

**NANA YAA ASANTEWAA, THE QUEEN MOTHER OF EJISU: THE UNSUNG
HEROINE OF FEMINISM IN GHANA**

BY

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**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
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University of Toronto**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the life story of Nana Yaa Asantewaa and its pedagogical implications for schooling and education in Ghana and Canada. Leadership role among women has been a topic in many debates for a long period. For many uninformed writers about the feminist struggles in Africa, Indigenous African women are docile bodies with little or no agencies and resistance power. However, the life history of Nana Yaa Asantewaa questions the legitimacy and accuracy of this misrepresentation of Indigenous African women. In 1900, Yaa Asantewaa led the Ashanti community in a war against the British imperial powers in Ghana. The role Yaa Asantewaa played in the war has made her the legend in history of Ghana and the feminist movement in Ghana. This dissertation examines the traits of Yaa Asantewaa and the pedagogic challenges of teaching Yaa Asantewaa in the public schools in Ghana and Canada.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to four important people in my life.

Nana Wiafe Akenten III and Mrs. Sophia Mensah Wiafe my wonderful and loving parents; you are really a blessing to me.

To my loving and caring husband, Nana Kamkam Bempah Kwame, this is for your patience, spiritual and emotional support, understanding, encouragement and financial and husbandry dedication towards my further studies. Love God bless you. My wonderful sons Nana Agyei Firitete Bempah and Nana Kankam Akenten, thus far the Lord has brought your Mum. God bless you all.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction:

The overarching theme of this dissertation is to investigate the life story and struggles of Nana Yaa Asantewaa, the Queen-mother of Ejisu, and the relevance of her life struggles to feminist movement in Ghana. The investigation pays particular attention to these three key objectives:

- a) To examine the life story and struggles of Nana Yaa Asantewaa
- b) To show how the life story and struggles of Yaa Asantewaa has informed and shaped the feminist movement in Ghana.
- c) To point to the pedagogical possibilities and limitations of studying Nana Yaa Asantewaa within the schooling and education system in Ghana and Canada.

Leadership role among women has been a topic in many debates for a long period. Historically, many African women have influenced the Socio-political terrain of their local community. For many uninformed writers about the feminist struggles in Africa, Indigenous African women are docile bodies with little or no agencies and resistance power (see Narayan 1997; Allen, 1986; Moraga, Cherrie and Gloria Anzaldua 1981; Rich 1976; Sen and Caren 1987; Smith 1983). However, the life history of Nana Yaa Asantewaa questions the legitimacy and accuracy of this misrepresentation of Indigenous African women. Nana Yaa Asantewaa was the queen mother of Ejisu Traditional Area of Ashanti region of Ghana. In 1900, Yaa Asantewaa led the Ashanti community in a war against the British imperial powers in

Ghana. Although the Ashantis were defeated in the Yaa Asantewaa War, the role Yaa Asantewaa played in the preparation towards the war and the war itself requires recognition in the contemporary discussion of traditional women who had played essential role in the feminist movement in Africa.

Another falsely claimed assumption about gender relations in African is that Indigenous African women have always played second fiddle to their men. Without denying the existence of patriarchy in Africa, the dissertation shows that contrary to Western (mis)representation and (mis)understanding of gender relations in Africa, Indigenous African women have always challenged patriarchal practices within their communities. The story of Nana Yaa Asantewaa reveals a complex and nuanced gender relation among Indigenous African society: on one hand, Nana Yaa Asantewaa was a traditional wife in a polygamous relationship who performed all the traditional duties required of a wife. On another hand, she was a powerful queen mother who stood against British aggressions against the Ashantis. How then does one theorize, teach and study such a complex character like Yaa Asantewaa in the contemporary schooling and education in Canada given the way in which Western education has (mis)constructed and reconstructed gender relations in Africa? What does the complex and nuanced gender roles of Nana Yaa Asantewaa reveal about feminist ideology and practices among Indigenous Africans? Why should the school and education system in Canada bother to study Yaa Asantewaa? It is the desire to search for answers to these questions that drive the dissertation

1.2 Problem Statement

The dissertation is guided by these key questions:

- a) Who is Nana Yaa Asantewaa and what is her relevance to schooling and education in Ghana and Canada?
- b) In what way have the life struggle and resistance of Nana Yaa Asantewaa help shape the feminist movement in Ghana?
- c) What are the pedagogical challenges and possibilities of studying Nana Yaa Asantewaa in schooling and education in Ghana and Canada?

Yaa Asantewaa became the regent for the Ejisu traditional area after the deportation of the then Asantehene, Prempeh I, and other Ashanti chiefs to Seychelles Island in 1896 by the British colonizers. After the deportation, the then British Governor-General of Gold Coast, Frederick Hodgson, demanded the Golden stool which is the spiritual symbol of the Ashanti nation. Yaa Asantewaa and the remaining Ashanti chiefs deemed the demand of the governor as an affront to the Ashanti nation. A meeting was immediately held at Kumasi, the capital town of the Ashanti Nation and the seat of the confederacy to pursue the next line of action. Yaa Asantewaa was present at the meeting as the then regent of Ejisu traditional area. Disagreements ensued among the Chiefs present at the meeting concerning the next line of action of the Ashantis. Some of the chiefs were of view that *Asanteman* (Ashanti nation) should negotiate with the British while others prefer fighting the British. Those in favor of the latter based their arguments in the past experience. The British has proven on many occasions that they cannot be trusted to keep their side of a bargain. For instance, Nana Prempeh I agreed to go to exile on Seychelles Island on

condition that the British will not pursue any further interest in the Golden Stool. After Nana Prempeh I was sent to the Seychelles Island, the British renewed their interest in the Golden Stool by insisting that the Stool should be given to them. In fact, there are many oral stories in which the chiefs who went to the British territory to negotiate with the British were arrested and taken as slaves to the United States. Yaa Asantewaa was among those who thought that war against the British was the best option for the Ashantis. It was at this deliberation amidst the disagreements, that Yaa Asantewaa presented this strong argument to the council:

Now I see that some of you fear to go forward to fight for our king. If it were in the brave old days of Osei Tutu, Okomfo Anokye and Opoku Ware, chiefs would not sit down to see their king to be taken away without firing a shot. No European could have dared speak to chiefs of Ashanti in the way the governor spoke to you this morning. Is it true that the bravery of Ashanti is no more? I cannot believe it. It cannot be! I must say this: if you, the men of Ashanti, will not go forward, then we will. We, the women, will. I shall call upon my fellow women. We will fight the white men. We will fight till the last of us falls in the last of us falls in the battlefields. (Historical Figure, Ghana-world.fromger)

Yaa Asantewaa took on the leadership of the Ashanti uprising of 1900 with the support of other Ashanti nobles. Although the Ashantis were defeated by the British in this war, the Ashantis achieved their aim of protecting the Golden Stool “*Sika Dwa Kofi*” from being seized and captured by the British.

It is this feat of Nana Yaa Asantewaa that makes her a remarkable figure to be studied by current generations in Ghana. The selflessness and determination that Nana Yaa Asantewaa exhibited in her course to defend the Ashanti Kingdom is something that can be learned within schooling and education in Canada and Ghana. It is based on these facts that this study explores the achievements of Nana Yaa Asantewaa and its pedagogical possibilities and limitations for schooling and education in Canada.

1.3 Researching among my own people: the politics of representation

The word “representation” denotes two meanings: the first meaning is captured in the *Longman Advanced American Dictionary* (new edition) as “the state of having someone to speak, vote, or make decisions for you.” The second relevant meaning of “representation” is found in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*: “To represent something is to describe or depict it, to call it up in the mind by description or portrayal of imagination; to place a likeness of it in the mind or senses.” I thus deduce from the two definitions that representation is the art of one trying to communicating the minds, take, stance and ideologies of a person or people on behalf of that particular person or people through language. Such descriptions to me are more of clarification stance. Hall (1997) defines representation as the production of meanings in our minds through language:

At the heart of the meaning process in culture, there are two related ‘systems of representation’. The first enables us to give meaning to the world by constructing a set of correspondence or a chain of equivalence between things — people, objects, events, abstract ideas, etc — and our system of concepts, our conceptual maps. The second depends on constructing a set of correspondence between our conceptual map and a set of signs, arranged or organized into various languages which stand for or represent those concepts. The relation between ‘things’, concepts and signs; lies at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call ‘representation.’ (1997, p.19)

Thus, the act of “representation,” whether as in speaking on behalf of a person or a group, or as in making sense and meaning of something is not apolitical or a neutral exercise. In order to

represent a person or a group, one needs to share the culture, politics, experience, history, and ideology of the person or group. But even with that there is still limit to representation.

In the case of research, “representation” is an important component because our subjective identities and political locations inform how we interpret and use the knowledge we acquire from our research participants. As researchers, we need to be cautious with which part of our identity we deliberately ignore as we represent our research community. For instance, Benita Parry in her article *Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse* interrogated the works of Ghatyatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Jan Mohammed for their relentless representation of the “Native”. Obviously disturbed by such constant criticism and questioning, Spivak responded: “She has forgotten that we are Natives too” (1999, p.190). By invoking their Native status, Spivak and her colleagues were claiming discursive rights to represent Native people. Commenting on Spivak’s response, Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) argue that there are oceans of difference and privilege that divide and separate those who have the gift of a voice from those who do not have such a gift; who in fact cannot dream of having a voice. In other words, sharing similar ancestry with Native people as the case of Ghatyatri Spivak does not guarantee that one will share the same experience and the politics of Native people. According to Daniel (2005), the “acts of naming” is not the same as the acts of “positioning oneself.” While the “acts of naming oneself” becomes an act of stating a specific place in society that one occupies by virtue of belonging to a particular ethnic, religious, racial, gender, ability, or sexual group; the acts of “positioning oneself,” by contrast, deals with the understanding of material, spiritual, emotional, psychological, and social consequences, costs, and dangers of belonging to or sharing a particular location with a group. In an interview George Dei granted to Jennifer

Kelly at Edmonton in February 1999, he draws the line between “racial identity” and “racialized identity.” Dei speaks of “racial identity” as identification on basis of color or the skin color signifier while “racialized identity” is the act of becoming part of a group or assuming a politicized understanding of the members of a group. Twine (2000) equally argues that one’s racial subaltern do not automatically translate into a better understanding of racism nor does it necessarily translate into identifying oneself closely with the members of a group. According to Franz Fanon (1967) and Memmi (1965), one’s racial subordination does not mechanistically generate a critical understanding of racism any more than colonialism created anti-colonial subjectivities. In other words, one can be Black by having black skin pigmentation but may be far from being black when it comes to sharing the politics and experience of blackness. As researchers, we need to be clear which of these positions—either “acts of naming,” “racial identity,” or positioning oneself—we occupied when we claim the role of representation. This is what probably Diana Bell, a White female anthropologist, failed to understand when her research among Aboriginal women was called into question by a group of Aboriginal women.

In her article *Speaking about rape is everyone’s business*, Diana Bell explained that her research was intended to raise the issue of silence regarding intra-racial rape among Aboriginal community and “to attempt to map terrain on which informed discussion may occur” (Bell 1989, p.403). While Diane Bell claimed her research was a collaborative work with an Aboriginal woman, Topsy Napurrula Nelson, the reality remained that Nelson was both included and excluded from the narratives. First, the supposedly collaborative article was written in a first person singular. Second, the author (Diane Bell) located herself as an active and authoritative White voice (see Larbalestier 1990). Thus, while Nelson’s inputs are crucial to the arguments in

the article (she gave legitimacy and discursive integrity to the narratives), she is rendered invisible in the authorship. No wonder shortly after the article was published, a group of Aboriginal activists wrote a letter of protest against the article. Although the protest letter did not dispute the issues raised in Diane Bell's article, it condemns the manner in which Diane Bell positioned herself as a dominated voice on issue of rape among Aboriginal community. As one Aboriginal woman said in her response to Diane Bell:

No white woman can know what it is like to be black and female in Australia. No white woman may speak of Aboriginal women's lives. The women's movement is white middle class and insensitive to black women. Our greatest problem is racial oppression not liberation as women. We don't want to pit ourselves against our men. (Bell 1989, p.409)

Obviously, Diane Bell chose to "speak for" and not necessarily to "speak with" Aboriginal women. Thus, the notion of collaboration as touted by Diane Bell (Bell 1989) was a convenient and unholy alliance meant to legitimize her voice as a White researcher speaking on issues affecting subaltern women. It is the core responsibilities that come with representation that researching among one's own people is a daunting task as anti-colonial and anti-racism researcher.

I embark on this research from my subjective location as an Akan female graduate student of a royal bloodline that directly connects to one of the prominent Ashanti throne in Kumasi. I am a princess to the paramount Chief of Offinso, Nana Wiafe Akenten III who happens to be a cousin to Nana Yaa Asantewaa. I am also a wife to a sub-chief of Buokrom, a town in Kumasi (Ashanti), Ghana. Thus, in talking about Nana Yaa Asantewaa, I am invariably talking about a history in which I am also an active agent. I am also a devoted Christian who is traditionally raised from a Christian family. My Christian background initially hindered my

enthusiasm on matters relating to traditions and indigenous cultural practices. Although as a appreciation of Akan history and tradition. I recall the many times my father provided explanation to some of the traditional ceremonies that were not clear to us. Yet, all these efforts did not whip my interest or enthusiasm on traditional matters. Even when my father was enstooled as the paramount chief of Offinso—the highest office of power within Offinso traditional area—I was not really happy because I thought that chieftaincy was nothing more than an apostasy or a syncretism. In addition to my Christian faith, the colonial education system in Ghana played a major role in severing me from my history and culture. The school system in Ghana rooted me into Western ideology and practices with little or no room for me to learn my traditional knowledge, values, culture, and worldviews. Therefore, it was not surprising that by the time I finished my undergraduate education, I knew more about Western ancestors like Shakespeare, Chaucer, Napoleons, Caesar, and other founding fathers of European civilizations, while I know virtually nothing about my own ancestors such as Nana Yaa Asantewaa, Okomfo Anokye, Osei Tutu, Nana Prempeh and other founding fathers of Ashanti Kingdom and civilization, I was at lost. Elsewhere in (Appiah 2006, p.7), Jane Appiah, citing the works of an Africanist educationist, Abdou Moumuni, contends that “colonial education did more than just to corrupt the thinking and sensibilities of Africans”; in fact, it filled Africans with abnormal complexities that considered anything African as evil while they unfortunately continue to imbibe everything Western. For instance, while I never show much enthusiasm to the festivals in my community because I thought they were all apostasy, I, however, never question the history of Christmas celebration, which interestingly, is part of pagan practices in Rome before it was

adopted as part of Christian festivities. If European pagan rituals can be Christianized, then what prevents me from Christianizing the indigenous festivals of my locality?

Even though History was taught in my early stages in education, it is so generalized that detailed accounts of the heroic prowess of Nana Yaa Asantewaa was virtually absent. Ironically, it was my journey to Canada and my engagement with some of the critical courses in my graduate education at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education that have offered me a new reading and thinking about Indigenous practices. I have now realized that if I had paid attention to my traditional values (which I now uphold very dear) it would have helped me more in my career. With insightful knowledge into Nana Yaa Asantewaa's attitudinal traits, I would have been spurred into greater height. I have come to realization that for me to make a positive impact in my society, I do not have to ignore my Indigenous knowledge but uphold and work with it. Indigenous people's survival and destiny rests on a form of intellectual, cultural, spiritual, and political liberation and emancipation grounded in an anti-colonial modernity (Dei 2008). The fact that the dominant did not understand our form of education and does not acknowledge our form of knowledge as Indigenous people should not have led us to abandoning it outright. I think if we had incorporated our form of knowing alongside that of western knowledge system, formal education would be prepared learners to address some of the complex questions facing human development and growth. It is upon these knowledges and eye-opening experiences that I have opted to embark on this research.

1.4 The political, educational and spiritual background of Akans of Ghana

The term "*Akan*" is believed to have emerged from the *Twi* (an Akan language) word *kan*, which literally means "first or foremost." The term *Akan* suggests the Akan people were the

first settlers (Aborigines) of Ghana. In fact, there is a perception in Ghana that the Akans have deliberately stretched this idea of being the first ethnic group in Ghana to claim sense of superiority over other ethnic groups (Kyeremateng 2004). Indeed, one needs not look further than this Akan proverb, “*Aninguase mfata Okaniba*” (Disgrace should never be the bedfellow of the Akan) to see the validity of this accusation. This proverb connotes that an Akan born is too important to be associated with anything disgraceful. No wonder this proverb does not sit well with other ethnic groups who accuse Akans of being arrogant and have high sense of themselves. The Akan society esteems and honours its sons and daughters who show bravery. This explains the local appellation and adorations for names such as Tweneboah Kodua, Yaa Asantewaa, Okomfo Anokye, and others. These individual names showed bravery and courage in the face of death. Thus, today, their names are written in the letters of gold among the *Akan* culture (Kyeremateng 2004, p.27).

The *Akans* of Ghana constitutes the largest and major ethnic group in Ghana. The last population census of Ghana held in 2000 suggested that the Akan ethnic group constitutes 49.1 percent of the Ghana’s total population. The Akans inhabits nearly two-thirds of Ghana’s land space between Black Volta and the Guinea Coast. They are culturally and linguistically homogenous and are sub-grouped into these tribes: Adansi, Agona, Ashanti, Akim, Akwapem, Assin, Bono, Denkyira, Fante, Kwahu, Nzema, Sefwi, and Wassa. Even though each tribal group speaks a separate dialect and has subtle differences in its cultural practices, the mutual intelligibility of their dialects and the uniformity of their cultural forms are without doubt similar (see Yankah 1995). The Akan language (*Twɔ*) is nearly spoken among 80 percent of Ghana’s population and could be seen as the lingua franca of Ghana—an idea other ethnic groups

vehemently opposed. Although the traditions and customs of Akans are not very different from what is being practice in other parts of the country and Africa as a whole, the Akans specifically do not practice female circumcision and tattooing (see Dankwah, 1944; Boahen, 1977; Yankah 1989). Akans widely practice matrilineal system of inheritance while a few others practice e patrilineal system. The matrilineal system is a system where “a person belongs to his or her mother’s family on the principles of matri-descent, thereby owing allegiance to the stool and property served by his or her mother’s family (see Adjei 2005). Devolution of property is organized on one’s ability to trace his or her descent through the mother’s family. Thus to claim to be an Akan, one must be able to establish one’s citizenship through the mother in order to be accorded certain customary rights and privileges. One of the tribal groups of Akans which is of particular interest to this essay is the Ashantis of Ghana because Yaa Asantewaa, who is the centre of this research, is an Ashanti.

1.5 The Ashantis of Akans

Ashantis were part of early settlers in Ghana. Ashanti kingdom was never founded until the reign of King Osei Tutu in the seventeenth Century. Historical accounts indicate that the success story of King Osei Tutu and the Ashanti kingdom is linked to the power and prowess of Okomfo Anokye, a lifetime friend and Spiritual advisor of King Osei Tutu. The divine powers of Okomfo Anokye no doubt made Osei Tutu and the Ashanti Kingdom very powerful and fearful. Even the establishment of Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti Kingdom is connected to the divine powers of Okomfo Anokye. According to oral accounts, Okomfo Anokye planted three *Kum* seeds at three different places and predicted that where the *Kum* seed will germinate and survive

climatic conditions to become a fully grown tree should be the capital town of the Ashanti Kingdom. The three places the *Kum* seeds were planted are *Kwaaman*, *Apemso-Bankofo*, and *Oboani*. The *Kum* seed at Apemso-Bankofo germinated alright but after some few weeks, the leaves got rotten and the tree fell down, so the village's name was changed from Apemso-Bankofo to *Kumawu* to imply the *Kum* tree died after germinating (*Kum-awu*). The *Kum* tree at *Oboani* even though survived germination and growth, for no apparent reason, it was relatively short and tiny. However, the *Kum* tree at Kwaaman flourished and became a very big tree under which the King and his people often sat under. So, Kwaaman was changed to *Kumasi* to signify "under the *Kum* tree." As expected, Kumasi became the capital of the Ashanti Kingdom.

Okomfo Anokye further unified the Ashanti kingdom by providing King Osei Tutu with a sacred golden Stool. According to historical accounts, the Golden Stool miraculously descended from the sky and landed on the lap of Osei-Tutu at a public gathering on Friday afternoon. Anokye then declared that the soul of the Ashanti Kingdom resides in the Golden stool and the day the Ashantis lose the stool will be the beginning of the total destruction of the Ashanti Kingdom.

1.6 The Golden stool of Ashanti



The Golden Stool (see the image above), which is also called *Sikadwa Kofi* (because it appeared on Friday), is made of pure gold and is 18 inches high, 24 inches long, and 12 inches wide. The Golden stool is kept under strictest security, and it is taken outside only on exceptional occasions and never comes into contact with the earth or the ground. The stool is so sacred that no one has ever sat on it. It is only a newly sworn in Ashanti King that is allowed to come closer to sitting on the Golden stool. And even in his case, he is lowered and raised over the Golden Stool three times without his buttock touching it. Without this important ritual, an Ashanti King cannot be recognized as a legitimate ruler. The Golden stool is so important to the Ashantis that they will rather die than allowed any group or individual to desecrate or take the Golden stool from them. For instance, in 1896, rather than risking a war that may cause the lost of the Golden Stool to the British, the Ashantis allowed their King Prempeh I to be deported to Seychelles Island. Again, in 1920, a group of African road builders that were constructing a road accidentally found the original Golden Stool hid somewhere. They made a horrible mistake by taking some of the gold ornaments from the Golden stool. The incident provoked the Ashantis and immediately trialed these accused people according to the customs and traditions of the Ashantis and imposed a death penalty on them. But the British intervened and the sentence was commuted to perpetual banishment from the Ashanti Kingdom.

It is within this context that on March 1900, when the then Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Frederick Hodgson, had a meeting with the elders of Ashantis and demanded to sit on the Golden stool as a way of establishing his authority over the Ashanti kingdom, the Ashantis felt insulted and have to prepare for a war with the British. It is in this particular war that Yaa

Asantewaa, the Queen-mother of Ejisu, became a popular figure in Ghana because of the heroic role she played in the war. The detail story about the war will be told later in essay.

1.7 Educational Philosophy of Akans

Philosophy is a conceptual response to problems posed in any given epoch for a given society. It is human beings' attempt to think most speculatively, reflectively, and systematically about the universe and the human relationship to the universe (Lucas 1969; Wiredu and Gyekye (1992). Philosophical reasoning serves as foundation for formulation and development of any educational system. By education, I imply a broadly conceived ways, varied options, and strategies through which people come to know, learn, and understand their worlds and act to make meaning fully within it (Dei 2004). Okrah (2003) observes that the most paramount consideration in defining or building a philosophical foundation of education in any social setting is the ontological, epistemological and axiological foundation of that social setting. Kwadwo Okrah (2003) submits that for one to understand the philosophy of Akans on education, one should be willing to answer the nagging question: what is the purpose of education in a given culture?

According to Peters (1966), education is normative and based on what every society values. Education implies that something worthwhile is being or has been intentionally transmitted in a morally acceptable manner. Therefore, it will be a logical contradiction to say that a person has been educated but has in no way changed for better or education is worth nothing (Peters 1966). Thus, education is about inculcating what a given society considered as valuable and worthwhile to learners. Indigenous *Akans*, like any other groups, have their

education system based on the philosophy of Akans. For instance, Akans believe that the nature of reality (ontology) is based on the assumption that all element of the universe is derived from similar substances and in essence spiritual. They insist that for one to understand reality of life one needs a complete or holistic view of society. Akan recognizes the interdependency among all peoples, to extend that individual existence is only meaningful in relation to the community that she or he is part of (Dei 2004). Thus, individual success story is not complete to Akans if it is not linked to the members of his or her family and community. Again, the Akan believes that the study of reality (epistemology) should not be based on only one way because there are multiple ways of knowing reality. Knowledges accumulated through emotions, dreams, intuition, and visions should be acknowledged as authentic means of understanding or studying the reality of life. The Akans believe that practice and experience are contextual basis of producing knowledge; hence survival should always go hand in hand with knowledge. In this sense, experience should be allowed to teach knowledge. This means, those who are fortunate to have lived longer in a community (Elders) should become the source of knowledge for the younger generation. Universally, the concept of “rights” and “responsibilities” are something that is cherished by all societies. Whereas, other societies place more emphasis on rights, the Akan community thinks responsibility should be encouraged more than rights. Thus, the *Akans* reward actions that are geared towards communal good instead of individual good. The *Akans* also believe in peaceful coexistence with nature rather than having total control or dominion over nature. These philosophical values serve as a guide in formulating and developing education system among the *Akans* of Ghana.

Busia (1969, p.15) observed that the *Akans*' education is based on the assumption that everything the younger ones learned should have relevance to the life and culture of the community and to the kind of life they are expected to lead. Boateng (1990) also noted that the traditional education of the Akans is there to be acquired and lived (p.110). Thus, for the Indigenous Akans, a learner's skills and understanding of communal knowledge is best test when she or he allows such knowledge to guide his or her actions and inactions within and outside his or her community. A learner whose behavior is uncharacteristic of his or her community is considered a failure. The Akans combine character and skill in training their young ones. A person is deemed educated if she or he is able to demonstrate good character and judgment in his or her daily interaction with members of community (see Okrah 2003). According to Abbam (1994), the Akans parents train and supervise their children to live a life that is at par with societal values such as; sociability, courage, solidarity, honour, endurance, and diligence. The Akan community will not hesitate to chastise any child that goes contrary to any of these values (see Okrah, 2003).

In view of that the Akan community teaches communal values and norms through storytelling, proverbs, idioms, fables, myths, and symbols. For instance, children exposed to storytelling may not want to emulate the life style of the character disgraced or ridiculed in the story; rather, children may want to emulate the hero of the story who exhibits bravery, loyalty, hardworking and wisdom.

1.8 Road map of the dissertation

The first chapter of this dissertation deals with the research questions. In this chapter, I explore the research questions that guide the dissertation. Also, I discuss the challenges and

complexities of writing about a subject in which one is an active agent. Further, I discuss the political, spiritual and educational background of Akans of Ghana which is an ethnic group that Nana Yaa Asantewaa belongs to. I also highlight the Golden Stool and its relevance to the Ashantis. The second chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks and methodology that grounds and guides the dissertation. The third chapter of the dissertation focuses on the narrations of two Indigenous Ghanaian writers and oral source to discuss Nana Yaa Asantewaa. The fourth chapter discusses some of the salient issues raised in the chapter three. The chapter five focuses on summary and conclusion of the dissertation

Chapter 2:

Theory and Methodology

2.1 Theoretical Framework

As already indicated, this dissertation draws on anti-colonial education, Indigenous knowledge, and Black Feminist Thought as discursive frameworks. As discursive frameworks, anti-colonial education, black feminist thought, and Indigenous knowledge theorize colonial and re-colonial relations and the implications of imperial structures on the processes of knowledge production and validation, the understanding of Indigeneity, and the pursuit of agency, resistance and subjective politics. These perspectives are useful in interrogating the configurations of power embedded in ideas, cultures and histories of knowledge production and use (Dei 2002a).

Elsewhere in (Dei 2002b), he argues that the anti-colonial discursive framework is an epistemology of the colonized, anchored in the Indigenous sense of collective and common colonial consciousness. It, therefore, allows for the celebration of Indigeneity that opposes the dominant knowledge system, hence call for research methods that respect and centre the voices of marginalized bodies in a research work because they are subjects of their own experiences and histories (Fanon 1963; Memmi 1965; Foucault 1980). As a critical framework, anti-colonial education challenges Western paradigms that guide today's education systems and social diversity by agitating for more inclusive practices to incorporate varied local concerns in research. It allows us to understand how these colonial remnants are being challenged, reproduced, or transformed in educational research today. The anti-colonial framework acknowledges the role of schools in producing and privileging different knowledge forms. Its acknowledges the urgency for creating educational systems that confront the challenge of social

diversity by being more inclusive and better able to respond to varied local concerns about formal schooling. An anti-colonial framework problematizes the marginalization of certain voices and ideas in schools. This framework views school as an institutional structure sanctioned by society and the State to serve the material, political and ideological interests of the social and economic groups that have greater influence in shaping the State/society.

Anti-colonial framework is well suited to question the essentialization of norms, values and social constructs, and how these also shape indigenous knowledge and spiritual knowing in African societies. Anti-colonial framework works with local/Indigenous knowledge as a strategic base form to rupture the conventional processes of schooling. The framework examines the notion of Indigenous as marked by the absence of colonial imposition (Dei, 2002). Also an Indigenous framework which forms the core of anti-colonial stance with its interconnections of self, group, community, culture and nature can provide compelling arguments against racism, colonialism, and imperialism that have ensured divisions, fragmentation and inequities in communities (Dei, 2008).

2.2 Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous Knowledges are not 'alien' knowledges emerging from an "outer space" but are knowledge based on experiences, beliefs, customs and values of people who have lived over the years on the land (Agrawal, 1995b, p.5). According to Semali and Kincheloe (1999), the concept "Indigenous knowledges" have often been associated with primitive, wild, and natural within the education system in the West. Such misrepresentation, as they further argued, has not only evoked condescension among Western observers, but more troublingly, generated little

appreciation for what Indigenous knowledges are and its relevance to schooling and education in contemporary time. Indigenous knowledges, in its basic sense, reflect the dynamic ways the residents of a given locality come to understand themselves in relationship to their natural environment and Cosmo world. According to Dei et al (2000, p.6), Indigenous knowledges are accumulated by individual and social groups through historical and current experience. Thus, through the process of learning from old experiences, new knowledge is also discovered. This understanding of indigenous knowledge is very important, because in this era of globalization and Diasporic relations, it is easier for one to assume that Indigenous knowledges have lost its relevance and even existence due to modernity. Such misunderstanding only tends to misrepresent Indigenous knowledge as something that sits in 'pristine fashion' outside the effects of other knowledges (Dei 2000a). But, like all other knowledges, Indigenous knowledge also borrows from other knowledges. In fact, when Barman, Herbert, and McCaskill (1987) argue that the Aboriginal people should return to their past, they were not referring to the very ancient lives of their ancestors; but rather was asking Aboriginal people to affirm their identity by selecting aspects of old ways and blending them with the new ways.

According to Maurial (1999), Indigenous knowledge is the people's cognitive and wise legacy. Maurial further categorizes Indigenous knowledges into three bases: First, Indigenous knowledge is a result of the quotidian interactions among indigenous families and communities. This knowledge is immersed in the whole culture and it is recreated through generations in the daily oral stories, symbols, songs, riddles, myths, and idioms constructed in local languages to reflect their daily agrarian work in the land, the curative powers of their local plants as well as the celebration of special events. The most important thing about indigenous knowledge is that it

is alive in indigenous peoples' culture but the main distinction between Indigenous and western knowledge is that Indigenous knowledge is neither archived nor stored in the laboratories and is not separated from politics and everyday life of Indigenous people. The implication of this is that Indigenous knowledge makes Indigenous people the actors of their own knowledge and not passive repositories of a knowledge that is separated from their everyday life.

Secondly, Indigenous knowledge is holistic in a sense that its ideas and practices are one. There is no division among "disciplines of knowledge." What Western knowledge may call *Religion, Law, Economics, and Arts* are united within a whole entity of worldview. This is expressed through oral and written tradition especially through Indigenous peoples' mythical narrations and symbolic works. Such exposition presents local people as theorists of their lived experience. Unlike Western classroom, where theorizing of live experience remains the privilege of those in academia, Indigenous knowledge is rooted and grounded in the local people's everyday practices. The local people theorize through their daily interaction with one another. This is why Indigenous knowledge is experientially based and relies on the subjective experience and the inner workings of the self to make sense and meanings to social interactions. Thus, Indigenous knowledge is holistic and relational.

In the era of individualism and sense of entitlement, Indigenous knowledge in education will breed new learners who think in a sense of collective and not in the sense of individualism. I am suggesting that it is only through Indigenous Knowledges that the communal spirit can be generated and used effectively. Within Indigenous knowledge are values, worldviews, knowledge that emphasize a sense of community. Quiet recently, I went to an African shop in North York of Ontario, Canada to buy groceries. I knew the owner of the shop to be a fellow

Ghanaian who speaks my local language. I actually needed help with clarification of a particular good that I was buying, so I spoke to the sale person in our native language. The man replied me in English. I asked him whether he does not speak our local language. The man replied that although he speaks the local language fluently, he does not want to speak the local language because he is in Canada now. I then told him that I was sorry to have bothered him because I was under an impression that since we all come from the same area, coming to his shop will help me to receive the explanation I was seeking about a particular item which he was selling because he can explain things to me better in our language (Twi). The irony and tragedy of this encounter is that the man could not even speak English properly. What will make a person rejects his own language for a foreign one that he or she does not understand and cannot articulate well? How can a person that arrogantly rejects his or her own language in favor of a foreign one that he does not understand expect respect and fair treatment? My only concern with this encounter is what this man has been feeding his children. I will not be surprised if he tells them that they are not Ghanaian. The tragedy of our society is that many Indigenous Africans, in their eagerness to be accepted into Canadian culture, have unfortunately denounced their own identity, culture and values. However, Indigenous knowledges are relevant in today's academy because they are anchors on which learners can develop and build their sense of being and spirituality.

2.3 Spirituality

It has been said that spirituality is the eternal human yearning to be connected with something larger than our own ego (Palmer, 2003). Spirituality is something so personal, unique and individualistic that it cannot be captured in any neat definition (Wane, 2002); that in contrast

to religion or religious theories, beliefs, and practices, it tends to be more varied (Dei et al. 2000a). Spirituality is ‘inner edge’ to do something bigger than oneself. According to Wright (1999), spirituality is concerned with the awareness a person has of those elements in existence and experience which may be defined in terms of inner feelings and beliefs.

In presenting the individual as a complex made up of many layers of meaning, Miller (1999) asserts that holistic education stresses the complex and that humanizing education empowers the learner to fulfil her or his responsibilities to a larger citizenry, such as confronting and resisting oppressions and social injustices in many forms. Holistic education, Miller writes, cultivates meaningful relationships. Students and educators can engage in dialogue, connect and mutually create meanings and interpretations about their world. As Groome (1999) also notes, holistic education engages individuals as whole beings to learn, teach, think, and act critically for themselves and their communities. Such visionary education requires solid grounding in respect and spiritual learning as a form of holistic education to integrate and synthesize the sacred and the secular to constitute material and emotional success. For Groome, there are spiritual values about which many of the great world religions and spiritualities agree. If educators were to allow such spiritual convictions to permeate their teaching and the ethos of schools these would be transformed. Here are some examples of such changes:

- X The equal dignity, rights, and responsibilities of everyone.
- X Life is a gift charged with purpose and meaning;
- X An emphasis on community - an understanding that we need and must care for each other;
- X Spirituality emphasizes the quest for wisdom of life;

- X All great spiritual movements teach justice for all and compassion for the needy;
- X At their best, most faiths are universal in outlook, emphasizing open hearts and minds and cherishing truth;
- X All spiritualities also are convinced that the person is essentially spiritual, that the human vocation is to live in "right relationship" with God - however named - and with oneself, others, and creation.

Dei (2002) argues that there are students and educators who use the spiritual understanding of parenthood as an entry point to teaching and learning. Classroom teachings stress the society, culture and nature nexus and the need to cultivate peaceful co-existence. The evocation of spirituality in education has implications for understanding power, authority, and respect in student-teacher relations. Collectivism and collaborative learning allow the student to display dependence and interdependence simultaneously. Citing O'Sullivan (1999), Wane (2002) argues that developing the spiritual nature of students through teaching will enhance their awareness of their relationship with other species and with the land. Wane goes on to assert that rather than viewing humans as occupying a hierarchical level above all other species, students would see the interconnectedness and interdependence that all living things have with one another. Such a vision would broaden their understanding of community and help them maintain the respect for life. Similarly, Dei's (2002) in his narratives pointed out that with the social dimensions (i.e., tying the learner to the broader community) added to school success, academic achievement must be read in social terms as benefiting both the individual learner and society at large. Wane also alludes to Miller (1997) and affirms that valuing the spirituality of students' means valuing the uniqueness of individuals, regardless of race, sex, creed, or ability. To create

an educational system that develops a student's spirituality, educators and teachers have to understand the holistic nature of education (Wane 2002). In the words of Suhor (1999), spirituality grows in classrooms when teachers see themselves as agents of joy and conduits for transcendence, rather than merely as licensed trainers or promoters of measurable growth. The latter's roles are important, but they are not why we educate.

In his attempt to offer educators a rationale for returning the contemplative (or third way of knowing that complements the rational and the sensory) to education, Hart (2004) suggests that opening the contemplative mind in schools is not a religious issue but a practical epistemic question. It is about how we know, not about what knowledge we are giving to others. Furthermore, Hart argues that few mainstream teachers or curriculum planners have explicitly integrated the contemplative into the classroom, yet contemplative knowing has been described as fundamental to the quest for knowledge and wisdom and complementary to analytical processing. Contemplative knowing affects student performance, character, and depth of understanding. It helps to return the transformative power of wonder, intimacy, and presence in daily learning and daily living. Inviting the contemplative in schools simply includes the natural human capacity for knowing through silence, looking inward, pondering deeply beholding, and witnessing the content of our consciousness.

2.4 Spirituality and collective responsibilities

In African traditions, collective responsibility is the belief that rights of community membership must come with matching obligations and responsibilities. These responsibilities include providing communal labour at any time when called upon by the traditional polity, as

well as making compulsory financial (Dei, 1989) and non-financial contributions to assist community members in difficult times. In the materialistic western society, there is a propensity for Indigenous immigrant families and their children to accord little credit to the sense of collective responsibilities shown to us by our forefathers. Nevertheless, this should not stop us from teaching our children our spiritual knowledges and sense of collective responsibilities. The Indigenous African philosophy posits that mutual cooperation is vital for both individual and group survival. The fear that the group could withdraw mutual aid and cooperation is a powerful inducement for individual to conform to societal norms and regulations. At early age, we learn that “joy comes with sharing.” Thus, we ought to share with our community and our school children what we have learned and how we have learned that. I remember, for instance, when growing up, one of the first morning rituals in the village was to gather and share dreams of the night. The content of these dreams was seen as a valuable shared resource, to be used by the entire Abusua (the extended family, which may not necessarily share the same daily meal) for instruction, prediction and understanding. I have come to realise that Indigenous immigrants negotiate various aspects of their identities and spiritualities against the backdrop of a very different cultural context. This to me this is happening because of many of us (Indigenous immigrants) do not understand spirituality or what it is about and the notion that spirituality is apparent in everything we do as human. We all have spirituality in us whether we are aware or not but has to be ignited and used in everything we do. According to Dei (1989), the individual can be spiritual and non-spiritual in the sense of acknowledging the power of the inner will to know and understand the self and be able to interact with the outer world and the collective. To be non-spiritual is a failure to show individual humility and to work with the knowledge that

comes with knowing the self and inner spirit. Thus spirituality is not an inborn trait for particular unique persons but then an inner spirit waiting to be used effectively and efficiently by the inhabited.

As stated above, many of us in this society do not really understand spirituality, and so there appears to be a great deal of challenges. Some of the reasons among numerous others to that are: First, much of what has been written about spirituality, in general, is presented in the dualistic context of East versus West. African spirituality, for example, is often left completely out of the dialogue. So it often is with things too mysterious, fearful, and not easily understood, yet the seed of many of the world philosophies and religions sprouted in the fertile and rich metaphysical gardens of the Motherland. Second, in Toronto and elsewhere, there are some parents who are alienated from their tradition and cultural heritage. The source of their alienation varies from disenfranchisement to association to people who do not share the same value. Many of these peoples are not spiritually connected to the traditions. Third, there are also among those who were not spiritually connected before coming to Canada. For all these people, regardless of where they are today, it is likely that they and their children lack some spiritual completeness in their development. Fourth, there are some in exogamic relationships whose children experience a tremendous degree of uneasiness due to their lack of spiritual practices. Immigrants who have lost their identity or have their spirituality dormant in themselves can often share similar experiences.

2.5 Black Feminist Thought

In Jan Larbalestier (1990), she argues that the problems of cultural representation, understanding, and production of knowledge in relations to power have particular relevance for

feminist discourse and practices. Accordingly Larbalestier (1990) observes that the lynch-pin of Western feminists that women form a universal sisterhood because their common goal within global context is to throw off the chains of patriarchy is very contentious and seems to challenge the existing meaning of social relationships in culturally dichotomous terms. Carby (1982) similarly argues that although “the history of black women is interwoven with white women, this does not mean they are the same story” (p. 223) because the idea of common sisterhood and the goals of the liberation fall shades of cultural diversity and inequality (Larbalestier, 1990). The observations made by Carby and Larbalestier are very relevant in discussing feminism within indigenous context because they troubled the existing feminist discourse that supports universality of women experiences. In fact Ramazanoglu, the aboriginal woman from Australia, eloquently argues that Western feminists cannot entertain the idea of having global feminist discourse if they are reluctant to acknowledge the differences that exist among women: “We cannot begin even to imagine how we might construct new bridges between women if women themselves lack critical consciousness of where we stand in relation to the divisions between us” (1989, p. 137). Thus, the interweaving of women’s live experiences as occupying the same historical time, place and unifying themes and conditions of existence (DuBois and Ruiz 1990), do not mean, as Carby argues, that women universally will tell the same story. The question remains whether feminists will ever tell different stories within a common feminist perspective (Larbalestier, 1990).

Therefore in using feminist thought I imply the multiple centers and/or bodies of knowledges that speak to the multiple experiences of black women globally and the convergences and divergences of these experiences. Indeed, experiences of black women within

the global context are very heterogeneous and therefore cannot be boxed into one single theory, discourse, or centre. Thus, creating multiple centers allows for the incorporation of the experiences and thoughts of many black women particularly those in rural Africa that are often silenced or lumped in the bigger category of Black feminism. In this case the worry of leaving out others experiences becomes minimal especially when spaces have been created within the centers for others to share their thoughts.

One remarkable feature about black feminist thought is its willingness to provide multiple discourses that capture ranges of experiences of black women who feel the current mainstream White Western feminist discourse that is based on the experiences of White, middle-class, heterosexual women do not speak to their multiple experiences. In fact, the analyses of White feminist theory painfully shy away from the specificity of black women's experiences such as race, culture, history and myths. The diversity of women's experiences is well captured in the indigenous Akan¹ proverb, "*Oketepa ne Oketew se din mpo a wonse honam*" (Even if the Lizard shares the same reptile family with the Alligator, they still differ in appearance). Metaphorically, this proverb suggests that sharing similarities should not negate or delegitimize differences. In the context of this dissertation, this proverb implies that White, middle, class, and heterosexual women may share womanhood with black women; nevertheless, their experiences differ. Probably, it is because of this narrow and Western hegemonic construction of feminism that many black women in local communities, for example in North America and Africa, have refused any association with the term "feminist" (Wane et al 2002; Mohammed 1998; Nfah-Abennyi 1997). In view of that Black feminist thoughts have constantly worked to create spaces

for the experiences of other black women in the global community. It is considering this view that Njoki Wane operationalizes black feminist thought to mean:

A theoretical tool meant to elucidate and analyze the historical, social, cultural and economic relationships of women of African descent as the basis for development of liberatory praxis. It is a paradigm that is grounded in the historical as well as the contemporary experiences of Black women as mothers, activists, academics and community leaders. It is both an oral and a written epistemology that theorizes our experiences as mothers, activists, academics and community leaders. It can be applied to situate Black women's past and present experiences that are grounded in their multiple oppressions. (Wane et al 2002, p. 38)

This paper utilizes black feminist thoughts to analyze the life story of Nana Yaa Asantewaa, the queen mother of Ejisu of the Ashantis. I am aware of the dominant narrations and the existing marking of Africa as the savage and primitive "other." My concern is in line with Nfah-Abbenyi's (1997) observation that Western feminists have most often used negative cultural practices that affect women in third world countries to reproduce Western classification of the "other" as inferior, primitive and savage while leaving the actual problem affecting third world women unsolved:

Western feminists tend to zero in on specific issues concerning women in the third world and then sensationalize those hand-picked issues for Western consumption. ... What I find negative is not the fact that a good majority of the feminists who address this issue often do not delve into the reasons why it happens, nor do they propose any solutions that can be helpful in the lives of these women. We are told that circumcision takes away their pleasure for life. This is sometimes followed by a plethora of examples that depict African men as inherently savage and violent. What ends up happening is unfortunate, given that in the bid to match African women's (sexual) victimization with African men's brutal nature/patriarchy, the women seem forgotten or remain in the shadow of the discussion that is (supposedly) about them and their sexuality. This issue is particularly problematical to me because my awareness of female circumcision was sparked and has been sustained only since my arrival in North America. (Nfah-Abbenyi 1997, p.26)

The focus of my analysis of Yaa Asantewaa is to stress on the stories of resistance and agencies of Indigenous African women by showing ways they challenge and effect changes on issues affecting their lived experience. Therefore, this dissertation has been analyzed with a strong gaze from black feminist thought. As a libratory discourse, black feminist thought shift the gaze from depicting local women as mere victims of patriarchal practices to an elaborate investigation that seek to highlight their survival skills and struggles to carve out a way from their past and present oppression.

Although much has been written on Nana Yaa Asantewaa by many scholars, she is still not known in other parts of the world. This essay carefully studies the traits and behavior of Yaa Asantewaa that spawned her heroic achievements. Although Ghanaians uphold and appreciate the heroism of Nana Yaa Asantewaa, we have not learnt much from her character. If her character traits- (selflessness, responsiveness, persistence, and resistant) nature is emulated, I think organizations like the feminist movements will soar to greater heights and achievement. Feminist theory has introduced gender as an important category of analysis—one with sociological, cultural, political, anthropological, historical, and other implication depending on what aspects of gender a theorist is most interested in elucidating (Nfah-Abennyi 1997). Based on this fact, I ask the question does the feminist theory consider the in-depth traditional knowledge surrounding black women and their importance in their societies. As noted by Reynolds (2002) “there is a specialized knowledge produced by black women that clarifies a particular standpoint of and about black women.” I ask this question because to me knowing what the black woman symbolizes traditionally will help differentiate what constitutes gender roles from patriarchal assumptions. Yes, there are patriarchal practices within indigenous Africa

that need to be challenged; however, such efforts should not be (mis)read as “gender war” between men and women. In the Akan community and among the Ashanti in particular, women are held in high esteem. My cultural background provides me a different understanding of a womanhood which to date, feminism has not been able to capture well. Nfah- Abennyah argues that “most feminists differentiate sex from gender. Sex is understood as a person’s biological maleness or femaleness.” This “maleness” and “femaleness” brings up a differentiation which to me does not necessarily amount to one being more important than the other. The differentiation however I think goes with a responsibility. The woman in the Akan community and what she connotes as mother, wife, caretaker of the home, and provider of basic things like food for her family does not render her less important than her man. These functions do not inhibit indigenous Akan women from challenging the actions and inactions of men. In fact, among the Ashanti culture, it is a pride for a wife to cook and cater for her family. A divorce can be granted to a woman if her husband refuses or fails to eat her food. In fact, eating from another woman’s bowl among the Ashantis is as bad as committing an adultery. It is within this context that “eating bowl” is a metaphor for the female sexual organ among Ashantis. When the Ashantis’ refer to a woman as the “public eating bowl,” it implies that the woman is sexually promiscuous. The use of “eating plate” as a metaphor for sexual organ is to imply the relevance of food among the Ashantis of Ghana. Cooking for one’s husband is equivalent to satisfying one’s husband sexually. In the same way, being faithful to one’s wife begins from eating from her house. When a man starts eating from another woman’s house, it also presupposes that the man is cheating with that woman. Therefore, the idea of a woman cooking for her husband among the Ashantis goes beyond the Western feminists’ assumptions of patriarchy. Similarly, an Ashanti’s man is

responsible for meeting the financial needs of the house. These needs include paying rents, providing money for groceries, paying bills, and taking care of the children needs (education, health, clothing, and shelter). Ashanti men are judged based on their ability to perform these roles. Of course, women in many occasions support their husband to perform these roles, but the primarily responsibilities of these roles lie with the men.

As one could tell, these gender roles among the Ashantis are different from what exist among the Western society. Therefore, when one talks about patriarchy among the Akans of Ghana, one needs to understand the cultural context of the Akan society. Of course, these do not mean that patriarchal practices do not exist among the Akans of Ghana; there are patriarchal practices among the Akans, but these practices need to be explained and interrogated within the context of the Akans culture. Therefore, in analyzing the lived experiences of Nana Yaa Asantewaa, one needs to understand gender relations within the context of Akan culture and traditions. As Joy James rightly argues, “To choose to live outside our traditions, apart from our ancestors and people, means losing the roles of living thinkers, servant to the spirits, community activists and the deepest realities they reflect” (James 1993, p.)

In the olden days for instance where societies fought wars to expand their land boundaries, even though women were not seen at the war fronts, they were the ones that spurred their men in wars. Women gathered at the time of war to sing war-songs and also perform liturgy to back their male counterparts. In addition, women pray to ancestors and the Supreme Being God for guidance, protection and assistance during the time of war. Women also send food to the men at the war camps. Thus women provided religious, emotional, and health support to men during war time. One may ask why women were not allowed to go to the war front? Yes, it is a

good question but then as enumerated before, every responsibility in our community is very important and women absence from war front does not necessarily connote fragility or feminineness. Indigenous Akan women were not encouraged to go to the war fronts because the Akans believe that women embody the family. It is through women that procreation goes on. Thus if they are sent to war fronts and get killed, it is not just one person that is killed but the whole society. Therefore, the idea to prevent from getting into the war fronts was to protect the continuity of the family line. As a matriarchal society, indigenous leadership is traced through the maternal line, so every family is very mindful of their women. We see our women to be endowed with special gift of insight and wisdom stemming from the sensitivity placed in them by the Lord God. Thus in the cause of nominating a successive chief for a vacant stool, the queen-mother has the sole responsibility of selecting who that leader should be. Also till now, a chief (indigenous leader), when saddled with difficult issues after brain storming with his elders will say “yen ko bisa abiriwa” meaning let us go and ask the opinion of the grandmother. It is also based on the idea of protecting women that many women were initially not encouraged into getting a formal education. The truth is that our ancestors did not trust the Europeans to teach their children better than they will do at home. Owing to that the traditional leaders did not initially send their actual children to schools; instead, they sent the children of their servants. It was after they saw the importance of education that they sent their children to formal school. Even then, the nephews that were selected to inherit their uncles were not sent to formal schooling. Rather, they were sent to the palace to learn the tradition and culture of their people. Within this context that women were discouraged from getting to school. Of course, things have

changed and this cultural knowledge should be reviewed but this practice should be understood and examined within the cultural context.

2.6 Methodology and Method

This research employed qualitative content analysis tool in collecting and analyzing two selected books of Adu Boahen and Asirifi Danquah. Busch al (2005) defined qualitative research method as a process used to deepen ones understanding of complex social and human factors in ways that cannot be understood with numbers. They further described content analysis as a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. Researchers quantify and qualify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part. Texts can be defined broadly as books, book chapters, essays, interviews discussions, newspaper headlines and articles, historical documents, speeches, conversations, advertising, theater, informal conversation, or really any occurrence of communicative language. In short, qualitative content analysis is a complex process of interpreting the presence, meanings and relationships of certain words, themes or/and concepts within written or oral text(s) to make inferences about the message based on the context within which those messages were produced. In other words, the interpretation of the message should take into accounts the author(s)' location, audience, historical conditions, times and space within which the communication occurred. Doucet and Mauthner (1998) insisted that interpreting messages from the context within which they occurred is important because “knowledge and understanding are contextually and historically grounded as well as

linguistically constituted” (cited in Wolcott 1994). According to Berelson (1952) and Palmquist (2005), content analysis is very useful in the sense that it helps, among other things; to reveal a existence of propaganda; provides valuable historical/cultural insights over time through analysis of texts and finally provides insight into complex models of human thought and language use.

This research tool is useful to the study of Nana Yaa Asantewaa because to understand the historical conditions that produce such subject as Nana Yaa Asantewaa. This does not imply that this methodology did not have any weakness. In fact, this methodology, among other things, is quite difficult to automate or computerize the data. In spite of this challenge, qualitative content analysis, becomes an ideal research tool for this research because it helps formulate themes and categories after textually reviewing certain chapters of these books: Asirifi – Danquah’s book *“The Struggle Between Two Great Queens” (Victoria of Great Britain and Yaa Asantewaa of Ejisu, Ashanti)* and Adu Boahen’s book *“Yaa Asantewaa And The Ashanti – British War of 1900 – 1.”*

Although many writers both white and black have at a point in time written about her in various perspectives and contexts (See Tordoff, 1965; Ward, 1967; Sweetman, 1984), I opted for the these two books because of the rich knowledge these authors bring to the life story of Nana Yaa Asantewaa. Unlike other bodies of work on Nana Yaa Asantewaa, these two books relied on the information provided by people who lived through the Yaa Asantewaa War. Therefore, their accounts were eye-witnesses accounts. In addition, the books interviewed family members and elders who are closely associated with Nana Yaa Asantewaa. In addition to these books, I also consulted Nana Wiafe Akenten III because historically, there is a close relation between the people of Offinso traditional area and the people of Ejisu traditional area. In fact,

history has it that Yaa Asantewaa fought the war with the support of Nana Afranewaa, who is the queen mother of Offinso Traditional area. Therefore, by consulting Nana Wiafe Akenten III, this dissertation intends to cross-check and authenticates the ideas in the two books. In using the two wonderful works, I reviewed various carefully selected chapters of the books that resonated with the research. I reviewed chapters that talked about the background of Nana Yaa Asantewaa, her role in the war, the war and its preparation and war frontiers and strategies. I also looked at chapters of both books that dealt with the end of the war and aftermath. Chapters twenty-seven, forty-one, fifty-two, fifty-seven, sixty-seven and one hundred and three were reviewed for this work.

Like every venture in life, I encountered some challenges in the cause of using these two works as research data. Though both books gave almost the same narrations, their ideas were scattered in the books that it quite difficult to formulate a common theme for analysis. In particular, it became quite a daunting task to massage the narrations of these authors to reflect on the research questions. Another challenge encountered in this work is how to present Yaa Asantewaa ideas in pluralistic society like Canada. Also, the dissertation recommends the teaching of Nana Yaa Asantewaa in schooling and education, the reality remains that Canada is a pluralistic society. Therefore, the challenge is speak and write about Yaa Asantewaa in a way that will make her life story useful to learners from diverse background.

Further, time and finances were not essential friends to this research. As an International student with only one year of guarantee funding in my M.A. program, I was under strenuous stress to finish the program within year. This means I have to write this dissertation in the summer while also trying to complete my course works. To say that this research supped all my

energy and joy of doing graduate education is simply understatement. While I was willing and eager to produce an effective work, I was also hunted by time knowing that if I failed to submit my final draft after two weeks of school re-open, I will be asked to pay a tuition fee for the fall. An amount I know I do not have and cannot afford at the moment. There were several issues in the research that I wanted to do further studies into it, yet I have to discourage this desire because of the fear that such venture will further delay the completion of the program.

Finally, the oral source of my research came for my own father, who is the paramount chief of Offinso traditional area. How does one interview her own parent for a research? What are the ethical and political implications of relying on one's family member for information in a research? These questions hunted me throughout the research. Needless to say, these problems did not affect the conclusions I draw from reading Adu Boahen and Asirifi-Danqua

Chapter 3:

3.1 Nana Yaa Asantewaa as a Person:

In his work, Asirifi-Danquah (2007) portrays Nana Yaa Asantewaa as a Queen mother who at her time of reign stood against the odds, injustices and imperialism of the then powerful British Empire. He describes Nana Yaa Asantewaa as the “first African Female General who led an army to fight the British for encroaching on the rights of the people of Ashanti” (p.27). Yaa Asantewaa was given birth to at a time that the royal females of Ejisu were facing problems in child birth. According to Asirifi- Danquah, a mysterious occurrence of still born twins happened seven consecutive times within a span of time. Yaa Asantewaa birthed after consulting the oracles for answers to these mysteries. One of the female royals gave birth to twins of which one was a formless body. The family preserved this body in a container and kept it at the family shrine. This was because the birth of this formless body was after the royal family consulted the oracles and thus believed the gods might have sent them this “unique” body. They thus thought it very unique and consulting the oracle again, the oracle professed this formless body as a deity. This deity became known as “Ateko”. The deity Ateko became a prominent medium of worship for the people of Ejisu. In Africa, there are lots of such deities and people believe them to possess super natural powers. Such deities are consulted by their worshippers for various assistances in times of wars, disasters, and for special favors. The Akans believe that the deities are generators of good weather and harvest and prosperity. Most of these deities are known by their believers to be benevolent and malevolent as the occasion demands. While these deities help their worshippers to prosper, they also punish them if they offend them. The people of Ejisu are said to have become very powerful warriors in the Ashanti kingdom with their deit

known to be their source of strength. They became noted for victory in every battle fought with neighboring States. These victory helped people of Ejisu to expand their land and territory. Nana Yaa Asantewaa was a citizen and queen mother of Ejisu. Adu Boahen seems silent on these facts due to apparently what he chose to centre on concerning the background of Yaa Asantewaa.

According to Asirifi-Danquah (2007), Nana Yaa Asantewaa was born in 1832 to a prosperous couple Kwabena Ampoma and Madam Attah Poh. Here Adu Boahen (2003) resonates with Asirifi-Danquah on Nana Yaa Asantewaa being born at Ejisu to the said couple; and Boahen goes on to mention Besease a town next to Ejisu, her father's hometown as the precise place of birth. Adu Boahen unlike Asirifi – Danquah, comments that oral tradition is not certain as to the exact date Nana Yaa Asantewaa was born. He however explains how descriptions given by foreign writers about Nana Yaa Asantewaa made him conclude she was sixty years (60) by August 31 1900. Thus going by this age, Adu Boahen calculates Yaa Asantewaa's date of birth around the year 1840. Both writers recount the matriarchal inheritance of Ashantis' and notes that since Madam Attah Poh is from the royal of Ejisu, Yaa Asantewaa automatically became a member of the royal family through birth. Asirifi-Danquah (2007) delves into Yaa Asantewaa's life story right from her birth through her adolescence and private life as an adult and then her queen-ship. He recounts that Yaa Asantewaa was said to be well versed in her culture since she was made to study the culture, customs, traditional norms and history of her State and that of other States. Yaa Asantewaa was groomed very well to become the queen mother of Ejisu. Yaa Asantewaa thus abided by the traditional norms, customs and culture of her people. She conducted herself very well, abstaining from sex and going through her puberty rite which is performed for girls at their first menstrual inception. Puberty rite was a ceremony

performed for girls who are deemed to have reached their prime with the first menstrual period. In the seventeenth century, premarital sex was a taboo punishable by either death or banishment from one's state. After the first menstruation, the initiation rite was done to declare a girl an adult. This also serves as a time of 'announcing' the girl's maturity to potential suitors. Sex was for adults and not for girls to indulge in it. Boahen (2003) does not necessarily focus on these parts of Yaa Asantewaa's life story but intermittently chips particular private information as deemed important for his work. Yaa Asantewaa got married to a man from outside her State. She was known also to be an ardent worshipper and a faithful servant of the family shrine. She was known to have served the family shrine relentlessly, even as a royal. She walked long distances to fetch water for usage at the shrine. She also used to prepare special clay for usage during festive occasions at the shrine. She was a member of a group that sang for the priest when he or she is possessed by the deity (pp.32-33).

Although Boahen does not touch directly on her worship life, he gives account of Yaa Asantewaa at the time of inciting the Ashanti chiefs to war made them "drink the gods". This trait of being "spiritual" as stated by Boahen buttresses the narrative of Asirifi-Danquah, of her practicable worship stance vehement. Asirifi-Danquah talks about her industrious qualities describing her as very hard working. Boahen (2003) similarly informs that she was a farmer. Both Asirifi-Danquah (2007) and Adu Boahen (2003) describe Yaa Asantewaa as a formidable-looking woman. Asirifi-Danquah describes her as "thin brown, leathery woman with fierce blazing eyes." Adu Boahen rather describes her as a stout woman giving her weight as two hundred pounds and height of five foot ten inches. Though the two descriptions sound a bit contradictory, a contrapuntal gaze of the two; reflect a strong brave personality. Asirifi-Danquah

(2007) goes on to explain that she was seen to be a strong woman who was noted to be neat and spent a lot of time to keep her surrounding clean. She was known to be tenacious and fervently believe that “men are not pillows for any woman to lean against” (Asirifi –Danquah, p.33). She used this slogan to encourage her fellow women to work hard at an era women were mostly dependent on men for their upkeep and livelihood. Adu Boahen mentions Yaa Asantewaa’s farm land at Boankra, a town found on the Kumasi –Accra trunk road. Adu Boahen further explains that oral accounts even suggest that the name Boankra came from the focused trait of Yaa Asantewaa. She was known not to bid farewell to any one when she was going to her farm thus generated the saying “Yaa ko afuom a onkra” meaning (Yaa always leaves for her farm without bidding farewell to anyone). Apparently this was a strategy by her to avoid unnecessary distractions from lengthy conversations. She thus was focused and avoided possible obstructions against her work and time. Asirifi –Danquah in agreement with Adu Boahen talks about Yaa Asantewaa having an only called Serwaa Brakatuo as asserted by Adu Boahen. Both writers inform that Serwaa Brakatuo unlike her mother Yaa Asantewaa gave birth to eleven children among whom was the Ejisu king was exiled alongside the Ashanti King, Nana Prempeh. Yaa Asantewaa was known to be very respectful to all including her husband. Asirifi – Danquah goes further to mention that Yaa Asantewaa had rival wives but never discriminated against her step children. She helped her husband to care for all her step children and her child alike. Another direct descendant of Yaa Asantewaa is the current Queen of Ejisu who is also a grand-daughter to one of the eleven children of Serwaa Brakatuo, Yaa Asantewaa’s only daughter.

According to Asirifi-Danquah (2007), Yaa Asantewaa was thirty-seven years old when she was enstooled the queen mother of Ejisu in 1869. Adu Boahen however is not certain on

when Nana Yaa Asantewaa was installed as Queen-mother but mentions that she was Queen from 1880s and 1890s. Thus both writers attest to her queen-ship around the same period. Asirifi- Danquah makes mention of her ‘unique’ character traits which won her many admirers. Both Asirifi and Boahen attests to this fact by mentioning that uniqueness enabling her play dual roles as both king and queen of Ejisu after her grandson, the king of Ejisu was arrested and sent to Seychelles Island alongside King Prempeh I. Asirifi –Danquah (2007) touches on the fact that she believed in God and also believed all human beings were equal and thus must be treated fairly. She loved peace and was known to avoid tribal clashes that could cause any disunity among the Ashanti Kingdom. She was known to uphold human dignity and justice not despising anyone but had high regard for rights and duties. She had regard and concern not only for her State but also the Ashanti Kingdom as a whole which she saw as having unique tradition and culture. Boahen (2003) concurs to this fact and explains this trait made her very influential in the ‘circles’. She taught her womenfolk to be obedient to their husbands but stood against abuse of children and wives by men and husband. She upheld high moral standards and challenged women to attain the status of virtue in their matrimonial homes. She combined “motherhood and motherliness. She was generous and provided for both her household and children of neighbors. This humane gesture won her the appellation “The Queen who fends for both the mother and the child; the mighty tree with big branches laden with fruits and from which children find their satisfaction for their hunger” (Asirifi-Danquah, 2007, p.36). She was known to be kind, generous, selfless, caring and affectionate towards both young and old. She was not greedy and sought to help others. Her happy mood and simplicity baffled even strangers that came into contact with her. During her four years reign as the King of Ejisu, her State enjoyed peace and

tranquility. Her over- generosity however led to the State of Ejisu being rated as poor financially as compared to other Ashanti States. She hated to see the rich maltreat the poor or enslave them because the latter owes the former; thus she was fond of using the State funds to settle the debts of some of her unfortunate citizens. It was this trait of generosity, kindness and care for people that she exerted towards her soldiers during the war. She always made sure her people are well cared for. Thus Boahen (2003) recounts Yaa Asantewaa sending “gifts and drinks to the various field officers to encourage and inspire them or boost their spirit” (p.126). She was remembered for advising the poor to desist from borrowing from the rich to avoid being enslaved. She also warned women in particular against borrowing from men so as to avoid a situation where a woman has to offer herself to a man as a form of paying her debt. As an Akan, Nana Yaa Asantewaa believed that traditions and customs are meant to improve the life of the people and not meant to destroy the people. Yaa Asantewaa believed in order and did not like indulging herself in other people’s affairs. As a queen mother, Yaa Asantewaa knew all her functions and obligations and stuck to them. She respected her King and gave him all the support he needed from her as a Queen.

According to Asirifi- Danquah (2007), Yaa Asantewaa possessed sterling qualities such as intelligence, patriotism, integrity and a good sense of judgment. As a traditional adjudicator, Yaa Asantewaa was known to judge fairly and equitably especially on issues involving the poor and the rich. She professed peace and forgiveness. She also considered brutalities and insults against women as a crime against womanhood and personally dealt treacherously with culprits. She loved and cared for people but was not hesitant to punish where an occasion demands punishment. Although accommodating and democratic, Yaa Asantewaa was a risk-taker and in

many cases forced her kinsmen to take risk ventures. Nana Yaa Asantewaa is known for her famous saying: “sometimes we rulers have to think for those who find it difficult to take risks” (Asirifi-Danquah, 2007, p.39). An example of such cases was cited by Boahen that Yaa Asantewaa made the Chiefs to “drink gods” (a practice where alcohol is drunk from a cup reserved for the gods) as mentioned above. He comments that by drinking from that cup, one commits him/her self to abide by whatever decision is taken by the group. One might think it was an encroachment on the right to make own decision by individuals. But to me, it was not necessarily so but then a way of intercepting fear – bound excuses made by individuals at crucial times. Besides the reason for drinking the gods would be made known to be agreed upon before the act.

3.2 Yaa Asantewaa Role in Ashanti War against the British:

Yaa Asantewaa War was not the first fought battle between the Ashantis and the British. In all, the Ashantis fought the British on six conservative times (Asirifi-Danquah 2007). Adu Boahen attests to this fact by mentioning many different wars namely that of 1807, 1824, 1873 – 4 and 1896 and the popular 1900 in which Yaa Asantewaa was very active. Asirifi- Danquah (2007) explains that the Ashanti Kingdom is known for its wealth and rich gold deposit; therefore, it became a target for the British when they colonized Gold Coast. Boahen (2003) however talked about the tensions stemming from the desire of the British colonial government to make Ashanti a protectorate after annexing trade ties with the Germans and the French and gaining control over the northern, coastal and southern areas of Gold Coast. Apparently the idea behind making Ashanti a protectorate could be due to the riches and also as mentioned in

conformance by Boahen, the period was an era when some European countries were scrambling for Africa. Both Asirifi and Boahen talks about the British's difficulty to defeat the Ashantis in the initial wars. The results of the first three wars say grounds the argument; the Ashantis defeated the British in all these wars. Both writers (Asirifi and Boahen) attest to the British strategically and diplomatically befriended some Ashantis States in separate alliance. This gave the British so much power to force Ashantis to become a protectorate. The British also built a fort and a military headquarters in the Ashanti capital, Kumasi to deter the Ashantis from ever thinking of war at a Kumasi suburb, Bantama.

Asirifi-Danquah like Boahen thinks the war resulted from both remote and immediate causes. As stated by Asirifi-Danquah, the immediate cause was the treatment meted to the Ashantis by British. The Ashantis' were being maltreated - very harsh and unjust administrative measures were placed on them as punishment by the British after the Ashantis lost to the British in the 1874 war. This led to the exile of Nana Prempeh and some Ashanti kings to Seychelles Island. Asirifi-Danquah (2007) unlike Boahen categorically lists the remote causes for the Yaa Asantewaa war as:

- Deprivation of Indigenous miners to the lucrative business of gold mining whiles the British acquired vast stretch of gold lands to extract the valuable mineral.
- The invasion of the Ashanti King's palace under no provocation by the British and looting the palace of gold dust and other valuables.
- The "unholy" alliances that Britain formed with some Ashanti States to perpetuate their 'divide and rule' tactics.

Boahen however narrates remote cause recounting the refusal of the Ashantis to the protectorate pact of the British colonial government. The Ashantis he explains under their leader Nana Prempeh sent a delegation of nobles to England to negotiate a treaty of peace and friendship with the British. This pact was refused by the British and the British used force on the Ashantis. It was after this encounter that the British entered the Kumasi, the Ashanti capital city with their army. Asirifi –Danquah (2007) agrees to the protectorate status that the British wanted to confer on the Ashantis as mentioned by Boahen. He mentions Some Ashanti Chiefs and advisers of Nana Prempeh I had then wanted them to fight the British but Nana Prempeh I discarded that advice and peacefully obliged to the demands of the British. The Ashantis thus accepted to be protectorate. One would think this should have sealed and satisfy the British; rather the British went further to arrest Nana Prempeh I, his family members and some other prominent Kings of the Ashantis and sent them to Seychelles Island. The Ashantis thought the action of the British was treacherous and provocative. The Ashantis became devastated but “refused to accept” the situation. They actually went through a state of frenzy for sometime but then decided not to act. According to Adu Boahen (2003), the Ashantis raised funds from “direct taxation” on themselves and used the proceeds to hire two lawyers to represent them. This was an action to speak on behalf of them in request of releasing and bringing back their king. Again the colonial office rejected this petition. Thus from then the Ashantis realized the British was not for peace and negotiation but for war.

Both Asirifi-Danquah and Boahen agree also on the account that the British Governor showed contempt to the Ashantis by threatening the Ashanti kingdom with further harsh punishment if they failed to obey him. Their narrations thus recount that as the then King and

Queen of Ejisu, Yaa Asantewaa took the current conditions of Ashantis to incite her people against the British. Asirifi – Danquah explains she diplomatically settled differences between her State and other neighboring States who through previous battles of her predecessor had become enemies to her State. It was through these tactics that she was able to influence most of the Ashanti Chiefs and their people to support her agenda: to wage war against the British.

3.3 The Trigger of the War and Outcome

According to the two books of Asirifi-Danquah(2007) and Boahen (2003), Sir Fredrick Hodgson, the then Governor of Gold Coast, after deporting the Asantehene, Nana Prempeh and some Ashantis Chiefs to the Seychelles Island, sent troops on three different occasions to search for the Golden Stool. When the Governor's searches proved futile, he called a meeting with the rest of Ashanti Chiefs. It was at this durbar where the Governor after receiving a hearty welcome from the Ashanti people demanded that the Golden Stool to sit on. According to Asirifi Danquah, this request did not surprise the Chiefs because prior to the governor coming to Kumasi, he had an earlier meeting with two Ashanti chiefs and demanded them to tell him where the Golden Stool is hidden. These Chiefs told the Governor that they were sorry because the day that Nana Prempeh was arrested in 1896, he was not given the chance to tell them where he had kept the Golden Stool. Though in conformity to Asirifi-Danquah's report, Boahen reminds that prior to the demand of the Golden Stool by the Governor, the Ashanti Chiefs requested the release and return of their King, Nana Prempeh during the durbar. This petition however was rejected by the Governor who went on to say that Nana Prempeh would not be returned to them. They should accept their fate and see him (the Governor) as their new king. The Governor

according to Asirifi-Danquah told the Chiefs that he knew where the Golden Stool was and would definitely get it. Boahen (2003) contends that to buttress Asirifi-Danquah's report that oral accounts mentions that between 1884 and 1888, the Ashantis experienced a civil war because one of its chiefs, Nana Atwereboana had failed in his attempt to secure the Golden stool for himself. This particular civil war might have awakened the interest of the British in the Golden Stool. Thus, it was not surprising that the governor, around February, a month before his infamous speech, had sent a "secret mission" to Kumasi to look for the Golden Stool of the Ashantis and was confident he would have it. Boahen (2003) argues further that Kwadwo Asumen, one of the servants of Atwereboana, knowing the interest of the British in the Golden Stool decided to get the Golden Stool for the British through the back door. His attempt however also proved futile because he could not locate the whereabouts of the Stool. Kwadwo Asumen turned around to reveal the secret of capturing the Golden Stool by the British to a Chief of one of the nearby towns in Kumasi, Ahodwo – Chief Opoku Mensah. The Governor was said to have become agitated after failing to secure the Golden Stool through persuasion (Asirifi-Danquah 2007) that he arrogantly said this at a meeting with the Chiefs:

What must I do to the man, whoever he is, who failed to give to the Queen, who is the paramount power in the country, the stool to which she was entitled? Where is the Golden Stool? Why am I not sitting on the Golden Stool at this moment? I am the representative of the paramount power; why have you relegated me to this chair? Why did you not take the opportunity of my coming to Kumasi to bring the Golden Stool and give it to me to sit upon? However, you may be quite sure that although the Governor has not received the Golden Stool, it will rule over you with the same impartiality and the same firmness as if you had produced it. (Asirifi-Danquah, 2007, p.60)

Both Asirifi-Danquah and Adu Boahen contend that the Governor's speech did not go well with the Ashanti Chiefs and their people. Yet, they did not openly display any anger or resistance

with the exception of Nana Yaa Asantewaa as reported by Asirifi-Danquah; who spat into the Governor's cloth. This incidence is recorded in the book *The Siege of Kumasi*, which was written by Mary Hodgson, the wife of the Governor Hodgson: "Except the Queen of Ejisu, Yaa Asantewaa, who at the time she was to shake hands with the Governor, stopped before the governor, and stretching out her hand, examined the governor's order and decoration and sarcastically admired his uniform. Yaa Asantewaa insisted on coming up the dais to shake hands with me, only to soil my gloves with the spittle of chewed cola nuts which she had stored in her palm" (Asirifi-Danquah, 2007, p.60). Further, Nana Yaa Ashanti ignored the protocol of speaking to the governor through interpreter and proceeded to address the Governor in the following words:

Foolish White man! Who are you to demand the Golden Stool? The Golden Stool is the property of the King of Ashanti and not for people like you: Do you belong to the royal family? Where is our King? Go and bring him to show you where the Golden Stool is kept. He is the sole custodian and he knows where it is hidden. (Asirifi-Danquah, 2007, p.61)

Adu Boahen omitted this speech and action of Nana Yaa Asantewaa in his accounts but recounts in accordance to Asirifi- Danquah's assertion that it was after this encounter that Nana Yaa Asantewaa, met with the other Chiefs to discuss the way forward for the Ashantis. Adu Boahen mentions some of the people who were present at this meeting. He mentions Nana Afranewaa the queen –mother of Offinso to be one of the people at that meeting. He further explains this that this is the first time that the presence of Nana Afranewaa presence at this important meeting has been acknowledged in any written work about Yaa Asantewaa War. As a princess to Offinso royal throne, I asked my father to collaborate this story. According to Nana Wiafe Akenten III, the current paramount Chief of Offinso Traditional area, the two queens, Yaa

Asantewaa and Afranewaa are cousins; thus even to date matters that affect Offinso is of paramount interest to Ejisu and the vice versa is true. Therefore, there is no way Nana Yaa Asantewaa can go to war without the mutual support of Offinso. In this sense, Adu Boahen's account of the presence of Nana Afranewaa, the Queen mother of Offinso at this meeting is a historical fact. In fact, the prominent role Nana Afranewaa played in the Yaa Asantewaa war has received little attention and recognition among historians. For instance, many historical accounts of the principal plotters of the Yaa Asantewaa war, like Captain Stewart's letter to the Crown on January 3, 1901 and Governor Nathan's account on March 19, 1901 cited Nana Yaa Asantewaa as one of the principal plotters. However, it is believed among the oral traditions of Offinso that Yaa Asantewaa consulted her sister Nana Afranewaa after each meeting with the chiefs. Nana Wiafe Akenten recounts that Nana Afranewaa was the person that fired the first gun -shot to mark the commencement of the Yaa Asantewaa War. There have been a lot of contentions on this issue but the Offinso Oral tradition reports that since Offinso is near to Bare and far bigger in size, the search for the Golden Stool and every move by the British was reported to Queen – mother and her Chiefs. As rightly reported by Adu Boahen, the Chief of Offinso, Nana Apea Sae was among the exiled Chiefs by the British. Thus Nana Afranewaa at the time though not pronounced regent as Yaa Asantewaa, together with her sub-Chiefs apparently was in charge. Nana Wiafe Akenten asserts that Yaa Asantewaa gave the over sight of Bare as a responsibility to her cousin for the save guard of the Golden Stool. Thus at the last search for the Golden stool, when the search was nearly over, Nana Afranewaa fired the shot to deter the British from not returning since such search disorganize the Bare Township in the cause. He further comments that this act brought the popular saying among the Ashantis' "Etuoto Bare" meaning the gun

has been fired at Bare. To date Nana Wiafe says if a problem is being solved and one faction pronounces that “Etuoto ato Bare”, it literally means a huge problem is ensuing. Nana Afranewaa was said to be daring just as her cousin Nana Yaa Asantewaa and she readily stood beside her together with her people in this war. The Offinso State was said to have played very much important role in the Yaa Asantewaa war. It is even said that after the war, the British wanted to exile Nana Afranewaa together with Nana Yaa Asantewaa; but seeing that she was old and also had her Chief already in exile, left her alone.

There are diverse stories surrounding the first shot which marked the beginning of the Yaa Asantewaa. The controversy is on who fired that shot. Whiles some think it was Nana Yaa Asantewaa herself, others thought it was a man from Bare, but then Nana Wiafe Akenten clarifies through Offinso Oral Tradition that Nana Afranewaa I (Okese) fired that shot. Both writers Asirifi-Danquah (2007) and Boahen (2003) state that at the meeting Nana Yaa Asantewaa gave a speech that coaxed and incited her compatriots to support her to fight the British. Asirifi – Danquah mentions that already the Governor aside the demand of the Golden Stool had also announced that some major Ashanti States should pay war indemnities in the kind of gold to his government. It was this underlying issue in addition to the exile of King Prempeh I and other Ashanti chiefs, and the current demand of the Golden Stool that caused Yaa Asantewaa to declare war against the British. Adu Boahen (2003) reports of an opposition to the idea of war by some of the Chiefs present at the meeting. It was in response to her cynics that Nana Yaa Asantewaa argued as reported by Boahen though omitted by Asirifi as thus:

How can a proud and brave people like the Ashanti sit back and look while white men take away their king and chiefs, and humiliate them with the demand for the Golden Stool. The Golden Stool only means money to the white man; they searched and dug everywhere for it. I shall not pay one “*mpredwan*” to the Governor. If you, the chiefs

of Ashanti, are going to behave like cowards and not fight, you should exchange your loincloths for my undergarments: “Monto mo danta mma me na moye me tam” (Boahen, 2003, p.118).

According to Adu Boahen’s account, at that stage, Nana Yaa Asantewaa “seized a gun and fired a shot in front of the Chiefs.” This act of firing a gun was a personal challenge to the chiefs that was ready to lead Ashanti men to the war.

Having recruited her army already, Yaa Asantewaa sent messages to her fiery warriors in Kumasi about the war (ibid). Both writers assert that Yaa Asantewaa was made the Commander-in-Chief of the Ashanti Army at this meeting. After assembling her warriors, Yaa Asantewaa gave what Asirifi-Danquah describes as a “spirited speech”:

Brave men of Ashanti, we are now faced with a serious confrontation by the Governor’s extremely provocative request for the Golden Stool, which is the religious symbol of unity of the Ashanti nation. Not quite long ago the white man came and unilaterally occupied our God-given land and by force of arms has declared Ashanti Kingdom a British protectorate. We should also not forget that during the reign of King Karikari, the aggressors waged a senseless war on us, destroyed the seat of the Ashanti monarch and burnt our palace after looting all the treasures bequeathed to us by our fore father. Taking our brave men for a ride, the governor arbitrarily arrested and deported our King together with some prominent Chiefs of Ashanti without you men raising a finger. Today, he has come again to demand the Golden Stool. Gallant youth and men of our fatherland, shall we sit down to be dehumanized all the time by these rogues? We should rise and defend our heritage; it is better to perish than to look on sheepishly while the white man whose sole business in our country is to steal, kill and destroy, threatens to rob us of our Golden Stool. Arise men! And defend the

Golden Stool from being captured by foreigners. It is more honorable to perish in defense of the Golden Stool than to remain in perpetual slavery. I am prepared and ready to lead you to war against the white man. (Asirifi-Danquah, 2007, p62)

Nana Yaa Asantewaa with this “spirited speech” energized, encouraged, and motivated Ashanti men to wage a war against the British.

3.4 The Preparation for War

According to Asirifi-Danquah the Ashantis bought logistics and armory like Danish guns and gun powder from traders from the South. They made brimstones and bullets locally from the gun powder and bark of trees. They also acquired quantities of dried gourds which used cloths and twigs as corks for their soldiers to carry their gun powder. They also acquired snider and martinis and other weaponry available and within their reach. In addition, they fashioned any object available—machetes, chopping knives, axes, locally made guns, calabash, dried sticks, bottles, plantain, bamboo, ropes, thickets and swamps—into weaponry. Yaa Asantewaa as mentioned earlier had a family shrine in the deity of *Ateko* who was known to be powerful among the Ashanti Kingdom. It was a popular truth that the Ejisu State was always victorious in their previous battles due to the help of this deity. Their ancestors would not go to war without consulting this god. Yaa Asantewaa, aware of the powers of *Ateko* did not hesitate to consult the deity for power, protection, and guidance to the war. She thus combined both physical and spiritual preparations for this course. Adu Boahen (2003) confirms the use of these weapons in the Yaa Asantewaa War even though he did not talk much about the preparatory stage and also

the ‘spiritual’ side. Like Asirifi, he also mentions guns bought from the Danes and the use of sniders, martinis and musquets. He however mentions other guns used which included *Ananta* (gun that can paralyze one’s opponent); *Awadiawuo* (gun that can kill opponent instantly); *Sikatuo* (golden gun) and *Akuapim* guns.

Asirifi reports that Yaa Asantewaa together with her war council members put their strategies together by forming units and building of camps, stockades and ambush. She appointed generals over various troops and positioned them at vantage points in and around Kumasi. She made camps placing generals and troops along major road linking Kumasi and other major cities in the Gold Coast. Adu Boahen (2003) is silent on the formation of the Ashanti army but seems to resonate with the fact there was an existing standing army. It could be that while Yaa Asantewaa may be the Commander – in-Chief of the war, Nana Afriyie of Atwima as mentioned by interviewed narrations in Boahen’s work as the leader of the war; led the Chiefs to execute the war plans. Like in modern day wars, a president of a country may be the Commander-in-Chief of a war; the actual war is executed by the army generals. Although Yaa Asantewaa, unlike modern day presidents who do not go to battlefield, was at the centre of the war in all areas of planning and execution, she could have relied on the supports and efforts of the other chiefs to execute all her war strategies. Within this context, Adu Boahen’s account singled-out the bravery and gallant effort of Nana Afriyie. This does not mean that Afriyie was indeed the commander-in-chief. Adu Boahen was just acknowledging Afriyie’s efforts in the war.

Asirifi-Danquah talks about some units and troops she formed such as the Kintampo-Nkoranza unit, Offinso unit to attack the Governor’s search party for the Golden Stool at Bare;

Kumasi-Cape Coast unit; the Atwima unit; Kwadaso- Bantama- Kaasi unit; the Essua – Bantama unit, and inner caucus ring leaders to guard the Golden Stool at where it was hidden—Bare and other places that the stool was moved to at various times. Of course there were also troops who besieged the fort at, Kumasi trapping the Governor and his people inside the Fort. Though Adu Boahen does not comment on these units, he makes mention of the war fought in phases. He mentions various areas in Ashanti like Adanse, Amansie, Atwima, Sekyere, Offinso and Kwabre as the phase - locations. These phase- locations are traditional areas and the units and troops sites mentioned by Asirifi under them.

3.5 Outstanding Strategies and Tactics of Yaa Asantewaa:

There are various tactics and strategies that were used to get a formidable army for the war. As known to be her trait, Yaa Asantewaa sometimes forced her people to take risk especially when she found them to be dragging their feet to address a situation because of fear. Yaa Asantewaa used her spiritual insight to invoke the gods to kill any woman who makes love to any man that refuses to join the army. This strategy worked accordingly as twenty thousand men joined the Ashanti army even with their own guns (Asirifi-Danquah, 2007, p.45). Yaa Asantewaa formed different units as mentioned before and each Chief was placed as a General over each division in accordance to his ranking in the Ashanti Kingdom. Royal guards were selected from well-built men to guard the royals. The Commander-in-chief, Nana Yaa Asantewaa also had her own group that she worked with; comprising intelligent staff, fetish men, linguists and auxiliary. The method of fighting in this war was an improved traditional method

used by the Ashantis which was mostly the resort to scouts, sentries and the use of women. This war was to be fought in three lines.

In this war under Nana Yaa Asantewaa, the infantry were to attack the enemy through various ways. They used the war of deception tactics, death drum and movement detractors against their enemies and these worked perfectly in dissuading the British. Yaa Asantewaa also used starvation as a strategy by besieging the fort where the British were lodging and this led to numerous deaths in the camp of the British. Adu Boahen (2003) narrates that due to the impact the starvation strategy of Nana Yaa Asantewaa had on the British, Captain Houston was sent to talk with her for the first time around April 3. Houston visited Yaa Asantewaa again on April 14 and on this second visit Yaa Asantewaa refused to present herself but sent messengers with a peace wish. Again on May 11, The British negotiated with Yaa Asantewaa for logistics and food to be sent to children and women who were held up in Kumasi Fort because Yaa Asantewaa and her soldiers have surrounded the Fort. Asirifi- Danquah (2007) talks about deaths resulting from the starvation demoralized the foreign troops at the war fronts. Yaa Asantewaa also used the building of numerous road blocks on all major routes leading to the city, Kumasi. She again mounted stockades about “half a mile to the city. She however backed the stockades with roads built around Kumasi interspersed with camps at short intervals. Being aware of the British’s probe for an opening on reaching stockades, Yaa Asantewaa created small passages and covered them with fire powder as improvised mines. These worked by slowing the movement of the British army and also costing them manpower through deaths when they stepped on those mines. Adu Boahen buttress Asirifi’s account by quoting Captain Biss, a British’s in whose report, he

described that the Ashanti used strategies of covered traps which caused the death of Captain Roupell and many other British forces.

According to Adu Boahen (2003), the casualty rates among the Ashantis were minimal compared to the British because of their war strategies. He comments further that the mounting of stockades caused a major problem to the British than any other war strategy used by the Ashantis.

Asirifi-Danquah (2007) talks about a strategy used known as the war of deception by Yaa Asantewaa and her men. They used pieces of plantain trunk and tied them to a rope. The British were fond of peeping through a sniper to fire at rebels who had besieged the fort. The plantain tied on the rope was thrown on a ticket on the wall of the fort and as the men lied down and pulled the rope it sounded like the movement of human being which made the British soldiers fire unnecessarily and hitting no target. This was said to have affected the British so much that the Governor needed additional ammunitions to the war.

Asirifi-Danquah (2007) describes Yaa Asantewaa's other strategy of beating drums to send death and war signals to the Governor and his people as they hide in their "trap". The rhythm of the drums conveyed messages - one beat, "Prepare to die," three successive beats - "Cut the head off" and one sharp strong beat - "The head has dropped. (p.49). This was said to have caused great panic and fear in the Europeans and the Governor, Hodgson. Thus "the constant booming of the drums into the ears of the besieged Europeans later came to be known as the "Death Drums" (p.49). It was reported that the psychological effect of the beating drums on British was such that any time they hear the drum; they have to touch their heads to feel

whether it was still on their necks (ibid). Fear indeed can kill and anticipation of death is said to be worse than death itself.

The last but not the least significant strategy Nana Yaa Asantewaa used was the movement detectors. In her own situation, she made her men tie long cord, hung bells and empty bottles and laid them across the path to the stockades. She made sure these items make loud noises which could alert her soldiers who guard the stockades at night if the enemy approaches. This served as a good alerting system to the extent that none of her soldiers serving at the stockades were ever taken unawares. With these strategies among others, Yaa Asantewaa and her Ashanti' army were able to stand against the then powerful Britain with their entire sophisticated armory. Nana Yaa Asantewaa's organization as reported by Asirifi-Danquah is described by both local and foreign writers as wonderful and almost incredible for any people considered as "savage race" (p.46)

3.6 The War itself

According to Asirifi-Danquah the War was fought on two basic fronts, Bare and the Fort in Kumasi. On April 2, 1900 the Ashanti troops opened fire on a contingent sent by the governor to search for the Golden Stool at Bare. Nana Yaa Asantewaa and her troops also marched to besiege the fort. The war grew fierce day after day and the "hope of crushing the Ashanti army within a matter of days ran into months" (p.68). The Ashantis fought well and with their well planned strategies and tactics put fear into the British troops. Consequently, there were divisions among the British troops. The prison doors were opened with prisoners let loosed, medical doctors were evacuated, leaving patients uncared for. Therefore, the British were forced to seek

negotiations with the Ashantis. The Ashantis conveyed their peace pact through their leaders to the Governor. The conditions were as follows:

- That their King will be released and sent back to them;
- That the indemnity which the Governor was demanding will be cancelled;
- That the Governor would not force them to bring the Golden Stool, for they did not know where it had been hidden.

These conditions were said to have been cunningly and reluctantly accepted by the Governor who decided to detain one of the leaders at the fort, Chief Opoku Mensah. He died on 21 May 1900 and afterwards the Governor broke the armistice by ordering some of his soldiers to operate against the surrounding villages of Kumasi –Adiemra, Kaase, Amakom and Kwaman. They burnt down all these villages. These insensitive moves of the Governor infuriated the Ashantis and led to the resumption of the war. At this phase more Ashanti States who had earlier on not joined the war due to fear and security, joined their people to fight the British. Fetish priests led the forces and together fought the white men. There were casualties at both camps. But the British suffered the most because they were over-powered and were losing logistics. The war became so intense to the extent that the Governor fled to Cape Coast. Although the Ashantis pursued him, they could not catch him. The Governor on reaching Cape Coast sent for reinforcement troops and logistics from Nigeria (the Hausa Soldiers) to fight the Ashantis.

Adu Boahen unlike Asirifi-Danquah does not report much on the strategies but comments on the phases bring to fore the various venues, time and how the attacks were planned.

According to Adu Boahen, Yaa Asantewaa war—the most protracted, bloody war and the last war ever to be fought between the British and Ashanti wars—was fought in four phases: The first

phase lasted between April 2 and July 15 July 1900. These days marked the siege of the Kumasi Fort. The First phase spread from Kumasi to Ashanti's areas like Adansi and Amansie. The second phase lasted between July 16 to the end of August and covered Ashanti areas such as Seyere, Atwema, and Kwabre. The third phase lasted between September 1 and the end of October and was fought in Offinso and Atwema areas. The final phase which was between November 1900 and March 1901 covered areas of Bono- Ahafo and Nkawie areas.

Adu Boahen (2003) also comments on the central role Ashanti women played in Yaa Asantewaa war. He reports that while the men were fighting in the war, the women were praying to the deities and performing rituals for the protection of men. They also supplied their men with food at the war fronts and even "*mmomomme*" every day during the war. This account of Adu Boahen was collaborated by an elderly Ashanti woman, Mamunatu, who was twenty years old at the time of the Yaa Asantewaa war and participated in the "*mmomomme*." *Mmomomme* is a series of local songs that motivate men to fight to death and also to taunt one's opponents. They also entail words that call on gods and ancestors to curse one's opponent. The essence of *Mmomomme* is to make one's opponent spiritually weak. It is also intended to de-motivate one's opponent and cause fear in them. Usually, women wear only *etam* traditional underwear when they are singing *Mmomomme*. The *etam* represents moment where an Ashanti woman is closed to the gods and therefore very potent in any curse she invoked. Therefore, by wearing *etam* to sing *Mmomomme*, the Ashanti woman has become powerful enough to cause panic among one's opponent. Singing of *Mmomomme* during time of war is very important to Ashanti men because its motivate them to fight to death. These women composed a local song especially to spur Nana Yaa Asantewaa on celebrating her leading role in this war. The song:

Krokrohenkro Yaa Asantewaa

Obaa basia oda pramo ano

Wa ye bi egyae.

Krokrohenkro Yaa wa ye bi egyae

This song literally means: “Yaa Asantewaa, a woman who fights before cannons, you have accomplished great things, and you have done well.” Thus as mentioned earlier in this work the Akans in Ghana or Africans idea of womanhood and role played by women in society does not necessarily goes with importance of sexes, fragility or weakness. But then each sex has a role and part to play in the society and as a team every role played is very important to help development and attain successful heights. As narrated by Boahen the Ashanti men without food could not have the strength to fight in this war. The binding of their men’s wounds was also beneficial in their own terms and above all the *Mmommome* songs had their own impact on both the Ashanti men and their opponents as well. One might see these roles as subtle but being an Akan myself, I know the impact these roles especially the songs can effect.

Adu Boahen gives a detailed negotiating role that Nana Yaa Asantewaa played during the war. He actually reports that negotiations became another strategy used in the war when necessary. Nana Yaa Asantewaa made Ejisu her hometown the head quarters. She kept most the logistics and soldiers there and apparently she dispatched her soldiers from there as the main camp. She retired to Ejisu after visiting various frontals. It was from Ejisu that she mostly issued orders through delegates or messengers to various Generals at units and camps. After Ejisu was defeated Yaa Asantewaa went to negotiate with Colonel Willcocks to end the war. Even with this negotiation pact, when it was believed the war was over, the arrogant demand of Colonel

Willcocks to other Ashanti war leaders to surrender and immediately report to Kumasi ignited another flame. According to Armitage, a British reporter,; “The leaders of the rebellion however dreaded the consequences of their audacious attacks on the Great White Queen’s representative; and preferred to fight to a finish” (Boahen 2003, p.140). Thus, instead of surrendering at the end of the fourth month as demanded by Colonel Willcocks, Ashanti leaders queen Asantiwah, Chiefs Kofi Kofia, Nenchi, Quasi Bedu (Boadu) and other Ashanti leaders sent a message to Colonel Wilcocks to effect that they would rather commit suicide than to surrender to the British.

Adu Boahen comments that after the defeat of Ejisu in August 3, Nana Yaa Asantewaa and her forces neglecting the demand of Colonel Willcocks, retreated to Offinso to her “kinswoman,” Nana Afranewaa, the queen-mother of Offinso to seek refuge. This buttress the role of Nana Afranewaa as narrated Nana Wiafe Akenten – Offinso Oral tradition. At Offinso, Yaa Asantewaa still directed battles that were being fought at Biemso and Dinasi, two Ashanti towns. She was reported to have fired her chief captain, Kofi Kofia and made Kwabena Kyerei the then Odumasi Chief known to be powerful, the chief captain over the forces. Yaa Asantewaa was said to have met with her captains and leader and strategized ways to continue the war without surrounding. She even decided together with her leaders to sort the assistance of the French, Cote d’Ivoire by sending a delegation to speak on her behalf. This delegation however did not reach their destination due to interception of their mission.

The Ashantis on a third plan decided not to let Nana Yaa Asantewaa in particular to surrender; rather they will fight to death to resist any attempt to arrest Nana Yaa Asantewaa through a “strategy of decoy.” The remnants of Ashanti army were divided into two major groups with Yaa Asantewaa heading one group and Kwabena Okyere the other. This plan

however was said to have worked in favor of the British. The British dispatched two columns of soldier to attack the other group of Ashanti soldiers headed by Kwabena Okyere at Bekyem on their way to Berekum in the Bono Ahafo (p.143). It was after this encounter that Nana Yaa Asantewaa and her group left Offinso towards southwest. However, the British could not pursue them as they could not read the movement of Yaa Asantewaa and her group. At Nkwanta, Yaa Asantewaa and her men were attacked and one of her men, Kwaku Nantwi was arrested and taken to Kumasi around December 1900. From then, Nana Yaa Asantewaa moved from one place to another until Ejisu chiefs sent one of their captains, Kwabena Baako to persuade her to surrender herself to the British. This was because her only daughter and her children were said to have been captured by the British and being held as ransom in the colonial fort.

According to Captain Samuel Howard Hingley, Nana Yaa Asantewaa was brought to the fort at 7a.m on March 3, 1901 and Captain Hingley received her and locked her up. This “submission and imprisonment” of Nana Yaa Asantewaa was reported by Adu Boahen to be the end of the war. Asirifi-Danquah (2007) however, reports Nana Yaa Asantewaa surrendered to the British on October 25 1900. Apparently that was the time that Ejisu was defeated and she entered into negotiations with British to end the war as described by Adu Boahen.

In agreement with Adu Boahen (2003), Asirifi comments that some of the Ashanti warriors were exiled together with Yaa Asantewaa by the British to join their King, Nana Prempeh and his cohorts in Seychelles Island. Boahen consonantly details that in all, forty-five principal leaders of the war together with Nana Yaa Asantewaa were arrested sent to Elmina castle on April 4, 1901. They were later exiled to Seychelles Island to join their King, Nana Prempeh on June 22, 1901.

Both Asirifi-Danquah and Adu Boahen reports that Nana Yaa Asantewaa died in Seychelles Island at fully ripe old age. Asirifi states she stayed in Seychelles for twenty years and Boahen agrees she died around ninety years old (90) after being arrested and deported at the age of seventy years. Both writers describe her as really a great woman. Boahen proclaims *The Daily Mirror of London* described Yaa Asantewaa as “The Joan of Arc of Africa.”

Chapter 4:

Discussions

In the course of doing this research, I have on several occasions asked myself, what is the educative purpose of this work? I have reflected on this question not because I do not consider this research useful, but because it is sometimes difficult for people to understand and appreciate other people's culture especially if the person does not respect those groups in the first place. I am aware that many people have little knowledge or appreciation about African culture. In fact, in this society (North America), Africa has become a basket case of crisis; many people have limited understanding of Africa; to them, Africa is a continent where people are starving themselves to death or children dying of HIV/AIDS and other diseases yet to be known in "civilize world." Within this context, how does one talk about personalities in Africa whose live experiences is an example for the rest of the world? Again, how does one through Yaa Asantewaa's story show the relevance of indigenous knowledge in contemporary schooling and education? How does Yaa Asantewaa's story teach us to rethink critically of Africa beyond the negative Western media depiction? These questions no doubt influence the discussion I bring to the story of Yaa Asantewaa.

While this essay is not dismissing the relevance of science in understanding the world, it argues that there is more to be learned about our world if contemporary critical educators utilize the knowledge accumulating from indigenous people and western science to address issues affecting humanit

4.1 Visionary trait of Nana Yaa Asantewaa:

Vision is very much needed by everyone, but it is not a common trait to all. It takes someone who has foresight to be visionary person. Nana Yaa Asantewaa was a woman with vision. From the accounts given about her adolescence life, although she knew from the beginning that she was being groomed to be a future queen mother, she did not this inhibit her from working hard. She was always guided by the maxim: “se odekyea anko a akoa dwane”; meaning, if a royalty abandon war, servants flee for their lives. She dedicated her life to hard work and always saw to that she made significance in people’s life. Consequently, she became rich and did not dependent on her husband even though it was the responsibility of her husband, according to the Ashantis traditions, to take care of her and her children. She always advised people not to rely on others financially in various aspects of life. She had the belief that relying on others for source of income can be a recipe for domestic abuse. She is remembered at Ejisu for her common phrase: “Obarima nye sumie na ye di yetri ato no so,” which literally translates, a man is not a pillow to be leaned on. For Yaa Asantewaa, being independent was not necessarily removing oneself from society or trying to make others feel unwanted. To be fully independent is to add value to the lives of others; the opposite is correct since everyone needs someone as we sojourn in this world. According to Donkor (2001), “Yaa Asantewaa was aware of herself in the various categories that she belonged to us an individual. She was at once aware of herself as an Ashanti, a family member, a woman and a mother without seeming to be in any conflict or being deterred by any obstacle.She was a daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, a member of a

lineage, a queen-mother and above all an Ashanti national. At the same time she was a farmer and a citizen of the Ejisu State. Yaa Asantewaa was a complex figure.”

It was through this visionary trait that she foresaw the true intent of the British after they exiled Ashanti King, Nana Prempeh I to the Seychelles Island. She also suspected that the British were doing all time because their interest has been about the Golden Stool. Her question to the British governor at the meeting conveyed with other Ashanti chiefs showed her witty and visual capacity. For Yaa Asantewaa, the fight to protect the Golden stool is not just about fighting to save the immediate Ashanti population but also about fighting to save the generations yet to come. She imagined the future of Ashanti Kingdom without the Golden Stool. If the Stool represents the symbols of unity among the Ashantis, then the Stool embodied the identity and spirit of Ashanti Kingdom. To allow the British to take this stool away is a way of denying the generations to come any symbol of identity and sense of connection to the spirit world. For her, the price of losing the Golden Stool far exceeded any immediate risk posed by the British. Therefore, the fight to protect the Golden Stool was a fight to protect the sanctity of Ashanti nation and its people. As a visionary and a strategist, she realized she needed more than her charisma and strength to defend the Golden Stool. Through careful planning, she was able to slowly help other chiefs and Ashanti people to under the imminent threat posed by the British.

4.2 The motivating power of Nana Yaa Asantewa

Nana Yaa Asantewaa was a great compatriot who knew how and when to motivate her people. After the exiled of Nana Prempeh I to the Seychelles Island, the Ashantis and their chiefs were de-motivated and depressed. This condition gave the British the strength to unleash the

final blow to the Ashanti kingdom. Yaa Asantewaa motivated the Ashantis and their chiefs to be guided by the old adage “Ashanti Kotoko, wo kum apem a apem be ba” meaning the Ashantis are the like the great porcupine, the more it is under threat, the more it becomes dangerous in its defense. Like the quills of porcupine, the more thousands that moves from the body to attack its enemy, the more thousands resurface. This adage motivated the chiefs and people to stand against up against the British.

4.4 Justice, a Hall Mark of Nana Yaa Asantewaa:

I have come to realization that there are some ideologies that are very much preached but least practiced among humans and societies in general. Among such ideologies is Justice. Justice is very much talked about in all walks of life but then to me its practice is far-fetched. Societies profess to be just and like-wise individuals, the administering of justice is hardly effective. The true nature of injustice comes into play when power and privilege is at stake. As often repeated in George Dei’s Anti-racism class, if white bodies want to make an impact as anti-racist scholars, then they should use their privilege to fight for the rights of the minoritized body. The Ashantis from the accounts given in the third chapter had no problem seeing the Europeans on their soil. The only thing they were against was the inconsiderate demands that the colonizers were making and expecting from them. It could be seen that some of these demands were so insulting and dehumanizing. The whites saw themselves superior to the natives and took their leniency to be weakness. They did not question themselves about why the Indigenous people were so much accommodating. After all we are better than them. We are a superior race and must be accorded such treatment forgetting the soil they were on.

Nana Yaa Asantewaa was able to stand against this fear. She rather thought about the consequences of the demands of the colonizer on her people, herself and generations to come. She could have kept quiet looking at the fact that her King Nana Prempeh was even arrested by the British without provocation and no resistance was put up at that time when the Ashantis' were in a better position to resist. She however thought about silence and its resultant effect. It can sometimes produce good results but other times very nasty outcomes. With her Indigenous knowledge, she realized the Akan saying "wo ankasa wo triri ho a, ye yiw ayeboni" meaning if you do not complain when need be, you virtually expose yourself to any treatment that are deemed fit. Thus you realize that silence is a unilateral endorsement of injustice especially when it does not affect one. Keeping mute about an unwanted situation which needs to be addressed, creates the impression that it is well though you might be suffering. Martin Luther King explains that "our world is becoming dangerous to live in not because of the vitriolic deeds of evil but the appalling silence of good people."

Nana Yaa Asantewaa could have neglected her actions with the thoughts that she is not the direct occupant of the Golden Stool. After all from the accounts there were some Ashanti nobles that fought against Nana Prempeh to acquire the Sacred Stool. It was even after that Ashanti civil war when the British also thought they could just demand for it forcefully. Thinking if a native could not capture this stool, we can do so by any means possible after all we are the powerful British. Yaa Asantewaa could have let things be. She was not the only Ashanti or the only Indigenous leader taking the risks and consequences of her actions into consideration; but she saw the stool beyond its physical and even symbolic self. Ontologically speaking, Nana Yaa Asantewaa unlike others present at that time, saw the Golden Stool in a different way.

Diving subtly into her spiritual ontology and essence, Nana Yaa Asantewaa is portrayed an ardent worshipper of her family god, “Ateko”. She did not observe things ‘secularly’. She always considered the unseen aspect and synchronized the two sides before acting. Thus in the cause of the war she was reported by Asirifi- Danquah as consulting and praying to her god for strength and direction on behalf of her men and herself. As a representative of the ancestors, she knew and acknowledged that though we live in a physical world, we do not govern it alone but with the oversight of the unseen forces – the ancestors, gods and the Supreme Being, God. She also knew that as human she was accountable to these forces thus do not live to please herself only. The Golden Stool she fought to secure was bequeathed to her people (the Ashantis) by the ancestors. Being aware that the ancestors’ mediate between humans and the unseen forces who are sacred, she knew everything pertaining or emanating from them was sacred. She thus did not see it just as an object. She saw and knew the sacredness of the Golden stool and what the sacredness connotes and symbolized. She realized the entire Ashanti kingdom’s existence depended on the Golden Stool. She thus pondered for the British to take the Golden Stool away, meant ripping the centre and main pillar that hold the building- the Ashanti nation; thus would result in the collapse of the building. What accountability would she give to her ancestors when called one day to the unseen world?

This inner yearning spurred her on to fight for this legacy – the Sacred Golden Stool. Her attitude of fighting injustice and holding on to her beliefs, values, customs, culture and world view teaches us that if we leave them (beliefs, values, customs, culture, world views) in the hands of foreigners or we do not uphold them but assimilate that of others to the detriment of our own, we should not demand respect or justice. After all you do not care about what belongs to

you so how do you expect an outsider to care or respect it. Thus the Golden Stool might not have meant anything to the Governor but to Nana Yaa Asantewaa, it was her very existence and that of her people—the Ashanti tribe as a whole. Can fish thrive in a river which has its waters completely scooped out? No, that would mean their death. Exactly that is how Nana Yaa Asantewaa saw that capture and seizure of the Golden Stool by the British in relation to the Ashantis.

4.5 Collective Consciousness of Nana Yaa Asantewaa

Nana Yaa Asantewaa had a collective sense of living. She did not consider only the material world that she sees. She always looked beyond the material. Being an Indigene, she realized nature is not made up of only the physical; but then a ‘spiritual’ side that humanity has to acknowledge and respect. As explained by Mazama (2002), “African Philosophical principle is the principle of the unity of being.” Thus the unseen world surrounding the seen world affect each other and thus should be considered in our decision making processes. This ontology of unity which is embedded in African Indigenous knowledge is what Mazama continues to cite Plumey (1975) in relation to the belief of the Ancient Egyptian. He explains:

The whole universe was a living unity. Even those parts of the physical world which are accustomed to think of as inanimate, e.g., stones, minerals, water, fire, air, partook a common life in which men and women and animals and birds and fishes and insects and plants and even the gods themselves shared (p.29).

This is what euro-centric way of knowing negates but I think a proper look and analysis of the unseen can help solve so many problems in our world. Nana Yaa Asantewaa as an Indigene knew that there was a connection of the physical and the unseen worlds. After all she had learnt

how active the gods and ancestors were in the lives of her people and herself. It was due to such knowledge that as a young lady she used to render so many services to the shrine and the god that she worshipped 'Ateko.' Accounts of her inform us that she was an ardent worshipper. It is thus no wonder that she was ready to sacrifice her life if need be to secure the Golden Stool which she knew was bequeathed to the Ashantis by their ancestors. But even aside her trait as an ardent worshipper of her god, she invoked her spirituality into action. As defined by Palmer, Spirituality is the eternal human yearning to be connected with something larger than one's own ego (Palmer, 2003, p.337). Thus Nana Yaa Asantewaa realized she was connected to the larger Ashanti by a bond greater than just being a member of the community. She knew the Sacred Golden Stool was something bigger than herself that connects her to her people and make the Ashanti identity possible. To sit idle for what defines her identity and her life to be taken away by someone who does not even know from whence this stool came into being, would be a great presumptuous sin which leads to death.

This was because she had come to understand from her Indigenous Knowledge that the Golden Stool is not just a stool but the 'soul' of the Ashanti nation. As the Bible admonishes Christians to strive to preserve their souls from hell fire, so did Nana Yaa Asantewaa realized she had to strive to keep the Soul of the Ashanti nation. She realized if she does not do anything about preserving the Golden Stool and passes on to the ancestral world, what would she tell her forefathers at her welcome address? You know the Ashantis and mostly Indigenous people believe that death is not a total absence or end of a human being but then a transition to another world, more potent. The Akans (Ashantis) believe when one passes on, she /he is welcomed by the ancestors and as our custom demands, one is asked of her/his mission for a journey embarked

upon. Thus Nana Yaa Asantewaa was aware of this fact and did not see the spiritual to be different or separate from the material but then each has part of the other incorporated. One might be tempted to say how can this be proven, but then we should know that the fact that the existence of a thing cannot be proven does not mean, it does not exist. An example is God the Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent is not seen but then we believe He exists.

Aside, seeing the gesture of preserving and fighting to keep the Golden Stool from seizure as something that would be appreciated by the ancestors on her death; she also thought this legacy was handed to us by our ancestors. Our very existence as a people depends on this sacred stool that holds our lineage together. If she does not guard it with my life and these foreigners capture it, I know that would result in the end of my people, how would the next generation of Ashantis do? What would be their fate? Would there be even an Ashanti tribe? Thus she also thought about the generations to come and how their very existence and identity is inter-twined with the Golden Stool. I realize her thought for the future was on both the seen – generations to come and the unseen – the ancestors, gods that she would face upon her death. Another trait of Nana Yaa Asantewaa that we can learn from was her leadership qualities. Leadership I have realized can be conferred on someone but then some individuals are born leaders indeed. Nana Yaa Asantewaa through her leadership qualities made me resonate with the latter ideology that some are born leaders and such individuals do not struggle in performing their duties. Nana Yaa Asantewaa from her accounts was known to be good leader which made her successful in her venture. She knew when to rally her people, energize them and motivate them. It can be recalled that the Ashanti men were really demoralized and felt ‘weak’ and the speech given by Nana Yaa Asantewaa at the meeting depicted how hopeless and frail they saw

themselves. They thought if the King himself has been exiled, what can we do because the Ashanti Indigenous leadership system knows of Kings leading their people in times of war, thus if even we rise up against these colonizers, who would lead us to victory. But then just as is written in the Bible, words are very powerful. Thus Nana Yaa Asantewaa being part of the remaining Chiefs and knowing that they lack a leader for this war she wants to incite her people into decided to use her tongue/mouth. She thus used the words of her mouth to energize and propel her people and compatriots. She touched on a salient point and made the Chiefs know that without the ‘Sika Dwa Kofi’, the very existence of the Chieftaincy Institution is doomed. She also reminded them of the implications of the seizure of the stool as professed by Okomfo Anokye the great legend who commanded the stool from the skies.

Her actions here teaches us that it is not just knowing the solution to a problem that matters but then how to apply that solution also counts. Yes she might have known how sacred the stool was, what it symbolizes to the Ashantis, what the outcome of its capture would be, and thus she and her people should stand against the capture. However how to go about the resistance in the state that she saw her people and herself needed tactical moves. Thus as minoritized bodies living in the western world, we must know how to address our grievances to effect results. The last but not the least trait of Nana Yaa Asantewaa that we need to learn from is her resistant nature. She portrayed that marginalized bodies are not docile bodies to allow violence meted on them. She made it clear that marginalized bodies have the agency to defend themselves thus the governor’s demand for the stool had to be resisted against. She saw resistance not to be necessarily rebellious but then a means to show the colonizer that as the Akans say “Okwasea dua yen teaso mpranu” meaning even one thought to be a fool would not allow his tail to be

trampled upon twice by another. If the British arrested and exiled their King, Nana Prempeh and in the cause humiliated them because they kept quiet suffering on their own bonafied land, the Ashantis and precisely Nana Yaa Asantewaa would not sit down silently to let them capture the Golden Stool which was serving as a consolation and a bond security for the Ashanti union. Resistance is a way of saying No to an unwanted circumstance or situation. It can be done in different ways as the occasion demands either peacefully or otherwise. Nana Yaa Asantewaa's resistance did not result in pleasantries and that does not mean I am encouraging minoritized bodies to use her example of war but her heart and the 'spirit' that she exhibited against the odds of resisting the 'super power' Britain at that time, is what I want my audience to learn from.

It can be realized that she was a risk taker. Her resistance was a great risk because she was fully aware of the consequences of the war. She knew the British had resources of all kinds, her King had been exiled and the possibility of the Ashantis being defeated in the war was very high but then why not. It would be better than folding our hands to watch them take our very existence unchallenged. After all if we do not resist, our identity and existence is at stake, if we fight and die, we would be gone but then a better memory would be left. Who knows we would be able to keep our legacy even if defeated. And this worked for Nana Yaa Asantewaa and the Ashantis. The Ashantis were said to be defeated in the eyes of the British and the war but the British forget the reason for their resistance was not defeated. The Golden Stool was preserved from capture by the British, hence the Ashantis proclamation of victory over the British. The good memory has really been kept; no wonder the numerous writings about this war and the brave woman who initiated it. Memory of her will live on for generations to come and I know

much would be learnt from my work about Nana Yaa Asantewaa and her traits; from which other writers would also use to put their own politics across.

4.6 The Feminist Impact of Nana Yaa Asantewaa:

Much has been discussed about the traits of Nana Yaa Asantewaa above and a lot I guess have been learnt from her character. As enumerated in the objectives for this project, I considered her sexuality as a woman and thus asked myself how her traits can help build up feminist movements in Ghana, the country that she was a citizen. Nana Yaa Asantewaa might not be the first Indigenous woman in African history that has shown bravery and courage. It can however be attested that her acts of courage and bravery first of all denounces the patriarchal assumptions that Indigenous African women have always been docile and weak. Nana Yaa Asantewaa's daring and courageous actions were similar to the acts of Okomfo Anokye, Osei Tutu, Tweneboar Kodua and Antwi Boasiako who played various patriotic roles even to the extent of sacrificing their lives (the latter two) to have a formidable Ashanti nation. Likewise Amoah Owusua and Nana Afranewaa for instance are also heroines who contributed immensely in Ashanti welfare and struggle respectively. These are all unsung heroes and heroines that I think much can be learnt from if studied through research. Secondly, she also through her role and assumed powers which brought her prowess to fore, render a good example of gender relations among Indigenous Africans. Indigenous Africans communities believe and thrive very well on definition of roles and mutual interdependence between the two main genders. An example is within Indigenous Akan context; men go to war while women attend to the injured and inspire their men through various ways like feeding and singing Mmomome as recounted by

Adu Boahen in the Chapter three; to motivate their men to fight. This roles played by Akan women does not in any way suggest that they are weak and cannot fight like their men when the situation requires to take up arms and fight for their children, men and themselves. If Nana Yaa Asantewaa was able to play the dual role of both a queen and king at a point in time when her Chief was exiled by the colonizer, without thinking the kingship role was for a man; then it depicts her knowledge about the abilities, roles and importance of both genders. So was also her vision about the war she led, she knew she could likewise fight if need be and she did; not just as a common soldier but the Commander-in- Chief of an army of formidable men . One might think Nana Yaa Asantewaa's case and action was an exceptional one; which I do not think so. To buttress my argument is a critical response given by Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie to Ali Mazuri concerning analysis of gender relations in Africa. Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie (1993) argues that the history of Indigenous Africans is filled with many stories about important adventures taken by Indigenous African women during war times. Mazuri's work is so bounded by patriarchal and simplistic vision of life and society that it can only deliver patronizing accounts of the experiences of women: e.g. women at war times "sneaking food to men in their holes" and Dahomean warrior women, ferocious from sexual frustration. What about women generals and spies in the MauMau war; Yaa Asantewaa of Ashantiland, Queen Nzinga; Sahelian women fighters of whom he mentions Queen Amina of Nigeria? It must thus be noted that the existence of Sarranuo (Warrior Queens) was a tradition in Sahelian West Africa, not an incidental event. Far from being a "fascinating experience" these women leaders and fighters were made possible by cultures that inculcated the concept that women can lead, do battles if necessary, fight for her society and kill for her people. (Mazuri 2004, pp.239-240).

Arguably Yaa Asantewaa's actions set the time for Feminist movements in Ghana not because women in the past have been docile; for instance as pointed out by Donkor (2001), "In Ashanti history there have been many instances when women have excelled in public capacity." E.g.s is the cases of Asantehemaa Adoma Akosua who took charge of the Ashanti nation in the absence of Ashanti King Osei Bonsu, when he travelled to visit and encourage his troops at the Coast on the battle field. She in the cause of her position received and transacted trade deal with the then Dutch embassy who called on her. Another instance was that of Akyamaa Oyiakwan, daughter of Ashanti king Osei Kwadwo who led two separate diplomatic missions. She actually negotiated the Maclean Treaty in April 1831 with the British and the Danes at Christiansburg Castle in August 1831 (See Donkor 2001). Thus Yaa Asantewaa's actions were not necessarily the first of its kind in terms of women participation in major and what could be termed as "the men's job," but the act of Yaa Asantewaa gave people a new understanding on how to read feminism. Yaa Asantewaa's ideology was also not necessarily a war between men and women but a fight for injustice. As a queen mother, Yaa Asantewaa was known to have advised her fellow women not to rely on their men for everything but work hard to fend for themselves. She also advised them to desist from borrowing from men so as not to become sexual victims to lenders.

It is not that Indigenous Akan women have not been part of the struggles for human survival; after all they are the bed rock of the family system. In fact, in the Akan traditional family system, women are the foundation upon which the family is built. Akan culture actually treats the male members of a family as passive members. Women and their children are seen as the actual family. Akan men are not seen as core part of the family in their position as fathers but

their position as uncles. When the family is threatened, the core responsibility falls on women and not the men. In times of financial crises, women are known to go around looking for money to solve problems. In times of arbitration, the King and his elders after thorough deliberations will insist that they have to consult the “Abrewa tia” (the old woman). Further, there are several Akan proverbs that speaks about gender relations and how women as seen as the central pillar of the family system. For example, there is an Akan proverb that says “Obarima nye sumie na wo di wotri ato ne su” meaning men are not pillows to lean on. This proverb is not to say that Akan men are naturally irresponsible but to suggest that Akan women have always come in to pick the pieces together whenever Akan men fail to perform their responsibilities as society expected. In addition, Akan women have been central to the family unit over the years. They are known to single-handedly take care of their children when their husbands fail to do so and even many times provide for the basic financial needs of the family when the occasion demands so. It is also a habitual fact that decision making are centrally pushed by women. Sometimes the men even think of their woman as too “pushy and anxious.” This example shows how indigenous women are held high within Akan culture. Yaa Asantewaa is not being portrayed as the one who necessarily established feminist movement in Ghana. The very foundation of the Akan family system is feminist in nature and practice. However, Yaa Asantewaa’s role in the Yaa Asantewaa War of 1900-1901 helped exposed the gender relations and how it functions among the Akans to the rest of the world.

Nana Yaa Asantewaa’s case however cannot be over looked because it took place at the national level and it helped the external world to pay attention to the role of Akan women for the fight for social justice. Yaa Asantewaa involvement in the war and the central role she played in

the execution of the war provided a new thinking about Akan women. It helps the rest of the world to think of Indigenous Akan women differently. No more is the Akan woman seen as the docile and weak body that needed to be saved from patriarchal domination, but was seen as an independent and visionary individual with qualities to contribute to national development. Since Yaa Asantewaa, many women in Ghana have pushed their skills and qualities from home and family level to the national and international level. For example, Mrs. Theodosia Salome Okoh was the originator and designer of the Ghana National flag. When Ghana obtained independence, Theodosia Salome Okoh took the bold step to respond to the bid of designing a flag for Gold Coast. She designed the Ghana flag in Red, Gold, Green colors and the Black star at the centre. The red color is an acknowledgement of the blood that was shared by our ancestors in obtaining independence for Ghana. The gold color represents the rich mineral in Ghana. The green color represents the green vegetation in Ghana, and the black star represents the hope and vision of liberation for the black race in the world. Surely, the thinking pattern and the philosophy behind the National flag speak of the complexity and deep understanding Theodosia had about the history, geographical location, and vision of Ghana and black race. This speaks about the strength and knowledge of indigenous Ghanaian women. Another wonderful and great woman was the late Dr. Esther Ocloo of Nkulenu Industries Limited who was named as one of the foremost women leaders by the Cambridge Biographical Society. She contributed tremendously towards the economic independence and empowerment of Ghanaian women. Her products from her Industry which mostly are local Ghanaian food paste canned serve those of us here in the Diaspora. Children born in the Western world are able to partake in our local dishes as she sells locally as well as export to other countries around the globe.

While she may not be the one who started feminist movement in Ghana, Nana Yaa Asantewaa's important role in bringing the rest of the world to the power, resilience, agency, and resistant power of indigenous Ghanaian women cannot be under-emphasized. Within this context, Akans cannot forget Yaa Asantewaa. The numerous children that have been named after her and continue to be named after her show how much she is honored in Ghana. In addition, many educational Institutions have been named after her. In addition, the name Yaa Asantewaa has become the euphemism for women in Ghana who stand up against injustice or stand for hard work, sense of independence, and collective consciousness of the community.

Chapter 5:

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Pedagogical Implications of Nana Yaa Asantewaa for Schooling and Education

This work began by studying the life story of Nana Yaa Asantewaa of Ejisu, Ashanti – Ghana. As an Indigenous leader, she imparted very positively on the lives of her people. The role of Nana Yaa Asantewaa in the history of the Ghanaian people highlights a very important component of our culture as Indigenous people. Her unique role in the history of the Ashanti espouses the strength of the African woman. It could be realized throughout this essay that Nana Yaa Asantewaa knew who and what a woman represent amongst her people. Because of her achievement, today, she is incontrovertible evidence that African women are not and have never been “second citizens” among their people. Yaa Asantewaa’s role as the Commander-in-Chief of the Ashanti armies which was mainly made up of men showed that women in Ghana and Africa are not necessarily relegated to the back as many western feminists may want the rest of the world to know and believe. This is not to deny the existence of sexism in Ghana and Africa, but to show clearly that African women are not docile subjects waiting to be saved by the west. Rather, they have collective agency and resistance power to challenge patriarchal practices in Africa.

5.2 Community and Communal Spirit

Talking about collective agency draws my attention to the sense of community. Nana Yaa Asantewaa had a communal spirit which incited her to fight against the imperialism of the British. She was not the queen for the entire Ashanti nation. She was the queen mother of Ejisu, a state in the Ashanti nation. She thus could have over-looked the situation or the matter at hand.

But she realized that as the Akan saying goes “Eka enii a, na aka hwine” meaning anything that affects the eye incidentally will affect the nose. Thus issues affecting Ashanti nation will definitely affect her local community. Aside this fact she saw the larger Ashanti nation and the Ashanti people not just the people of Ejisu.

Community is defined by as a body of people living in the same place under the same laws. With the Golden Stool being a symbol of unity among the Ashantis, Nana Yaa Asantewaa knew Ashanti came first before her state. She realized that if she is being identified, she would be referred to as an Ashanti before mentioning her hometown, Ejisu. And that is how to date every Ashanti identifies him or herself. One might ask with the assurgency of selfishness and slandering here and there accompanied with individualism and privacy, does real communities exist? In as much as I agree to this question, I think we as individuals are aware that we cannot exist in vacuum. We are because someone is. We need each other to survive. The Akans talk about the community being very broad. Knowing that a community is made up of families, they acknowledge and have high regard for the family system, both immediate and extended. There is the Akan saying “Abusua ti se kwae, ewo akyiraa abumu wii, nanso wo ko mu a, adua biara si ne sebia” meaning the family is like a forest that makes a canopy; at a glance it seems one, but at closer range is made up of individual trees. Thus communities are made up of lineage, clans, towns, households, extended families and immediate families in that sequence and hierarchy. Anything that affects any one of the elements in the sequence affects the rest. Thus safe guarding one member in the sequence secures the rest. What do I want to get across here? I want to address two categories of student audience here. Firstly as minoritized students, I want us to

know that whatever back ground that we come from, whether black, Asian and African we are categorized as the 'other' thus we should not think the fight for liberation from unfair treatments meted out by the dominants are for a particular minoritized bodies, say blacks only. But then as it is said in Akan once again, "se wo ko hunu se aboa bi se wonua bi hwine soa, anka se sore ne so, ka se sore yenso, na ofiri ne so a, obeba wo so" meaning if you see an predator mount on the nose of your brother, do not say get away from his nose but say get off from our nose; for after it has finished with him, it would be your turn. Today might be the turn of drop out of black students due to unfair and intimidating treatments in North American schools. The next attack might be predominantly on another group of minoritized body. After all the agenda is the same. I advise we stand as a minoritized community and fight for a common goal.

With the student body in general, especially pertaining to dominant students, I pray they realize the need for other bodies so as to learn from each other. Canada is very blessed with a pluralistic society which enhances great learning and development. I presume the country for sometime realized the need for 'other' hands and thus encouraged and welcome diverse bodies from different countries and continents here. But then the aim and focus for this assemblage I think is shifted and needs to be put in place. Why am I directing this change to students and not politicians? It is because they are the future generation who are being prepared to take over and stir the affairs of this country. Not being informed to facilitate a change would result in furthering the 'Cancer'. As students we tend to befriend each other, understand each other and are more likely to stand for each other. After all we all have a common ground that we fight governments for. Example is school fees and some basic benefits. In like manner, I think privileged student should stand and fight along -side their colleagues facing difficulties with

pedagogues and such authorities. All students are student and the schools/ Institutions are the common place we live. We all have to write examinations and pass before promoted. The don'ts and dos apply to us all. We thus form a community and must act as one.

5.3 Identity

Issue of identity is critical and pivotal in education. How a person sees him / herself, and how he or she incorporates and synthesizes the various aspects of the social world can be both psychological and sociological phenomena (Bagley and Yong, 1988). Mead (1934), the initiator of the environment and its effect on identity formation saw 'the self' as being composed of two parts: the "I" and the "me". The "I" is the natural, spontaneous unsocialized side of the self. The "me" is generated through how 'significant others' respond to and interpret the expressions of the "I." Charles Horton Cooley extends Mead's position further in the theory '*Looking Glass Self*'. The metaphor of the looking glass expresses the passive nature of the development of the self and its dependence upon images as expressed by others. We see ourselves through the eyes of others; even to the extent of incorporating their views of 'us' into our own self-concept. Therefore, the political environment created by the academy to a large extent helps in shaping the identity of students. I use the term political environment to imply the kind of knowledge (text/curricular, culture and language) that the academy produce and validate in the classroom and also power relations embedded in structures and relations. There is no gain in repeating that the continuous celebration of European system of thought as the only legitimate knowledge has serious consequences in how bodies come to view, understand, and articulate their daily reality and sense of being. Thus, the only ontologically viable means to liberate learners from

Eurocentric domination in the academy is to introduce them to multiple forms of knowing and understand the world. Consciousness rests on an understanding of what it is that one has lost. Unfortunately, the current Eurocentric education is too standard, uniformed, and detached to be in tune with the predicaments of ordinary and marginal indigenous students eager and hungry for recognition, representation, and identity reclamation (Nyamnjoh 2004). For Longfish has long offered this advice:

The more we are able to own our [education], religious, spiritual and survival information, and even language, the less we can be controlled... The more we get rid of the "stupid" pictures in our space and believe in our own abilities, the more we are able to make change work for ourselves. To rid ourselves of these pictures and own who we are, is to take control and not play the game by the white rules. (1992, p.151)

Within this context, this essay recognizes the pedagogical relevance of teaching the life story of Nana Yaa Asantewaa in schooling and education in Ghana and Canada. This position of the essay dwells on the assumption that language and culture are epistemic because they are tools through which one can make sense of their reality. If the language and culture available to learners are filtered through only Eurocentric system of thought, then it is logical to assume that learners understanding, interpretation, and articulation of reality will equally be distorted and biased towards Eurocentric thinking. Therefore, the presence of other forms of knowing is an opportunity to give learners multiple filters through which they can understand and interpret their realities. Within this context, the studying of Nana Yaa Asantewaa in public schools in Ghana and Canada is an opportunity to help learners to think differently about African history and its personality.

Throughout the recounting of the life story of Nana Yaa Asantewaa, we learned about a woman who stood against imperial powers of the British. If there is anything to learn about Nana

Yaa Asantewaa, it is about her courage, selflessness, and her passion for social justice, fairness, and equity. In an era where some learners have lingering questions about the legitimacy of social justice work in education, the life story of Yaa Asantewaa is a wakeup call for learners. Martin Luther King Junior once observed that the world is becoming a dangerous place to live not because of the vitriolic works of evil people but the appalling silence of good people. If the education system is to be transformative, then it requires learners and educators who centre social justice, equity, and fairness in the teaching curricula. This essay argues strongly that there are a lot to be learned about the character and live experiences of Yaa Asantewaa in the current schooling and education. For the purpose of this essay, here are few points to note:

5.4 Resistance

First, Nana Yaa Asantewaa teaches us that marginalization is not a site to produce docility and cowardliness. Rather, it a site to produce resistance and agency. Although they were completely overwhelm by the powers of the British, Nana Yaa Asantewaa saw the strength, will power, and resistance power of Ashantis if they are come together. Yaa Asantewaa challenged Ashantis not to be forced into silence and fear; rather, she challenged them to fight for their liberation. After all, the only thing cowards lose when they respond to injustice is the chains of domination. As educators, we can use Nana Yaa Asantewaa's story to teach learners agency, resistance power and sense of activism.

5.5 Character

Youth indiscipline, violence, and lack of responsibility are becoming a global concern. For educators in North America, the issue requires a re-introduction of character education in the

public school system to arrest the situation. In a Gallup Poll that was conducted in 1994 by Phi Delta Kappa of the United States, majority of the people questioned in the pool supported the introduction of character education in the public schools (Elam, Lowell & Rose, 1994). Within Canada, there have been efforts to make character education part of the Ontario school curricula. In fact, the Ontario Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (LNS) recently funded an eighteen-month research conducted by Professor George Dei of the University of Toronto to study how African indigenous philosophies and local cultural knowledge forms can be used to teach youth discipline and non-violence in public schools in Canada (see Dei 2010).

Historically, character education has been emphasized when educators and the general public view social stability as threatened and moral standards weakened. Character education was part of the educational program in virtually every school in North America in the early part of the 20th century (Titus 1996). However, getting to the later part of the 20th century, the rise of cultural pluralism and series of Supreme Court rulings to maintain the wall of separation between the church and the state affected the momentum of character education in the public schooling in both Canada and the United States (ibid). In fact, leading the charge against character education in the public school system was the positivists and the liberal educators. These individuals insisted that morality is a personal trait and dependent on unscientific value judgments; therefore, it is inappropriate for schools to transmit it (Lickona, 1993). For the positivists and liberal educators, character education is nothing than a transfer of adults' authority and values to the younger generation. This therefore makes character education more like a brain washing or mind controlling that denies children the rights to decide by themselves what they consider right from wrong (Titus 1996).

The proponents of character education believe that it is inevitable and proper for adults to shape the principles and values of the younger generation. The idea that schools can be value-free is only a wishful thinking which is far from the reality. The school system is laden with values. Everyday actions and inactions of the schools—the enforcement of school regulations, students behaviors that get reinforce and the behaviors that get discourage, the selection of subject matter, the celebration of certain holidays and the pledge of allegiance, the expectation of students to work hard, act responsibly, and respect others—all implicitly teach character and values in the public schools. So, rather than maintaining a façade of neutrality, objectivity, and valued free—which we all know do not exist—teachers should not be casual or apologetic about confronting character and value education. They must explicitly commit to character education in the public school system (Titus 1996; Lickona 1993). This is where the lessons from Akan education can serve as a relevant reference point for the education system in North America. The indigenous Akans do not separate their education system from their spiritual knowing and value system (see Dei 2010a; Dei 2010b; Appiah 2006). Busia (1969, p.15) succinctly argues that the education system of Akans is based on the assumption that everything the younger ones learn should have relevance to the life and culture of the community and to the kind of life they are expected to lead. Thus, a learner's skills and understanding of communal knowledge is best tested when she or he allows such knowledge to guide his or her actions and inactions within and outside the community. The learner whose behavior is uncharacteristic of the community is considered a failure. The Akans combine character and skill in training their young ones. A person is deemed educated if she or he is able to demonstrate good character and judgment in his or her daily interaction with members of the community (see Okrah 2003). According to Abbam

(1994), the Akans parents train and supervise their children to a life that is at par with societal values such as sociability, courage, solidarity, honesty, responsibility, discipline, respect, endurance, and diligence. An Akan elder will not hesitate to chastise any child that goes contrary to any of the communal values (see Okrah, 2003).

The personal character traits of Nana Yaa Asantewaa can be used to teach character education in Public school system. Yaa Asantewaa was a selfless, humane, hard working, responsible individual. As a queen and a king in the Ejisu traditional area, Yaa Asantewaa was known to have advocated for the weak and the disadvantaged whenever they come to her court of arbitration. She was against injustice and exploitation and always dealt with people who exploit others. These remarkable qualities of Nana Yaa Asantewaa, arguably, are the very things that are missing among learners in the current public schools. By using Yaa Asantewaa's life story, teachers can help learners to appreciate and adopt these qualities from Nana Yaa Asantewaa.

5.5 Indegenuity/Agency

Yaa Asantewaa teaches us about the risk and peril of doing anti-oppression work. Yaa Asantewaa no doubt knew the cost of challenging the British. In fact, she knew death was inevitable if the Ashantis go to war with the British, yet she also saw the danger of inaction and cowardliness. In a sense, Yaa Asantewaa knew that without fighting the British, the Ashanti will forever lose the Golden Stool to the British; an occurrence that can spell doomed for the whole Ashanti Kingdom and its people. She therefore challenged Ashantis to fight to death to defend the Golden Stool. As educators and learners, we sometime allow the cost, danger, peril and

consequences of speaking out against injustice to force us into silence. However, Yaa Asantewaa teaches us that there is nothing to gain in education if we sell our soul to save our body. At the end, there is a real price to be paid when we pick silence over speaking out because we fear the consequences and cost of our actions.

5.7 Leadership

Yaa Asantewaa teaches us about leadership. Although she was queen with full approval from the people, she also realized that she was also accountable to the gods and ancestors. Within that context, her actions and inactions are not only guided by the wisdom and counseling of the people, but also the divine direction of the gods and ancestors. Yaa Asantewaa therefore saw her position as queen mother as not a site of power but a site of responsibility. Within this context, she did not use her position as a queen mother to exploit the people; rather, she used her position to guide and direct the affairs of her community. What can be learned from this kind of leadership is the understanding that one's call into leadership is a call for something beyond oneself. Leadership is not about personal aggrandizement and self interest. It is about pursuing the well-being of the people.

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