

# **Architecture, mural decoration and Pottery in Sirigu Culture.**

**BY**

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## CERTIFICATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the Master of Arts Degree and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree in this university or elsewhere, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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## **DEDICATION**

This Thesis is dedicated to my angelic daughters Sena Addzo Wemegah and Erlorm Addzovi Wemegah.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sirigu, with its extraordinary traditional architecture, mural decorations and pottery, genuinely is one of the most artistic communities in the Upper East Region of Ghana. These splendid art forms have inspired and attracted many admirers over the years. However, very little is known about the nature of the above art forms in the Sirigu society. The central focus of the study therefore was to examine the raw materials, motifs and techniques used in creating the above mentioned art forms, as well as to ascertain their cultural and philosophical significances to the people of Sirigu. The study was carried out with the aid of interview guides, photographs, illustrations, participant and non-participant observational techniques, note taking, voice recordings, as well as review of relevant literature. The research revealed that architecture, mural decoration and pottery in Sirigu culture, was evolved to meet the needs of the people. The art forms possessed a large volume of the cultural beliefs and history of the people of the society. The study also explicitly exposes the raw materials used in producing the art forms are obtained from the immediate environment, and are organic in nature. The research underpinned the fact that the above mentioned art forms have important tourism potentials, and if properly harnessed, could be of great benefit to the Sirigu people. The major recommendation is to sustain the art forms as well as assist in boosting tourist inflow to the community to improve the standard of living of the people.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Ethnographical Background**

Sirigu is a village in the Upper East Region of Ghana, well reputed for its striking traditional architecture, pottery and mural decorations. Pottery and wall decoration are livelihood activities that stem from proud artistic traditions that give unique cultural identity to the people of Sirigu, who are committed to keeping the artistic traditions alive. The village has five communities namely: Guwonkor, Busongor, Wulingo, Nyangolgo, and Basengo.

Sirigu is specifically situated in the eastern part of the Kassena Nankana District, which is predominantly rural in outlook and comprising 216 communities with Navrongo as its Administrative centre. It covers an area of about 1,675 km<sup>2</sup> (Ghana Statistical Department, 2008). The village can be reached by a motorable gravel road which is about 30 kilometers off the Bolgatanga- Navrongo trunk road.

The main occupation of the people is subsistence farming of predominantly millet, sorghum, and groundnuts which have consistently declined in yield because of soil depletion, and they also keep small herds of cattle, goats, chickens and guinea fowls. (Ministry of Food and Agriculture, 2008). The animals are sold in times of need and also used for sacrifices and payment of bride price during marriage.

There are two main seasons, the wet season which spans June to October, and the dry season which stretches between November and May. The average annual rainfall is 850–950 mm with an average temperature range of 18°C to 45°C. (Ghana Meteorological Department, Bolga, 2008). The area is ecologically classified as belonging to the Guinea

savanna and consists of semi-arid scrubland with natural vegetation limited to widely spaced trees, shrubs, and grasses.

Sirigu people speak Nankam, a language of the Gur family belonging to a larger group of languages that are historically related to the Niger-Congo languages (Naden, 1988).

Descent among the people of Sirigu is patrilineal. Marriage is often consummated with the payment of a bride price by the family of the groom. Children, especially males are treasured because they maintain the lineage thus encouraging large families.

Economic activity in the area is limited to retailing of commodities such as foodstuff, shea butter and handicraft items made by women. The district is however open to outside influence due to economic activity across borders. There are few salaried workers who teach in the Primary, Junior High and Senior High schools respectively.

There are three main religious groupings in the district. The Christians (mainly Catholic) and Moslems form less than 40% and the traditional religionists constitute over 60% (Ghana Statistical Department, Bolga, 2008).

Superstition abounds with belief in life after death. Ancestral veneration is practised among the people and the link between the living and the dead is maintained through the consultation of an oracle. Most households have family and personal shrines which are positioned at the entrances of their architecture. The ancestors are consulted for guidance in various sectors of life such as marriage, childbirth, naming ceremonies, festivals, ill health and death.

Traditional political power is vested in the Sirigu Chief, who exercises limited titular political authority over the entire community and clans, with the help of a group of elders as counselors. Complementary authority is reposed in the indigenous religious

office of the *tendaana* or earth priest, who concerns himself with mediation between entities in the spirit world and the people of the society as well as issues concerning fertility of the earth and land allocation in the Sirigu culture.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Traditional architecture, wall decoration and pottery are important aspects of the culture of Sirigu, in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The architectural edifices and pottery wares found in Sirigu, are designed and modeled to respond to the society's needs and aesthetic aspirations.

Though these art forms are of great significance in the Sirigu culture, very little is chronicled about the philosophies, symbolism of the motifs, and the processes involved in the architectural construction, wall decorations and the people's pottery. Also, it seems very little of the cultural symbolism of the above art forms, are known even by most of the indigenes.

The study therefore intends to study and document the technologies, raw materials and motifs employed in the construction of Sirigu architecture, mural decoration, pottery production, and their cultural significance to the people of Sirigu. It is believed this would aid in the sustenance of the material and non-material culture of the community, inform the general public about the philosophy and significance of the art forms, as well as create awareness about the tourism potential of Sirigu.



### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. What are the materials, techniques, and motifs used in the production of architecture, mural paintings and pottery in the Sirigu community?
2. What roles do these art forms play in the culture of Sirigu?
3. What are the tourism potentials?

### **1.4 Objectives**

1. To ascertain the raw materials, motifs and techniques used in the creation of Sirigu traditional architecture, mural decorations and pottery.
2. To study the cultural significance and philosophy of the above art forms in the Sirigu indigenous community and recommend appropriate ways for their sustenance.
3. To advocate innovative methods to boost tourist inflow to the area and contribute to the standard of living of the people.

### **1.5 Definition of Operational Terms**

Architecture - the art and technique of designing and building, as distinguished from the skill associated with construction.

Pottery - baked wares of the entire ceramic field.

Mural - decoration of walls or ceilings for aesthetic or didactic purposes, executed in any of several techniques.

Iconography – a branch of art history which studies the identification, description, and the interpretation of the content of images.

African art - art forms originating from the continent of Africa.

Bambolse - the traditional name given to the art of mural decoration by the people of Sirigu and its environs.

Tendaana- The earth priest, who concerns himself with mediation between entities in the spirit world and the people of the society as well as issues concerning fertility of the earth and land allocation in the Sirigu culture.

### **1.7 Limitations**

Even though the study was interesting, it was not without limitations. The limited time available to the researcher coupled with the seasonal nature of the art forms made it quite impossible for an extensive study to be carried out.

Another problem which confronted the researcher was the high demand by some of the respondents for monetary incentives before giving out information or allowing their homesteads, mural decorations or pottery wares to be photographed. This makes the study quite capital intensive.

### **1.8 Delimitation**

The study focused mainly on the raw materials, motifs, and techniques used in the creation of traditional architecture, mural decorations and pottery in the Sirigu culture. The cultural and philosophical significances of the above art forms were also studied. An overview of the tourism industry in the Sirigu community had been examined as well.

## **1.9 Organization of the Study**

The thesis comprise of five chapters. Following the introductory chapter, which outlines the ethnographical background and nature of the study, Chapter 2 reviews related literature on African Architecture, Mural Decoration in Africa, Pottery Production in Africa, Iconography in African Art, Women's Art in Africa, as well as the Perspective of Western Art Historians and Critics on African Art.

Chapter 3 presents the thesis methodology. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the field research as well as the tourism potentials of architecture, mural decoration and pottery in Sirigu. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the study through a discussion of the research findings and the presentation of a set of recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The aim of this literature review is to set up a theoretical framework for the study, develop a clear understanding of the key concepts, ideas, studies and models related to the thesis, clarify important definitions and terminologies, evaluate the works of others as well as narrow the problem and make the study feasible. This review will focus on six thematic areas which have a direct bearing on the area of study. These themes are: African Architecture, Mural Decoration in Africa, Pottery Production in Africa, Iconography in African Art, Women's Art in Africa, as well as the Perspective of Western Art Historians and Critics on African Art.

#### **2.2. Architecture**

The New Encyclopedia Britannica (2003) defines architecture as “the art and technique of designing and building, as distinguished from the skill associated with construction” (p.530). The Encyclopedia explains that all cultures have developed diverse architectural forms based on the simplicity or the complexity of the societies in which the built forms are found. While simple societies evolve rudimentary architectural forms, the more complex ones exhibit a wide range of styles and techniques that define the shape of their buildings.

A further amplification of the definition of architecture is given by Wikipedia online Encyclopedia (2008), which explains that the term architecture is etymologically derived from two sources; the Latin word “architectura” and the Greek “architectekton”,

which is interpreted to mean “master builder”. The encyclopedia elucidates further that while the term is primarily used to describe the “built environment”, it is also sometimes used to suggest the “art and discipline of creating an actual plan of any complex object or system” (page 1).

Ruskin (1989), however, constricts his definition of architecture to state that architecture should be considered as art, which bestows beauty, pleasure, power, and to a large extent positively affects the mental health of man. So far as Ruskin is concerned therefore, aesthetic qualities are of more importance than any other architectural quality. He theorizes that a building could not be considered as an architectural work unless it is beautified or ornamented at the very least.

### **2.2.1 Architecture in Africa**

Many traditional built forms in Africa had been described by scholars and historians in varied terminologies over the years. Hayland (1970), articulates that “indigenous architecture” and “vernacular architecture” (p.10) are terms used by architects and scholars to describe “architecture without architects” (p.10). Hayland is however quick in explaining that the phrase “architecture without architects” sounds quite pejorative, segregating formally trained architects from non-formally trained ones. He progresses further to also point out that the term “vernacular architecture,” connotes an inference with vernacular language. Hayland, however, elaborates that just as a society develops its language over a long period of time through uninterrupted contacts with people of other societies or ethnic groups, thereby influencing their indigenous speech, so

is the evolution of the unique building techniques, decorations, and forms of a particular community.

Linam (1999) however, advances that the above terminologies, fall short of an exhaustive description of locally designed and built forms. The author emphasizes that “the body of architectural works were far too rich and diverse, permeated with various levels of technique and cultural meanings, for a single definition” (p. 6). Linam therefore suggests that in talking about “vernacular architecture”, general descriptive phrases and terminologies should rather be used instead of the above mentioned pejorative nomenclature.

Continuing this analogy, Oliver (2006), writes that the word "vernacular" is a derivation from the Latin word "vernaculus", meaning "native". Vernacular architecture, according to the author, could therefore appropriately be defined as “native science of building”. Oliver however, suggests that the term "shelter" should rather be used instead of "architecture" to instill what he refers to as “some measure of neutrality” in the usage of the term. This, according to the author, would stress the reason for the building of all the structures inhabited by man. Oliver naturally admits that the term “shelter”, might not be satisfactory, since it has the tendency of being associated with the “rudimentary rather than the complex, the utilitarian rather than the aesthetically pleasing”. The author elucidates that in using the term "vernacular architecture", he refers to all built structures made by "people in tribal, folk, peasant and popular societies where an architect or specialist designer is not employed" (p. 4).

Chanda (2007) mentions that architecture in Africa could be classified into two main categories: buildings in agrarian communities, and buildings in large, self ruling

cities. The author advances that rural dwellings could be found only in communities where agricultural activities were rife. These agricultural communities, Chanda (2007) explains, comprise of family compounds with each compound having separate facilities for cooking, eating, sleeping, storing tools and protecting animals at night. The architectural structures, she stress, may be circular, semicircular, or rectangular in nature. The author adds that common architectural structures were also built for teaching children or holding meetings.

Further analyzing the characteristics of African architecture, Willett (1994), advances that the heterogeneous nature of built forms in Africa, makes it quite difficult to decide “where mere buildings ends and architecture begins” (p.115). He explains that the “windbreaks” constructed by the Bushmen from southern Africa and the “beehive” huts of the pygmies, could hardly be referred to as architecture. On the other hand, the conical huts built by the agrarian communities populating the African grasslands, have architectural characteristics. Among the Tiv of northern Nigeria, the author remarks that stone, mud and thatch were used in building the above mentioned conical huts. The Ham people of Nok, in Nigeria, who constructed oval mud houses and roofed with thatch, used mud in such an exceptional manner that, according to the author “surpasses that of medieval and later European builders in mud and thatch” (p. 116).

In the forest belt, the author notices that the houses are rectangular and had painted walls; but among the Bakuba, the walls of the buildings are covered with woven mats. In areas where the landmass is swampy, the author notices that the houses are built on stilts.

In the Cameroon grassland area, Willett (1994) discovers that the houses are squarely built, with pyramidal roofs. The author adds that the doors together with the door posts are intricately carved and also flanked with representation of ancestral figures.

In Nigeria, Willett (1994) remarks that the Hausa people construct rectangular buildings with flat roofs supported with split trunks of *Borassus palm*, known as “azara”. The “azara”, Willett (1994) comments, are also used to reinforce the arches of public structures such as mosques, the emir’s palace and town gates.

Willett (1994) also reveals that the Dogon of the Niger bend in Mali construct elegant rectangular houses and tube-like granaries. Public structures such as the Sakore mosque at Timbuktu, and the tomb of Askia Mohammed at Gao, have in-built scaffoldings which protruded outside the buildings giving it a “prickly appearance” and aided in the annual repair of the structures.

Another important architectural mode, which the author refers to as “impluvium” was detected in some of the forest zones. The “impluvium”, which dominates the architectural landscape of Yoruba, Benin and Edo, all in Nigeria, had the entire structure constructed around a square courtyard, with the verandas joining together to form a “a kind of large room with the courtyard reduced to a small open area in the center into which the rain falls, hence the name, “impluvium” or “rain courtyard”. Willett (1994) proceeds to add that pots and cement tanks are designed to harvest the rain, and drains incorporated to channel the excess water away. The source, however, observes that burnt bricks or cement block buildings gradually replaced the “impluvium” structures in Yoruba, with the exception of some old houses and palaces (pp. 127-129).



Explaining the indigenous building methods used in the above mentioned communities, Willett (1994) mentions that the process entails mixing the mud with water in a hole dug into the ground and when the desired consistency is achieved, a continuous layer of mud is then built along the floor plan of the building design, leaving gaps for the door way. The author detects that in Benin, the walls of the King's Palace are thicker and taller than most standard structures.

Great Zimbabwe, Willett (1994) advances, probably had the best known architectural monument in the entire Africa. He proceeds to explain that excavations carried out on the site, unveils varied modes of building, comprising elliptical building, round mud huts constructed with poles and plastered with clay, and dates around the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, as well as stone buildings. Willett theorizes that the way the stone walls are joined at an angle and not keyed into each other suggests that the method of building in stone might have originated on the spot and not imported. However, the author adds that apart from Great Zimbabwe, smaller circular stone structures could also be found in Mozambique and Engaruka in Tanzania.

Prussin (1974) throws more light on the subject by remarking that the diversity of the physical features of Sub-Saharan Africa, also greatly influenced their architecture. Her study reveals that the climatic variations that characterize Africa, also determines the shape and nature of its built forms. Prussin writes that the rain forest belts, with relatively low temperature ranges, demands "a shelter with a maximum of cross ventilation to ensure bodily comfort". The buildings in the forest zones therefore made good use of maximum openings to ensure the circulation of air. The floors, the author notices, are raised to intercept the ocean breezes. The houses in the forest zones, the source points out

are rectangular, not just by design, but by the nature of their orientation, they are able to intercept the oceans breezes effectively to ensure ventilation.

The Savanna climate on the other hand is characterized with brief annual rainfall and prolonged dry season with dry harmattan winds from the Sahara Desert. The above conditions result in very high temperatures. Built forms in the Savanna belt, the author emphasizes, therefore require a building method which can reduce the cold and chilly winds of the harmattan and at the same time provide solution for the severe heat during midday. Prussin (1974) explains further that the round earthen architectural structures in the Savanna are appropriate because they have insulating walls and can accumulate and preserve the midday heat for the evening.

In Sub-Sahara Africa, Prussin (1974) notices that the building of new dwellings is a communal activity, which normally involves the potential owner, his extended family, as well as the entire community. She remarks that the potential compound owner acts as the master builder. The writer further observes that building skill is mastered by all the male participants involved in the construction of a particular building project, and that the owner of each new homestead therefore becomes its architect. Division of labour, the author points out always characterizes the building process, with the men and boys bringing the clay, whiles women fetched water for mixing the earth material into the right consistency. Among the Fulani and Tuareg societies of North Africa, Prussin (1974) notices that even though it is the men who installed the central post of the tent, it is the women who wove the mats, the textile materials which constitutes the wall of the tent, and ends up erecting other tent structures.

The indigenous method of building in West Africa, according to Prussin (1974), is a wet-mud technique known as “banco”, which closely resembles the construction of coil pottery. However, in most urban centers, the author comments that cast, sun-dried bricks and spherical hand-moulded bricks are used instead of the “banco”. The spherical bricks dictate curved walls, while the “cast, carpentered bricks” are used in building cubistic looking structures. Prussin remarks that the appearance of rectangular buildings in Savanna urban centers, are as a result of the introduction of “building with block from Islamic north Africa, via centuries-old trans-Sahara trade” (p.12).

The French, the author writes, introduced kilns into Africa and encourages the indigenous builders to use the kilns to fire their bricks to ensure more durable built forms. But the gesture of the French was rebuffed and became unsuccessful because it “threatened the balance of the traditional division of labour” (p. 13).

The main tools used by the traditional builders, Prussin (1974) identifies, are rudimentary agrarian tools such as adze, which is used to crack clods of clay, and the earthen pots used in fetching water for mixing the broken clay. The builders, the writer observes, use their hands in forming the buildings.

Anquandah (2007) identifies two other construction modes. He mentions that some West African communities, including Ghana, made use of a “wood-cum-mud style of technology”, known as “wattle and daub”, which dated back to 2000 – 500 BC (page 1). The technique, which comprises of two stages, begins with the construction of a circular or rectangular foundational floor plan of stones or laterite block, followed by the erection of a skeletal wall, together with a framework of roof composed of wood. The second stage, the author adds, marks the application of earthen paste (daub) which is

prepared from clay and sand, onto both the inner and outer wall surfaces to totally hide the wooden armature. The building is then completed by roofing the structure with thatch. Anquandah (2007) observes that “wattle and daub” structures, if well maintained lasts longer than structures built solely from mud.

The author also mentions another construction technique known as *Atakpame*, which is known among some ethnic societies in Ghana, such as the Akan, Ga, Dangme, Ewe, Gonga, Dagomba and Mamprusi. This mode of building entails the use of tough mud paste *daga* and sand. Anquandah advances that unlike “wattle and daub”, the *Atakpame* constructional method made use of no skeletal wooden framework. Describing the process, the author explains that depending on the basic design of the structure, the builder lays the *daga* down in multiple layers, either in a circular or rectangular course. A foundation trench is dug, and the *daga* is laid up to the roof level, with the lower courses taller, firmer and stronger than the upper ones. The style which the author notes was used as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD in northern Ghana derives its name from “a guild of itinerant professional builders” (page 1, para 4) from Togo and Benin.

### **2.3 Murals**

The Encarta Encyclopedia (2008) explains that the word mural is derived from the Latin word *murus*, which means wall. The term, the Encyclopedia explicates is used to describe the ornamentation of walls and ceilings for aesthetic and instructive purposes, in any of the varied methods. It explains further that murals tend to be quite large in size and depict important historic, religious, and patriotic themes valued by the public.

The Britanica Concise Encyclopedia online (2008) on the other hand, defines mural as “painting applied to and made integral with the surface of a wall or ceiling”.

The 1911 Encyclopedia online (2008) expatiates further by simply adding that mural is “the art of ornamenting wall surfaces”.

Mural paintings, the Encarta Encyclopedia (2008) comments, dates back to ancient times and could be found on the walls of prehistoric caves, especially those in the Lascaux caves in southern France, Spain, and Altamira. In the Far East, the Encarta Encyclopedia pointed out that murals were painted as far back as 1700 BC in China, and later on spread to Korea and Japan. In India, Encarta states that mural paintings depicting Buddhist themes were discovered in caves in Ajanta, and dates between 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC and 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD. In ancient Egypt, mural paintings executed in tempera, were used to decorate the walls and ceilings of tombs. The paintings, the source explain portrayed motifs and figures depicting life in the afterworld.

The statement also asserts that in ancient Greece, the palaces of Knossos in ancient Crete depict flowers, animals and brightly coloured frescoes. The Encarta adds that both private and public structures throughout Greece made use of murals registered either in frescoes or in encaustic. The mural tradition, it further explains later spread to Pompeii and Herculaneum.

The Britanica Concise Encyclopedia online (2008) adds that mural painting reaches its highest apogee of creativity in Europe, during the Renaissance period. The source mentions Masaccio, Fra Angelico, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael as some of the most notable mural artists of the Renaissance period.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Britannica explains that the Cubist and Fauve artists of Paris, the Mexican Revolutionary painters such as Diego Rivera, Jose Clement Orozco and David Alfaro, together with the depression era artists of the United States are some of the mural artists who stand tall.

### **2.3.1 Mural Decoration in Africa**

African mural works are direct reflection of its cultural environment, and take their style not only from abstract aesthetic notions but create an important avenue for communication of cultural norms, to foster community cohesion as well as to protect the mud walls from the vagaries of the weather.

Willet (1994) explains that the Hausa of northern Nigeria decorate the exterior walls of their houses with murals around the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The author writes that the murals were either painted or rendered in low reliefs. The themes of the murals, the author argues comprises of clocks and bicycles. Aside the aforementioned relief works, Willet further writes that the Hausa also decorate with “china plates and brightly coloured enamel bowls,” which were embedded into the walls and ceilings to compliment the relief and painted works (p. 120).

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Africa (1978), corroborates Willet’s (1994) assertion by pointing out that the Hausa people indeed ornament the entrance doorways of their houses with spirals, loops as well as other interlaced designs. The author is of the opinion that the above techniques were probably copied from the East African coast, where similar techniques and materials were utilized around the fifteenth century A.D. According to Willet (1994), the technique of decorating walls with brightly coloured

china and enamel wares might have traveled northward into Nubian territory and then westward towards Muslim Sudan.

Detailing the decorating technique, the author explains that the saucers, which are about three to four inches in diameter, were embedded with the “concave side against the moist clay and tapped with a wooded mallet, which shatters them and presses the fragments into the clay”. The decoration apart from its aesthetic characteristics, Willet explains, also protects the wall against the harsh climatic elements.

Willet’s (1994) study also reveals that the Dogons of the Niger bend also decorate their rectangular houses and tubular granaries with vertical and rectangular relief works, which are similar to the marks found on the faces of their masks.

Writing on mural decoration among the people of Benin, Willet (1994) explains that the palace of the King of Benin is decorated with horizontally positioned flutings on both the interior and exterior walls.

Anaba (1995) writes that in Zimbabwe and Namibia, the San people paint murals in caves. The author also discloses that indigenous societies such as the Soninke of Mali, the Bushongo of Congo, the Ibos of Eastern Nigeria and some traditional communities of Mauritania paint and utilizes murals aesthetically.

In Northern Ghana, Anaba’s (1995) study explicates that Christianity has boosted the development of mural art, since traditional mural Artists were commissioned by the church to decorate chapels built in the locality. The study authoritatively exposes that the first church built in the northern sector, which happens to be located in Navrongo, in the Kassena Nankana District, was copiously decorated with murals executed by indigenous mural artists, and pegs the date of the church around 1960.

Anaba's (1995) study adds that in the southern part of Ghana, mural decorations were basically used to beautify palaces, shrines and the headquarters of Asafo companies in the Ashanti Region. The author's study unveils that in the Ashanti Region, a "mural school was established in Fomase in the 15<sup>th</sup> century", to offer training to indigenous court artists. The author discovers that broken china plates are used in composing non-figurative murals in some parts of the Northern Region of Ghana. This synchronizes with Willet's (1994) study, which describes the use of similar materials among the Hausa of Nigeria. Mural artists from the Northern Region, which is predominantly a Moslem community, might have imported the idea from Nigeria.

Anaba's (1995) adds that among the Kasena Nankana people of the Upper East Region of Ghana, mural decoration, traditionally called "Bambolse", is predominantly a female oriented art. Mural decoration among the Kasena Nankana people, Anaba explains, is basically for adornment, communication and preservation of traditional values. The author writes that motifs used by the muralists from the above communities are either representational, geometric or a combination of both.

Mathews' (1977) research into mural painting in South Africa reveals that the art was essentially a domestic one, practiced by women. The study divulges that mural decoration in South Africa falls into two main categories; "Sotho and associated modes in eastern and northern Orange Free State; and those of the Nguni Peoples, Xhosa in southern Cape Province and Ndebele in southern and eastern Transvaal" (p. 28). In each of the two diverse communities, Mathews discloses that two styles could be identified; one contemporary and the other archaic. The author explains that the two styles were interchangeably used in specific areas of the home. Mathews indicates that the



contemporary designs which are more colourful were used in the front of the dwellings whilst the side and back walls of the home receive the archaic and more monochromatic designs.

Among the Xhosa, the author writes that vertical relief patterns known traditionally as “cimthi” were used together with painted designs. The Sotho of Orange Free State, the author elaborates, also uses a plant-shaped variety of relief works known as “litima” alongside similarly painted images to decorate their walls.

Mathews (1977), states that the paintings among the Ndebele community exhibits “strong, schematic colour arrangement in bold, flat areas outlined in black”. He further notices that the style was a development of the archaic and monochromatic style sometimes referred to as the “first phase”. The designs, the author writes were architectural and geometric in nature (p. 28).

The source reveals that fundamentally, mural art by the Xhosa are more “fluid, spontaneous and organic” than that found in Ndebele communities, which are more formal and geometric (p. 31). While mural artists from Ndebele and Sotho use bright and some time synthetic colours, the author reveals that Xhosa artists on the other hand use earth colours such as ocher, red, oxide and white pigments extensively.

Mathews (1977) explains that the mural artists use their fingers, rags, brushes, trowels and forks in applying the pigments on the wall. Cardboard stencils, the writer notes were also sometimes used to quickly achieve repetitive patterns.

Vanwyk (1998), reporting on mural decoration among the Basotho people of Southern Africa, states that the women claim they use their murals to “call the ancestors, appealing to them for their blessings, particularly rain” (p. 58). Writing on the importance

of colour among the Basotho muralists, Vanwyk explains that red also locally called *letsoku* meaning “blood of the earth” represents the fertility cycle guaranteed by the ancestors. The author further explains that red also symbolizes the sacrificial blood of animals which establishes contact with the ancestors as well as menstrual blood, which signifies a woman capable of procreating.

According to Vanwyk (1998), white symbolizes serenity, spiritual purity, and enlightenment, which is prerequisites for communicating with the ancestors, while black represents the ancestors and the dark rain-bearing clouds.

Smikle (1993) writes that wall decoration in most African societies is intended for aesthetic and religious purposes, the writer is of the opinion that designs used are standardized through generations of use. The author explains that homestead and compound entrances, granaries, grinding sheds, and women’s rooms, are usually depicted with elaborate designs. According to Smikle, other areas of the architecture that mostly receive copious ornamentations are; community buildings, sacred and ceremonial structures, doorways, inner walls, and roof pinnacles.

Smikle (1993) points out that decorations are done during the dry season, and that mural traditions could be found in Upper Guinea, among the Asantes and Kassenas of Ghana, the Ibos and some communities in Burkina Faso. Smikle elucidates that colours used in most mural decorations are; white, black, yellow, red ocher, green and grey-blue. The author theorizes that mural designs enable the mural artists to react to the world around them, convey information as well as adorn their various homes.

## 2.4 Pottery

The Columbia Encyclopedia online (2007) defines pottery as “baked wares of the entire ceramic field” (para. 1). The source classifies pottery into; porous bodied pottery, stoneware, and porcelain. The Columbia Encyclopedia elaborates that porous bodied pottery is produced when raw clay is heated at a temperature of about 500 degrees Celsius. Stoneware and porcelain, it adds, are produced when clay is fired at temperatures higher than 500 degrees Celsius. This vitrifies the clay and strengthens the product.

Prior to most shaping processes, the Wikipedia Encyclopedia online (2008) adds that the clay was de-aired by kneading or wedging manually or mechanically by using a “vacuum pug” to remove the trapped air. It further adds that the potter’s most fundamental tool is the hand, but supplementary tools such as potters wheels, turntables, paddles, anvils, roulettes, rolling pins, knives, wires, burnishing stones, chamois, and many other tools are used by potters all over the world. The source also explains that hand building, jiggering and jolleying, ram pressing, granulate pressing and slip casting are some of the extensive pottery shaping techniques used by potters.

The Wikipedia Encyclopedia online (2008) elucidates that the “Gravettian figurines” discovered at Dolni Vestonice in modern day Czech Republic and dates to 29,000 – 25,000 BCE, are believed to be the earliest known ceramic objects, while Jomon vessels created by the ancient Jomon people of Japan around 10,500 BCE stood out as the earliest known ceramic containers.

Throwing more light on the development of pottery, the *Encyclopedia of World Art* (1971) explains that pottery was an artform known to people from agricultural settlements all over the world. The source further adds that pottery was not known among

hunters from Australia, the Bushmen of South Africa, and the Eskimos. The Encyclopedia of World Art emphasizes that pottery was also generally absent from nomadic communities for whom the conveyance of such bulky and delicate objects is considered generally uneconomic and taxing. The article theorizes that the lack of pottery among Polynesians could be due to the absence of clay in the Coral Islands, suitable enough for pottery production.

#### **2.4.1 Pottery in Africa**

Speight and Toku (1999) write that archaeological findings of pottery shards from the Sudan indicate that pottery was made about 1000 years ago in Africa. The source also reveals that pottery shards dating between 9000 – 8000 years were located at various parts of Africa, indicating the development of well-formed and highly decorated pottery traditions in Africa. The authors are of the opinion that the assortment of textural decorations and the thinness of the walls of the pottery shards discovered suggest an even earlier development of ceramic technology on the African continent.

According to Speight and Toku (1999), the Northern Nigerian villages of Nok and Taruga yield evidence of shards of life-size terra cotta sculptures, depicting human and animal forms, dating from around fourth or fifth century BC. The source elaborates that the technology required for constructing and conveniently firing such large ceramic sculptures suggests the rich artistic usage of clay over a long period of time. Research conducted by the authors show that some small group of women living in the neighborhood of Nok and Taruga in recent years have produced pottery bearing the

characteristics of ancient Nok pottery. The authors are of the opinion that the women are the inheritors of the Nok culture.

Speight and Toku's (1999) study also asserts that realistic life-sized terra cotta wares were produced by the Yorubas of Southern Nigeria, between 800 – 1400 A.D. The Yoruba community of Ife, the authors note, were skilled bronze sculptors, a craft that relied on clay for creating crucibles for melting bronze, as well as moulds and models for bronze casting. The authors further reveal that bronze casting techniques spread to the Nigerian court city of Benin, where clay was also used extensively.

The *Encyclopedia of World Art* (1971) advances that some communities in Ethiopia produced assortment of jars, jugs, and bowls. The shapes of the pottery wares the source identifies were angular, suggesting the influence of oriental metal work. Towards the Nuba Mountains west of Ethiopia, the source explains that burnished black bowls, gracefully incised with giraffe patterns were made. It adds that, in producing the pottery, clay was pounded in a pit lined with mats, producing a pottery style known as “mat-marked pottery”, which could be linked to prehistoric pottery making traditions.

In Uganda and Rwanda, the *Encyclopedia of World Art* (1971), unveils that “ritual two-mouthed beer pots, vessels studded with sharp bosses, and small narrow-necked, flat-based bottles of polished red and black wares predominate” (p. 210). It further explains that representational art forms are uncommon in these areas.

West Africa has been identified by the *Encyclopedia of World Art* as an area, rich in pottery art. Ceramic wares in Nigeria and Cameroon, the source discusses, are exceptionally varied and very splendidly made. In Cameroon, the source expresses that the Ekoi, Bamenda, Ibo, Bali, Bamum, Kapsiki and Bamileke tribes produced votive

bowls, decorated animal-shaped lamps, human-shaped pipes, bowls, funeral urns and beer pots, decorated with reproductive symbols.

The Congo region, the Encyclopedia states produced very little ritual pottery, but made various domestic wares, either painted or incised, demonstrating “classical perfection of form” (p. 210).

Writing on the importance of pottery in the African society, Speight and Toku (1999) add that pots are greatly used in transitional rites all over the continent. The authors explicate that the Ashanti people from Ghana, usually position a variety of pots known as *abusua kuruwa*, together with a cooking pot, implements, and hearthstones, alongside the grave of the recently interred. The *abusua kuruwa* pot usually contained the hair of all blood relatives of the dead person, cut-off from the heads. The source however fails to explain the exact symbolism of the above ritual. The writers also explain that various ceramic vessels and objects are used by both male and female secret societies to initiate the youth into adulthood. Ceramic wares, the authors again note are used in festivals, and rituals dedicated to the spirits of crops and fertility or to bringing good fortune.

Contributing to the role of pots in African societies, Barley (1994), writes that pottery products provide architectural accents such as roof finials, skylights, well and latrine linings, as well as roof tiles in most African cultures. He explains that, among the Hausa, baked ceramic plates were incorporated into walls to protect and adorn them. The author further explains that pottery was made into lamps, beads, lip-plugs, coffins, funeral monuments and sieves. Milk churns, mortars, grindstones, gambling chips, dolls,

beehives, fumigators and even rat-traps, according to Barley, are clay products fashioned and used in most African communities.

Speight and Toku (1999) point out that even though pottery is the vocation of women in almost all African societies, a minority group of men sometimes also produce a special type of pottery such as ritual drums, pipes as well as bellow tips for smelting purposes. The authors add that in some societies, when men are engaged in pottery making, women were prohibited from coming near them at certain stages of the production process.

Writing on pottery making techniques, Speight and Toku (1999) state that a potter starts the pottery process by pressing a piece of clay into a base mould, after which it is left to harden-up before building the upper part, using the coiling technique. Alternatively, they explain that the potter could start with the upper part of the pot, after which it is allowed to harden-up before composing the base, using the coiling method in an upside down position. They add that some potters use the pulling technique to form both the base and the walls of the pots, while others employed the hallowing methods, using the fingers. Still, Speight and Toku (1999) advance that pottery could also be made by pressing the clay into a mould, padded with leaves or ashes to prevent the clay from adhering to the mould; as they construct the walls of the pot it is shaped with a wooden beater against a stone, which is held inside the walls of the pot.

The base moulds, Speight and Toku (1999) explain could be a dried gourd, or the bottom part of an old pot. Where coils are employed, the authors point out that they are “scrapped, pressed, or beaten as they are added to meld the wall together. The outside is

then smoothed with the finger, a shell, or a bit of dried gourd or a piece of leather used as rib.” (p. 75)

Speight and Toku (1999), examining the finishing techniques of pottery from Africa, reveal that, texturing, burnishing or both, are used in most pottery production regions. They write that in some communities, the body of the pot was tempered with mica or mica bearing slip before firing. The finished pot therefore sparkled as it reflected light. In other areas, the authors observe that a slip of graphite was applied to the pot prior to firing. After firing, the pot displayed a high gloss finish. Resins, palm oil or vegetable extracts, the authors elucidate, may also be used by some African potters to seal the pores of the pot. In some cases, the vegetable extracts, Speight and Toku add, may be applied onto the pot while it was still hot, leaving a marbled pattern on the pot.

The investigations of Speight and Toku (1999) show that firing in most African pottery producing districts were by the “open fire”, “updraft kiln”, or “pit methods”. Locally acquired fuels such as firewood and grasses are widely used. The duration of the firing the authors disclose, depend greatly on the “size, number, and thickness of the pots”.

Smith’s (1978) study among the Gurensi people of the Upper East Region of Ghana, reveals that clay sourcing, preparation, pottery making as well as firing was the preserve of female potters in the Gurensi community. The study shows that weaned clay was weathered, pounded into fine particles, sieved, mixed with water and tempered with finely ground potsherds before shaping into pots. Smith notes that the coil technique is basically used in producing pottery. According to the author, the interior and exterior surfaces of the pots are burnished with moistened stone, and textured with corn cobs,



twisted basketry strands and incised with a piece of broken pot or pebbles. He elaborates that the Gurensi use pots for rituals, cooking, as a storage container, brewing of beer, carrying water, as well as serving and eating food. Funeral pots, Smith further explains are painted in a fashion similar to wall decorations found among the Gurensi.

Smith (1989) examines the significance of pots in the Gurensi society. The author reveals that apart from the commercial and domestic usage of pots, its ritualistic importance could not be overemphasized. The pots, Smith advances, were extensively used in funeral rites of the Gurensi People. The author notes that when a person dies in the community, a special funeral pot containing the locally brewed beer known as “pito”, was placed at the entrance of the deceased’s room during the funeral period, as a symbol of the family’s hospitality. Visitors to the funeral partook of the beer, and it was believed the deceased also drank some of it. Smith also writes that a woman’s eating bowl, which was believed to symbolize her personality, was shattered together with any other pot in her room, to mark the summation of the funeral rites. The potshards were preserved, and acted as a link between the deceased woman, her family, and the earth. Potshards, the author explains were also used in constructing shrines in most Gurensi communities. Although, other materials could be used, Smith emphasizes that the potshards were mostly used to instill a sense of spirituality as well as “symbolizes the ever-present involvement of Earth in all aspects of human society” (p. 61).

## **2.5 Iconography**

The Wikipedia Encyclopedia online (2008) defines iconography as the “branch of art history which studies the identification, description, and the interpretation of the

content of images”. The source explains that the term literally means “image writing” or painting and had been etymologically derived from the Greek words “*εικον* (image) and *γραφειν* (to write)”. It further adds that iconography could also be secondarily used to describe “the painting of icons in the Byzantine and Orthodox Christian tradition”. Again, The Wikipedia stresses that the word is also used in many other fields such as Semiotics and Media studies, to allude to “the content of images, the typical depiction in images of a subject, and related senses” (page 1).

### **2.5.1 Iconography in African Art**

It is known that all over Africa, most art objects have meanings beyond their artistic values. Even the simplest artifacts may be endowed with symbolic values.

Ross (1978) advances that Asante sword ornaments have varied meanings depending on the nature of its inherent ornamental theme. The sword itself, the researcher reveals is seen as a symbol of authority and military strength among the Asantes. Ross remarks that the motifs used on the swords were drawn from both natural and artificial environments of the Asantes. The iconography of the swords stemmed from “the behaviour and relationships of animals, birds and fish; the growth patterns of plant; and the functions of various objects” (p. 18).

The author exposit that at Juaben and Nsuta, the lion motifs used on the sword symbolizes the bravery and fighting spirit of their chiefs. Swords depicting the crocodile motifs were interpreted using the appellation phrase “the great crocodile that swallows a stone every year” (p. 18). The author explains that the “stone” is a metaphor for bullet and relates to the Mampong Chief’s position as the war leader of the Asante King.

The crocodile with a mud fish in its mouth together with a second mudfish, on the other hand, as common in Kumawu, symbolizes the proverb “when the mudfish swallows anything it does so for its master” (p. 18). According to Ross (1978) if further translated, it might mean that the chief “automatically benefits from the success of his subjects”. The same symbol, the author adds could also mean “if that species of fish comes from the river to tell you that the crocodile is dead, there is no need to argue about it” (pp. 18-19). In other words, people who live together know each others behaviour. The author again notes that the meaning of the above motif is translated in Ejisu to denote “if the crocodile catches the mudfish it does not deal leniently with it” (p. 19). The author observes that attaching multiple meaning to a single motif was very common in Asante iconography.

The shield and sword combination motifs used in Kumasi, Ofinso and Ejisu, (Ross 1978) observes means “warrior”. In Ejisu, the following proverb “nobody has control over what you do with you sword” (p. 19) was used to add further meaning to the motif.

Another motif touched on by Ross (1978) is the “gunpowder keg” at Ejisu, a “pistol-on-keg” used in Kumawu, and the “musket-on-keg” in Nsuta. The above iconic emblems, the author reveals are analogous motifs, symbolizing the military strength of the state.

Ross (1978) notes that apart from the military and authority-oriented motifs explained above, the Asantes also made use of other sword emblems which connote the unity and continuity of the Asante Royal family. The author identifies the symbol of a bird and its nest as one of such iconic motifs. In Juaben, the sword emblem depicting an anthill flanked by a monkey and an antelope, admonishes people outside the royal

lineage, not to attempt ascending to the throne since “when the monkey rubs its body against the anthill, it doesn’t become an antelope” (p. 22). In other words, the imitation of chiefly behavior does not necessarily make one a chief.

Smith (1952), researching the symbolic nature of some African art forms, mentions that in most African societies, material objects, verbal utterances and actions are believed to exude mysterious energy that is effective in the production of certain concrete outcomes. Expounding further, Smith writes that among the Nyakyusa community, the headman was given a horn, a tail, and a spear, as symbols of their authority. The spear, he further elaborates, was used as a symbol of the headman’s manhood and strength. The other two objects signify what the author refers to as “mystical power” or what was known locally as *amanga*. While the *amanga* of the horn increases his prestige, the *amanga* of the tail would enable him to dream of impending dangers, the author exposit.

Smith (1952) also comments that the emblematic staff of the Sotho Chief, which is created from rhinoceros horn, is believed to embody the tremendous strength of the rhinoceros, from which it was made. Smith adds that so long as the scepter is in the hand of the chief, he was believed to be invincible during a battle.

Elaborating on the use of animal objects in some parts of Africa, Smith (1952) points out that the Balla people view artistic objects depicting hare, to signify cunning while the hyena objects denote gluttony. The chameleon on the other hand is seen as a symbol of death, and the snake synonymous with life.

Among the Asantes, the author hints that various aspects of the royal regalia have meanings at one time or the other. The lion motifs found on the royal umbrella and on the

chief's spokesman's staff is synonymous with power. The leopard skin, on which the King's stool is placed, the author enlarges, is a fierce and daring animal. By putting the king's stool on the leopard's skin, the fierceness of the leopard is believed to be channeled to the King. Appropriately, the queen mother's stool, the author observes was placed on a sheepskin, symbolizing meekness. Smith (1952) explains further that the parrot totem of the Anana clan of Asante stands for eloquence and persuasiveness. The crow motifs used by the Asona clan is symbolic of wisdom, while the buffalo is assigned the qualities of conscientiousness by the Konna clan.

The Tallensi of Upper East Region of Ghana, Smith (1952) notes, views the porridge stirring-stick as a symbol of womanhood, just as the bow denotes manhood. For any of the opposite sexes to engage in a fight, using the above items as weapons was considered flagitious.

Again, Smith's (1952) study reveals that among the Buyeye of Sukumaland, "The hut itself is a symbol of the earth and upon its walls and roof the moon and star are depicted. Time is represented by grinding stone and copper bangles, the maternal ancestors by a pot-ladle. Pegs driven into the ground stand for knowledge, a pad of twisted grass for the strength and unity of the society, an earthen pot for prosperity" (p. 26). The author adds that aside the religious functions of shrines in most African societies, they are also perceived as symbolic objects of cohesion and persistence.

The Wikipedia Encyclopedia online (2008), dilating on African masks, remarks that among the Senufo of Ivory Coast, masks with eyes half closed and lines drawn near the mouth symbolized tranquility. To the Temne of Sierra Leon, masks with small eyes and mouth were synonymous with humility and tranquility. Wisdom, on the other hand,

the source asserts, is represented by bulging foreheads by the Temne. The Wikipedia also observes that a variety of masks with long faces and broad foreheads in most African societies symbolizes soberness associated with one's duty, while masks with round eyes denotes anger and alertness. Straight noses carved on masks, the article adds, symbolize unwillingness to retreat.

Chanda (2007), elaborating further on the iconographic nature of African art forms writes that the Luba people of Central Africa, made special caryatid stools depicting kneeling female figures, which are viewed as representations of important female ancestors. In most traditional African settings, Chanda mentions that swords, knives, spears and other weapons were not only used for battles but are iconic artifacts of status and authority. The source expounds further that in 15<sup>th</sup> century Benin, only the King of Benin wore the ceremonial *ada* sword. The *ada* ceremonial sword, the author adds, symbolized the King's right to take life.

Kings and Chiefs in most African Societies, Chanda (2007) notices wear crowns and other headgears to symbolize their power and authority. Among the Yoruba, specially designed beaded veil cum crown known as *ade* is used by the rulers to denote their authority and power.

The author proceeds to describe how the Luba, of south western Congo, use carved three-pronged stands to hold bows used in hunting. These stands according to Chanda (2007) are viewed as symbols of royal authority. The above carved stands, the author adds, "were decorated with seated female figure, hands placed on her breast. Her gesture symbolized women's power to reproduce and was in turn a symbol of political power" (p.11).

Ray (1993) continues the analogy of African iconography by elucidating that among the Bamana, during the planting season, farmers constituting the *Chi-Wara* association perform a special dance, wearing *Chi-Wara* headresses which are carved in male and female antelope forms. The long horns of the male *Chi-Wara*, the author advances, represent tall millet plants, while the female ones stand for the desired growth of the millet plant. The penis, the author explains further, symbolizes the germination of the millet grains, while the long ears of the antelope stand for the ability of the male farmers to listen to songs sung by women to encourage them to work harder. Ray further points out that the zig-zag patterns carved on the neck of the antelopes represent the sun's tracks as it journeys between two solstices. The female *Chi-Wara* figure, which represents the earth, the study reveals, also carries a baby antelope, which symbolizes an infant human being. Ray elucidates that when the male and female *Chi-Wara* figures are used in a ritual dance by the male farmers, the act combines the elements of the sun and water, which are necessary for the germination of the millet plants.

## **2.6 Women's Art in Africa**

In most traditional African settings, the various roles played by men and women in evolving art works, are clearly defined by cultural norms and values. While men to a large extent produce ritualized and public artifacts, women on the other hand concentrate their artistic talents in developing domestic oriented artifacts.

Smith (1986) writes that in Africa, some artistic endeavours such as carving and metal working activities are the preserve of men while women are restricted to artistic fields such as pottery and mural painting. The author is however quick to add that other artistic

activities such as basketry, beadwork, and some types of textile weaving are practiced not only by women but men as well.

Smith (1986) proceeds to expatiate that the combinational talents of both sexes, are sometimes necessary for the production of some art objects, as is the case among the Hausa aluminum casters in northern Nigeria. The spoons which are normally given out as wedding gifts, he explains are usually fabricated by men but ornamented by women. The author notes that whatever the situation, women's arts are clearly distinct from their male counterparts. The author is of the opinion that most female artistry in Africa is largely aesthetic evocations intended to improve or accentuate female status or beautify a given environment. He mentions that among the Gurensi of Northern Ghana, murals are painted on the walls to demonstrate a sense of pride in the family as well as embellish and beautify the family compound. Smith adds that among the Igbo of Nigeria, *uli* body painting makes a statement because it gives the opportunity for a young woman to look distinctive and in that "difference beauty is defined" (p. 29).

Adams (1993) advances that female visual arts among the We of Canton Boo (Cote d'Ivoire), is used "as part of a gender strategy" (p. 32). The author explains that the Boo women use visual artistic forms to decorate environments and surfaces where their authority is more pronounced. The walls of their houses, surfaces of their cooking pots and the faces of young girls embarking on initiation rituals, are elaborately decorated by the women. By engaging in the above mentioned artistic activities, the We women of Canton Boo, Adams theorizes, attracts favourable attention to their achievements due to the alluring characteristics of their art forms. The author adds that the women use their art works in such a way that does not undermine the authority of their male counterparts,



which they accept as the leaders of the community, but rather attract their attention and respect in a transient manner.

According to Aronson (1991), artistic activities in Africa, are characterized with division of labour among both sexes. Women, she expands, use clay and other organic materials in making pottery and painting walls while men made use of wood and metals to make sculpture. In weaving, the author elaborates that in some parts of Africa, women weave wide width cloths on vertical fixed frame loom with continuous warp while their male counterparts weave long narrow cloths on horizontal foot-treadle looms. The study further shows that even though in some African ethnic communities such as Owo in Yoruba, Nigeria, women are allowed to produce ritualistic materials such as burial and title cloths, other societies such as the Shona, restrict women from producing art works for rituals purposes, because the society believe women do not obtain their artistic inspiration from the spirit beings. Aronson proceeds to explain that in most African communities, women are restricted from being blacksmiths due to the strict rules governing the blacksmithing processes. The author however observes that the wives of most blacksmiths are potters, which is an integral aspect of blacksmithing.

The author expatiates that even though the domestic roles played by women influences to a large extent their artistic involvement and even the artistic media they used, studies carried out over the years shows that female artistic activities and products extend also into the public arena in diverse ways. Aronson (1991) explains that art works produced by women, apart from being used domestically are also greatly used in transitional rituals. The various arts associated with female initiation rituals, the author mentions, are assorted body and facial embellishments. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, the

author reveals that the Sande female society members use face paintings during initiation periods. The art form is not exclusive to only the female Sande society members, but their male counterparts in the Poro society also benefit from the women's artistic talents.

Among the Ga'anda of Nigeria, the author notes that scarifications or cicatrices are used as part of initiation rites. The cicatrices, according to Aronson (1991), are applied by women in a gradual process, commencing when the child is six years old and proceeding until puberty. Every stage, according to the author, is characterized with rituals such as bride price payment. The scarifications, the author adds, are not only viewed as aesthetic symbols, but are status icons giving her recognition as a full-grown in the Ga'anda society. The initiation symbols of the Ga'anda, Aronson asserts, are also painted on walls of their houses as a way of projecting their female identity to the public realm. Similar practice of registering initiation symbols onto architectural edifices is practiced by Ndebele women of South Africa, the source adds. The Ndebele paint their beaded initiation attire on the exterior walls of their compound dwellings to communicate the essence of the initiation beads they wore and to beacon suitors for marriage.

According Aronson (1991), female artistic knowledge is propagated from the older generation to the younger ones through a well orchestrated family oriented apprenticeship. Kemba girls learning the techniques of pottery making under the tutelage of their mothers, always sign their pottery products with their mother's signatures. The author stated that the practice cease only when they got married and left the house, by which time they are believed to have mastered the art of pottery making. The author again illustrates that Senufo girls also inherit the basic pottery tools used by their mothers

together with old prototype pots which they copy and study until they became perfect and could work on their own.

The author advances that the economics of women's arts is "essential for explaining some aesthetic rules, organizational patterns, and the important question of sexual division of labor in the arts" (p. 568). She proceeds to explain that women's arts could be exchanged in a kind of barter system, to provide household needs and to foster gender relations. She adds that the barter economies in most African societies are controlled mainly by women as a way of protecting their economic interests. In Ghana, the author notes that "Shai potters taboo non-Shai women and all men from entering their profession in an effort to protect their monopoly on that industry" (p. 569). Similar exclusionary tactics are used by Ikombe Kisi potters of Tanzania, to protect their economic interests, the author explains. Aronson again reveals that in Nigeria, Awete Igbo weavers employ myths as a strategy of excluding unwanted competitors and thereby protecting their interests.

Aronson's (1991) study shows that designs and forms in women's arts could be economically influenced. She comments that Gurensi female potters in Northern Ghana use specialized motifs on their pots to ensure their market worthiness. Similar rationale also accounts for the personalized identity symbols employed by Kemba potters of Kenya, the author remarks.

Increased commercialization of women's arts, Aronson (1991) however notices, could have a negative adverse effect on art production generally. She also mentions that changing socio-economic conditions could permit women to engage in artistic fields which were previously the preserve of men, as is the case among the Hausa people of

Nigeria, where women ventured into aluminum spoon production, which was exclusively a male dominated industry.

## **2.7 Perspective of Western Art Historians and Critics on African Art**

The Wikipedia Encyclopedia online (2008) explains that African art has a long and checkered history and that until quite recently, the designation “African” was used only to embrace the arts of Black Africa or the works of the people living in Sub-Sahara Africa. The source advances that the art forms of North Africa, the works of the Black Africans occupying the Horn of Africa, as well as Egyptian art forms were not designated “African art”, until quite recently. The Wikipedia adds that the arts of the people of African Diaspora, which are most common in Brazil, the Caribbean and the Southern United States, are sometimes also referred to as “African art”. It further asserts that traditional African art is the most studied art forms in Africa, while contemporary African art is highly understudied due to scholar’s and art collectors’ concentration on traditional art.

Laude (1973) writes that Europeans were collecting African artistic items as early as 1479, when “Charles the Bold signed an order to pay Alvarre de Verre, servant to Jehan d’Aulvekerque, Esq., Portuguese lord,...21 pounds...who lately presented him with a sword and some wooden figures used as idols” (p. 3). Subsequently, in the fifteenth Century, princes and merchants, Laude stresses, acquired “natural as well as man-made treasures for their private collection rooms”. Consequently a large amount of African artistic works flooded Europe around 1840 due to wholesale buying and

plundering of African tribes and societies. The large artistic materials swamping Europe and beyond precipitates the study of the works to educate the varied public, to prepare them for later dealings with Africa.

Laude (1973) explains that the African artistic objects were showcased in museums and mentioned in treatise and monographs under labels such as “religion, cult, and custom...fetishes and idols” (p. 17). According to the author, artistically, the works were considered “rough, clumsy, arbitrary representations of men, spirits, and gods” (p. 17). Laude add that the judgment of African sculpture for example, was in relation to classical sculpture which was considered to be the model of perfection and the “ultimate step in artistic evolution” (p. 17). The author quotes Andre Michel’s work, which states that “among Negroes, who are still very backward concerning art, as are all races of central and southern Africa, one finds idols representing men, reproducing with grotesque precision the characteristics of the negro race” (p. 17).

Rubbins (1989) throws more light on the issue by stating that the Western world viewed African art as “primitive”, “crude”, or “untutored” (p. 20). The attitude conveyed by some historians and critics, Rubbins advances, is that by the use of the term “primitive”, “crude” or “untutored”, they were implying “a chronological sequence from the “uncivilized” to the “civilized” (p. 21). Thus some art scholars, according to the author, still refer to African art works, especially sculpture, as “primitive”, since the term so far as they are concerned is not pejorative but simply connotes “first”, “original”, “source” or “early” (p. 21). Rubbins is however of the opinion that their continuous usage of the term is likely to pollute the minds of a greater number of people who might not digest the terms analytically enough to grasp the “concept of cultural relativism” (p. 21).

The author remarks that alternative terminologies are speculated by western scholars to be used instead of the derogatory “primitive” word. However, all the alternative suggestions either reflect some partisanship or are just not relevant. Robbins (1989) expatiates that the word “tribal”, even though could be a neutral term it still displays some prejudicial and emotionally charged aura as the term “primitive” and is unsavoury to many people. Similarly, the author remarks that terms such as “preliterate, indigenous, native, folk, and ethnic are inappropriate for a variety of reasons”. He illustrates that though majority of sub-Sahara African art comes from societies that had not developed written languages, the use of terms such as “preliterate” could be considered “misleading, insofar as iconography of African sculpture comprises an intricate language of visual symbols, comparable in communicative power to that of the written word” (p. 22).

Robbins (1989) continues his analysis by stating that the term “symbolic” as used by some Western scholars is also inappropriate because although it may be applicable to African art, its use would be quite confusing due to its usage as a western art historical term.

With all the euphemisms that had been suggested by western scholars, Robbins (1989) points out that the term “traditional” remains probably the most appropriate and generally acceptable adjective, not because it is devoid of pejorative tendencies, but because it “alluded to the centuries-long tradition of African art as an expression and a conveyor of the beliefs, and customs of Africa’s past” (p. 22).

Chanda (2007), contributing to the discourse, writes that initially, African artistic concepts such as its function in ritual and its emphasis on abstract patterning rather than

representation, makes it quite alien to the sensibilities of Europeans. Most Europeans therefore do not consider African artistic materials as art, in the true sense of the word. The author however elaborates that around the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Western ways of conceiving African art begun to change, because African artistic works swamp Western countries and Western scholars begun to grasp the cultural and aesthetic significance of the artistic works from Africa. Chanda further adds that during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, wider recognition was given to African artifacts due to the role it plays in influencing modern European painters such as Pablo Picasso, Andre Derain, Amedoe Modigliani, and sculptors such as Constatin Brancusi, Alberto Giacometti, and Henry Moore. She adds that major European art movements such as cubism, expressionism and fauvism are laden with new freedom of form that draws heavily on African art. Chanda also hints that more recently, American artists such as Meta Warrick, Martin Puryear, and Renne Stout are all influenced by African sculptural forms.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

What has transpired from the above discussion divulges that in Africa, architectural development was virtually need-based. It is also quite apparent that climate, availability of building materials and cultural norms are some of the major dictates that shaped architecture in Africa. Also, as explained by Prussin (1974), the owner of each house, in most traditional African societies, was his own architect.

Mural decoration on the other hand is basically a female dominated art form, used generally as an aesthetic, communicative and a wall-surface protective tool in most indigenous African communities. Apart from the use of basic colours such as black, yellow, red, ocher, green, and blue, in painted murals as accentuated by Smikle (1993),

other materials such as ceramic plates and relief works are also greatly employed in many ethnic societies.

Pottery, as the review reveals, is practiced in virtually all African societies. The study reveals that pottery is predominantly a female oriented art, even though a minority group of men sometimes also produce special types of pottery for ritual purposes as mentioned by Speight and Toku (1999). Pottery in Africa, as clearly pointed out by the review, is used for both domestic and ritual purposes all over the continent of Africa.

It is also quite clear from the above review that most indigenous African art works are very iconographical in nature, embodying meanings beyond their artistic values.

The review also shows that in Africa, even though some art forms are regarded as female arts, they may be used to compliment the arts of their male counterparts for a common good.

Finally, even though art from Africa was initially regarded as “clumsy”, “primitive,” “fetish” and “idols” by some Western scholars, time has gradually eroded that perception as knowledge concerning the production and essence of Africa artistic objects becomes more diffused. The review also reveals that the use of African sculptural forms by some Western artists makes it possible for African artistic materials to be accepted as art, in the true sense of the word.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A research methodology references the procedural rules for the evaluation of research claims and the validation of the knowledge gathered while research design functions as the research blueprint (Creswell, 2003). Sekaran (2003) further clarifies that a research methodology may be defined as academia's established regulatory framework for the collection and evaluation of existent knowledge for the purpose of arriving at, and validating, new knowledge. It is therefore imperative that methods used in collecting and analyzing research data are explicitly explicated to give credence to the study.

Proceeding from the above and bearing in mind that the primary research questions are descriptive in nature; the research adopted a descriptive research design to answer the research questions.

The descriptive design was chosen because it offers the opportunity of studying and describing the materials, techniques, cultural symbolism of the art forms and their tourism potentials, as well as analyzing the relationship between other artistic variables that permeate the Sirigu culture.

Qualitative research instruments such as interviews and observational procedures were also used to get in-depth information on selected matters and open up the possibility to discuss personal viewpoints. A collection of quantitative data could also have been interesting, given the lack of reliable statistical data from that area, but was unfortunately not possible due to limited resources in terms of time and money as well as the nature of the study.

### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The target group of the project included traditional architects, compound heads, mural decorators, and potters in the Sirigu community. The chief and elders of the community, as well as medicine men, the earth priest (*tendaana*), and the workers of the Sirigu Women's Organization of Pottery and Art (SWOPA) were part of the study. All the tangible and visible artistic and cultural forms such as architectural structures, murals, pottery wares, and shrines constituted the target of the study as well.

### **3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedure**

According to Patton (1990), the sample size must be reasonably large to give credence to the study. He however cautions that the sample need not be too large to derail in-depth and contingent examination of the various units of the sample. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) also adds that sample sizes need to be kept reasonably small, in order to do justice to the rich evidence provided by qualitative studies and to make best use of the resources available for intensive research.

Within the context of the above, the sample size was primarily determined by that which was realistically achievable to the researcher. A total sample size 103 respondents were contacted for data extraction. The sample is made up of 30 potters, 15 traditional builders, 15 compound heads, 30 mural decorators, one chief, two traditional elders, one earth priest (*tendaana*) and one medicine man. The others were two SWOPA members, two officials of Centre for National Culture, two personnel of Ghana Tourist Board, Bolgatanga, one person of the Ghana Statistical Department and one officer of the Kassena Nankana District Assembly.

Both the snowball and purposive sampling procedures were used to select respondents for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used because the data being sourced for was scanty and could only be obtained from selected knowledgeable people in the Sirigu community. The purposive sampling technique therefore made it possible for such respondents to be pinpointed.

The snowball procedure being a strategic respondent sampling technique was employed to select veteran craftsmen who volunteered information for the study, after which other peer veterans were pointed out for data extraction, thereby resulting in a snow balling sequence. This made it possible for the researcher to get reliable data within a limited timeframe for the study.

### **3.4 Research Instruments**

Semi-structured interview guides were designed to solicit data from the primary and secondary sources. The semi-structured interview technique was chosen because it facilitates faster interviews that could be more easily analyzed and compared. In preparing the interview guide, care was taken to make sure that the content of the instrument was adequately designed to measure the research questions raised in chapter One. The instrument was constructed to be as neutral, concise and as clear as possible to be able to serve its intended purpose.

Participant and non-participant observational techniques as well as voice and video recorders were also largely used to accumulate data.

### **3.5 Validation of Instrument**

The interview guide was assessed at three stages: during the development, early review, and modest reformatting of the instrument. In the first stage, the content of the instrument was established by the author from his review of literary materials available on African traditional architecture, mural decoration, pottery and iconography.

The second stage of the instrument's content validity assessment was conducted by two personnel of the Centre for National Culture, and one each of the Ghana Tourist Board and SWOPA. The instrument was independently reviewed by personnel of the above mentioned organizations and reformatted to gain additional clarity and consistency.

The third stage of content review was completed when the author assessed the minor word changes and confirmed that the reformatting was consistent with the original intentions of the instrument. Based on the three stages of the review of the items in the instrument, the instrument was judged to pose sufficient content validity for its original intent.

### **3.6 Data Collection**

The material collected for the thesis stems from the author's own empirical research, conducted at Sirigu, and from other secondary and tertiary sources. All introductions within the Sirigu community were arranged by the author's interpreter and personnel of SWOPA. The chief and elders of Sirigu were visited and informed about the author's intention to carry out the study and why their community was selected for the

study. Their approval was sought to carry out the study, and verbal consent was given to that effect.

The author collected the empirical data in Sirigu throughout three periods of field study of respectively four months and one week (September 2008 – January 2009). The data was collected from five communities within the Sirigu Township, namely; Gunworgkor, Basingu, Bugusongor, Wusingor and Nyangalor. While English language was spoken by the researcher, a local translator explained the interview questions to the respective respondents in “nankam”, the language spoken by the people of Sirigu. The secondary and tertiary respondents on the other hand, being highly literate individuals, were communicated with directly in English. All primary interviews took place in the homes of the respondents, at the SWOPA complex and under shady trees in the Sirigu community. The secondary interviews were carried out in the various offices of the governmental agencies. Three to four interviews took place each day and lasted an average of between 45 minutes to one hour. Interviews were very lively though it usually took much time for the respondents to open up. Participants invariably yielded information voluntarily.

Interviews and observational data collection techniques were also used to solicit data for the study. Largely, the researcher employed both non-participant and participant observational methods to allow for an in-depth understanding of the behaviour, values, techniques, and artistic endeavours of the people, and to create the necessary rapport to ensure easy volunteering of information. The researcher took into account the fact that people under observation could sometimes behave abnormally. Care was therefore taken to minimize the above occurrences.

The researcher used interview guides to systematically record the desired data, taking into account the aim of the study. Portable video and audio recorders were used to record data for prolonged observational studies. Photographs were also taken to provide visual record of products, materials and production techniques.

### **3.7 Data Transcription and Analysis**

The analysis of the data, which was done manually, commenced when all interviews and observational data had been transcribed by the researcher. After the researcher had read through the transcribed materials, emerging themes were identified, using a constant comparative approach. This entails examining, comparing and categorizing data until no new categories emerged (Wikipedia Encyclopedia online, 2008).

Underpinning the analysis of the categories by the theories of knowledge mentioned above, the final data was descriptively presented under the following headings:

#### **Architecture in Sirigu Culture:**

- Nature of Architectural construction
- Raw materials and tools
- Construction techniques

#### **Mural Decorations in Sirigu Culture:**

- Mural decoration traditions
- Raw materials and tools

- Techniques
- Motifs & symbols

### **Pottery Production in Sirigu Culture:**

- Pottery tradition in Sirigu culture
- Raw materials and tools
- Techniques
- Motifs & symbols

### **Tourism Potentials of Architecture, Mural Decoration & Pottery in Sirigu:**

- Overview of current tourist inflow
- Identification of constraints

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4.0 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF MAIN FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results of the interviews and observations conducted towards the answering of the research questions raised in chapter one. This chapter contains overviews of architecture, mural decoration and pottery production in the Sirigu culture, as well as findings concerning the tourism potentials of the research area.

#### **4.2 Architecture in Sirigu Culture**

The built environment in Sirigu constitutes a carefully designed stage on which cultural and social activities within the community take place. Homesteads in Sirigu are distributed over a large area with the individual compounds being positioned about 30 to over 100 meters apart, depending on the population density of the area. The researcher observes that a good majority of the architectural structures are rectangular or circular in plan and have flat mud or thatch roofs. The buildings are generally wider at the base and slightly narrower at the top. The buildings are connected by walls that together create a series of linked courtyards. The external wall of the building marks the boundary between public and private spaces.

Compounds are headed by the senior-most male, who is the overall administrator of affairs concerning the entire compound. It is his duty to allocate dwelling places, to oversee the construction of new structures to the main compound, to guard the main



entrance of the compound physically and spiritually, superintend all family shrines, and resolve all family conflicts, thereby maintaining peace and cohesion of the entire family.

There is a clear cut division of labour, during the construction of homesteads in Sirigu, just as has been detected by Prussin (1974) in other African traditional settings.

The following are the major characteristics of architectural structures in Sirigu:

#### **4.2.1 Shades (*puga*)**

Almost all the compounds have shaded spaces in front of the main entrances of the architectural structures. The shaded space is characterized by either shady trees, grass roofed huts or both. Some of the shady trees normally used are baobab (*Adansonia digitata*), dawadawa – (*Parkia clappertonnia*), or shea nut tree (*Butyrospern zunzparkiz*). Resting platforms are integral aspects of the shaded spaces. These platforms are composed of carefully arranged logs of wood. The shaded spaces are normally used as places for family gatherings, a resting place especially for the elderly, and a place to receive visitors (See Plate. 1).



**Plate. 1 Shade (*punga*)**

#### **4.2.2 Shrines (*bagre*)**

Ancestral shrines are found at the entrances of most homesteads (Plate 2). This is due largely to the fact that majority of the inhabitants of the Sirigu community practice traditional religion, of which ancestral veneration is an integral part.



**Plate .2 shrine (Bagre)**

As pointed out by Asampana a compound head, “the shrines protect the family from enemies and disease” (personal communication, September 11, 2008). The shrines are round mud structures with smooth plastered surfaces, which are either embellished with geometric designs or left plain. Some of the shrines are incorporated with broken pieces of pottery. Most of the shrines were constructed in the shaded areas described above or concealed under the resting platforms under the shades.

#### **4.2.3 Entrances (*yanga*)**

Entrances to the compounds are clearly defined by two cone-shaped earthen pillars. At the base of these pillars are hollowed spaces used as fowl coops. The entrances of the 23 compounds visited directly opened into the animal courtyard or pen, which is within the walls of the compound. Seven others visited opened into the main courtyard, from which the sleeping rooms and other structures could be accessed. The entrances are

quite narrow, measuring about 1.2192 metres in width. The pillars are wider at the base and narrower at the top.

#### **4.2.4 Courtyards (*zinzaka*)**

There could be several courtyards within a compound depending on the size of the family living within its walls. All the architectural structures within a compound, such as bedrooms, kitchens, and bathrooms normally open onto the courtyard, in a circularly arranged format. The floors of the courtyards are tightly and smoothly packed with laterite. Dwarf walls (*gesenga*) measuring about 0.9144 metres in height, linked multiple courtyards within a given compound. The dwarf walls define the private spaces of the other separate families living within a multiple courtyard compounds. Members of the compound usually visit other family members by stepping over the dwarf walls into their courtyards.

Numerically, courtyards can vary from a single one in newly built compound to as many as eleven, as found in a large compound in Busongor, one of the Sirigu communities. The researcher observes that each courtyard may comprise of a complete set of room types and occupied by a married male with his wife or wives and their children.

In all the homesteads visited by the researcher, the compound head's rooms are situated near the entrance to the compound. Elias Aburipoore, one of the compound heads explains that "it is the duty of the compound head to protect the members of the compound by neutralizing any evil entering the compound" (personal communication,

September 11, 2008). He adds that “in the olden days when slave raiding was common, it was the duty of the compound heads to fight the raiders”.

New courtyards are usually added when the sons of the compound head marry and bring in their wife or wives, as the situation may be. This expands the homestead, creating a complex but well arranged architectural edifice (Plate 3). The compounds are normally remodeled during the dry season, just after the harvest. This period spans late October to mid-April.



**Plate .3 Courtyard (zinzaka)**

#### **4.2.5 Granary (*baare*)**

Granaries are cone-shaped structures built with earth, incorporated with cross-wooden scaffolding at the upper part of the construction. These structures are usually built on well-arranged stones and logs of woods (See Plate 4). According to the respondents, the stone and log foundations prevent the grains stored in the granary from rodent attack. The granaries are mainly used to store millet, which is the main staple foodstuff in the Sirigu community. The granaries are covered with conically woven roofs made of grass. The single opening which is located at the top of the granary is mostly

accessed with the aid of a carved log ladder. A maximum of two granaries are found in some of the homesteads visited by the author.



**Plate .4 Granary (baare)**

#### **4.2.6 Pens (*nandene*)**

All compounds have pens which shelter the family's livestock, such as cattle, donkeys, sheep and goats. In 23 of the compounds visited, the entrances open directly into the pens. The floors of the pens are covered with vegetable materials such as dried grass, groundnut leaves or beans leaves, on which are deposited cow or donkey dung, which are very important raw materials in the Sirigu community. The floor of the animal pens are usually not compacted like the sleeping rooms and the courtyards, but rather padded with dry grasses and animal fodder.

#### **4.2.7 Poultry coops (*uka*)**

Apart from the hollowed spaces within the conically shaped pillars (Plate 5) that mark the main entrances of the compounds being used as fowl coops, other well coordinated fowl coops could be found along courtyard walls. These coops are constructed at the bases of other conically shaped pillars embedded in the outer walls. The cavities are so cleverly designed in a way that would not compromise the strength of the wall.



**Plate .5 Poultry coops (uka)**

#### **4.2.8 Kitchens (*danga*)**

The kitchen types found in the Sirigu community vary slightly in some compounds visited. Nineteen of the homesteads visited have dual kitchens. The first variety was constructed from mud and roofed completely with woven grass. The second variety is enclosed with mud walls and devoid of any form of roof. The unroofed kitchen is mostly used for cooking during the dry season, and the roofed ones used as storage and cooking space during the rainy season.

In eleven other homesteads visited, the kitchens are just enclosures comprising three mud walls and grass roofs (See Plate 6).

All the kitchen types are characterized with swish stoves made from mud or composed of three carefully laid stones.



**Plate .6 Kitchen with swish stove**

Firewood and millet stalks used for cooking, are usually packed at a corner in the kitchens. Generally, the kitchen spaces in all the homesteads visited are characterized with smoke blackened walls and stocked with pots used for cooking and serving food.

#### **4.2.9 Bathing space (*esoroga*)**

All compounds visited have specially constructed spaces for bathing. Most of the courtyards have their own bath spaces while some courtyards share the bathing spaces. The bathing enclosures are usually integrated into the outer walls, with openings designed to channel water through the outer walls into gutters outside the walls. Walls defining the bathing spaces are left unroofed, and without doors.

#### **4.2.10 Bedrooms (*degarekor*)**

Separate rooms are used by a husband and his wife or wives within each courtyard. The researcher observes that the bedrooms are either circular, or rectangular in design. Within a given compound, one may find a combination of both designs. The rooms are built into the main external walls, and are roofed with mud, grass or iron roofing sheets. When mud roofs are used, it serves as a sleeping space during the dry season when the weather is warm. Very small windows, about two to two and a half feet are sometimes cut into the walls to admit fresh air and light. In some of the houses visited, the author detected that some of the bedrooms do not have any windows at all. The doors to the bedrooms are either rectangular or arch-shaped. Some of the rectangular entrances had wooden doors. In some cases, the entranceways were left totally uncovered (Plate 7).

Most traditional bedrooms have semi-circular dwarf walls constructed immediately in front of the main entranceway, just within the bedroom. One therefore needs to step over this wall before entering the main bedroom. The walls are roughly about two feet high. This barrier, according to Ayamga (personal communication, September 15, 2008), prevents rain showers, sunlight and wondering animals from entering the rooms. The dwarf walls also enable whoever is squatting inside the room to look at others outside without being seen. Most of the bedrooms have mud platforms on which woven grass mats are spread and used as beds. Some of the rooms also have grass mats positioned on the bare floors for sleeping. Yet still, some of the rooms have wooden beds.





**Plate .7 Bedroom (degarekor)**

#### **4.2.11 Lifespan of compounds**

Compounds, according to the respondents, go through developmental cycles, which define their foundation, growth, decline and sometimes, total extinction. A compound after its construction grows by the virtue of family expansion resulting from marriage and childbirth. It may decline and disintegrate when the family units break down due to disease resulting in the death of a sizeable portion of the family. Natural disasters or family migration could also lead to the desolation of homesteads.

#### **4.3 Raw Materials and Tools**

Generally, the materials and tools used by the artisans in the Sirigu community for architectural construction are rudimentary in nature. Below are some of the important ones.

1. Clay (*yougro*) - This is used by some of the inhabitants in Sirigu together with loam in building homesteads. The use of the material depends on its availability in the locality.

2. Loam (*tono*) – This is rich soil consisting of a mixture of sand and clay and decaying organic materials. It may be used entirely alone or together with clay in architectural constructions.
3. Laterite (*zigi*) - This is normally used in floor construction of homesteads. The material is watered and compacted by women into smooth and hard floors.
4. Cow dung (*nambeto*) and Donkey dung (*bagabisigo*) - Cow or donkey dung are collected, soaked and mixed with loam or clay for flooring or plastering.
5. Coal tar – Coal tar, which is tar formed from distillation of bituminous coal, is sometimes heated and mixed with loam for plastering walls by some of the women instead of cow or donkey dung.
6. Hoe (*kunre*) - The hoe is used in the excavation of clay, loam, and laterite as well as digging foundation trenches and mixing the above materials for construction.
7. Shovel - Shovels are used together with hoe, at some of the construction sites visited by the researcher, in mixing mud for construction.
8. Pots, Buckets, Gallons, and Drums - Earthen ware pots, buckets, rubber gallon and drums were used at construction sites to fetch and store water for building works.

9. Wood - Assorted types and sizes of woods are used for roofing works in the Sirigu community. The woods are cut from the immediate environments. Some also use machine processed lumber purchased from Bolgatanga or Navrongo for roofing. Logs are also processed into ladders and used in accessing grains in granaries or climbing to homestead rooftops.
10. Grass (*moo*) - Woven grasses are used in roofing circular shaped rooms, huts and granaries. The grasses are either processed by the builders or purchased from the Sirigu market.

#### **4.4 Construction Techniques**

Two main traditional architectural designs have been discovered among the people of Sirigu. These are circular and rectangular buildings, which are based on techniques referred to by Anquandah (2007) as “atakpame”, and Prussin (1974) as “cast sun-dried brick” respectively. The “cast sun-dried” constructional type, which is mainly used in building rectangular-shaped structures, uses “cast carpentered bricks”. The study reveals that in Sirigu, construction is done under the direction of an expert traditional builder or a mason, who has been technically trained. Building works are generally carried out after the harvest, between late October and mid April.

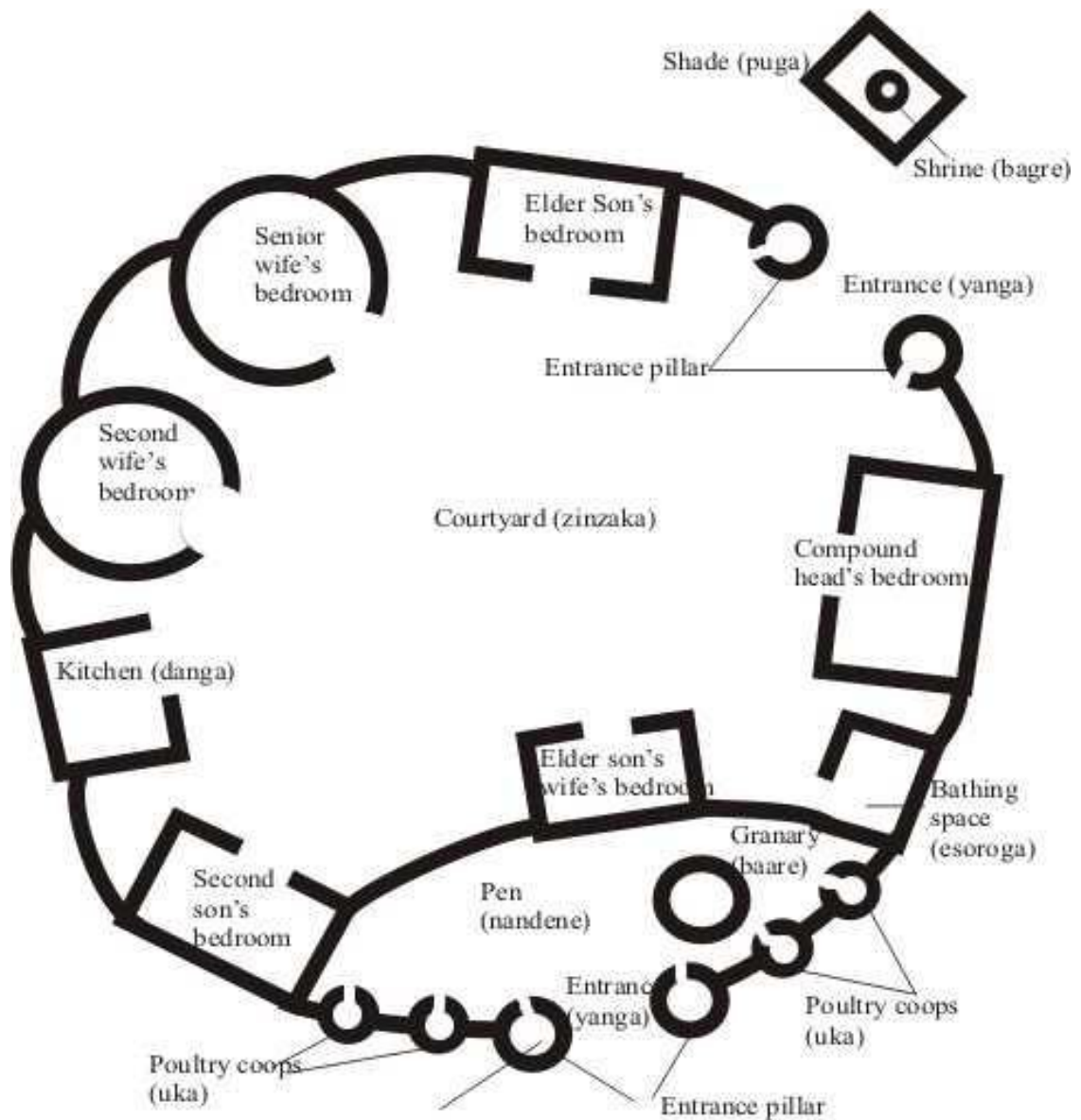
What happens is that usually, after fixing the day for the construction, the beneficiary of the project informs friends and relatives about the intended project, since the main labour used for such the construction is provided by friends and relatives. The house owner also makes provision for food and beverages, which are the basic rewards for those who come over to assist in the construction.

#### **4.4.1 Libation and Prayers**

Before the actual construction, the family head usually pours libation and prays, using locally brewed gin (*akpeteshie* or *apio*), asking the omnipotent God, tribal gods and ancestors, to guide them in the successful construction of the compound or courtyard. The prayer also asks for strength for all those who would be working on the project, and protection against all malevolent spirits and accidents, and to bless the family who would be staying in the compound or courtyard being constructed. The remaining drink was shared among those present, and the construction work begins, with the marking of the floor plan and its ultimate digging.

#### **4.4.2 Floor Plan and Foundation Trenches**

The floor plans could be circular (See Figure 1) or rectangular in design, depending on the existing plan of the old compound or what the new homestead owner intends to build. Building foundation trenches, which are dug by men, may vary between 14 and 18 inches in width and about 10 inches deep. The digging is done with the aid of hoes. The trenches are sometimes filled with small stones to reinforce the foundation. In some cases, trenches are not dug before raising the mud walls. The ground is just cleared and the areas of the floor plan moistened with water, before building.



**Figure .1 Schematic view of Ayamga's compound**

#### **4.4.3 Mixing of Mud**

There is a clear cut division of labour in the preparation of the mud paste used in building the walls of the homestead. Excavation of mud and loam is the preserve of men and young boys. The clay and loam pits are usually at the building site. Water for mixing

is fetched by women, using pots, buckets and empty oil gallons. The excavated loam is mixed with water into a smooth consistency before being rolled into balls and sent to be laid into walls or moulded into bricks (Plate 8). The mixing is done using the feet, hoe or shovel (if available).



**Plate .8 Mixing of mud paste**

#### **4.4.4 Moulding of Bricks**

Mud bricks are made manually by pressing the prepared mud mixture into rectangular capentered wooden moulds. The bricks are then dried in the sun and later used for constructing rectangular shaped structures.

#### **4.4.5 Construction**

“Atakpame” Technique:

When using the “atakpame” building technique, the builders normally lay the mixed mud paste along the floor plan, which had been moistened with water. Care is

always taken to ensure that the lower walls are thicker than the upper ones. As the building progresses, the walls are dressed using the fingers and planks of woods. Walls are usually interspaced with conically shaped pillars which are hollow at the base to create space for fowls. Space is also left for entranceways. Windows were either cut into the walls or gradually constructed. Some of the builders also build belts at the base of their buildings to protect them from erosion. The “atakpame” technique is used for building both circular and rectangular-shaped structures.

#### “Cast sun-dried brick” Technique:

The “cast sun-dried bricks” are used in a manner similar to the mud balls used in constructing the “atakpame” architectural types. Most, balls of mud paste are laid along the moistened floor plan, after which the sun dried bricks are laid on the mud paste and the spaces in between the various bricks also filled with mud paste, using the hands. Successive courses of the bricks are laid up until the desired heights of the walls are achieved. Just as the “atakpame” technique, spaces are left for entranceways and windows. Wooden door and window frames are sometimes affixed to enable the use of doors and window shutters.

#### **4.4.6 Floors**

The floors of the bedrooms, courtyards, and kitchens are usually constructed with laterite. The material is collected and deposited on the desired floor space and sprinkled with water before being compacted with flat-base pestles into a cement-like finish similar to plastered wall. This job is carried out by women.

#### **4.4.7 Plastering**

Plastering may be done before or after roofing. The built walls are plastered using loam and cow or donkey dung mixtures, or loam and coal tar mixtures. The mixtures are applied onto the walls with the hand. When using coal tar, the material is first heated over fire before being mixed with the loam. The cow dung on the other hand is usually dissolved in water before being added to the loam. The walls, prior to the plastering process, are sprinkled with water. When the plastered walls are partially dry, they are burnished with smooth quartz stones, in a fashion similar to the techniques used on pots. If murals are to be made on the walls, it is carried out at this stage.

#### **4.4.8 Roofing**

The study identified three different roofing techniques in the Sirigu society. These comprise of flat mud roofs supported with timber beams, thatch roofs, and roofs made with aluminium roofing sheets. A homestead could be constructed using all three roofing typologies.

#### **4.4.9 Flat Mud roofs**

The flat mud roofs are constructed by inserting wooden beams into the uppermost parts of the mud walls of the structure, and reinforcing them with wooden cross members and supported independently by forked log posts buried the middle of the floor. Fibre ropes are used to secure the wooden cross members to the beams before covering the wooden skeleton with mud mixtures. Small holes of about four to five inches in diameter are then bored into the mud walls, just above the external roof and inserted with



cylindrical metal sheets to channel out water during the rainy season. The above roofing types are used on both circular and rectangular-shaped architectural structures in the Sirigu society. Most of the flat mud roof types seen by the researcher have either wooden ladders cut from stout logs or mud ladders attached to it, to ensure access to the roof.

For ventilation and light, some of the roofs have vertical holes dug at the top of the roof and covered with two sets of superimposed pots. The pots may be removed to admit fresh air or light into the rooms, if the need arises (See Plate 9).



**Plate .9 Flat Mud Roof**

#### **4.4.10 Thatch Roofs**

Thatch roofing techniques are used in roofing both rectangular and circular shaped mud constructions, including the granaries (Plate 10).

In this instance too, wooden beams are buried into the mud walls, supported with wooden forked posts, over which smaller wooden poles of cross members were attached with the help of fibre ropes. The thatch, which is composed of woven grasses are then spread over the wooden skeleton and again adroitly secured with strong fibre ropes to prevent it from

being carried away by heavy winds. Thatch intended to be used on granaries are woven into a conical hat, which is used to cap the single orifice on top of the granary. The roofs of the rectangular structures are either designed over gable walls or slanted to allow rain to empty outside the walls.



**Plate .10 Thatch Roofed Building**

#### **4.4.12 Metal roofing sheets**

Generally iron roofing sheets are used on rectangular shaped mud constructions. The iron sheets are nailed over two by four or two by six wooden beams inserted into the mud walls and covered with two by four or two by two wooden cross members. The roofing designs are also, either slanted or built over gable walls.

#### **4.5 Cultural and Philosophical Significance of Sirigu Architecture**

The studies carried out by the researcher reveals that kinship relations in Sirigu dictate how the inhabitants of the society arrange themselves in space. The homesteads of clan members are found together in a given geographical location. The architectural

edifices are designed and built to meet the cultural and social needs of the people. Apart from providing shelter, architecture in the Sirigu society also provides space for the storage of utilitarian objects such as pots, calabashes, baskets, and other intimate personal belongings. Animals such as cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats, chicken and guinea fowls, which play important roles in the socio-cultural lives of the people of Sirigu, are also sheltered and bred within the confines of the architectural structures. Granaries which are integral components of the Sirigu architecture aid in the storage and preservation of farm produce, towards the sustenance of families and for that matter, the society as a whole.

Architecture in Sirigu provides the platform for people to interact and make merry during births, naming ceremonies, marriages, and to mourn the dead. It also provides the pedestal for beings in the physical and spiritual worlds to interact via personal, family or clan shrines, which are inherent aspects of most traditional homesteads found in Sirigu.

The construction of new compounds and the renovation of old ones is a communal activity, which normally involves the potential owner, clan members and friends. This practice provides the avenue for the younger ones to learn the techniques of architectural construction from the elderly and more experienced builders. The exercise also brings together clan members and friends. This nurtures camaraderie and cohesion among the people.

The architectural edifices and their related spatial confines also provide congenial atmosphere for procreation and the upbringing of children, who in turn become the custodians of the cultural values of the society, perpetuating the various ancestral stocks of the people of Sirigu.

The size and ornamentation of a particular compound can easily reveal the status of the members living within its walls. While multiple compounds paint a picture of large, polygamous, influential, wealthy, or royal families, smaller homesteads may either indicate the beginning of a new family, a poor family or a family with very few members. The general ornamentation of the homesteads may reveal the creativity, economic capabilities or managerial abilities of the woman or women living within the confines of the compound.

#### **4.6 Mural Decoration in Sirigu Culture**

The researcher could not trace the major beginning of the mural tradition in Sirigu. Most of the elders interviewed explained that the tradition, of mural painting which is known locally as *bambolse*, had been in existence before they were born. They also admitted that mural decoration in their society is gradually dying out.

The mural decoration tradition, as explained by the respondents, is usually transferred from mother to daughter, in an apprentice-like teaching and learning format. The intricacies of the craft, they further added, could be mastered over a fairly short period of time. The consensus is that it takes about one month to six months to master the rudiments of the craft.

Mural decoration in Sirigu is predominantly a female art form. The information collaborate Anaba's (1995) study concerning mural works among the Kassena- Nankana people. Some very few men are however, currently engaged in mural decoration due to its commercial viability. The craft is purely a dry season art, carried out after harvest between November and April. The dry seasonal nature of the art form agrees with

Smikle's (1993) findings among some other African countries, such as Upper Guinea, Burkina Faso, and among the Ibos in Nigeria, where mural decoration is practiced.

A careful observation by the author reveals that painting and low relief works are the two main artistic methods used by the artisans. The designs which are generally geometrical and representative in nature are usually rendered symmetrically in horizontal or vertical formats all over the exterior and interior walls of the architectural structure.

Wall decoration sessions observed were characterized with singing, clapping, dancing and general merry making. Most of the wall decoration sessions observed clearly reveals that the most competent decorators always check the plaster and paint preparations before application. Experienced decorators always register the appropriate outline of the motifs on the walls before other decorators, who are less proficient, join them to fill in the appropriate colours.

The traditional mural artists in Sirigu seem to be constricted in their choice of colour. Generally, red ochre, black and white are the basic hues employed in mural painting in Sirigu. No clear symbolism is attached to the above colours by the informants. This finding is contrary to the findings of Anaba (1995) whose study among other Nankam speaking communities reveals that red stood for "danger" and "importance", black for "death, gloom, wickedness and uncertainty", while white denotes "purity, happiness or faultlessness". If the above symbolical connotations did exist in the past, that understanding seems to be lost to the current practitioners of the art form.

#### **4.7 Raw Materials and Tools**

Sirigu muralists use very rudimentary materials and tools in their craft. All materials used are obtained from the immediate environment or neighbouring communities. Detailed below are some of the most essential materials and tools used by the decorators.

1. Red oxide stone (*gare*) - Red oxide stones traditionally called *gare*, could be picked directly from the Sirigu community, especially at locations where there is high deposit of laterite (Personal communication, A. Akanvolle, October 3, 2008). Alternatively, it could also be bought from the local market. The material is pulverised on grinding stones and soaked in water for a day or two before use.
2. Lime stone (*Kugupela*) - White pigments used by the muralists are obtained from lime stone. Locally known as *kugupela*, limestone is imported from Yelewongo, a town along the Burkina Faso border and also sold in the Sirigu market. They are used directly on the wall by rubbing it on the desired areas of the mural.
3. Black Earth (*Kug sabla*) - The black pigment is also purchased from the local market. The material is obtained from special ponds found in Burkina Faso (A. Ayampoka, personal communication, October 5, 2008), and are sold in balls. Prior to use, they are pulverized and mixed with water and cow dung.
4. Cow dung (*nambeto*) - Cow dung is a very important material in the Sirigu community. In wall decoration, it is copiously used as a binder when constituting

colours for mural decoration. Cow dung is also mixed with water and sprinkled on plastered walls prior to burnishing. The material could be collected from the animal pens or from the open field.

5. Quartz pebbles (*saase*) - Pebbles of different sizes and shapes are used in embellishing walls. They are employed by the muralists in defining bas relief works, as well as working the various colours into the walls.
6. Millet combs, Feathers, Twigs and Bristle brushes - Millet combs, feathers from guinea fowls and chickens, as well as beaten twigs are traditionally used in painting the various colours on the walls. Imported bristle brushes have also been introduced by some foreign collaborators into the tool boxes of some of the artisans. Some of the mural decorators sometimes use their hands to apply pigments onto the wall during decoration.
7. Hoe (*kunre*) - The hoe is basically used by the women to mix clay, loam and cow dung used for plastering the walls.
8. Pots, Metal bowls, and bucket - Various sizes of pots, old imported metal bowls and buckets are used for fetching and storing water, as well as mixing cow dung, vegetable extracts and pulverised colours for application.

9. Water - This is extensively used in mixing colours, clay and cow dung for mural work. Water is sometimes stored in earthenware pots or metal buckets on the site.
10. Short Broom - The brooms made with grass are used by the wall decorators to sprinkle mixed cow dung or water onto the walls for embellishment.
11. Loam - This is collected and mixed with cow dung and sometimes smooth sand, for plastering walls prior to mural decoration.
12. Laterite - This is normally pulverised and mixed with water and cow dung before application onto the walls. Laterite mixtures are normally applied after plastering of walls.
13. Varnish - Vegetable extracts prepared from locust bean pods (*acacia nilotica*), dawadawa (*Parkia clappertonnia*), the branches of the *Sia* tree and the bark of the *ampoua* tree, are sprinkled on decorated walls to give it a shiny patina and a waterproof finish.

#### **4.8 Mural Decoration Techniques**

Plastering is done on the day of mural application. The materials used for plastering are loam, cow dung and sometimes smooth sand. The cow dung is collected and soaked in water for some days, and strained to remove the fiber contents before being mixed with the loam and sand.



The mud mixture usually is applied with the hands to the walls. Relief works are then moulded by adding pellets of mud mixture on the areas of the walls where relief works are required, and defined with quartz pebbles. A mixture of water and cow dung is then sprinkled on the wall with short grass brooms, and the entire wall burnished with quartz stones into a smooth finish. A mixture of cow dung and pulverized laterite is prepared and applied in a very thin layer to the walls as a second coat, and again burnished. This gives the wall a light reddish hue.

Prior to decoration, the black earth and the red oxide stones are ground into fine powder on a grinding stone and mixed in small pottery, plastic or metal bowls into paste. Painting is done with millet combs, feathers, beaten twigs, or even with the fingers. Outlines of motifs are painted in black by expert muralists on the entire wall surface, in vertical or horizontal formats. In most instances, painting was always started from the topmost parts of the walls. Other mural decorators then fill in the outlines registered by the master decorators with black and red paste. The white lime stones are also rubbed at selected portions of the walls, in a contrasting manner before entirely burnishing the walls again with assorted sizes of quartz pebbles. At this stage, burnishing is done in a very meticulous manner, along the various coloured and uncoloured portions before being allowed to dry. Care is taken not to smudge the colours.

The ultimate finishing is carried out by applying a varnish of vegetable extracts, which are prepared from locust bean pods (*acacia nilotica*), dawadawa (*Parkia clappertonnia*), the branches of the *Sia* tree and the bark of the *ampoua* tree. The mixture is spattered on the dried decorated surface giving it a nice shiny reddish patina and its waterproofing quality.

## 4.9 Motifs and Symbols

Different types of motifs are used by mural decorators in the Sirigu society. Generally, the motifs are either figurative or geometric or a combination of the two. While the figurative symbols depict stylized human beings, and animals, the geometric designs comprised crescents, rhombuses, triangles, hatchings, vertical and horizontal lines that look very similar to the symbols used on Sirigu pottery wares. Technically, the motifs are either painted or moulded in bas relief on the walls. In some cases, the designs may be incised on the walls, just as is done on pottery.

The study has unearthed eight painted and five relief traditional motifs on the walls of the 30 homesteads visited. Even though the repertoire of visual language employed by the Sirigu muralists seems quite small, the symbols are copiously coded with adages, morals, mythologies, virtues, and admonishing messages. Presented below are the most important Sirigu traditional mural symbols and their iconographic interpretations.

### 4.9.1 Paintings

#### **Zaalinga**

Traditionally, the *zaalinga* is a net used by women in Sirigu to stock their calabashes to prevent them from breaking. The fiber used in weaving this net is derived from the kenaf plant which grows widely in the area. The symbol, according to the respondents, is designed and used as a way of showing the importance of the fibre net and the calabashes it seeks to protect.

There are two varieties of the designs. *Zaalin nyanga* (See Plate 11) which is said to be the female design, and *Zaalin daa* (Plate 12) which symbolizes the male. The male

motif is usually depicted in a vertical manner, while the female one is horizontal in nature.



**Plate .11 Zaalin Nyanga**



**Plate .12 Zaalin Daa**

### **Akun Nyanani**

*Akun nyanani* has been explained to mean “Kunyana’s cows”. The design (Plate 13) is a tribute to a cattle owner known as Kunyana, whose cattle always behave in a very wise manner. According to Akanvolle (personal communication, November, 2008) a veteran mural decorator, legend has it that the cows of Kunyana always behave in an orderly manner. The cows did not stray off when grazing, but follows each other in a single line. Other respondents pointed out that the motif is a symbol of wisdom and

riches. The design is most often used on the upper periphery of walls in a horizontal register.



**Plate .13 Akunyanani**

### **Wanzagsi**

The above term means broken calabash. It has been explained that the calabash, even when broken, is of varied utilitarian value to the Sirigu woman. The broken pieces of calabash are used in shaping pottery. The calabash may be broken together with some specific pottery wares during the death of a woman, to signify their physical alienation from the community. The physical breaking of the calabash also makes it possible for the deceased to use the calabash in the spirit world. *Wanzagsi* (Plate 14) therefore has been designed and used to show the importance of the calabash. *Wanzagsi* is painted at the upper parts of architectural structures.



**Plate .14 Wanzagsi**

### **Agurinusi**

The word which means “linked hands” in the nankam language, is a design which has been inspired by school children moving to school with their hands held together. A mural decorator, according to the respondents, was inspired by the unity expressed by the school kids, and designed the motif to emphasise the need for unity and friendliness. It is usually depicted on the main body of buildings (See Plate 15).



**Plate .15 Agurinusi**

### **Waagne/ Amizia Zuka**

Two major interpretations were given concerning the Waagne or Amizia Zuka motif. Whiles a section of the respondents identified it as an upturned calabash (*waagne*), the others called it *Amizia Zuyaka* (Plate 16).

Those who said the motif symbolizes an upturned calabash pointed out that the design is a testimonial of the usefulness of calabashes. Those who interpreted it to mean a hat also explained that the symbol was designed by a mural decorator to mock her brother-in-law who was bald for making fun of her any time she was making murals. The name of the bald man Amizia Zuyaka, was given to the crescent shaped designs or “hats”. The hat was created by the innovator to be used metaphorically in covering the

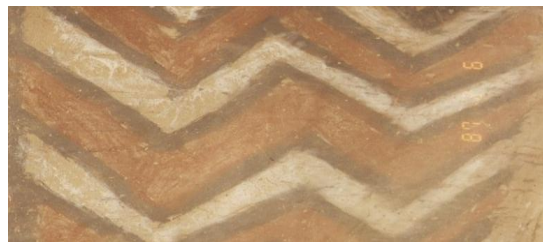
bald head of her brother-in-law. The motif is normally painted at the base of architectural structures.



**Plate .16 Waagne/ Amizia Zuka**

### **Taana Golima/ Sorogbelima**

*Taana golma* or *sorogbelima* (plate 17) motifs are used on the main body of buildings. One section of the respondents explained that the design describes the footpaths that linked the various homesteads in the Sirigu community while the other section pointed out that there was no definite symbolism attached to the design. They all however, agreed that the design is one of the old traditional designs. The *taana golima* is normally painted in a horizontal register while the *sorogbelima* is depicted in a vertical format.



**Plate .17 Taana Golima/ Sorogbelima**

### **Ligipelga**

*Ligipelga* means “cowry”. Cowries were used in the olden days as dowry, and during marriage ceremonies in the Sirigu society due to its capital. The motif (Plate 18) is mostly painted on the main body of buildings in Sirigu.



**Plate .18 Ligipelga**

### **Saaba**

*Saaba* means “leather talisman or amulet” in the nankam language. The leather talismans or amulets may be diamond shaped or rectangular. There are normally worn around the neck or stitched on traditional dresses for protection against evil forces. The *saaba* designs (See Plate 19 just as the talisman or amulet, are expected to protect the inhabitants of the building from malevolent forces. The *saaba* motif ordinarily occupies the main bodies of architectural structures.



**Plate .19 Sabaa**

#### 4.9.2 Relief Motifs

##### Waafo

The study reveals that *waafo* or python is a mythological and totemic figure, which is believed to protect families who pay homage to it. An elderly compound head explained that in the olden days, pythons nursed crying babies left at home by their mothers, by putting the tip of their tails in the mouths of the babies to suckle in order to stop them from crying. Some respondents added that the totemic pythons reveal themselves to those who are pure at heart. The *waafo* motif (Plate 20) which stands for protection is usually made in relief on the trunk of buildings.



**Plate .20 Waafo**

##### Golima Golima

This relief work, which is constructed either entirely or partially around a building, is believed to be another variety of the python. A section of the respondents however explained that the relief work (Plate 21) which may either be straight or undulating ridges, has no definite symbolic meaning, but was just used to terminate the course of rain water on buildings, thereby protecting the structures from early ruin.





**Plate .21 Golima Golima**

### **Naafo**

Naafo, which literally means “cow”, symbolizes wealth. The symbol epitomizes the importance of cows in the Sirigu culture. Apart from being used as dowry, cows are also used for tilling farmlands or sold for money. The stylized *naafo* motifs (See Plate 22) are depicted on the main trunk of buildings.



**Plate .22 Naafo**

### **Dogona**

*Dogoma*, which literally means “curved sticks”, is used by elderly men for support when walking. The curved stick is associated with wisdom, knowledge and authority, which elderly people are believed to have acquired over the years. The design (Plate 23) is either depicted above entranceways or on the main body of buildings.



**Plate .23 Dogoma**

### **Niila**

The term *niila* describes chickens or domesticated bird bred for their flesh or eggs. Apart from being used for food, the birds also form part of materials presented to a bride's family as part of traditional marriage rites. The birds and their eggs, the respondents explained, are also used for sacrifices and offerings and are therefore very important in the Sirigu culture. The *niila* motif (Plate 24) which depicts the importance of birds in the Sirigu culture is used above entranceways.



**Plate . 24 Niila**

## **Eegba**

Crocodiles are called *eegba* in the Sirigu society, and are seen as totemic objects. They are also believed to be the temporary abodes of ancestral spirits, and are therefore venerated by some kinship groups. The crocodile motif (Plate 25) is mostly in relief, even though some very few painted ones were seen by the researcher. They are sometimes depicted with two heads instead of one. The reliefs are made on the main trunk of architectural structures.



**Plate .25 Eegba**

### **4.10 Cultural and philosophical Significance of Murals in Sirigu**

The study revealed that by and large, mural decoration in the Sirigu cultural setting is utilitarian and aesthetic in nature. The inherent mural symbols which may be representative or geometric in nature, are inspired by objects and creatures in the domestic and natural settings and embodies the concerns, beliefs, cultural norms, events, and mythologies in the Sirigu society.

By codifying the above in murals, the women present the issues in visual forms, thereby precipitating a dialogue, either, towards their protection or amelioration.

“Bombolse” or mural decoration may appropriately be seen as a dynamic voice, used by Sirigu women to address a variety of socio-cultural issues that concerns the society.

The protective capabilities of the murals cannot be overemphasized. By compacting and polishing the walls, the women render it more repellent to atmospheric and climatic degradations. Relief works such as the *Golima golima* ridges interrupt the flow of rain water racing down the wall thereby reducing its destructive impact on the architectural edifices.

The decorations by themselves beautify the environment, define private space, and instill a homely and welcoming effect on any one visiting the Sirigu community. Culturally, wall paintings also define the nature or the status of the women living in the homesteads, since the ability to produce a mural in the Sirigu community is seen as a mark of a woman's ability to properly manage a home. As Azibonor, an old mural decorator puts it, in the olden days a woman who did not decorate her home with *bombolse* was seen as unclean and unruly woman, and was treated with contempt (personal communication, October 20, 2008).

Mural decoration is a social event that brings women together to share ideas, sing, dance, and drink together. This fosters community cohesion and instills the values of good-neighbourliness. It also precipitates a healthy competition among the women in the performing arts, since mural decoration sessions are used as platforms for launching new musical compositions and dance formations.

Some of the iconographic symbols such as *agurinusi* (Plate15), *akunyanani* (Plate 13) and *amizia zuka* (Plate 16) are heavily coded with moral values. *Akurinusi* teaches the need for unity, *akun nyanani* highlights orderliness, while *amizia zuka* expounds

tolerance. The above morals aid in imparting noble values into the lives of the inhabitants of the community.

#### **4.11 Pottery Production in Sirigu Culture**

The history of pottery production in the Sirigu culture could not be traced concretely. The consensus is that the craft has been practiced since time immemorial, by the forebears of the current inhabitants of the community. Pottery, referred to locally as *yag-basa*, is largely practiced during the dry season after the harvest. Small quantities are however produced during the rainy season, if the need arises.

Generally, pottery production in the Sirigu society is a female dominated activity. A handful of men however, also produce specialized clay artefacts such as figurative objects, miniature architectural constructions, smoking pipes, and decorative plates for economic purposes. The above conclusions correspond with Speight and Toku's (1999) findings concerning the gender of the people engaging in pottery production on the African continent.

The current study has not uncovered any prohibition that particularly favoured any of the sexes in the production of pottery in the Sirigu community. The basic precondition for engaging in pottery production therefore is interest and expertise.

Three of the men interviewed by the researcher revealed that they learnt the pottery making technique from their mothers, who were expert potters. The female potters questioned explained that the pottery making know-how was imparted to them during their juvenile or adolescent ages. The respondents named different instructors from whom the pottery techniques were acquired. Eleven of the respondents explained that they were

instructed by their mothers. Five of them said they learnt it from their grandmothers. According to nine of the respondents, they were taught by their elder sisters, while three of the potters revealed that they acquired the crafting techniques, when they got married to men from Sirigu. In this last category, the respondents explained that they were taught by their mothers-in-law.

The learning processes, according to the potters progressed from very rudimentary stages such as clay extraction, drying, pounding and sieving, to more complex and intricate processes such as mixing of clay, forming, prefiring ornamentation, firing and post-firing ornamentation techniques.

Specialization, the researcher noticed, was very limited. Most of the respondents could produce all the essential domestic pots. In two cases, however, the potters explained that they specialized in the production of ritual and a highly ornamented water pots respectively, because the products were on order constantly. As indicated by Azibonor, who specializes in the production of water pots, “people know I can produce nice water pots so they order from me often. So I am always producing water pots. But I can also produce other pottery types (personal communication, October 20, 2008).

#### **4.12 Types of Pottery**

The researcher identified seven main categories of pottery wares in the Sirigu community. Generally, all the pottery products are ornamented in varied degrees. Below are the main categories of pottery products found in Sirigu:

#### 4.12.1 Cooking pots

##### **Zeero Dukor and Saa Dukor**

*Zeero dukor* and *saa dukor* (Plate 26) pots have been identified as the two main pottery wares used in cooking daily meals. *Zeero dukor* is employed in the preparation of vegetable soups and sauces while *saa dukor* is used to cook *tuo zafi*, a thick millet porridge preparation, normally eaten with vegetable soup or sauce.



**Plate .26 *Zeero Dukor* (left), *Saa Dukor* (right)**

##### **U-wa**

This pottery ware (Plate 27) which comes in various sizes has several bored holes on the main body of the pots. It is used for smoking all types of meat and fish.



**Plate .27 *Uwa***

### **Mala and masala**

*Masala* is a bowl with two handles affixed to it, while the *mala* has a honey-comb appearance (Plate 28). They are used in baking millet cakes.



**Plate .28 *Masala* (left), *Mala* (right)**

### **Katariga**

This is a set of two pottery wares, comprising a base pot and a bowl with tiny holes bored at its base and superimposed on the base pot (Plate 29). These sets of pots are used for steaming all types of meat and fish.





**Plate .29 Katariga**

### **Sere**

This pottery bowl, which measures about 91.44 centimetres and reaches a height of about 45.72 centimetres, is used in preparing shea butter (Plate 30).



**Plate .30 Sere**

### **Da-ane**

This is a v-shaped pottery ware of about 60.96 centimetres in height and spans about 121.92 centimetres in diameter (Plate 31). It is used for fermenting *pito* preparations as well as serving as a crucible for freshly prepared *pito*.



**Plate .31 *Da-ana***

#### **4.12.2 Serving and Eating**

##### **Lasuliga and Lapea**

The two main pottery wares used for serving food are *lasuliga* and *lapea* (Plate 32). *Lasuliga* is used for serving vegetable soup and sauce, while *lapea* is the main pottery bowl used for serving *tuo zafi*, a thick millet preparation normally eaten with vegetable sauce or soup.



**Plate .32 *Lasuliga* (bottom), *Lapea* (top)**

#### **4.12.3 Water and Beverage**

##### **Yore**

Generally, very large pots measuring about 45.72 centimetres in diameter and towering about 60.96 centimetres or more, are referred to as *yore*. The researcher identified two main varieties of *yore* pottery types (See Plate 33). The first variety is a

pear- shaped pot with two handles affixed to the opposite sides, with a lid. The second variety is round-shaped, and is sold with or without lids. Whiles the first variety is mainly used for storing drinking water, the second variety may be used for fetching as well as storing water.



**Plate .33 *Yore* (pear-shaped), *Yore* (round)**

#### **Yogila**

This pot variety is quite smaller that the *yore* types (Plate 34). It is used in fetching and storing water for drinking, especially on the field. They are made without lids.



**Plate .34 *Yogila***

### **Du-a Noliba**

This is a rotund-shaped pot with two or more vertical-shaped spouts affixed to the top (Plate 35). They are used for serving water and *pito* beer.



**Plate .35 *Du-a Nobila***

### **Bugutar**

This is also a rotund-shaped pottery piece with two slanted spouts positioned on its topmost part, and linked with clay slab to form a handle (Plate 36). It is used mostly as a mobile water container on the field. Some also use it as *pito* beer container.



**Plate .36 Bugutar**

#### **4.12.4 Storage**

##### **Peligo, lamolga, and kalenga**

This is a three-set storage pottery ware used by most women. The *kalenga* is a sizeable pot about 30.48 centimetres in diameter and about 45.72 centimetres in height. This forms the base pot, on which are superimposed the *lamolga* and the *peligo* (See plate 37). This is used in storing millet, beans or groundnut.

The *lamolga* in some cases consist of two, instead of one pot making it a four-set piece. The *lamolga*, which is a bowl, is used in storing dry meat, fish, millet or any other food stuff. Ritually, it is also used as container for and burying the placenta of newly born babies.

The *Peligo* is a round-shaped pottery ware with a lid, which is affixed to the main pot with fibre ropes. The respondents explain that it is used in storing cooking ingredients such as salt, pepper, and other seasonings. It may be used for storing other precious materials such as money and jewellery. One respondent explains that witches are known to hide their witchcraft powers inside the *peligo*. The fibre ropes are intentionally woven in a manner that makes it difficult to access the contents of the pots in a hurry.



**Plate .37 *Peligo* (top), *Lamolga* (middle), & *Kalenga* (bottom)**

### **Dukor vuliga**

This is a small pot with a lid, which is used for storing shea butter, an essential cooking item and skin moisturiser (See Plate 38).



**Plate .38 *Dukor vuliga***

The study reveals that generally, cracked and old pottery wares (Plate 39) are used for storing grains such as millet, beans, and groundnuts. These are usually stored at the corner of homesteads, and sealed with cow dung.



**Plate .39 Old and cracked pots being used as storage pots**

#### **4.12.5 Funeral and Ritual**

##### **Bagadokor**

This is a round pot with a lid, and studded with clay spikes. The respondents explain that it is used for the containment of spiritually energised herbs and other ingredients used for healing and protection against evil forces (Plate 40).



**Figure .40 *Bagadokor***

### **Lamolga**

This pottery ware (Plate 37), is used in burying the placenta of newly born babies. Some of the interviewees explained that the placenta is placed in the pot and buried vertically on a rubbish dump. They further add that this is done secretly, to prevent people with evil intentions from knowing the burial spot. They explained that if the pot is buried upside down, the woman who yields the placenta would become barren.

#### **4.12.6 Old cooking pots**

Old cooking pots, especially *zeero dukor* and *saa dukor* (Plate 27), may be used ritually to bury aborted or miscarried fetuses. It is believed that this ritual enables the deceased beings to properly incarnate and run the full course of their lives, just as the old cooking pots in which they are interred.

During the funeral rites of women, the above-mentioned cooking pots belonging to the deceased woman are ritually broken. Two contradictory explanations were offered for the ritual. Whiles some of the respondents believe the ritual symbolically separates



the deceased from the living, others hold the view that by breaking the pot, the deceased woman would be able to use the pots in the spirit world to cook.

#### **4.12.7 Livestock Care**

##### **Norsere**

This is a round pot with about four or more holes, measuring about 91.44 centimetres in diameter, bored on the body of the pot. It is used as a watering trough for chickens (Plate 41).



**Plate .41 *Norsere***

#### **4.12.8 Miscellaneous**

The researcher has also discovered that other pottery wares such as figurative smoking pipes (tadokor), human and animal figurines and miniature architectural compositions (Plate 42), are produced in the Sirigu community, mainly by men. Apart from the pipe,

which some men and use for smoking tobacco, the figurines and the miniature architectural compositions are mainly created for the tourist market.



**Plate .42 Clay bird (Left), Smoking Pipe (Middle), & Miniature Compound  
(Right)**

#### **4.13 Raw Materials and Tools**

Clay is the basic material used in the production of Sirigu pottery. Clay is excavated from two main deposits found in Mirigu and Dasungor. These are neighbouring communities.

All the 30 respondents agreed that rigorous observance of taboos is necessary for the successful excavation of clay and its ultimate usage. All of them said egg must not be sent to the clay pit, while eight of them added that the fruit of the baobab tree (*torro*) must not be sent to or eaten in the vicinity of the clay pit. Nine potters said if salty food is eaten clay excavation, the hands must be carefully washed. Again, there was consensus among the 30 potters that a cutlass must not be used for clay winning. The hoe, they

explained, is the appropriate tool for winning clay. The respondents explained that violation of the above taboos results in the development of cracks in the pottery wares during production or firing. Ayampoka, an elderly potter, explicates that “the taboos were formulated by their ancestors and their violation angers the ancestors who punish the offender by causing her pots to break for disobeying their laws” (personal communication, November 20, 2008).

Some of the essential tools and materials used by potters in the Sirigu community are:

1. Grog (*yorgseem*) - Potters mix the moist clay body with large quantities of grog obtained by grinding broken pottery shards on a stone. The temper, which has already been fired, reduces the cracking and breakage due to shrinking during firing.
2. Pebbles (*saase*) - Assorted sizes of very smooth pebbles are used for burnishing and decorating pottery. This is a very important tool found in the tool boxes of all the potters interviewed.
3. Broken calabash pieces (*sabese*) - Broken pieces of calabash are important tools used in shaping pottery. This tool is used for smoothening, scraping, and reducing the thickness of the pottery walls, as well as defining its curvature. They come in various shapes and sizes.

4. Pointed sticks and metals - Pointed sticks and metal are also greatly used by the potters to register very delicate designs and motifs on the bodies of the pots. They are also used in boring very small holes in special pots used for smoking fish, as well as for texturing.
5. Cement paper and goat hide (*boa gane*) - Cement paper and goat or sheep hides are normally dipped in water to extrude clay and consolidate and define the walls during the forming of pots and bowls. They are especially used in shaping the neck of both small and large pottery wares.
6. Mortar (*toore*) and pestle (*tanduga*) - The mortar and pestle are used by the potters in pounding the dried clay prior to sieving. Majority of the homesteads have mortars and pestles which are used in pounding clay. Some neighbours sometimes share the facility.
7. Earth Pigments - Assorted earth pigments such as red oxide preparations and limestone are sometimes applied onto the body of the pots and burnished to give them aesthetic appeal.

#### **4.14 Production Techniques**

Pottery production in Sirigu is carried out in six basic steps namely; preparation of the clay, forming, pre-fire decoration, drying, firing, and post-fire decoration. The pre-

firing techniques are very similar to those found among the Gurunsi and reported by Smith's (1978), in his work. There has not been any evidence of the use of corn cobs and twisted basketry strands in texturing of pottery, as stated by Smith.

#### **4.14.1 Clay preparation**

Excavated clay is usually dried and pulverized by pounding it in a wooden mortar with a wooden pestle. The powdered clay is then sieved and then moistened with water to achieve the right working consistency. The potters also mix the clay with pounded or ground grog or pieces of broken pottery. The respondents explained that the grog reduces the tendency of breakage during firing.

The potters generally agreed that the addition of grog strengthens the pot. The mixed clay is kneaded thoroughly, using the balls of the inner palm to attain homogenous consistency prior to shaping.

#### **4.14.2 Forming Techniques**

Two major forming techniques are used by the potters in Sirigu. These are the pulling or extrusion and coiling techniques, as described by Speight and Toki (1999) in Chapter Two.

##### **1. Pulling Technique**

The potter commences the pulling technique with a mass of kneaded clay on the ground, on which dry sand had been sprinkled. She first makes an impression or hollow in the middle of the clay mass. With the aid of a piece of cement paper, sheep or goatskin

dipped in water, she then positions her right thumb inside the depression while the other fingers hang outside the walls of the clay as she forces the fresh clay upward, pulling the clay upward in a circular motion and simultaneously thinning the walls with the pressure of her fingers as they travel over the mass of clay. The potter pulls the moist clay upward, by delicately pressing and sometimes adding more clay to form the walls of the pot, while turning the pot around on the floor (See Plate 43).

When the desired wall height has been achieved, the potter defines its thickness by scraping them with a piece of broken calabash on both sides of the wall. Most potters pay particular attention to the rim, finishing it with a thin roll of clay deftly worked in by the hand and smoothened with a piece of wet goat or sheep hide or cement paper, dipped in water. Relief works are normally made on the pots using pellets or coils of clay before storing the pot away to harden.

The walls of the pots formed using the pulling technique, were observed to be usually thinner, and the shape more controlled than the coiling method.



**Plate .43 Moulding of pots**

## **2. Coiling Technique**

The coiling technique, the potters explained, is used when forming large or cylindrically shaped pottery wares. The potters start at the base with a sizeable lump of clay that is moulded by the hands to define the lower portions of the pot. Thereafter, the wall is built up by adding successive rolls of clay along the courses of the clay base, in a circular pattern, consolidating them by pinching and leveling them on both sides with pieces of broken calabash.

When the desired shape has been attained, the potter forms the rim. Most often, clay is added at this point to thicken and strengthen the rim of the pot. The potter then uses pieces of moistened cement paper, goat or sheep hide to smoothen and shape the wet rim. Great care is taken to achieve a smooth, even, and well-formed rim. As one potter put it “the rim is the strength of the pot”.

Just as the pulling technique, relief ornamentation is carried out at this stage before setting the pot aside to touch-dry for a day or two before the burnishing and further decoration. The walls of the coil pots are thicker than the ones constructed with the pulling technique.

### **4.14.3 Pre- Fire Decoration**

The pot is put aside and covered with polythene sheets or pieces of cloth to touch-dry slowly for a day or two before the base of the pot is filled with additional pieces of clay and carefully dressed to give the pot stability.

The entire pot is carefully burnished with varied sizes and shapes of pebbles and pieces of calabash dipped in water, and impressed or incised with geometric or figurative

patterns. The designs are usually registered in horizontal or vertical formats onto the body of the pottery wares. Sometimes delicate designs and motifs are made with the help of pointed metals and sticks which are also used for texturing.

Slips of reddish coloured clays or limestone are also sometimes applied onto the surfaces of the pots and burnished into the body of the pots, to create contrast. After the above processes, the pottery wares are stored away in a very cool and shady place to dry.

#### **4.14.4 Drying**

The drying periods vary according to weather conditions and product size. The respondents agreed that during the dry season, the drying period could vary between three days to a week. During the rainy season, the potters explained that the pottery wares must be allowed between two weeks to one month to dry to avoid breakage during firing.

#### **4.14.5 Firing**

Pottery firing in Sirigu appears to be quite unsophisticated and very appropriate for a culture with very limited flora. The “open fire” firing system, as recorded by Speight and Toki (1999) among most traditional African pottery producers, is used in firing pottery wares in Sirigu.

Prior to firing, the pottery wares are pre-heated in the sun for about three to five hours depending on the intensity of the sun and the size of the products. All the respondents again concurred that pre-heating prepares the pots for the fire and reduces breakage.



The fuel normally used may be dried millet stalks, donkey manure, chaff from pounded and winnowed millet, grass, leaves, dry twigs or a combination of some or all of these materials. The selected materials are usually arranged with the heavier materials at the base in a circular fashion, leaving a depression in the middle, into which the pottery wares were piled. The arranged pots are then covered with dry twigs, cow dung, leaves and grasses before ignition (Plate 44). It was noticed that in most instances, firing lasts between 20 to 35 minutes, depending on the size of the fuel heap, its composition and the nature of the wind prevailing at the time of firing.

Normally, firing is carried out in the evenings when the air is quite still, so as to conserve heat and ensure adequate firing of the products.



Plate .44 Firing of Pottery

#### **4.14.6 Post-Fire Decoration**

While the pottery wares are still red-hot from the heat of firing, the potters pulled them from the hot ashes with the aid of long sticks and applied vegetable extracts either along incised lines on the pots or entirely on the bodies of the pots. The researcher observed that millet combs were dipped into the vegetable decoction and applied on the

pottery wares. The potters explained that pots intended to be used for cooking are sealed on both sides with the vegetable extract while water pots are sealed only on the outside.

The vegetable extracts darken up on the pottery wares giving a shiny black finish that has a glaze-like appearance. The respondents explained that the application of the vegetable extracts improves the porosity of the pots.

The vegetable concoction was extracted from the locust bean pods (*Acacia nilotica*) and dawadawa (*Parkia clappertonnia*) leaves or pods. The vegetable materials were crushed and boiled until the solution became syrupy. Sometimes, the potters thinned the consistency of the solution with water after it had cooled down.

#### **4.15 Motifs & Symbols**

Ornamentation of pottery wares in Sirigu is mainly dictated by aesthetic and economical considerations rather than rituals. Even though pots such as the “bagadakor” ritual pots are clearly distinguished from the other Sirigu pots due to their unique ornamentation, the researcher observed that largely, symbols and motifs are made on the pottery wares to increase their aesthetic values.

Motifs used on Sirigu pottery wares, are generally geometric and representative, similar to those used in mural works. The symbols are either depicted in horizontal or vertical registers. The representational motifs comprised totemic animal forms such as pythons, crocodiles, lizards and other domestic creatures such as cows, donkeys, guinea fowls, and chickens. One also finds stylized human figures. Plant forms are sparingly used.

Geometric symbols comprised of crescents, rhombuses, triangles, hatchings, vertical and horizontal lines. The symbols are normally depicted in low relief, incised, impressed or painted with vegetable extracts as well as earth pigments.



**Plate .45 Some pottery motifs**

#### **4.16 Cultural and Philosophical Significances of Pottery**

It is quite obvious that pots in the Sirigu society are created as solutions to problems that the women, and for that matter, the society encounters. Apart from its domestic usage for the preparation and serving of food and beverages, as well as for the storage of grains, cooking ingredients and water, pottery is employed in other different spheres in the Sirigu community.

Philosophically, the conception of children and their ultimate birth into the Sirigu society is metaphorically compared to the potting process itself. It is therefore not surprising that still-born and miscarried fetuses are buried in cooking pots which are believed to have fully passed through the complete pottery production process and have been put into use. It is believed that if the child reincarnates, he or she would be expected to traverse the full length of life, just as the pot in which he or she had been buried.

As stated earlier, the placenta of newly born babies are placed in a special pottery bowl called *lamolga* and buried on rubbish dumps. The respondents explained that the ritual is a very important spiritual exercise that helps the woman who yielded the placenta to conceive and give birth to other children in the future. The *lamolga* bowl could be exhumed and re-buried upside down in a special ritual to prevent a woman who yielded the placenta from further births by an enemy (A. Abolikoma, personal communication, December 3, 2008).

Cooking pots are also broken on the death of a woman to symbolise her alienation from the society and to make it possible for her to use the pot in the spirit world for cooking.

Again, in relation to funerals, pots are used as shrines and a container of special liquid preparations, which are believed to be magically energised by ancestral spirits for the protection of those who handled corpses in the society. According to B. Akayuura, an elderly compound head, some human beings even though clinically confirmed dead, would not like to be prepared for burial. Such corpses therefore fight with their handlers. The energised liquids therefore protect the handlers from the spirits of the dead (personal communication, November 25, 2008).

Pots also play very important roles in traditional medicine. Special herbal preparations are cooked in pots for the treatment of a plethora of diseases in the society. The use of traditional pots is believed to please benevolent spirits, who in turn imbue the herbal materials with healing properties for the treatment of diseases.

Spiritually energised materials may also be kept in pots for the protection and bestowment of good health and prosperity of an individual, a family or a clan, as typified in the use of the *bagadokor* (Plate 41) medicine pots.

As has been detected also among the Gurensi by Smith (1989), broken pieces of pots are used in the construction of shrines in the Sirigu community. The potshards are incorporated mostly on the upper parts of shrines to contain sacrifices and offerings made to ancestors and other protective spirits.

Pots also aid in communicating indigenous cultural practices and values of the people of Sirigu to the younger generation, through their constant use in funerals, religious rites, and in the domestic arena.

#### **4.17 Tourism Potentials of Architecture, Mural Decoration & Pottery in Sirigu**

##### **4.17.1 Introduction**

This chapter shall be broken down into four main sections. The first section will focus on the Tourism potentials of architecture, mural decorations, and pottery in Sirigu. The second section will present the overview current tourist inflow in Sirigu, while the third section discusses the constraints militating against the development of viable tourism industry in Sirigu.

##### **4.17.2 Tourism Potentials**

The World Tourism Organization (Wikipedia, 2009) defines tourism as "travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year

for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited". The study indicates strongly that Sirigu is endowed with a rich cultural heritage and a sound ecological environment, which if marketed properly, could become a tourist magnate.

Richards (Wikipedia, 2009) mentions that "Cultural attractions play an important role in tourism at all levels, from the global highlights of world culture to attractions that underpin local identities... Cultural heritage tourism is important for various reasons; it has a positive economic and social impact, it establishes and reinforces identity, it helps preserve the cultural heritage, with culture as an instrument it facilitates harmony and understanding among people, it supports culture and helps renew tourism".

Sirigu's unique setting has the potential of benefiting from cultural heritage tourism and ecological tourism. The Wikipedia encyclopedia explains that cultural heritage tourism is an arm of tourism that specifically targets all cultural heritages of a given locality, where the tourism is taking place. The same source explains that ecotourism targets the "flora, fauna and cultural heritage" of a given society which acts as a magnet for eco-tourists.

The respondents of the Ghana Tourist Board in Bolgatanga point out that world tourism has increased substantially over the past years, and the phenomenon will likely continue and flourish in the future. To this effect, they state that if Sirigu's cultural and ecological assets could be well coordinated and managed, they have the potential of drawing many positive social and financial gains. Apart from boosting the hospitality, transportation and restaurant businesses of the area, it would also bring in financial gains through the collection of site entrance and guided tour fees, as well as sales of

handicrafts. Furthermore the local government may generate further revenue through the collection of taxes. The proper development and promotion of the tourist assets may also create prestige for the centre, thereby generating interest and appreciation of the cultural and ecological interests of the center internationally they add.

The respondents assert that the above tourism spin-offs could contribute to the general standard of living of the people in the locality, as well as decelerating the migration of the youths from the locality to the southern sector of Ghana for greener pastures.

Despite the laudable attributes of the tourism potentials detailed above, the interviewees explain that infrastructure development, pollution, disturbance of animals, disdain for the local people, erosion, and prostitution could characterize the tourism industry. They add however, that if the tourism centre is well organized and managed, the inauspicious effects could be totally minimized.

#### **4.17.3 Overview of Current Tourist Inflow**

The compound heads admit that tourists have been coming to Sirigu since time immemorial. The visitors, they explain, mostly visited their homesteads to take photographs of the architecture, mural works, and the pottery products. Some of the respondents add that some of the tourists who were mainly whites, stayed with them to understudy the construction and production processes of the various art forms.

Various sums of money and gifts such as clothing, biscuits, drinks, sweets, and magazines, according to the respondents, were given to them by the tourists over the years. Artefacts such as pottery wares and baskets were purchased by the tourists.

In 1999, the Sirigu Women Organization of Pottery and Art (SWOPA), was formed by a retired female educationist, Melani Kassise, to organize the female artists into a group to properly exploit the advantages of the tourist and art industry. The SWOPA organization was able to mobilize funds to construct a handicraft exhibition hall, which also acts as a gallery. The organization consulted the owners of some of the homesteads by the roadside and other conspicuous areas of the community, and agreeable terms negotiated with them, to receive tourists. SWOPA later contacted the Ghana Tourist Board in Bolga, which assisted the organization in training a male tour guide, who conduct visitors around the community, after paying some agreed sum of money to SWOPA.

In 2003 SWOPA constructed a guest house to accommodate visitors who would like to stay in the community for some time. Currently, SWOPA has one self-contained room, three double rooms, and a large hall consisting of 5-beds for renting at GHC 15.00, GHC 10.00 and GHC 30.00 respectively. Solar panels are used to provide energy for the facility since the site has not been connected to the national electricity grid.

According to the senior tour guide, between five to fifteen tourists visit Sirigu every week. Majority of the visitors, he states, are foreigners. He adds that most of the tourists are interested in photographing the mural decorations, visiting the traditional homesteads, and observing the production of pottery. Some of the tourists also participate in mural decoration sessions organised by SWOPA. Foreign visitors entering the Sirigu gallery pay GHC 1.50, while their local counterparts are charged GHC 1.00. Guided tours to the homesteads attract a fee of GHC 2.00 for foreign tourists and GHC1.50



respectively for local visitors. A flat fee of GHC 5.00 is levied for all artistic demonstrations in mural decoration and pottery production.

In relation to the sales of handicrafts, the senior tour guide points out that most tourists usually purchase handicrafts from the SWOPA gallery or from individual producers in the Sirigu community. The favourite artefacts purchased by the tourists, he explains are small pottery wares, paintings and baskets.

When asked how the people in Sirigu benefit from the tourist business, the senior tour guide explains that SWOPA buys handicrafts from individual artisans to stock the gallery, thereby putting money constantly in the pockets of the artisans. He further adds that the homesteads visited by the tourists are paid an agreed sum of money by SWOPA. Some of the tourists, he points out are very generous and assist some of the local people in various ways, such as the paying of school fees. He also states that the tourism activities in Sirigu made it possible for him and his colleagues working at SWOPA to be employed.

#### **4.17.4 Constraints**

Even though the data detailed above point to the fact that Sirigu has been receiving tourists beyond recorded history, this study reveals that the full potentials of the site have not been fully exploited, due to some constraints. The study also exposes that while some of the tourists are dissatisfied with existing accommodation structures, others persistently exhibit tendencies of disrespect for the people of the community.

The Bradt Travel Guides (2006) records the disappointment of some of the visitors who stayed at the Sirigu guesthouse in the following words “The huts at the

Guesthouse are not tidy and rather unappealing... The staff at the SWOPA were men only... no fridge for a cold drink, even Fanta” (p. 372). The above statement shows that even though SWOPA has made provision for accommodating tourists, their standards do not meet the expectation of some of the visitors.

The senior tour guide explains that even though a borehole has been dug at the site to harvest water, the absence of powered pump makes it difficult sometimes to meet the requirements of the tourists staying at their premises. He also explicates that the poor nature of the road linking Sirigu to the Bolgatanga – Navrongo trunk roads makes it difficult for some vehicles to ply the road. Tourists are therefore heavily charged by taxi drivers, thereby discouraging many potential tourists. He also remarks that some of the tourists would like to sleep in traditionally built homesteads among the people, instead of the concrete chalets built on the premises of SWOPA.

The guide also lamented that some tourists are disrespectful to the local people. Visitors photographed people’s compounds without their consent. In some cases, the tourists penetrate the community without passing through the SWOPA visitors centre, thereby depriving the centre of its expected revenue. He points out that the Chinese, Koreans, and most Asians are guilty of the above mentioned misdemeanours. Some of the indigenes of Sirigu, according to the senior tour guide, also harass and hustle visitors, begging for money and other favours, thereby dishonouring the community.

#### **4.17.5 Summary**

The data captured above clearly reveals that Sirigu could benefit from cultural heritage and ecological tourism if the community and its activities are well packaged and

managed. The current overview of tourism in Sirigu also reveals that tourists have been visiting the community for some time and some of the members of the community have benefited either in kind or cash from the tourists. The activities of Sirigu Women Organization of Pottery and Art (SWOPA) in promoting tourism in Sirigu could be seen as a humble beginning. Even though the effort of the organization is laudable, it is also obvious that more needs to be done by SWOPA to meet the standards and needs of the tourists.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **5.1 Summary**

The findings of the study as detailed in Chapter Four clearly reveal that architecture, mural decoration and pottery in the Sirigu culture evolved generally as a solution to the cultural needs of the people of the society. The architecture was developed to conform to the needs of the people, taking into consideration their cosmological beliefs, agricultural practices as well as other cultural values. The architectural styles have been perfected over the years, and are conservatively practiced because the system seems to be quite effective and suitable for not only the current generation, but all those that preceded it.

Clearly, the correlation of architecture, mural decoration and pottery in Sirigu culture can not be overlooked. It is quite obvious that earth, provides the main raw materials for the creation of all the three art forms. As has been detected by Smith (1998) among the Gurensi, who could be found in the same administrative region as the Nankanis, the earth is seen as a life nourishing force, which is very much active in both the spiritual and physical worlds. The above cultural philosophy conspicuously links the three art forms to the cosmological beliefs of the indigenous people of Sirigu. It could also be premised that the people of Sirigu and the Gurensi, have similar religious believes.

The organic nature of the raw materials used in the construction of homesteads, mural decorations and pottery production, does not only present readily available raw

materials for practicing the above art forms, but also makes it possible for the people to live harmoniously with nature, since only environmentally friendly materials are used by the people of the community.

Traditional architecture, mural decoration and pottery, clearly reveals the cultural beliefs of the people of Sirigu. While it has been found that it is the duty of the Head of the compound to spiritually and physically protect the inmates of the homestead, as is typified in the positioning of his room near the entrance of the homestead, it is equally apparent that it is the duty of the wife or wives of the compound head and other male occupants of the homesteads to nutritionally and hygienically sustain the people living within the compound. The head of the compound fulfils this mandate by constructing the compound, together with shrines, which serve as a contact between his family, ancestors and other spirit beings, as well as making sure that sacrifices and offerings are performed to ensure good health and bounty harvest towards the sustenance of the family. The head woman plays her role by sanitizing her environment using *bambolse* or mural decoration, which also exhibits her beliefs, concerns, interests, and aspirations. The creation of pottery wares also helps the head woman to accomplish her mandatory obligation of nutritionally sustaining the family. The pottery wares help the Sirigu woman to fetch and store water, cook, store cooking ingredients and other personal belongings.

It is also crystal clear from the research findings that the role of the Sirigu woman extends beyond domestic sanitization, beautification, and nutritional sustenance. It projects into the public arena. This is so because, areas where mural decorations are highly concentrated, exude a special aesthetic aura, which impacts dulcetly on the general spatial environment within the community. Mural works therefore, in this case,

can not be said to be only limited to the domestic arena, but also aids in sanitizing and beautifying the Sirigu society as a whole.

Pottery usage in medicine and public religious rites again, makes it not only a domestic art form, but a public one as well. The Tendaana or earth priest for example, uses a lot of pottery wares in rituals for the protection of the entire society against disease, bad luck, famine and against black magic, while the traditional healer uses pots in preparing varied herbal decoctions for the treatment of many sicknesses. The people who are treated by the traditional healers are not only from a particular homestead but from the general public. Pottery therefore could be seen as being in the service of the entire society. The pottery making process in Sirigu, the researcher has detected, is metaphorically compared to the birth and nurturing of human beings. Just as human beings are born and taught many things in their formative years to prepare them for life, pots are also delicately and meticulously made and fired, to become useful objects within the society. A pot must be perfectly made and ornamented to meet the acceptable standards of the society. An ornamented pottery is seen as a bejewelled human being. As indicated by A. Ayumgpurum, a good pottery ware must be well formed and decorated to be accepted (personal communication, October 9, 2008). Ornamentation itself is therefore not seen as an afterthought, but an integral aspect of the pottery making process.

Perfectly constructed and ornamented pottery wares increase the market worthiness of the product. Since pottery is not only employed in domestic and ritual settings, but also sold for money or commuted for goods such as dry fish and salt in Sirigu. The study of Aronson (1991) reveals that in Africa “Women's arts can be either exchanged in kind, for the benefit of maintaining household and gender relations, or

exchanged within a larger market system. Either way, women's arts can feature as an important part of the domestic economy” (p. 569).

Communal labour as employed during architectural construction and mural decoration in Sirigu, is an important social tool used in instilling not only good neighbourliness and communal sharing. But the practice, apart from providing a reliable and seasonal labour force, also makes it possible for all within the Sirigu society to own a descent homestead, befitting the status of the society. The use of communal labour in architectural construction and mural decoration, also presents an effective platform for instructing the youth in techniques of building, mural decoration, and essential cultural values.

The use of a limited palette of colours in mural decoration may be due to their availability in the olden days to the innovators of the tradition. Lack of additions to the colour range by subsequent generations could be due to absence of other colour choices or conservatism on the side of the practitioners. The explanation for the absence of a coherent colour symbolism as revealed in the study relating to mural decoration could be due to cultural and religious acculturation, through which the colour symbolisms were lost.

## **5.2 Constraints**

Traditionally built homesteads, mural decorations and pottery production traditions in Sirigu; which have the potential for generating income through tourism are being gradually given up because of the dictates of globalization.

The study carried out reveals that foreign materials and forms are gradually being appreciated by the youth and some of the elderly people in the Sirigu society, than the indigenous ones due to their permanence. Cement block buildings, roofed with iron roofing sheets are gradually erupting on the geographical landscape of Sirigu. Instead of the aesthetically appealing mural decorations, coal tar is rather being used on some of the walls. Pottery wares are being replaced with metal and rubber containers in most homes. Even though the foreign materials listed above may have the advantages of longevity, permanence and convenience, its proliferation imposes a devastating impact on the tourism potential and cultural systems of the society.

The respondents explain that the limited annual rainfall which has characterized the Sirigu society for the past years has totally reduced annual yields from the farms. Those organizing communal labour have to source for funds elsewhere to acquire enough food and beverages to feed the labour force. This makes it difficult for many to organize communal labour to renovate dilapidated homesteads or ornament their walls.

The introduction of formal education has to some extent also worked against the sustenance of traditional art forms within the community. Most youth from Sirigu who had received formal education turn to cherish imported customs and traditions, to the detriment of the indigenous ones. To many of such people, anything that has to do with the indigenous culture is considered archaic and primitive.

The high rate of migration of the youth from the community to the southern in search of greener pastures, does not only make it impossible for them to receive the necessary training in architectural construction, mural decoration and pottery production. But the trips expose them to foreign lifestyles which they attempt to replicate on their



return. The lifestyles of the returnees become the norm which most young persons in the Sirigu society longs for. Earth-built homesteads, mural decorations and pottery wares are therefore erroneously considered by some of the youth as items for the elderly and for that matter the unenlightened.

Despite the above constraints, the fact that the above art forms are still being practiced may be due partly to the conservative nature of the society or the existence of a large number of adherents of traditional religion within the Sirigu society, fueling the continuation of the art forms. It could be surmised, therefore, that the very existence of traditional religion, depends largely on the above mentioned art forms.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

To ameliorate the constraints militating against the sustenance of traditional architecture, mural decoration and pottery production in the Sirigu community, as well as to profit from the tourism potentials of the art forms and the cultural setting, the following recommendations are being put forward for consideration;

1. The mural and pottery motifs should be promoted to ensure their incorporation and usage in interior decorations, furniture decorations, textiles designs, graphic designs, public mural works, jewellery design, publishing, and other artistic fields to immortalize the motifs.

2. A community museum must be built to showcase the artistic, cultural, and historical items from Sirigu. This would help the community to organize itself better to receive tourists. The museum would not only influence the resurgence of cultural

expressions such as dances and oral traditions, but also form the foundation for a process of social cohesion, encouraging local inhabitants to voluntarily deposit family and clan objects for preservation and income generation.

3. International and local exhibitions of cultural and visual artifacts by SWOPA and the Sirigu traditional council could go a long way in drawing the attention of investors and tourist alike to the community to assist in the sustenance of the art forms and the development of the community.

4. Hotels and guest houses in the region and beyond should be encouraged to use Sirigu mural compositions on their walls to advertise the art form and draw attention to the Sirigu community. SWOPA could even lobby for the decoration contract, as way of generating income to sustain its activities and to put money into the pockets of the women.

5. A successful development of the tourist facilities in Sirigu depend on the active involvement of the government, businessmen, tour operators, craftspeople, hotel operators, and many others. Sirigu traditional council and SWOPA must identify the above stakeholders and join forces to pool resources and ideas towards the development of tourism in Sirigu.

6. Since the special charm and uniqueness of the artistic and cultural facilities within the Sirigu community is what will draw visitors, attempts must be made, however small, to reinvigorate interest in earth architecture, mural decoration and pottery production in the community. This could be done through annual competitions and educating the youth on the importance of the art forms during home-coming festivals.

7. Promotional materials and projects such as posters, brochures, radio, television, newspaper and magazine advertisements and the development of a rich website, could all go a long way in actively marketing and promoting Sirigu as the premier responsible tourism destination, thereby drawing tourists to the community.

8. The tourist lodging facilities and services in Sirigu must be improved to meet the standard of visitors. Since satisfied, excited visitors would send knowledge home and send friends off to experience the same thing. This would provide continuing business for the destination.

9. An attempt must be made by SWOPA to construct earth built homesteads within the Sirigu community to cater for visitors who would like to stay in such facilities to learn about and observe local etiquette. This gives the residents the opportunity to learn how to deal with foreigners and vice versa.

10. SWOPA must take advantage of all available training opportunities provided by the industry and ensure that the local tourist guides and other tourist service providers working within their organizations are continuously trained, to upgrade their skills to meet the exigencies of the tourism industry.

11. SWOPA must negotiate with tour operators to include Sirigu in their tour itineraries. This could be done by giving the tour operators some agreed percentage of total money realized through each visit.

12. SWOPA and the Sirigu traditional council must ensure that the people within the Sirigu community benefit from the tourism activities to ensure their full participation in promoting and sustaining the facilities.

13. SWOPA must ensure that their workers receive reasonable wages and remunerations based on qualifications, experience and merits. It must also ensure that congenial working environment and conditions are created to ensure the best productivity of its workers.

14. SWOPA must consider negotiating with some taxi and bus drivers from Bolgatanga and Navrongo to convey tourists from designated locations in the above mentioned communities to Sirigu. This would eradicate the tendency of arbitrary and capricious charging and extortion of potential tourists. The selected drivers must be trained in customer relations and etiquette in order to enhance their services and allow them to play important roles in the tourism industry.

15. The Kassena Nankana District Assembly must consider improving the road linking Kandiga and Sirigu to improve accessibility and allow Sirigu to unleash its tourism potential.

#### **5.4 Future Research Opportunities**

1. Three future research opportunities have been identified by the researcher. The three proposed research opportunities are, by no means, exhaustive. However, within the context of this study, they have been identified as the most significant of the available opportunities. It is believed that research into the proposed areas would build upon this present study.

2. To throw more light on the cultural significance and philosophy of the Sirigu art forms, the correlation of architecture, mural decoration, pottery production and the traditional religion in Sirigu need to be explored further.

3. The general effects of foreign influence on architecture, mural decoration and pottery production in the Sirigu community, must be studied to determine the extent at which it is positively or negatively affecting the above mentioned art forms.

The researcher has discovered that new innovative motifs are being developed by some of the artisans within the Sirigu community. Even though most of these motifs depicted foreign ideas, which are alien to Sirigu, their aesthetic effects on the community cannot be overemphasized. Documentation of this new development could greatly compliment the current study.

### **5.5 Validation of Research Questions**

Needless to say, the study does not purport to cover all areas relating to raw materials, techniques, and motifs in the production of architecture, mural decoration and pottery production in the Sirigu community, nor does it claim to have analyzed all the roles the art forms played in the Sirigu community, or identified all the tourism potentials of the art forms detailed above. However, that did not detract from the fact that a substantial contribution has been made in the areas of architecture, mural decoration, and pottery production in the Sirigu community by the researcher. By limiting the scope of the study, the researcher was able to more thoroughly focus on the proposed research questions and satisfactorily respond to them, as indicated below:

**1. What are the materials, techniques, and motifs used in the production of architecture, mural paintings and pottery in the Sirigu community?**

The field study reveals that loam, clay, laterite, cow dung, donkey dung, wood, grass coal tar, and iron roofing sheets are currently used in architectural constructions, whiles sandy soil, vegetable decoctions, cow dung, black earth, red oxide and lime stones are the basic materials employed in mural decorations. The study further shows that clay; grog and vegetable decoctions are used in pottery production in the Sirigu community.

The literature review and the field study identified two architectural construction techniques namely “atakpame” (Anquandah 2007) and “banco” (Prussin 1974) as the main traditional construction techniques used in Sirigu. The data collected divulges that earth relief works are combined with painting to embellish the architectural walls. Pottery production on the other hand utilizes both the “pulling” and “coiling” (Speight and Toki 1999) techniques to form pottery wares. Ornamentations on pottery, the study shows are carried out using relief works, incisions, impressions, burnishing, clay slip applications, and vegetable decoction painting techniques.

The research shows that the motifs used in mural works and on pottery are evolved by women based on cultural norms, mythologies, morale, events, adages and caprices. The study shows further that potters and mural decorators copiously shared motifs. Motifs used in mural works and pottery, as revealed by the study are either figurative or geometric in nature. Crescents, rhombuses, triangles, hatchings, vertical and horizontal lines are the basic geometric symbols used, whiles the figurative motifs comprised of stylized human beings and animals. The motifs are either painted, incised, impressed or in relief.

## **2. What roles do these art forms play in the culture of Sirigu?**

The investigation shows explicitly that architecture, mural decoration and pottery play very important roles in the Sirigu culture. Architecture provides shelter, space for storage, as well as rearing of livestock. It also provides an arena for procreation, celebration of birth, naming ceremonies, marriages, and funeral rites. The research also manifests that architecture in Sirigu also provides the stage for contact between physical and spiritual beings through the use of shrines and alters. It is also a status symbol that could reveal the social condition and numerical strength of its dwellers.

Mural decoration in Sirigu on the other hand, as the study establishes, codifies the cultural values, morale, totemic figures, events, aspirations, mythologies, and caprices from the perspective of women. This helps in the preservation of some essential cultural facets of the Sirigu society. The study demonstrates that the visual symbols in the murals also help in precipitating verbal discourses towards the ameliorations of some societal problems. It also protects the walls of homesteads from early deterioration, beautifies the environment, defines private space, and reveals the status of the women living within the walls of the homesteads.

The communal nature of architectural construction and mural decoration, the study shows, fosters community cohesion and healthy competitions among the practitioner. In mural decoration, the research further reveals that the communal nature of the art form presents a unique stage for the launching of new musical compositions and dance formations.

It is also clearly evident through the study that a large repertoire of pottery produced in sirigu are used in the immediate domestic settings, for the preparation and

serving of food, fetching and storage of water, preparation and storage of shea butter, brewing, storing and serving of *pito* beer, baking of millet bread, smoking of fish, chicken, guinea fowls and all types of meat. Pottery wares in the Sirigu community, the study exposes are also important crucibles used for the preparation of herbal medicine, shrine construction, containment of spiritually energized materials, and used in birth and funeral rites. Philosophically, the potting process is metaphorically compared to human conception, birth and upbringing. Pottery shards are pounded and reincorporated into new pottery wares to strengthen them and project the concept of reincarnation. The study indicates that the general usage of pottery in the socio-cultural activities and rituals in the Sirigu community helps in preserving and perpetuating those aspects of the society.

### **3. What are the tourism potentials?**

The empirical data collected explicitly shows that Sirigu is endowed with rich artistic, cultural, and ecological assets that could promote “cultural heritage tourism”. The study proves that some degree of tourism had already been taking place in Sirigu since time immemorial. It has been explained by the respondents from Ghana Tourist Board in Bolgatanga that the artistic, cultural and ecological assets of Sirigu if well managed and promoted has the potential of having a positive economical impact on Sirigu as well as the local government agency administering the area. To this effect, the researcher made some recommendations for the consideration of SWOPA and its stakeholders.



## **5.6 Conclusion**

Despite the referenced shortcomings or limitations of the study, the fact remains that the study satisfied its outlined objectives and validated its research questions.

The findings of the study therefore allow for the research to conclude with the assertion that traditional architecture, mural decoration, and pottery production in the Sirigu society are evolved to meet the various needs of the society. The art forms embody great percentages of the cultural values and history of the people of the society. The study also clearly expresses that raw materials used in the production of the art forms are sourced from the immediate geographical environment, and are organic in nature, therefore environmentally friendly and quite economical. The research also proves that the above mentioned art forms have very important tourism potentials, which if properly tapped and managed, could enrich the Sirigu society and its environs, as well as generating a substantial foreign exchange for the country.

The author has also made vital recommendations which could go a long in sustaining the above mentioned art forms in the Sirigu community, as well as boosting its tourist assets and services.

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**APPENDIX**  
**SAMPLE INTERVIEW GUIDES**

**ARCHITECTURE**

1. Could you please give me your name?
2. Could you please give me the history of architectural construction in Sirigu?
3. How are sites selected for architectural construction?
4. What activities are carried out before the actual construction?
5. What materials are used in the construction of the structures?
6. Where do you get the materials from?
7. What roles do men, women and children play in the construction process?
8. What special role does the compound owner play in the construction process?
9. What processes are involved in the constructing the walls?
10. How is the floor of the compound constructed?
11. How do you construct the roofs?
12. What tools are used?
13. Do you observe any taboos during the construction of compounds?
14. Why do you put shrines near the compounds?
15. Apart from housing, what other roles do architectural structures play in the Sirigu community?
16. What is the local name for compound?
17. Could you please give me the local names of all the rooms and spaces of your compound?

18. Why are some buildings abandoned?
19. What is the average lifespan of a compound?
20. Why do people now prefer cement block houses to the earth built ones?
21. How is the knowledge transferred to the younger ones?
22. At what age does the training commence?
23. How long does it take to master the construction techniques?
24. Do tourists visit your home?
25. What are their interests?

### **MURAL DECORATION**

1. Could you please give me your name?
2. Could you please give me the history of mural decoration in Sirigu?
3. Who taught you how to decorate walls?
4. Why do you decorate your walls?
5. Do you normally decorate your walls alone?
6. How many communities in Sirigu still decorate their walls with murals?
7. What is the local name for murals?
8. Which of the sexes is responsible for mural decoration in sirigu?
9. Which sectors within the compound are decorated?
10. What preparations are carried out before decoration?
11. What raw materials are used for mural decorations
12. Where are the materials sourced from?
13. What are the major processes used in mural decoration?
14. What tools are used?

15. How do you generate your motifs?
16. Can any motif be used anywhere on the walls of the compound?
17. Could you please mention the names of the motifs you used on your walls and what they symbolize?
18. Do the colours used have any symbolism?
19. How are relief designs made?
20. At what point are relief designs used?
21. Do you observe any taboos/ ritual before or after decoration?
22. What finishing methods are used?
23. How long does it take to master the mural decoration techniques?
24. How is the knowledge transferred to the younger ones?
25. At what age are women trained in mural decoration?
26. What is the lifespan of a mural?
27. What is the best season for making murals?
28. How important are murals in the Sirigu society?
29. Why many compounds are left undecorated?
30. Do tourists visit your home?
31. What are their interests?

## **POTTERY**

1. Could you please give me your name?
2. Could you please give me the history of pottery production in Sirigu?
3. How many communities in Sirigu still produce pottery?
4. What is the local name for pottery?



5. Who taught you how to make pottery?
6. Which of the sexes is responsible for the production of pottery in sirigu?
7. What raw materials are used in pottery production in Sirigu?
8. Where are the materials sourced from?
9. What major preparations are carried out before production?
10. What are the major techniques used in forming a pot?
11. What tools are used?
12. What motifs do you use on your pots?
13. How do you generate your motifs?
14. What do they symbolize?
15. How are the designs made?
16. Do you observe any taboos/ ritual before or after pottery production?
17. How long does it take to master the pottery making techniques?
18. What types of pottery do you produce?
19. What types of pots are produced in the Sirigu community?
20. Could you please mention the local names of the pottery wares you know?
21. How is the knowledge transferred to the younger ones?
22. At what age are women trained in pottery making?
23. What is the best season for pottery making?
24. What are the uses of pots in the Sirigu society?
25. What materials are used in firing pottery wares?
26. What preparations are carried out before firing?
27. How is firing done?

28. How long does firing take?
29. What finishing methods are used?
30. Do tourists visit your home?
31. What are their interests?

## **TOURISM**

1. Could you please tell me when Sirigu women's Organization of Pottery and Art was established?
2. What was the motivation for the establishment of the organization?
3. How do you fund your operations?
4. What is the history of the tourism business in Sirigu?
5. Averagely, how many tourists come to Sirigu each day?
6. Which sites/ art forms are they most interested in?
7. Do the tourists have any special demands?
8. What facilities do you have for hosting tourists?
9. How much do you charge for your services?
10. Do you provide any sort of training for your staff members?
11. How do the local artisans and the community benefit from your operations?
12. What are some of the constraints you encounter in the delivery of your services?
13. Do you think the tourism business in Sirigu could be developed better than it is now?
14. What do you think could be done to boost the tourism business in Sirigu?
15. Which tourism service providers are you affiliated with?

