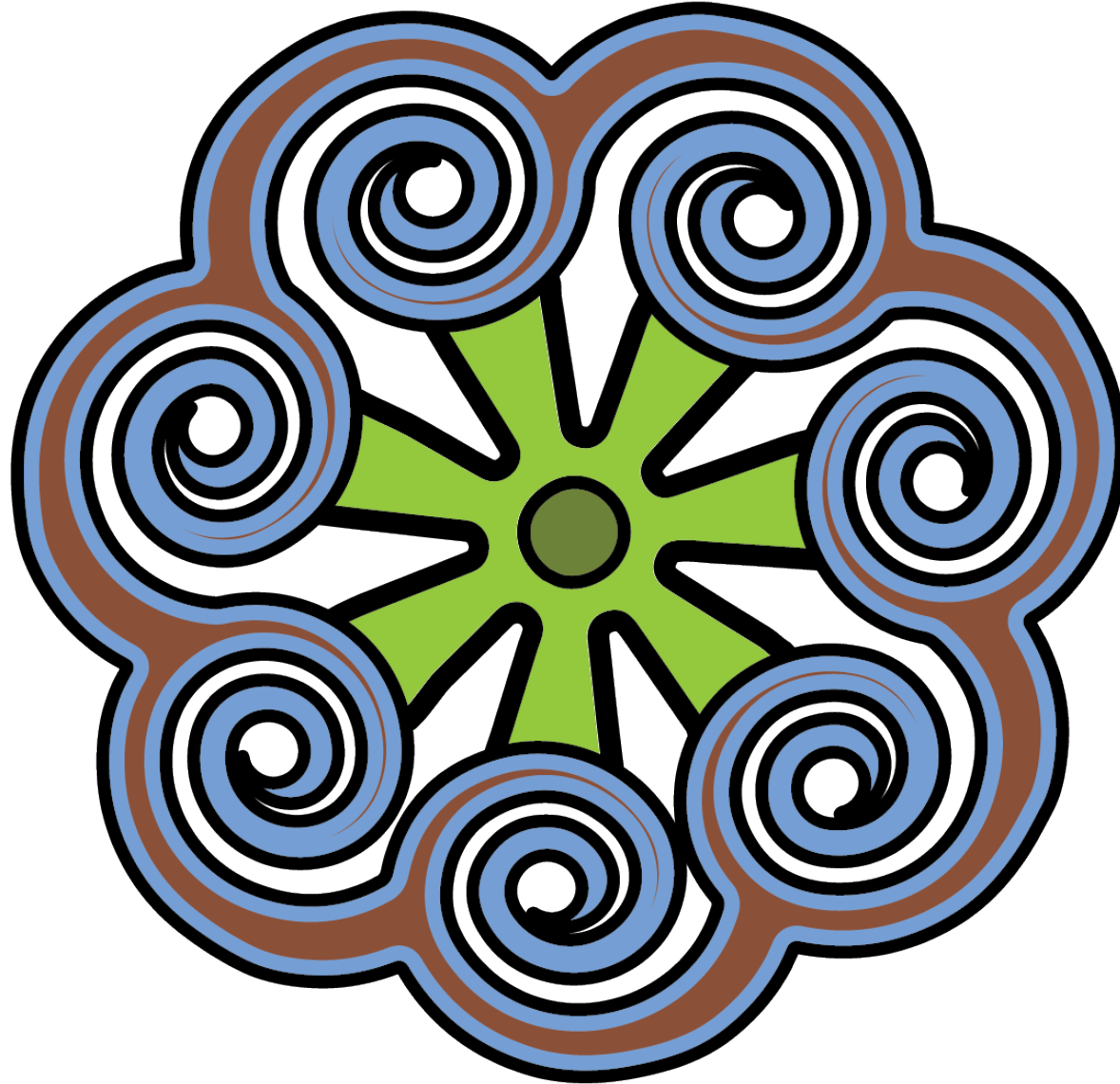
growth, renewal, flourishing future



interconnectedness of all life  
under the sky



fertile soil, grounding foundation



## Asase ye Duru

(Ah-~~San-Hye-Doo~~ "Earth's Resilience")

"Asase ye Duru" directly translates to "Earth's Resilience" in the Akan language. The symbol encapsulates the indomitable strength and capacity of Mother Earth to endure and rebound despite the adversities posed by human activities and climate change. It carries a profound message of environmental awareness and Earth's ability to recover and thrive when nurtured with care and respect.





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## Mpatapo

(em-pah-TAH-poh)

*Knots Of Reconciliation*

*Mpatapo symbolizes the knot of reconciliation, embodying themes of harmony, unity, and peace making. By incorporating Mpatapo, the design underscores the need for collective action and cooperation among nations, communities, and individuals to address the global challenge of climate change and adopt renewable energy solutions.*

## Nyame Biribi Wo Soro

(N-yah-meh Bee-ree-bee Woh So-ro)

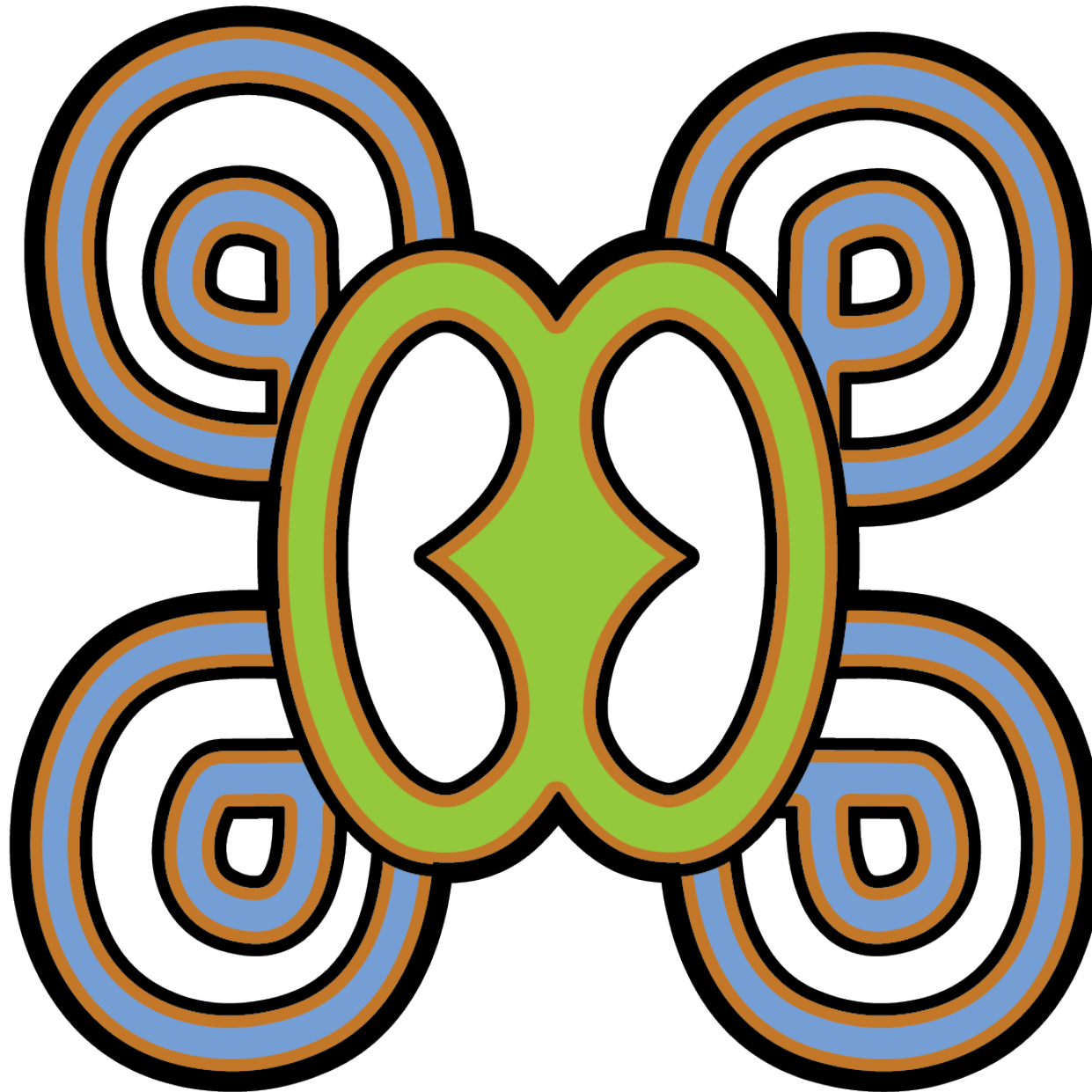
*God In The Heavens*

*Nyame Biribi Wo Soro, translating to "God is in the heavens," represents the omnipresence and divine protection of the Supreme Being. When interwoven into the design, this symbol communicates the idea that divine guidance and support are present in our endeavours to harness renewable energy sources and create a more sustainable world.*

nature, growth, renewable energy

value & abundance of  
sustainable power sources

natural resources under the sky



# Mpalapo Biribi

(M-pa-lah-poh Bee-bee)

The profound message behind “Mpalapo Biribi” centres on advocating for renewable energy solutions as a vital means to combat climate change, reduce carbon emissions, and ensure a sustainable future for our planet. This symbol serves as a potent reminder of our collective responsibility to embrace clean energy alternatives, transitioning away from non-renewable fossil fuels, and ushering in an era of environmental consciousness.



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## Nsoromma

(En-soh-rohm-mah)

*Children Of The Heavens*

*Known as the "Star," Nsoromma symbolizes hope, guidance, and the divine connection between humans and a higher power. The upward-pointing star reminds us to reach for our aspirations and seek guidance from within. By incorporating Nsoromma into the symbol it emphasizes the significance of trusting one's inner compass for direction and enlightenment.*



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## Nyansapo

(N-yahn-sah-poh)

*Wisdom Knot*

*Nyansapon" symbol represents wisdom, knowledge, and the importance of acquiring knowledge from past experiences. It features a wisdom knot that signifies the quest for understanding and learning from life's lessons. By integrating Nyansapon the design underscores the role of wisdom in engaging in an authentic inner dialogue.*

purity, clarity,  
understanding one's true self

recognizing one's worth

tranquillity, peace, introspection.



# Nkoso Asem

(Nkosi Asem)

The heart of Nkoso Asem lies in the significance of self-awareness, introspection, and the constant conversation we have within ourselves. In a world filled with distractions and external influences, this symbol serves as a reminder to pause, listen, and engage in meaningful reflection. It urges individuals to explore their thoughts, emotions, and aspirations, fostering personal growth and a deeper understanding of one's true self.





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## Nsoromma

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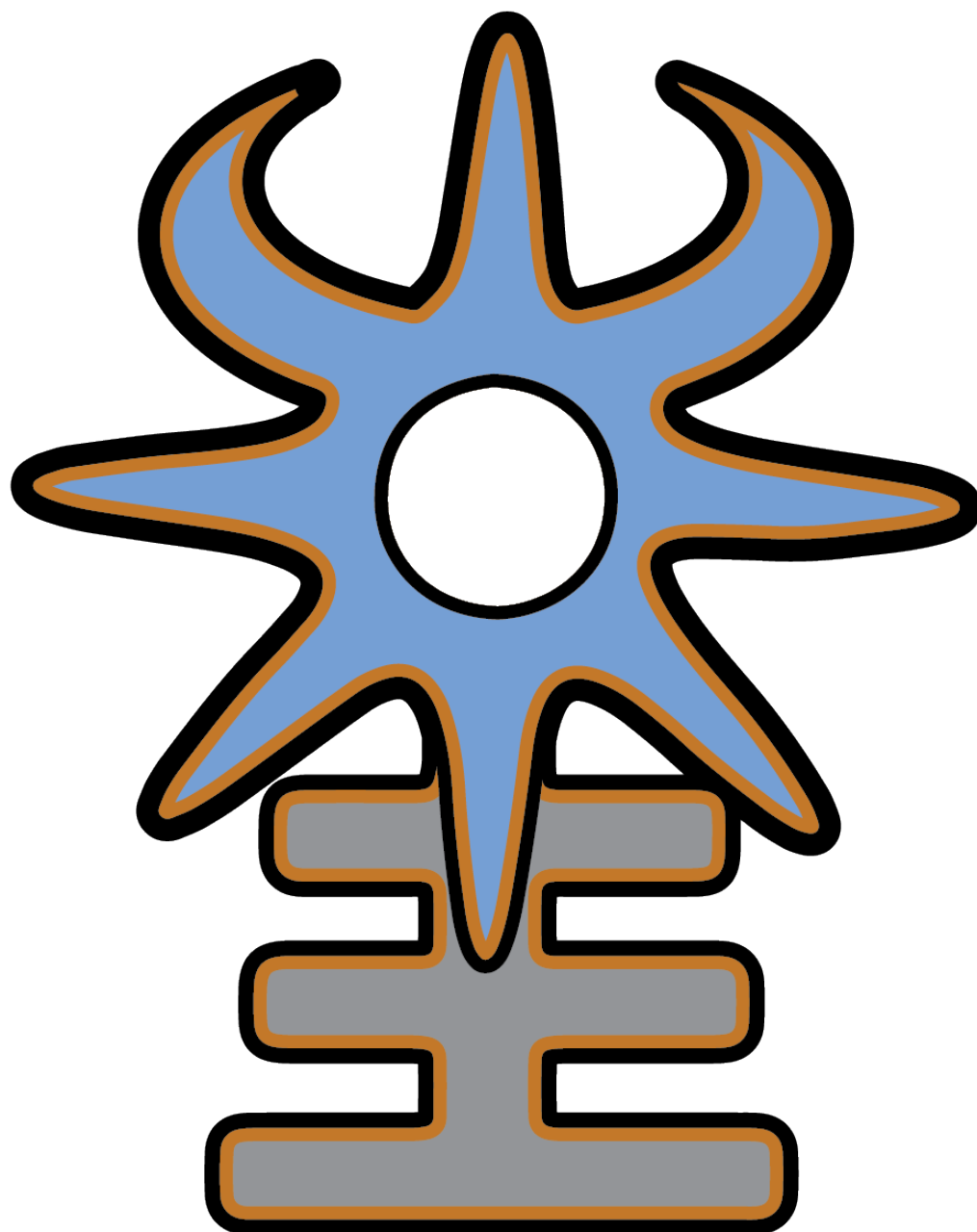
digital infrastructure, hardware, software



valuable exchange, prosperity by digital innovation



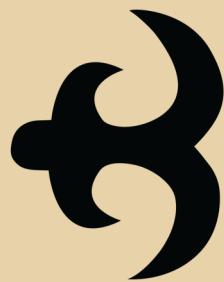
tranquillity, peace, introspection.



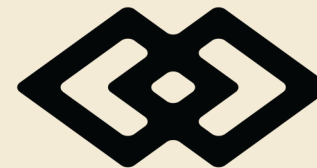
# Nkaninkontom

(Nkaninkontom)

The core message behind Nkaninkontom revolves around the profound impact of digital technology on modern society. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected through the digital realm, this symbol seeks to embrace and celebrate the positive aspects of this technological revolution while also urging caution and responsibility in its use. Nkaninkontom embodies the potential for knowledge-sharing, unity, and progress that digital connectivity offers.



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## Akoko Nan

(Ah-KOH-koh Nahn)

### *The Leg Of The Hen*

*The Akoko Nan symbol portrays the leg of a hen, symbolizing nurturing and protection. By integrating Akoko Nan into the design it emphasizes the nurturing aspect of fostering empathy and compassion towards one another, promoting an environment of unity and support.*

## Epa

(EH-pah)

### *Handcuffs*

*The Epa symbol is associated with handcuffs, signifying law, justice, and the concept of crime and punishment. In the context of the design, the Epa represents the need to transcend the limitations of rigid judgment and punitive measures, emphasizing the importance of embracing understanding and reconciliation.*



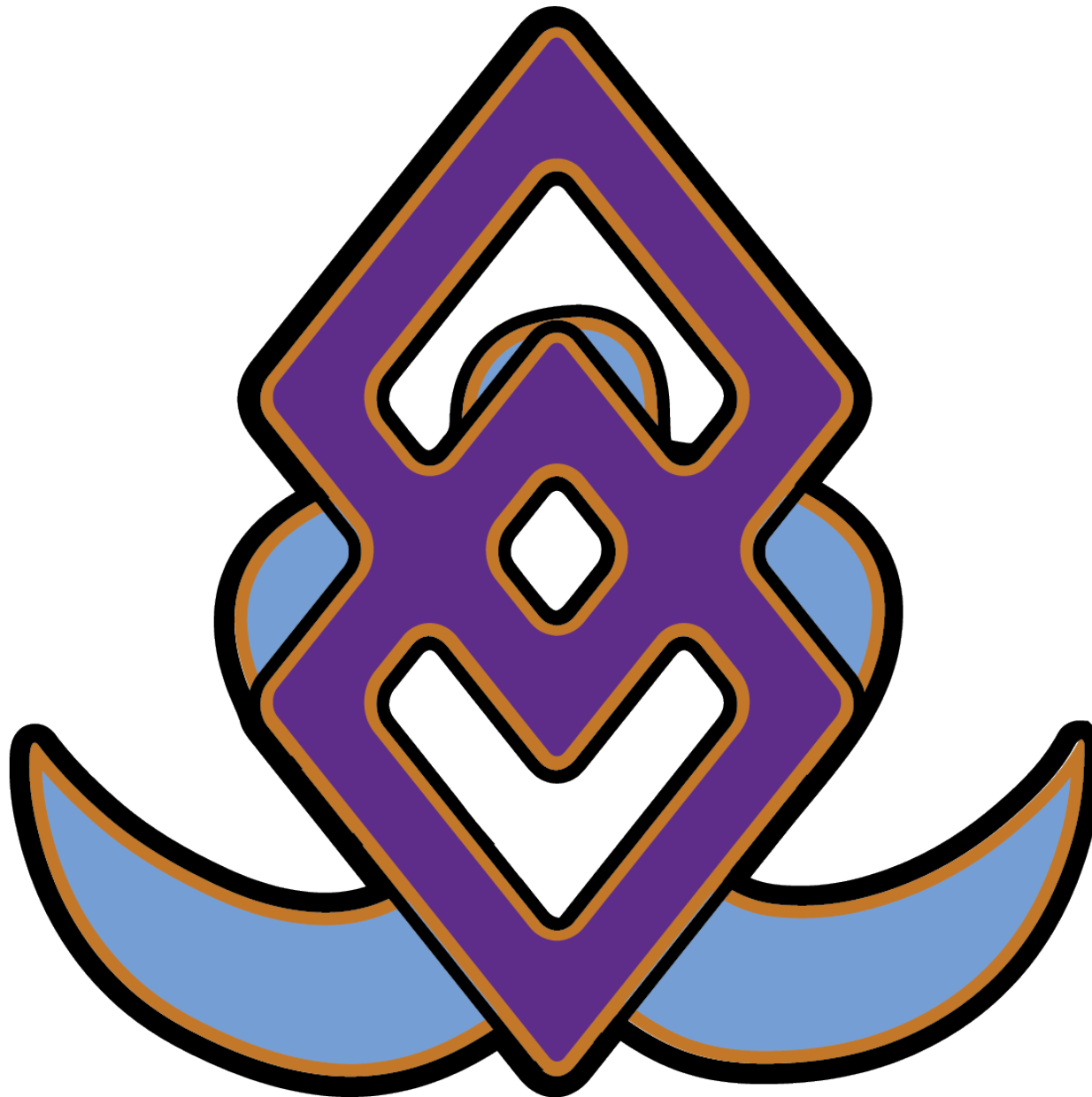
balance, harmony



wisdom, enlightenment



peace, calmness



## Nkuniṃ Epa

(Nikoo neem Eh'gab)it"

The essence of "Nkuniṃ Epa" lies in promoting a society where individuals triumph over judgment, bias, and discrimination, fostering an environment of inclusivity, compassion, and understanding. The symbol serves as a reminder of the significance of open-mindedness, acceptance, and seeking common ground to achieve true victory, not through division, but through unity and respect for one another.





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## Gye Nyame

(je nyah-meh)

*Except God*

*Gye Nyame symbol, it translates to "Except for God" or "Only God." It represents the omnipotence and supremacy of the Divine Being. When integrated into the design this symbol emphasizes the core concept of divine protection, reminding us that our safety and well-being are under the watchful eye of the Divine.*

## Mako

(Mah-koh)

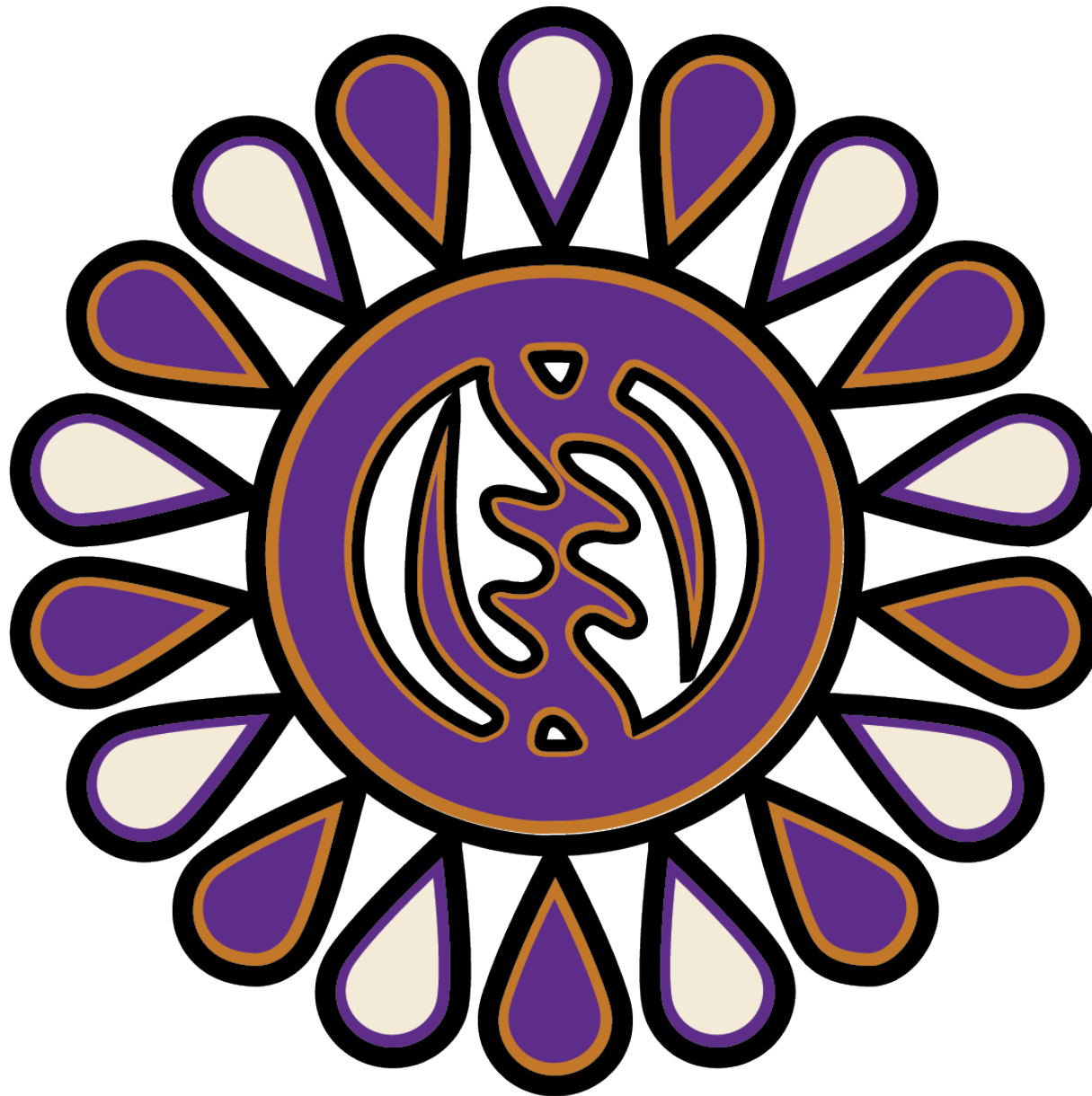
*Pepper*

*Mako symbolizes the fiery nature of pepper and is often associated with vitality, protection against evil forces, and the ability to ward off negative influences. By incorporating Mako into the design it imparts a strong sense of vigour and resilience, signifying the fierce nature of divine protection.*

spirituality, mysticism, the divine

richness & brilliance of the divine

purity, innocence,  
seeking protection & guidance



## Nyame Nhyira

(Nyame Nhyira)

Nyame Nhyira is not just a mere symbol; it carries profound significance and serves as a source of solace and hope for individuals facing modern-day challenges. It stands as a testament to the enduring faith in divine providence, inspiring people to find comfort in the embrace of the spiritual realm during life's trials. This new Adinkra symbol seeks to bridge the gap between the material and spiritual worlds, reminding us that divine protection is always within reach for those who seek it with a sincere heart. As the world continues to navigate the complexities of the modern era, "Nyame Nhyira" serves as a guiding light, instilling the belief that we are never alone in our journey through life.



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## Duafe

(Doo-AH-fay)

*Wooden comb*

*Known as the comb, Duafe signifies the importance of beauty, self-care, and grooming. It represents the idea that appearance and dignity are intertwined. By integrating Duafe into the design, the symbol highlights the grace, elegance, and self-assuredness of queens as they carry themselves with poise and dignity.*



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## Adinkrahene

(Ah-DINK-rah-heh-neh)

*Adinkra King*

*Adinkrahene is represented by a large, central circle adorned with smaller interconnected circles. It symbolizes greatness, charisma, and the chief or king's authority. By incorporating Adinkrahene, the design emphasizes the regal and influential nature of queens, portraying them as powerful figures who inspire and guide their communities.*

royalty, power, nobility

opulence, prestige, strength

purity, integrity, wisdom



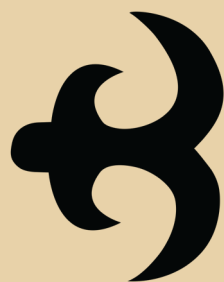
# Adwera Nea Ohemaa

(Adwera Nea Oh-heh-mah)

Adwera Nea Ohemaa serves as a beacon of inspiration and admiration for women in leadership roles, encouraging them to embrace their inherent strength, beauty, and grace. Moreover, this symbol acts as a reminder to society of the immense contributions of queens throughout history and the importance of empowering women to take on leadership roles in contemporary times.

In a world where gender equality and female empowerment are essential pursuits, Adwera Nea Ohemaa stands as a symbol of encouragement and a call to recognize and support the strength of queens in shaping a brighter and more equitable future.





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## Akoko Nan

(Ah-KOH-koh Nahn)

### *The Leg Of The Hen*

*Akoko Nan is symbolized by the hen's leg, representing the strength and resourcefulness of the hen. This symbol conveys the importance of being vigilant, persistent, and enduring in the face of challenges, much like the hen diligently scratches the ground in search of food for its chicks. Akoko Nan teaches the value of perseverance and adaptability in navigating life's hurdles.*

## Gye Nyame

(je nyah-meh)

### *Except God*

*By incorporating Gye Nyame the design emphasizes the acknowledgment of a higher power and the wisdom to trust in divine guidance.*

stability, grounding,  
practical wisdom

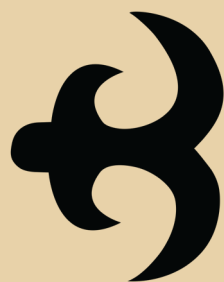
preciousness of wisdom



## Akoko Gyefo

(~~Akoko Gyefo~~ "The Hen Treads Carefully")

The essence of Akoko Gyefo revolves around the values of wisdom and endurance, two qualities that have proven indispensable in navigating the complexities of the modern world. This symbol serves as a reminder of the importance of acquiring knowledge, making informed decisions, and cultivating the strength to persist despite adversity. It embodies the Akan adage, "Akoko Nan," meaning "The hen treads carefully," signifying the necessity of thoughtful consideration before acting.



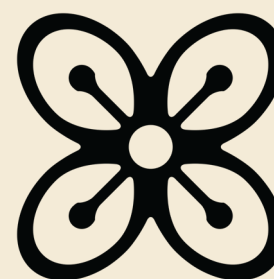
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## Akoko Nan

(Ah-KOH-koh Nahn)

### *The Leg Of The Hen*

Known as the "Heart" or "Love" symbol, "Akoma" embodies the essence of compassion, patience, and understanding. By integrating Akoma, the new symbol underscores the significance of genuine love as a catalyst for positive change and the strengthening of bonds between individuals and communities.



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## Bese Saka

(BAY-say SAH-kah)

### *Sack Of Coal Nuts*

:As a symbol of greatness, leadership, and charisma, Adinkrahene represents the inherent power within every individual to be a positive force in the lives of others. By incorporating Adinkrahene, the design emphasizes the importance of embracing our leadership roles, both big and small, to foster love, unity, and empowerment within our communities.

purity, harmony, unity

foundation of love

enthusiasm, energy, creativity



# Nkyinkyim Nkyerewa

(Nkyinkyim Nkyerewa Ah-say)

The central message of “Nkyinkyim Nkyerewa Ase” revolves around celebrating and cherishing the innate human capacity for creativity and the unrestricted flow of ideas. The symbol serves as a profound reminder that each individual possesses the gift of creativity, and it is essential to nurture and cultivate this freedom for personal and collective growth.





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## Dwennimmen

(DWEN-ee-men)

### *Ram's Horn*

*By integrating Dwennimmen, the new symbol conveys the message that embracing diversity can lead to collective strength and resilience.*



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## Nkyinkyim

( In-CHIN-cheem)

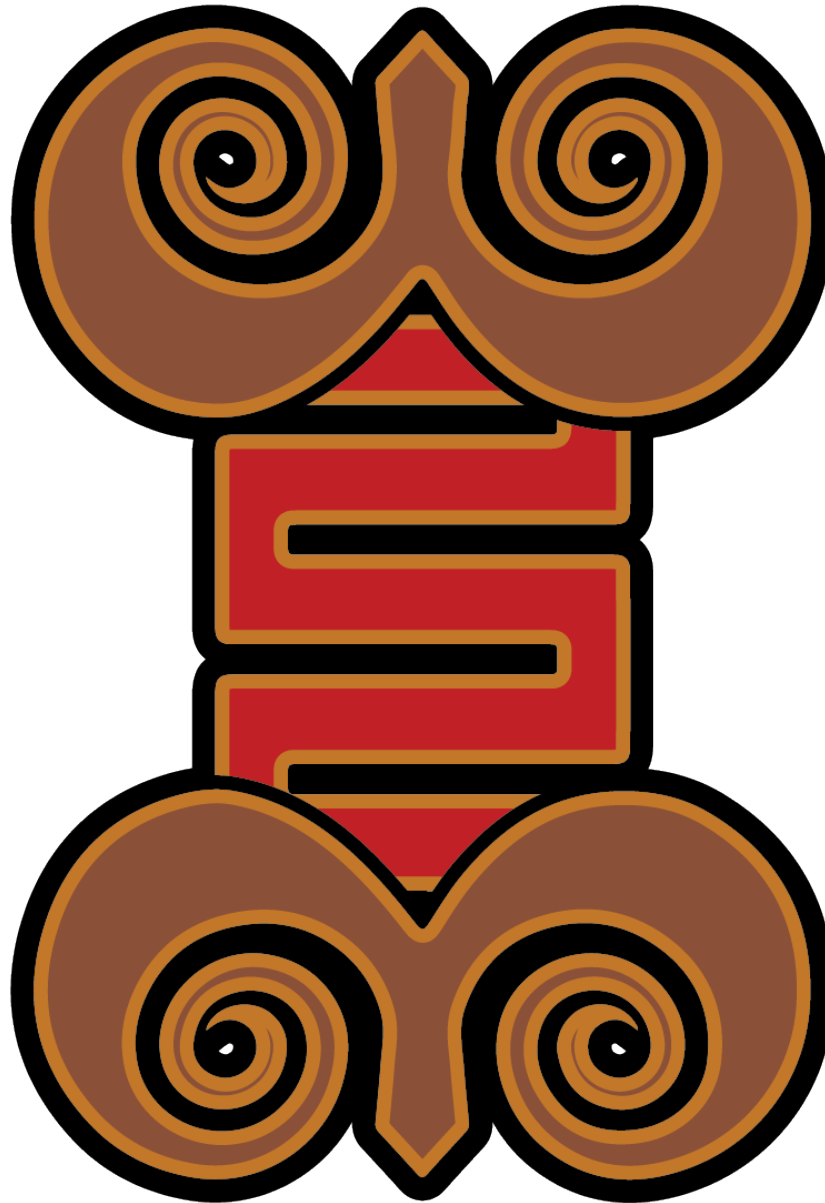
### *Twisting*

*Nkyinkyim resembles a twisting and turning path or road, symbolizing the dynamics of life's journey and the unpredictability of human experiences. By incorporating Nkyinkyim the design emphasizes the significance of acknowledging and respecting the diverse paths individuals may take in life.*

value of unity

preciousness of wisdom

energy, passion



# Adwenninkyim

(Adwenninkyim)

Adwenninkyim is not just a symbol; it is a call to action and a reflection of our shared responsibility to create a world that embraces and celebrates diversity. It encourages us to acknowledge and appreciate the unique contributions of every individual, fostering an environment of inclusivity and understanding. This new Adinkra symbol seeks to inspire a global movement towards unity in diversity, reminding us that together, we can overcome challenges and create a more harmonious and equitable world for all.



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## Akoma

(Ah-KOH-mah)

### Heart

Known as the "Heart" or "Love" symbol, "Akoma" embodies the essence of compassion, patience, and understanding. By integrating Akoma, the new symbol underscores the significance of genuine love as a catalyst for positive change and the strengthening of bonds between individuals and communities.

## Fawohodie

(Fah-woh-hoh-dee)

### Freedom

: As a symbol of greatness, leadership, and charisma, Adinkrahene represents the inherent power within every individual to be a positive force in the lives of others. By incorporating Adinkrahene, the design emphasizes the importance of embracing our leadership roles, both big and small, to foster love, unity, and empowerment within our communities.

value of unity

preciousness of wisdom

energy, passion



## Adinkrahoma

(~~Adinkrahoma~~ "mah)

Adinkrahoma revolves around the notion of "Empowered Love," which goes beyond conventional expressions of affection and compassion. It encompasses the idea that genuine love can transform lives and communities, inspiring individuals to empower one another and create positive change. This symbol serves as a reminder of our shared responsibility to spread love, support, and encouragement to uplift those in need and to build a harmonious global society.





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## Akoma

(Ah-KOH-mah)

### Heart

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(Ah-DINK-rah-heh-neh)

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value of unity

preciousness of wisdom

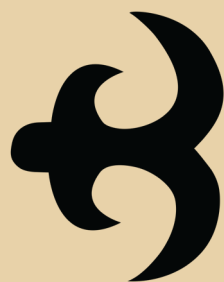
energy, passion

# Akofa Wura

(Akoma Fawohodie)

Akoma Fawohodie stands as a profound symbol of hope, inspiring individuals and communities to cultivate love and compassion, fostering an environment where freedom thrives. As we embrace the interconnectedness of love and liberty, this emblem calls us to break the chains that bind us, both internally and externally, and create a world where love for one another paves the way to true freedom and a brighter future for all.





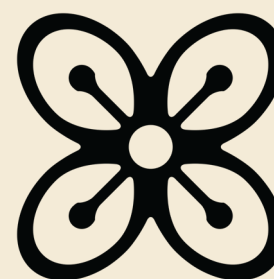
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(Ah-KOH-koh Nahn)

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purity, harmony, unity

foundation of love

love, passion, warmth



## Odo Nea Mmerenkonsono

(Oh-doh Nay-ah Mmeh-ren-kon-so-no)  
*"Love Beyond Standards"*

Odo Nea Mmerenkonsono encapsulates the universal language of love, encouraging us to break free from preconceived notions and embrace the beauty of love in all its forms. It stands as a beacon of hope, promoting acceptance, compassion, and understanding in a world that thrives on love that surpasses boundaries and defies conventional norms. This new Adinkra symbol seeks to inspire individuals to cultivate love that is free from judgment and prejudice, creating a more compassionate and empathetic world for all.









# 06

## Bridging Traditions

*Hand Printing and Digital Prints of the New Adrinka Symbols*



# Hand Printing: Honoring Craftsmanship

Hand printing is an intricate art form that carries the essence of human touch and craftsmanship. In the process of creating hand-printed versions of the new Adrinka symbols, I used the modern technique of lasercutting to carve each symbol onto wooden blocks, paying homage to the traditional techniques that have been passed down through generations. The rhythmic dance between wood and ink imbues every stroke with a unique character, resulting in prints that resonate with the spirit of the symbols themselves.

The imperfections that arise from hand printing are a testament to the authenticity of the craft, allowing each symbol to tell its story with an aura of individuality. From the selection of colors to the choice of materials, the journey of hand printing brings the new symbols to life in a tangible and tactile way that connects us to the roots of Adrinka symbolism.



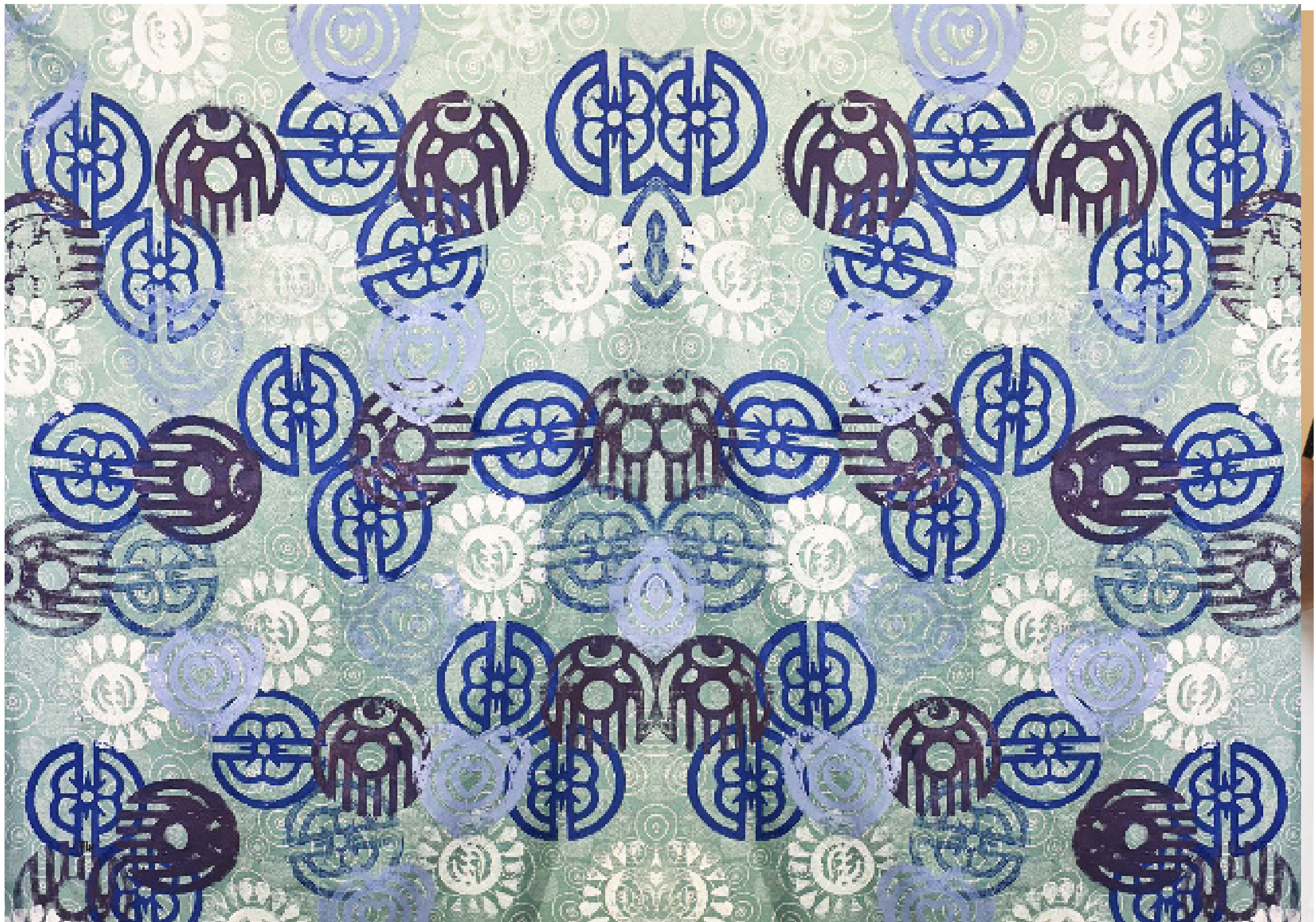


# Digital Print: Envisioning the Future

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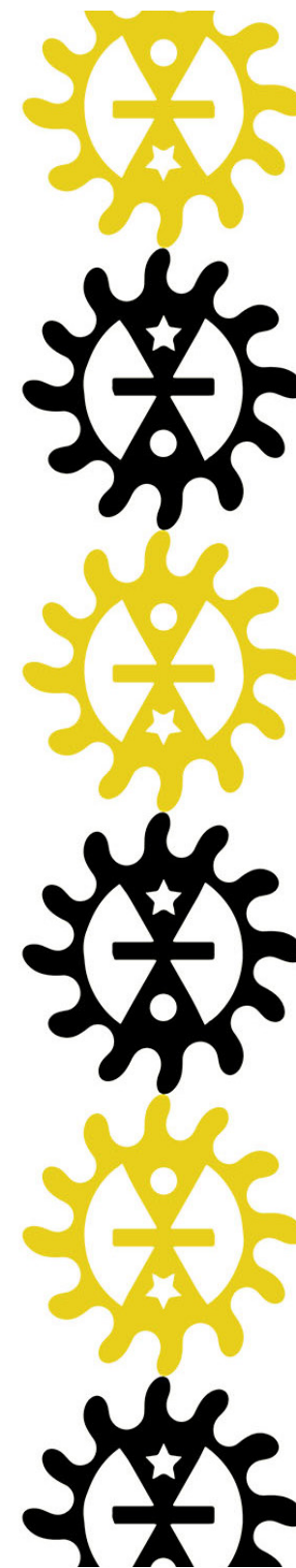
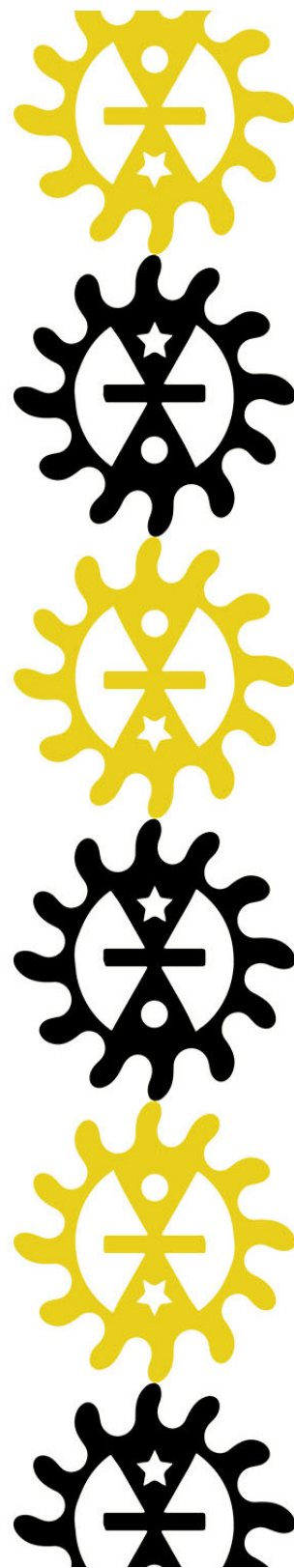
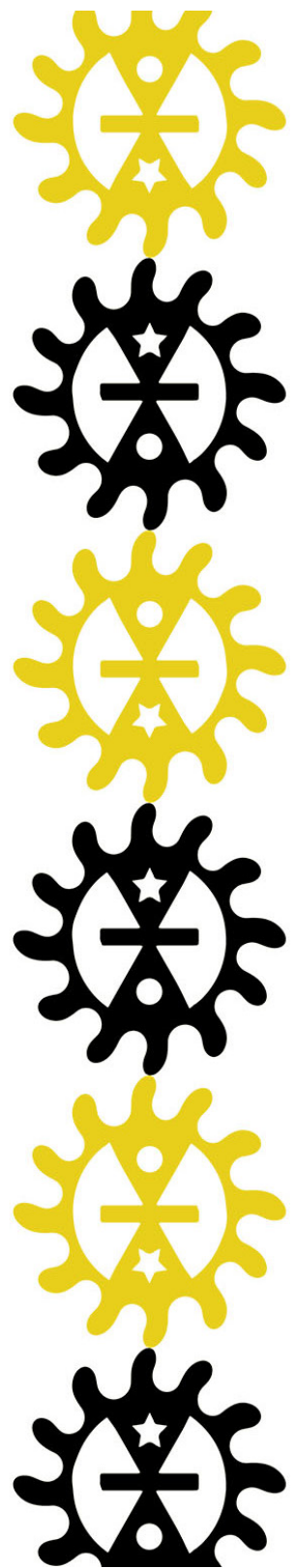














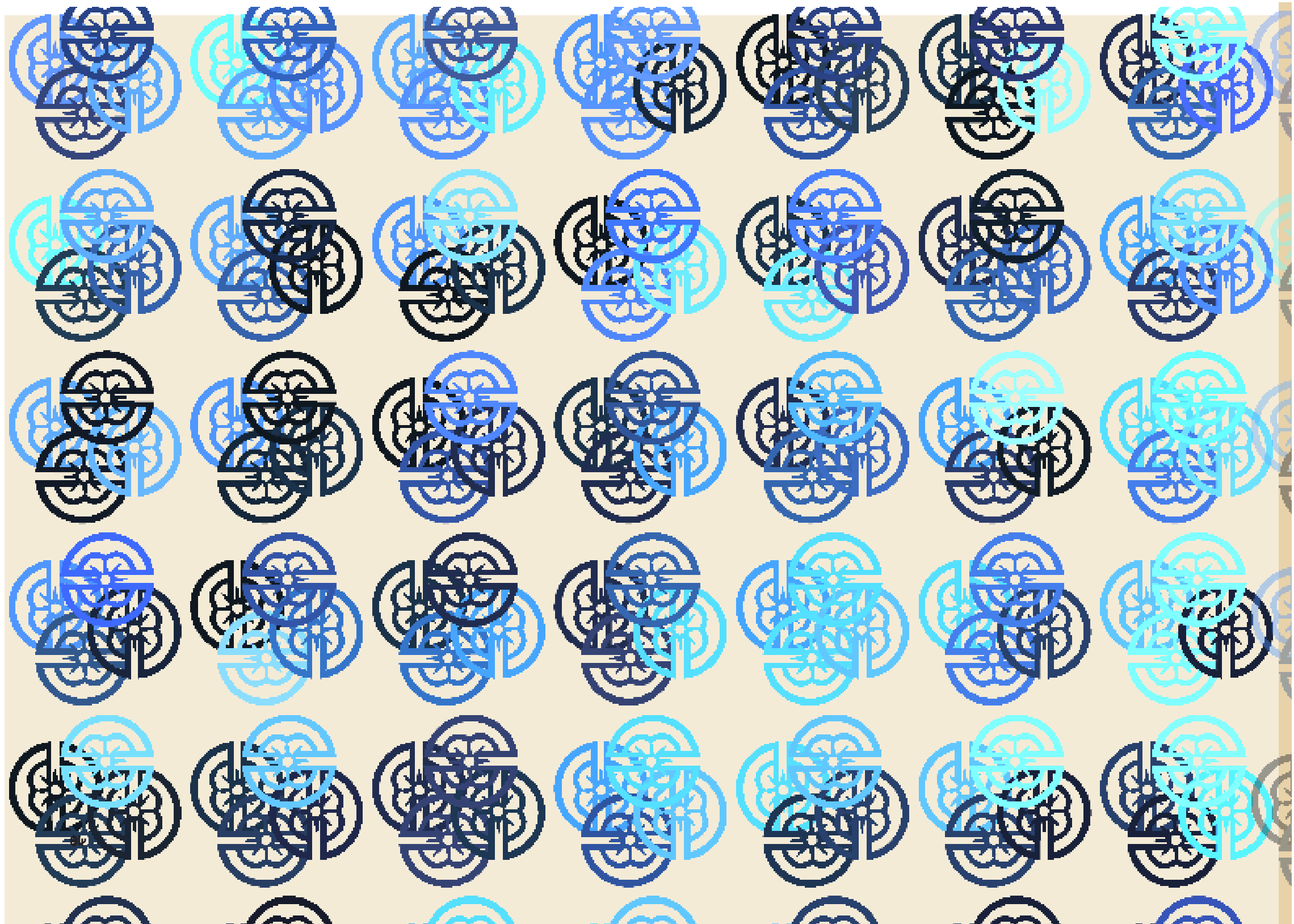


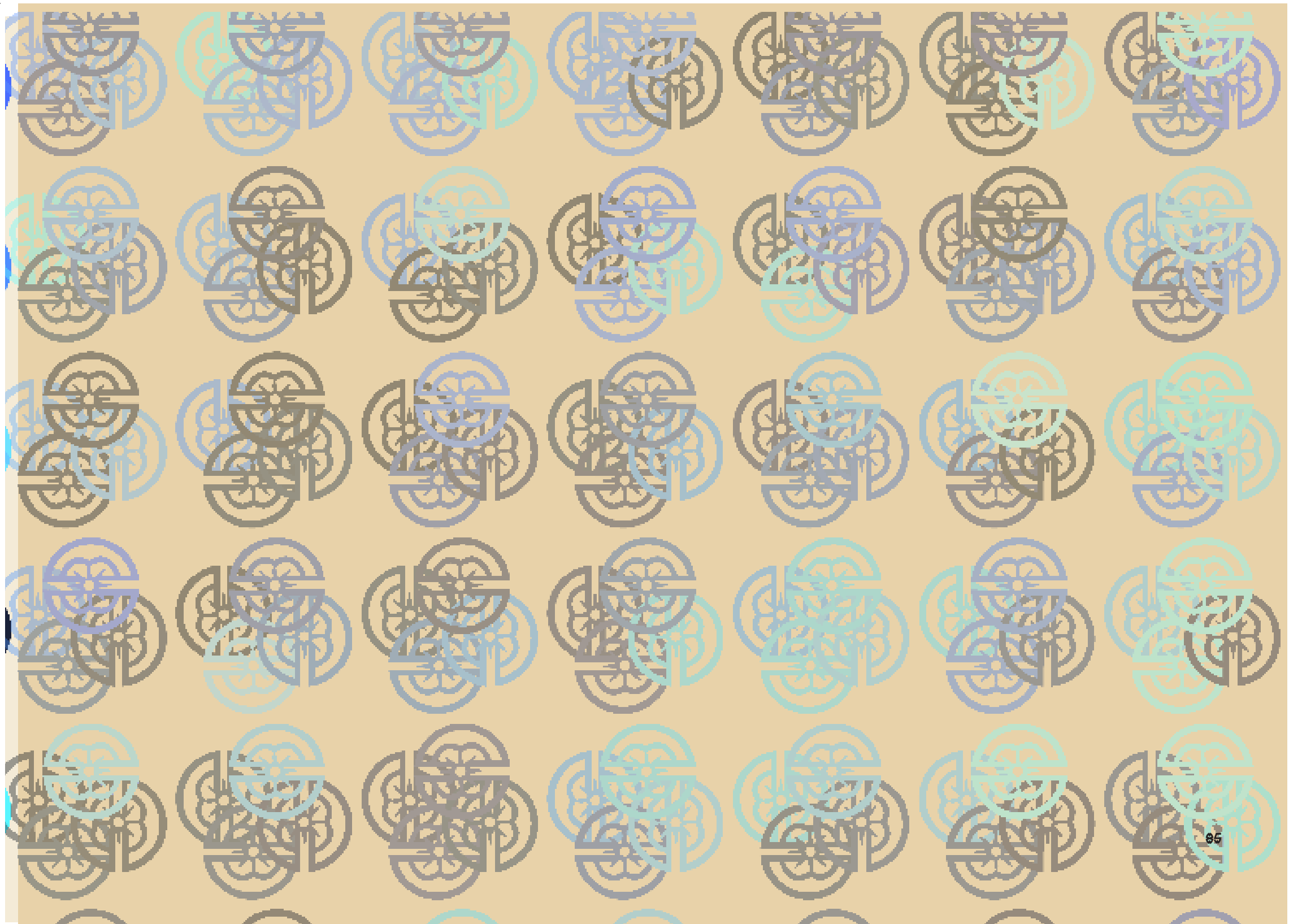












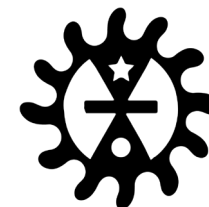
As we conclude our journey through the captivating world of Adinkra symbols and their contemporary interpretations, we are filled with a profound sense of appreciation for the richness of Akan culture and the enduring significance of these newly crafted emblems. Each symbol we explored in this book has contributed to the preservation and evolution of Adinkra tradition, honouring the past while embracing the challenges and possibilities of the present and future.

In this quest to breathe new life into Adinkra, we introduced sixteen symbols, each with its unique name, meaning, and purpose. Let us take a moment to reflect on the significance of these creations and the impact they hold in preserving the essence of Adinkra culture.

**1. Nanaanom Adwane ne Asase**  
"Guardians of the Earth"



**2. Mkonka mmere**  
"Growth through Change"



**3. Msvaefo Mkonson**  
"Sustainable Growth"



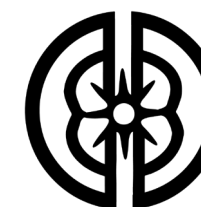
**5. Asase ye Duvu**  
"Earth's Resilience"



**4. Mpafapo Biriibi**  
"Renewable Energy"



**10. Mkoso Asem**  
"The inner Dialogue"



**6. Mkaninkonkom**  
*"Digital connectivity"*



**8. Mkanim Epa**  
*"Victory over Judgment"*



**9. Nyame Nhyira**  
*"Divine Protection"*



**10. Adwera Nea Ohemaa**  
*"Strength of Queens"*



**11. Akoko Gyefo**  
*"Beautiful Creation"*



**12. Adwenninkyim**  
*"Unity in Diversity"*



**13. Adinkrahoma**  
*"Empowered Love"*



**14. Akofa Wura**  
*"Love for Freedom"*



**15. Odo Nea Mmerenkonsoro**  
*"Love Beyond Standards"*



**16. Mkyinkyim Mkyerewa Ase**  
*"The Freedom of Creativity"*





