

# **CELEBRATION OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN PROVERBS, WISE SAYINGS AND FOLKTALES: AN EXAMPLE OF AKAN TRADITION IN GHANA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*African women are sometimes discriminated against and this has made most of them to recoil and are hardly able to do things on their own. The idea that the world is a male dominated society, has made the African to institute a lot of proverbs, wise sayings and folktales which are used to support male chauvinism to describe the woman as subordinate to the man. Even though these proverbs are given a lot of prominence in the everyday communication of the African, there are still a host of these language arts that celebrate women. However, these language arts that attempt to celebrate the African woman are hardly heard. This paper therefore, attempted to bring to the fore most of these language arts that celebrate women to help change the negative perception towards the African woman. The paper is also in support of the global attempt at women empowerment and to establish women as partners of development. It is also a contribution to feminist writers in their attempt to establish the position of women.*

*Keywords: African Women, celebration, wise saying, folktales, Akan tradition*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Throughout history, the female sex has been looked down upon by their male counterparts. Men have always enjoyed the privilege of superiority over women. According to Simone de Beauvoir (1949), “very often this privilege depends upon inequality of numbers – the majority imposes its rule upon the minority or persecutes it. But women are not a minority, like the American Negroes or the Jews; there are as many women as men on earth.” One just wonders about the basis of this sex stereotype where women are seen as inferior.

In Ghana, the female sex has been stereotyped to such an extent that women have been given certain roles to play in the society, which most men will not associate themselves with. For instance, women are supposed to cook in the homes, care for their babies and wash the clothes of their families. Because of this, some women are asked by their husbands to be housewives with active support from their families. To this end, such women are not allowed to engage in any meaningful income generating ventures so that they can have time for their household chores.

Conventionally, women who engage in income generating ventures in addition to their household chores have been characterized by works such as petty trading,

nursing, teaching and secretaryship, as these are what the society dictates. The few career women who would like to go into careers such as Engineering, Medicine and Architecture are branded witches. In the same vein, men who would like to brush off what the society dictates and engage in household activities such as helping their wives to care for their children and cooking are branded “womanized-men.”

All these have come about not because nature made it so but as a result of certain social practices in Africa and some other parts of the world. According to Umoren (1995), “the African child is born female or male. The girl child grows up as an African girl and later becomes a woman through the process of inculturation. This inculturation process has both cognitive and emotional elements. The girl child who later becomes a woman learns and internalises both. This learning-to-become is comprehensive in the sense that one learns and internalises both the derogatory and positive concepts, judgments and attitudes towards womanhood. This learning takes place through example, direct teaching and in patterns of behaviour, in songs, proverbs, wise sayings and folktales.” It is therefore crucial for society to be conscious and cautious about what is spoken by way of proverbs and wise sayings since they can affect gender roles. This is because it is a strong belief that the woman is as wise and competent as the man. It is what we say about men and women in our society in terms of proverbs, folktales and wise sayings that bring about the gender differences.

For instance, among the Akans of Ghana, there are a lot of folktales that talk about women being given in marriage. Women who disobey their parents by choosing their own husbands suffer the consequences. A whole lot about women’s subordination is depicted in such tales. Among the Akans also, there are many proverbs and wise sayings that support the subordination of women. Examples of such proverbs are as listed below:

- 1) Xbaa te se ohuriie; xnom mogya na xmma mogya. (A woman is like the tsetsefly; she drinks blood but she doesn’t give blood). This portrays women as parasites who are always at the receiving end.
- 2) Mmaa pz dz kyiri ka (women like to enjoy themselves but they hate to pay for the indulgence). This portrays women as cheats.
- 3) Mmarima nni fie a na akyakya yi ne to kyere maa. (it is only when men are absent from the home that the hunchback can dare expose his hump). This proverb also portrays women as weak people who can not discipline someone who is playing the fool.
- 4) Xbaa txn nyaadowa na xntxn atuduro (a woman sells vegetables but not gun powder). Traditional society expects the woman to content herself with domestic chores that are symbolised by garden eggs and not in acts of bravery as symbolised by the gun powder.
- 5) Xbaa wx mpempem a, xbarima na xhwz ne sox. (However rich a woman may be, it is the man that controls her). Whatever a woman may do, she needs a man. This portrays women as always dependent on men.

- 6) Xbaa ho ye fz a, na efiri xbarima (if a woman becomes beautiful, it is because of a man). Nothing good can happen to the woman unless there is a man in her life.

The following are examples of Akan wise sayings that support female subordination.

- 1) Xbaa tx tuo a, etwere xbarima dan mu (when a woman buys a gun, it is in the man's room that she keeps it).
- 2) Sz xbaa yzn odwan a, xbarima na xtxn (even if a woman rears a sheep, it is the man who sells it).
- 3) Akokx berez nim adekyez nanso xbisa firi akokxnini ano (the hen knows when it is day break but she waits for the cock to announce it).
- 4) Sz xbaa to tuo a, etwere xbarima bo (a woman can fire a gun only from the man's bossom.).

Schipper (2004) states that “obviously, the ideas expressed in proverbs over the centuries and around the world provoke tensions between the traditional gender echoes humming in our heads and our own ideas about human rights for both men and women in today's world.” Although most proverbs about women represent male interests, women have, willingly or unwillingly, agreed to the dominant perspective, as the interests and loyalties in women's lives have mostly been connected with the men in their lives. According to Oha (1998), proverbs, as forms of figurative communication with didactic functions in studied conversations were found to possess evidences of male attempt at maintaining control over discourse in society. The representations of womanhood in Igbo proverbs are mainly negative: women are typically portrayed as being senseless, morally debased, devilish, childish, and weak. This is as a result of the fact that in the male-dominated African cultures, proverbs are appropriated by men to uphold themselves as producers and custodians of knowledge which women are thought to be incapable of.

This female subordination can also be found in Akan folktales. There are a lot of folktales that talk about women being given in marriage. Women who disobey their parents by choosing their own husbands suffer the consequences. A whole lot about women's subordination is depicted in such tales. An example of such tales is about a girl called Boatemaa. According to the tale, when Boatemaa reached the marriage age, she was never pleased with any man who asked for her hand in marriage. She decided to choose her own husband. Because she rejected a lot of men who came her way, the monster turned “himself” into a very handsome man and came and proposed love to her. Because he was very handsome, she agreed to marry him. This lover of hers took her to a very far away town which later turned to be a thick forest where he revealed his real identity as the monster and devoured her. Tales such as this are used by the African man to keep the African woman in subordination to the dictates of the parents. It shows that the African woman is not wise and discerning enough to choose what is good for her. She must be supported and guided by the parents. This female stereotype has even found itself in the works of prominent African writers like Chinua Achebe and Cyprian Ekwensi who tend to limit the

potentials of women in the society to child-bearing and being erotic lovers. For instance, in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), emphasis is placed so much on child-bearing and marriage that the women prefer to undergo such harsh treatments from their husbands rather than leave their marital homes while in Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana*, there is the image of the sophisticated city girl who is portrayed as a prostitute.

Frank (1987) tries to assign reasons for this negative portrayal of women in African novels. She says, "until recently, most African novels have been written by men and they tend to focus on social, historical and political rather than personal or domestic themes." This explains why in most African novels, women are defined by their relations to men. "They are someone's daughter, wife, mother, shadowy figures who hover on the fringes of the plot. They are seen suckling infants, cooking or plaiting their hair" According to Little (1980), women in male African novels tend to fall into a specific category of female stereotypes. They are "girlfriends or good time girls, workers such as secretaries or clerks, wives and other male appendages, and prostitutes or courtesans" just as is found in most popular African language arts. African feminist writers like Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta and Ama Ata Aidoo have tried to challenge this female stereotype by portraying their female characters as strong and independent.

It is rather unfortunate that women have been socialized to accept these traditional views and some women still hold to them. Even though, there are other folktales, proverbs and wise sayings that depict the woman as a very important person among the Akans, these language arts are not popular as they are deliberately not fore-grounded in the male dominated African society. This is because perhaps male chauvinists always want to maintain the psychological suppression of women. In this paper, wise sayings, proverbs and folktales that show the importance of women in the Akan tradition are presented and discussed.

## **THE AKANS**

The Akans are a group of people speaking different or similar dialects of the same language in Ghana. They practise similar customs and have the same social and political institutions. They include the Akyem, Akuapem, Asante, Fante, Assin, Kwahu, Akwamu, Denkira and Twifo. They constitute about 45% of the population of the present day Ghana (Mpere, 1992). History has it that the Akans lived in Bono in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. According to Mpere (1992), there are a lot of stories connected with their origin.

Some of these stories indicate that they migrated to the forest area as a group from the "north" most probably from what is now Burkina Faso. We are not certain of when they got to the forest region but it is known from oral traditions that they first lived in an area now known as Techiman in the Bono area with Bono-Manso as their capital town. Different Akan groups moved to new areas. Among such groups were the Twifo, Asante, Akyem, Assin, Fante and Agona. It is known that King

Asaman was their leader and first ruler. At Present, the Akans are predominantly found in four out of the ten regions in Ghana. These are Ashanti, Eastern, Central, and Brong-Ahafo regions.

### **WOMEN IN AKAN PROVERBS**

As discussed earlier, traditional African society expects the woman to content herself with domestic chores that are symbolised by “garden eggs” in some proverbs. Also, a weak, effeminate man is described as “Xbaa ba” (Son of a woman) because such men are traitors to the cause of men. On the other hand, a bold, independent-minded woman is referred to as “xbaa kokxnini” (A female cock). Such women are most of the time branded witches simply because they reject male superiority or wish to do their own things, independent of men.

Apart from the above proverbs that support female subordination; there are others which celebrate women. For instance, there are a lot of proverbs that portray the woman as industrious, compassionate and a key player in the society.

### **THE WOMAN AS INDUSTRIOUS**

- 1) Xbaatan nna awia nna (a mother does not sleep in the afternoon). Women are expected to be up and doing always and working hard to take care of the family.
- 2) Xbaa brzfox kx aware a, xde ade pa ba fie (if a hard-working woman gets married she brings good things into the house). It is a belief among the Akans that it is the woman who brings fortune to the family. (Appiah, Appiah and Agyeman-Duah, 2007)
- 3) Xbaa mmxdemmxfox na neba hyz n’akyiri a, xsoa nnuoxma. (If a hardworking woman puts her child on her back, she carries a load at the same time). Women are industrious.
- 4) Xbaa ahoxden wo n’atofo mu (a woman’s strength is in her bustle). Women sometimes wear their cloth in a kind of roll at the back-“atofo”, a bustle-where they may keep their money and other valuables, and on which it is easy to carry a child. This bustle stands for her wealth and her femininity.
- 5) Xbarima a xnni xbaa no, xno ara na xpotx n’abomu (a man who does not have a woman prepares his own stew). Women are seen to be very supportive to men.

### **THE WOMAN AS COMPASSIONATE**

- 1) Xbaatan na xnim dez ne mma bedie (it is the mother who knows what her children will eat). Women are very caring.
- 2) Xbaa pa na ntetia kxxkx nam n’apakyie asez (small ants always crawl over the back of a good woman’s gourd) Ants appreciate tasty food. Hence, a good woman is valued by all.

- 3) Xbaatan kxne mpampuro mu a,xde ne to bini ba fie (if a mother goes ease herself at the bamboo plantation, she comes home with unclean buttocks). Bamboo leaves are used to clean the bottom after excretion. Hence, a good woman gives everything to her family (especially her children) and is left with nothing for herself. (Appiah, Appiah and Agyeman-Duah, 2007)
- 4) Xbaatan kodi asika a, onnya ne ba hx (if a mother goes to collect gold, she does not leave her child behind.) However great the reward, a mother will never desert her child.
- 5) Xbaatan nnim ba bxne (a motherly woman does not know a bad child). A mother's love is so strong that even if a child proves stubborn, she still loves and cares for him/her.

### **THE WOMAN AS A KEY PLAYER IN THE SOCIETY**

- 1) Agya mma nya a, mepz, zena mma nya a, mepz papaapa (when my father's children make a fortune, I am pleased, but when my mother's children make a fortune, I like it even better). Good things are expected to happen to the mother because one belongs to his/her mother's family.
- 2) Xbaa na xwo xbarima (it is a woman who gives birth to a man). It is the woman who makes the man who he is.
- 3) Xbaapa na xda kztz pa sox (it is the ideal woman who sleeps on a good bed). Good things are reserved for the woman.
- 4) Xbaa ne xbarima hyia a, xbaa ye xbaa na xbarima nso yz xbarima (when a woman and a man meet, the woman remains a woman and the man remains a man). Both men and women are important because every one of them has an important role to play in the society.
- 5) Xbaa ne ne kunu aszm, obi nnim mu (nobody knows the affairs of the woman and her husband). Women are trustworthy in marriage. Thus, they don't normally discuss with external parties what is happening in their marriage. . (Appiah, Appiah and Agyeman-Duah, 2007)
- 6) Xbaa te sz borxdez, n'ase mpa mma (a woman is like a plantain tree, which sprouts all the time) We depend on the fruitfulness of women.
- 7) Mmaa kx afuom na sz wo yere ba a, na mmaa no nyinaa aba (if all women go to the farm and your wife comes, it means all of them have come). Women always move together. It also shows the value that is placed on one's wife as the most important of all women so if she is around then her husband doesn't have to think of any other woman again.
- 8) Xbaasadefox twe ade pa ba fie (a lucky woman draws good things to the family). It is the wealth of the woman which stays in the family for ever because if her children inherit her property, they are still in the family for ever. (Appiah, Appiah and Agyeman-Duah, 2007)
- 9) Nsamampxm soakoduro, woni wu a, w'abusua asa (if your mother dies, you have no family again). Women are indispensable and very vital in procreation and continuity of mankind.



The above proverbs depict that the woman is very important in the Akan society. The fact that it is believed, as seen in the proverbs above, that if your mother dies you have no family means that women are esteemed very highly. Also the good bed is reserved for the woman and the man and his children depend on the woman for their food which is very essential to every human being.

### **WOMEN IN AKAN WISE SAYINGS**

In order to maintain the psychological suppression of women, a host of Akan wise sayings that have gained prominence instruct women to respect the man's counsel in all aspects of life. Most of the sayings reveal how women have been treated for generations as lacking the capability for reasoning and decision making. It is rather unfortunate that, people who hold strong traditional beliefs against women because of these wise sayings forget that there are a lot of these same sayings which show how important women are. For instance, among the Akans, women are associated with wisdom. This is because when there is a very difficult decision to be taken and the elders need time to think about the decision, they would say "yzrekbisa aberewa" which means we are going to consult the old woman. The fact that they do not say "we are going to consult the old man" but rather the old woman, means that they do not believe that wisdom is associated with the aged man but the woman.

Also, among the Akans of Ghana, the earth is highly esteemed. This is because it is believed that man's sustenance depends on the earth. When we are alive, we till the earth for food and also when we die, we are buried in her bosom. Hence, the saying "Asase Yaa-Yztease a yzdan no, yzwu nso a, yzdan no." This saying translates "Whether we live or die, we depend on mother earth." This very important earth, is believed to be a woman and is given the name Yaa which is a generic name given to a baby girl born on a Thursday. If this very important source of livelihood is believed to be a woman then there is no doubt that the woman is highly esteemed among the Akans of Ghana, hence, the proverb. xbaa te sz borxdez, n'ase mpa mma (a woman is like a plantain tree, which sprouts all the time). We depend on the fruitfulness of women.

The sea, another very important source of livelihood is also believed to be a woman. Among the Fantis, the sea is believed to be a woman who is called Abena (a name given to a female child born on Tuesday). Because of this, people living near the sea do not go fishing on Tuesdays. The sea is a very important source of livelihood for the Akans living near it as they get fish from it for their food and also for commercial purposes. Therefore, for them to believe that she is a woman shows that the woman is very important. Apart from the sea, there are other very important rivers who are believed to be women. For instance, River Birim in Akim Ods is called Birim Abena (a female born on Tuesday). Similarly, River Yaayaa at Seniagya in the Sekyere East District of Ashanti Region bears the name of a female born on Thursday, hence it is believed to be a woman. There are other very important wise sayings that bring about the importance of women. Some of them are:

- 1) Onyame baatanpa (God the good mother).
- 2) Eni yentx (one cannot buy a mother)
- 3) Xbarima bi ara bzyz yie a, na efiri neyere (a man's success depends on his wife).
- 4) Akokx Antwiwaa (the fowl)

Among the Akans, God is believed to be a man. He is called, Onyankopxn Tweeduapxn Kwame. Onyankopxn means the one great God. Tweeduapxn means dependable God and Kwame is a generic name given to an Akan male boy born on Saturday. God is believed to be Kwame because he finished all his creation and had His rest on Saturday. The above saying that depicts God to be a good mother is therefore paradoxical. However, the Akans may not be wrong in calling God Xbaatanpa because His tender loving care, abundant grace and benevolence can only be compared to that of a mother. Unfortunately too, there is no word like "Xbarimatan" to describe the good father, hence, his being referred to as "Xbaatanpa." This is because the Akans do not believe that compassion can come from a man, that is why there is no word like that. They see the woman as a symbol of compassion and benevolence.

The word "xbaatanpa" is even used to describe the good mother just as the good father. This shows that it was the woman who started showing love and care hence the name becoming associated with her. A whole lot of lessons can be learnt from this as showing how women are recognized in the Akan wise sayings. The second saying above which says that a mother is invaluable also suggests how important the mother is. Without her, life becomes so unbearable for both husbands and children, hence, making people wish to buy one at all cost if only it was possible. The third saying also depicts the importance of the woman as being able to do or undo the man.

There is a strong belief among the Akans that if a man will prosper, it depends on his wife. This is because if a woman does not help her husband, he can never prosper. There is even a biblical allusion to this belief as found in Proverbs Chapter 18 Verse 22 which says; "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the Lord" (New International Version.). The last of the wise sayings above which refers to the fowl as 'Antwiwaa' (a female name) is also worth considering. Among the Akans, the fowl is a very important bird. It is always present in all celebrations. If someone recovers from a serious illness, the fowl is killed for the celebration

If someone completes school successfully, a fowl is killed and above all during Christmas, fowls are killed for celebration. So, for the Akans to give a woman's name to such an important bird makes one see how important the woman is as almost everything that sustains life and brings happiness is associated with the woman.



## WOMEN IN AKAN FOLKTALES

Despite the fact in most of the folktales, women are often presented as symbols of disobedience; Akan folktales are not altogether against the woman. It is in Akan folktales that God is portrayed as having a daughter as against the biblical account that portrays God as having an only begotten son, Jesus Christ. According to this tale, God had a daughter called Asiedua. She was very beautiful and no one was supposed to look at her for a long time. One day, she went to Kweku Ananse (the Spider) to collect water to drink. The cunning Ananse could not overlook her beauty so he found a way to look at Asiedua for a long time so Asiedua died. Not knowing how to tell God about her death, he composed a song that he sang for God to hear. The song goes like this:

Nana Nyankopxn ba Asiedua xbaae  
Xbaa me hx bz srzz me nsua me maa no  
Mede m'aniwa kxhwz no kakra owue  
Asiedua woamma merewu  
Me Kx a znkx oo  
Asiedua woamma merewu  
Me ba a zmma oo  
Asiedua woamma merewu.

The above song literally translates that God's daughter Asiedua came to me for water and I gave her but I looked at her and she died. This tale can be the Akan version of the son of God, Jesus Christ whom God sent to the world but because of man's disobedience, they killed him. The difference and most important point to note here is that among the Akans, God has a daughter and not a son. This should make every woman who feels discriminated against because of the many folktales that support females subordination come to her senses and realize that Akan folktales are after all not against the woman.

Another version of the tale has it that once upon a time, Nana Nyankopxn (God) had a daughter that he cherished very much. She was very beautiful so every man who saw her wanted her for a wife but no one knew her name. So many men went to Nana Nyankopxn to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage but he refused to give her to them. He said he would give her to the man who could mention her name. When Kwaku Ananse (the spider) heard this, he decided to do all he could to get to know the name of the girl so that he could get her for a wife.

One day, Ananse went to consult the "Road" and told him that he wanted God's daughter to marry but he did not know her name. The "Road" said "the girl passes here every day with her maids so come and hide here so that if one of the maids mentions her name, you can get to know of it." Ananse said "thank you." He therefore climbed an avocado pear tree to hide himself. A few hours later, he saw the girl and her maids passing through the road. He picked one fruit of pear and threw it down. The maids' attention was drawn towards the place so they moved there and found the pear. One of the maids said "Feduasa Mfensa, come and see this beautiful

pear.” Feduasa Mfensa said “how beautiful! Give it to me.” When Ananse heard the name, he was very happy so he plucked more of the pears for them to pick. The girls were very happy they had the fruits but they never knew that someone was sitting on the tree.

As soon as the girls left, Ananse went to Nana Nyankopxn’s palace. When Nyankopxn saw him, he asked, “What can I do for you?” Ananse replied “I can tell you the name of your daughter so that I can marry her. “What is her name?” God asked, and Ananse said, “Her name is Feduasa Mfensa.” When God heard it, he became surprised as to how Ananse got to know of his daughter’s name but he called his daughter and blessed her and Ananse as husband and wife. God also divided his Kingdom and gave half to Ananse and his wife. Ananse was so grateful to the road that he composed a song for the road. The song is:

Mede wase, Meda wase  
Xkwan meda wase, meda wase  
Meda wase,meda wase  
Sz anka sz menya wo a  
Sz anka sz menya wo a  
Ma nkonya Feduasa Mfensa  
Xkwan meda wo ase meda woase  
Wama manya Feduasa Mfensa.  
The song means  
I thank you Road.  
I thank you Road.  
If it had not been for your help  
I would not have got Feduasa Mfensa  
I thank you Road.

This tale also shows that among the Akans, God is believed to have a daughter and not a son. There are other tales that portray the woman as being a very faithful helper to the man. An example is the tale below. There lived a poor hunter in a small hut. One day, he killed an antelope and after eating all the other parts, he smoked the thigh and hung it in his kitchen. This hunter was living alone in the hut but one day when he returned from his hunting expedition; someone had swept his hut, washed his dirty clothes and cooked a very delicious meal for him. He looked round the house but he did not find anybody. However, he ate the food and really enjoyed it.

The next day, he left for another hunting expedition and when he returned, this unknown person had again cleaned, washed and cooked for him. This thing continued for a long time so the hunter decided to find out who was doing all these things for him. One day, he dressed up and left the hut as if he was going for hunting but hid somewhere in the bush so that he could see the one who would come and clean, wash and cook for him. As he hid in the bush, to his surprise, he saw the antelope thigh he had hung in his kitchen, turn into a very beautiful woman. The hunter watched her as she swept, washed and cooked. When the hunter saw her he

walked slowly and got hold of her but the woman pleaded with the man not to tell anybody about her origin and that she was prepared to make the man wealthy and great. The hunter also promised not to tell anybody so the woman sang a song:

szbrzbztom bztomszbrz  
nnipa zmra oo  
szbrzbztom bztomszbrz  
adan zmra oo  
szbrzbztom bztomszbrz  
sika zmra oo  
szbrzbztom bztomszbrz

(Buildings should come, people should come, money should come etc)

She sang this song till the hunter's small hut turned into a very big city with a lot of beautiful buildings and many people. She also sang her song for the hunter to become the king and his palace was one of the most beautiful palaces one can think of. He also became very rich and married the woman who has metamorphosed from the thigh of an antelope. He named her Yzboaa. Later on, the king decided to marry more women because he had become rich and great. He had a lot of children with Yzboaa and the other women. After some time the king started to maltreat Yzboaa so one day, Yzeboaa complained that she was not happy the way the king was treating her but the king got annoyed and disclosed Yzboaa's identity in public by singing the song:

szbrzbztom bztomszbrz  
me yere Yzboaa  
szbrzbztom bztomszbrz  
xyz xtwee srz  
szbrzbztom bztomszbrz

(My wife Yzboaa is an antelope thigh).

This made Yzboaa too very sad and disappointed so she also decided to take the king to where he came from. Yzboaa therefore sang her song commanding all the things she had brought into being to disappear. The king's wealth, his wives and children and the whole city went away and the man turned into the poor hunter he used to be and Yzboaa also turned into the antelope thigh hanging in the kitchen. This tale shows how helpful women can be to their husbands but later their husbands disappoint them. This even happens in real life when some women are said to have given their inheritance to their husbands who later disappoint them. The tale below portrays the woman as a good adviser.

There lived Ananse and a wealthy man called Xkwa in a village. Although Ananse was poor, Xkwa liked him and was always helping him financially. One day, Xkwa said, "You know how we find life difficult here. Why don't you let us go and find wives so that even if they don't do anything for us, they can cook for us." Ananse agreed. One early morning, Xkwa put on his rich kente cloth and Ananse also put on a small worn-out cover cloth. As they were going, Ananse asked, "Why

are you sweating like this? Why don't you give me your cloth and collect my cloth since as for me, I don't sweat?" Xkwa agreed and gave his cloth to Ananse.

As they were approaching the city where they were to get their wives, Xkwa asked Ananse to give him his cloth back but Ananse insisted that the cloth was for him and that he was never going to give it to Xkwa. Xkwa therefore had to go in Ananse's worn-out cloth to look for a wife. When they reached the town, everybody who saw Ananse and the way he was dressed concluded that Ananse was a very rich man but indeed he was a very poor man. When they told of their mission in the town, a man gave Ananse the elder of his twin daughters and gave the younger to Xkwa to marry. They then returned to their village.

Later on, Xkwa's wife found out that Xkwa was a very rich man. As for Ananse, he kept on lying to his wife that they were going to stay at a very beautiful place but they kept on staying in the bush. When Xkwa's wife heard of his sister's predicament, she invited her to come and enjoy herself. Because of enjoyment she didn't even want to go back to Ananse but Xkwa urged her to go back. Ananse then realized that if he didn't take care, he would lose his wife so he decided to eliminate Xkwa.

Ananse then cultivated a very big okro farm. When the okro matured, Ananse harvested all the okro, pounded it, and smeared it on Xkwa's veranda and stairs when Xkwa and his family were sleeping on top floor of their storey building. When he finished, he started shouting as if he needed help. "Xkwa, they are killing me." When Xkwa heard his friend shouting, he decided to go out and help him but his wife insisted, "My dear, don't go, for you know Ananse already. He is lying." But Xkwa ignored his wife's advice and ran to see what was wrong with Ananse. As soon as he stepped on the stairs, he fell from the top floor to the ground and died. If Xkwa had listened to his wife's advice, he would not have died. This tale shows how men who do not listen to their wife's advice do not end well. (Ayz,1963).

## CONCLUSION

A closer look at the gender roles in this study reveals that the female sex has for a long time been discriminated against socially, economically and politically. This can be attributed partly to the mind-set reflected in our proverbs, wise sayings and folktales and partly to the socialization process in Africa. There is therefore the need for the African woman to be liberated. Umoren(1995) states that one way the African woman can be liberated is to develop the culture's latent potential towards the human development of the woman, created like her male counter-part in the image and likeness of God. He again suggests that a well articulated programme to teach the positive values, attitudes and beliefs about womanhood should be taught to the African from infancy to death. Among the Akans of Ghana, about whom this study is made, there are a lot of proverbs and wise sayings that support female subordination. However, this study has revealed that the Akans are after all not against the woman. This is because a closer look at their proverbs, wise sayings, and folktales reveal that there are a whole host of them that celebrate the woman.

It will therefore be wrong on the part of anybody to still hold on strongly to the ones that support female subordination. Rather, these proverbs, wise sayings and folktales should be brought to the fore and be cited in everyday conversations so that the African woman will know that society, after all, is not against her. Women must therefore be educated so that if anyone makes an attempt to cite any proverb or wise saying to suppress them, they will also cite the good ones about women to defend themselves and move forward.

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