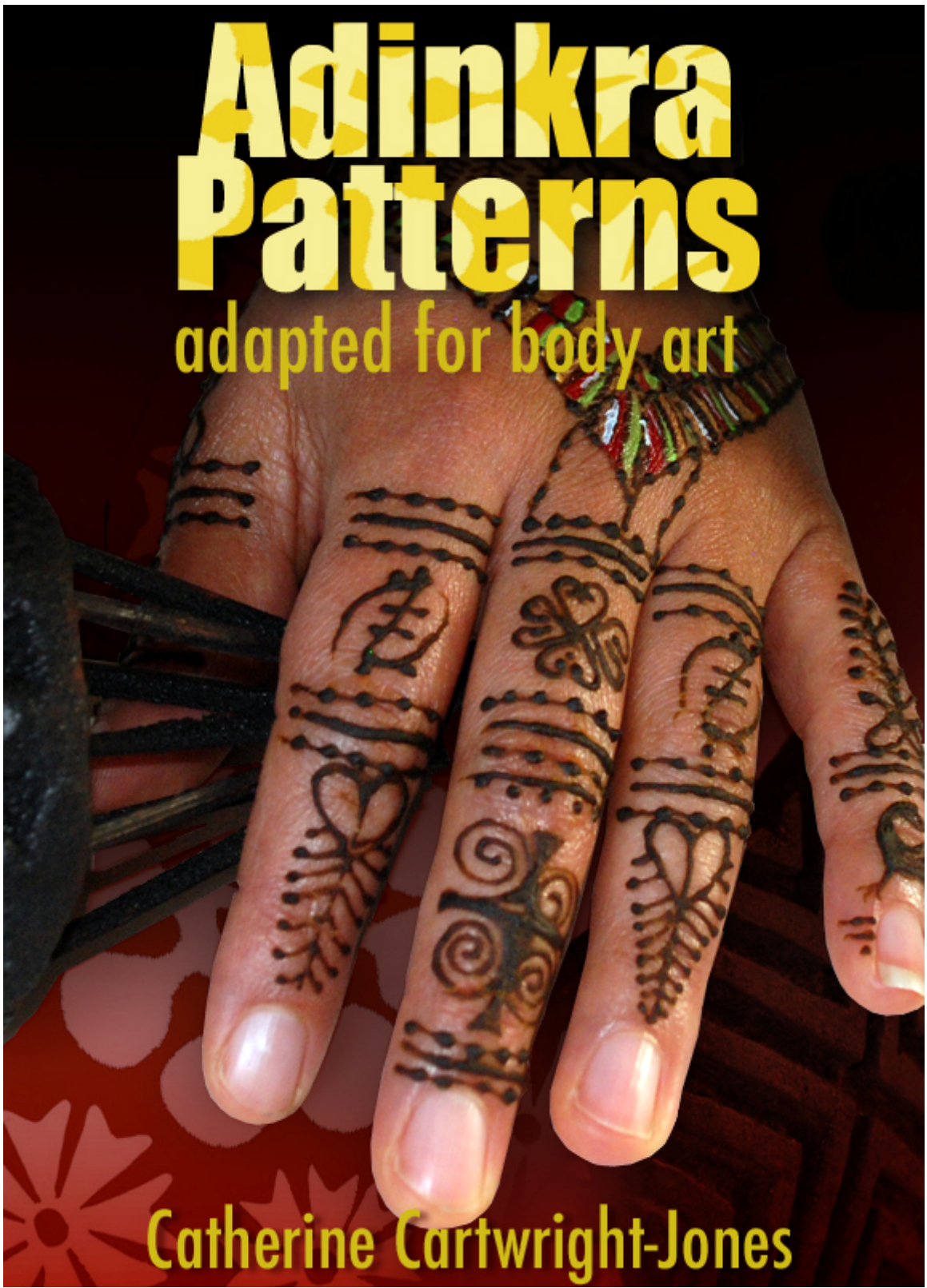


Adinkra Patterns

adapted for body art



Catherine Cartwright-Jones

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Cover Art by Penni AlZayer
Cover Graphics by Alex Morgan
Photography by Roy Jones

Additional body art work by Penni AlZayer, Paul Hernandez, Beth Boyd Hendrickson and Wendy Rover

Published by TapDancing Lizard® LLC
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Stow, Ohio 44224 USA

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

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Body art patterns, materials, and examples

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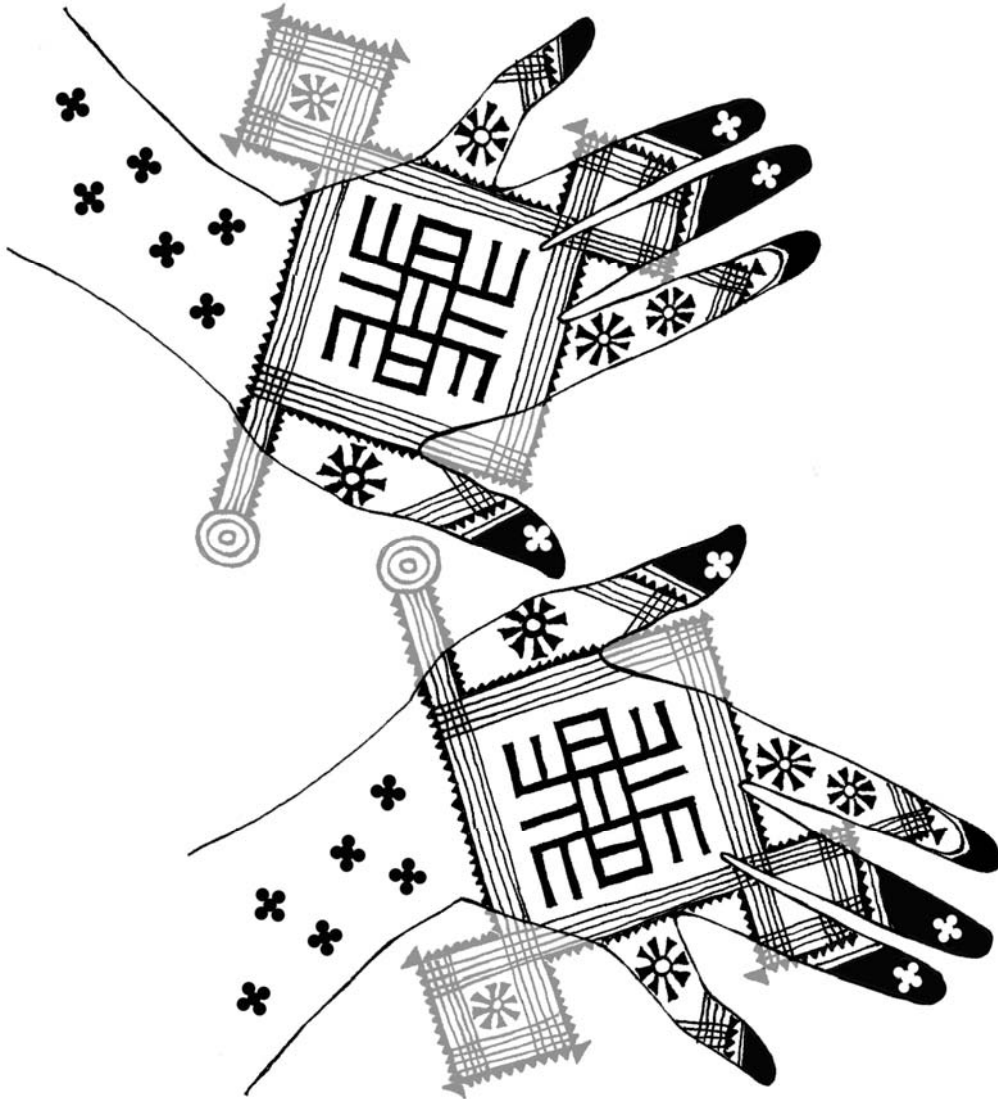


Figure 1: Patterns for success adapted for henna, both direct and resist application

ADINKRAHENE: “Chief of adinkra symbols” symbolizes greatness, charisma, and leadership

NEA ONNIM NO SUA A, OHU: “He who does not know can learn,” symbolizes knowledge and life-long education

ANANSE NTONTAN: “The Spider’s web” symbolizes wisdom, creativity.

TABONO: “Oars” symbolize strength, confidence, and persistence.

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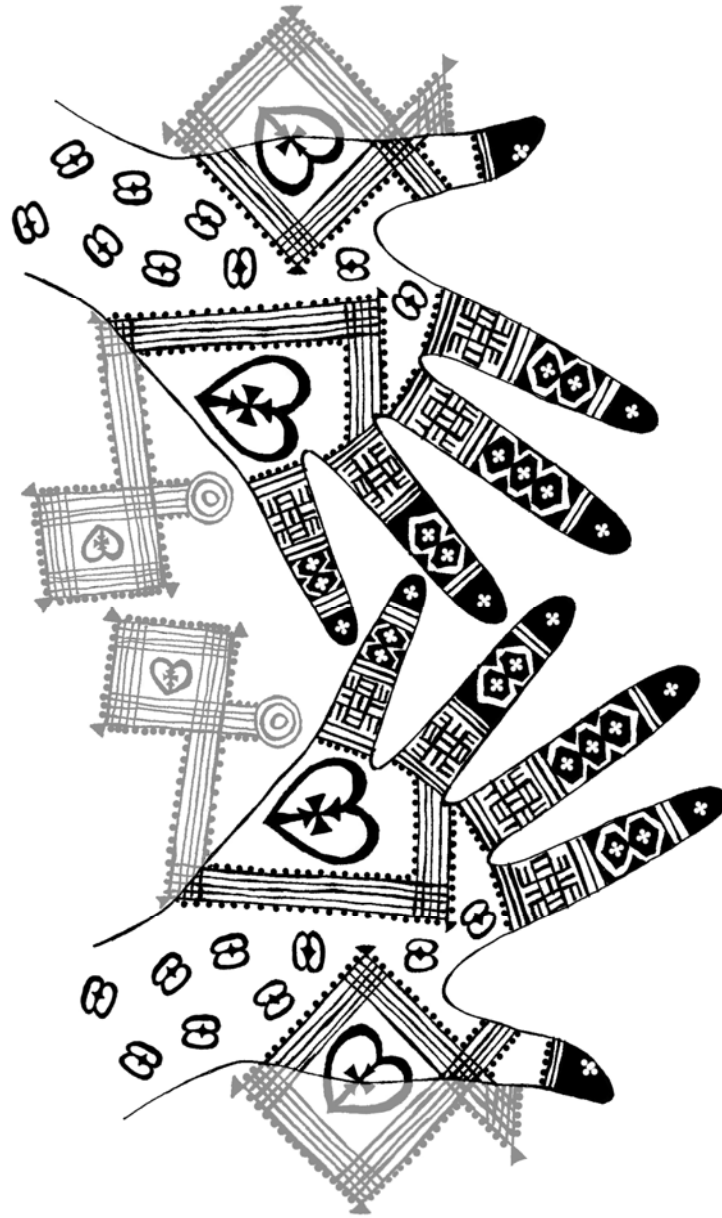


Figure 2: Patterns for hope and success adapted for henna, both direct and resist applications

ADINKRAHENE: “Chief of the adinkra symbols,” symbolizes greatness, charisma and leadership.

NYAME BIRIBI WO SORO: “God is in the heavens,” symbolizes hope

NEA ONNIM NO SUA A, OHU: “He who does not know can learn,” symbolizes knowledge and life-long education

NYA ABOTERE: “Be patient,” symbolizes patience and calmness

TABONO: “Oars” symbolize strength, confidence, and persistence.

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Figure 3: Patterns to bring good luck and happiness, adapted for henna, both direct and resist applications

MMUSUYIDEE symbolizes good fortune and sanctity. This symbol removes bad luck and wards off the negative powers of thoughts.

ADWERA: “Adwera nsuo, wo ne nkwansuo, nsu korogyenn a wohuru nso wonhye,” “Water of life, you are the pure crystal clean water that boils and does not burn.” The weeds in the water symbolize purity, sanctity, and good fortune.

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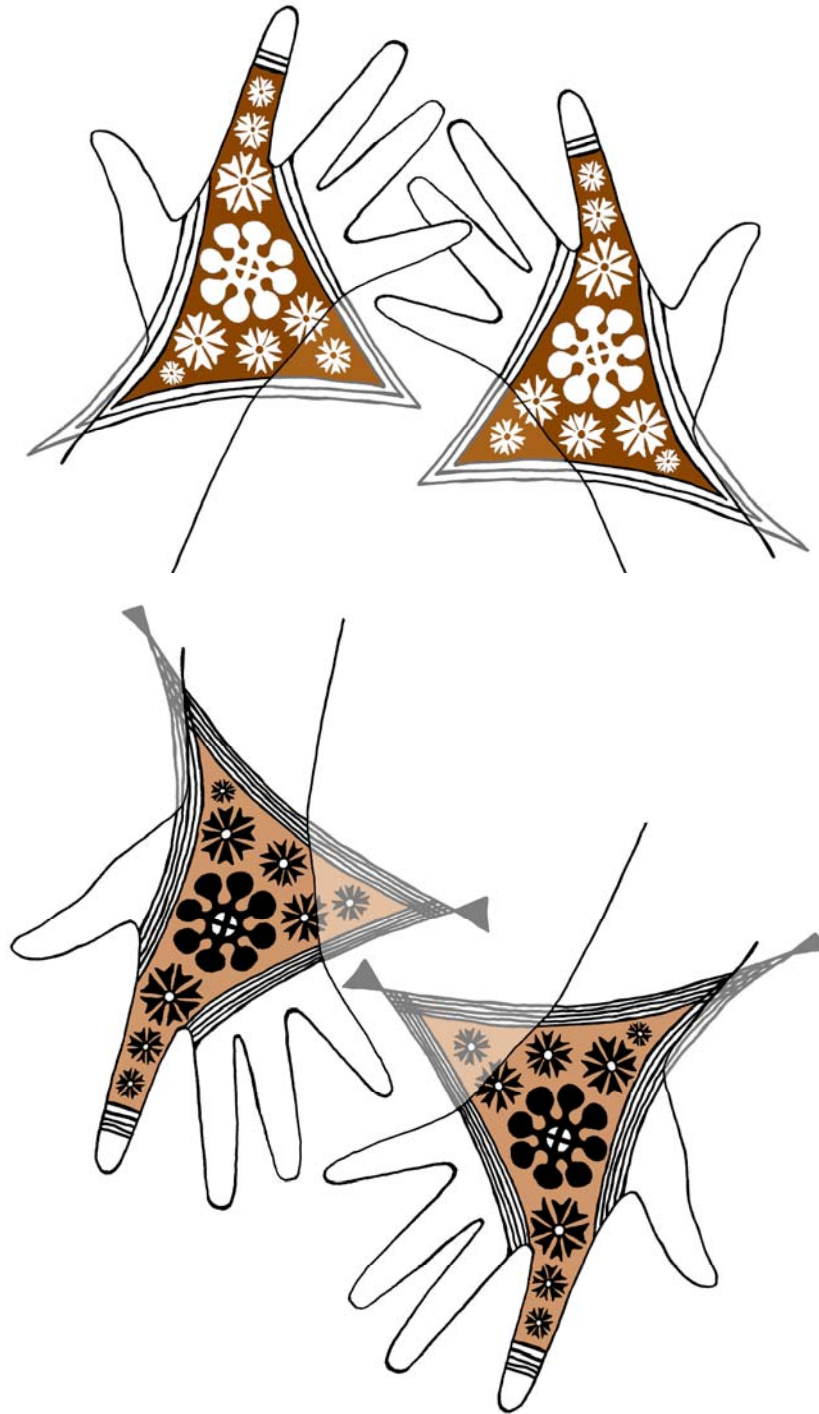


Figure 4: Patterns for nobility and wisdom, adapted for henna applied in resist

OHENE ANIWA: “The king’s eye,” symbolizes beauty and vigilance. The king must be aware of everything in his kingdom to be a benevolent and effective leader.

OHENE: “The king”, symbolizes wisdom

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Figure 5: Patterns for new beginnings and success, adapted for henna

SESA WO SUBAN: “Change and transformation,” symbolizes new beginnings. This symbol depicts the morning star within a wheel, signifying the start of something new.

SEPOW: The knife of justice

TABONO: “Oars” symbolize strength, confidence, and persistence.

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Figure 6: A pattern for true love, adapted for henna in two tones

ODO NYERA FIE KWAN: “Love never loses its way home,” symbolizes the power of love and faithfulness.

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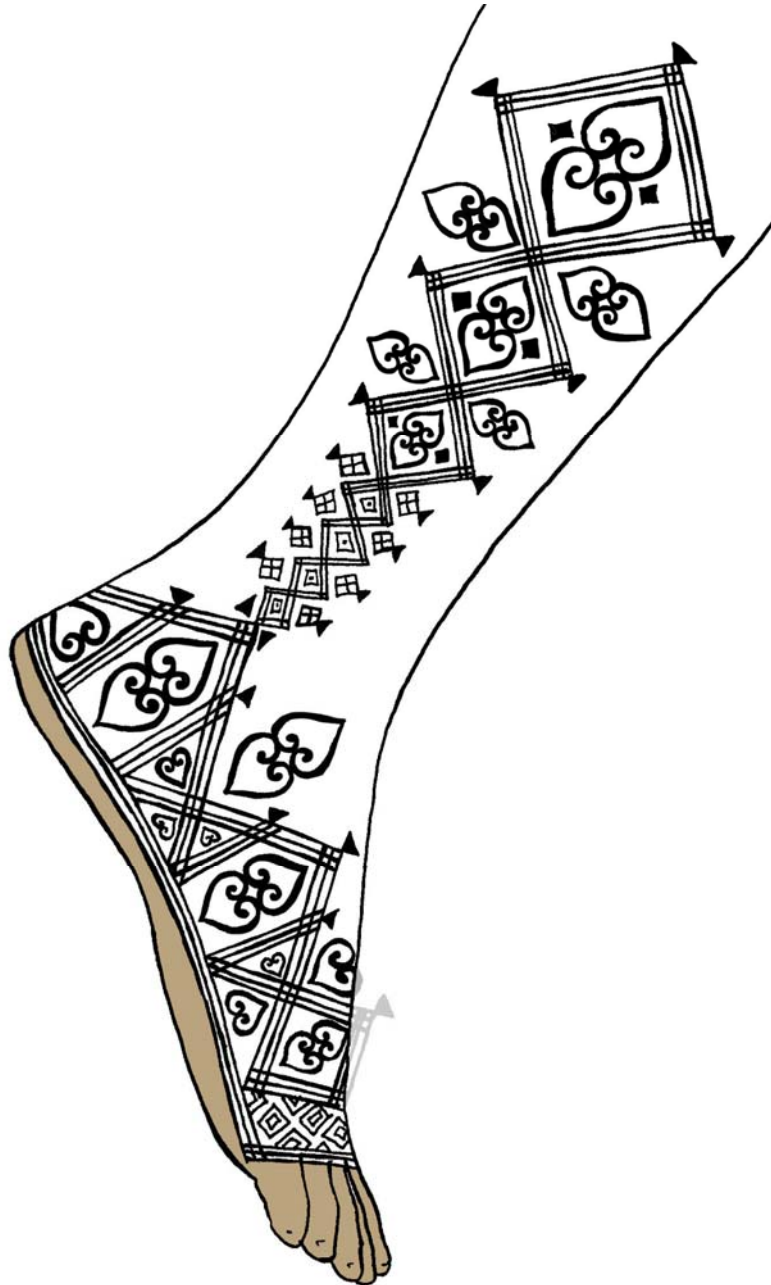


Figure 7: Patterns for the love of nature, adapted for henna

ANI BERE: “Ani bere a, nso gya, anka mani abere koo,” “Seriousness does not show fiery eyes, else you would see my face all red,” symbolizes seriousness, diligence and perseverance

ASASSE YE DURU: “Tumi nyina ne asase,” “All power emanates from the earth,” symbolizes respect for the importance, power, and authority of nature.

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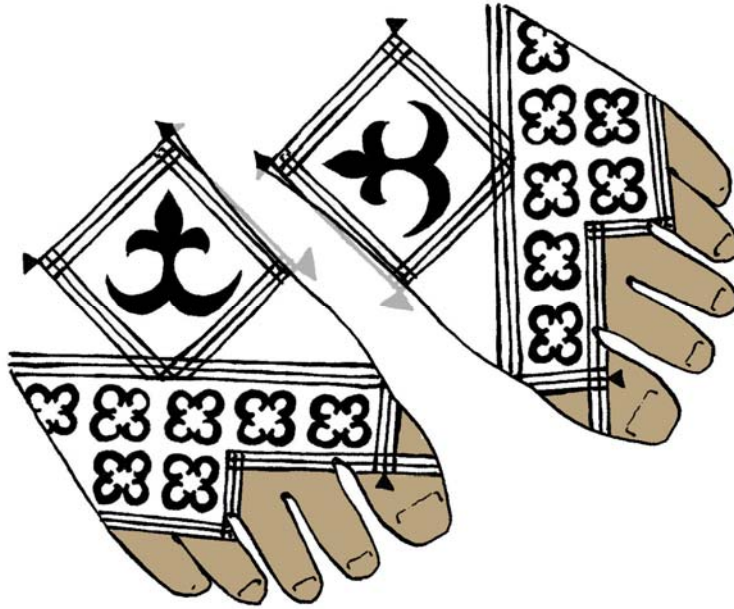


Figure 8: Patterns for a loving mother adapted for henna

AKOKO NAN; “Akoko nan tia ba, na ennkum no,” “The hen treads upon its chicks but it does not intend to kill them” symbolizes the hen’s feet, parenthood, discipline, care, tenderness and protection.

AGYINDUWURA symbolizes faithfulness and dutifulness.



Figure 9: Patterns for success through patience and strength, adapted for henna

TABONO: “Oars,” symbolize strength, confidence and persistence.

OSRAM: “Osram mmfiti preko nntwareman,” “It takes the moon some time to go round the earth,” symbolizes patience.

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Figure 10: Pattern for ancient wisdom and heritage, adapted for direct application of henna

SANKOFA: “Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi,” “Return and get it,” or, “It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten,” symbolizes the importance of ancient wisdom, tradition, and learning from the past.

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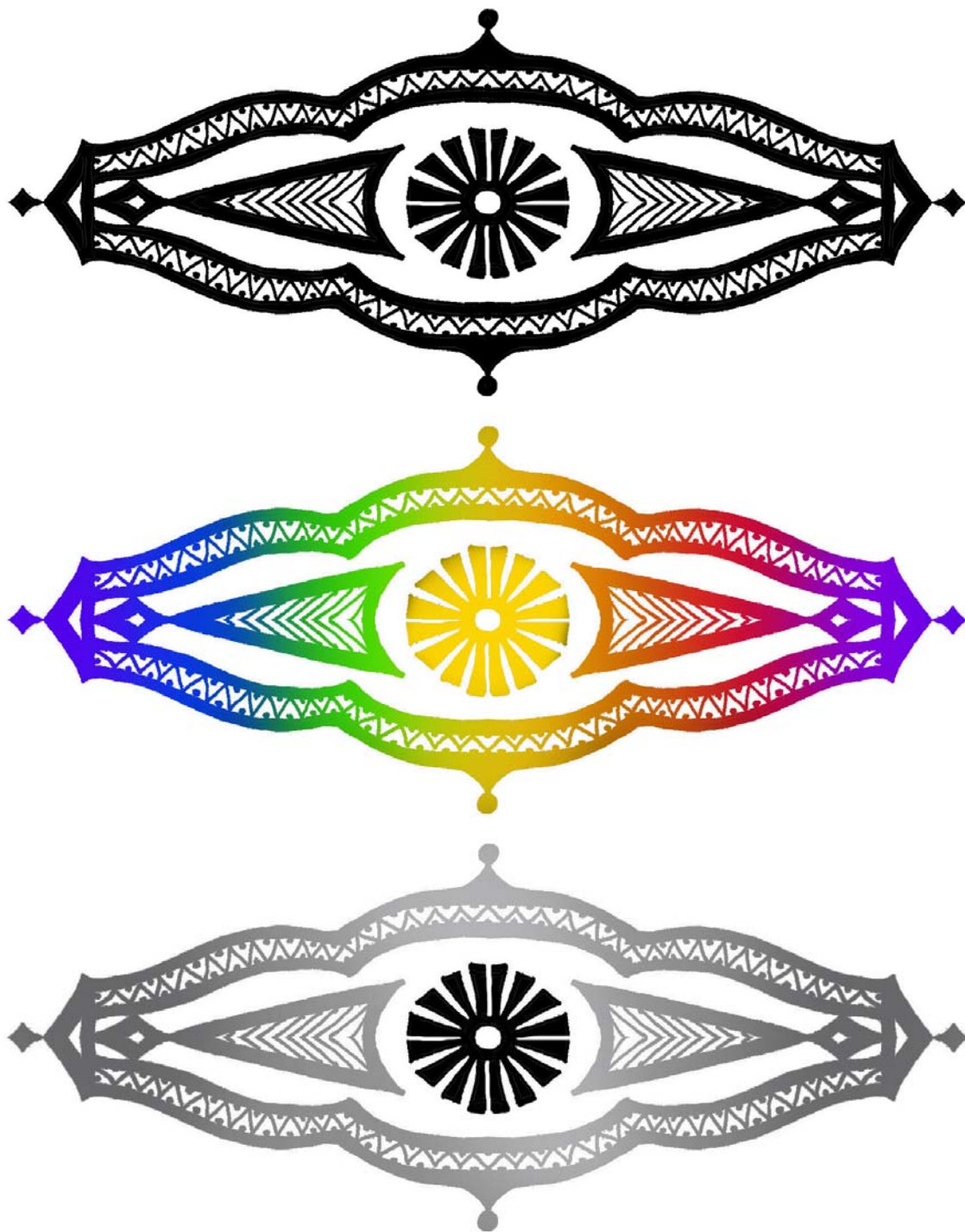


Figure 11: Pattern for wisdom and creativity adapted for henna, harquus, and gilding.

ANANSE NTONTAN: "The Spider's web" symbolizes wisdom and creativity.

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Figure 12: Pattern for true love and faithfulness, adapted for henna, harquus, and gilding

ODO NNYEW FIE KWAN: “Love never loses its way home” symbolizes the power of love and faithfulness.

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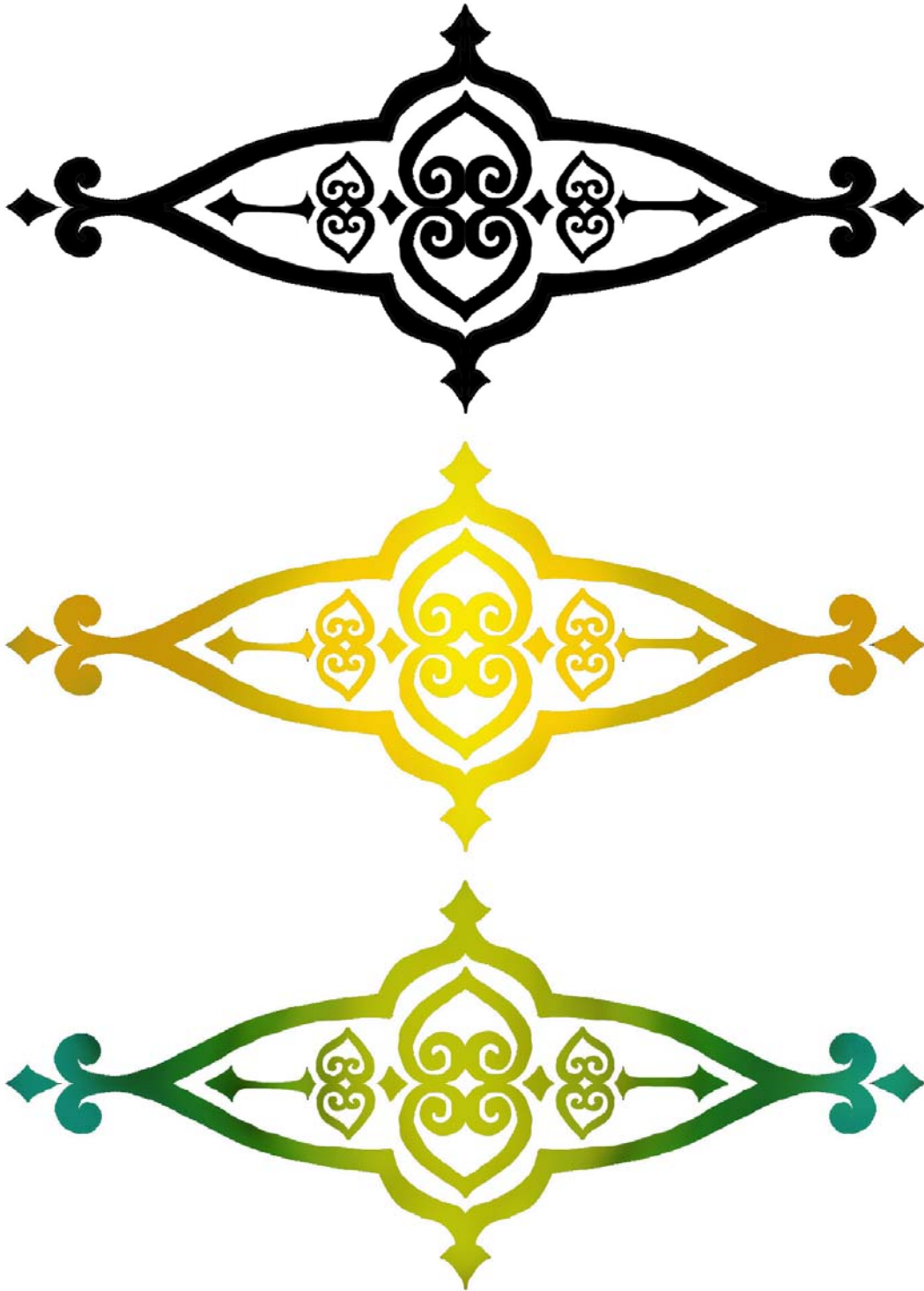


Figure 13: A pattern for the love of nature, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint and gilding

ASASSE YE DURU: “Tumi nyina ne asase,” “All power emanates from the earth,” symbolizes respect for the importance, power, and authority of nature.

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Figure 14: A pattern for success, adapted for henna, harquus, and gilding

AYA: “Fern,” symbolizes endurance and resourcefulness, because the fern can thrive in difficult environments.

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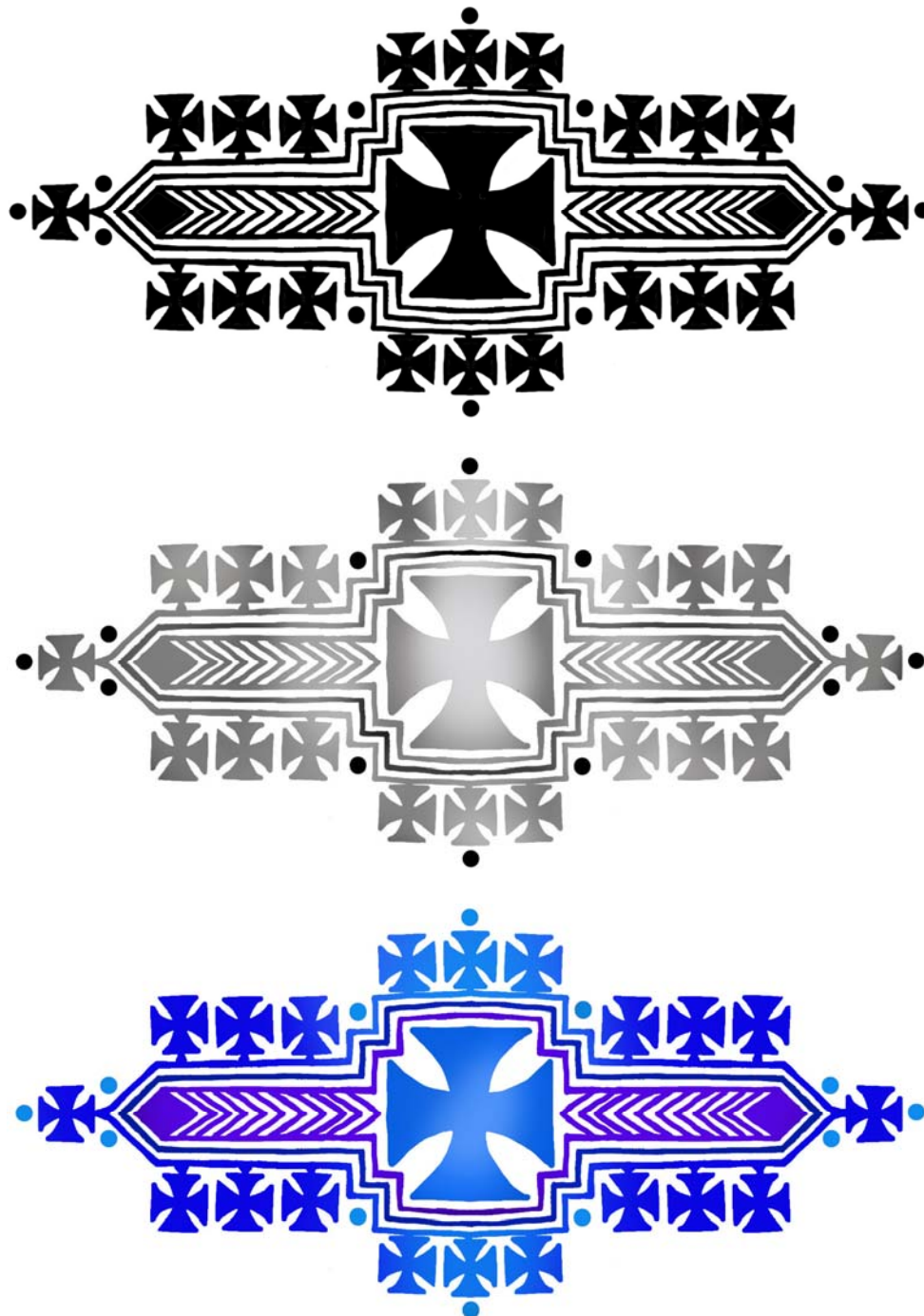


Figure 15: Pattern to bring good luck, adapted for henna, harquus and gilding.

MMUSUYIDEE: “That which removes bad luck,” wards off negative powers of thoughts, averts the evil eye, and protects good fortune and sanctity.

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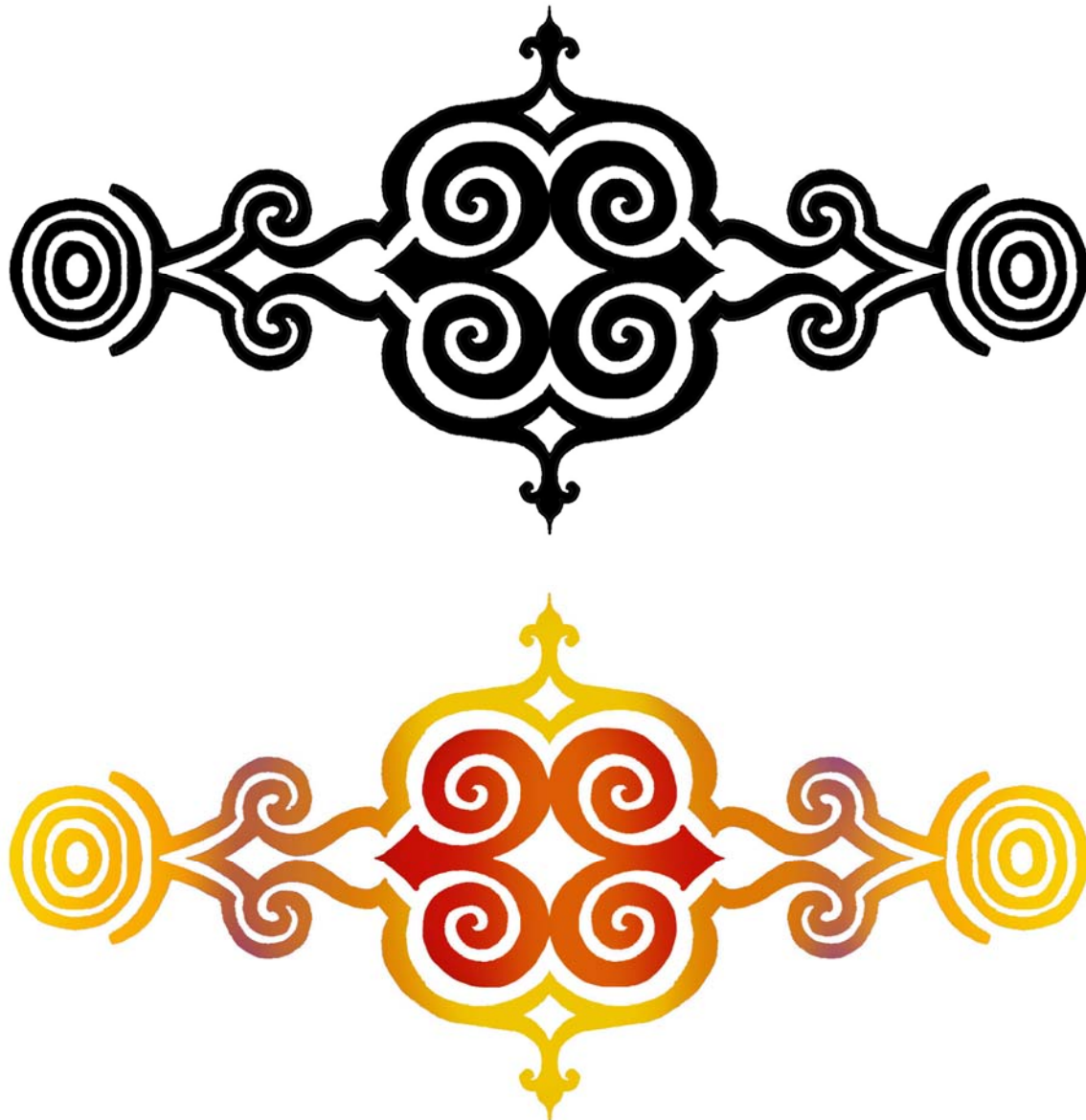


Figure 16: Pattern for leadership and strength, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint and gilding

DWENNIMMEN: “Ram’s horns” symbolizes strength and power tempered with humility. The ram will fight fiercely against an adversary, but it also submits humbly to slaughter, emphasizing that even the strong need to be humble. This symbol is also a reminder to use one’s strength for leadership, not for hostility and aggression.

ADINKRAHENE: “Chief of the adinkra symbols,” symbolizes greatness, charisma and leadership.

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Figure 17: Patterns for strength through God's grace and power, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint and gilding

GYE NYAME: "Except for God" symbolizes the power of, and respect for, the Supreme Being

ADINKRAHENE: "Chief of the adinkra symbols," symbolizes greatness, charisma and leadership.

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Figure 18: Patterns for true love and faithfulness, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint and gilding

OSRAM NE NSOROMMA: “The moon and the north star,” symbolize love, faithfulness, and harmony

AKOMA: “The heart,” symbolizes patience and tolerance

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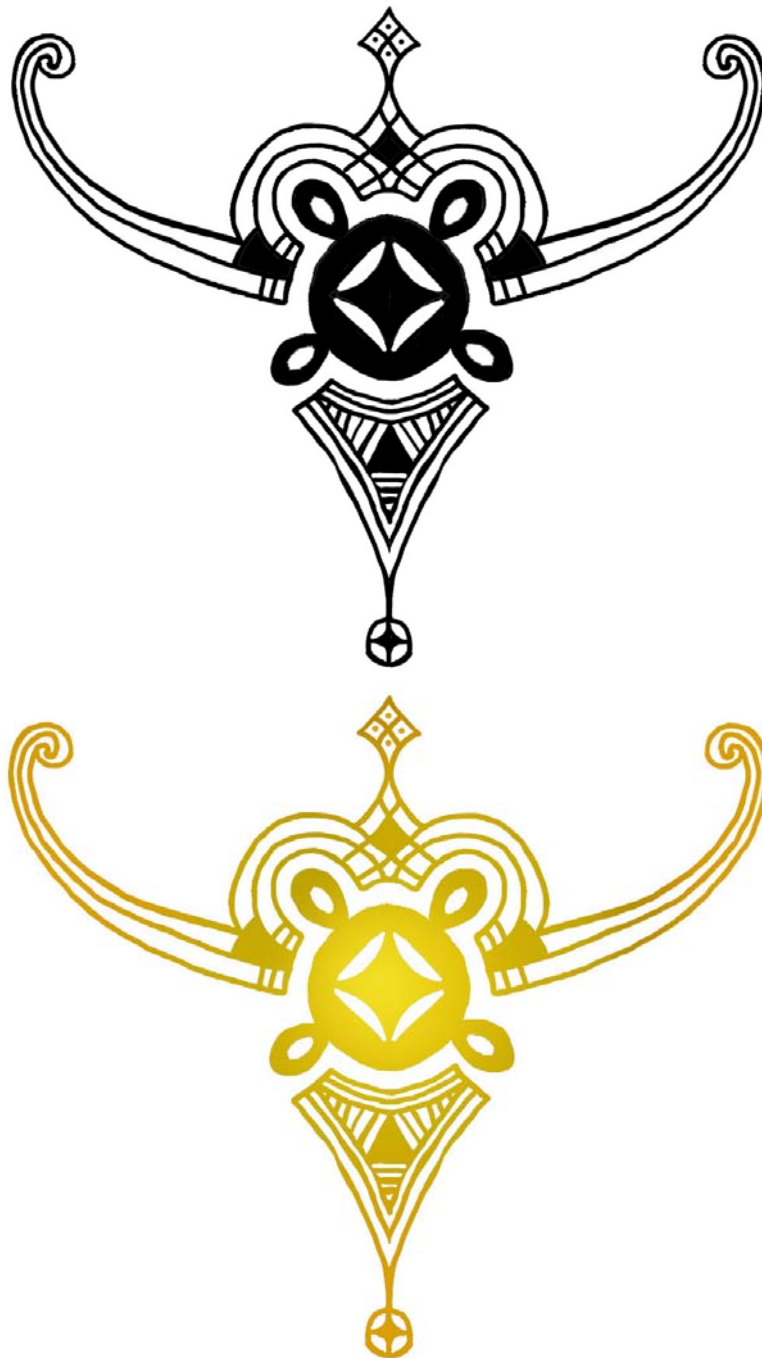


Figure 19: Pattern for the unique spirit within a person, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, and gilding

SUNSUM: “Spirit,” is that which connects a person’s body to their soul. Spirit develops through a person’s experience in the world, and is the unique to each person.

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Figure 20: A pattern for success through patience and cooperation, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, and gilding

AKOMA NTOSO symbolizes linked hearts, unity and understanding.

AKOMA: “The heart,” symbolizes patience and tolerance.

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Figure 21: A Pattern for hope and faith adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, and gilding

ONYANKOPON ADOM NTI BIRIBIARA BEYE YIE: “By God's grace all will be well,” symbolizes hope, providence, and faith.

NYAME NTI: “By God's grace,” symbolizes of faith and trust in God.

NSOROMMA: “Child of the heavens,” is a reminder that God watches over all people and hears all prayers.

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Figure 22: A pattern for doing the impossible, adapted for harquus body paint, and gilding

HYE WON HYE: “That which does not burn,” symbolizes imperishability and endurance. This symbol is based on the ritual of ‘fire walking’, meant to inspire people to endure and overcome difficulties.



Figure 23: A pattern for creativity through ancient wisdom, adapted for harquus, body paint, and gilding

SANKOFA: “Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi,” “It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten,” symbolizes the importance of learning from the past.

ANANSE NTONTAN: “The spider’s web,” symbolizes wisdom and creativity.

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Figure 24: A pattern for sweetness and joy, adapted for harquus, body paint, and gilding

ASAAWA: “Sweet Berry” symbolizes sweetness.

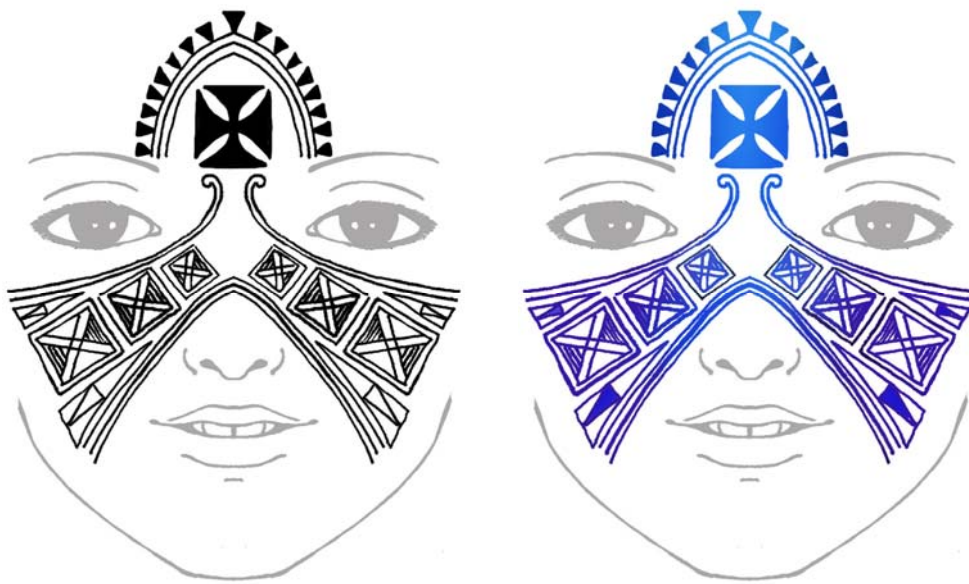


Figure 25: A pattern for good luck and protection, adapted for harquus, body paint, and gilding

MFRAMADAN: “The wind-resistant house,” symbolizes safety and endurance

MMUSUYIDEE: “That which removes bad luck.” This symbol wards off negative powers of thoughts, averts the evil eye, and protects good fortune and sanctity.

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Figure 26: Pattern for success, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, or gilding

NKYINKYIM: “Twisting,” symbolizes initiative, dynamism and versatility

TABONO: “Pars” symbolizes strength, confidence and persistence.

NSOROMMA: “Child of the heavens,” is a reminder that God watches over all people and hears all prayers.

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Figure 27: Pattern for a loving marriage, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, or gilding

EBAN: “Fence,” symbolizes love, safety and security.

OSRAM NE NSOROMMA: “The moon and star,” symbolize love, faithfulness, harmony

KETE PA: “A good bed” symbolizes a good marriage, from the expression that a woman who has a good marriage is said to sleep on a good bed.

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Figure 28: Pattern for strength, power, and wisdom, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, or gilding

DWENNIMMEN: “The ram's horns” is symbolic of strength and power tempered with humility. The ram will fight fiercely against an adversary, but it also submits humbly to slaughter, emphasizing that even the strong need to be humble. This symbol is also a reminder to use one’s strength for leadership, not for hostility and aggression.

MATE MASIE: “What I hear, I keep,” symbolizes wisdom, knowledge and prudence. The literal meaning of “mate masie” is “I understand,” implying that listening and remembering bring wisdom and wise actions.

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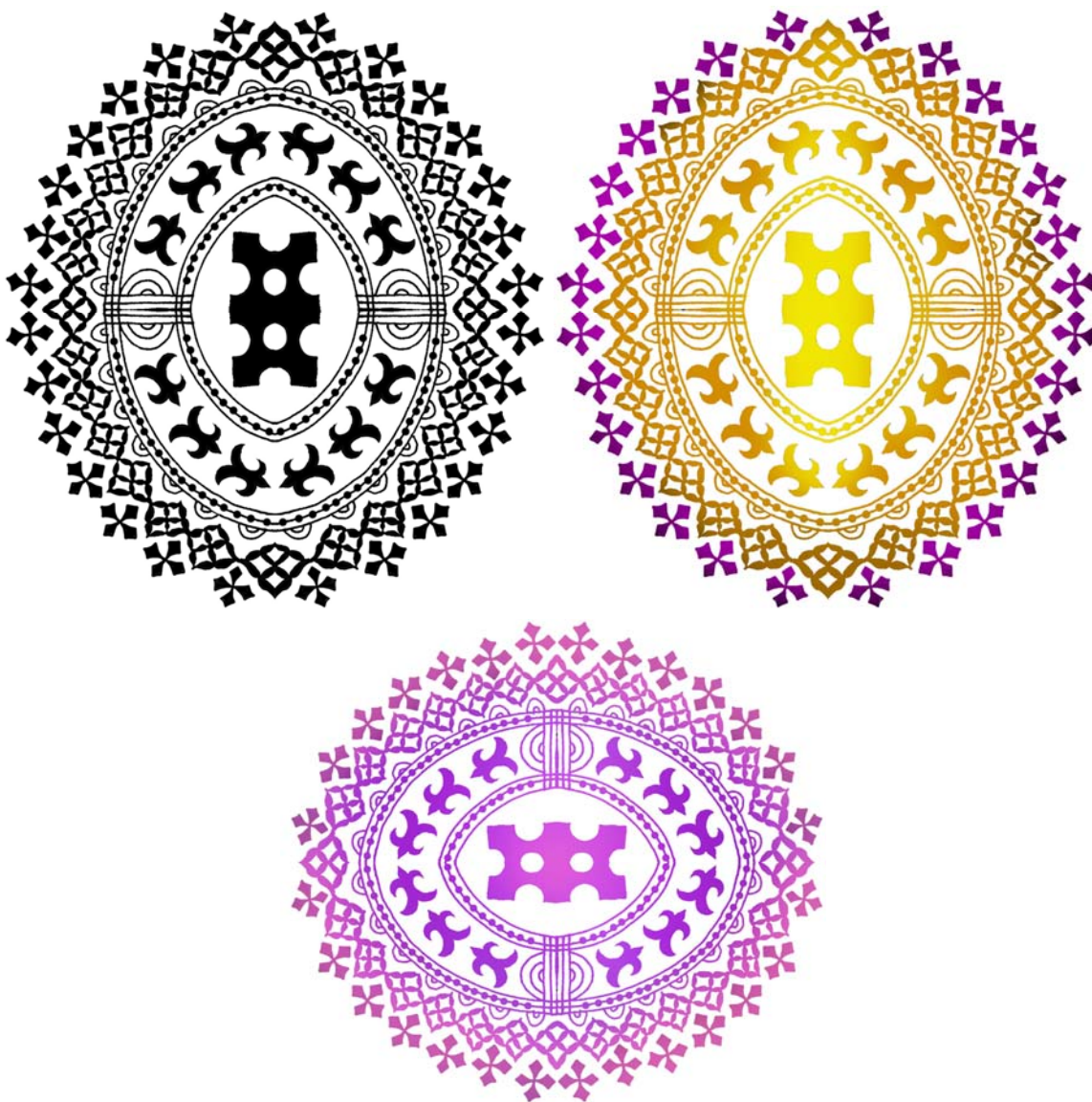


Figure 29: Pattern to celebrate the birth of a daughter, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, or gilding

OBA NE OMAN: “Woman is the nation” symbolizes the proverb that when a boy is born, an individual is born; but when a girl is born, a nation is born.

ASAAWA: “Sweet Berry” symbolizes sweetness.

AKOKO NAN: “Akoko nan tia ba, na ennkum no,” “The hen treads upon its chicks but it does not intend to kill them,” symbolizes the hen’s feet, parenthood, care, tenderness and protection, and the challenges of disciplining one’s offspring.

EBAN: “Fence,” is symbolic of love, safety and security. A fence around a home keeps it safe, so that love may grow.

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Figure 30: Patterns for success through endurance, resilience, and focus, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, and gilding

AYA: “Fern,” symbolizes endurance and resourcefulness, because a fern can thrive in difficult environments.

ANI BERE: “Ani bere a, nso gya, anka mani abere koo,” “Seriousness does not show fiery eyes, else you would see my face all red,” symbolizes seriousness, diligence and perseverance.

ANANSE NTONTAN: “The Spider’s web,” symbolizes wisdom and creativity.

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Figure 31: A pattern for ancient wisdom and connecting with the past, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, or gilding

SANKOFA: "Return and get it," "Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi," "It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten," symbolizes the importance of learning from the past, and connections with one's heritage and traditions. This symbol also is also a reminder that one can always go back and correct mistakes.

OHENE: "King," symbolizes wisdom.

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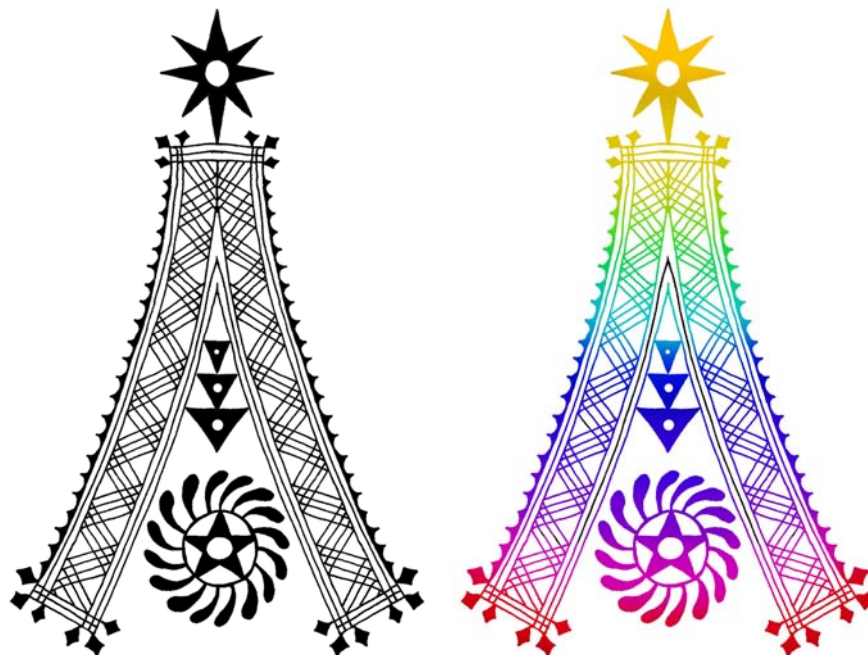


Figure 32: A pattern for a successful new beginning and accomplishing the impossible, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, or gilding

SESA WO SUBAN: “Change or transform your character,” is symbolic of transforming one’s life.

NSOROMMA: “Child of the heavens,” is a reminder that God watches over all people and hears all prayers.

OWO FORO ADOBE: “A snake climbing the raffia tree,” is symbolic of steadfastness, prudence and diligence. The thorny raffia tree is difficult and dangerous for a snake to climb, requiring persistence and prudence.



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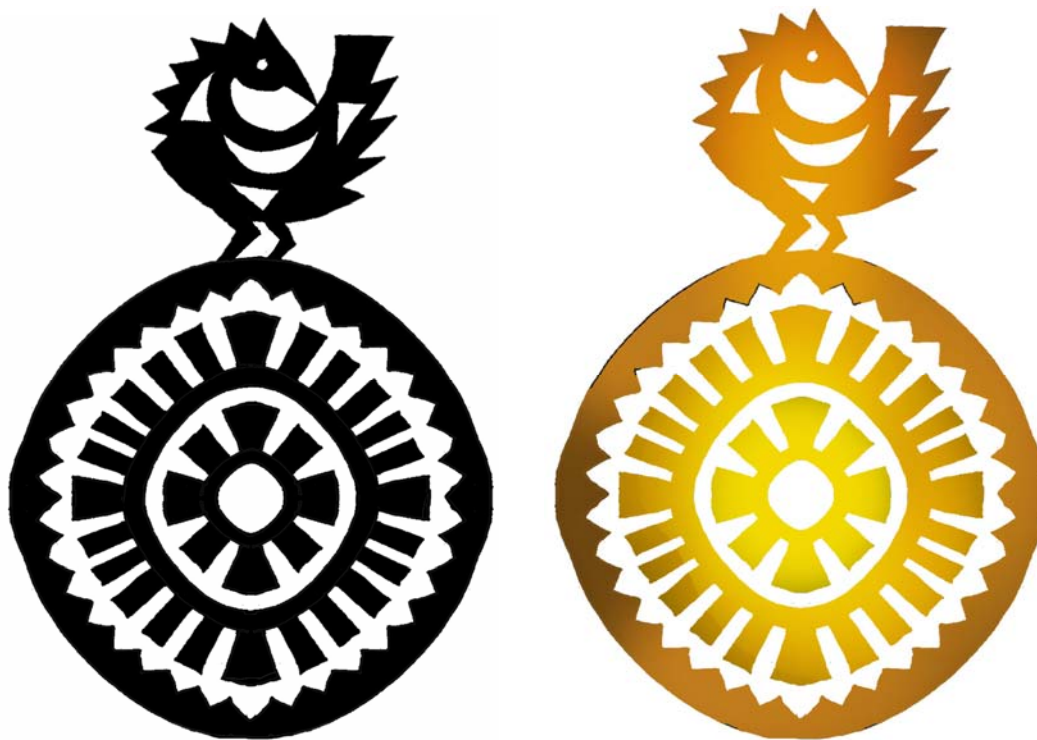


Figure 33: A pattern for a successful new beginning, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, and gilding

SESA WO SUBAN: “Change and transformation,” symbolizes new beginnings. This symbol depicts the morning star within a wheel, signifying the start of something new.

SANKOFA: “Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi,” “Return and get it,” or, “It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten,” symbolizes the importance of connecting with ancient wisdom, tradition, and learning from the past. This symbol also is also a reminder that one can always go back and correct mistakes.



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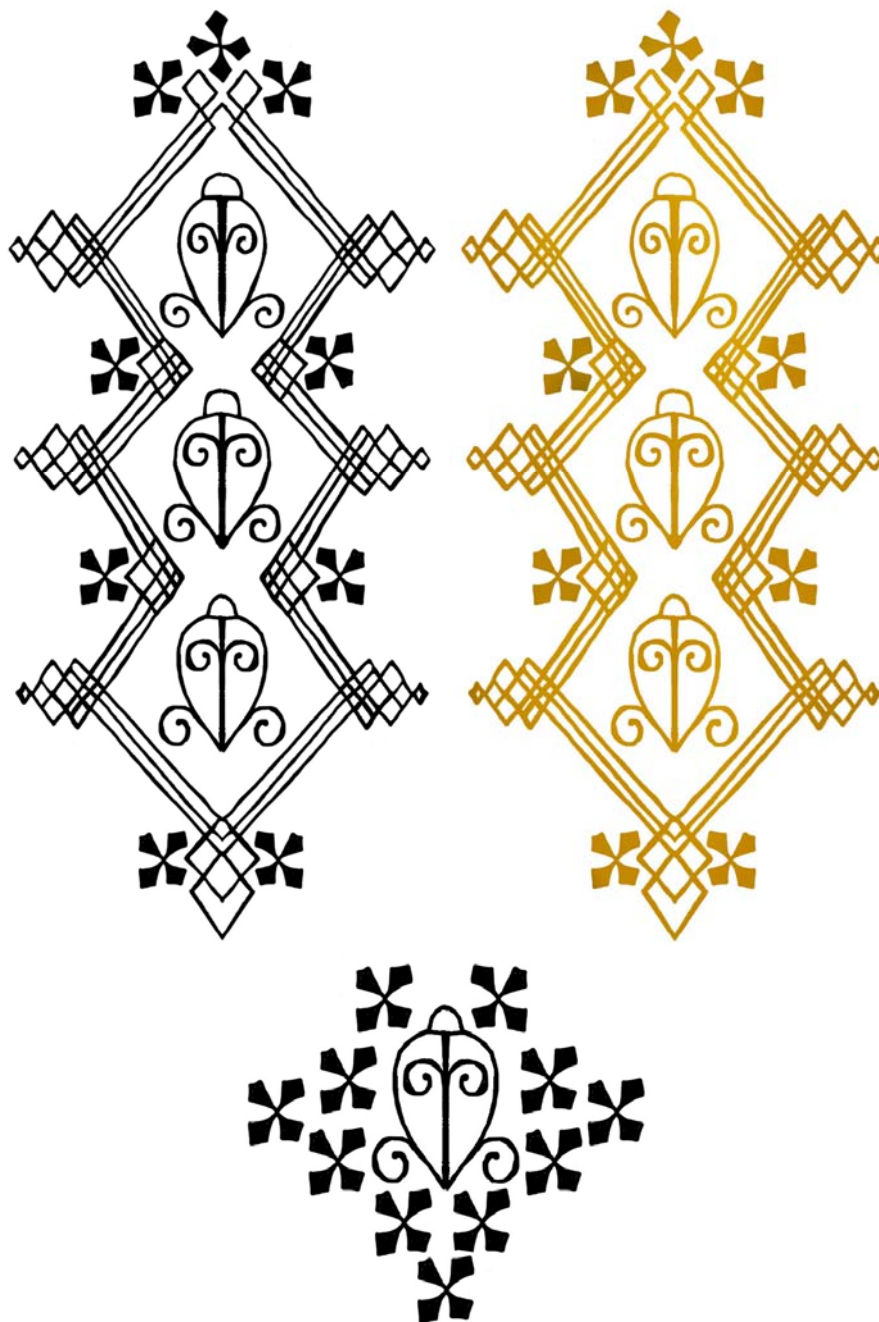


Figure 34: A pattern for the power of true love, adapted for henna, harqus, body paint, or gilding

ODO NNYEW FIE KWAN: “Love never loses its way home,” symbolizes the power of love.

ASAAWA: “Sweet berry,” symbolizes sweetness.

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Figure 35: A pattern for success through overcoming obstacles, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, or gilding

HYE WON HYE: "That which does not burn," symbolizes endurance. Traditional priests performed a ritual of walking on fire without burning their feet, an inspiration to others to endure and overcome difficulties.

ADINKRAHENE: "Chief of the adinkra symbols," symbolizes greatness, charisma and leadership.



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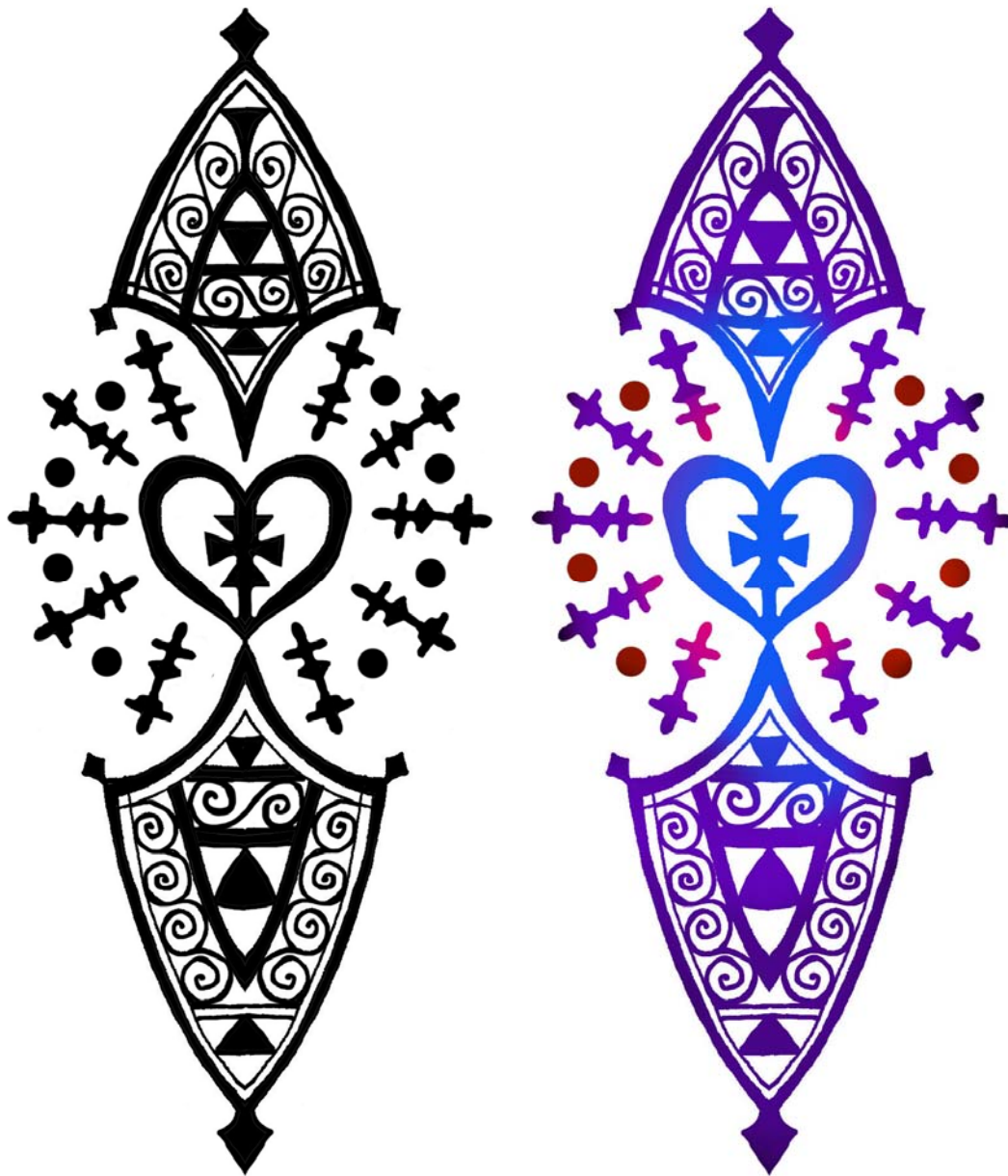


Figure 36: A pattern for the calm strength and power, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, or gilding

NYA ABOTERE: “Be patient,” symbolizes patience and calmness.

OKODEE MMOWERE: “The talons of the eagle,” symbolizes strength, bravery, and power.

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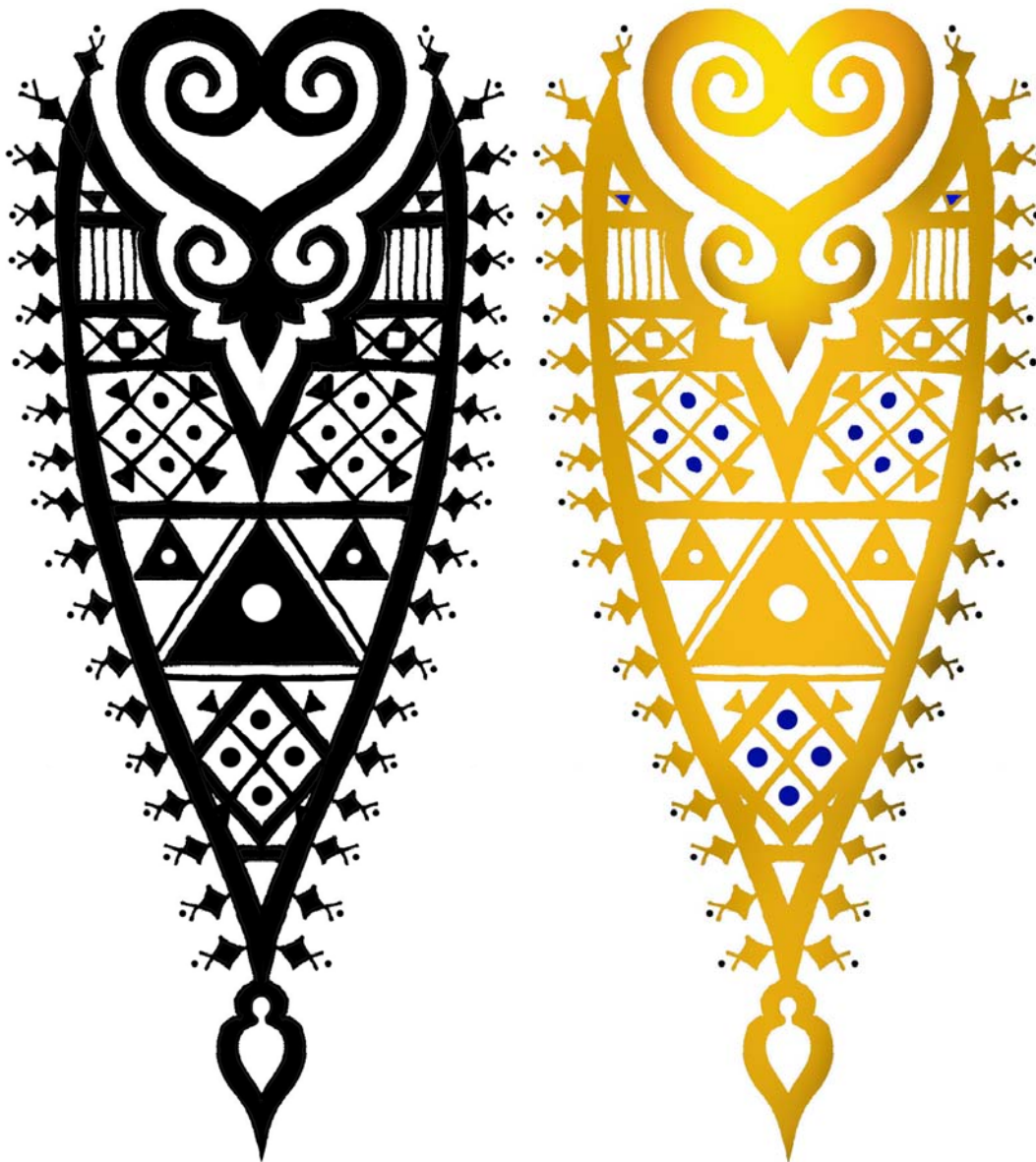


Figure 37: Pattern celebrating tradition and one's history, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint, or gilding

SANKOFA: "Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi," "Return and get it," or, "It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten," symbolizes the importance of ancient wisdom, tradition, and learning from the past. This symbol also is also a reminder that one can always go back and correct mistakes.

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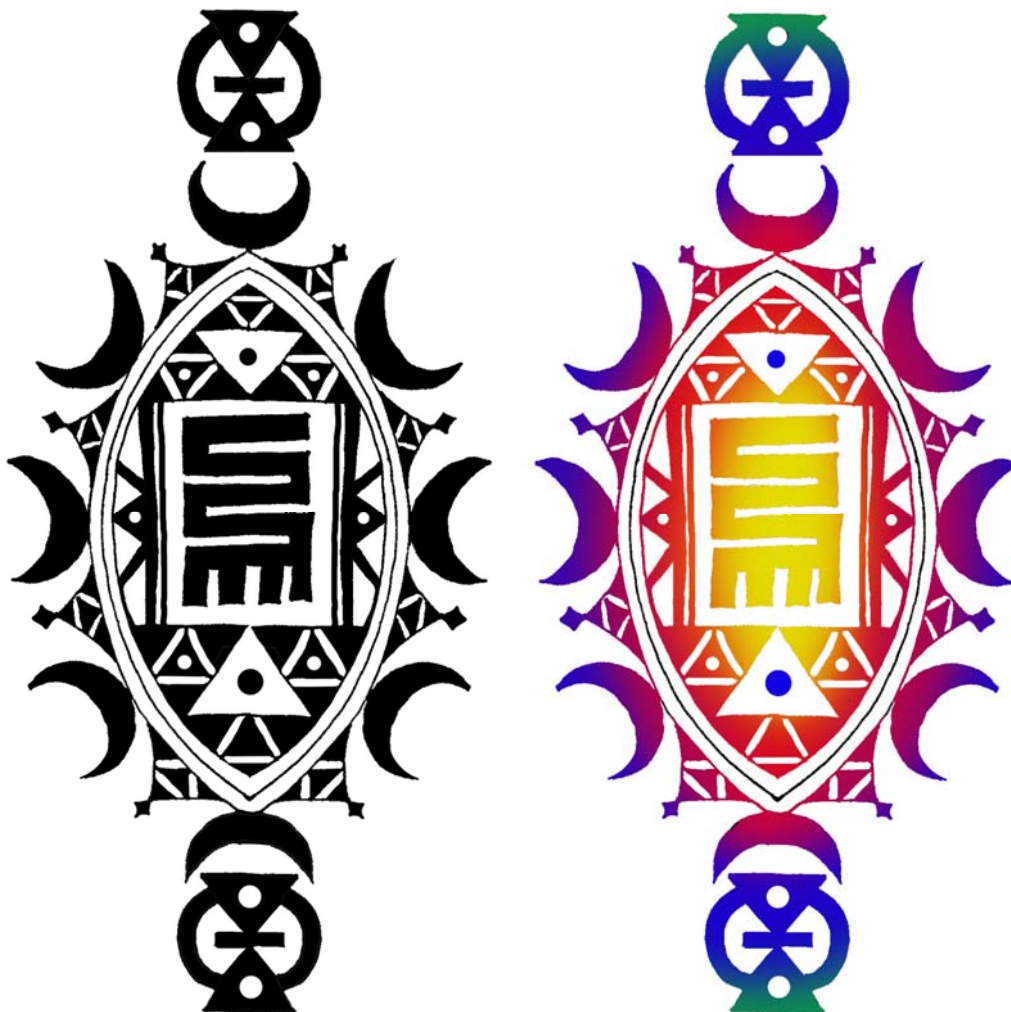


Figure 38: A pattern to embrace change and challenge for a successful life, adapted for henna, harqus, body paint, or gilding

NKYINKYIM: “Twisting” symbolizes initiative, dynamism and versatility, and may symbolize the challenges of enduring changes in life.

MMERE DANE: “Time changes,” is symbolic of the inevitability of change, and a reminder to remain flexible.

OSRAM: “Osram mmfiti preko nntwareman,” “It takes the moon some time to go round the earth,” symbolizes patience.

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Figure 39: A pattern for hope and faith that prayers will be answered, adapted for henna, harquus, body paint and gilding.

NYAME BIRIBI WO SORO: “God is in the heavens,” symbolizes hope, and is a reminder that God listens to all prayers

NSOROMMA: “Child of the heavens,” is a reminder that God watches over all people.

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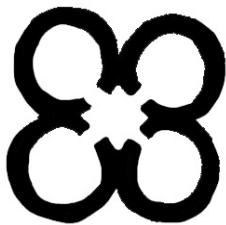
Pattern Index:



ADINKRAHENE: “Chief of the adinkra symbols,” symbolizes greatness, charisma and leadership.
Patterns: 1, 2, 16, 35



ADWERA: “Adwera nsuo, wo ne nkwansuo, nsu korogyenn a wohuru nso wonhye,” “Water of life, you are the pure crystal clean water that boils and does not burn.” The weeds in the water symbolize purity, sanctity, and good fortune.
Patterns: 3



AGYINDUWURA: Symbolizes faithfulness and dutifulness.
Patterns: 8



AKOKO NAN; “Akoko nan tia ba, na ennkum no,” “The hen treads upon its chicks but it does not intend to kill them” symbolizes the hen’s feet, parenthood, discipline, care, tenderness, and protection.
Patterns: 8, 29

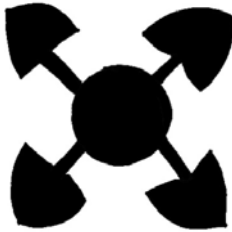
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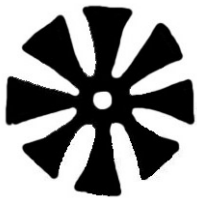
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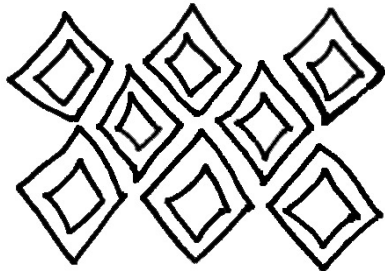
AKOMA: “The heart,” symbolizes patience and tolerance.
Patterns: 18, 20



AKOMA NTOSO: Linked hearts, unity and understanding.
Pattern: 20



ANANSE NTONTAN: “The Spider's web” symbolizes wisdom, creativity
Patterns: 1, 11, 23, 30



ANI BERE: “Ani bere a, nso gya, anka mani abere koo,” “Seriousness does not show fiery eyes, else you would see my face all red,” symbolizes seriousness, diligence and perseverance
Patterns: 7, 30



ASAAYA: “Sweet Berry” symbolizes sweetness.
Patterns: 24, 29, 34

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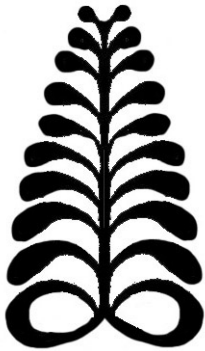
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ASASSE YE DURU: “Tumi nyina ne asase,” “All power emanates from the earth,” symbolizes respect for the importance, power, and authority of nature.

Patterns: 7, 13



AYA: “Fern,” symbolizes endurance and resourcefulness, because the fern can thrive in difficult environments.

Patterns: 14, 30



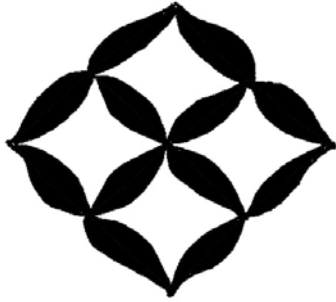
DWENNIMMEN: “Ram’s horns” is symbolic of strength and power tempered with humility. The ram will fight fiercely against an adversary, but it also submits humbly to slaughter, emphasizing that even the strong need to be humble. This symbol is also a reminder to use one’s strength for leadership, not for hostility and aggression.

Patterns: 16, 28

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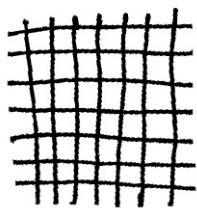
EBAN: “Fence,” a symbol of the love, safety and security of home.
Patterns: 27, 29



GYE NYAME: “Except for God,” is symbolic of the power of, and respect for, the Supreme Being
Patterns: 17



HYE WON HYE: “That which does not burn,” symbolizes imperishability and endurance. This symbol is based on the ritual of ‘fire walking’, meant to inspire people to endure and overcome difficulties.
Patterns: 22, 35



KETE PA: “A good bed,” symbolizes a good marriage. A woman who has a good marriage is said to sleep on a good bed.
Pattern: 27

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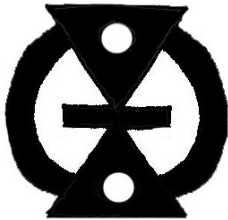
MATE MASIE: “What I hear, I keep,” symbolizes wisdom, knowledge and prudence. The literal meaning of “mate masie” is “I understand,” implying that listening and remembering bring wisdom and wise actions.

Pattern: 28



MFRAMADAN: “The wind-resistant house,” symbolizes safety and endurance

Pattern: 25



MMERE DANE: “Time changes,” symbolizes the inevitability of change, and is a reminder to remain flexible.

Pattern: 38



MMUSUYIDEE: “That which removes bad luck,” wards off negative powers of thoughts, averts the evil eye, and protects good fortune and sanctity.

Patterns: 3, 15, 25



NEA ONNIM NO SUA A, OHU: “He who does not know can learn,” symbolizes knowledge and life-long education

Patterns: 1, 2

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NKYINKYIM: “Twisting,” symbolizes initiative, dynamism and versatility. This pattern also symbolizes the challenge of enduring life’s changes.

Patterns: 26, 38



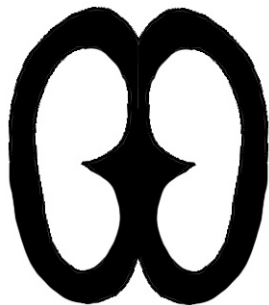
NSOROMMA: “Child of the heavens,” is a reminder that God watches over all people and hears all prayers.

Patterns: 20, 26, 32, 39



NYA ABOTERE: “Be patient,” symbolizes patience and calmness

Patterns: 2, 36



NYAME BIRIBI WO SORO: “God is in the heavens,” symbolizes hope, and is a reminder that God listens to all prayers.

Patterns: 2, 20, 39

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NYAME NTI: “By God’s grace” symbolizes faith and trust in God
Pattern: 21



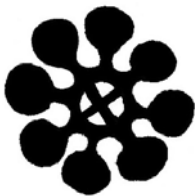
OBAA NE OMAN: “woman is the nation” symbolizes the proverb that when a boy is born, an individual is born; when a girl is born, a nation is born.
Patterns: 29



ODO NYERA FIE KWAN: “Love never loses its way home,” symbolizes the power of love and faithfulness.
Patterns: 6, 12, 34



OHENE: “The king,” symbolizes wisdom
Patterns: 4, 31



OHENE ANIWA: “The king’s eye,” symbolizes beauty and vigilance. The king must be aware of everything in his kingdom to be a benevolent and effective leader.
Patterns: 4, 18

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OKODEE MMOWERE: "The talons of the eagle," symbolizes strength, bravery, and power.
Pattern: 36



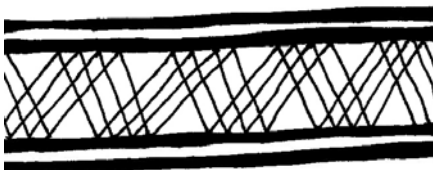
ONYANKOPON ADOM NTI BIRIBIARA BEYE YIE: "By God's grace, all will be well," symbolizes hope, providence, and faith
Patterns: 21



OSRAM: "Osram mmfiti preko nntwareman," "It takes the moon some time to go round the earth," symbolizes patience.
Patterns: 9, 38



OSRAM NE NSOROMMA: "The Moon and the Star", symbolizes love, faithfulness, and harmony.
Patterns: 18, 27



OWO FORO ADOBE: "A snake climbing the raffia tree," is symbolic of steadfastness, prudence and diligence. The thorny raffia tree is difficult and dangerous for a snake to climb, requiring persistence and prudence.
Pattern: 32

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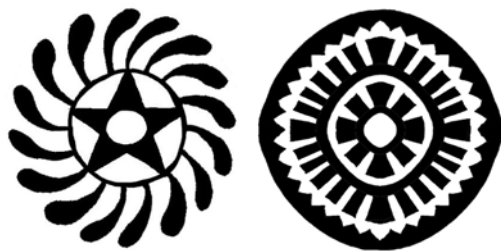
SANKOFA: “Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi,” “Return and get it,” or, “It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten,” symbolizes the importance of ancient wisdom, tradition, and learning from the past. This symbol also is also a reminder that one can always go back and correct mistakes.

Patterns: 10, 23, 31, 33, 37



SEPOW: The knife of justice.

Pattern: 5



SESA WO SUBAN: “Change and transformation,” symbolizes new beginnings. This symbol depicts the morning star within a wheel, signifying the start of something new.

Patterns: 5, 32, 33



SUNSUM: “Spirit,” is that which connects a person’s body to their soul. Spirit develops through a person’s experience in the world, and is the unique to each person.

Pattern: 19



TABONO: “Oars” symbolize strength, confidence, and persistence.

Patterns: 1, 2, 5, 9, 26

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Always use safe, natural red-brown henna in your henna work. Never use any “black henna” product containing para-phenylenediamine to stain skin. Para-phenylenediamine may cause severe injuries to both artist and client.

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Gilding work done with materials from mehandi.com by Beth Boyd Hendrickson: this body art is waterproof, and may last up to two weeks.

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Gilding with materials from mehandi.com with glitter, gems, and gilding powder; this gilding is waterproof and lasts up to two weeks, artwork by Wendy Rover

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Body paint and gilding work with materials from mehandi.com by Paul Hernandez

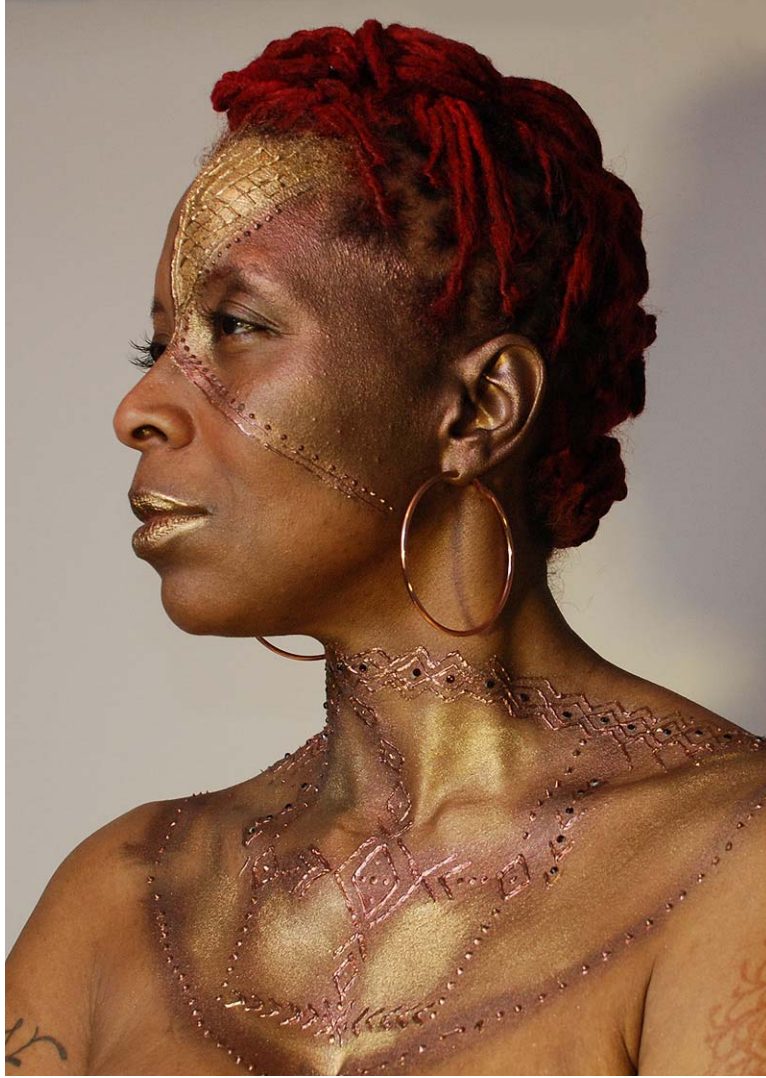
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