



Purification of the Stool and Skin of FIHANKRA

On December 9, 1994, one of the most historically significant events of this millennium took place in Accra, Ghana, West Africa. The event was the inaugural purification of a specially carved wooden stool and the specially prepared skin of an animal. Together these two sacred articles were customarily given the name "FIHANKRA", which literally translated means "when leaving home good-byes could not be said".

In the traditions of Africa, both the Stool and Skin are sacred symbols of divine chieftaincy authority in which, it is believed resides the very spirit and soul of its people. Chiefs of Southern Ghana sit upon stools, while Chiefs of Northern Ghana sit upon skins. In their symbolic form the Stool and Skin can be compared to the traditional throne of other peoples and nations. Thus, in keeping with tradition, the Purification of FIHANKRA restores to Africans born in the Diaspora two sacred symbols as one, thereby reaffirming the cultural and spiritual ties that had been denied them for centuries.

The purification of FIHANKRA evolved from a coalition of persons under the leadership of his Majesty Odeneho Oduro Numapau II, then President of the Ghana National House of Chiefs.

The importance of this traditional purification ceremony lay in the following:

- It was the first time that African chiefs had gathered especially to perform traditional rituals to atone for the misdeeds of ancestral traditional rulers who helped to sustain the trans-Atlantic slave trade initiated by European powers in the 15th century.
- It was an act of restoring customary authority to the Africans of the Diaspora, presumed to have been lost as a result of the slave trade. It also provided for the appointment of a Diaspora born custodian, Nana Kwadwo Oluwale Akpan, and the subsequent establishment of a Traditional Council and an International Council of Elders to administer the affairs of FIHANKRA on behalf of the descendants of Diasporans.

As a key figure in the Purification Ceremony and as the only Diasporan Chief among the planners, the responsibility of the custodianship of the Stool and Skin was given to Nana Akpan on behalf of Diasporans worldwide.