

**A STUDY OF SELECTED INDIGENOUS GHANAIAAN WOMEN IN SOME
INDIGENOUS VISUAL ARTS**

By

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B.A. ART (INTEGRATED RURAL ART AND INDUSTRY)**

**A Thesis submitted to the Department of General Art Studies,
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of**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, this submission is my own work towards the PhD 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 of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Finally, all aspects of this study have been discussed with and approved by my supervisor, Dr. B.K. Dogbe.

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I declare that I have supervised the student in undertaking the study submitted herein. The student has been consistent in his interaction with me for guidance and direction. He has my consent to present it for assessment.

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that except for references to other people's works which have been duly acknowledged this thesis is the candidates own account of his research.

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Mrs. Nana Afia Opoku-Asare
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Signature

.....
Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to all female artists especially my wife, Sally Esi Asante and my mother, Mrs. Gladys Asante

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Praises and thanks to the Almighty through whose guidance and protection I have been able to go through my education.

One cannot write a study of this nature without incurring a lot of indebtedness to those who helped in diverse ways to make the research possible. First and foremost, I wish to express my sincere and immeasurable thanks to my supervisors, Dr. B.K. Dogbe and Dr. O. Osei Agyeman for their constructive suggestions and criticisms and more so their tolerance and attentiveness in supervising the study to its successful completion.

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While I am greatly indebted to all these people, I am solely responsible for any defect in this work.

ABSTRACT

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TITLE : A STUDY OF SELECTED INDIGENOUS GHANAIAAN
WOMEN IN SOME INDIGENOUS GHANAIAAN
VISUAL ARTS
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Women historically have played and are still playing enormous roles in the Socio-economic development of art both as visual artists and as themes of art works; but who would know? In Africa and around the world, men get almost all the attention for their creative endeavors. But with the multitude of roles the woman assume in Africa, especially in Ghana, as – mother, housekeeper, cook, water carrier, economic contributor and often sole provider , when would the woman have a chance to make her own artistic statement or voice her concern on this issue?

This research work therefore is an attempt to explore, figure out and document some artistic roles, which women play in this age of gender equality and national development; focusing mainly on Selected Indigenous Ghanaian women

1. Pottery and Ceramics,
2. Mural and
3. (Weaving) Basketry.

In this light, the researcher attempts to bring to identify and document the traditional roles of some Ghanaian women in selected indigenous Ghanaian visual arts. The study also seeks to investigate the roles, which women are playing in some indigenous visual arts for national development and also examines and discusses the use of women as themes in some Ghanaian arts.

Studies such as this one would readers to know the extent to which Ghanaian women are involved in the productions, promotions, and distributions of some major Ghanaian traditional visual arts. This document also plays a very unique role of providing information to scholars, ethnographers, policy makers, art historians, gender activists, sociologists, and women organizations.

The information contained in this thesis may be integrated in the developmental plans and actions of the policy makers of this nation, Ghana. It will contribute to knowledge on Gender and Art.

The research methods used are the descriptive and analytical survey methods. The research tools employed are: questionnaire, interviews, observation, photography and video recording. The scope of the study has been limited to works produced by selected indigenous Ghanaian women in some indigenous visual arts such as pottery, weaving (Basketry) and Mural Paintings at Kpando, Bolga, and Sirigu. However, a brief mention will be made in comparison with other places where women are involved in the indigenous arts.

The final study is presented in six (6) chapters in the following order:

Chapter one begins with an introduction – a general commentary of issues on the topic and the background study follows before the problem statement. Then the Objectives, hypothesis, assumption, delimitation, limitation, justification of objectives, statement of purpose, importance of the study, research methodology, definition of concepts, the arrangement of chapters and lastly an ethnographic background of Ghanaian women.

The second, Chapter Two, reviews the literature pertinent to the subject of this thesis. References that have a bearing on the topic from available published and unpublished sources were used.

Chapter three presents the methodology of the study by giving a background to the geographical study area and the instruments that have been used in gathering information.

Chapter Four displays the analyses of data from the field study with a presentation and discussion of major findings; Thus selected Ghanaian women as indigenous potters, mural artists, basket artists and Ghanaian women as themes of some visual arts.

The final Chapter, five deals with discussions, summary, and conclusion and recommendations based on the research findings.

It is highly recommended that women artists be given all the needed attention in Ghana; since this would go a long way to develop the country socially and economically.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

Women as artists and themes of artefacts are burgeoning all over Africa, but they have not been accorded much attention. Within Africa and around the world, men get almost all the attention for their creative accomplishments. With the huge number of roles women assume in Africa, especially in Ghana, as – housekeeper, mother, economic contributor, cook, water carrier, and often sole provider and also due to some socio-cultural relegation of women to the background when would the woman have a chance to make her own artistic proclamation or voice her concern on this issue? Throughout history, most societies have thought that women in the field of Art are of inferior status compared to that of men especially when it comes to the visual arts; thus women as visual artists and women as themes of visual art works. In many societies for instance, most people have the notion and belief that women are less intelligent and creative in nature, and are moreover emotionally, spiritually and physically weaker than men.

But it has been observed by many scholars like Gloria Nikoi (1993) and Jane Irina Adu (1999) that both men and women generally have the same level of creative and intellectual capabilities, this means that given the same materials and task the woman (not necessarily an artist) may do it as well as the man would and may be even better.

For instance, the 6th March, 2008 edition of the Daily Graphic captures the veteran Ghanaian artist , Mrs Theodosia Salome Oko, who designed Ghana's national flag and seven out of the ten brilliant Members of Parliament of the first Republic (Appendix A)

The database below also highlights on some distinct achievements made by some Ghanaian women in other fields:

- Women Parliamentarians

In the Second Republic (October, 1969 – 12 January, 1972)

- i. Miss Lydia Akandodipo (Sandema) Has since died.
- ii. Miss. Catherine Tedam (Chiana – Paga)

In the Third Republic (24th September, 1979 – 30th December, 1981)

- i. Miss Agatha Awuah
- ii. Miss Grace Atinka
- iii. Mrs. Dorcas Commey

Others are:

The first Ghanaian woman to become Chief Nursing Officer shortly after Ghana's Independence on 6th March, 1957, was Miss Docea A. N. Kisseih, a product of Achimota Secondary School.

The first Ghanaian woman to qualify as a Dental Surgeon was Mrs. Ayensu (nee Vardon), wife of Mr. K.B. Ayensu, former Clerk of Parliament and later Chief of State Protocol. She died in 1996.

The first Ghanaian woman Journalist in the then Gold Coast was Miss.Akua Asabea Ayisi.

The first Ghanaian woman to hold a cabinet Appointment in the Nkrumah Regime was the late Mrs. Susuana Alhassan.

The first woman to be trained as a Police Officer in Britain in the 1990s was Madam Dekowski.

The first woman Director, Institute of Adult Education and second woman Professor in Ghana is Prof. (Mrs.) Miranda Greenstreet.

The first woman Dean of Faculty of Law is Prof. (Mrs.) Akua Kuenyehia. Other women Professors are Prof. Ardeyfiio Schandorf, Prof. Naa Afarley Sackeyfiio of Cape Coast University, Prof. Araba Van Apt. etc.

The first woman High Court Judge was late Mrs. Justice Annie Jiagge.

The first graduate to enter Parliament in the First Republic- Mrs. Victoria Nyarko at the age of Twenty Six (26) years.

The First woman Minister of Education in the First Republican was the late Mrs. Susuana Alhassan. A member of Council of State.

The first woman Member of Council of State is Dr. (Mrs.) Mary Grant.

The first woman Minister for Foreign Affairs and a pioneer woman who initiated a Rural Bank is Mrs. Gloria Nikoi (Akwapim Rural Bank at Mamfe). The first woman Editor, Ms. Elizabeth Ohene, formerly of Daily Graphic. The first woman President of Ghana Journalists Association is Mrs. Gifty Afanyi Dadzie. The first woman Trotro Driver is Sweet Mother at Adenta., The first woman Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax is Mrs. Janet Opoku-Akyeampong of Internal Revenue Service, Head Office.

The first woman Director, Ministry of Agriculture is Mrs. Baaba Sekyi

The first woman Director, Ministry of labour and Social Welfare is Mrs. Katriku.

The first woman Minister for Labour, Ms. Adisa Munkaila in the Third Republic.

The first woman Executive Board Member of TUC, Ghana was Ms. Rebecca Nunoofio.

The first woman National Union Chairperson of Health Services Workers Union of TUC, Ghana was the late Ms. Elizabeth Azah.

The first woman Acting General Secretary of Local Government Workers Union of TUC, Ghana - Mrs. Lucy Osei.

The first woman District Secretary of Kurnasi in the First Republic was Mrs. Mary Osei. The first woman Managing Director of Ghana Food Distribution Corporation was Ms. Mancell, a Lawyer.

The first woman Managing Director of Ghana Commercial Bank - Mrs. Rebecca Locke. The first Queen mother to proclaim herself as Omanhene at Asante Juaben was late Nana Juaben Serwaa.

The first powerful Queen mother who charged the Asante's to go to war in 1901 with the colonial masters (the British) because of oppression and suppression was the late Nana Yaa Asantewaa, Queen mother of Ejisu-Asante

The first woman entrepreneur who manufactured canned fruits, beverages, etc. is Dr. (Mrs.) Esther Ocloo of Nkulenu Industries.

The two women educationists to establish International Schools are:

- a. Mrs. Comfort Engmann of North Ridge Lyceum,
- b. Late Mrs. Esmine Sereboe, Morning Star School

The first woman Executive Secretary of Women World Bank was Mrs. Esther Ghann, an Executive Banker of Barclays Bank, Ghana,

The first Deputy Director (Admin.) (MDPI) Management Development and Productivity latitudes, Headquarters - Mrs. Comfort Okraku.

The first young woman Miner to go to the pit (underground) was Ms. Comfort Amissah at Tarkwa Goldfields.

The first woman Dramatist & Poet and Chairperson of Ghana National Commission on Children - late Mrs. Efua Sutherland (Children's Park named after her).

The first woman Producer of Women's Magazine "Obaa Sima" - Mrs. Kate Abbam.

The first woman Executive Secretary for National Council on Women and Development (NCWD Mrs. Comfort Nartey.

The first woman Executive Secretary for National Commission on Children - Mrs. Comfort Caulley-Hanson.

The first woman Regional .Secretary (Greater Accra) Mrs. Taylor, formerly with UNLCEF.

The first woman to write a book on Educational Reforms on Life Skills is Mrs. Jane Irina Adu formerly of West Africa Secondary School, Accra and now the Managing Directress of Horizon Publications and the Green Velvet Enterprise, Accra.

From the foregoing catalogue of some prominent women in our society, it could be seen that when girls are educated, they may be better placed to contribute effectively to the development of the country. An educated woman is even more of a blessing for the home, in that she makes it a happy and lovely place to live. She receives visitors, serves and listens to any problems brought to be solved with a touch of finesse. By going through formal education, they are able to overcome that inherent self depreciation normally found in illiterate women. Women are the hub of the society. They hold families and societies together by displaying their deep

love and affection for all. For this reason, when they are educated they help to solve the problem of child labour since they understand why their children should also be educated. They are particularly situated to help curb population as they understand the need for Family Planning. In a home where the mother is educated, waste may be avoided in that she may know how to put limited resources to efficient use. She may cook under hygienic conditions and makes sure her food contains the necessary food nutrients which keep the body strong and healthy. The knowledge they acquire at school concerning sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies may put fear in them, thus minimizing prostitution and premature death in the society. It means therefore that the higher the literacy rate among women, the more the enhancement in development, socially, politically and economically.

The theme of an art work is of great concern to the viewer, because it gives viewers a greater understanding of the artefact; and it also provides a meaningful connection to the viewer's everyday life.

This could be traced right from the themes of the prehistoric paintings and engravings. Amongst the many scenes engraved and painted by the prehistoric man, sex related themes were distinct and are also of great importance to our study since in these, figures of women and men were also focused.

One of the earliest representations of the female figure as a theme of an artefact is the Venus of Willendorf (plate 1). It is an 11.1cm high statuette of a female figure, discovered near Willendorf, a village in lower Austria. It is carved from limestone that is not local to the area. Clearly not a realistic portrait but rather an idealisation of the female figure, with her vulva, breasts, and swollen belly disproportionately pronounced. It is estimated to have been carved 24,000 - 22,000 BC, a striking time in the stone age, long before any form of images were produced. Many other Palaeolithic figures were found since the discovery of it; it is likely that some can be dated earlier than the Venus of Willendorf.

The Venus of Willendorf is clearly a fictional figure; even modern humans are attracted by the pronounced features. It is an exaggerated female body, an art form depicting fertility, driven by human instinct. Such instinctive creativity can be seen in paintings, photography, movies and other forms of art throughout modern history.

This historic figure was discovered by the late Professor Obermaier of Australia in 1908 on the banks of Danube at Willendorf near Kermbs, thirty metres from Vienna. It is also called by Grigson as a tubby, little enormous lady. A voluptuous, sexual creature, almost a caricature of a fat lady. Her heavy body indicates her child bearing role, milk giving, warmth and softness of body. The original sculpture is currently located in the Museum of Natural History, Vienna.

The Venus of Willendorf is a flabby little figure with an enlarged mid section which tapers towards the head and feet. The head, which does not show any facial features has circular, wavy rings around it which probably represents a hairstyle. The breast, abdomen and buttocks are greatly enlarged.

Also in Traditional African Art are several feminine themes such as the Afo fertility doll from Nigeria, Mende Female mask of Sierra Leone, Akuaba doll of Akans of Ghana among others. (see plates 2, 3, and 4 respectively).

The themes of most African art have strong moral connotations, which directly relate to the society. For example, the African concept of 'family' contains universal values. The family in Africa is most important and the future of the family lies in the children so great care is taken in raising and teaching them. For this reason most artists throw light on the motherly care which most women exhibit towards these children.

The benefit of studying about women in African art is becoming more widely known; for instance, the title of Hilary Clinton's book, *It Takes a Village*, published 1990 is taken from an African proverb meaning, the whole village must be involved in the raising of children and the whole village reveres the women who bear the future generation. In Ghana, both traditionally and contemporarily, some women indulge themselves in all the visual art forms in diverse ways; we see women as textile artists, jewellers, ceramic artists, wood artists and sculptors, painters among others.

Undoubtedly, many Ghanaian women play very significant roles in the socio-economic development of Ghana as artists and as themes of works of art.

As a means of highlighting on these roles which some indigenous women play in selected Ghanaian visual arts, their contributions have been discussed under the broad heading; Ghanaian women as Indigenous potters and mural decorators, and the role of some Ghanaian women in the Indigenous basket weaving industry. Ghanaian women as themes of some traditional visual arts

The role of women in art is so dynamic and ongoing that, there would always be more for researchers to discover.



Plate 1 *Venus of Willendorf* , 24,000 - 22,000BC

Limestone, 11.1cm high, Museum of Natural History, Vienna

Source: www.willendorf.com



Plate 2: *Afo fertility doll from Nigeria.*

Source: African art journal volume 22



Plate 3: Female mask.

Mende(or Vai) mask

Sierra Leone,

Wood painted black,

24 inches high, 12 inches diameter

Source: Radiance from the Waters (1986)



The Akuaba doll of the Akans, Ghana



The Akuaba doll in use.

Plate 4: Akuaba Fertility Doll

Akan, Ghana,

Wood painted black,

17 cm high,

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ghanaian women are virtually the backbone of some traditional visual arts in Ghana, taking into consideration the enormous roles women play in the various Ghanaian art forms, especially as Visual artists and themes of works of art. However, it appears very little has been written on this immense contribution women are making to the development of Ghana. This research work therefore attempts to explore, figure out and document the artistic roles (works of art), which some indigenous Ghanaian women play in this age of advocating gender equality and national development. The study also covers women used as themes in selected visual arts such as painting and sculpture.

1.3 Objectives

- To identify and document the traditional roles of some Ghanaian women in selected indigenous Ghanaian visual arts.
- To investigate the roles, which women are playing in some indigenous visual art for national development.
- To examine and discuss the use of women as themes in some Ghanaian arts.

1.4 Justification of Objectives

The study will uncover the extent to which some Ghanaian women are involved in the production and promotion of selected traditional artefacts and the use of women as themes of works of art. The study will serve as the mouth piece to the indigenous women who are mostly illiterates to voice out their basic needs to the government and philanthropists.

An in-depth study and documentation will create awareness and generate interest in the academia to conduct parallel researches that will widen advocacy of the women in such lucrative professions.

1.5 Statement of Purpose

The involvement of women in the production of some of these artefacts and the use of women as themes of some art works should be of great concern to all of us (both in the academia and the wider society as a whole especially policy makers and investors) since it serves as a great source of revenue to the Nation and the artists themselves. The question therefore is: how would they be heard of since there is not much documentation on their activities? This project is to commend to policy makers, writers, investors, and students of culture the problem at stake and sensitize the general public on the need to have a proper documentation of some of the indigenous visual arts of Ghana which are basically done by women and also the need to patronize their products. The use of women as themes of artefacts has also been discussed in a broad perspective.

It is envisaged that this document will serve as an orientation for further studies.

1.6 Hypothesis

In Ghana, not only do Ghanaian women feature as themes in certain visual arts but also they produce the arts for their own and the country's socio-economic development.

1.7 Delimitation

This research has been limited to works produced by selected indigenous Ghanaian women in selected indigenous visual arts such as pottery, weaving (Basketry) and Mural Paintings at Kpando, Bolga, and Sirigu from 1920 to date. However, a brief mention will be made in comparison with other places where women are involved in the indigenous arts.

The scope of the study has been restricted to pottery, basketry and painting among other visual arts because women are in most cases forbidden to be actively involved in the other visual arts.

The study also covers women used as themes in selected visual arts such as sculpture and painting.

1.8 Limitation

The major difficulty encountered in embarking on this research work was inadequate funds and reluctances on the part of some interviewees to divulge some vital information which would have enhanced the work.

1.9 Statement of Assumption

This research is has conducted on the assumption that, as of now some Ghanaian women through their involvement in selected indigenous arts are contributing so much to their own socio-economic development and that of Ghana; taking into consideration their roles as Visual artists and as themes of some works of art, but yet they are not given the required recognition.

1. 10 Importance of the Study

This research work would help us to know the extent to which Ghanaian women are involved in the productions, promotions, and distributions of some major Ghanaian traditional visual arts. This document also plays a very unique role of providing information to scholars, ethnographers, policy makers, art historians, gender activists, sociologists, and women organizations.

The information contained in this thesis may be integrated in the developmental plans and actions of the policy makers of this nation, Ghana. It will contribute to knowledge on Gender and Art.

1.11 Research Methodology

This research work has been executed by field research with the aid of data collection through a validated and tested questionnaire to solicit the view of the people.

Also an intensive library research has been conducted in Kumasi, Accra, and the other regional capitals to discover and review the available literature relevant to the subject. After this, a rigorous investigation was conducted on some available materials on indigenous Ghanaian Women in selected indigenous Ghanaian visual Arts, and was found out that the available literature has almost nothing directly from the point of view of the title but rather, they contain information which could be applied to make the current research more comprehensive.

Further more, the researcher interviewed people in the related field especially women to find out which of the art activities they are involved in, and then examined the findings with this yardstick: to what extent are Ghanaian women involved in the productions, promotions and distributions of some Ghanaian visual arts?

The interviews were conducted on an informal basis with open-ended questions which facilitated the flow of conversation because many of those interviewed were illiterates. The type of questions asked were in two parts

the first part was directed to the individual artist; how she worked, her motivation, awareness of materials, approach, religious beliefs how she went about promotions and distributions and how she felt about her work as an artist. And the second part was to the general public; to know how they perceive women in the traditional art, taking into consideration social, educational, spiritual, cultural and economic factors.

The researcher has employed the use of digital and video cameras to enhance the documentation process. Also recordings were made from the interview to capture, discuss and recast the views of the people. After this, a critical observation and analysis of the information gathered were done.

This thesis has been written in the descriptive, narrative, analytical, and statistical forms.

Finally, a test of the hypothesis was conducted, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made.

1.12 Facilities Available

The facilities available for this research work include;

- Libraries in Accra, Kumasi, and the other regional capitals.
- Women associations like Kpando potters associations
- Aid to Artisans Ghana
- Art Centres in the regional capitals of Ghana
- Ministry of women and children's affairs in Ghana
- Selected female institutions and artists and
- Selected Museums and Galleries.

1.13 Definition of Terms

For the rationale of the research, some terminologies have been used to accomplish the desired meaning of the framework in which they find themselves. Such words may be in the English language coined, or local Ghanaian languages. The terms and their meanings have been explained below.

Anxiety: Fear or worry as caused by uncertainty about something; an uncomfortable feeling

Themes: A subject or topic

Connotation: The implied meaning or the resultant meaning

Gender Equality: The argument that men and women are equal in most senses

Envisaged: To picture to oneself

Open-Ended Questions: Questioning without restriction

Social realism: Conventional paintings of contemporary scenes especially of ordinary People

Fufu: is a local dish prepared with either plantain or yam or cassava or a combination of any two of the foodstuffs stated and pounded until malleable. It is served with soup.

Kejetia: The largest open market in Kumasi – Ghana

Adinkra: Traditional motifs of Asantes of Ghana

Pigment: a substance that is added to give something such as paint or ink its colour. Pigments are often available in the form of dry powders to be added to liquids.

Philosophy: the branch of knowledge or academic study devoted to the systematic examination of basic concepts such as truth, existence, reality, causality, and freedom

Culture: the sum- total of the ways of life of a given society, tribe, kingdom, or nation.

1.14 Arrangement of Chapters

The text has been divided into six (6) chapters;

Chapter one begins with an introduction – a general commentary of issues on the topic and the background study follows before the problem statement. Then the Objectives, hypothesis, assumption, delimitation, limitation, justification of objectives, statement of purpose, importance of the study, research methodology, definition of concepts, the arrangement of chapters and lastly an ethnographic background of Ghanaian women.

The second, Chapter Two, reviews the literature pertinent to the subject of this thesis. References that have a bearing on the topic from available published and unpublished sources were used.

Chapter three presents the methodology of the study by giving a background to the geographical study area and the instruments that have been used in gathering information.

Chapters Four displays the analyses of data from the field study with a presentation and discussion of major findings; Thus selected Ghanaian women as indigenous potters, mural artists, basket artists and Ghanaian women as themes of some visual arts.

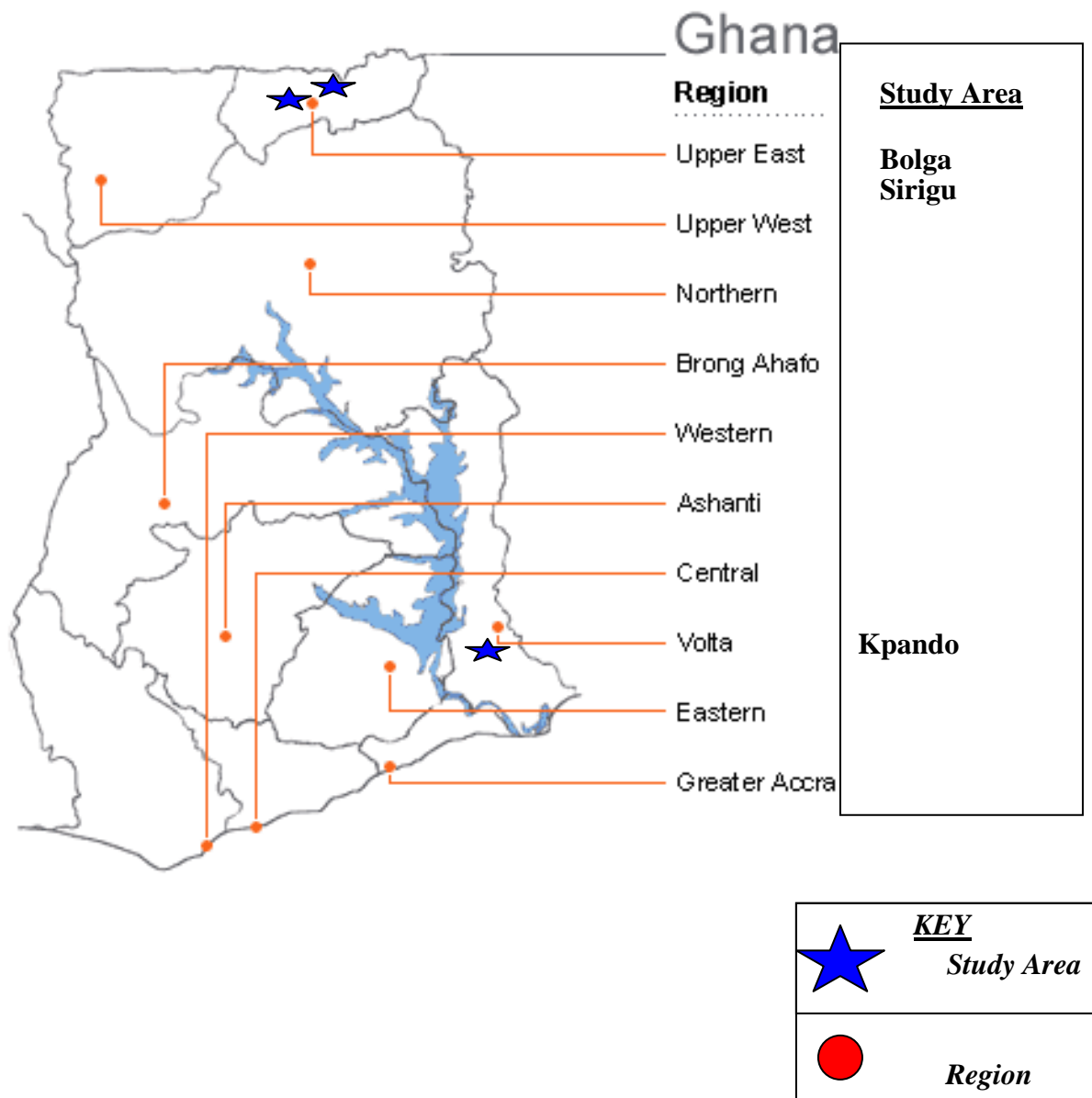
The final Chapter, five deals with discussions, summary, and conclusion and recommendations based on the research findings.

1.15 Ethnographic Background of Kpando, Bolga and Sirigu

Ghana is located on West Africa's Gulf of Guinea only a few degrees north of the Equator. It shares boundaries on the North with Burkina Faso, on the East with Togo, on the West with Cote d'Ivoire and on the south with the Gulf of Guinea. Below in **Map 1** is a regional map of Ghana showing the study areas and their regions.

The Ghanaian woman takes her role in life very seriously. Traditionally, she is an expert farmer, hardworking, and quite proficient in performing all the domestic duties that her role demands.

If she is born into a family of potters or artists, then pottery or that particular art becomes one of her domestic tasks in addition to all the others.



Map 1

A regional map of Ghana showing the study areas and their regions

1.15.1 Ghanaian Women

Out of the 18.5 million people of Ghana, (2000 census) with 52% being women. 60% of the population live in villages and of this, 70% are women with 54.3% being illiterates. (GTV News. 2001).

Ghanaian women are very hard working: many of them produce all kinds of visual arts ranging from metal, wood and clay products, fabrics and many others; majority of the indigenous engage themselves in these arts as their main source of income, while others do them for leisure. The uneducated often toil daily engaged in lowly paid jobs to earn enough to keep their families together. Many of them live on the periphery of poverty. However, their traditional roles in the society are defined. They are to keep the home, till the land, plant seeds, harvest the produce of the farm, feed their families, care for the aged and the sick, serve the husband and in short keep their families alive. When one therefore considers the multi-faceted roles of women in the Ghanaian society, it is appropriate to infer that they are the pivots around which the society revolves. A keen observation of Ghanaian society shows that the entrepreneurship of women is legendary and the places where their skills are often exhibited are the market places and their homes. The Ghanaian woman is often considered “beautiful” when she comes across as cultured and graceful; with a fleshy, radiant, smooth, dark skin. (Sarpong, 1974).

She is expected to be humble and devoted to her husband and family. She is expected to be a vessel of love and music and to carry the tradition and history of her people down the generations through songs, dance and tales. Beauty therefore, is seen in the “character and conduct of a person than in the physical appearance”. (Gyekye, 2003)

1.15.2 Bolga Women

The women here are basically *Frafra* people of a historical town in Northern Ghana called Bolgatanga. They form about 60 percent of the Bolgatanga entire population size. (source: Northern Regional Directorate)

The category of people who are of prime concern thus the focal point of this research are the ‘weavers’ community comprising, perhaps people of the ethnic groups sharing common boundaries with the District. The last class of people constitutes workers and buyers who come from all corners of the country forming an insignificant percentage of the entire population

1.15.2.1 Religion

There are various religious temples, ranging from traditional community and family shrines, Mosques and Church buildings. The indigenes are Islam dominated. It is interesting to note that the various religions make use of the indigenous artistry, thus the basketry and straw mats for worshipping.

1.15.2.2 Occupation of the people

The female residents are generally in the weaving business, which is basketry, door mats, hats, window blinds among other functional artefacts. Besides this, some of them (both men and women) are subsistent mixed farmers. Perennial crops grown include cereals, tubers and legumes- guinea corn, millet, yam sweet potatoes and vegetables such as okra. The rest are legumes comprising white beans and Bambara beans.

They are also into Livestock rearing and of course this is also a very lucrative and booming job perhaps due to the favourable condition for cattle rearing

In addition to the weaving work, some aged women engage themselves in cotton spinning, traditional textile weaving and fire wood harvesting and selling. The town is noted for a number of rich historical records. Since the olden days, and until now, it has been a renowned seat for basketry in Africa and even through out the world.

1.15.2.3 The Arts

Since this project is to examine the involvement of the women in some of the arts, it is of the essence to know the components of the art of a people to enable the researcher discover the role of such art forms in the study scope.

“Art forms an integral part of a culture [but may be separated for the purpose of emphasis]. Its definition is the quality, production, expression, or realm of what is beautiful of more than ordinary significance. ‘The Art’ include the visuals, literature (written and oral), music, and theatre arts. These manifestations of human creativity are some times expressive culture. People express themselves creatively in dance, music, dressing and costume, song, painting, sculpture, pottery, cloth, story telling, poetry and drama”.

(Conrad Philip, 2000 p336).

As stated above the implication is that, art may be created, performed or displayed outdoors in public, or in special indoor settings, such as festival grounds, in church and concert hall. Buildings in that respect may be dedicated to such arts to help create the artistic atmosphere. Also “the buildings (churches and cathedrals) in which religious music is played and in which visual art is displayed may themselves be works of art” (Conrad Philip, 2000 p337) similarly in traditional settings, there are temples, some of which house the deities and the rest, worship and cleansing centres

Art in the Northern Region in particular and Ghana as a whole does not constitute a single tradition. Ghana is an enormous country with hundreds of cultures that have their own languages, religious beliefs, political systems, and ways of doing things. “Each culture produces its own distinctive art and architecture, with variations in materials, intentions, and results.

The art may satisfy an everyday household need, adorn the body, or fulfil a social or religious role. These objects of use also have artistic values because skilled artisans have designed and created them with a strong concern for visual beauty and symbolic meanings. Art objects that serve basic household needs include baskets, table mats, and hats. Ritual objects include masks used in ceremonies and statues that commemorate and guard the remains of important ancestors. Personal adornment may take the form of decorative body scars, jewellery, or staffs and other objects that identify a person's social status. African art objects rarely serve only one purpose. A piece of jewellery, for example, may adorn the body, indicate prestige, and at the same time be the focal point of a ritual that protects the wearer from negative forces.

The indigenous visual arts done by the Bolga women have been discussed extensively in Chapter Five.

1.15.3 Kpando Women

Women form a greater percent of the entire Kpando traditional community. They mostly belong to the Ewe ethnic group and for that matter they speak the Ewe language. History has it that they (the people of Fesi in Kpando, in the Volta Region) are said to have migrated from Togo. The category of people who are of key concern as far as this research is concerned are the 'Potters' comprising both young and old women.

1.15.3.1 Religion

There are assorted religious groups and for that matter temples, ranging from traditional community and family shrines, mosques and church buildings. The indigenes are largely traditional worshipers. There are also Christians and some of the people are Muslims. Also at Kpando, the people belonging to the various religions make use of the traditional artistry, thus the pots, vases and sculptures as means and mediums for worshiping.

1.15.3.2 Occupation of the people

The women at Kpando engage themselves primarily in the production and sales of pottery and ceramics wares thus they make pots, vases, cups, and sculptures as their main occupations. Moreover, some of them (both men and women) are subsistent mixed farmers and others are into fire wood harvesting and selling.

1.15.3.3 The Arts

The involvement of the Kpando women in the art of pottery making is of importance to this research. It is therefore ideal to know the components of the art of the people to enable the researcher discover the role of such art forms (pottery and ceramics) in the study scope. This has been discussed into details in chapter five.

1.15.4 Sirigu Women

The indigenous settlers and chief custodians of the land are the Kassina Nankana people who occupy the Northern Savannah belt near the Burkina Faso border which is primarily characterized by grass land and with low scattered trees. They are very hardworking as their counterparts in the Upper East Region. Many of them practice mural painting and decorations

1.5.4.1 Religion

There is a visual contest of different religious places of worship, ranging between traditional community and family shrines, Mosques and churches. The indigenes are Muslim dominated. There are eight to ten different Christian denominations mostly patronized by the strangers. Noted for its traditional significance, traditional worship is highly upheld by the natives and therefore made artefacts to reflect their beliefs. Of late, there are some of the Christian denominations trying to ‘win souls’ thus evangelize in order to have some of the indigenous people attending their church. This they normally do by the distribution of used clothing and food items to members of the church thus attracting the needy people to their denominations.

1.5.4.2 Occupation of the people

Generally, the inhabitants are mostly subsistent mixed farmers. Perennial crops grown include cereals, tubers and legumes- guinea corn, millet, yam sweet potatoes and vegetables such as okra. The rest are legumes.

The most patronized job by the women in Sirigu is mural making; thus painting and decorating wall surfaces with traditional icons. And this has given Sirigu such a great international recognition because of the uniqueness of the art. (Detailed discussion has been made in chapter four). Some of the women also engage themselves in cotton spinning, traditional textile weaving and fire wood harvesting and selling.

1.5.4.3 *The cultural life of a people*

Culture embraces numerous things, ideas and customs, what life should be, their judgment of what are good and bad in human behaviour, family structure, and their traditional forms of arts, craft, music as well as language. Also included are other aspects of their socio-economic life such as their ways of farming or building houses, preparing their food and weaving their clothes. “Culture refers to the sum- total of the ways of life of a given society, tribe, kingdom, or nation. These ways of life have evolved in, or bequeathed, to the society over generation of time”

(Dickson et al, 1995 p 20)

The family is the only unit common to all groups of people. It is the fundamental unit of social structure; the unit has specific functions with relation to its members and to the total society. It is the primary social institution, serving as the means of transferring culture from one generation to another. Division of labour between sexes is a strong influence in keeping the family together especially among the Sirigu people. The institution takes different forms among different peoples. Family systems ordinarily count descent through both father and mother, but many ethnic groups consider a child as belonging to either the father's or the mother's family.

The design of the houses reflects the extended family structure of the people. The compounds are composed of a number of round and or rectangular rooms made of mud. An enclosure wall chains the rooms together. Each adult person has her or his own room. Men are normally the head of households that may include a number of his brothers and sons, with their wives and children.

Every house is divided into sections for the animals and for humans. The kraal is used for the cattle, goats and poultry. The conical granaries with their straw roofs are placed in the kraal. Interesting features of the houses are the flat roofs with staircases, the decorations, the round openings of the main rooms, the places of rest under shady trees nearby, family shrines, the rooms of the women with their pots and inner mural decorations and relief's.

When daughters of the house marry, they will leave their parents' home to go and live with their husbands' family. The sons, who are expected to continue the paternal line, stay in the house and bring up their family and will take care of the aged parents and grandparents.

Traditionally women are regarded the property of their husbands' family after the dowry has been paid. Women cannot own land, but may use it for farming purposes. They cannot take part in decision making for the family and have no right to their biological children in case of divorce or death of their husband

“The arts, like other professions, often run in families; at a smaller level of culture, certain artistic traditions may be transmitted in families. A child born into a particular family or lineage may discover that he or she is destined for a career in leather working, pottery or weaving. In Bali for example, there are families of carvers, musicians, and mask makers. Two lineages among the Yoruba of Nigeria are leather workers”

(P.K. Conrad, 2000, p346)

Conrad again says that in many societies, myths, legends, tales, and the arts of story telling play an important role in the transmission of culture and the preservation of tradition.

In the absence of writing, oral tradition may preserve details of history and genealogy in many parts of West Africa. Art forms often go together. For example, music and story may be combined for drama.

The people of Sirigu adhere strongly to the principles of culture. This is seen in they utilise the various art forms produced by the indigenes of the area. The tradition where women are basically the master hands when it comes to mural art still stand even though there have been some situations where men partake in the art this is not a common practice.

1.5.4.4. *The Arts*

This project examines the artistic roles of Sirigu women thus the extent of involvement of the women in the mural paintings done in the Sirigu area. For this reason, it is imperative to know the components of the art of a people to enable the researcher discover the role of such art forms in the study scope

Apart from the visual arts, that is mural arts, the women are also involved in some performing arts such as singing, dancing, drumming, and clapping however, for the purpose of this research our focus shall be on the murals done by the women.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

Although women in art have not attracted much attention throughout the human race in all ages, since the 1995 Beijing conference, women's views and activities have engrossed scholarly and literary attention. As a result, some amount of literary works has been produced on women in art for study. Nonetheless, additional research such as the present one is required to add to knowledge. In this direction, there has been the need to review available literatures to know the gap to be filled. The review would provide us with enough knowledge to solve any problem the researcher may encounter. It would also provide him the background for comparison between his own findings and what previous writers have documented.

This chapter has been segmented into the following to make easy the review exercise:

- Women in world art.
- Women in African art.
- Women in Ghanaian art.
- Women Artists.

2.1 Women in World Art

‘Where were the women?’ a flier in the College of Art, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology library published by Micronesian Seminar, known popularly as MicSem, states emphatically that women artists have always existed but they have often gone unrecognized or under recognized. Women have participated in every important art movement, yet they are rarely mentioned by historians.

Until recently, most of the widely used college text books on art history, covering prehistoric times to the present, showed no works by female artists. The statement “Anonymous was a woman,” reminds us that through out the centuries, women’s creative work was a part of the fabric of society but was rarely given credit.

The academic emphasis on “fine art” over “craft” helps keep woman’s art invisible. Art historian, Linda Nochlin’s essay, “*Why Have There Been No Great Woman Artists?*” Attempting to answer the above question; she stated that “to find answers, we need to ask more and perhaps different questions, ‘Have significant numbers of outstanding women artists existed but have gone unrecognized?’ ‘Have they been marginalized by male dominated institutions and male critics and historians?’ Or ‘Have few great women artists existed because the conditions were not there to support their focused creative development?’

The answers to these questions appear to be interconnected. What is amazing is that so many black women have achieved so much against overwhelming odds. One cannot tell whether the Stone Age artists were men or women, but it may be interesting to realize that a great deal of prehistoric art might have been made by women.

Concerning the participation of the traditional women in the arts, Wendy Slatkin in her *“Women Artists in History”*, States:

In absence of concrete evidence, it is very difficult to determine the extent of women’s participation in craft activity. We simply do not know whether women were responsible for the creation of fertility figurines, clay pots or woven baskets. However, we can assume that women were responsible for the creation of cloth’.

Interestingly, this authenticates an information discovered in a magazine, “Textiles”. In it, it is stated that, Elizabeth Barber has accumulated a vast body of evidence documenting the production of textiles in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. Based on her analysis of the data, she concludes that nearly all textile workers during this epoch were women. Barber builds her case by associating the production of woven cloth for household use as a task consistent with child rearing, and thus appropriate to women.

Susan Peterson (1998) asserts in her essay dubbed “Pottery by American Indian Women, the Legacy of Generations”, that American Indian women have been making pottery for over two thousand years. Actually this essay was to celebrate the achievements of ten potters who have preserved this important ancestral tradition while advancing the art form through their innovative ideas and masterful craftsmanship.

These artists include:

Tewa Indian, born at Zia Pueblo in 1939,
Dorothy Torivio, born at Acoma Pueblo in the 1940s,
Jody Farwell, born at Santa Clara Pueblo in 1942,
Alice Cling, born in 1946,
Jean Bad Moccasin, born in Europe in 1947,
Jacquie Stevens, a Winnebago Indian, born in Omaha Nebraska in
 1949,
Lorraine Williams, born in Arizona during the late 1950s,
Anita Fields, born in 1951,
Nora Naranjo-Morse, born in 1953, and
Roxanne Swentzell, born in 1962.

As of the year 2003, the indigenous women potters had contributed so much for their own upkeep and have also by so doing attracted a great amount of foreign exchange for their nation.

History of North American Indians has it that Basketry, one of the oldest and most widespread American Indian arts generally was a women's art, but among some Indian peoples, such as the Pomos and the Yupiks, men wove as well, created sturdy baskets that was used as fish traps or pack baskets. Younger family members learned this skill from their elders, by observing, copying, being gently corrected, and improving over years of practice until they, in turn, taught others.

According to Peterson (1998), at a time when indigenous women had few choices of occupation, basket making provided a welcome and significant source of income. It also allowed weavers to preserve and practice important cultural traditions in the midst of tremendous cultural change. Prior to the commercial basket market, weavers produced only what was needed for their families' use and not for any other purpose. The extensive non indigenous demand for Indian baskets, however, caused a surge in basket production. Contrary to dealers' rhetoric, Indian basketry at this time was not a "dying art" but thrived as never before.

In Japan, a unique combination of political, social, and economic factors led to the flourishing of women artists during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, despite the fact that women's position in Japan's patriarchal society was theoretically very low. Women artists came from diverse segments of society, worked in many schools and traditions, and created artworks displaying a wide range of styles. They earned the plaudits of their peers and were important figures in both literary and artistic circles. The reasons for the increase of women artists during the Edo period (1600-1868) are manifold. After nearly a century of civil war, Japan was enjoying an age of peace and prosperity. As affluence spread to the middle and lower classes new patrons and new schools of art developed. Women's participation in art and literature was also abetted by the spread of education; the growth of private and clan schools stimulated learning and literacy among all classes. Women who were educated were more likely than others to move beyond the socially approved roles of wife and mother.

Most of the women who broke away from traditional roles and achieved recognition as artists were members of the non-aristocratic classes. This is not to say that women from the court or upper-ranking samurai families were not gifted. There were a number of outstanding noblewomen artists, but they were outnumbered by those who led less restricted lives.

Women were active in several ateliers, but were most prominent in those of the Kano school and *ukiyo-e* artists. Kiyohara Yukinobu (1643-1682) was the most celebrated female painter working in the Kano school tradition. She was the daughter of Kusumi Morikage, a leading Kano school master. He must have encouraged Yukinobu's artistic talents, and permitted her to adopt this male-dominated vocation. As a professional Kano painter, Yukinobu was trained in the academic Chinese styles used for painting landscapes, flowers and birds, and figures. She was also adept in the decorative Japanese style known as *yamato-e*, which was traditionally used for rendering narrative tales or portraits.

Yukonobu's range was diverse, including Buddhist deities like the *apsara*. This type of flying divinity is usually shown hovering around a Buddha, which suggests that this painting may originally have been part of a triptych. Yukinobu's *apsara* descends amid swirling clouds, arms outstretched in preparation to strike a musical note. The celestial deity is garbed in robes decorated with intricate gold brocade patterns, rendered with the sensitivity and precision that won Yukinobu public acclaim.

Because of the relative freedom of behavior in the urban pleasure quarters, *ukiyo-e* artists tended to be more receptive to having female apprentices

than were traditional art workshops. Among the many women ukiyo-e artists who achieved a degree of success were Yamazaki Ryu-jo, Katsushika Oi, and Kakuju-jo. Mirroring the interests of their clientele, they focused their attention on life in the amusement quarters, taking as their subjects kabuki actors and courtesans. Ryu-jo, also known as Joryu, was the daughter of a samurai serving the shogunate in Edo (now Tokyo). Most of her known paintings depict fashionable courtesans.

Images of Japanese women are well known to Western audiences due to the popularity of courtesans and entertainers as subjects in woodblock prints. Despite the predominance of women of the pleasure quarters in ukiyo-e ("images of the floating world") compositions, Japanese artists also frequently portrayed female divinities, mothers, ladies of the court, and legendary heroines. Goddesses have been revered in Japan from the time of the country's mythic past--as is evident in the painting *Izanami and Izanagi Creating the Japanese Islands* by Kobayashi Eitaku. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, aristocratic women such as Murasaki Shikibu, the celebrated author of *The Tale of Genji*, were accorded a prominent role in society. Artists of later periods often represented such women as exemplars of sophistication and literary accomplishment.

However, with the rise of the military class in the thirteenth century, the status of women changed. They were expected to assume subservient roles as wives and protectors of households and estates. During the Edo period

(1615-1868), though, courtesans were idolized for their charms and erudition, as well as for their allure. Drawn from the permanent collection, "

The theme of a beauty standing beneath a tree had been popular for centuries in Asia. By the nineteenth century, several of the leading male ukiyo-e artists were readily accepting women into their studios. Two of Hokusai's daughters achieved a respectable degree of fame. Oi (active 1818-1854) was the better known, producing formal and informal paintings as well as book illustrations.

In addition to paintings, women ukiyo-e artists were also involved in the design and production of woodblock prints. Kakuju-jo is one of the rare female artists who actually had a woman for a teacher; she is recorded as having studied with Tsunoda Kunisada's female pupil Sadaka-me. Kakuju-jo's known prints without exception depict episodes from the popular kabuki drama. The great majority of Japanese women who succeeded as artists were also talented poets. Because so many noblewomen of earlier ages were renowned for their novels, dairies, and poetry, the Edo-period literary world was prepared to accept women. *Waka* verse (composed of thirty-one syllables, arranged in five lines of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables) was deemed the most suitable for women. Those who won the most popular acclaim did so because their talents were visible to the public. Many were courtesans, employed in one of the few vocations in which intelligent women of the plebeian classes were encouraged to display their talents. Within this profession there were many levels: At the bottom were low-

class prostitutes, but at the top were exceptionally talented women skilled in traditional poetry, calligraphy, and painting.

Many women literate painters were and are wives, sisters, or daughters of artists working in the Chinese tradition. They painted nature subjects primarily, with landscape being the dominant theme because it reflected the scholar-artists' yearning to achieve a spiritual communion with nature. Ko Rajkin, who was active late in the eighteenth century, created elegant landscape paintings featuring exquisite detailed brushwork and formal compositional beauty, exemplified in her *Landscape with Fisherman*, tiny figure peacefully fishes from his boat, dwarfed by the surrounding mountains and their thick, luxuriant foliage. Rajkin depicted the mountains with dry, textured mountains with dry, textured strokes, over which she laid light washes of blue, green, and peach. She was especially skilful at blending the different colours together to create subtly rich hues.

Ema Saiko (1787-1861) was celebrated for her Chinese-style verse and bamboo paintings. This subject had long been favoured by literati who admired the plant's strength and ability to endure. Because it stays green all year long and bends in the wind but does not break, bamboo was compared to virtuous old gentlemen, with their ability to withstand hardship. Saiko's brushwork forming the bamboo is crisp and deliberate, imbued with the strength that connoisseurs have long referred to as "bone." She varied the tonality of her ink, presenting the bamboo closest to us in rich black ink and gradually lightening the tones to create the illusion of receding planes.

Unlike most women artists, who developed their artistic talents over long years of practice and dedication, Takai Okon (1816-1888) was a prodigy who reached the height of her fame around the age of nine. In that year she was invited to demonstrate her calligraphic skills for the imperial court and was rewarded with gifts from the emperor. Okon became renowned for her cursive Chinese script.

2.2 Women in African art

Women are portrayed in different forms in the various traditional African countries. For example, The Gelede Headdress of Yoruba, (plate.4) honours the omnipotent powers of female elders, ancestors, and goddesses. The Gelede's function is to maintain and increase the health and prosperity of the community and the members of the society. Gelede masks are essentially naturalistic in concept and highly detailed. It contains two parts: a lower mask and an upper superstructure. The latter contains birds which signify the dangerous powers of women who act as witches. The superstructure is designed to appease the gods by displaying all inner powers; thus, the wellbeing of the community is reinforced. Their fecund power of women, affects the life of the family, peace, and communal existence. Yoruba claim women possess the secret of life itself, and the knowledge and special power to bring human beings into the world and remove them. The snake, on the top, symbolizes the positive feminine qualities of endurance and apathy.

This Gelede mask worn by the dancers was originally painted in bright colours so that it could be admired, from different angles.

In the Chi Wara society of the Bambara, Mali, the elders teach the young about farming culture and ways to preserve agricultural practices. Skilled farmers are selected to dance with the Chi Wara headdresses at planting and harvest time. Typically, the Chi Wara is styled to be worn as a headdress. The heads and horns are those of a roan antelope; whereas, the lower part of the body and legs represent an anteater, or armadillo. The role of the women in this practice is to sing praises to the male farmer. The female version of the Chi-Wara mask (located on the right, plate 5) symbolizes the earth. The female dances along with its male counterpart, symbolizing the sun. In daily life, women assist with farming chores and provide men with food and drink while they work the fields. This relationship between male and the female Chi Wara and sun/earth embraces the ideals of the community to provide for fertile crops. The female Chi Wara mask symbolizes the fertility of the earth.



Plate 5

*The Gelede mask of the Yoruba,
an icon of powers of female elders
Nigeria
wood painted in bright colours
source: The Gelede Spectacle*



Plate 6

A female and a male Chi-Wara mask,

Bambara Mali,

Made in wood

source: internet

In the southern Gabon Traditional Region, masks called “Okuyi” are used to animate funeral ceremonies. The masks, consisting of kaolin-whitened face of soft wood, are commemorative portraits of female and male ancestors. Stilt dancers at funeral celebrations to honour the spirits of a female ancestor use white masks; whereas, black ones are worn by judges who are capable of discovering sorcerers. Essentially, the mask represents the ideals of feminine beauty: high cheekbones, elegant coiffure, a domed forehead, arched eyebrows, and finely incised eyes.

Also, the Baule Spirit Spouse of La Cote d’Ivoire is designed with great care and attention to several body parts. For instance, the coiffure, called the Baule Tre, consists of a tripartite arrangement; the mouth is usually projected forwards; the way that the hands rest on the stomach nears the navel as a sign of grace and peace. Each of these gestures and features are taken into careful consideration and developed with grace. As a sign of beauty among young Baule girls and to intensify the effect, which the sculpture has on the audience, the artist frequently enlarges the head, reduces the limbs, and lengthens the neck into folds.

The gesture that the Baule spirit spouse makes frequently (i.e., hands resting in the stomach near the navel) has great meaning to the Baule. The gesture is "made by certain spirits to show their respect or deference when they meet humans." The navel is essentially the symbol of life for a protruding navel symbolizing a carnal link. Baule art speaks the poetry of the human body with a rhythm as man being the "universal measure of space; as the

theatre of essential experiences." Baule art allows the sculpture to come to life with an added natural grace. Typically, the female is called "blolo bla", or wife, and can cause male impotence; whereas, the male commonly called "blolo bian", or husband, provokes sterility in women. The statuette, which is an idealized form of the human body, represents the marital bond shared between a man and a woman. Ultimately, the Baule Spirit Spouse symbolizes fertility.

‘The Role of Women in African Traditional Religion’ an article written by John Mbiti, partly focuses on women in African mythology. He pointed out that; some myths speak about an original mother of mankind, from whom all people originated. For example, the Akposso of Togo tells that when uwolowu (god) made men, he first made a woman on the earth and bore with her the first child, the first human being. The Ibibio of Nigeria say that human beings came from the divinity Obumo, which was the son of the mother-divinity eka-abassi. It is told in Eastern Africa about a virgin woman Eke, who fell on earth from the sky and bore a son; the son got married to another woman and founded human society.

The main idea here is to link human life directly with God through the woman. She is created by God, and in turn becomes the instrument of human life. She rightly becomes the one who passes on life. This is beautifully illustrated in a myth of the Tutsi of Rwanda. They tell that the original pair of human beings was in paradise. But both the man and woman were sterile they could not bear children. So they begged God to help them. God mixed clay with saliva and formed a small human figure. He instructed

the woman to keep the figure in a pot for nine months. Every day the woman had to pour milk into the pot, mornings and evenings. She was to take out the figure only when it had grown limbs. So she followed these instructions and after nine months she pulled out what had now become a human being. God made other human beings according to this method, and these later increased on the earth (s). The pot is here a symbol of the womb of a mother, in which a baby takes shape and after nine months it is born. The woman shares directly with God in a personal way, the secrets and mysteries of life and birth. This role of the woman in sharing in the mysteries of life started already in the mythological time.

Through the myths of origin, we get a picture of the woman as someone placed by God in a special position. She shares with him the creative process of life. In some ways her position and her role in these myths eclipses the position of the husband (male). She is in a real sense the mother of human beings, the dispenser of life, howbeit as an agent of God. At the same time the woman shares in the misfortunes, suffering and death, which in various ways came into the world.

Jannea R. Prescott (1991) states in '*Women in African Art*' that the elders display the Senufo female figure during the cycle of initiations, to show neophytes that "beyond the superficial reality, there exists a hidden, esoteric meaning." Sandogo, the women's initiation society, along with the men's Poro initiation society, governs many aspects of the Senufo of Mali. Women in Senufo society carry the greater responsibility in invoking the benevolence of the supernatural world. The typical Senufo sculpture, such

as this one, depicts angular stiffness, sharp edges, and detachment from its audience. The suckling posture suggests a nurturing presence; however, the baby is essentially a symbol of the central divinity of the initiation cycle. Initiation is a central aspect of the Senufo culture which the elders and women play an instrumental part. The Ancient Mother is responsible for "giving birth" to all male initiates when they finish their twenty-one year initiation cycle. Ultimately, the sculpture has no aesthetic purpose; rather it is used as a means of communication. The female figure embodies the power of feelings (i.e., mental and physical) and an intellectual process into the Senufo community.

Sindiwe Magona, an African female writer explains that her great hope for African women is that one day they will come into their own and that is why she chose to write.

'As African women struggle to claim their rightful place in African society and in the world, women writers, visual artists, and musicians chart the course of this struggle in a rich variety of artistic works. Through prose, poetry, drama, sculpture, painting, music, and many other forms, African women speak *their* thoughts and share *their* perceptions about their lives and their societies. ;

"Our problem," Adeola James (1990) writes, in her introduction to *In Their Own Voices*,

is that we have listened so rarely to women's voices, the noises of men having drowned us out in every sphere of life, including the arts. Yet women too are artists, and are endowed with a special sensitivity and compassion, necessary to creativity.

In the magazine, 'African Art', Rayda Becker wrote an article on 'The New Monument to the Women of South Africa', which was inaugurated on August 9, 2000. In this article, Becker quoted Brigitte Mabandla, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Art, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) – South Africa, as saying that “a significant, visible tribute to women of South Africa is long over due” The site acknowledges all the women of South Africa, black, brown and white.

Becker, added that the South African monument in honour of the women is really very interesting since it officially affirms the role women have played in the formation of the new country which all South Africans have equal civil rights. Indeed it is a kind gesture which needs to be encouraged throughout Africa especially in Ghana, where most female artists have gone unrecognized.

Generally, African Pottery has always been almost exclusively a woman's form of art. For example Women in the pre-colonial Democratic Republic of Congo were respected as mothers and guardians of tradition, but nonetheless subject to the abuses that are incorporated in many patriarchal societies. Therefore, for centuries the role of women was reduced to child bearing, running the household and doing other household duties, such as making pottery. While it was women who for centuries made the pots, it was the men who began carving them into elaborate designs. Pottery and women are so interlinked in African society that there are even certain taboos concerning the two. For example among ethnic groups of northwest and central Africa women are prohibited from creating pots while

menstruating and in some ethnic groups only menopausal women are allowed to create pottery.

In support of this view, Kathleen I. Kimball 1989 wrote in her article "The Power of Clay" that,

“Throughout Africa pottery is largely considered to be women’s work; and for the Yoruba the goddess of potters is a goddess of fertility. There are many taboos and rituals regarding the making and using of pots, e.g., while menstruating, Manda women cannot gather clay, and Asante women cannot make pots. When a Gurensi woman dies her eating bowl is broken at the funeral as the pot is analogous to the body as vessel, and the body is no longer functioning. Even decorative styles may reflect the body, e.g., scarification patterns appear on pots with the similar result of .beautifying the surface”.

However, notwithstanding the above facts, there are some areas in Africa where traditionally both men and women are potters although they make different kinds of vessels. For instance in Cameroon women make pottery for domestic use while men make pottery for special occasions similar to that of Southern Ghana.

According to the History of the advancement of women in Zaire; section thirteen (a) of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women’s report, it is stated that:

On the economic level. Running the household; drawing water; gathering firewood; working, seeding, planting and tending the fields; pottery and basketwork. All these everyday agricultural and domestic tasks were performed by women with rudimentary tools and under the most arduous conditions: they worked between 12 and 16 hours a day. They covered long distances on foot bearing heavy loads on their heads, often with a baby on their backs.

This obviously points out the fact that African women since time immemorial have been contributing so much towards their own

development and that of the continent as a whole. In some African Countries, women are greatly involved in the design and production of weaving and basketry products. Mama Afrika explains that with a few blades of dried grass, women in Africa have been making spectacular 'crafts' since longer than anyone can remember. This ranges from simply designed baskets to store their food, to complex and multicoloured woven vessels used for decoration. Basketry certainly has its role to play in the lives of African women.

Basket weaving is an art form and a skill which allows women across the continent to express themselves and their imaginations from toys to cups, from laundry baskets to lockable picnic baskets. The women are involved in all the processes entailed in the production and even distribution and sales of the basketry products. In all, the process of gathering, drying, dyeing, weaving and finishing takes more than thirty (30) hours for a single, medium sized basket. So one can imagine how long these women spend making those which are complicated or large in design! This is when the ladies use their imagination and create everything from tablemats to market baskets.

In Niger, a country where only fifty thousand (50,000) of its nearly nine (9) million inhabitants are salaried workers, the work done in the "informal sector," where revenues are very scanty, is essential to the survival of thousands of Nigerian families. The women of the Sahel region are the pillars of this informal sector, which accounts for more than half of Niger's

economy. While their men are often away in search of seasonal work in bordering countries, the women must struggle to help their families survive. A number of these women are into the making peanut oil, extraction of salt from earth, and turning of gypsum into plaster. The craftswomen also create marvellously decorated pottery, beautifully woven straw mats, and intricate leather work. All this is done in the hope of earning a few dollars per week. [International Trade Organisation's statistics].

The Bamana figurative sculpture of Mali illustrates the Bamana concept of beauty and the ideals of character and action. Bamana sculptures show people how to look, how to behave towards each other and what goals to strive for. The belief that Bamana figures are used in fertility rituals seems to have, originated in Kjersmeier's account of their function. According to him, Bamana girls are given the sculptures to dance with when they are very young in order to ensure that they will later be able to bear children (1935-38). Although it is possible that the dance described by Kjersmeier was intended to render the girls fertile, it does not correspond to any other accounts of Bamana rituals concerning human fertility, which usually involve women of childbearing age. Below (plates **6, 7, 8, 9**) are some Bamana sculptures



Plate 7
Lance with Female figure, iron
h. 65 ¼ inch.



Plate 8
Lance with Female figure, iron
h. 67 ¼ . Lynne and Robert Rubin Art
Collection.



Plate 9
Mother and Child, wood h. 46 ½
Gustave and Franyo Schindler

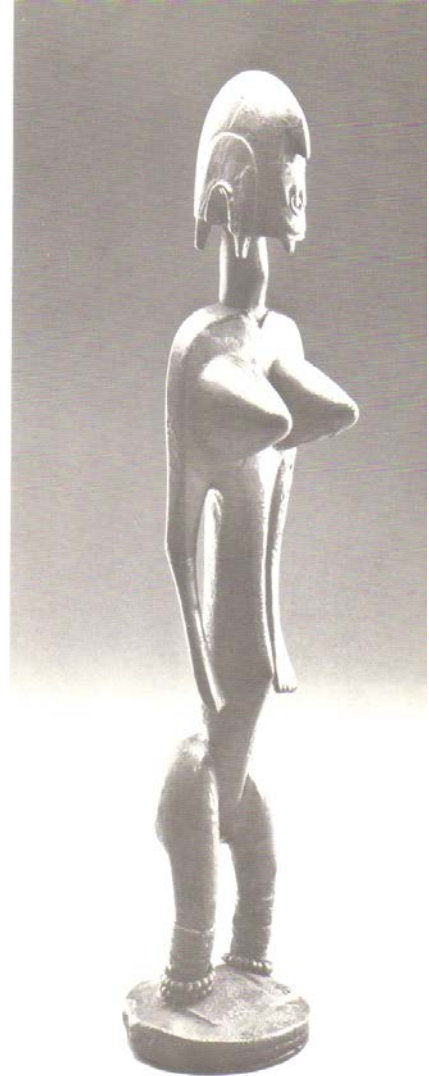


Plate 10
Standard Female
figure, wood, beads,
copper, leather,
pigment, h. 20 ¾ in.
The Detroit Institute of
Art, Bequest of Robert
H. Tannahill 70.46.

While not strictly for ancestors, another type of Bamana figure sculpture is also associated with deceased family members, specifically with twins. In some parts of the Bamana area, a wood figure is carved if a twin dies at an early age. It is named after the deceased twin, although twin figures in general are called *flanitokele* or *flani nyogon* (Henry 1910:98; Dieterlen 1951:87; Zahan 1974:14-15; Imperato 1975). The twins' mother cares for the sculpture until the surviving twin is circumcised indicating that he or she is old enough to assume responsibility for himself or herself (Plate 10). When the surviving twin marries, a figure may also be carved to serve as a "spouse" for the twin sculpture.

Bamana twin figures are made in a wide range of styles, and outside of its context of use it is difficult to identify a twin figure solely on the basis of its form. They are all standing figures, but they vary greatly in size—from about two inches up to about a foot and a half. They represent both females and males and are generally adorned with beads and cloth, as are other types of Bamana sculptures.



Plate 11.

Woman holding figure of a deceased twin. Zogofina village, Segou, March 2, 1985.

Source: African art journal

2.3 Women in Ghanaian art

Though not much has been written on this subject, few books, news letters, monographs, and publications have highlighted some aspects of the subject matter in one way or the other to clarify a particular point being made by the writer at the time.

In his book, “Handicrafts of Ghana”, Kwaku Amoako –Attah Fosu (1990), stated that ‘in the Villages, the women are known for the production of the products, for instance at Pankrono, the clay is fetched from a stream called *Aworo* by the women who again use it for the making the pottery wares’. This statement presupposes that the women

at Pankrono are in no doubt contributing a great deal to their own advancement and that of the nation. Hitting on almost the same point, Emmanuel Christian Nyarkoh (1999), in “Pottery Shapes and Decorations in Ashanti”, also added that the pottery town of Pankrono, a suburb of Kumasi, and situated five miles on the Mampong road has quite recently grown to become a tourist centre of attraction because of the traditional pottery vessels produced there by the women.

Nyarkoh also reports that the origin of pottery in Pankrono could also be traced to women ‘...there is an oral history at Pankrono about its origin which asserts that the people came from Denkyira to settle at their present town as captured slaves during one of the Ashanti-Denkyira wars before the reign of Osei Tutu I, and the head of the people called Brobe had a wife

called Anane who was a potter. After settling at Pankrono, she worked hand in hand with the Buokrom potters and later on the women of Pankrono also took it up. Also the potters of Bomso and Sayeemo say that their ancestors learnt the art of making pots from the women of Sasa.

Jannea R. Prescott stated in 'Women in African Art' that; Asante women often give honour to the *Akuaba*. An *Akuaba* essentially represents the Asante concept of beauty: a high oval, flattened forehead, a small mouth, and a ringed neck. The *Akuaba* is a sculptured wooden figure, which is believed, by the Asante people, to induce fertility and ensure a safe delivery of a beautiful, healthy infant. The name, *Akuaba*, comes from the legend of a woman named Akua who was distraught at being barren, for Akan women desire above all to have children. She took her problem to a traditional priest, who instructed her to commission a small wooden child (*dua ba*) from a carver and carry the surrogate child on her back as if it were real one. Akua was instructed to care for the figure as she would a living baby; even to give it gifts of beads and other trinkets. She did these things and with time the wooden figure became known as *Akuaba* (Akua's child). Eventually, she conceived and gave birth to a daughter. Other female villagers later took the same measures to cure barrenness. The following factors accounted for the fact that *Akuaba* is primarily female image: Akua's first child was a female; Akan society is purely matrilineal; and, Akan society specifically mothers prefer girls over boys for they are able to help with household chores.

Gloria Nikoi, a Ghanaian gender activist in her book “Gender and Development” throws more light on the need for gender balance for national development touching on the several international conferences held with the central aim of making known internationally, the immense contribution of women in national and international development giving the 1995 Beijing conference in China as an example.

Elizabeth Hunting Wheeler is quoted to have said that:

Three features characterize the economic life of women to a greater or lesser degree, all women are agriculturist, many of them practice some craft or trade and they sell the produce of their labour or their services in the market places

This quotation readily suggests to the current researcher that most women depend on ‘craft’⁴ for their daily up-keep.

As if in support of this view, Elizabeth Ardayfio-Schandorf, (1992), in her book “*Women in Ghana*”, an annotated Bibliography, provides to some extent, update information on the Labour force participation of Ghanaian women, from the past to the present. But she did not throw light on women in the art industry. For instance, Seiwa Bonsu, in her monograph ‘*Art in the Life of Ghanaian women*’ has thrown some light on the African woman as an art form stating that sometimes the image reflects aesthetic appreciation of women or it may be a specific reference to women’s role in the society.

This opinion posed by Seiwa is true because in Ivory Coast and Liberia, particularly among the Poro societies, specially carved wooden spoons or ladles bearing either the image of a woman, her leg, and her

round shaped buttocks are awarded whichever wife provided the most impressive hospitality during the societies public ceremonies.

On Woman in Human development, Mrs. Jane Irina Adu *Woman in Human Development* describes the Ghanaian woman as ‘the heart of development and that leaving her out means failing to make use of all the human capital God has endowed our world generally and for that matter Ghana specifically. Though Mrs. Jane Irina Adu, and Florence Abena Dolphin, in ‘The emancipation of women – an African perspective’ wrote on some specific roles Ghanaian women have played and are still playing to the socio-economic development of Ghana, both writers failed to touch on the traditional roles Ghanaian women play in the field of art. Rather, they added their voice to the numerous complaints from the rather few women activists who feel women are rather relegated to the background unfortunately losing sight of the fact that the labour of women contributes significantly to the economic life of the society in their dominance of the traditional ‘crafts’ and also the informal sector

2.4 Women Artists

Female artists have existed since time immemorial. For years without date, women might have played unique roles as performing artists, verbal artists, body artists and visual artists making use of such natural resources as clay, straw, wood, stones, ivory, and fibres from plants and others to produce artefacts for their daily use.

Linda Nochlin an Art historian has stated that “One cannot tell whether Stone Age artists were men or women, but it may be interesting to realize that a great deal of prehistoric art might have been made by women”. Written records on the other hand have substantiated the fact that throughout the world and for that matter in Africa, great women artists have existed and are still in existence championing the good course of producing the visual arts as their main source of income or as their prime leisure activity.

For example, the internet records at

<http://www.csupomona.edu/~plin/women/anguissola.html> also show that,

from the nineteenth century to the present day, several female artists had existed and still exist: a list of twenty six (26) female artists mostly from America is provided. These artists comprise painters, illustrator’s potters, mural painters etc. However, Prof. Kojo Fosu in his book, ‘The 20th Century Art of Africa’ gives a brief data base of some female African artists who existed at the time. The five female artists he mentioned are:

Kamala Ishag: A Sudanese woman born in 1939 and a very renowned African painter.

Hajiya Ladi Kwali: A typical traditional African potter.

Charlotte Hagan: An elite Ghanaian textile artist born in 1938.

Younousse Seye: (born in 1940) an African female multimedia artist.

Theresa Musoke: born in 1941 and was a textile artist.

In addition to the above information on African women artists, Contemporary African Database (CAD) on people has in the female artists section a list of African female artists with their various specialities (APPENDIX B).

Unfortunately this record does not capture any Ghanaian female artist.

However, the exhibition catalogue 'Women Artists of Ghana' published in 1992 published by B.K. Dobge Indicates some female Ghanaian artists who are:

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Peace Enyonam Akosua Baku, | a free lance artist, |
| Eva Juliet Campbell, | a painter, |
| Olivia Aku Glime, | a textile artist |
| Vesta Adu-Gyamfi | a ceramic artist |
| Dorothy Asukonfu Abaitey, | a painter and a textile artist and |
| Esther Victoria Ulzen-Appiah, | a textile artist. |

There are yet another group of educated female Ghanaian artist who have not been captured at all. These are the art historians, the female art educationist, the female graphic artist among others; Names of these people include, Mrs Joyce J. Stuber, former Dean of the College of Art and a prominent graphic artist, Nana Afia Opoku-Asare, a ceramic and textile artist and educator current Head of Department, General Art Studies, College of Art and Social Sciences, KNUST.

From the related literature reviewed above, it is clear that many female artists have existed in Africa and throughout the world but it fails to establish the traditional roles which Ghanaian women play in the visual arts and also the use of women as themes in Ghanaian art.

Also the available literature does not provide in-depth information on the roles, which women are playing in art for national development now and how, they may effectively do it in future. This and more are what the current thesis sets out to establish as would be noted in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter outlines the various procedures by which pieces of information about the topic were obtained.

The qualitative research method was used in this study to enable the researcher provide a vivid ethnographic account of the various study fields and this describe what goes on there.

Data was obtained from both primary and secondary sources.

Data collected through questionnaire, field notes and one on one interviews and observations with people that matter as far as this research is concern, constituted the primary data.

Secondary data was also collected through literary sources, such as books, journals, research papers, news papers and the internet.

Topics discussed in this chapter are research tools, Library Research Conducted, Archival Research Conducted, Museum and Gallery Research Conducted, Sampling, Interviews Conducted, on site Observation.

3.1 Research instruments

The research was executed with the aid of an empirical review of related literature. Series of formal and informal interviews with opinion leaders and some artists were conducted with the aid of an interview guide, and photographs of scenes of interest were taken. The rest are responses to

copies of questionnaire. On-site notes and observations of events was also done. Statistical diagrams including bar charts, frequency tables, and diagrams have all been used to illustrate primary data collected in numerical forms.

The quasi data, represented mathematically as stated above, are analyzed and discussed descriptively. Arguments have been posed in comparison with secondary information obtained from earlier documentation. The researcher has at some stages stayed out of the finds so as to avoid twisting the facts. However, the facts are discussed and the position of the researcher stated.

In describing and discussing the pieces of information, accompanying photographs of events, scenes and persons have been shown in plates, on later pages.

3.2 Library Research Conducted.

Library research constituted quite an enormous part of the study. Several libraries were visited in Kumasi a couple of times in pursuit of relevant information to the thesis. These libraries include the K.N.U.S.T. main library, the College of Art Library, the Social Science Library, the Department of General Art Studies Library, all of K.N.U.S.T., the British Council Library and the Ashanti Regional Library. Apart from the above mentioned Libraries which were all in Kumasi, other public and Private Libraries which the researcher visited were; The Balme Library of The

University of Ghana, Legon, The Development and Women's Studies Library, Accra, Legon, and The Institute of African studies library in the University of Ghana Legon.

All through these research visits, grand efforts were made to collect the secondary data even though not much was acquired from literary sources like books, magazines, journals, thesis and brochures. In sum, about one hundred and fifteen (115) books, twenty (20) Journals, magazines, and brochures were read. However, only few of these documents spoke directly on Ghanaian women in art and this information though scanty, was used for some part of the literature review.

The information or data from various publications were classified under the following subheadings Women in world art; Women in African art; Women in Ghanaian art; Women Artists. The relationship between the information gathered and the study "Selected Indigenous Ghanaian Women in selected indigenous Ghanaian visual arts" were then established. With this analysis, most of the existing literatures could easily be identify and utilized. The bulk part of the literature was found at the collection in the various public libraries. In the course of this research some top officials in the art industries like Mrs Bridget Kyremanteng Darko, Director Aid To Artisan Ghana, Mr Robert K. Ellis, Managing Director of *Fritete* African Art Works, Honourable Kofi Poku-Adusei, Deputy Minister of Local Government And Rural Development, Honourable Hajia Alima, Minister of Women And Children's Affair were interviewed informally to seek further information on the subject.

3.3 Archival Research Conducted

In the course of this study, the researcher visited the National Archives of Ghana in Accra and Kumasi to solicit for information pertinent to the subject “Indigenous Ghanaian Women in selected indigenous Ghanaian visual arts”. Unfortunately, not much information was discovered on art as a whole except for some few books and a photographic display in their search rooms. Nonetheless, some informal interviews were conducted with the officials present at the time of visit.

The Ghana statistical survey department was also visited in connection with searching for information on the subject. Here again not much was discovered. The researcher was provided with a CD ROM and a manual titled Ghana info V2.0 which is a database system that helps to organize and present data on social development indicators. The database consists of the following elements;

- Time Periods
- Geographic Areas
- Subpopulations; **gender, urban / rural, age groups**

But the database did not provide any information on the labour force of women in the field of art.

3.4 Museum and Gallery Research Conducted

Some museums and galleries were also visited by the researcher in pursuit of information on women in art. The places visited include:

The National Museums and Monuments Board in Accra, The Manhyia Palace Museum, and The Jubilee Museum located in the Centre for National Culture, Kumasi. Galleries like The Artist Alliances, and Aid to Artisans Ghana Gallery in Accra were also visited to critically study and investigate the extent to which women are involved in art both as themes and artists. Photographs on selected works made by female artists or on female themes were taken in the Aid to Artisans Ghana Gallery to be fully discussed in chapter four. ‘The loom’ a private gallery located at Kwame Nkrumah Circle in Accra, Ghana where some women artists send their works for display and sales was also visited.

3.5 Sampling

3.5.1 Characteristics for the Population of Study

Population is generally observed or understood as a group that consists of all quantities and values relevant to a statistical study, from which representative samples are taken in order to determine the characteristics of the whole. Busha and Harte (1980), defined population as “... any set of persons or objects that possessed at least one common characteristic”. Within this background, the artist, curators, gallery operators, buyers of art works, distributors of art works, and women groups

could be conveniently referred to as a population in this thesis it is therefore expedient for the researcher to study the characteristics of these population.

The populace was divided into two categories comprising:

- a. Women artists, marketers, curators, art collectors or Connoisseurs.
(i.e. Group A)
- b. The educated general public most especially lecturers and teachers from learning institutions and colleges. (i.e. Group B)

| | | |
|-------------|---|------------|
| 1. Group A. | = | 150 |
| 2. Group B. | = | <u>230</u> |
| Total | = | <u>380</u> |

The total anticipated population for the current research was therefore three hundred and eighty (380), Comprising art officers who are above thirty (30) years in terms of age. This is because such people might have enough work experience and in the case of students, female art students from tertiary institutions were chosen.

3.5.2. Justification of Sample Selected

Based upon the information given earlier on the samples chosen for this research work and financial constraints on the part of the researcher, one hundred and fifty (150) samples were randomly selected to represent the entire population. In effect, the one hundred and fifty people became the targeted and reachable population. It is interesting to note that though the samples chosen for this research are homogeneous in a way each group vary in one way or the other. For instance, the art officers from learning institutions and colleges most especially lecturers and teachers train female and elite artists in the Ghanaian society and some of them are females

themselves. Women in general (students, artists, marketers, curators, art collectors or Connoisseurs) on the other hand, may be involved in the production, promotion, sales and distribution of the artefacts.

The importance of this categorisation is that it would help the current researcher to know where and how to access information as regards Ghanaian Women in Ghanaian Traditional Art. It will also offer the chosen population the opportunity to freely give their open opinion about the enormous contributions which Ghanaian women are making towards the art industry and the nation as a whole.

3.5.3. The Survey Instruments

The survey instruments used for this study were designed questionnaire which was tested among peers and others, interviews, and observations of the women on the field thus during production, sales and distribution

(a) Questionnaire Design

A ten page questionnaire was designed to solicit for relevant information from the targeted population of study; most especially from the elite female artist.

This survey instruments was divided into sections.

Section one: this section of the questionnaire sought for particulars of the respondents which included their sex, position / status / rank, years in the job, and highest qualification.

Section two: respondents were required to

- I. tick in the box provided for or against the involvement of Ghanaian Women in Ghanaian Traditional Art
- II. indicate the traditional art in which women are forbidden to produce.
- III. indicate the extent to which Ghanaian women are involved in the traditional visual arts of Ghana.

Section three: sought the knowledge of respondents on the degree to which Ghanaian women are involved in the production of some traditional visual artefacts.

Section four: demanded that respondents supply any information on whether Ghanaian women are into the sales and distribution of some Ghanaian traditional visual artefacts.

Section five: requested the respondents to provide any information on the use of Ghanaian women as themes of works of art and also to give any suggestions and recommendations on how the Ghanaian women could boost their socio-economic gains through their involvements in the traditional visual art.

The open ended questions were asked to give respondents enough room to express themselves freely and offer constructive suggestions. Five hundred hard copies of questionnaires were prepared. (Sample in appendix C)

(b) Administration of Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed accordingly to the selected populace of four hundred.

In all, about four hundred and fifty questionnaires were recovered from the respective respondents.

3.6 Interviews Conducted

The researcher conducted some formal and informal interviews. This gathering device was as equally helpful as other techniques used for sourcing information and it was realised that some respondents were more willing to talk than to write. This also gave the current researcher the opportunity to establish a pleasant relationship with the respondents and so obtained off the record information crucial to this study.

Interviews were conducted at both work places and homes of respondents with the help of tape recorders in some cases, particularly in Fesi near Kpando in the Volta Region, Bolga in the Upper East Region and Accra. The exercise was conducted both in English and Twi languages where applicable. And, in some cases, the services of translators were employed especially at Kpando and Bolga.

3.7 On site Observation

Some women artists were observed at their workplaces to give the researcher a reasonable idea of how the women effectively go about the processing and production of some traditional artefacts. In some cases photographs were taken to support the study. Artefacts like baskets, murals, pottery and other materials were observed by the researcher especially in the galleries and the market for further clarification in one way or the other. This exercise was done to enable the researcher see, appreciate, photograph and document these unique traditional activities which some Ghanaian women engage themselves in for their own and the country's socio-economic development. Besides, certain pertinent questions were also discussed with respondents where necessary and suitable.

CHAPTER FOUR

AN ANALYSIS OF WORKS BY SELECTED INDIGENOUS GHANAIAN WOMEN ARTISTS AND THE USE OF WOMEN AS THEMES IN POTTERY PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

4.0. Overview

This chapter is a continuation of the field study by means of the instruments listed in Chapter Three. Subjects discussed in the chapter are Ghanaian women as mural artists and indigenous potters with special reference to the women potters at Fesi a suburb of Kpando in the Volta Region and Sirigu in the northern Region of Ghana. The other places where women are traditionally involved in indigenous pottery are Mpraeso in the Eastern Region, Pankrono in the Ashanti Region and Togome also in the Volta region.

The roles of Ghanaian women in the indigenous basketry weaving industry are also discussed here. Data were collected from groups of women in the various fields art.

The second part of this chapter also discusses the use of women as themes by selected artists in paintings, sculpture and ceramics.

4.1 Some Ghanaian Women as Indigenous Potters in Kpando

In Ghana, pottery is a distinctive part of the cultural tradition of the people. Pots are widely used for many different purposes and there are many different pots, which are made for use in the communities, house hold and other special purposes including religious ones. Indigenous pottery is almost exclusively the work of women. The art of pottery is traditional in certain families and communities who usually work in groups. The group of women interviewed at Kpando include: Davi Comfort (head of the potters at Fesi), age 57 years , Yayera Aku, 25 years Enyonam, Sylvia among others. (The other names of these interviewees were not supplied by them).

Kpando has been recognized for generations as the home of a skilled guild of women potters. The people of Fesi in Kpando, Volta Region are said to have migrated from Togo. The main occupation for the women in this village are pottery and farming. It is quite unfortunate to note that the women artists themselves are not very sure of the origin of their proud profession -pottery. However, there are two schools of thought who present different views of the origin of pottery in the area. Whereas some of the women interviewed (names of some of the women interviewed have been listed below) claim that their ancestors brought down the art of pottery making from Togo, the others claim that pottery was taught by a wasp. Based on the second view Davi Comfort claims that her great, great grandmother learnt the art of pottery making from the wasp fly. She said, her great, great grandmother witnessed the fly creatively modelling its

abode that looked like a pot. After that, she then quickly rushed home and tried replicating what she saw the fly doing and she was successful in producing a miniature pot. She then began to teach her daughter and the art become popular amongst the natives. It is worth noting that the history surrounding the origin of pots varies from one place to the other.

Many Kpando women gave up pottery production in order to farm and trade to support their families because the art could not compete favourably with the mass-produced plastics which Kpando traditional restaurants began to use. However, with the timely intervention of Aid to Artisans, Ghana, in 1997 to reunite Kpando's women and revive their fading pottery tradition, the art of indigenous pottery making in Kpando and its surrounding villages has regained its stands. Interestingly, at present the Kpando pottery community employs not less than 125 women from six villages in the Kpando area and who almost solely depend on the handicraft for their livelihood.

The indigenous women informed the researcher that clay used for the production of the pots is dug from clay-pits on river banks and the pits are under the control of Kpando priestesses, and the weaning of the clay is wrought with ritual prohibitions such as the following:

- Previously, uninitiated girls were not to enter the pit. It is believed that the uninitiated girls who are seen as 'unclean' would defile the earth divinities if they enter the clay pit and as a result suffer the wrath of the divinities. In the same way the people believe that girls

and women who have not undergone puberty rites may defile the earth divinity. Potters at Mpraeso and Pankrono also hold on to this taboo. However, now this taboo is not keenly observed due to the influence of Christianity, Islam, Western education and the general spate of modern civilization.

In addition to this, at Mpraeso the women are banned from winning clay when a queen mother dies. This is because she is considered to be the custodian of the wealth of the earth deities; failure to comply with this would cause the pit to collapse and bury those winning the clay.

- Men are rigidly forbidden traditionally to participate in the winning of the clay. Failure to abide by this may lead to the man losing his manhood, thereby becoming impotent. This was also observed at the other places where the indigenous women produce pottery wares. It was however, noted by the researcher that the women almost strip themselves naked during the process of winning the clay. Therefore it will be improper for a man to be present at the scene.
- Peculiar to Kpando, the priestesses are responsible for the 'health or purity' of the pits. (They ensure that nothing contaminates it as found in the other places).
- Women in their menstrual periods are not allowed to part take in the clay weaning process. Women who break this rule may suffer premature menopause which may result in an abrupt break in

fertility resulting the person incurring the displeasure of the ancestors who are believed to reincarnate.

- A special libation must be poured to the earth god to seek for its consent and ask for success in its usage before digging the clay.

Aside the above, there are some general taboos that govern the selected Ghanaian indigenous pottery industry. Some others are that:

- One should not wear sandals to the clay pit –this would defile the earth divinity that is in charge of the clay. (observed at Mpraeso, and Pankrono as well)
- One should not price a pot until it is fired- because it believe that if they do so it may influence the ware to break during the firing process. This is likened to the Akans believe that customary rites for pregnant women are not to be performed until she delivers otherwise the superstition may influence the pregnancy to be aborted or the pregnant mother may even not survive ‘labour’. (Observed at Pankrono as well)
- Peculiar to Pankrono, the potter should in no way be annoyed or angered during the process of pot making. Failure to observe this may result in the production of a bad-looking ware.
- One should not break pot intentionally – it is a sign of disrespect for the gods.
- Pots are not to be left standing overnight if empty since bad spirits may put poison in them at night and dirt may also be trapped in them posing health hazards to its users. (observed at all the centres)

The women create all kinds of pots in various shapes, including animal forms by hand, smoothing the exterior of each item with stones. After air-drying, the pieces are open fired and rolled in sawdust if the artist wants to achieve the characteristic black colouring as shown in the picture below. (The women artists in Mpraeso in the Eastern Region also make use of a similar technique in blackening their wares).



Plate 28
Rolling wares in sawdust, a traditional technique for blackening the pots.

Source: photograph Field trip

Considering the art as a business venture, the Kpando potters take the opportunity to export their products to foreign markets in other African countries and the United States, especially because now they realize the necessity of steady work and to earn income from the growth and health of their own families.

4.2 Economic and Social Dimensions

As caretakers of the natural richness of the Volta Region (the clay) in a rapidly changing world, the Kpando potters carry the burden of many rural artisans—to utilize new ideas as a vehicle for promoting and preserving their traditional culture. The women of Kpando are able to make money from their own skills thus the handicrafts, which are far more stable than crop sales or the local trading market.

Amazingly, several women told the current researcher that they had been able to put their children through schools even to the tertiary level because of their pottery earnings. Some have also built their own houses and other infrastructure from the art.

Other people who benefit economically from Kpando, Togome Mpraeso and Pankrono pottery are truck drivers who in all cases are hired to carry clay from the pit to the production centres and also carry finished wares to the market. When these drivers in turn purchase fuel for their trucks, the

fuel station operator also benefits economically from the income of the women. This chain of economic benefit continues even to the external family members of the artist who are sometimes given financial assistance by the women artist.

Others such as carpenters and masons who are employed to construct shed and build houses for the women also gain economically from the art of the women.

A survey was done by the current researcher by means of questionnaire to know how rewarding (economically) the art of pottery making has been to the women at Kpando as artists and mothers as against farming. A total of one hundred and ten questionnaires were distributed to one hundred and ten individuals, out of which hundred were retrieved and analyzed. Table 2 displays the figures obtained under the respective respondent as Much Better, Better, Same, Not Good.

Table 1

A table indicating the responses on how rewarding (economically) the art of pottery making has been to the women at Kpando as artists and mothers as against farming.

| | Much Better | Better | Same | Not Good | Total |
|--------|-------------|--------|------|----------|-------|
| Artist | 57 | 23 | 13 | 7 | 100 |

A Bar Chart

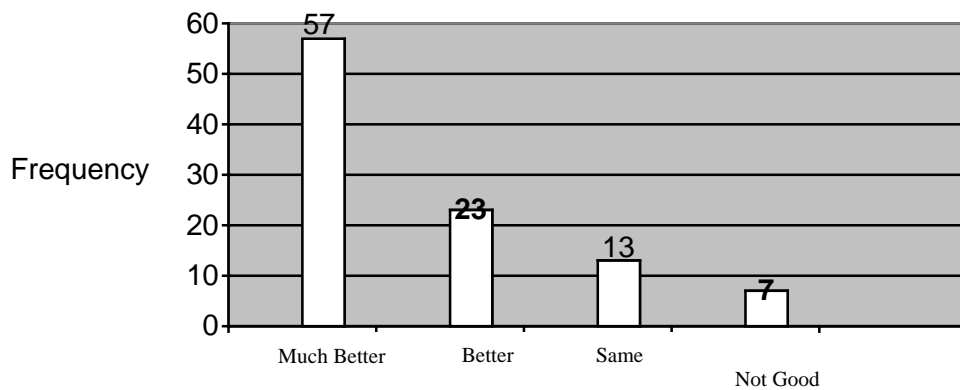


Figure 2

Economic benefits of Pottery as against Farming to Knando women

The table and resultant bar chart above bring to bare a lot of interpretation to the study.

The percentages of scores under each view displayed as follows:

| | | |
|-------------|---|---|
| Much Better | : | 57%, representing 57 respondents of a total of 100 |
| Better | : | 23 %, representing 23 people out of the 100 |
| Same | : | 13% representing 13 respondents of a total of 100 |
| Not good | : | 7% representing 7 respondents of a total of 100 |

Judging from the response obtained above, one could safely conclude that most Kpando women potters benefit economically from their art works as women artists.

The social dimensions of the art are that, since the potters work in group, they are able to support each other in joy and in pain. When one of them is bereaved it becomes the burden of the wholes group of potters. They normally come together to sing, dance and make merry especially at the end of the year or when one of them gives birth.

The researcher observed at all the centres visited that, because of the job, the family members of the female artists especially their children are united in one way or the other.

This is because as their mothers come together to produce the art, their children follow them to the site and when they get there, they play and even eat together and this fosters unity among them.

The Kpando pottery industry has flourished for centuries. Pots of different sizes and forms, for carrying and storing water, for cooking and serving food, ritual and ceremonial purposes and domestic utensils are made from the Kpando pottery village.

Today the indigenous pottery industry in Kpando and its surrounding villages has undergone several changes. For example the women are gradually shifting from producing artefacts just for their utilitarian purposes to producing also for aesthetic purposes. Some pots are extremely round as if they were turned on the potters wheel. (see plates 29,30,31 and 32)

4.3 Examples of some Kpando Pots and Clay Wares



Plate 12
Yayera Aku
(Kpando Potters Association)
Coiled vase
1998
Fired clay
46 X 53cm



Plate 13
Kpando Potters
Association
Flower vase
1999
Fired clay with sooth
46 X 53cm



***Plate 14**
Kpando Potters
Association
cylindrical Flower vase
1993
Painted fired clay with
46 X 53cm
Location: Atag gallery*



Plate 15
Sena
Potters Association
Local Flower vase
1997
Fired clay with sooth
46 X 53cm

Apart from the round pots and vases produced by the women, they also make open bowls which are usually constructed like the base of a pot.

Sometimes these women integrate sculptural forms with geometric and zoomorphic forms to create vases and receptacles for various uses; ranging from rituals to aesthetics. Examples of such pots are Plates 33 to 38.



Plate 16
Davi Comfort
The proverbial fowl,
1999
Fired clay with sooth
46 X 53cm



Plate 17
Kpando Potters Association
The Proverbial Tortoise
1990
Painted fired clay with 46 X
53cm



Plate 18
Kpando Potters Association
The owl vase
1990
Painted fired clay with 46 X
53cm
Groups Collection



Plate 19
Kpando Potters Association
Elephant
1990
Painted fired clay with saw dust
Groups Collection

They also produce several unique animal forms. The most interesting and well painted ones include the rabbit and the tortoise. (Plate 37 and 38 respectively).



Plate 20
Davi Comfort
The Ghanaian Tortoise,
2000
Painted Terra cotta
40 X 21cm
Private Collection



Plate 21
Anonymous
Rabbit,
1995
Painted Terra cotta
31 X 40cm
Private Collection



Plate 22

Davi Comfort is a very prominent potter in Fesi near Kpando in the Volta Region of Ghana.



Plate 23

*Sena, a member of the Kando Potters Association at pose with her lamp
shade*

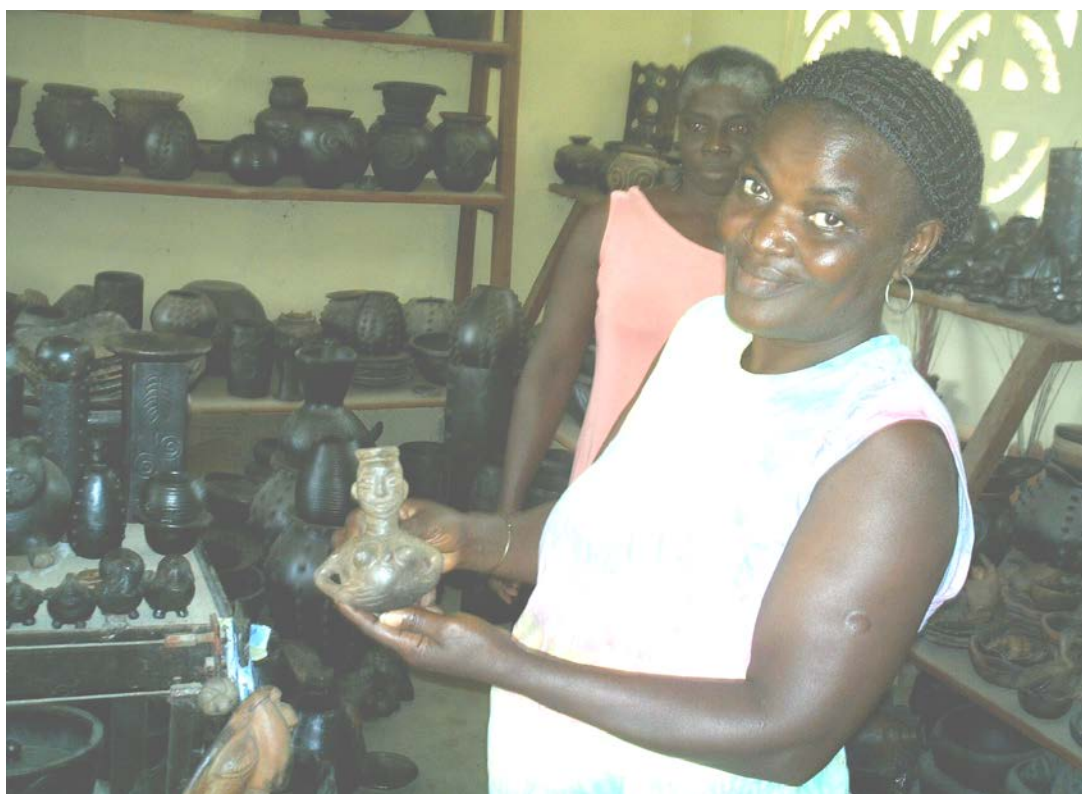


Plate 24

Madam Akofa and Enyonam showing their products to the researcher

4.4. Ghanaian Women in Indigenous Mural Painting at Sirigu

Mural (wall painting as an art) is a unique art, and unlike pottery, the involvement of women in this kind of art is not so common in Africa and even beyond. However, in the Upper East Region of Ghana, Artistry of a high standard is displayed by the women folk into an interesting art form (wall painting).

The Kassina Nankana people occupy the North Savannah belt near the Burkina Faso boarder which is characterized by grass land and with a low scattered tress. In this area, before the raining season groups of women cover their dwelling with colourful decorations of murals of geometric patterns and symbols. This adornment (wall decorations) is a form of artistic expression as well as surface protection.

Like what pertains in Kpando pottery, young girls who are born into families of mural artists automatically become apprentices to the art. The skill is passed down to the younger generations from time to time without them necessarily going through a formal education or training.

The group of women who were interviewed during the study at Sirigu include the following:



Aputugna Akolibire
48 years



Apolala Akaba
60 years



Anya Atolia
68 years



Asaase
35 years



Abisiboba Adongo
45 years



Adiviisa Ayangba
47 years



Akatogre Atanga
39 years



Aneriba Ana Akunbire
58 years



Azoko Ayungpurum
60 years



Evelyn Naaba
30 years



Faustina Ayambire
26 years

Some Sirigu women mural artists
Plate 25

According to Melanie Kasise, who is known to be the first woman to have received higher education, the wall decorations are a very unique expression of the cultural identity of Sirigu. Women take pride in making the house of the husbands beautiful by painting them with unique patterns. Newly built rooms have to be painted, but also older houses have to be repainted every three years as the colours are not durable.

It is worth noting here that in Sirigu, they get almost all the materials they use in executing the art especially the paints from the things gathered from their environment. These materials are *Bakpela*, *Gali*, and *Gusabula*.

The most outstanding colours are red, black, and white.



Plate 26
White tailed stone for producing
white paints
Captured during field study



Plate 27
Resultant white paint
from the white tailed
stone seen above

4.4.1. Bakpela

This is the white tailed stone from which the white paint is gotten.

This stone is normally rubbed against the latraite surface until a chalk like-feel or powder is obtained. This is then mixed with water to a reasonable consistency for the colour. (See plate 27)



Plate 28

gali (red paint) in a bowl

4.4.2. Gali

This is the local name of the red soil which gives the red colour obtained along the road side outside Sirigu in a village called Jua. This material is ground and mixed with cold water and cow dung to give it the rich red colours which are used for the art. (Plate 28)



Plate 29

Gusabula, black earth for the black colour

4.4.3. Gasabula

Gasabula which provides the black colour is obtained from black earth naturally composed from dead animals and rotten vegetables mined from a mud pond in Burkina Faso. It can be found in the market as well, usually in the form of a dry ball. (Plate 29)

4.5. The use of Symbols

The design are made of abstract geometrical and animal figures. They can be painted on a flat surface or in relief. The colours used are black, red and white. These colours are made of the minerals and materials that are locally available. Black is the sign of power, the red the sign of danger and white the sign of purity.

Black clothes are worn at funerals, but , contrary to its meaning in western societies, this colour does not mean sadness. Mme Melanie Kasise, the founder of Sirigu Women Organisation for poetry and Art pointed out to the researcher that the black used in thier paintings represents the recognition of changes in life: death, reincarnation, ancestral power, tradiion and memories. whilst the white and the red symbolises purity and danger respectively.

Below are symbols used and the names in Kassina language.

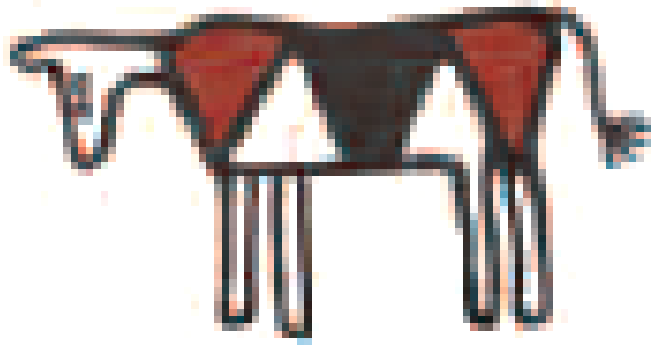


Plate 30
Cow / *Naafo*

Cow / *Naafo*

The cows which are mostly featured in Sirigu painting have a hump on the back. In the northern part of Ghana, cows are the symbol for wealth. One's wealth is determined by the number of cows he or she has. They are kept as capital for the family and are used to pay bride prices for women. Cows help to plough the farm and carry products to the houses. A wall painting which has the symbol of a cow therefore depicts that the owner of the house is wealthy.



Plate 31
Python / Waafu

Python / Waafu

The python in the paintings stand for protection. Some clans in sirigu also have it as their totem to symbolize life and death. They worship the python and do not eat it. The researcher was informed Ayampoka Akayuure that the python does not disturb humans unless it is tempted. There are two legends about the python. It comes to welcome a newly married woman to her husband's home by lying on her lap and, the python coils with its head in the middle and the tail outside, so it can lure a crying baby to sleep by putting its tail into the baby's mouth to suck. People who therefore dwell in a house painted with the python symbol believe that they are spiritually protected.



Plate 32
Crocodile / *Eebga*

Crocodile / *Eebga*

Crocodile symbolize the salvation of life of a clan and they are worshipped as a special god. Crocodiles can sometimes be seen near dams in the Sirigu area. In traditional paintings, the crocodile can have one or two heads to symbolise unity. A crocodile on a mural informs the society about the clan of the inhabitants.



Plate 33
Chicken /Niila

Chicken /Niila

Chicken and guinea fowl are kept for their eggs and meat. They are also important in ritual ceremonies and are slaughtered as offering to the forefathers in order to thank them for good harvest, long life, good health or to ask them for prosperity. The design are often placed above doors. The people often show their hospitality by giving visitors chicken or guinea fowl eggs.

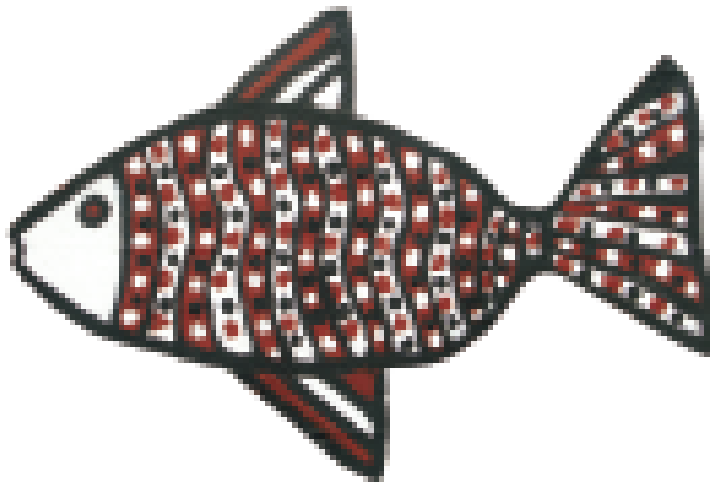


Plate 34
Fish / *Ziifo*

Fish / *Ziifo*

Fisk are caught in rivers or nearby dams. Fish is commonly used in cooking but are most often smoked or dried before use. This symbol is often use for domestic paintings.

4.5.1. Abstract Symbols

Paintings are sometimes done in abstract geometrical figures which have local symbolic meanings. Some of the common geometrical figures and their meaning as given to the researcher are presented below.

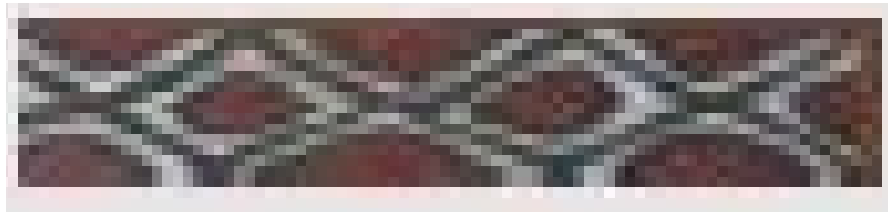


Plate 35
Cows | *Akun-nyana-nii*

Cows | *Akun-nyana-nii*

It is said that Atereeba Kunyana was a man blessed with many cattle. His cows were very wise and followed each other in a straight line without disturbing each other in their movement.

The design remembers the man, his wealth and the remarkable character of his numerous cows. The design symbolizes wealth and prosperity so it is used often, at the top of walls for high class people in the community.



Plate 36
Broken Calabash | *Wanzagsi*

Broken Calabash | *Wanzagsi*

The calabash is a fruit from commonly found at Sirigu. After harvest it is dried and the seeds removed.

The hard shell is used for numerous purposes especially by the women. Even when it is broken, the women at Sirigu use it for their pottery-works. The design, *broken calabash* is used to symbolizes the usefulness of the calabash.

When a woman dies, a calabash is broken to symbolize that she will be using the calabash in the next world. To this extent painting done with the broken calabash is meant to educate people on how important calabash is.

To carry out a given task, the women basically work under the principle of division of labour. The most talented and experienced women commence the work by sketching the basic patterns free hand with the aid of a brush with the black colour. (Plate 45). If the surface to cover is wide, a number of the women get involved in the basic design process. As this goes on, others also paint out the details. (as seen in Plate 46)



Plate 37

Drawing of basic patterns with brush and black paint.



Plate 38

*Women painting details into the basic
outline drawings*



Plate 39

Adiviisa and Adongo trying to work with precision



Plate 40

They attach all seriousness to the task

At times amidst songs



Plate 41

Team work by Asaase and Atono

Finishing up a task

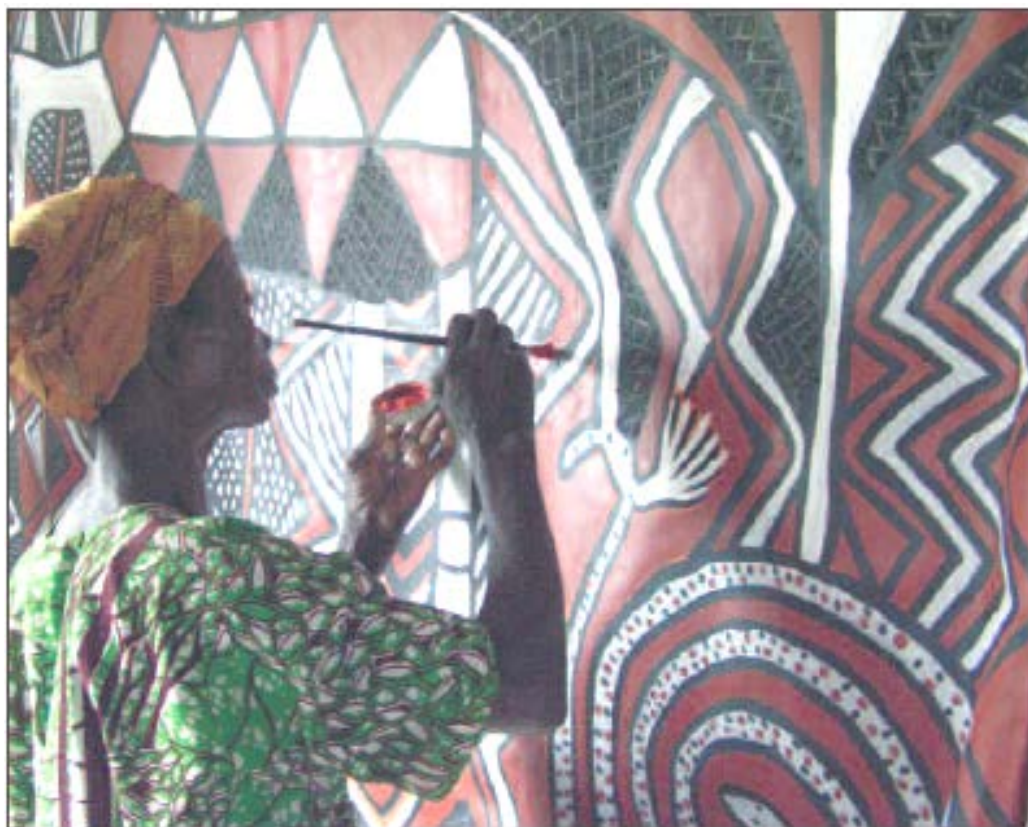


Plate 42

Almost finished Mural



Plate 43

Finally, when the work is completed the result is characteristically unique and classic by indigenous painting standard

SOME FINISHED MURALS

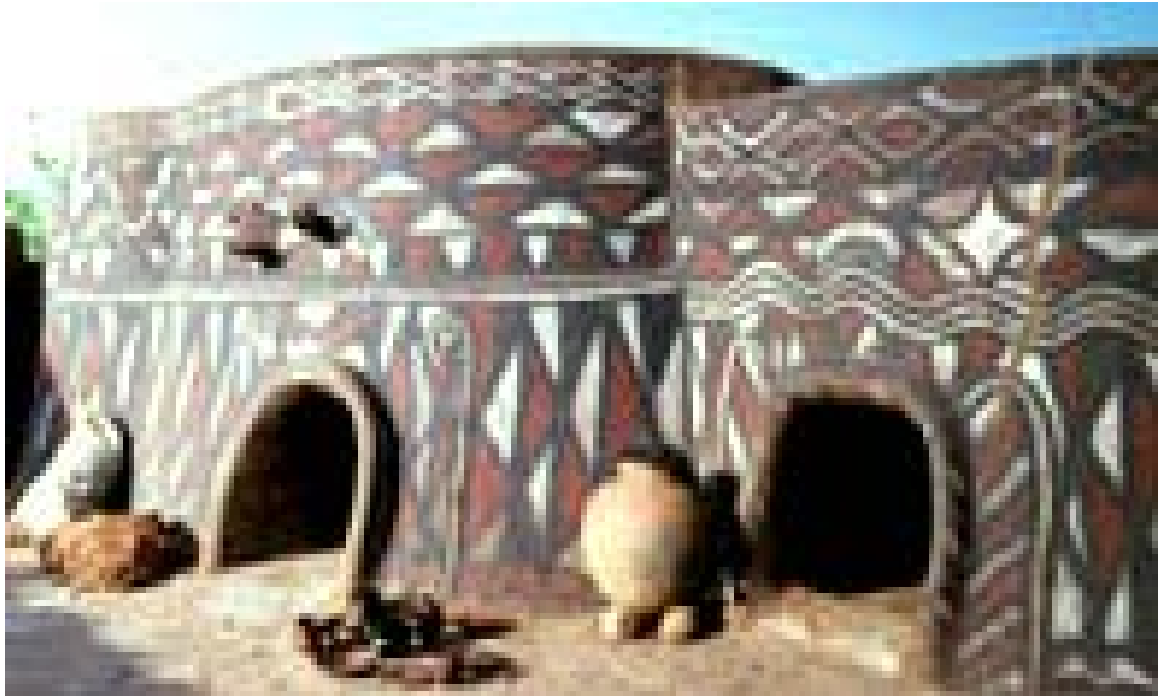


Plate 44

Finished Murals

4.6 Socio-Economic Dimensions of the Art.

Certainly, the painting activity is a lot of wealth to the women who normally work as a team. Currently through the efforts of the some institutions, like Alliance Frances the women are able to have access to the international market thus buyers from France . Thus they are sometimes given international contracts. For example Aid to Artisans Ghana under the auspices of USAID awarded some women of Sirigu the contract of painting some part of their craft village at the Ghana International Trade Fair Centre which earned the artist a good amount of money. Alliance Frances also an international institution is known to have also been working closely with selected Sirigu Women to organise some exhibitions which showcase the women's art.

Apart from the above, other people also benefit economically from the women artists; there are people whose business is pick the raw materials for the painting and sell them to the women artists for their daily living. Others sell brushes to the artist for some financial gains. In most cases people who sell drinking water make a lot of sales when a wall is being painted.

Currently, some lovers of art deliberately commission the women to paint some of their geometric and symbolic patterns on canvas for them, this also give the women some economic benefits.

The wall painting activity has several social dimensions. They work together and in groups in executing a project and this facilitate unity among themselves and even their families.

Since most of them live in the same neighbourhood, their children also share sentiments together. They sometimes come together to sing native songs and dance while others shout.

When one member is bereaved, they join the bereaved to mourn the deceased as a group.

Member of the society learn a lot from the symbols in the paintings, for example the calabash symbol in a mural educates the people on how important calabash is to them, symbols such as the crocodile among others educate the people on the need for them to be united.

4.7. Ghanaian Women in Indigenous (Basket) Weaving – Bolga

The baskets are exclusively woven by the indigenous women of a historical town in Northern Ghana called Bolgatanga. Basket Weaving has been a traditional skill of these people over the years. The geographical land area of Bolgatanga is not fertile enough for extensive agricultural activities. Coupled with an erratic rainfall pattern and generally, harsh weather conditions, handicraft activities such as basket weaving, and pottery are undertaken mostly by the women to supplement their incomes from the subsistence farming activities.

Here again, the women learn the art by handing down this skill from generation to generation.



Plate 45. A family of weavers at Bolga

It is amazing to see how these women groups who have not had any formal education on colours blend and apply colours obtained from local dyes to do their works. Plate 52 is a display of some of the colours used by the women for their art.

Table 2 Some Commonly used Colours and their Local Names in their
Native language

| Colours (English) | Colour (native language) |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Red | <i>Molega</i> |
| Yellow | <i>Hale</i> |
| Brown | <i>Molgne</i> |
| Black | <i>Sabga</i> |
| Green | <i>Delmadeto</i> |



Plate 46

Variations of colours

As seen in Plates 53 to 59, the women are able to make very intricate patterns all by hand. The beautiful colours they employ and the intricate patterns make the Bolga baskets special and a hot commodity on the market.

The processes below are observed by the women when making a basket.

4.7.1 The Creation Process:

The following processes are observed by the women when making a basket:

- Elephant grass straw is collected from the tops of the stalk, then each piece is split in half vertically by biting through it.
- Each half of the split straw is then twisted tightly by rolling it against a weavers lap to give it strength.
- The straw is put in bunches and dyed in boiling water with the dye added. For bright colours the straw is dyed yellow first, then the other colours.
- The women weavers carefully select appropriate straws for the base, sides and handle. The selection of the proper grass for the proper parts of the basket is critical to good weaving.
- Weaving starts at the base and works up to the rim. The rims are generally finished flat, or wrapped with straw to form a tube like edge.
- There are a variety of different handles, but all are made with a sturdy wrapping technique around a grass core.
- Remaining bits of straw that are sticking out of the basket are carefully trimmed off. The trimming is important because it determines how the basket feels to when touched.
- Leather handles are sometimes applied by local leather workers. A medium basket takes 3 days to complete.

Bolga baskets are mainly functional. The women weavers hardly make baskets just for aesthetics purposes unless they are specially commissioned by a buyer to do so.

The women weave all kinds of products ranging from door mats, hats, waste bins, and market baskets to plate mates. Examples of some few could be seen below.

Laundry Basket



Plate 47
Bolga laundry Baskets
Large size 19 X 9
19198



Plate 48
Bolga laundry Baskets
Small size 15 X 15
19198

This beautiful basket is available in 3 sizes and comes with double handles. Small: 15x15 cm, Medium 17x17 cm, Large: 19x19 cm. The women brilliantly attach to the baskets handy latches that are removable to keep the lids closed. They can be used to hold laundry, or any number of items. They can also make great toy boxes for a child's room.

Balga Fan



Plate 49 *Bolga Fan, dyed straw 12X10 cm*

This unique artefact is also done by the women at Sirigu. It measures 12 cm wide by 10 cm high not including the handle.

The current researcher tried using one and found it wonderful for it moves an incredible amount of air! The women are so creative. It can be hung up when not in use.

Shepherd's Bag



Plate 50
Shepherds basket
Approx 6-7 inches Tall X 5-6 cm Across
(plus 19-27 cm twisted leather strap)



Plate 51
Shepherds basket
Approx 6-7 cm Tall X 5-6 cm Across
(plus 19-27 cm twisted leather strap)



Plate 52
Shepherds basket
Approx 6-7 cm Tall X 5-6 cm Across
(plus 19-27 cm twisted leather strap)

These baskets are used by the indigenous goat herders to carry a small meal into the countryside. The women weavers in the region use elephant grass to weave these handy, baskets that are used for many purposes. These baskets are made in varieties of colour and size. Here are some samples which were all done by the women who also work in groups.

4.8 Socio-Economic Dimension of the Art

The economic dimension of the art of indigenous basketry weaving at Bolga is quite numerous. Quite apart from the financial gains made by the women themselves through the sales of their products, other people such as labourers who usually are paid for weeding production sites, masons who are paid for their services at the site (preparing concrete floors), local dye sellers whose products are purchased by the women for finishing their works, retailers of the basketry products, and even the end users of the product also benefit economically from the art of basket making by the women at Bolga.

Above all, the Government also gets so much revenue from the exportation of the basketry products to other countries and continents.

This in a way authenticates Peterson's assertion that, at a time when native women had few choices of occupation, basket making provided a welcome and significant source of income in most African continent.

Like Kpando and Sirigu, the women at Bolga contribute so much to the social life of the people. They sometimes meet to think about their welfare, needs, protection of the native art and how to hit the market. They also meet to entertain themselves through music and dance. They share in the joy and pain of themselves so their families are firmly united.

4.9. The Use of Women as Themes in Pottery Painting and Sculpture

Themes play a very unique role in the field of art; be it verbal, performing, body, environmental or visual art. This is because they (themes) unveil the meaning of the art piece. Generally in Africa, themes of most visual art works are taken from proverbs, myths, extracts of song, poems, and figures (animals and human figures).

Some writers claim that one cannot tell between male and female visual art figures with ease. In other words it is quite easy to confuse a male figure with a female one especially when the artefact is an abstract or surrealistic and its anatomical features are not conspicuous. However, the clue is sometimes seen in certain features like beard, hair style, and most often the use of round and angular forms by the artist to produce that particular artefact. The presence of beard is usually symptomatic of manhood rather than old age. Round forms normally represent female figures whilst angular ones depict male forms; as often depicted in stools and Akuaba dolls of the Akan of Ghana or in Chi-wara of the Bambara in Mali. (Plate 5).

In African societies, the female figure among other images was used in making certain household and personal objects including those that are symbols of prestige. The theme used may reflect aesthetic appreciation of women, or it may refer to one of the roles women play in traditional African societies. A survey was conducted by the current researcher by means of questionnaire (Appendix C) to know why most artists desire to produce artefacts with female themes A total of one hundred and fifty questionnaire

were distributed to one hundred and fifty individuals, out of which hundred and twenty- eight were retrieved and analyzed.

The table below displays the figures obtained under the respective reasons; Aesthetic purposes, Philosophical purposes, Religious purposes, No reason

Table 3

A table indicating the responses on reasons why some artists go in for female themes.

| | Aesthetic purposes | Philosophical purposes | Religious purposes | No reason | Total |
|--------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------|-------|
| Artist | 47 | 70 | 9 | 2 | 128 |

A Bar Chart

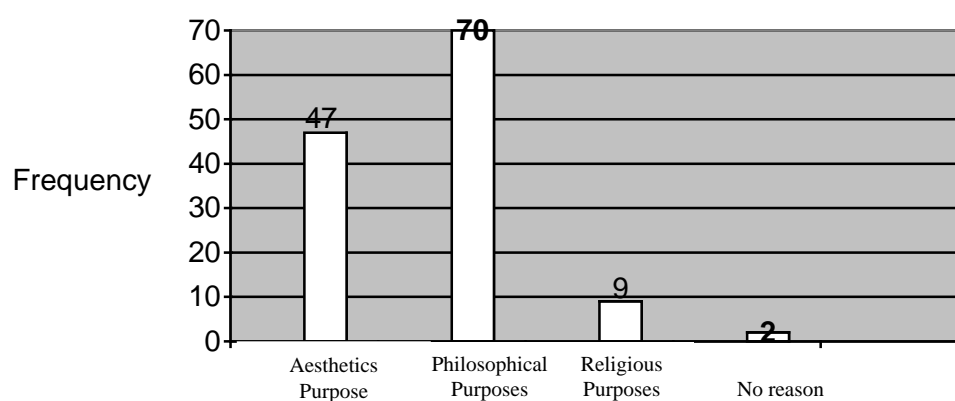


Figure 1

Reasons why some artists go in for female themes

The table and ensuing bar chart above both bring out a lot of interpretations to the study.

The percentages of scores under each reasons are displayed as follows:

Aesthetic purposes : 36. 72%, representing 47 respondents of a total of 128

Philosophical purposes : 54.69%, representing 70 people out of the 128

Religious purposes : 7.03% representing 9 respondents of a total of 128

No reason : 1.56% representing 2 respondents of a total of 128

Judging from the response obtained above, one could safely conclude that most African and for that matter Ghanaian artefacts bearing female themes in one way or the other presents a unique philosophy of nature.

Women have featured prominently in the works of many artists in Ghana who have immortalized their distinctive physiognomies and attitudes. There are several artefacts which basically depicts the African woman and her enormous roles and responsibilities. In Africa and most especially Ghana, female figures and their activities have been often been used in some visual art works as themes by both male and female artists. This is actually so because of the value and the concepts of beauty associated with the black woman's anatomy.

The dominance in the use of women as themes of artefacts over that of men undoubtedly adds to the pace at which some art works sell thereby affecting the economic and social life of Ghanaians in the short or long term. Most

importantly these female themes also serve as a strong educational tool for both the local society and the Diaspora.

This chapter therefore discusses the use of women as themes of some visual art works (painting and sculpture) and the social and educational impact of such themes on the artists themselves and Ghana at large. Specifically, a special light has been thrown on the themes of some visual artefacts done by Vesta Adu Gyamfi, B.K.Dogbe and Benjamin Offie Nyarko. Though these artists a modern artist, the themes for their works depicts the indigenous Ghanaian woman's way of life and philosophies.

4.9.1 The Female Themes of Vesta Adu Gyamfi's Art Works

Vesta Adu Gyamfi is a prominent Ghanaian female artist who is currently the Dean of the Faculty of Industrial art, College of Art and Social Sciences, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). She started clay-work during a foundation programme at the College of Art in the then University of Science and Technology (U.S.T) now Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (K.N.U.S.T) Kumasi, Ghana where she opted for Ceramics in her second year on the programme and graduated with it. She also had her M.F.A programme at Rochester Institute of Technology, New York in the U.S.A

Adu Gyamfi's fields of specialization are Ceramics and Ceramic Sculpture and the themes of most of her works are centred on the inscrutability of women in Africa, most especially Ghana. She once said, "I try to project the great responsibilities of being female from birth to death. How the earth, the sea, everything is related to woman." Without doubt, this quality is seen in the themes she chooses for the works she produces.

For example, her ceramic sculpture entitled "*Motherhood*" (plate 7) though is an abstract figure yet in a way she has managed to represent the female form both in structure and in shape. Most fascinating is a close bowl-like piece with a lid which serves as the African woman's (Akan) oval head and this sits on a thrown ringed neck. In a hollow space depicting the stomach is a smaller pot and a ringed section made in the manner of the bigger one to represent a smaller offspring. Obviously the artist through this theme and the work is educating the general public on the role of the African women as carriers of babies right from conception to delivery and afterwards. Indeed the making of a man is indisputably hinged on mothers (women).

Again the concept of beauty among Akans of Ghana and in Africa is observed. Thus: In the Ghanaian society, among Akans, the oval head represents an uncommon beauty while ringed long necks signify beauty of womanhood.

Well developed buttocks and thighs on the other hand are linked with fertility and sexual attractiveness.

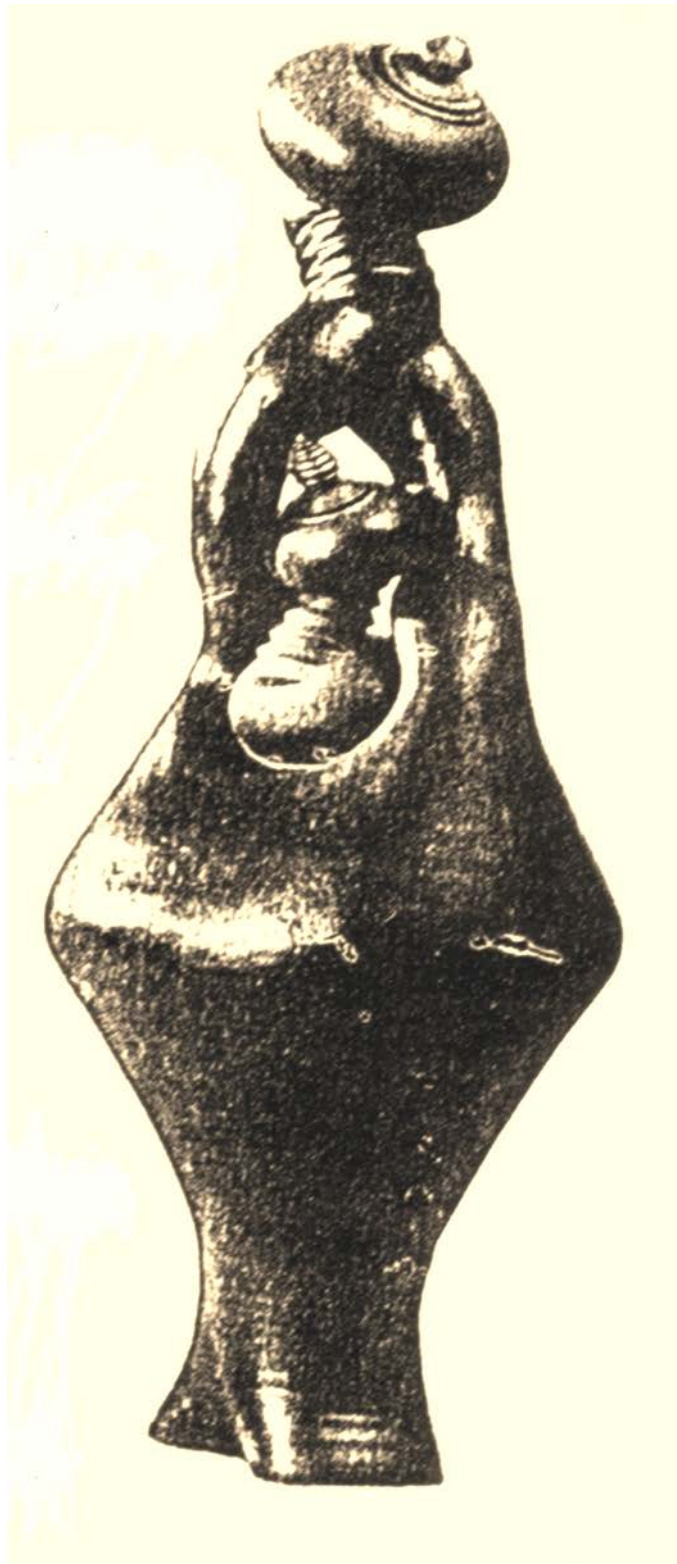


Plate 53 Vesta Adu-Gyamfi. “Motherhood”, 1990

Glazed Ceramics, 45cm high

Location: private collection of the artist

In this piece (Motherhood), the concept of birth, nurturing and maternity are effectively stirred up. The ringed part that serves as the neck in the case of the mother becomes the umbilical chord for the offspring. The use of different forms to represent the various parts of the female figure introduces viewers to the hidden philosophy of unity and togetherness. Just one form out of the component of Plate 7 couldn't have made such a meaningful work and the message the artist wanted to sell out wouldn't have been achieved. But the coming together of several forms cylindrical, conical, spherical and amorphous shapes actually brought the message out and this confirms the popular Ghanaian Proverb. "Two Heads Are Better Than One".

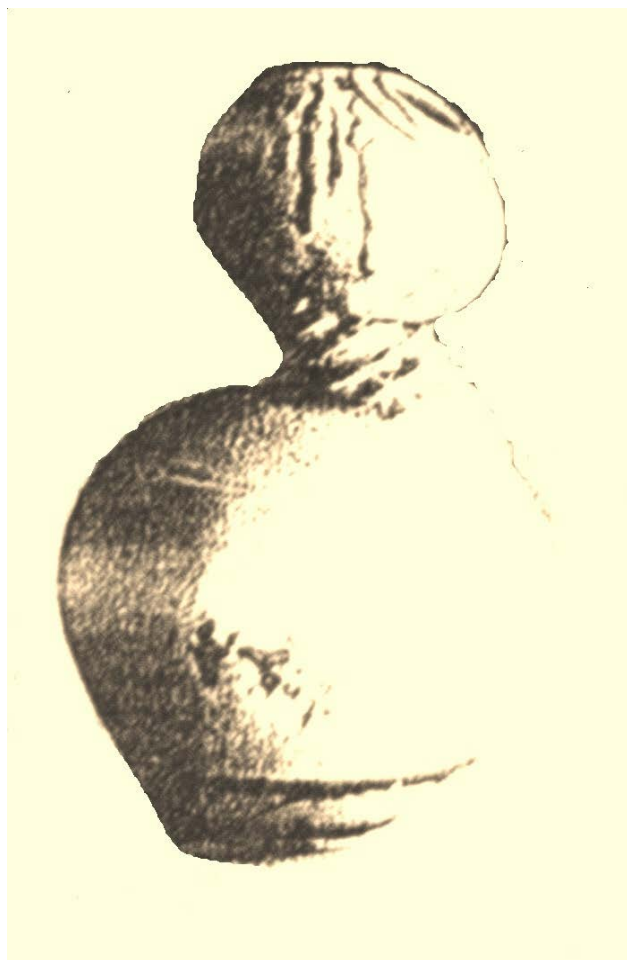
In another ceramic sculpture, "*African Woman*", Plate 8 presents to the viewer the rich aesthetics qualities of the African-Ghanaian woman. In Ghana and among the Akans concept and philosophy of beauty, nothing feeds the eyes more and is more aesthetically pleasing than the female figure.

Plate 54 Vesta Adu-Gyamfi.

“African Woman”

Glazed Ceramics, 45cm high

Location: : private collection of the artist



As could be seen in the figure (Plate 8), the female artist, Vesta, dwelt on the African female form (the head, the neck and the torso) to justify her theme.

The head is the most esteemed shape in Akan society and women with high domed foreheads are considered especially beautiful and this is intelligently displayed in her ceramic sculptures. Adu Gyamfi once said “the neck of my pots represents a stylized expression of the ideal neck (with a series) of rings or folds”. In the Akan society, an art piece with a well developed buttocks and thighs are linked with fertility and sexual attractiveness. From this work, one could easily conclude that the artist has an intimate understanding of form and motion, which impart an undulating fluidity to her pieces.

Clearly, Vesta through the female themes of her works has dared to educate the entire world on the socio cultural roles, the value and concept of beauty of the woman in African most especially in Ghana and amongst Akans.

A comparative study of Adu Gyamfi's themes and works with that of the Mende of Sierra Leone shows some similarities in terms of the concept of beauty attached to them. Just as Adu Gyamfi's themes and works enlighten us about the Akan concept of beauty, the Mende are known for their mask and figures associated with the Bundu and Yassi female secret societies. Masks used in Bundu initiation ceremonies (Plate 9) are said to

reflect the ideal of feminine beauty among the Mende and related societies. The high forehead, the black lustrous skin and the elaborate and tidy coiffure was favoured in some of the communities where the masks were used. Fat ringed necks were said to signify health, beauty and well-being. Obviously, this concept of beauty changes depending on the geographical location of the artist. In other words, the way a woman is represented or portrayed at a period reflects the morals of a particular people at a given time.



Plate 55
The Bundu Mask, Mende, Sierra Leone
Wood and Raffia
Source: internet

4.9.2 The Female Themes of B. K. Dogbe's Art Works

Dr B. K. Dogbe, a senior lecturer in the Department of General Art Studies of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. is also an artist who has contributed so much in promoting knowledge through the themes of his artefacts.

Though a male artist, Dogbe seems to have a unique skill of carrying out his ideas through his female sculptures and themes. Some of the female themes he has worked on include:

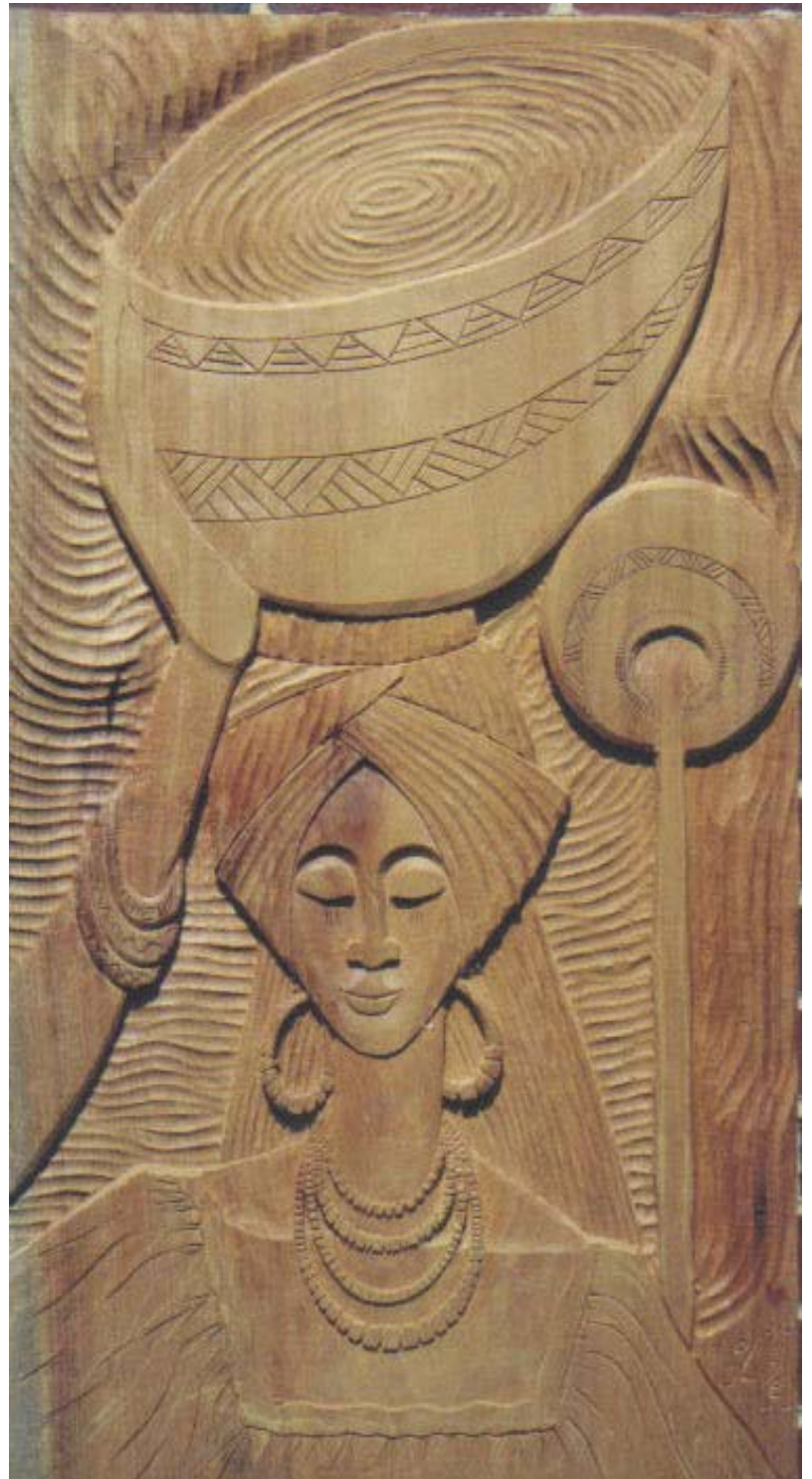
“The family treasure”, “The Nude with a Towel”, “Female Figure”, “The Milk Woman”, “Makola”, “A Girl Admiring Her Beads”, Mother of Twins” amongst others.

Interestingly, each of these female centred themes employed by the artist plays a special role of educating the general public on the enormous roles women play in the Ghanaian Society such as marketers, mothers, sources of aesthetic admiration among others. For example, his sculpture titled “The Milk Woman” Plate 10 shows a well decorated woman carrying a bowl containing fresh cattle milk which appears to be have been just ‘sucked’ from the cattle considering its fluidity in the calabash on her head.

This artefact depicts how industrious the Ghanaian woman is. This theme also plays a very special role of letting its viewers know how the ideal Ghanaian woman dresses with local adornments to make her beautiful.

Also the woman with all her special adornments and dressings has carried the bowl of milk on her head educating the general public not to rest but go all the way out (despite ones adornment, beauty and position) to work in order to earn a living.

Plate 56
B.K. Dogbe
"The Milk Woman"
1998
Wood
36 X 18 inches
Private collection.



Another theme brilliantly executed by the artist, is “*Nude With A Towel*” plate 11 which presents a young woman about to take a bath with a sombre facial look. Which educates it’s viewers on how modest the African woman is. By this theme and pose (ready to bath), the artist brings to fore the need for the society to practise personal hygiene both at the individual level and at public gathering.

Undoubtedly, the realistic nature of this figure makes one understand the true beauty embedded divinely in womanhood right from her head to toe; and the use of the theme: ‘The Nude with a Towel’ is so catchy that anyone who wants to know what at all it is that the African woman has to present underneath her cloths would dare watch it and appreciate the concept behind beauty as associated with the Ghanaian woman. The current researcher was informed that this is a commissioned work by a prominent lawyer in Kumasi, which is an indication of the fact that not only artists admire female figures.

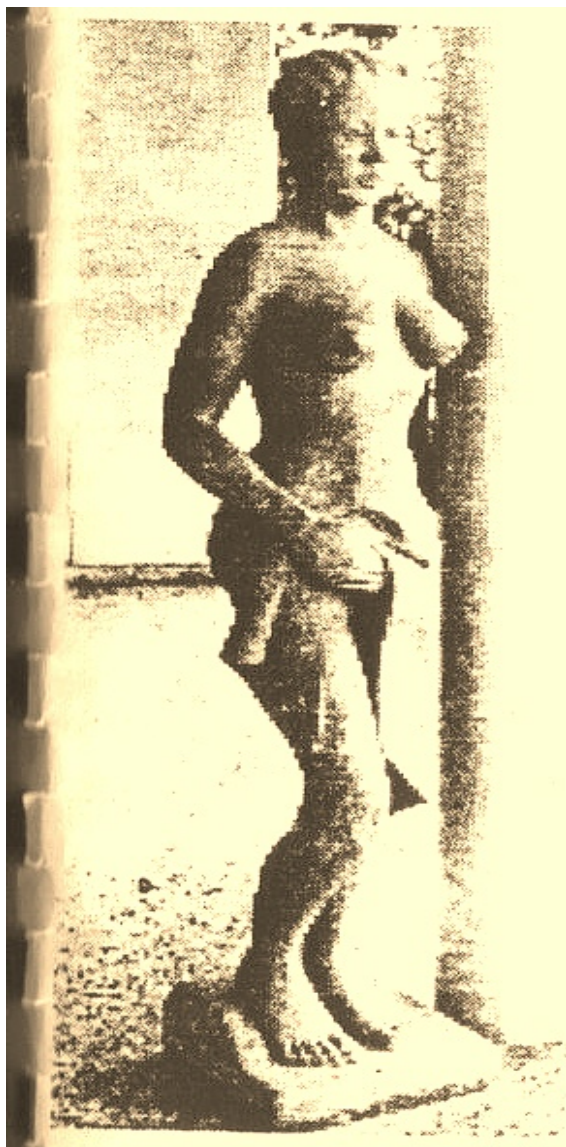


Plate 57
B.K. Dogbe
“Nude with a Towel”
1981
Concrete, Life size(5ft
8m)
Collection: Mr. J.K.Toto
Kumasi



Plate 58
B.K. Dogbe
“The Family Treasure” 1995
Wood, 50cm high
Artist’s Private collection

As could be observed from Plate 12 above, the theme of the nicely crafted sculpture piece “The Family Treasure unveils yet another unique role played by women in the African traditional society thus as custodians of the family’s valuables. This work shows an elegant looking Ghanaian woman with plaited hair, a ringed neck and decorated with beads, typical of a beautiful African woman. The African concept of a beautiful woman as outlined by Kofi Antobam (1991) has been vividly captured here by Dogbe.

In Ghana, most especially among the Akans, women are known to be the main custodians of treasures such as gold, jewellery, and precious stones in their homes. Having this tradition in mind, Dogbe, like others who have worked around similar themes has sculptured his figure in a very protective or defensive posture with the treasure pot or vessel in her arm. This theme and the actual work educate the general public on the socio-cultural responsibility of the Ghanaian woman.

As used by Dogbe, the image of or the theme mother and child has often been used in traditional African sculpture and generally, a statue or sculpture that depicts a female and child personifies fecundity and continuity of human life (plates 8 and 13). The mother and child theme however, is not confined to African art only. It is one of the most commonly encountered themes in world art. In most cases, the traditional African representation tends to schematize the infant, whether carried on the mother’s back, at the breast, lifted high in a playful mood etc.

The mother and child also raise a very important historical question as to whether the Christian images or icon of the Madonna and Child or ancient Egyptian representations of Isis and the infant Horus may have stimulated these responses in Africa, south of the Sahara. Photograph of other artefacts produced by Dogbe with similar educative themes could be seen in Plates 14 and 15.



Plate 59

"Mother and Child"

B.K. Dogbe

Date: 1990

Medium: Wood (Sapale)

Measurement: 76.2 cm High

Location: College of Art Gallery, Kumasi



Plate 60
"Playful mother and child"
Artist: B.K. Dogbe
Date: 1990
Medium: Wood (Sapale)
Measurement: 76.2 cm High
Location: College of Art Gallery, Kumasi



Plate 61
B.K. Dogbe
"They toiled all day"
1990
Wood (Sapale)
76.2 cm High
Location: College of Art Gallery, Kumasi

4.9.3 The Female Themes of Benjamin Offei Nyako's Art Works

A series of paintings by Benjamin Offei Nyako (often referred to as BON) are centred on portraits of market women, *kaya ye*, (female head potters) and the marginalised. The artist informed the researcher that his sensibilities sympathised with their physical presence and in all manner of postures and physiognomies. BON's style has alternated between realism and semi abstraction but, his theme has largely remained the same. He is comfortable and honest with the representational style as seen in plates 16 and 17, but he also experiments with other styles and materials at times. His works in the abstract style, (plates, 18, and 19) nonetheless gravitate towards the "sculptural idiom" The market place and the traditional home which act as the barometer of the political, social and economic ambience of the country offer him a wide range of compositional possibilities.

Plate 16 is a portrait of a teenage girl almost in silhouette, standing imposingly in a doorway against lush vegetation in the background. There is an empty bucket by her side, indicating she is about to go out to fetch water which is a daily duty in most households performed by women or house helps. It is a bright and sunny morning. The artist explained to the researcher that the serene landscape symbolizes freshness, fertility and virginity. This is a painting of two compositions. The first being the landscape in the background and the second, the standing figure in the room. The door frames the landscape and even the figure.



***Plate 62** Daily Chore*

Artist: BON

Date: 1990

Medium: Oils

Dimensions: 70 X 90cm

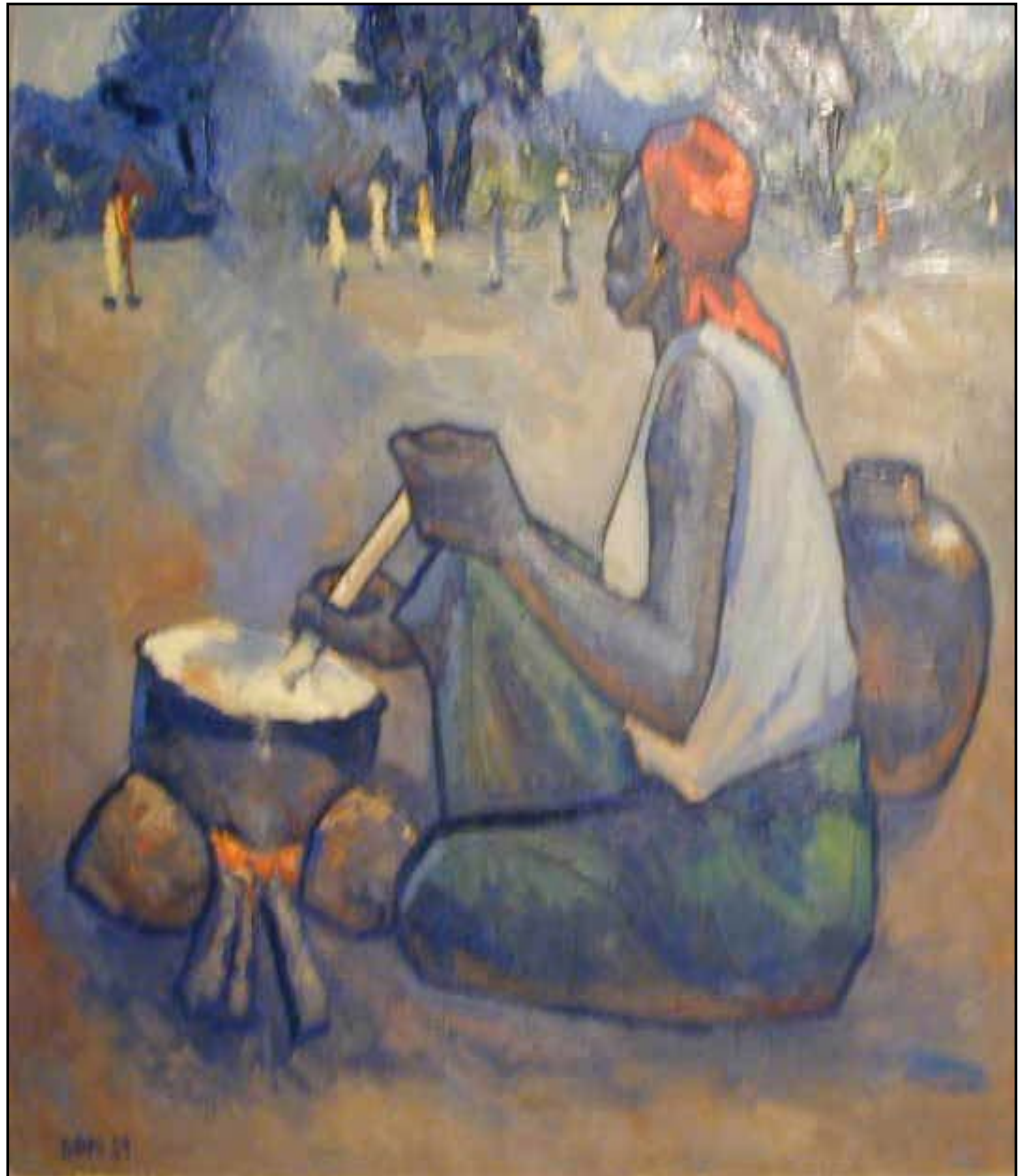


Plate63. Preparing Breakfast.

Artist: BON

Medium: Oils

Date: 1990

Dimension: 60x90 cm

Collection: Emmanuel Asiedu Nyako. USA

Preparing a maize meal is a daily chore among women folk in Ghana. Maize is a staple food in Ghana. The meal is sometimes prepared in the open, on a camp fire. In this painting, however, the artist claims that he was interested in the pose of the woman which connotes the social condition in deprived communities. The scene could be found in any part of Ghana. The pot of water behind the woman symbolizes life in the sense that it is used to carry water, keep grains and sometimes the wealth (gold dust) of the family.

The composition is straightforward. The hands are extra large to symbolize work. The dark outlines stand for stability and strength, qualities associated with the Ghanaian mother who is the provider of food for sustenance and energy.



Plate 64. Market trail.

Medium: Print.

Dimension: 30x60 cm

Date: 1990

Artist: BON

The print in plate 18 shows three women repeated to make six; carrying pots which are well balanced on their heads and walking together with ease. The artist explained to the researcher that the six huts symbolic of northern architecture correlate to the figures in numbers. Each figure represents a household. The huts have been laid out in linear perspective purely for compositional expediency. The women's cloths (dresses), the huts and the pots are decorated with African motifs, especially the diamond shape or the zigzag pattern. The woman at the tail end is carrying a baby on her back in addition to her head load, a sight common in several rural communities in Ghana.

The images are angular, distorted and stylised in the African sculptural idiom. The outlines are heavy which gives them visual stability and elongated to give them poise. A zigzag pattern runs as a design throughout the entire print. The oval shaped heads, the elongated and ringed necks of the figures are designed to conform to the Asantes concept of beauty as epitomised in the fertility doll – “*Akua ba*”. The zigzag patterns in the print, which are also expressed in the latent movement of the figures, symbolise prudence.

The triangular shapes symbolise female presence, pride, love, attraction and friendship. (Sarpong. 1974). The motifs add to the aesthetics of the print.



Plate 65. Fufu

Artist: BON

Medium: Acrylics

Dimensions: 75x90 cm

Date: 1995

This painting (Plate 19), entitled *Fufu*, is in acrylics. It is in a semi abstract style. Like most of his works, the colours of the main elements in the composition are warm and moderated with a grey background. The painting shows two figures preparing '*fufu*', one of the favourite Ghanaian dishes. One person stands pounding the "*fufu*" with a pestle while the other turns the dough in a mortar. This procedure is typical of the Akan ethnic group.

The figures are angular and sculptural. The objects wrapping the figures as stated by the artist, are supposed to represent items found in the kitchen or the market place. The objects and figures are outlined in black for emphasis. BON claims that the inspiration for the composition was derived from the door panels of the Dogon people of Mali. (Encarta, 2004.)

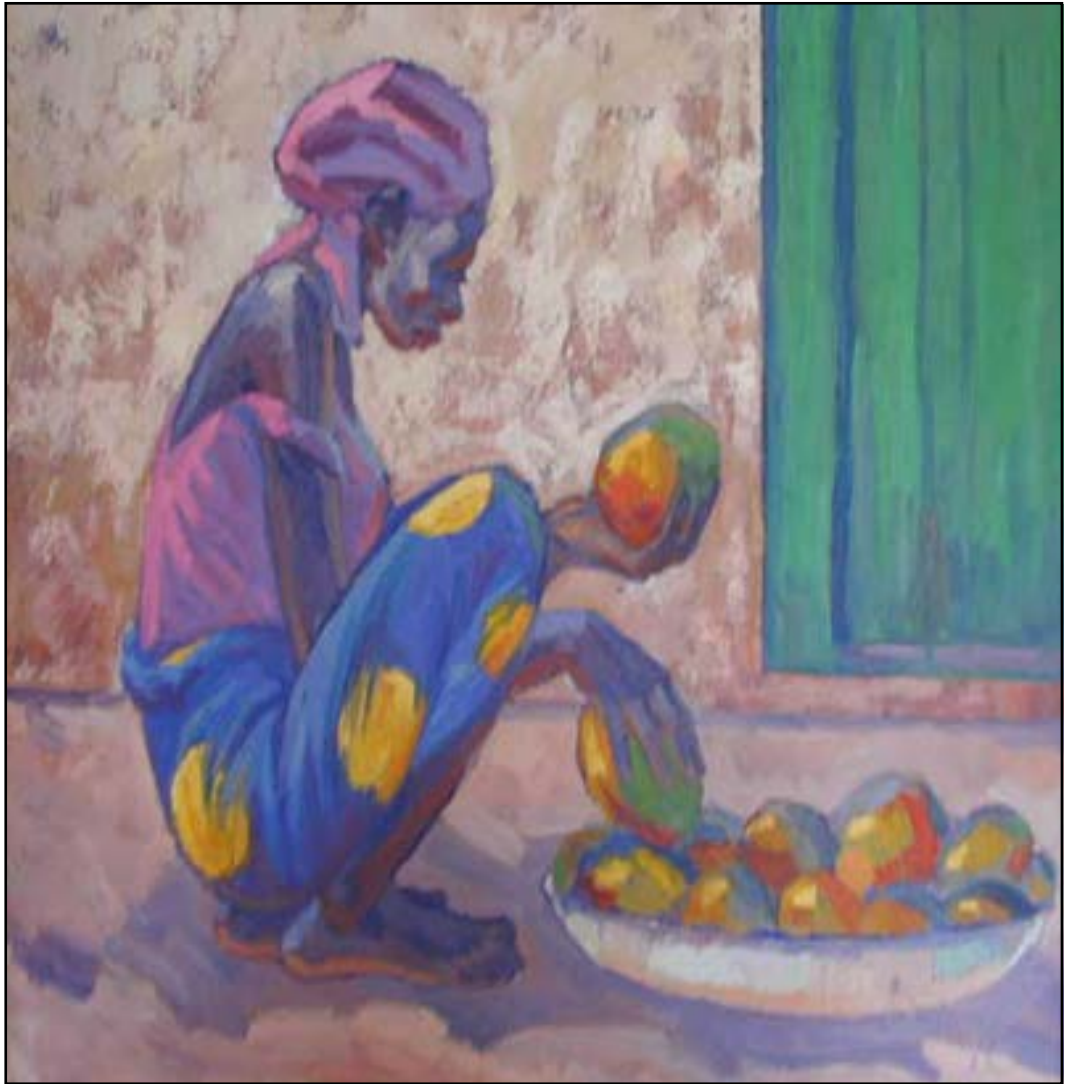


Plate 66 The Mango Seller.

Artist: BON

Medium: Oils

Dimensions: 70x90 cm

Date: 1996

The “Mango Seller” plate 20 shows a one quarter view of a young woman selling mangoes. The green of the door symbolizes fertility and abundance (Amenuke et al). The colours of the mangoes are warm and juicy in contrast to the pastel hues of the figure and the rest of the composition. The crouching pose is a normal resting pose. Even though it is a market portrait, the door seems indicates the hawker sells off her wares from house to house.

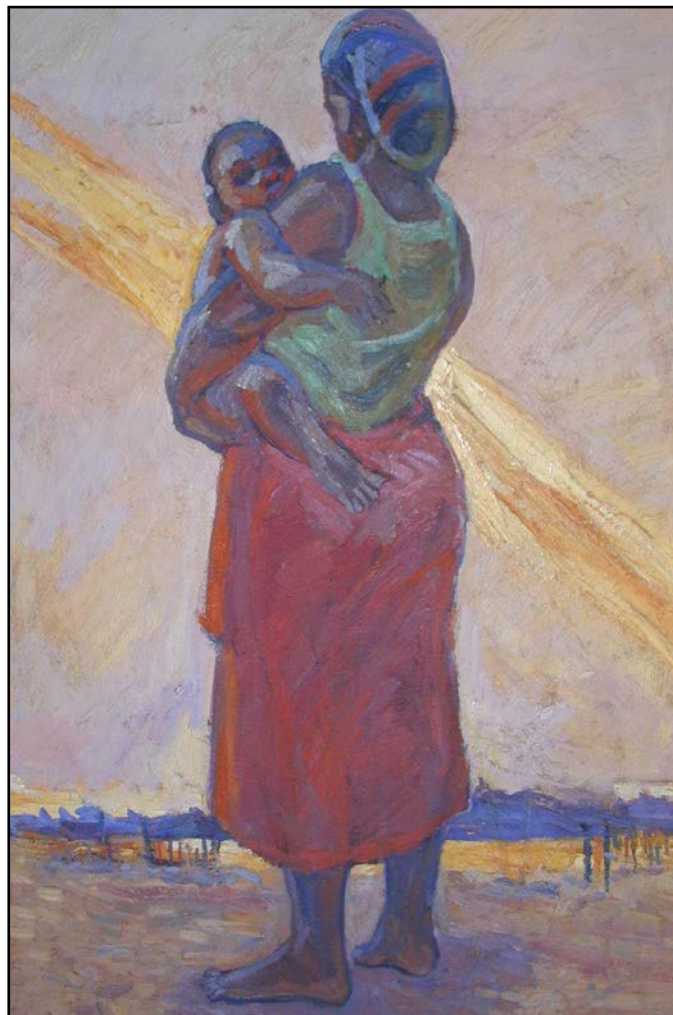


Plate 67. Mother and Child

Artist: BON

Medium: Oils

Dimensions: 75x90 cm

Date: 1996

According to the artist, Mother and child is one of the “coastal series” done in the 1990s. In this painting a mother carrying her baby stands majestically, commandingly and comfortingly, looking towards the other side of a lagoon.

The colours of her cloth – green and red - though contrasting, are tempered with greys. The colour of the sky is indicative of the time of the day which is sunset.

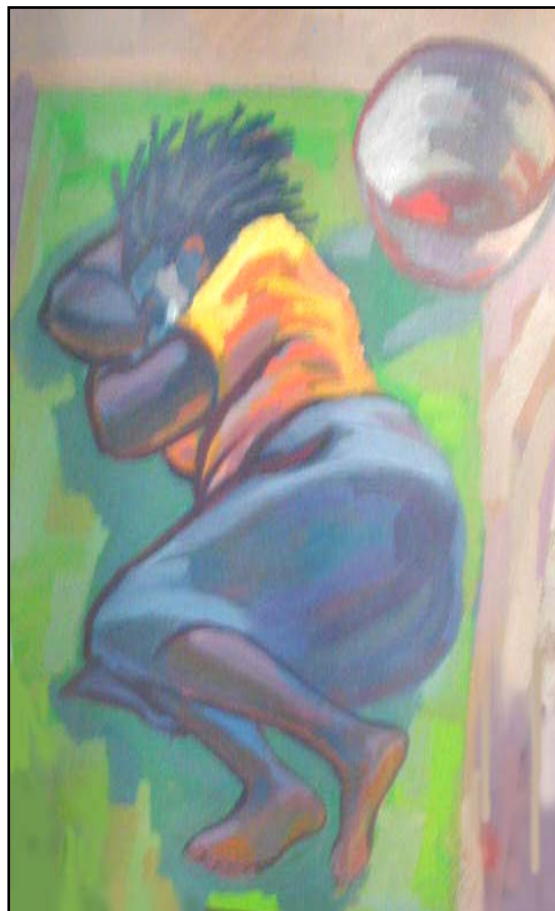


Plate 68. Napping

Artist: BON

Medium: Acrylics

Dimensions: 70x90 cm

Date 1998

Plate 22 “Napping” which captures a "*Kaya Ye*"(female porter), taking a nap at “ Kejetia” market after half a days work, have been used by the artist to mirrors the warmth of the African continent and the harshness of her condition. Her bowl rests close to her head. She, tired from the morning chore of carrying goods at the market, takes a short nap before the next call.

It appears to be a hot and sunny day and this is emphasized by the intensities of the colours. The yellow blouse stands out boldly against the blue skirt. This is a painting with strong hues, moderated by the neutrals of the fore ground. The pose is reclining. The head seems larger even in foreshortening symbolizing the weight of the goods she carries daily. She is without shoes or sandals which exhibits her poverty.

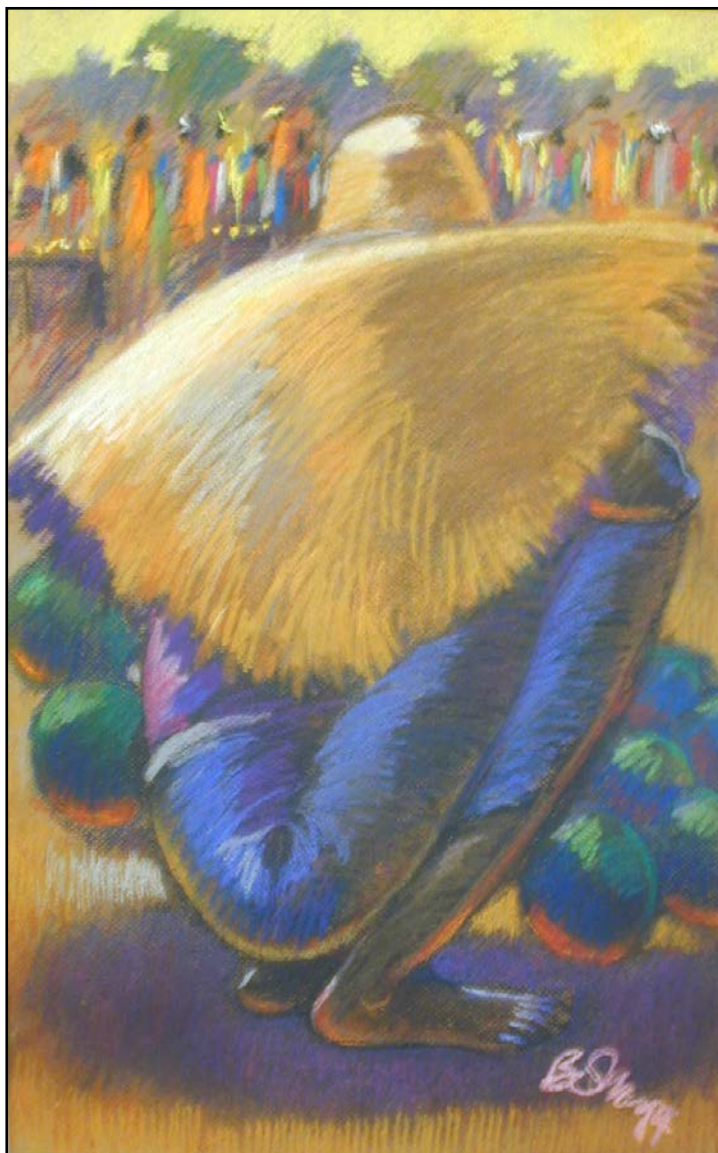


Plate69 Watermelon Seller

Artist: BON

Medium: Pastels

Dimensions: 30x50 cm

Date: 1999

BON claims that the “Watermelon Seller” Plate 23 was executed in chalk pastels. The figure is in a crouching position which is a relaxing position adopted by many peddlers. These peddlers troop to the market to sell whatever is in season and what they can lay their hands on. The brim hat protects her from the heat of the sun. This painting has a lot of figures in the background since it is a market day. The artist claims to have used the yellowish sky to symbolize intense heat. The blue coloured cloth complements the warmth of the hat.

The orange foreground emphasizes the heat, noise and activities in the market place.



Plate70.

The Fisherman's Daughter.

Artist: BON

Medium: Oils

Dimensions: 70x90 cm

Date: 2000

“The Fisherman’s Daughter” shows a teenager waiting at the beach. The painting was done in the “impasto technique” using a combination of the brush and the painting knife. The accidentals often associated with this technique are synonymous to freedom associated with youthfulness and the unpredictability of the catch due to the lack of modern technology to determine the location of a shoal. The bright yellow sky symbolizes wealth, joy and heat. The teenager sits modestly with the legs together and the hands around her legs. At her side is an empty basket to carry the fish. The major activity is going on in the background. Even though the day is coming to an end, she is not perturbed but waits patiently for “her boat” and subsequently shares the catch. According to BON, this is a painting symbolizing patience.



Plate71. Exodus

Artist: BON

Medium: Acrylics

Dimensions: 70x90 cm

Date: 2000

“Exodus”, Plate 25, is a semi abstract painting in Acrylics with black and grey as the dominant colours. Black in the Akan tradition is the colour for mourning, anguish and ancestral veneration. Grey symbolizes indifference. The artist used points out that he used these colours to symbolize the anguish and pain that refugees go through. The painting shows a woman carrying a baby at the back and also a load on her head as the central theme of the composition. The background is decked out with

human and animal activities in silhouette. The strips of green and patches of white tell of a better life, lived somewhere and the hope to return to their motherland or probably a more peaceful place. The red emphasizes the pain and the loss of lives associated with exodus. Women and children are principal casualties of war and disasters. In this painting, the woman and her baby stand for strength, perseverance and rebirth, in spite of adversities of life displayed in the background of the painting.



Plate 72. Sunny Day II

Artist: BON

Medium: Oils

Dimensions: 35x 45 cm

Date: 2000

Sunny Day, II, Plate 26, is also set in the northern and savannah region of Ghana as evidenced by the indigenous architecture. The climate is semi arid and hot for most part of the year. A woman sits by the door way relaxed and feeding her baby. Two others are in the background. The pots which represent life are arranged near to the woman who also is giving life to the baby. The sky is blue without clouds and the shadows are strong, an

indication of a sunny and hot afternoon. The atmosphere is calm and restful. The composition is simple and placed in such a way that the onlooker is peeping from another door within the same compound. In effect, the composition is framed by the door.



Plate 73 A Queen in charge of Tomatoes sellers

Artist: BON

Medium: Acrylics

Dimensions: 90x45 cm

Date: 2003

Plate 27,” The Tomato Queen “A *Queen in charge of Tomatoes sellers*” shows a main figure in “three dimensions” and the rest in “two dimensions”. “*Adinkra* motifs” frame the central theme. BON narrated that, the objective of this painting was to synthesize the two styles by amalgamating academism and indigenous painting styles of the Northern Region of Ghana. The broad hat shades the woman as a mother would protect her children. The figures in linear formation represent women walking long distances to perform daily chores like going to farms or markets or fetching water and the like.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

In this final chapter we shall summarize, draw conclusions and make recommendations based on the findings made so far.

5.1 *Summary*

The burden of this thesis was to bring to bare that in Ghana not only do women feature as themes in certain visual arts but also they produce the arts for their own and the country's socio economic development. This arduous task commenced with a review of related literature comprising all related areas that have direct or indirect bearing on the effective realization of the set objectives.

In the study, two forms of data were used. These were Primary data and secondary data.

5.2 *Primary Data*

The primary data which were collected through Questionnaire, Field notes, Interviews and observations dealt with some works and places where women are directly involved in the designing production and promotion of some art works. It also dealt with the use of women as themes of the works of some artists, the philosophy behind some of them, the nature of the work with regards to materials and techniques and in some cases the tools used in its production

5.3 *Secondary Data*

The secondary data also dealt with the identification and analysis of the literary materials on the subject matter.

5.4 *Instruments for Data Collection*

The instruments used were:

- a. Personal Interviews thus responses from one on one interview with artists, curators etc.
- b. Field trips, photographs, slides, and personal experience.
- b. Library research from long essays, report, thesis, magazines and journals.
- c. Copies questionnaire was made used of.

5.5 *Result of Problem One*

The first objective of this research was ‘to identify the traditional roles of some Ghanaian women in selected indigenous Ghanaian visual arts’. In the process of solving this problem, the women’s’ unique role played in pottery, mural and basketry were identified. In pottery, it was unveiled that, most of the indigenous women are traditionally into the winning of clay, its processing, production and sales of the artefact.

Mural (wall art) in the Northern Region of Ghana specifically, Sirigu is mainly done by the indigenous women. Also it was identified that in Bolga, the art of basketry making is largely the indigenous women’s job.

5.6 Result of Problem Two

Objective two, ‘to investigate the roles, which women are playing in some indigenous visual art for national development’ was achieved by a visit to Bolga where the women depend largely on the art of basketry making and its sales for the up-keep of themselves as artist and their family, the researcher also visited Kpando and Bolga in the Volta region and Northern regions respectively to be practically familiar with the contributions which the women potters and basket weavers are making to the development of themselves and the nation as a whole and this was seen in how the women could cater for their children’s education all by the arts they do and other infrastructures they had made out of the job.

5.7 Result of Problem Three

The third problem which was ‘to examine and discuss the use of women as themes in some Ghanaian art’ was also solved by thoroughly examining the works of some artists who basically focus on female themes to unearth the social, educational and economic benefits of these themes to the artists themselves and the society as a whole.

Again, the philosophies behind such works in most cases were discussed.

5.8 Proof of Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this thesis is that “In Ghana, not only do Ghanaian women feature as themes in certain visual arts but also they produce the arts for their own and the country’s and socio-economic development”.

Having identified some art works which have female themes and also bringing to the fore the enormous educational and socio-economic contributions some women are making in their localities through art for their own and the nations development in chapters four and five, it could be safely said that the hypothesis is valid.

The numerous activities proved the hypothesis to show that not only do Ghanaian women feature as themes in certain visual arts but also they produce the arts for their own and the country’s socio-economic development. Chapter four has provided sample pictures to substantiate the fact that some Ghanaian women feature as themes whilst some produce the some arts for their own and the nation’s development.

On a whole, the research has established that some indigenous Ghanaian women are into the production of some visual artefacts for their own and the countries socio-economic development. Also some Ghanaian women feature as themes in certain visual art works.

5.9 Conclusions

Some indigenous Ghanaian women through their involvement in some traditional arts such as pottery, basketry and mural art (wall painting) have contributed and are still contributing so much to their own socio-economic development and that of Ghana; taking into consideration their roles as Visual artists and as themes of some works of art, But who would know? In Africa and around the world, men get almost all the attention for their creative endeavours. But with the multitude of roles the woman assume in Africa, especially in Ghana, as – mother, housekeeper, cook, water carrier, economic contributor and often sole provider , when would the woman have a chance to make her own artistic statement or voice her concern on this issue?

This research work therefore has attempted to explore, figure out and document the artistic roles, which some indigenous Ghanaian women play in this age of gender equality and national development; focusing mainly on selected indigenous Ghanaian women in pottery and ceramics, mural and basketry. Also the women's contribution as themes of works of art has been highlighted.

Women play a very outstanding role in the pottery industry in Ghana, thereby promoting the nation socially and economically. This is seen in their mass involvement in the localized pottery centres like Kpando in the Volta region of Ghana, Mpraeso in the Eastern region of Ghana , Pankrono

in the Asante region of Ghana, Sirigu in the Northern region of Ghana, amongst others in the country. For instance in Mpraeso, the entire production process of the art is done by the women.

Interestingly, this activity (production process), indirectly imbibes patience and tolerance, into the women since the least rush and intolerance would destroy the work.

The economic gains the people in this locality make from the women's trade is quite enormous: the beneficiaries include truck drivers who are paid to transport the clay from the site to the yard, firewood fetchers who sell the firewood to the women for money, drivers who are paid for transporting and distributing the pots to the market or the consumers, and above all the government, who collects tax from the women for national development.

The role of women in the basketry art industry to the socio-economic development of Ghana cannot be overlooked. For instance, a visit to Bolga, a town well known for basketry production in the Northern region of Ghana revealed that the women are involved in every bit of the art; right from fetching of the straws to the sales of the finished product. They do this to earn their daily living and also, as a result, pay taxes to boost the economy of the country. In effect, it makes the women self employed.

Socially, when the women come together, gathering the straws, splitting it, dyeing and twisting the straws and weaving, they are united; having a common goal of producing baskets.

Mural art (wall painting) is of no exception when it comes to enumerating the contributions women are making to the art industry and the socio – economic and educational development of Ghana.

In Sirigu, where this art is traditionally done, every aspect of it is done by the indigenous women. They do this, as their main source of income, while others do it as leisure activities.

Aside the above mentioned visual arts and the others which has not been highlighted in this thesis, women are also used as themes of works of art; ranging from painting, textiles, pottery and ceramics, sculpture, graphics and others. This is so because of certain philosophies which the African and for that matter Ghanaians attach to the physiology of women. Women are naturally beautiful compared to men, taking into consideration their anatomy and physique. For this reason, artists represent them in their works for aesthetics and mystical purposes. Apart from using works of art with women themes for decorative purposes, people also use women as themes for their works to symbolize fertility, motherliness, friendliness, and caring. These works provides a very good means of education to the general public on the above subjects (fertility, motherliness, friendliness, and caring). Also, works of this nature receives high patronage throughout the world's market thereby providing economic gains to the individual artist and the nation as a whole in the form of foreign exchange and taxes.

5.10 Recommendations

This study has discovered that some indigenous Ghanaian women are contributing so much to their own development and that of the nation and that given the right support they may even do better in this subdivision of national development. The study therefore recommends that scholars, ethnographers, art historians, gender activists, sociologists, should endeavour to document further on the immense contributions which these women are making to serve as a reminder or study materials to the generations ahead.

A visit to the various centres (the field) showed that most of these women; thus the women artist's are nationally relegated to the background; compared to women in the field of science, law, politics etc. The current researcher therefore recommends to policy makers and women organizations to integrate the activities of these indigenous women into their developmental plans and actions to enable them to actually come out confidently in their area of national development.

Also the girl child should be encouraged and nurtured to pursue art programmes right from the junior high school to the University level. This is because most of the women found in the villages where the various specialised art works are, have not been formally educated and are therefore not very good in idea development.

Art students and writers may be encouraged to embark on further research into the contributions of women in the other fields such as textiles, metals and bead making focusing on the extent of involvement of the contemporary Ghanaian woman in these arts.

Ghanaian women in some Ghanaian performing arts could also be considered for future studies.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

"Multi-Media Artists" (Some Women's Category)

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Meriem. Ait Elhara: | Algerian multi-media artist |
| Ghada, Amer: | Egyptian-born multimedia artist |
| Samta, Benyahia: | Algerian multi-media artist |
| Bonita, Alice: | South African multi-media artist |
| Lien, Botha: | South African photographer and mixed media artist |
| Zoulikha, Bouabdellah: | Algerian photographer and video artist |
| Fatma, Charfi: | Tunisian multi-media artist |
| Félicité, Codjo: | Senegalese artist |
| Coré, Hélène: | Multi-media artist, Reunion |
| Amal , El-Kenawy: | Egyptian multi-media artist |
| Rehab, El-Sadek: | Egyptian multi-media artist |
| Safaa, Erruas: | Moroccan multi-media artist |
| Mary, Evans: | Nigerian artist |
| Veliswa Gwintsa,: | South African artist |
| Hassan, Reem: | Egyptian painter, multimedia artist |
| Karnouk, Liliane: | Egyptian painter and installation artist |
| Khattari, Majida: | Moroccan multi-media artist |
| Maamoun, Maha: | Egyptian artist |
| Mekuria, Salem: | Ethiopian professor, film-maker and video artist |
| Muinde, Yvonne: | Kenyan painter |

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Murdoch, Antoinette: | South African multi-media artist |
| Mwangi, Ingrid: | Kenyan multi-media artist |
| Niati, Houria: | Algerian multi-media artist |
| Nkanga, Otobong: | Nigerian multi-media artist |
| Nwosu-Igbo, Nkechi: | Nigerian painter and conceptual artist |
| Ractliffe, Jo: | South African artist |
| Rose, Tracey: | South African artist |
| El-Sadek, Rehab: | Egyptian multi-media artist |
| Searle, Berni: | South African artist |
| Sedira, Zineb: | Algerian multimedia artist |
| Siopis, Penny: | South African artist (painter/multi media) |
| Southwood, Doreen: | South African multi-media artist |
| Tuggar, Fatimah: | Nigerian multidisciplinary artist |
| Vari, Minnette: | South African multi-media artist |
| Williamson, Sue: | South African artist and art critic |
| Youssef, Ola: | Egyptian artist (multimedia) |

"Sculptors & Ceramicists" (Some Women listed in category)

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Alexander, Jane: | South African artist (sculpture and photo-montage) |
| Bell, Deborah: | South African artist |
| Bonieux, Geneviève: | Mauritian painter and sculptor |
| Camara, Seni Awa: | Senegalese sculptor |
| Dike, Ndidi: | Nigerian sculptor |

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Douglas Camp, Sokari: | Nigerian-born sculptor |
| El-Gawad, Zenat Abd: | Egyptian artist (ceramicist) |
| Ferreira, Ângela: | Mozambican-born sculptor |
| El-Gawad, Zenat Abd: | Egyptian artist (ceramicist) |
| Mabasa, Noria: | South African sculptor |
| Madamombe, Colleen: | Zimbabwean sculptor and photographer |
| Mansour, Amina: | Egyptian sculptor |
| Marzouk, Mona: | Egyptian artist |
| Muendo, Marie: | Congolese sculptor |
| Nabulime, Lilian: | Ugandan sculptor and academic |
| Nagawa, Margaret: | Ugandan sculptor, painter and curator |
| Ndandarika, Locardia: | Zimbabwean sculptor |
| Ndandarika, Rachel: | Zimbabwean sculptor |
| Nyanhongo, Agnes: | Zimbabwean sculptor |
| Odundo, Magdalene: | Kenyan artist (ceramist) |
| Olowu, Elizabeth: | Nigerian sculptor |
| Poulsen, Etiya Dimma: | Ethiopian painter and sculptor |

"Print-makers" (Women in this category)

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Aleem, Mariam A.: | Egyptian print-maker |
| Bell, Deborah: | South African artist |
| Bhimji, Zarina: | Ugandan-born artist |
| Dhlomo, Bongiwe: | South African artist and administrator |
| Kurgan, Terry: | South African printmaker and photographer |
| Lahkim Bennani, Asmae: | Moroccan print-maker |
| Peters, Sophie: | South African printmaker and painter |
| Skotnes, Philippa (Pippa) : | South African print-maker and academic |
| Wairimu, Eunice: | Kenyan painter and print-maker |
| Williamson, Sue: | South African artist and art critic |

Painters (Some Women in this category)

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Abd al-Hamid, Zeinab: | Egyptian painter |
| Abdalla, Amna: | Sudanese artist (painter) |
| Adama, Akili: | Nigerian painter |
| Agueznay, Malika: | Moroccan artist |
| Aïdara, Aïcha: | Senegalese painter |
| Al-Assal, Kawkab: | Egyptian arts educationalist and painter |
| Amer, Sawsan: | Egyptian painter |
| El-Amir, Sahar: | Egyptian painter |
| Arnold, Marion: | South African painter and art historian |

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Ashmallah, Evelyn: | Egyptian painter |
| Al-Assal, Kawkab: | Egyptian arts educationalist and painter |
| Atnafu, Elisabeth Tariqua: | Ethiopian painter |
| Badran, Samira: | Libyan born painter |
| El-Bayoumi, Mona A.: | Egyptian painter |
| Bell, Deborah: | South African artist |
| Bengu, Bongi: | South African artist |
| Bickle, Berry: | Zimbabwean painter |
| Bonieux, Geneviève: | Mauritian painter and sculptor |
| Chukwuogo-Roy, Chinwe: | Nigerian painter |
| Codjo, Félicité: | Senegalese artist |
| Costa, Marcela Martins: | Angolan painter |
| Dicks, Trudy: | South African born painter |
| Efflatoun, Inji: | Egyptian painter |
| El-Amir, Sahar: | Egyptian painter |
| El-Bayoumi, Mona A. : | Egyptian painter |
| Gbaguidi, Pélagie: | Beninois artist |
| Halim, Tahiya: | Egyptian painter |
| Hassan, Reem: | Egyptian painter, multimedia artist |
| Himid, Lubaina: | Zanzibar-born painter and academic |
| Homawoo, Amivi: | Togolese artist |
| Ishaq, Kamala I. : | Sudanese artist |
| Karnouk, Liliane: | Egyptian painter and installation artist |
| Lieros, Helen: | Zimbabwean painter |

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Liking, Werewere: | Cameroonian writer, painter and filmmaker based in Ivory Coast |
| Madkour, Nazli: | Egyptian artist (painter) |
| Mahieddine, Baya: | Algerian painter |
| Mahlangu, Esther: | South African painter |
| Marzouk, Mona: | Egyptian artist |
| Matome, Neo: | Botswana painter |
| Mehretu, Julie: | Ethiopian painter |
| Moreau, Mathilde: | Ivorian painter |
| Muchoki, R. Wanjiru: | Kenyan painter |
| Muinde, Yvonne: | Kenyan painter |
| Naga, Sawsan Abul: | Egyptian painter |
| Nagawa, Margaret: | Ugandan sculptor, painter and curator |
| Nagui, Effat: | Egyptian artist (painting and mixed media) |
| Nicodemus, Evelyn: | Tanzanian art historian and artist |
| Njeri, Lucy: | Kenyan painter |
| Nwosu-Igbo, Nkechi: | Nigerian painter and conceptual artist |
| Omar, Ekram: | Egyptian artist (painter) |

APPENDIX C

A SAMPLE OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Sir,

This study attempts to explore, figure out and document the artistic roles, which some women play in this age of gender equality and national development;.

Your accurate answer will aid the researcher and the Department of General Art Studies to document these contributions of the women in the field of art. It would also help the policy makers of the nation to make the right decisions in support to women in art.

You are therefore; please requested to express your candid opinion on the issues raised in the questionnaire.

Thank you,

Yours faithfully,

Eric Appau Asante

Ghanaian Women in Some Ghanaian Traditional Art

Research Questionnaire

(Part one) Women artists

Please tick [☒] the answer or insert the correct response that is most suitable in the space provided.

Section One

PARTICULARS OF RESPONDENT

1. Sex Male Female
2. Age a) 20-40 b) 40-50 c) 50-60 d) 60- 70
3. Status/ position/
rank.....
4. Years in job a) one year b) two years c) three years
 d) four years e) five years and above
5. Highest qualification(s)
a) BECE b) SSCE c) Diploma d) Degree e)
- Others

Section Two

WOMEN AS TRADITIONAL VISUAL ARTIST

Please tick [☐] in the boxes provided.

1. Is it traditionally acceptable in this area for you to be involved in some Art works like pottery, basketry and mural painting?
- a) Yes ☐ b) No ☐ c) Not sure ☐
2. How did you learn this vocation?
- a) Through my Parent ☐ b) By apprenticeship ☐
- c) Through formal education ☐ d) Nobody taught me ☐

3. How do you get your materials for production?

.....
.....

4. Which other job do you do for a living?

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.....

5. Do you know any Traditional Ghanaian Art which women are forbidden to produce in your area? ☐ Yes ☐ b) No

If yes, Please name them.

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.....
.....

5. To what extent are you involved in Pottery, Basketry and or Mural ?

a) As a full time job ☐ b) As a part time job ☐ c) As a hobby ☐
d) Other

.....

6. What are some of the problems you have been encountering in this vocation?

a)
.....

b)
.....

c)
.....

d)
.....

e)
.....

Section Three

TRADITIONAL WOMEN ARTIST VERSUS SUPERSTITIONS

1. Please tick in the boxes provided which of the traditional artefact you produce.

☐

a. Textiles

b. Woodwork and sculpture

☐

c. Metal art

☐

d. Ceramics and pottery

☐

e. Painting

☐

f. Leather work

☐

g. Graphics

☐

h. Basketry

☐

i. Beadwork

☐

2. Why are you forbidden from getting involved in the production of those artworks which you did not tick?

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.....

3. Do you know of any myth which prevents women from producing certain artefacts?

.....

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Section Four

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SOME WOMEN'S ART

1. Which of these traditional visual arts do you produce?

a. Basketry?

☐

c. Ceramics and pottery?

☐

d. Painting (wall Art)?

☐

2. Is this your main source of income?
 a) Yes ☐ b) No ☐
3. How do you source funds for your orders?

4. Which people normally buy your products?

5. Do you make daily sales or periodic?
 a) Daily ☐ b) Periodic ☐ c) Other ☐
6. How much money do you make a day or within a specific period through this job?

7. To what extent has this job help you and your family?

8. Who else have benefited from this business?

Section Five

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Please give any suggestion or comment on how Ghanaian women can effectively produce the traditional Ghanaian Visual arts.

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Ghanaian Women in Some Ghanaian Traditional Art

Research questionnaire

(Part two) For the Educated General Public most especially
Lecturers and Teachers from learning Institutions and Colleges

Please tick [✓] the answer or insert the correct response that is most suitable in the space provided.

Section One

PARTICULARS OF RESPONDENT

1. Sex Male ☐ Female ☐
- Age a) 30-40 ☐ b) 40-50 ☐ c) 50-60 ☐ d) 60-70 ☐
2. Status/ position/ rank.....
3. Years in job a) one year ☐ b) two years ☐ c) three years ☐
d) four years ☐ e) five years and above ☐
4. Highest qualification(s)
- a) Diploma ☐ d) Degree ☐ e) Others ☐

Section Two

WOMEN AS TRADITIONAL VISUAL ARTIST

Please tick [☒,] in the boxes provided.

1. Do you think it is right for Ghanaian women to be involved in some Traditional Art like pottery, basketry bead making, and painting?
- a) Yes ☐ b) No ☐ c) Not sure ☐
2. Please state the reason for answer ticked in question (1)
-
-
3. Would you advise your sister or a close female relative to be involved in any of the traditional visual arts?
- a) No ☐ b) Yes ☐ c) if only she is interested ☐

4. Do you know any Traditional Ghanaian visual Art which women are forbidden to Produce? a) Yes ☐ b) No ☐
5. If your answer for question 3 is yes, why do you think women are forbidden to get involved in that particular traditional art?
 a) Religious reasons ☐ b) Due to social stigma ☐ c) Health reasons ☐
 d) Work load involved ☐ e) other reasons ☐
 State other reasons.....
6. In your opinion, does preventing women from producing some traditional artefacts for whatever reason affect the women in anyway?
 a) Yes ☐ b) No ☐ c) I don't think so ☐ d) I have no idea ☐
7. To what extent are Ghanaian women involved in Pottery, Bead Making, Basketry and Mural Painting (wall art)? ☐ ☐
 a) As a full time job b) As a part time job c) As a hobby
 d) Other

Section Three

TRADITIONAL WOMEN ARTIST VERSUS SUPERSTITIONS

1. Please tick [√] in the boxes provided which of the traditional art you know women are
 Involved in its production.
- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Textiles | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Woodwork and sculpture | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Metal art | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Ceramics and pottery | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Painting | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Leather work | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. Graphics | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. Basketry | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| i. Beadwork | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Why do you think women are forbidden from getting involved in the production of these artworks which you did not tick?
.....
.....
3. Do you know of any myth which prevents women from producing certain artefacts?
.....
.....
.....
4. What do you think of a woman whose job is to produce Pots, Bead Baskets and Mural painting?
 - a) Women are equally competent as men would ☐
 - b) Has broken tradition ☐
5. Is it traditionally acceptable for a woman to sell artefacts?
 - a) I don't know ☐
 - b) Yes ☐
 - c) No ☐
6. 'If you were a man', would you advice your wife to sell artefacts?
 - a) Yes ☐
 - b) No ☐
 - c) I wouldn't mind ☐

Section Four

WOMEN AS THEMES OF ART WORKS

Please tick [✓] in the box where applicable.

1. Women are used as themes or subject of works of art for?
 - a) Aesthetic purposes? ☐
 - b) Religious purposes? ☐
 - c) Philosophical purposes? ☐
 - d) No reason? ☐
2. i) Would you purchase an art piece with a feminine theme?
 - a) Yes ☐
 - b) No ☐
- ii) Why?

.....
.....

3. If you were to choose between an artefact with a female theme and that of male theme, which one would you go in for?
- a) The female theme? ☐ b) The male theme? ☐ c) None?. ☐

4. Why?

.....

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Section Five

WOMENS' ART.

1. Are you familiar with any existing unique traditional visual art produced by a woman? a) Yes ☐ b) No ☐

2. Where is it located?

- a) Museums? ☐
- b) Public and Private Galleries? ☐
- c) Centres for national culture? ☐
- d) Other? ☐

2. If you chose 'other' as an answer for 2. please specify the location.

.....

3. What is its theme?

4. How unique is it?

- a) Very Antique? ☐
- b) Typically a traditional piece? ☐
- c) Very Philosophical? ☐

5. What kind of material is it made of?

- a) clay ☐
- b) raffia / straw / rattan ☐
- c) wood ☐
- d) Fabrics. ☐

6. Is the product useful or beneficial to you?
- a) yes ☐
- b) No ☐
7. How does it benefit the artist herself?
- a) Financially? ☐
- b) Enhancement of her fame? ☐
- c) Making history? ☐
- d) Has expressed her feeling through the piece ☐
8. To what extent would it be useful or beneficial to the nation as a whole?
- a) A source of income ☐
- b) For tourist attraction ☐
- c) For national records ☐
- d) For educating the general public ☐
9. Why do you think a lot of women are not producing any of the artefacts mentioned in the questionnaire; especially pottery, basketry and mural ?
(Please name the artefact and consider what is below when supplying the reason).

| <u>Reason</u> | <u>Artefact</u> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| a) Scarcity of Raw Materials | <input type="text"/> |
| b) Cultural Reasons | <input type="text"/> |
| c) Difficult to produce | <input type="text"/> |
| d) Other Artefacts and Reasons | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Section Six

CONTEMPORARY WOMENS' ART.

1. Do you know of any contemporary visual art which Ghanaian women in Bolga, Kpando and Siligu are still forbidden to produce?
- a) Yes ☐ b) No ☐

2. Please name them.

.....
.....
.....

3. Why are women still forbidden to produce these visual art works?

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4. Please comment on the involvement of the contemporary Ghanaian woman in Pottery, Basketry, and Mural

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Section Eight

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Please give any suggestion or comment on how Ghanaian women can effectively produce the traditional Ghanaian Visual arts.

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