

## THE RHYTHM OF GLOBALIZATION AND PERSISTENCE OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GOLD JEWELLERY IN ASANTE, GHANA

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### Abstract

Gold jewellery is one essential art form by which the people of Asante express their sociocultural identity and distinctiveness. It is perceived however that this heritage is being eroded in recent times through the rhythm of globalization. This study provides empirical evidence on the persistence or otherwise of the sociocultural significance of gold jewellery in Asante. The study employed the explanatory design approach. Data was obtained from a total of 198 respondents comprising traditional rulers, goldsmiths and the general public through the use of questionnaire designed in open and close ended patterns and personal observations. The statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) computer package was used for data analysis, whilst descriptive statistical tools such as frequency and percentage were used to analyze the facts sought from the questionnaire. The study observed that a lot of myths that surrounded gold jewellery have been demystified as a result of education, religion, trade liberalization, ICT and the current political dispensation which gives people the right of choice and makes it difficult to control production, designing and sale of products. While this trend of change is of great significance to national building, on the other hand it offsets the preservation objective of the Asante culture, by which the Asante historical culture may lose its value.

**Keywords:** Asante, cultural heritage, Ghana, globalization, gold jewellery

### INTRODUCTION

Globalization is defined as an important phenomenon that links societies and spaces and has grown rapidly to encompass every aspect of life (Nsibambi, 2001). It is a double-edged sword that has impacted positively and negatively on nations and cultures (Iwuagwu, 2014). Some of the positive impacts of globalization include liberalization of democracy and the installation of fundamental human rights to the extent that any nation that fails to respect this system of government becomes a pariah state. Globalization has also brought nations together and ensured the formation of institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the International Criminal Court (ICC), the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), the Human Right International, UNESCO, World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), etc. These Institutions help to promote development, trade, justice, peace, security and economic cooperation and material wellbeing (Buckley, 1998).

Notwithstanding globalization could be seen as a threat to the traditions and cultural values of societies in the context of identity. It was indicated that globalization has its own set of cultural attendants, which exercise a profound influence on the life of people everywhere (Guillen, 2001). The rhythm of globalization has brought about excessive materialism, which is transmitted by social media, resulting in the loss of identity, self-pride and disregard and disrespect for traditional and socio-cultural values. Several cherished

African social values are eroding very fast all in the name of globalization. Such important social values such as modesty, respect for the aged, sacredness of life, care for the aged within the family, integrity, etc. are all disappearing (Iwuagwu, 2014). The contemporary African has no more room for abominations, taboos, traditional social prohibitions and traditional disciplinary measures for social misconducts. Sacred grooves are being destroyed, water bodies are being polluted with impunity and there is no more respect for the dead as cemeteries are disregarded (Okeke et al., 2017).

The African society today is challenged from what is called a cultural cringe, which is the belief that one's own country occupies a subordinate cultural place on the periphery, and that intellectual standards are set, and innovations occur elsewhere (Helgesson, S., 2022). As a result of this mind-set, people are inclined to devalue their own cultural, academic and artistic life, and then venerate the seemingly decorated "superior" cultures. Fening (2015) reiterated that in Ghana today, the outfits that most people wear are western in style, but that does not make the society modern. People are moving away from the Ghanaian cultural values, lifestyles and pattern and the irony of the situation is the condemnation of their own great culture, patterns and resources.

No society can exist without a culture (Study.com, 2023). It is culture that keeps social structures alive. Each culture carries its values, which influence the thoughts, feelings and actions of its members. Ghanaians emphasize communal values such as family, respect for the elderly, honouring traditional rulers, and the importance of dignity and proper social conduct (Compassion Blog, 2023). Individual conduct is seen as having impact on an entire family, social group and community; therefore, everyone is expected to be respectful, dignified and observant in public settings, and in most every aspect of life (Compassion Blog, 2023). It was observed by Irele, (2010) that the desire to be like Westerners by the youth in Africa has suddenly made them promiscuous; doing things that were never imaginable several years ago.

Majority of Ghanaians including the clergy have in recent times expressed worry over what they termed "the rapid decaying" of the traditions and cultural values especially on the part of the youth. It was of no surprise that this issue was the focus of discussion during the inauguration of the Central Regional Performers of Traditional Arts Union of Ghana (PETRAUGA), on April 2014.

The irony of the situation is that cultural isolationism is not possible in the context of globalization. The UN General Assembly in 2010 therefore recognized the importance of culture for sustainable development (UN, 2011). This was followed with the adoption of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development in 2015. Culture is hence recognized globally as an enabler and contributor to sustainable development (Hawkes, 2002; Davies 2020; Duxbury, 2017).

There is therefore the need for African societies to reappraise the principles of cultural revival, in order to check the fast rhythm that globalization is impounding on the African continent. This will require a concerted effort of all to sustain and preserve the cultural heritage for the harmonious functioning of the society.

The Asante elders, sacredness of life, care for the aged within the family, integrity, etc. are disappearing speedily. The present-day African milieu has no room for abominations, taboos, ostracization, traditional social prohibitions and traditional disciplinary measures for social miscreants. In the face of globalization, the traditional African festivals have lost their steam.

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The Asante or *Asanteman* is what is now known as the Ashanti Region in Ghana. It is one of the constitutionally protected sub-national traditional states within the Republic of Ghana. The Ashanti Region is located in southern part of Ghana and it is the third largest of 16 administrative regions, occupying a total land surface of 24,389 km<sup>2</sup> or 10.2 percent of the total land area of Ghana (Helgesson, S; 2022). It is the most populated region with a population of 5,440,463, according to the 2021 census, accounting for 19.4% of Ghana's total population (GSS, 2021). The Ashanti Region is known for its major gold bar and cocoa production. They have very rich traditional and cultural heritage including indigenous and contemporary artifacts and exceptional intriguing philosophical values. The 'Golden Stool' for instance is a symbol which represents the soul of the people of Asante (Ayensu, 1997, Africa Research Consult, 2023). Gold jewellery is therefore an essential art form of the people, and it constitutes an integral part of their cultural heritage. The relevance of gold jewellery is noticed in all the stages of Asante life: birth, puberty, marriage, and death. They are also endowed with various ceremonial practices which emphasize the identities of the indigenous Asante and promote their socio-cultural development (Monda, 1994).

There, however, seems to be a change in trend of the significance of gold jewellery to the socio-cultural development of Asante in contemporary times. This perception of change is thought to be brought about through the transformational rhythm of education, modernization, religion, ICT technology, social media, trade liberalization etc. Indeed, Castells (1996) posited that globalization is more a threat to socio-cultural environment in the context of identity. Also, Annku and Adu-Agyem (2012) stated that globalization is analogous to carrying a porcupine in a ‘haversack’, a task which is a combination of joy and pain or often associated with good and evil. The observation of Korea Herald (2004) opined that “Globalization is a declaration of war upon all other cultures” might therefore be quite relevant. The feasible question that arises then in the context of this study is which relevant cultures of Asante have changed and which still persist and what determines the willingness of the people to hold to these traditions. The purpose of this study was to investigate the resilience of the sociocultural significance of gold jewellery in Asante to globalization, which is the soul of the people.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Socio cultural significance of gold jewellery in Asante***

Gold jewellery has great significance in the life of a people and touching on the cultural significance of jewellery, Monda (1993) indicates that jewellery is greatly varied according to the lifestyle of the people and their cultural contacts. The current researcher agrees with this assertion because the importance of jewellery is noticed in all the stages of Asante life: birth, puberty, marriage, and death. The very hub of the whole Asante political system of course is the golden stool or *Sikadwa Kofi*. The golden stool is priced above all other items of regalia, and it is believed to contain the soul of the Asante Nation and seen as providing the essential link that joins all stages of their history together (Ayensu, 1997). The Asante has a saying *sika ne hene* meaning gold is king (Ayensu, 1997). Political power and the possession and display of wealth are inextricably bound together in Asante society. Items of gold regalia also serve as important records of events in the state’s history and in the career of its ruler or his predecessors. On occasions when the King received in audience his chiefs and nobles, he would be decorated with gold ornaments, a nicely folded crown adorned with one or two slabs of solid gold, one on the forehead and another on the back: then two gold rings on one of his fingers and one on his feet (Monda, 1994). On festive occasions the *Asantehene* would be decorated with massive gold, chains of solid gold on his neck and slabs of massive gold on his crown, elbows, wrists, fingers, ankles and the ten toes (Monda, 1993). The gold ornaments on the ankles are so heavy that the King is forced to slow down his rate of movement. His sandals are all gold plated, his cloth is most colourful and decorated with slabs of gold (Martin and Meara, 1995).

The ancient kings of Asante worshiped their ancestral stool and the skeletons of the past kings preserved at the sacred mausoleum at Bantama (Meyerowitz, 1949). The big *Adae* festival was a way in which the kings went through some ceremonies to revive their relationship with the spirits of their past ancestors whom they looked upon as gods. The

mausoleum is a long building partitioned into small cells; in each cell was the sacred skeleton of a king in preservation. It is amazing to know that the different segments of each skeleton have been carefully and artfully joined together with gold wires, and placed in a coffin adorned with slabs of gold, stressing the enormous place of gold jewellery in the Asante culture (Meyerowitz, 1949)

Concerning the Asante royal court, Bowdich had this to say: Gold covered the thrones and stools, and golden threads embroidered the robes of royalty. It was cast into every conceivable form of ornament, from the king's crown to the courtiers' talismans and the gold leaf applied to ceremonial staves was even used to cover collars of doors at the court (Wilks, 1989). The work of Fynn (1971) and that of Wilks (1975) more than substantiate the views of Bowdich. Once again, this writer wholly agrees with Bowdich because the grand adornment of jewellery worn by the Chiefs portrays their political opulence, power and prestige. This is a potent and remarkable cultural value, which is inherent in the lifestyle of the Asante from time immemorial.

### **Globalization and culture**

Globalization is the process of intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across international boundaries (Akindele et al., 2002). It is an evolution which is systematically restructuring interactions among nations by breaking down barriers in the areas of culture, commerce, communication and several other fields of endeavours, thus increasing the integration of world markets. In some respect, globalization has had disastrous effects on African culture in general. A postcolonial perspective reveals that globalization in its current neo-liberal form has been developed on the foundation of the old colonial empires.

Culture on the other hand can be broadly defined as the beliefs, value systems, norms, mores, myths, symbols, language, behaviour and structural elements of a given group or society (Parsons, 1999; Onibere et al., 2001; Hugo, 2002). Culture is not a timeless and motionless body of value systems that remains unaltered by social change: rather it is dialectic and incorporates new forms and meanings while changing or reshaping traditional ones (Parsons, 1999). Thus, it is conceived as a coherent body of beliefs and practices which are dynamic and changing within particular historical periods. The relationship between cultural values and globalization can be understood if people recognize that, while in the past the significant agents of socialization were the family and school, at present, the media and the global communication industry is providing additional sources (Pillai, 2002).

### **Persistence of indigenous cultures**

Cultural globalization has been a major trend in Africa for the past decades and it remains so today. Change, however, does not necessarily lead to cultural extinction. By the beginning of the 21st century, the persistence of identities and the re-creation of traditions show that indigenous cultures can thrive in the modern world. Social and cultural change started accelerating around World War II, more so in Africa than in many other parts of the world. Colonization in its first phase, affected the autonomy of indigenous peoples, followed

by successful struggles to regain control over local affairs under wholly new circumstances that included not only traditions but also modernity and globalization (Magni, 2016).

Change is an aspect of all societies and cultures. Traditions come, transform themselves, and some eventually pass. Obsolete elements of cultures are discarded, and new ones emerge. It is more “normal” and in that sense “healthier” than stagnation. The importance of culture preservation has been highlighted by some researchers considering its economic value (Promayuk & Chairattananon, 2016; Kalamarova et al., 2015; Logan, 2007). Additionally, UNESCO also argues that maintaining cultural diversity, especially its homogenization is essential to confront the fast-growing globalization process.

Cultural persistence is the persistence of cultural traits such as myths, beliefs, values, customs and behaviours that may last for very long periods of time (Effective Altruism Forum, 2023). In other instances, such traits may change rapidly and quite dramatically (Giuliano and Nathan, 2020). The importance of cultural persistence relates to cultural evolution and has therefore received some attention by researchers worldwide (Giuliano and Nathan, 2020, Kelly, 2019). It has been postulated that when the environment across a generation is more stable it gives greater value to the tradition and cultural traits that have evolved up to the previous generation and by so doing make the tradition and cultural traits more likely to be persistence (Giuliano and Nathan, 2020). It has furthered been observed by Giuliano and Nathan, (2020), that populations with ancestors who lived in environments with more cross-generational instability place less value on maintaining tradition today and exhibit less cultural persistence. Globalization may influence cultural persistence to undergo processes of adjustment and develop styles that will become more suitable and up to date (Khunmas et al., 2017).

Cultural persistence is created through various processes that may include the perception of a people having a common ancestor and common language which is ingrained in the minds of the members of the society through the process of cultural transmission from one generation to another (Mamat, 2016). Another process by which cultural persistence is created is through the sharing or transmission of personal knowledge and experiences on matters concerning, for example, the performance of religious rituals among members of the society. Furthermore, adhering to cultural doctrines, having confidence and faith and pride in one’s traditions and customs as well as setting an example for others to emulate are all important factors for the process of creating cultural persistence (Mamat, 2016).

## **METHODS**

### **The Study Area**

The study was conducted in the Kumasi metropolis which is the capital of Ashanti and the second largest metropolis in Ghana in terms of land area, population size, social life and economic activity. Kumasi is approximately 480 km north of the Equator and 160 km north of the Gulf of Guinea. It is between latitude 6.35° – 6.40° and longitude 1.30° – 1.35°, an elevation which ranges between 250 – 300 meters above sea level with an area of about 254 square kilometers (Helgesson, S; 2022).

The unique centrality of the city as a traversing point from all parts of the country makes it a special place for many to migrate to. The city is a rapidly growing one with an annual growth rate of 5.47 per cent (GSS, 2021). It encompasses about 90 suburbs, many of which were absorbed into it as a result of the process of growth and physical expansion. Kumasi was chosen for the research for a number of cultural reasons including Fort Kumasi (built by in 1896 to replace an Asante fort and now a museum) and the Kumasi Hat Museum. Royal Asante attractions include the Kumasi National Cultural Centre (including the Prempeh II Jubilee Museum with Asante regalia with a reproduction of the golden stool), the Okomfo Anokye Sword, the Asantehene's Palace (built in 1972), and the Manhyia Palace, dating from 1925, now a museum. The city can also boast of several traditional goldsmithing workshops, and shopping centers and markets.

### **Study Design**

The study employed explanatory research design which is a study method that investigates the causes and a phenomenon when only limited data is presented (Baskerville, et al., 2010). This design was chosen to enable the Researchers explore the subject matter and develop a deeper understanding of it so that it can be described or explained more vividly. Explanatory research seeks neither to generate new knowledge nor solve a specific problem; rather it seeks to understand why something happens (Form plus Blog, 2022).

### **Data and Sampling Technique**

The purposive sample method was used in selecting the traditional rulers since their number was relatively small (Nilolopoulou, 2022). In purposive sampling you set out to identify members of the population who are likely to possess certain characteristics or experiences (and to be willing to share them with you) (Nilolopoulou, 2022).

The convenience sampling method on the other hand was employed in selecting the target craftsmen and the general public. The technique involves selecting haphazardly those cases that are easiest to obtain for sampling such as the person at the market or shopping center. The advantage here is that respondents will participate on their own volition and not selected against their will (Morse, 1998).

Primary data obtained (from traditional rulers, goldsmiths and the general public) for this study were acquired through the use of questionnaires, personal observation and personal interviews. The design was adopted because of its appropriateness in describing the current sociocultural situation of the Asante vis-à-vis globalization (Kothari, 1990). The questionnaire consisted of a mixture of Likert-scale multiple choice and open and close ended patterns and administered directly on the respondents. The questionnaire was pilot tested, and it yielded a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.83. This coefficient signified high internal consistency and reliability (Pallant, 2001).

### **Sample Size**

The sample size for the study was determined using the sample size determination formula developed by (Yamane 1967), with a 95 percent confidence level and a level of precision (e) of 5.

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where: n = sample size

N = number of people in the population

e = allowable error (%) substitute numbers in the formula

The target population was as follows:

Traditional rulers – 120

Goldsmiths – 250

General public – 500.

Using the formula of Yamane (1967), as explained above the sample size obtained were:

Traditional rulers – 44

Goldsmiths – 154

General public – 400.

### **Data Analysis**

Data obtained was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency and percentage were used to present facts sought from respondents.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Myths, Legends and Beliefs Associated with Asante Gold Jewellery**

A total of 40 traditional rulers were interviewed. 28 of them were chiefs, twelve of them comprised queen mothers and the rest were family heads. Their ages ranged between 35 and 73 years. Four of them were University graduates, 22 senior high school graduates and the rest first cycle education graduates. The traditional rulers interviewed had ruled for a varied number of years. Two of them had been chiefs for over 30 years. The queen mothers had ruled for between 3 and 18 years respectively, while the family heads have been heads for between 5 and 25 years. Regarding the craftsmen all the 150 interviewed were Ghanaians and full-time practitioners who were in active practice. Twenty percent (20%) of them were below 40 years of age. The majority (75%) were between the ages of 40 and 50 years. The remaining 5% were 60 years and above. Most of them work in groups of between three and six. All the craftsmen interviewed had some level of education, spanning from basic education (5%), secondary (18%) and tertiary which comprise graduates from technical colleges, polytechnics, diploma awarding institutions and universities (78%). Eighty two percent (82%) of the general public interviewed were Ghanaians and Asantes, 15% were Ghanaians but non Asantes while the rest (3%) were foreigners. Their ages range between 21 and 66 years. All of them, however, lived in Kumasi.



The Asante tradition in gold jewellery making dates back to the 5th century B.C., when craftsmen from ancient Ghana Empire developed a vibrant goldsmith and jewellery making industry (Ayensu, 1997). Today, this tradition is evident in the local jewellery industry of over one thousand indigenous artisans (GIPC, 2000). There are also several medium-sized companies employing between five and twelve bench jewellers that can be located in certain towns across the country.

The myths, legends and beliefs of gold jewellery in Asante has been recounted by several writers including Visoná (1953), Garrard (1980) and Yeboah (1997) and passed on from generation to generation. History has it that gold jewellery in Asante was created for the adornment of the ruling class. Gold was therefore treated with great respect in Asante. It was believed that gold had a life of its own, with spiritual powers. Ceremonies and rituals were therefore associated with the opening of a new mine (Meyerowitz, 1949). For instance, prospecting for gold was done at night by the prospector would wash his face with herbal medicine believed to make him aware of a glow on the earth where the gold lay (Meyerowitz, 1949). And when gold was found libation prayers were extended to the Earth goddess and owner of the gold, *Asaase Afua* or *Asaase Yaa*, the nearest river deity, or the national god of the state (Meyerowitz, 1949).

The traditional rulers interviewed concurred to these assertions but were quick to indicate that the practices have been discontinued. They indicated that rituals that were associated with the discovery of a new mining site have been discontinued due to the coming into place the operation of large and multilateral mining companies. They however, alluded to the fact that some form of unofficial practices still persists among the illegal miners 'galamsey', who are said to do some rituals including making of libation before entering a new dug pit. Another important myth was that menstruating women were forbidden to enter gold digging areas, because it was believed they defiled the spiritual purity of the metal (Meyerowitz (1949). This belief has also changed as women, children and even and babies are these days seen at mining sites. In terms of myths and beliefs that surrounded the goldsmith profession, and for which reason the trade was strictly a male profession, Garrard (1980), recounts it was a taboo for women to even go near the working areas of the craftsmen.

Gold jewellery making was also a close family trade that admitted only sons and nephews and trained as apprentices. It was observed during the visit to jewellery workshops in this study that the apprenticeship system continues to provide effective-informal training of craftsmen for the jewellery trade, but it is no longer restricted to family members. About 60 % of the craftsmen visited had an average of two apprentices while the rest had between 3 to 6 apprentices each who worked with the master craftsman. Most of the apprentices were males (96%), but female apprentices were also found (4%). The involvement of women in the jewellery trade has demystified the myth surrounding it. The trend in this regard as obtained from this study showed that a sizable number of females are now into the profession, majority of who are graduates from the Faculty of Industrial Art, KNUST, Kumasi. The involvement of women in the trade is one important cultural change which is of great significance to national building.

### Gold Jewellery as Traditional Status Symbol

Historical beginnings have it that the gold jewellery created by the craftsmen served to distinguish the various ranks of chieftainship in Asante (Monda, 1993). The chiefs and queen mothers interviewed in this study indicated that this cultural heritage still persists explaining that they all have their family goldsmiths who produced their jewellery. Traditional rulers interviewed affirmed that they inherited some jewellery products from their predecessors. That notwithstanding, they bought other jewellery products from other sources. When the traditional rulers were asked whether they wear special jewellery symbols or totems, some of them answered that they wear the symbol of their family or clan. This special jewellery is used on specific occasions such as durbars and festivals.

They further explained that the use of traditional jewellery in the cultural context of the Asante is more than an adornment item. They claimed it is a visual representation of their history, belief and political thoughts and that in accordance with tradition some jewellerys are reserved for special occasions and not meant to be used for common place daily activities or as an ordinary wear. They also mentioned that some of the jewellery is also used as special gift items during such rites of passage as child naming, puberty, initiation graduation, marriage, soul washing, and burial as well as ancestral remembrance ceremonies. They emphasized the socio-cultural significance of the symbols in jewellery and indicated that they are denoted from historical events, individual achievements, proverbs, philosophical concepts, oral literature, moral values, social code of conducts, human behavior and certain attributes to plant and animal life.

Interestingly all the traditional rulers interviewed could mention and give the significance of all the jewellery symbols they used. Among them were '*oheneaniwa*' (symbol of vigilance and wariness), '*Osranensoromma*' (symbol of faithfulness and fondness), '*fihankra*' (symbol of security and safety), '*sunsum*' (symbol of spirituality) etc. They further explained that some were restricted to select a few because of their social status. The traditional rulers indicated that to be able to understand the meaning of the symbols, one has to undergo cultural learning, which forms part of their tradition and cultural heritage.

Commenting on the trend of the designs, the traditional rulers said that even though traditional designs such as '*adinkra*' are still followed, in their view the quality of products has degenerated. They claimed the gold fabric is often poor and heavily alloyed with copper and silver. They observed that some jewellerys are merely brass, plated in gold. They concluded by saying that present day jewellery lacks the delicacy of former times. Judging from these discussions, the authors of this study would not be far from right to say that the socio-political and cultural roles of jewellery in Asante still persist to some extent today despite years of the competitive dominance of innovative global culture. There is no doubt that the types of jewellery traditional rulers wear during occasions such as enstoolments, durbars and festivals are significant today as they were before independence. This agrees to the statement by Roland (2004) that values and beliefs are deeply rooted in an ethnic group which a person belongs and is transmitted from one generation to another.

### ***Symbolism and Cultural undertones of Gold Jewellery in Festivals and Durbars***

The traditional rulers indicated during the survey that festivals are occasions during which the chiefs and people gather to celebrate special periods in their lives. They mentioned that the *Addae* is the main festival celebrated by the Asantes and emphasized that the culture and tradition that are associated with the celebrations including rituals, treasury, inheritance and other undertaking still persist. The chiefs become focal points during such festivals and durbars. They dress in rich *kente* clothes or *Adinkra* clothes, crowns, footwear and most importantly gold jewellery dominate their outfits which portray the rich culture of Asantes. When the traditional rulers were asked whether the gold used specially on their crowns and footwear were all solid gold as of the olden times, they indicated that some of the regalia may have other base metals. The craftsmen work by skillfully covering these items with gold either through depletion gilding or foil cladding. The role of gold jewellery in the culture of the people comes to the fore during these festivals. The executioners, the soul washers, the sword bearers and most importantly the traditional priests are all bedecked in gorgeous gold jewellery. The traditional rulers consider the persistence of the celebration of these festivals as a means of cultural heritage capital which also has a significant effect on the economic development of Asante.

### **Gold Jewellery Symbols and Designs**

Jewellery design, today, exploits the prevailing technical abilities within the craft, so that art and the practical approach are inextricably combined to produce an adornment that is a visual delight. The trends in jewellery designing in Asante have been subjected to change with the changing times as observed by Fening (2015). She further stressed that jewellery designs and styles keep on changing with the change in lifestyle and tastes of people. During the survey the goldsmiths indicated that gold jewellery was cast predominantly following the traditional system, which involved casting from lost-wax moulds or cuttlefish bones. This gave the gold jewellery a uniform heavy two or three-dimensional characteristic. They however, explained that a new trend has evolved whereby flat sheets of metal are pasted with graphic designs often *adinkra* symbols. The sheet is pierced or cut out and soldered.

During the survey it was observed that even though goldsmiths are still drawing from *adinkra* symbols, they are now experimenting with three dimensional effects. It was also observed during this study that piercing, doming, modelling, folding and wire work are at play where *adinkra* symbols are now adapted, combined, twisted and created into various forms of jewellery. The craftsmen indicated that earlier these aphorisms and *adinkra* symbols were produced as original designs with little or no innovation. When the craftsmen were asked why this shift or change in production, the craftsmen indicated that this was being done to suit the international market and specifications of clients.

### **Gold jewellery as body adornment**

History has it that the traditional kings in Asante had the unique role as chief custodian of culture and heavily patronized gold jewellery (Meyerowitz, 1949). Today, however,

jewellery has become a vital element in everyone's life. Men, women and even children love to wear jewellery articles all the time as part of their dress accessories. Wearing jewellery is the demand of modern fashion. A few years back jewellery was used only on special occasions like festivals, weddings, engagements and other formal ceremonies and it was associated with brides and married girls only (Fening, 2015). But nowadays it is worn casually as well as formally and everyone likes to wear beautiful and elegant jewellery items. People nowadays have a passion for jewellery which in part accounts for the influence of globalization fashion. It was therefore not surprising that 63% of the general public interviewed wore various jewellery of necklaces, bracelets and rings, which were made of fashionable gold.

The study noted that most of the general public wore jewellery that had brand, or personal names that departed from the traditional symbols. Another known designs encountered during the survey were the usage of the cross. This trend of affairs may have both negative and positive implications on the socio-cultural significance of jewellery in Asante. While in one breath it gives every Ghanaian the right to any jewellery, on the other hand it offsets the preservation objective of the Asante culture. Thus, some particular types of jewellery that was once considered a valuable heritage and formed a tangible part of Asante's historical culture may lose its value.

## **CONCLUSION**

The current socio-cultural situation in African societies is that the transformational influence of globalization and technological advancement have taken the character of non-linearity which is expressed in the rejection of customs and traditions and the dominance of innovative culture of the Western world. This phenomenon has potential of resulting in the loss of African cultural heritage including language, fashion, cultural values and beliefs, customs and traditions, arts and crafts etc. This study has shown that gold jewellery is one of the most effective art forms of the Asantes which has fostered solidarity among them and helped to preserve their tradition and cultural heritage, for socio economic development. However, a lot of myths that surrounded gold jewellery have been demystified due to the domineering influenced of globalization. While this trend of change is of great significance to national building, on the other hand it offsets the preservation objective of the Asante culture, by which the Asante historical culture may lose its value. In the framework of the philosophical understanding of the phenomenon of globalization, it is very prudent that the problems surrounding the transformation processes are analyzed to offset any future negative influences.

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**THE RHYTHM OF GLOBALIZATION AND PERSISTENCE OF  
THE SOCIO-CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GOLD JEWELLERY  
IN ASANTE, GHANA**

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