

From Oral Memory to Artistic Humanism: Reframing Akan Folklore Through *Asempayetsia*

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Abstract

Across my academic journey, I have observed that artistic excellence in African contexts is often judged by Eurocentric standards that overlook the deep human aspect of Indigenous creative intelligence. In response, I intentionally turned to my cultural roots, grounding my work in *Sankofaism*, the Akan principle that one must return to ancestral knowledge to move forward with integrity. Guided by the idea of epistemic disobedience, I approached Ghanaian-Akan-Mfantse artistic knowledge not only as material for preservation but as a living human inheritance capable of inspiring new artistic visions. My doctoral research revived *Kodzi*, a group of Mfantse storytelling traditions that have long influenced community ethics, identity, and intergenerational memory. To adapt this heritage into modern artistic forms, I developed *Asempayetsia*, a compositional framework based on cultural excavation, symbolic or compositional translation, and audiovisual reinscription. This model aligns with international heritage principles, especially the UNESCO 2003 Convention and AU Agenda 2063, Aspiration 5, which emphasises protecting African heritage through innovation, community-centered practices, and cultural continuity. The framework also draws on the WIPO (2001) Traditional Knowledge Principles, emphasising respect, accuracy of representation, and the ethical handling of community knowledge. Rather than treating creation as separate from humanity, *Asempayetsia* positions artistic research as an act of cultural care, ensuring that oral traditions continue to breathe within contemporary artistic landscapes. By reframing Akan folklore through composition, narrative, and digital visualisation, this work argues that in a rapidly globalising world, the arts remain one of humanity's essential spaces for grounding identity, memory, and meaning. *Asempayetsia* demonstrates how heritage and creativity can coexist, transform, and sustain the human spirit.

Keywords: *Asempayetsia*, Akan Folklore, *Sankofaism*, Indigenous Knowledge, UNESCO 2003, AU Agenda 2063, WIPO 2001, Artistic Research, Cultural Heritage, Humanity.

Bio

Dr. Nana Amowee Dawson is a Ghanaian composer, music theorist, educator, interdisciplinary artist, and creative researcher deeply interested in African musical arts, indigenous knowledge systems, and decolonial creative practices. He holds a PhD in Music Theory and Composition (Artistic Research), and his doctoral work reimaged the Akan-Mfantse folklore tradition (*Kodzi*) as a visual, programmatic music form, framing it as a sonic archive rooted in indigenous epistemology. His research framework, *Asempayetsia*, promotes African-centered artistic methods for reclaiming indigenous knowledge systems in modern creative and academic practices. Dr. Dawson's recent work explores the intersection of African art music, technology, and cultural heritage, emphasising archival preservation, community engagement, and immersive sound design.