

THE CULTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF MOTIFS ON SELECTED ASANTE TEMPLES

By

Stephen Larbi B.F.A. (Hons.)

**A Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS IN AFRICAN ART

Faculty of Fine Art, College of Art and Social Sciences

July, 2008

© 2008 Department of General Art Studies

DECLARATION

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

KNUST

.....

.....

Student Name & ID

Signature

Date

Confirmed by

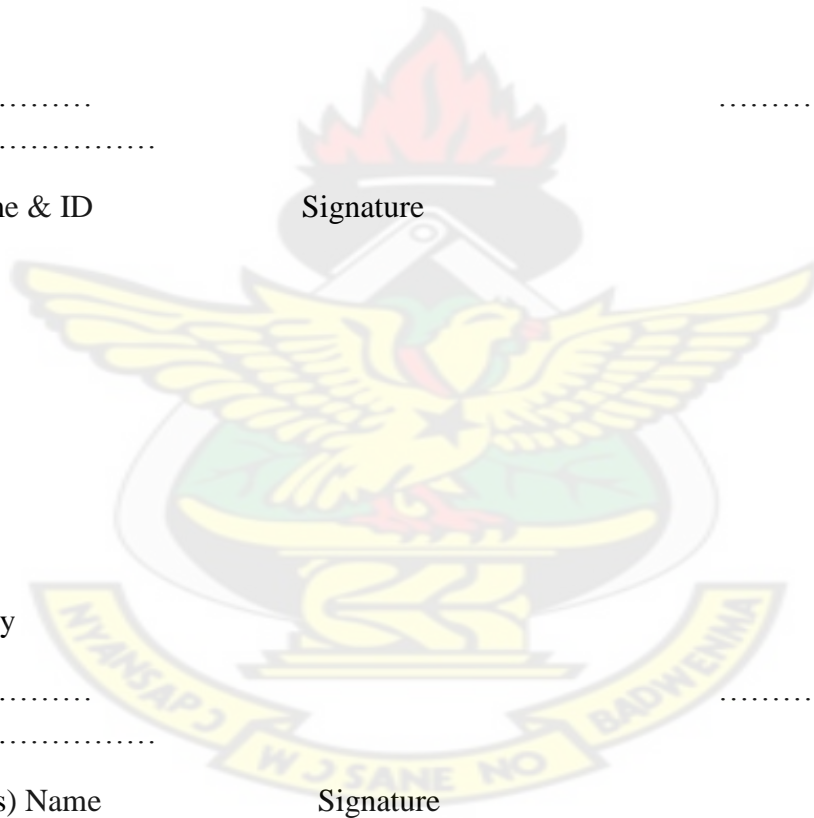
.....

.....

Supervisor (s) Name

Signature

Date



Confirmed by

.....
.....

.....

Head of Dept. Name

Signature

Date

ABSTRACT

Asante temples are small edifices built over one or two hundred years ago to house the shrines of some of the deities of the Asante. They are adorned with beautiful motifs which tell a lot about the culture of the Asante. But the lack of adequate and comprehensive studies on them has kept them away from the public. This study therefore studies the history of selected Asante temples and the cultural and aesthetic significance of their motifs. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher used the qualitative research method. The primary sources of data of the study were interviews and observation. They were carried out at the villages where the temples are located. The researcher selected some people from the villages where the temples are who could provide him with the primary data and consulted them for the data. He also contacted some scholars of Asante culture for the primary data. The secondary data was obtained from books and the internet. The motifs tell a lot about the religious beliefs and social norms of the Asante. They also reveal a lot about symbolism in Asante art and serve as decorations on the temples. They symbolise concepts and beliefs personified in human and animal forms and geometric shapes. The findings go to confirm the theory that African, and for that matter Asante, arts are influenced by the culture (believes, practices,

notion of beauty and world view) of the people. The arts are also used to send symbolic, social and religious messages to the people.

KNUST

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration
ii

Abstract
iii

Table of contents
v

List of figures
vi

Acknowledgement
viii

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Background study of work
1

Statement of the problem
4

Research questions
4

Objectives

4

Delimitation

4

Limitation

5

Importance

of

study

5

Organisation

of

the

chapters

6

CHAPTER TWO - REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A

brief

history

of

traditional

Asante

buildings

7

A

brief

history

of

Asante

temples

8

Origins

of

Asante

wall

motifs

9

Aesthetic

judgement

or

appreciation

of

African

art

10

Symbolic

importance

of

African

art

13

Religious

importance

of

wall

motifs

in

some

African

cultures

15

Social

importance

of

art

in

Africa

15

The art

of

wall

decoration

in

other

West

African

cultures

16

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

Overview

18

Research

design

18

Qualitative		research
18		
Research		tools
19		
Population	for	the study
20		
Sampling	of	population
20		
Instruments	for	data collection
21		
Validation	of	instruments
22		
Administration	of	instruments
23		
Primary		data
23		
Secondary		data
24		
Data	collecting	procedures
24		
Data	analysis	plan
24		
CHAPTER FOUR – PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS		
Overview		
26		
The	Adako	Gyaakye temple
26		
The	Asenemaso	temple
30		
The	Kentinkrono	temple
33		
The Besease temple		37

The Edwenease temple
40

The Abirem temple
43

CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview
62

Summary
62

Conclusions
62

Recommendations
63

REFERENCES

APPENDIX

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: A map showing all the Asante temples
25

Figure 2: Adako Gyaakye Temple – Adako Gyaakye
48

Figure 3: Adako Gyaakye Temple (interior view) –Adako Gyaakye
48

Figure 4: *Sebo ne bofo* motif – Adako Gyaakye
49

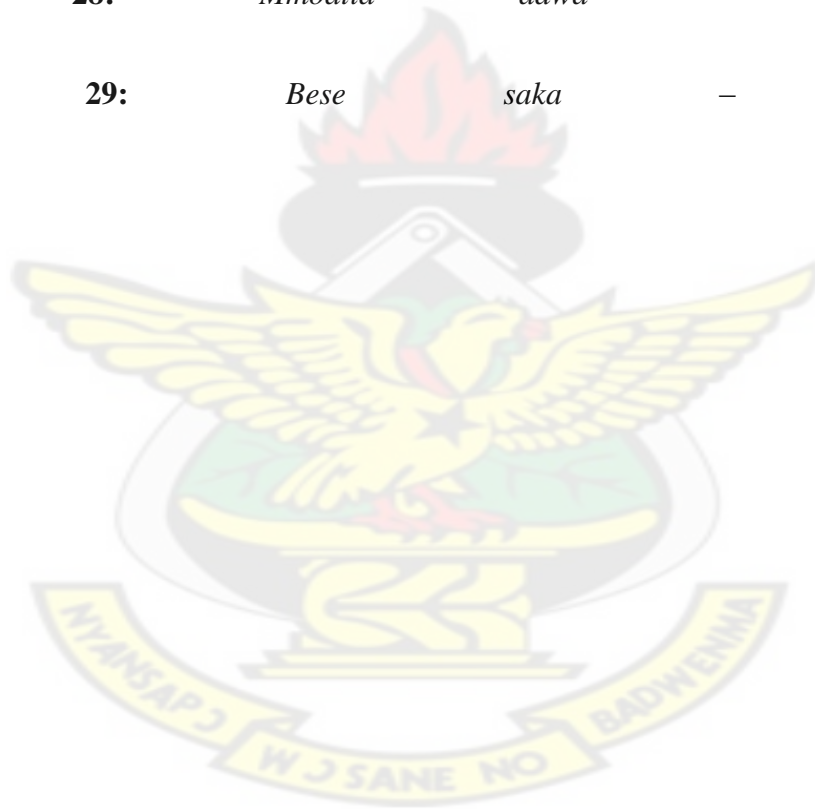
Figure 5: *To akyiri fa* – Adako Gyaakye
49

Figure 6: *Agyinamoa* motif - Adako Gyaakye
50

Figure 7: Asenemaso Temple – Asenemaso
50

Figure 51	8:	<i>Owuo atwedee</i>	motif	–	Asenemaso
Figure 51	9:	<i>Dwannini mmen</i>	motif	–	Asenemaso
Figure 52	10:	Kentinkrɔno	Temple	-	Kentinkrɔno
Figure 52	11:	Kentinkrɔno	Temple (interior view)	-	Kentinkrɔno
Figure 53	12:	<i>Sankɔfa</i>	motif	-	Kentinkrɔno
Figure 53	13:	<i>Bese saka</i>		-	Kentinkrɔno
Figure 54	14:	<i>Ɔdenkyem</i>	motif	-	Kentinkrɔno
Figure 54	15:	Besease	Temple	–	Besease
Figure 55	16:	Besease	Temple (interior view)	–	Besease
Figure 55	17:	<i>Dwannini mmen</i>	motif	–	Besease
Figure 56	18:	<i>Sankɔfa</i>	motif	–	Besease
Figure 56	19:	<i>Nnomaa mmienu</i>	motif	–	Besease
Figure 57	20:	Edwenease	Temple	–	Edwenease
Figure 57	21:	Edwenease	Temple (interior view)	–	Edwenease
Figure 58	22:	<i>Ɔbofoɔ</i>	motif	–	Edwenease

Figure 58	23:	<i>Ɔdenkyem</i>	motif	–	Edwenease
Figure 59	24:	<i>Sasabonsam</i>	motif	–	Edwenease
Figure 59	25:	Abirem	Temple	–	Abirem
Figure 60	26:	Abirem	Temple (interior view)	–	Abirem
Figure 60	27:	<i>Nkyinkyim</i>	motif	–	Abirem
Figure 61	28:	<i>Mmoatia</i>	<i>adwa</i>	–	Abirem
Figure 61	29:	<i>Bese</i>	<i>saka</i>	–	Abirem



KNUST

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am very grateful to the Almighty God for his grace and mercy. My second acknowledgement goes to my father, the late Mr Ernest Kwaku Mensa Larbi and my mother, Madam Martha Adwoa Pinaman and my siblings Akosua Daakowaa, Akwasi Yeboa and Yaa Amoakowaa. I thank them for their support.

I say thank you to all the people, especially Maame Akua Badu of Adako Gyaakye and Mr S. F. Dadzie the Acting Directing of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board-Kumasi, who provided me with the data I needed for the thesis. I also thank my supervisor, Dr B. K. Dogbe, for reading through my script and directing me in the conduct of this study. I would also like to single out Mr Karikacha Seidu and thank him for proofreading my script and offering me valuable suggestions during my work. Finally, I say thank you to all my friends and benefactors who helped me in one way or the other to complete this study successfully.

KNUST

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background study of work

This study outlines the history of selected Asante temples and examines the cultural and aesthetic significance of their motifs. The Asante are a Twi speaking people of Akan extract. They are the best known and the most populous group among the Akan. The Akan belong to the Kwa language group of the Guinea Subfamily. They occupy the central parts and parts of the coastal areas of Ghana, the south eastern parts of the Ivory Coast and some parts of the eastern borders of Ghana with Togo.

According to oral tradition the Asante came from an area north of the West African forest belt to occupy their present home in the central forest region of Ghana. Nana Osei Tutu I, the first King of the Asante, united the then separate Asante states into one strong kingdom in the latter parts of the seventeenth century. Under Nana Osei Tutu I and successive Asante Kings, Asante grew into a powerful empire in the next two centuries until her dominance was squashed by the British in 1901.

The area occupied by the Asante in the south central part of Ghana was once a dense tropical forest. The region is fed by an annual rainfall of 150cm (60 inches) occurring in two rainy seasons. The first and second rainy seasons occur from May to July and from September to November respectively (Ross, 1999:31).

Traditionally the Asante are mostly farmers who grow food crops such as plantain, yam, and cocoyam as well as cash crops such as cocoa, rubber and palm trees. Some of the people are also traders and craftsmen. The flora and fauna of their forest are typical of a tropical forest.

Traditional Asante religion centres on the belief in a supreme being called *Nyame* or *Onyankopon* who created and controls everything in the universe. Natural features such as rivers and lakes which are believed to be the progeny of *Nyame* possess special powers. Then the lesser gods or *abosom* are regarded as the intermediaries between *Nyame* and the people. The *abosom* are believed to abide in rivers, lakes, mountains, etc. They are invoked into shrines made after the appropriate rituals are performed. The shrines, which are the temporary abode of the deities, may be kept in different places such as under a tree or in a temple. The Asante also practice ancestor veneration (Debra, Naa, Acheampong, Ivor, Joffroy, Moriset and Misse, n.d:12).

In their history, the Asante are known for their bravery in war, their formidable chieftaincy institution and their art. They are known in art, particularly, for their metal casting, wood carving, cloth dyeing and stamping, cloth weaving and pottery. Kumasi was the centre of Asante art. Kumasi grew to become the heart of Akan civilisation as the Asante Empire expanded. Artists from the conquered states were brought to Kumasi to work for the *Asantehene* (the king of Asante) in his palace (Garrard, 1989:41).

The Asante also achieved great feats in the areas of architecture and wall decoration. Their buildings became larger and beautifully adorned just as their towns became bigger (Ross, 2002:27).

They built palaces, temples and homes in their traditional courtyard architectural styles with steep sloped thatch roofs. They were built in the wattle and daub method. The walls of the King's and chiefs' palaces, houses of very important people and temples of the deities were profusely adorned with motifs. Sadly, most of the Asante traditional buildings have collapsed. Most of them were destroyed in the Asante and British wars. Only few temples of the gods have survived.

These temples are found in some of the villages dotted around Kumasi such as Kentinkrono (Kentinkrono), Adako Gyaakye, Besease, Edwenease (Edwenease), Abirem, Saaman, Bosore (Bosore), Asenemaso, Kenyase and Bodwease (Bodwease). They were designated National Monuments in 1972 by the Legislative Instrument (LI) 43 by the Ghana Government and listed

on the world heritage property list by the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee in 1980. Their walls are adorned with motifs in bas reliefs showing human, animal, plant and abstract forms. Besides their aesthetic significance, the motifs also reflect the cultural beliefs and norms of the Asante.

Statement of the problem

The motifs on Asante temples are a body of knowledge on culture and aesthetics, yet no meaningful study has been conducted about them. The rich designs and the meanings inherent in the motifs are consequently out of the reach of the public.

Therefore it is urgent and prudent to study and document the motifs in order to unearth, preserve and promote their cultural and aesthetic significance.

Research Questions

1. What is the historical background of the selected temples?
3. What are the cultural and aesthetic significance of the motifs on the selected temples?

Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To study the history of the selected Asante temples.
2. To discuss the cultural and aesthetic significance of the motifs on the selected Asante temples.

Delimitation

The research is limited to six out of the ten (10) existing Asante temples that are located at Adako Gyaakye, Asenemaso, Besease, Kentinkrono (Kentinkrono), Edwenease (Edwenease) and Abirem which are all located in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The research will focus on the study and documentation of the history of the selected temples and the cultural and aesthetic significance of two or three motifs on each of the selected temples. The study started from May, 2007 to June, 2008.

Limitation

The researcher could not access master builders or motif makers. As a result of this, the researcher could not get access to data on the method of making the motifs.

Importance of the study

Outcomes of the study will help preserve the meanings of the motifs for posterity especially when the custodians of our history and culture are dying out.

The document will be a reference material for the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB) and UNESCO. It will serve as a repository of knowledge on Asante wall motifs for these bodies. It will also help them to explain the meanings and significance of the motifs to researchers and tourists.

The research will also be useful as introductory material for interested anthropologists, historians and scholars. Artists can also fall on the study for subject matter and cultural history. Architects can also use the motifs for decoration of houses and structures and conceptual purposes in their designs.

The research will alert Ghanaians to explore the meanings of the wall motifs. These meanings can be adopted to improve the social fabric of Ghana.

Organisation of the chapters

Chapter One contains the background study of work, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, delimitation, limitation, importance of study and organisation of the chapters. Chapter Two is a review of related literature. It is divided into these subtopics: A brief history of traditional Asante buildings, a brief history of Asante temples, origins of Asante wall motifs, aesthetics judgement or appreciation African art, symbolic importance of African art. Others are religious importance of wall motifs in some African cultures, social importance of African art and the art of wall decoration in other West African cultures. The researcher dealt with research methodology in Chapter Three. Here the researcher wrote on the research design, qualitative research, research tools, population for the study, sampling of population, instruments for data collection, validation of instrument, administration of instrument, primary data, secondary data, data collection procedure and data analysis plan. In Chapter Four the researcher dealt with presentation and discussion of findings.

The conclusion and recommendations are in the Chapter Five. This chapter also includes the summary. The bibliography and appendix form the last parts of the thesis. The bibliography was done in an alphabetical order according to the names of the authors.

KNUST



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Overview

This chapter reviews literature that are related to the topic of this study. The reviewed literature were obtained from literary sources and the internet.

The brief history of Asante traditional buildings.

According to Prussin (1980:57) the origin of Asante traditional architecture is ultimately traced to the convergence of two major traditions. That is the merger of the cultures of the coastal rainforest and the grassland savannahs in the sixteenth century around the Adanse area. Asamoah (1993:24) also says that the Asante courtyard housing style was borrowed from the model of the Adanse courtyard house which was traditionally known as *Fihankra* (courtyard house). The building of courtyard houses became widespread in Asante. And almost all buildings whether domestic, public, or religious conformed to this style.

Kumasi was said to possess the most impressive of those structures in Asante and beyond. According to Debrah et al (n.d:8) William Winniett, a 19th century visitor to Asante, wrote that Kumasi was quite unique from the other towns in this part of Africa. The style of building made the streets look bright. The *Asantehene's* palace was described as the most enormous. According to Ross (2002:29), two 19th century British travelers to Kumasi, Gros and Freeman, wrote that the *Asantehene's* palace was a complex that nearly occupied five acres with a great court about ninety feet long and forty-five feet wide. The most important buildings were decorated with beautiful wall motifs. Schreckenbach (1982:55), referring to R. A. Freeman's description of Kumasi in 1889, mentions streets with houses nicely built, meticulously and artistically finished and well kept.

A brief history of Asante temples

Asante temples have a long history. They originated from an architectural style that developed in Asante culture in the seventeenth century. They were built to house the shrines of the deities. According to Debrah et al (nd:5) the temples have survived to this day because they were protected from the massive damage which the buildings in the big towns suffered in the long wars with the British. The temples were used for worship and to house the shrines of deities in traditional Asante religion.

Swithenbank (1969:4), Debrah et al (n.d:16, 18) and Schreckenbach (1982:51) all say that the Asante built temples to house the shrines of some of their *abosom* (deities). Asante temples were not only designed to house the shrines of the deities but there were also other buildings reserved for drummers, singers and cooks.

According to Larbi (2004:18) Capt. Rattray wrote that some temples in Asante were designed for the sky God. But Opoku (1978:29-30) says that West Africans, especially the Akan

believe that the sky God is everywhere and should not be confined to and worshiped at any particular place.

According to Swithenbank (1969) the Adako Gyaakye temple was built more than hundred years ago to house the shrine of deity called *Akwasi Sima*. He also says that three out of the four buildings of the Asenemaso temple have collapsed leaving only the *bosom dan*. The Abirem temple according to Swithenbank (1969) was built to house the shrine of a deity called *Tano Abenamu Subunu*. *Ɔkomfo* Afia brought the shrine from Akomadan Nkwantu near the Tano River and ordered for a temple to be built for it.

Origins of Asante wall motifs

Debrah et al (n.d:22) and Swithenbank (1969:7) say that the art of wall decoration was passed down from the past generations to the present generation. They stop short of stating the actual origins of the art of wall decoration among the Asante. Debrah et al (n.d:24) however, say that Arabic influences are pervasive in some of the motifs which probably are the results of Asante's contact with Muslims from the north. Swithenbank (1969:8) also says that Bowdich was the first person to comment on the Muslim factor in Asante wall motifs which is attributed to early contacts between the two cultures and not migration. Some Asante wall motifs such as the interlacing designs, the open-work screens and the open beams are synonymous with Muslim wall motifs. In his attempt to prove the Islamic or northern factor in Asante wall motifs, Prussin (1980:62-63) says that the *dwannini mmɛn* (the horn of a ram) motif has an identical motif in northern leather work. He explains that the Tekna and Trarza Maures call it *eddar* (the house). Gillon (1984:137) also speaks of an Islamic influence in Akan or Asante art when he says that Islamic influences surpass those of the indigenous cults in a lot of the visual arts, including architecture.

The linking of Asante wall motifs to Northern Muslim art is not surprising because the two cultures were in contact even long before the coming of Europeans to the Guinea coast. They had contacts in the form of trade and art. The Asantehene even had "northern imams" in his court who among other duties wrote the Arabic inscriptions on his amulets, cloths and other regalia (Ross, 1999:159,162). It is therefore not surprising that the Asante art was influenced by Arabic art.

The wall motifs derive their names from the objects or the idea that they represent. Swithenbank (1969:8) identified such names as 'the queen's fan', 'the gnome's stool, and 'the jaws'. According to Swithenbank (1969:8) the spiral motifs also appear in *adinkra* stamped cloths, gold weights and metal containers used for rituals and storing cosmetics.

According to Swithenbank (1969:7) not much of the meanings of the motifs have been kept even among the master builders. The later meanings have deviated from the original meanings

which have thwarted efforts at interpreting them. Vernon Blake in Rattray (1927:356) also opines that the Asante coming into contact with Europeans for long might have forgotten the original meaning of the motifs but retained only the idea of decorating the walls of their temples.

Knowledge in traditional Asante societies was transferred from the older generation to the younger generation orally. Hence it is unlikely that the knowledge or information will not be twisted in the course of its diffusion or even forgotten altogether. Moreover, earlier writers of Asante history and art were not particularly interested in researching into the meanings of things such as wall motifs hence the seemingly loss of the original meanings of the motifs.

Aesthetics judgement or appreciation of African art

Aesthetics, especially African art aesthetics, has been a rather difficult subject to deal with. This difficulty emanates from the fact that scholars have different meanings of or approaches to aesthetics just as different cultures have different criteria for aesthetic appreciation. Some scholars have tried to share their views on the subject.

To Gyekye (1996:125) the aesthetic is “characterized by delight, interest, and enjoyment experienced by human beings in response to objects, events, and scenes.” He says that in African cultures the objects that are traditionally deemed worthy of “sustained appreciation” include painting, sculpture, music, and dancing and also human life and culture, like humanity itself and morality. He explains that in Akan or African notion of art, equal importance is put on the functional, symbolic and the purely aesthetic values of art. Layton (1991:12) also says that the art of a people should be appreciated based on their aesthetic standards.

Okpewho (1977:301-310) also bemoans the unfortunate practice of some anthropologists and art historians who sometimes interpret African art as being informed by and used for ritual purposes. He further says that, the “aesthetic principles” that inform the creations of art in Africa are the mimetic principle, the ecology of art and tradition and originality. Okpewho’s theory of African aesthetic principles borders on the factors that influence the making of art in Africa. These are the idea to represent real objects and supernatural bodies in art, the influence of environmental factors on art, established practices in art and quest to invent new things in art.

Ottenberg (1971:2-5) points out the failure of the some literature on African art to present the African’s conceptions of his art. According to him some literature on African art are from the western investigator’s and scholar’s viewpoint. These literature are silent on what Africans themselves believe, on their own conceptions of form, of what is beautiful or ugly. In order to understand African aesthetics he suggests among other things that anthropologists ought to

have a complete understanding of African art and language before they can treat the aesthetics of African art comprehensibly.

The fact that art is highly influenced by other aspects of culture in Africa is reiterated by Wilkinson. She says that in Africa social, cultural and religious happenings informed the creation of art (Coetzee and Roux, 1998:387).

The religious or functional use of African art has been overemphasised by some writers to the detriment of their aesthetic appeal. Some writers have tried to correct this erroneous idea held about African art. Gyekye (1996:126) argues that in African art a work of art, such as a form of music or dance, is enjoyed for its own sake in the traditional culture. He says there are objects that have no functional use but are enjoyed for their purely aesthetic qualities. In Akan such objects are called *afɛɛfɛdɛɛ* or items of beauty. Okpewho (1977:301) on his part cites the abundance of secular art among the Baule and the long practice of decorative designs on Nigerian pottery to support his argument. He explains that contrary to the often held misconception about African art, beauty was often nurtured for its own appeal but not art or artists being forced into any ritual servitude.

Other writers provide another side of the coin in their arguments. They apparently find it very difficult if not impossible to disentangle the functionality of African art from its aesthetic appeal. Sarpong (1974:98) states categorically that "... there is no art for art sake in Ghana. Art is always expressed in some object of utility". Debrah et al (n.d:22) puts it this way; the Asante wall motifs just like other Asante art forms have in addition to their aesthetic purposes symbolic meanings passed down from the past. The motifs were used to relay messages through their symbolisms and also served as records. And Vansina (1984:132) says that there is no gainsaying that objects of art were first appreciated for their emotional appeal, at least by the general public...that appeal derived from their use, meaning and place in the social environment.

It is very obvious from the submissions above that aesthetic judgement of African art must certainly be based on the culture of the people. But does their aesthetic appeal always rest on the functional use of the works or are they admired exclusively for their aesthetic appeal? And how do African peoples such as the Asante judge an art work to be beautiful. Is it based on their imitational precision or the message the work carries?

Vernon Blake's discussion of, "The aesthetics of Ashanti" in Rattray (1927:362-363) is useful here. He opines that to the "primitive" mind the ability of a statue or a drawing to imitate the original has no or little value in determining the worth of the work; for the same work can represent two completely different things. He therefore cautions that applying the 'likeness' criticism on Asante art is unjustified.

Rattray (1969:173) wrote that the motif on the most highly structured temple he had set eyes on in Asante had no specific meaning. Here it is possible that Rattray's informant referred to the aesthetic appeal of the wall decorations or he might not be aware of the symbolic and functional use of the motifs. But this phenomenon is also reported among the Kusasi of Ghana. Sometimes their women do not associate any meanings to their wall motifs other than to enhance their homes (Courtney-Clarke, 1990:156).

Symbolic importance of African art

Symbolism is about using something physical or corporeal to represent an idea or a concept. The symbol may be portrayed in the form of an art object like painting, drawing or carving.

According to Mbiti (1975:22), there are several symbols in Africa which are usually expressed in art forms. These are represented by animals, certain trees, colours, birds, etc. For example, white is the symbol of death among some African people. So when someone dies in those societies the relatives smear white chalk on their bodies. The meanings of the symbols are common to majority of the people. Yet there are some symbols such as those used in initiation, divination and secret societies whose meanings are exclusive to just a section of the societies.

Explaining the magnitude of symbolism in preliterate societies, Gyekye (1996:127) writes that it was a forceful tool that informed the production, expression, or appreciation of art. Meanings and ideas in these societies were expressed in art. Sarpong (1974:105-106) also says that, Africans often think about the world in symbolic terms other than in scientific terms. He continues to spell out some reasons behind the appropriateness of a particular symbol in a particular case. He mentions resemblance between the symbol and the symbolised, the symbol's nature, its name and its usage in daily life or in rituals as some of the reasons that inform the appropriateness of a symbol.

Symbols must have a close association or relationship with the symbolised. Sometimes, too, this relationship is explained by a myth, tradition, etc. In short, the symbol must be apt. Symbols also express very important values and they have influence on people. As Sarpong (1974:107) puts it, the symbolised is something valuable. People react to their symbols affectionately. Animals are used quite frequently as symbols of ethnic groups, nations, football clubs and even political parties. For example, the porcupine is the symbol of the Asante.

Symbolism in African art is evident in Asante wall motifs. Deborah et al (nd) says that the motifs are not only decorations but they have symbolic meanings which were handed down from the past. They say that the motifs are a form of non-verbal communication which played significant roles in traditional Asante societies. Swithenbank (1969) also says that the motifs symbolised objects and principles.

Religious importance of wall motifs in some African cultures

One major characteristic of African art is its attachment to religious activities or beliefs. It is a common phenomenon to find African art being used in rituals as mediums, costume, or as objects of religious status.

African art often articulates religious ideas. These art forms can be seen on wood, stools, pots, handicrafts, and human bodies (Mbiti, 1975:22). Although this side of African art cannot be denied it is more often than not over emphasised by some writers.

The art of wall decoration among African peoples such as the Ndebele of South Africa, Hausa of Nigeria, Soninke of Senegal and Kasena of Ghana go to support the fact that African art has religious significance. Some styles of wall decoration such as Uli and Nsibi also possess religious significance. For example according to Willis (1989:62) the Igbo of Nigeria paint the walls of their public shrines and compounds with Uli motifs to signal or announce major rituals and religious festivals. Among the Nankani of Ghana too, a snake motif or *bohinbore* portrayed in a mud-relief on the wall of a house is believed to protect the people in that house (Courtney-Clarke, 1990:156).

Social importance of art in Africa

African arts are also made to serve the needs of the society. Gillon (1984:137) writes that, but while some art can be described as 'spirit oriented', with origins in these early beliefs, majority of Akan art meet the needs of the state, the court and chiefs, personal prestige and domestic needs.

Writing about the importance of art in social history, Vansina (1984:204) says that art objects are connected to social institutions. He says that the skill exhibited in the objects shows the level of specialisation of labour, the distribution of their utilisation is linked to social stratification and most importantly concentrations of art objects around some institutions show their overriding position in society. For example, among the Tsogo of Southern Gabon, art is concentrated around institutions such as mosques, churches or temples.

Igbo women of Nigeria employ sharply rendered line motifs to make clear their social status. The art of wall decoration among the women of northern Ghana is also described as a social activity which enables the women to come together. This interaction affords the women the chance to discuss common issues and share ideas (Courtney-Clarke, 1990:156).

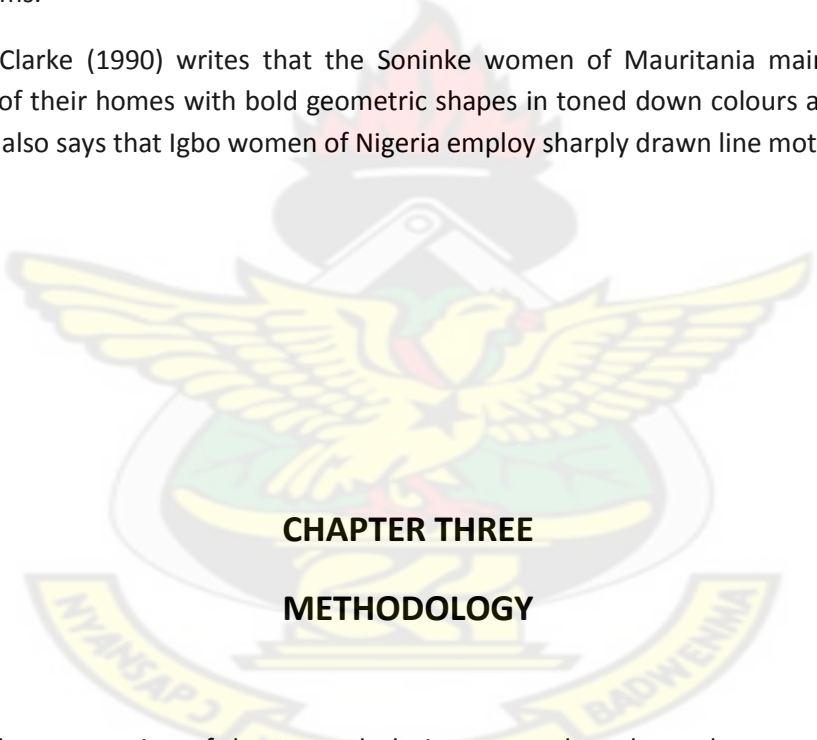
The art of wall decoration in other West African cultures

The art of wall decoration is prevalent in a lot of West African societies. The people of West Africa decorate their domestic, religious and political buildings with different types of motifs.

Writing on the art of wall decoration in the Navrongo District, Issahaku (1991) in Larbi (2004) says that the art of wall painting in the Navrongo District is called *bambolse*, which means to decorate, embellish or make more attractive. He says that the term may also refer to any design or motif that has no name, usually, newly created designs. He adds that *bambolse* is made to increase the aesthetic qualities of the building relative to the environment. The wall decoration may identify the social class or status of the owner of the house.

Smith (1978) also says that the Gurensi (also called Frafra) of northern Ghana use the term *bambolse*, that means “embellished,” “decorated” or made more attractive.” He says that the term is “exclusively restricted to wall decoration.” According to Smith (1978), *bambolse* is a generic name for any design or motif which has no specific name. He continues to write that the decorations are made by the women. And the motifs are the form of paintings, relief and incised decorations. Moreover the motifs are largely non-figurative, rectilinear, symmetrical and curvilinear forms.

Courtney-Clarke (1990) writes that the Soninke women of Mauritania mainly adorn the interior walls of their homes with bold geometric shapes in toned down colours are painted on dry walls. She also says that Igbo women of Nigeria employ sharply drawn line motifs to tell their social status.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter consists of the research design, research tools, study area and population and sampling. Other topics that are treated here are; instrumentation, validation of instruments, administration of the instruments, primary data, secondary data, data collection procedures and the data analysis plan.

Research design

The researcher chose the qualitative research method for the research. This research method in the estimation of the researcher will help him to achieve his set objectives. That is, it will help him to gather, analyse and interpret the data better.

Qualitative research

According to Best (1981:156) qualitative studies are those in which the observations are described and not merely expressed in quantitative terms. The aim of qualitative research is to paint a holistic picture and depth of understanding, but not to render a numeric analysis of data. The qualitative researcher tries to give a rich description of people, objects, events, places, conversations, and so on (Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh, 2002:25).

The qualitative research method was used by the researcher to describe the place of the selected temples in the history of the communities where they are located and the Asante Kingdom as a whole. It was also used to analyse and interpret the data.

Research tools

The researcher employed the following tools in the study: libraries and their resources, the computer and its software and a digital camera. Following are the uses of the aforementioned research tools.

The researcher visited libraries mentioned below in order to obtain pertinent literature for the research. Books, thesis books and journals were obtained from the libraries. The data obtained served as sources of secondary data for the study.

University library, KNUST, Kumasi

College of Art and Social Sciences library, KNUST, Kumasi

Department of General Art Studies library, KNUST, Kumasi

Ashanti library, Kumasi

College of Architecture and Planning library, KNUST, Kumasi

The researcher used his personal computer and its software extensively in this study. It was used to type and edit the text of the thesis as well as to arrange the photographs. The internet was also used to obtain some important data form literature such as articles, journals and official documents. The digital camera was used to take photographs of the selected temples and their motifs.

Population for the study

Target population

The target population was all the caretakers and master builders of the selected temples, priests or priestesses of the deities, traditional elders of the communities where the selected temples are located officials of Ghana Museum and Monuments Board in Kumasi and the ten existing Asante temples.

Accessible population

Category A – master builders	0	
Category B – priests, caretakers and elders scholars of Asante culture	4	16 Category C –
Total population	20	Sampling of

Due to time constraints and lack of adequate funds available for the study, the entire target population of the study could not be accessed. It was therefore important to select a small proportion of the population which would be accessible to the researcher. The researcher used the purposive sampling method to select the accessible population. This enabled the researcher to handpick and divide the population into groups.

The population was grouped into three categories, namely categories A, B and C. In category A were traditional builders/master builders. The researcher could not access a single master builder because they were all reportedly dead. In category B were priests/priestesses, caretakers/curators of the temples and local/traditional elders. Sixteen respondents were interviewed in this category. Category C had scholars of Asante culture. Four respondents were interviewed in this category.

The criteria for selecting these categories of respondents are that the traditional or master builders could provide information on the method of making the motifs. The respondents in category could not provide any data because they were reportedly dead. The respondents in category B could also provide data on the history of the selected temples and the meanings of the motifs since they have a direct and daily contact with the temples. This group of respondents could provide the data that were expected from them. And the third category of respondents might provide the researcher with data on the history

of the selected temples and the meanings of the motifs since they are experts of Asante culture. These respondents could also provide the data that were expected from them.

Instruments for data collection

Observation and interview were used to gather data for study. This is because this study studied the temples in their natural settings. Moreover the study discussed the significance of the motifs on the selected temples from a cultural perspective. And most of the respondents were illiterates.

Interview

Cohen and Manion (1994 :271) referring to Cannell and Kahn's definition of an interview states that it is "a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant data, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation." The researcher used interview to obtain data from the respondents.

Observation

Observation is the most common method of acquiring data in qualitative research (Ary, et al, 2002:430). It is the study of material objects or specimens or a human subject in action. It is used in experimental, descriptive and historical research. Observation is employed in ethnographic studies in the form of participant observation to study the cultural characteristics of people (Best, 1981:111). Observation was used to observe details of the motifs and the temples.

Validation of instruments

In order to direct the observation to the desired objects and make it beneficial, the researcher had to validate it. This was done by preparing an observation guide to guide the researcher in the observation (See appendix I on page 86 for an example of the observation guide). The observation guide was shown to some lecturers and other colleagues for proofreading it and suggestions.

The researcher also prepared an interview guide to guide him in the interviews. In order to eliminate errors from the interview guide it was shown to some lecturers and other colleagues to edit it (See appendix II on page 87 for an example of the interview guide).

Administration of instruments

The researcher administered the interview by making advance arrangements with his respondents to alert them of the intended interviews. Upon his visit to the temples and the houses and offices of the respondents, he sat down with them and administered the questions on the interview guide. The researcher developed some rapport with them in order to obtain the needed data from them.

The researcher had to become an observer in order to observe details of the temples and the motifs. He did this by paying several visits to the towns where the temples are located. While in those towns, he went to the sites of the temples and then observed the temples and the motifs.

Primary data

Primary data are the data collected at first hand or from primary sources such as original documents, relics, remains, or artefacts mainly through surveys, interviews, or participant observation. Primary data are the direct outcomes of events or the records of eyewitnesses. McNeill (1990:99) and Ary, et al (2002:450). The primary data of this study were collected by observing the temples and the motifs and interviewing the respondents. They were in the form of notes taken during interviews and observations as well as photographs and sketches of the motifs.

Secondary data

Secondary data is obtainable from other sources, and comes in several forms. It has been produced and processed before receiving the attention of the researcher (McNeill, 1990:99). According to Ary, et al (2002:450) in secondary sources data is passed from a non observer to the user or researcher. History books, articles in encyclopedias, and reviews of research are common examples of sources of secondary data. The researcher obtained the secondary data for the study from books, articles published on the internet, journals and thesis books. The secondary data were used for the literature review and in the discussions and interpretation of the findings.

Data collecting procedures

During the interview the researcher wrote the responses of the respondents down. The researcher also observed and recorded the conditions of the temples. A digital camera was used to take photographs of the motifs and the temples. On-the-spot sketches of the motifs were also made.

Data analysis plan

The next chapter comprises presentation and discussion of findings. Firstly, the historical background of each temple is treated. This is followed by discussion of the cultural and the aesthetic significance of the motifs.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter presents the historical background of the selected temples. It also discusses the cultural and aesthetic significance of their motifs.

The Adako Gyaakye Temple

Adako Gyaakye is a small town located about sixteen kilometres from Kumasi, off the Kumasi-Accra high way. Documents obtained from the GMMB in Kumasi say that the temple was built in the latter parts of the eighteenth century. According to *Okyeame* Boaten (the spokesman of the chief of Adako Gyaakye), the current chief of the town is called Nana Osei Bosompem III.

According to Maame Akua Badu, the caretaker of the temple, (personal communication, 2nd April, 2008), the temple was built by the people of Adako Gyaakye, Fumesua, Abirem, and Tikurom through communal labour upon the invitation of the chief of Adako Gyaakye. They also made the motifs on it. According to documents obtained from the GMMB, they were four houses in all, two of which have collapsed. The adjoining houses were inhabited by people and also used as a waiting lounge by visitors to the temple. The temple has gone through several renovations over the years. It was enlarged in the early nineteenth century and used as the chief's quarters.

According to *Okyeame* Boaten and Maame Akua Badu (personal communication, 3rd April, 2008), those who consulted the deity included people who needed help to bear children, be successful in their jobs, and be cured from their sicknesses. The shrine of the deity is said to have been taken to war by the Asante in the past. For example it was taken to the Asante and Ewe war. Today the spokesman of chief pours libation to the deity when someone comes to seek help at the temple because the deity has no priest or priestess.

The Adako Gyaakye temple is built in the Asante traditional courtyard style. The roof has been changed from the original thatch roof to corrugated iron sheets (See Fig. 2 on pg. 48). There is the *bosom dan* (shrine room), *akyeremadefo dan* (drummers' room), *soorofo dan* (cooks' room) and *adwomtofo dan* (singers' room) (See Fig. 3 on pg. 48).

Discussion of the motifs

This section will identify the motif, give a short description of the named motif and discuss its cultural and aesthetic significance.

Sebo ne bofo motifs

Sebo ne bofo means a leopard and a hunter. These motifs consist of two separate motifs. These are *sebo* (a leopard) figure modelled on one of the pillars which support the arch in front of the shrine room and *bofo* (a hunter) figure, found on the other pillar in front of the shrine room. The motifs face each other with the hunter pointing a gun at the leopard while the leopard is walking towards him (See Fig. 4 on pg. 49).

According to Maame Akua Badu and *Okyeame* Boaten (personal communication, 3rd April, 2008), the motifs symbolise the strength of a leopard and the bravery of a hunter. The leopard says it is not afraid of anything except a gun. The leopard here represents an evil spirit and the hunter represents the deity. The motifs mean that the deity fights and overpowers evil spirits who try to attack the people.

The motifs are rendered in profile. They are rendered in profile so that the forms of the leopard and the hunter can be shown better. They are also not without much detail in the forms in terms of the modelling. The actions of a hunter in the forest and movement of leopard in the forest are depicted in the forward thrust of the legs of the hunter and the leopard respectively.

To akyiri fa motif

To akyiri fa literally means 'when it falls to the back fetch it.' This motif shows two birds placed facing each other. They are placed very close together. There is a tree placed between them. The bird on the left is looking forward and bird on the right has its head turned backwards (See Fig. 5 on pg. 50).

The bird which is looking forward, according to Maame Akua Badu and *Okyeame* Boaten (personal communication, 3rd April, 2008), is believed to have the ability to turn its head round to make a full circle. Therefore the motif symbolises the ability of the deity to look forward and see what is in front of it and confront it. The other bird looking backwards symbolises the ability of the deity to turn its head round an angle of 360° to see what is behind it and confront it. Therefore the motif is a symbol of an all seeing god.

The deity in this motif, according to Maame Akua Badu and *Okyeame* Boaten (personal communication, 3rd April, 2008), is depicted as having the ability to see and prophesy correctly about issues which have been reported to it and those which have not been reported to it as well. It can therefore see and alert the community or the relatives of someone of an impending danger beforehand.

This is another motif rendered in the side view or profile. They are modeled boldly on lower part of the wall. The rendition of the forms is very simple. There is movement in the forms because of how the legs are placed apart, the beaks opened and the tails raised. These qualities show the readiness of the bird for action. The eyes given to the bird motifs also inject life into the forms. The ability of the bird to turn its head round an angle of 360° is emphasised in the round form of the bird on the right.

Agyinamoa or *ɔkra* motif

Agyinamoa or *ɔkra* means a cat. This motif is in the form a cat. It is found on the upper wall of the temple that faces the courtyard of the visitors' house. (See Fig. 6 on pg.50).

According to Maame Akua Badu and *ɔkyeame* Boaten (personal communication, 4th April, 2008), this motif symbolises the quiet nature of the cat. The cat is said to be '*anwaanwaaboa*' or 'an animal that moves slowly and quietly.' According to Maame Akua Badu, the deity sometimes acts like the cat. That is, it moves slowly and quietly to accomplish its goal.

The *agynamoa* or *ɔkra* motif is another motif which is rendered in the side view or profile. The body and the tail of the cat are represented with a long cylindrical form. The tail is curved upwards. The legs are represented with relatively short cylindrical forms which are attached to the body. The legs are placed straight without much movement in them. This is probably to emphasise the quiet nature of the cat.

The Asenemaso Temple

Documents obtained from the GMMB in Kumasi say that Asenemaso is a town about eleven kilometres from Kumasi close to Abuakwa on the Kumasi-Sunyani highway. The Asenemaso temple was built in about 1894-1896 to house the shrine of a *Tano* deity, called *Tano Kwasi*. The shrine of the deity was brought from Manfo – Tanoso by Kwadwo Frimpong also known as Kokoroko to Nana Amankwaatia, the *Bantamahene* (the chief of Bantama) at the time, long before the Yaa Asantewaa War to lead him to wars. The original temple was called *Tano Kwasi Fie* (the house of Tano Kwasi). It had no motifs on its walls. Later on Kofi Yinka, Kwame Akosem and Aboagye Sei saw the motifs somewhere else and they decided to make copies of them on the temple in their home town. *Tano Kwasi* was very well known in Asante before and after the Yaa Asantewaa war for it was a powerful soothsayer and had healing powers. The shrine of *Kwasi Tano* was taken to the battle field by Asante troops for consultation during the Yaa Asantewaa war.

The village of Asenemaso was left desolate during and after the Yaa Asantewaa war for many years. Consequently the temple which was roofed with leaves or *benmu* collapsed. On their return to the village the temple was rebuilt at the first site and then roofed in shingles and later changed to corrugated iron sheets.

According to documents obtained from the GMMB, the present Asenemaso town was laid out in 1955 close to the old site. The Monuments and Relic Commission paid for the corrugated iron sheets used to roof the temple before the people moved in to occupy the new town so the temple remained the property of the commission. In 1963 the GMMB took charge over the temple when it restored and preserved it. The shrine of the deity was taken to another place.

The Asenemaso temple stands on the left side of the Kumasi – Sunyani road which passes through the town. It is in the same premises with the *banmu* (royal cemetery) of the Bantama stool. The size of the temple is rather small for a large group to enter at a time. Only the shrine room of the Asenemaso temple now remains. According to Swithenbank (1969) it was presumably part of the normal four roomed courtyard temple. (See fig. 7 on pg. 50)

There is no priest or priestess to serve the deity. The old priestess who died quite recently has not been replaced. Sister Dora Adanse is the caretaker of the Asenemaso temple.

Discussion of the motifs

This section will identify and describe the motifs. A discussion of their cultural and aesthetic significance will then follow.

Owuo atwedee motif

Owuo atwedee means the ladder of death. This motif is composed of a network of diagonal lines modelled on the lower wall of one of the pillars in front of the temple (See Fig. 8 on pg.51). It is boldly modelled on the wall surface.

According to Maame Abena Kwabena (the mother of the caretaker of the temple) (personal communication, 15th June, 2008), the *owuo atwedee* motif represents the inevitable journey of death that every man shall suffer. It talks about the Asante proverb that says '*owuo atwedee ɔbaako nfro*' or 'the ladder of death is not climbed by one man.' This motif tells people that no matter who they are (even if they are the priests) they cannot escape death.

The *owuo atwedee* is modeled boldly on the lower part of the pillar supporting the front roof of the shrine room. It depicts thick lines which are executed in diagonal lines in the form of cross-hatching. The number of 'steps' created the cross-hatching effect metaphorically represents the steps men take toward death. The shapes created by the intersections of the lines create a pleasing rhythm in the motif.

Dwannini mmen motif

Dwannini mmen literally means the horn of a ram. This motif is found on the base of one of the pillars in front of the temple. The motif comprises two sets of spiral lines placed in a vertical format and joined in the middle by a kite-like shape. (See Fig. 9 on pg. 51).

This motif symbolizes, according to Agya Kwaku Mensah (the caretaker of the Besease temple) (personal communication, 17th June, 2008), represents the importance of a ram in rituals that are

performed at the temple. He said that the *dwannini* (a ram) is a very important animal in the rituals performed at the temple. It is more often than not the preferred animal for sacrifices. For example, if couples who have problems with child bearing come to consult the deity and their requests are granted, they present a ram to be sacrificed to the deity as part of the rituals to thank the deity.

The *dwannini mmɛn* motif is modelled thickly on the lower part of one of the pillars in front of the building. This motif is an abstract rendition of the horn of a ram. The motif comprises two sets of spiral lines, one on the left and one on the right. A similar design is repeated at the top part of the first motif. The two motifs are joined together by two thick lines which extend from their mid sections to converge at the middle part of the motif. The joint between the designs forms a shape like a kite. The use of lines in this motif is very high. The spiral lines in it go to emphasise the curved shape of the horn of a ram.

The Kentinkrono Temple

According to documents obtained from the GMMB in Kumasi, Kentinkrono (Kentinkrono) is a town about three kilometers from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) campus in Kumasi on the Kumasi – Accra highway. The *Tano Kwadwo* temple was built between 1896-1900. The *Kentinkronohene* (the chief of Kentinkrono), Nana Ankobea, brought the shrine of the deity from Praso in Adanse and built the temple for it. *Tano Kwadwo* was consulted by the *Asantehene* (the king of Asante) very often. It was also consulted by barren women to help them conceive. Moreover, it helped the sick to regain their strength and could also predict the outcome of wars.

According to Opanin Twumasi, the caretaker of the temple, (Personal Communication, 15th June, 2008), the chiefs visited the temple in the night to seek the help of the deity before they went to wars in the past.

The makers of the motifs on the walls of the temple are not known. The shrine of the deity is still there but there is no priest or priestess to man the temple. The temple was occupied by squatters until the GMMB restored order in the temple in 2006. Mr Apau lives in the temple and keeps it tidy. (See figs. 10 and 11 on pgs. 52)

Discussion of the motifs

This section gives the names and descriptions of the motifs. It also discusses their cultural and aesthetic significance.

Sankɔfa motif

Sankɔfa literally means 'go back and fetch it.' This is boldly modelled on the lower part of a pillar in front of the shrine room. It comprises a spiral line in the shape of a bird that has turned its head

backwards. This motif has changed slightly from its original. The original motif was a heron like creature, modelled with its head turned backward. Swithenbank (1969). See fig. 12 on pg. 53.

According to Opanin Twumasi *Sankɔfa* literally means 'go back and fetch it'. It expresses the sayings that "*sankɔfa yɛnnkyi*" and "*sɛ wo wɛrɛ fi na wo san kɔfa a yɛnnkyi*". These mean "it is not abominable to go back and fetch it" and "if you forget and you go back to fetch it it is not abominable". The motif represents the idea of going back to fetch the aspects of our culture that we have forgotten. This means that we should return to the positive aspects of our culture and not allow them to die out. Those positive aspects of our culture may be religious or social. For example in order to solve some of the social problems that persist in our society today, we can reinstitute some of the morally oriented practices such as *bragorɔ* (puberty rite for girls) and respect for elders.

The *sankɔfa* motif is modelled boldly on lower part of one of the pillars in front of the *bosom dan* (shrine room). The whole motif is made up of a spiral line. The motif shows the side view of the bird. The turn in the head of the bird is represented in the smooth flow of the spiral line that flows from the body of the figure. According to Maame Akua Badu of Adako Gyaakye, the *sankɔfa* bird has the ability to turn its head round in an angle of 360°. This character of the bird is shown in the circular shape the figure.

Bese saka motif

Bese saka means a bunch of kola nuts. The motif shows a bunch of kola nuts resented in oval shapes. It is incised on the upper front wall of the shrine room. (See fig. 13 on pg. 53).

According to *Ɔkɔmfɔɔ* (priestess) Afia of Abirem, kola is a very important fruit in the activities of the temple. It is often included in the offerings presented to the deity. Sometimes kola is included in the offerings offered to the gods. Some people also offer kola nuts and other objects as rituals at the river side or by the road side in order to receive special favours from the gods. They might also offer kola so that a misfortune will evade them. *Bese* (kola) is also chewed by the Asante when they are bereaved.

The *bese saka* motif is incised on the upper part of the front wall of the shrine room. This motif is more of an abstract design. The kola nuts are modelled in four oval shapes. The execution of this motif is quite different from the other motifs on the lower part of the walls of the temples in the sense that this motif is incised on the wall while the others are in the form of bas-reliefs.

Denkyɛm motif

Denkyɛm means a crocodile. This motif shows a crocodile with a mud fish in its mouth. Its body is covered by dots and it is wagging its tail. It is found on the outside wall of the shrine room (See fig. 14 on pg. 54). According to Opanin Twumasi, the original motif was removed from the temple and taken to

the Prempeh II Jubilee Museum at the National Cultural Centre, Kumasi. Another crocodile motif was made to replace the one taken away.

According to Opanin Twumasi and documents obtained from the GMMB in Kumasi, the *denkyem* motif represents an Asante proverb that says “*Ɔdenkyem bɔne na odi ne bɔn mu adeɛ*”. This literally means “it is the bad crocodile that eats what is in its hole”.

The fish in its mouth is a mud fish which is the neighbour of the crocodile. The crocodile is described as bad because it eats its neighbour, the mud fish, which is supposed to be its friend. It is a motif that draws people’s attention to good neighbourliness.

The *denkyem* motif is the only motif on the exterior wall of the temple. The motif is boldly modelled on the wall surface. It is also relatively big in size which may be because it is the only motif on that wall. It shows an aerial view of the crocodile figure. Opanin Twumasi said that, the protruding belly of the crocodile shows that it has really fed well on the mud fish. The curved shape of the crocodile’s tail shows movement in the figure. The curved shape in the body of the fish also shows movement in the figure. The crocodile seems to be enjoying the experience while the fish is obviously struggling for its dear life. The rough texture of the crocodile is represented in the motif by dots. The dots create a linear rhythm which enhances the design.

The Besease Temple

Besease is a village near Edweso (Ejisu) about twenty one kilometres from Kumasi on the Kumasi – Accra road. The Besease temple was built by *Ɔkɔmfɔ* (priest) Yaw Awua in the nineteenth century during the reign of Nana Kwaku Deekyi as *Edwesohene* (Ejisuhene, the chief of Ejisu). It houses the shrine of the Besease *Tanɔ* deity known as *Tanɔ Yaw*.

According to Agya Kwaku Mensah (the caretaker of the temple) (Personal Communication, 5th June, 2008), Yaa Kyaa of Besease and a relative of Yaa Asantewaa the *Edwesohemaa* (Ejisuhemaa, the queenmother of Ejisu), conceived, surprisingly she gave birth to a mysterious object instead of a human being. It was revealed, upon consultations with mediums, that the object was the representation of a powerful deity called *Tanɔ* (Tano). He was named *Tanɔ Yaw* (Tano Yaw) because he was born on a Thursday. Yaa Kyaa then became the priestess of the deity. *Tanɔ Yaw* is regarded as a protective god and a fertility god. It was reputed for protecting its people during wars.

The GMMB has carried out some restoration works on the Besease temple. For example it restored the temple in 1963. Debrah et al (nd) says that in 1998 the GMMB and the French Embassy in Ghana restored it again. Agya Kwaku Mensah said that, at the moment there is no priest or priestess of the deity after the last one died about six years ago. (See figs. 15 and 16 on pgs. 54 and 55)

Discussion of the motifs

This section will identify the motifs and describe them. It will also proceed to discuss the cultural and aesthetic significance of the motifs.

Dwannini mmen motif

Dwannini mmen means the horns of a ram. The same motif is found on the base of the pillars supporting the *adwomtofoɔ dan* (singers' room). It shows two spiral lines juxtaposed to form the shape of a ram's horn (See fig. 17 on 55). This motif shares the same meaning with the other *dwannini mmen* motifs already shown on page 51. Refer to the discussion of its cultural aesthetic significance on pages 32 and 33.

Sankɔfa motif

Sankɔfa literally means 'go back and fetch it.' This is also another motif that is made up of spiral lines. There are two main sets of spiral lines which converge in the middle to form a square shape. It is found on the base of the wall that opens to the shrine room (see fig. 18 on page 56). It shares a similar meaning to the *sankɔfa* on the Kentinkrɔno temple. Therefore refer to it for the discussions of its cultural and aesthetic significance on pages 34 and 35 .

Nnomaa mmienu motif

Nnomaa mmienu means two birds. This motif shows two birds facing each other. They are linked by a series of circular lines. The motif is found at the lower part of the wall at the front part of the shrine room. See figure 19 on page 56.

This motif, according to Agya Kwaku Mensah and Swithenbank (1969) symbolises, the general dual principle of life and death; male and female; young and old; and night and day. These principles or entities work hand in hand to move the society forward.

The *nnomaa mmienu* motif is modelled on the lower part of the wall in front of the shrine room. This is another motif executed in the side view or profile. The level of craftsmanship exhibited in the execution of this motif is quite high. The motif shows two identical birds which are joined by series of lines. The raised tails and combs of the birds put a lot of life in the figures. They seem to be busily engaged in a chart, dialogue or an interaction.

The Edwenease Temple

Documents obtained from the GMMB in Kumasi reveal that Edwenease (Edwenease) is about eight kilometres from Edweso (Ejisu) through Onwe (Onwe). It was founded by Opanin Kwaku Yawo, who was living at Abenase, in the nineteenth century. The village was founded under a big tree called

ɔdwono. Hence the name of the village became *Edwenease*, meaning under the ɔdwono tree. After the people had settled there, they built a temple for their god Atuo – Kosua Kwame.

According to Kwaku Bosuo (the Edwenease unit committee chairman) and Kwame Sarpong (the caretaker of the temple), (Personal Communication, 7th June, 2008), Atuo – Kosua Kwame is believed to have helped the *Edwesohene* (the chief of Ejisu) to defeat the army of the *Mampɔnhene* (the chief of Mampong), who together with the *Kokofuhene* (the chief of Kokofu) had rebelled against the *Asantehene* (the king of Asante). In order to honour the deity for this victory, *ɔhene* (chief) Kwabena Dua, the *Edwesohene* (the chief of Ejisu), ordered for the temple to be rebuilt and enlarged. The *daha* (leaves) roof was changed to corrugated iron sheets. The builder came from Kumasi Amakom and the motif maker, called Kosae Fuo, came from Antoa. The motif maker's apprentice was Kwaku Ntinakɔ. See figures 20 and 21 on page 57.

Opanin Kwaku Assuming is the current priest. He is old and weak. He was admitted to the hospital at the time the researcher visited the village. Kwame Sarpong is the caretaker of the temple. He is literate and well trained in the restoration and preservation of the temple and motifs.

Discussion of the motifs

This section identifies some of the motifs on the Edwenease (Edwenease) temple. It also describes them and discusses their cultural and aesthetic significance.

ɔbofoɔ motif

ɔbofoɔ means a hunter. This motif shows a male figure. It is found on the base of the exterior of the cooks' room. It is boldly modelled on the wall surface. See figure 22 on page 58.

According to Kwaku Bosuo and Kwame Sarpong, the motif represents a warrior. He is holding *afena* (a sword) in his right arm and *tuo* (a gun) in his left arm. He also has *apiretwaa* (a bag) and *atuduro* (gun powder) 'tied' around his waste. The motif means the deity is always prepared for battle.

The figure is modeled very boldly on the wall. It stands on a pedestal in a front view. This is one of the few motifs which are executed in front view. The front view of the figure shows that the hunter is ready to face the enemy. The figure is about four and a half head length tall. In spite of this, the facial features - such as the eyes, nose and lips as well as the fingers of the figure are meticulously executed. However, the belly of the figure is flat and it appears not to be wearing a shirt. The outstretched and raised hands of the hunter suggest a triumphant gesture.

Ɔɔɛnkyɛm motif

Ɔɔɛnkyɛm means a crocodile. This motif is found on the upper wall of the exterior of the cooks' room. It shows *Ɔɔɛnkyɛm* (a crocodile) with *bomokyikyie* (a mud fish) in its mouth. See figure 23 on page 58.

The motif, according to Kwame Sarpong, represents the Asante proverb that says: '*se bomokyikyie firi nsuo ase beka se Ɔɔɛnkyɛm awu a yen nnye no akyinyie.*' That is, 'if the mud fish comes from under the river to say that the crocodile is dead, we do not dispute it.' In other words, if a person's aide-de camp reports of the death of his master, his report should not be disputed. If the priest reports what the deity has said to him to the people, his report should not be disputed.

The crocodile motif is modelled boldly on the wall surface. The large size of the crocodile and the small size of the mud fish are to emphasise the power of the former over the latter. There are dots all over the crocodile's body, to depict the textures on its skin. The belly of the crocodile is rounded. The curved shape of the tail of the crocodile depicts movement in the figure.

Sasabonsam motif.

Sasabonsam refers to a forest monster. This motif is found on the lower wall of the exterior of the cooks' room. It shows the head of a person with his arms raised. He holds in his crossed arms *afena* (a sword), *sekan* (a machete) and *bosome* or *ɔsrane* (a crescent moon) in the middle. See figure 24 on page 59.

According to Kwaku Bosuo, the motif represents *sasabonsam* (a forest monster). It is believed to lurk in the forest and scare or attack people. The news of a *sasabonsam* (a forest monster) lurking around brings panic and anxiety among the people because it is believed to catch and eat both humans and animals. But the deity is believed to be more powerful than it.

The *sasabonsam* (forest monster), according to Kwaku Busuo, is believed to be one of the spirits that inhabit the forest. It is a menacing spirit that is feared by people. In spite of this the deity is believed to be more powerful than it. Sometimes hunters come to deity to acquire talismans to protect themselves from the attack of the forest monster.

The *sasabonsam* (forest monster) motif is modelled in bas relief on the lower part of the exterior wall of the cooks' room. This motif shows the head, upper shoulders and hands of a human like figure. The head is represented by a round dot. The arms of the figure are thin and elongated to represent the extra ordinary height that the forest monster is believed to have. The forest monster is also believed to operate mostly in the night; this is represented by the crescent moon.

The Abirem Temple

Documents obtained from the GMMB in Kumasi reveal that, the village of Abirem is about thirteen kilometres to the north east of Kumasi on the Antoa road. It was founded in the eighteenth century. Most of the impressive traditional buildings in the village have collapsed due to disrepair (dilapidation) because of a plan to relocate the village to another site. The temple of their deity, called *Tanɔ Abirem Subunu*, is still existing. The shrine of the deity was reportedly brought from Akomadan Nkwantu by a woman called Afia during the reign of Nana Osei Tutu I as *Asantehene* (the king of Asante). The people of Abirem and the neighbours were very dedicated to the deity.

According to *Ɔkɔmfɔɔ* Nyarko, the priestess of the deity (personal communication, 9th June, 2008), *Abirem Subunu* was taken by Osei Tutu I to the war with King Adinkra of Gyaaman. When Adinkra was beheaded, his head was put in a *yaawa* (pan) and carried back to Kumasi. Upon reaching a big river, Adinkra's head fell into the river. All the deities at that spot tried all they could to retrieve it from the river but to no avail. Word was sent to Nana Osei Tutu who had not reached the spot. When he got there in the company of *Abirem Subunu*, the deity told them to go and retrieve Adinkra's head from the top of a silk cotton tree nearby. And true to its word, they found it there. The deity was then rewarded with an *apakan* (palanquin), *asipim* (chair), and *sɛkɔ* (sedan chair) which had been promised to anyone who would help retrieve the head. Therefore *Abirem Subunu* is highly regarded in the *Asantehene's* (the king of Asante's) palace. (*Ɔkɔmfɔɔ* Nyarko, personal communication, 9th June, 2008).

The GMMB restored the Abirem temple in 1964. There were a lot of motifs on it. But there are only four types of motifs on the temple now. All of the motifs are on the wall of the shrine room. There are no motifs on the outside of the temple. See figures 25 and 26 on pages 59 and 60.

Discussion of the motifs

This section deals with the identification and descriptions of the motifs. It will also discuss their cultural and aesthetic significance.

Nkinkyim motif

Nkinkyim means twisting. This motif shows a network of several spiral lines. It is boldly modelled on the base of the wall to the right side of the shrine room. See figure 27 on 60.

According to Mr Boakye, (the caretaker of the temple) (personal communication, 10th June, 2008), the *nkyinkyim* (twisting) motif represents the weaving track or path created by a dancing priest or priestess. In other words it is a symbol of dynamism and versatility.

The qualities such as versatility and dynamism that the motif represents, according to *Ɔkɔmfɔɔ* Nyarko, are attributes of the deity. It is believed to have the ability to change into human and animal forms in order to achieve a particular goal. It is also believed to outwit evil spirits because it is smarter than them.

The *nkyinkyim* (twisting) motif is modelled in base relief on the lower parts of the wall in front of the shrine room. It is composed of continuous network of spiral lines which have form a unique rhythm. The principle of repetition is highly evident in this motif. A close examination of the motif reveals that one line of design is turned upside down and placed on the other one.

Mmoatia adwa motif

Mmoatia adwa means the stool of gnomes. This motif consists of two designs. The first design shows thick lines which have been joined to form the shape of a stool. The second design comprises two curves that are interlocked to form a unit. This motif is found on both sides of the front wall of the *bosom dan* (shrine room). See figure 28 on page 61.

The motif, according to *Ɔkɔmfɔ* Nyarko, represents the friendship between the priest or priestess and the gnomes. The depiction of the *adwa* (stools) shows that the gnomes are welcomed at the temple; for it is only when one is welcomed at a place that one is offered a seat.

The friendship between the priest and the gnomes, as explained by *Ɔkɔmfɔ* Nyarko, is seen in the selection and training of a new priest/priestess. When someone is selected as the new priest/priestess by the deity, he/she is taken by gnomes into the bush and trained for some time before he/she comes back. After that he/she is taken through some rites by a practicing priest/priestess to become a fully fledged priest/priestess. Sometimes, too, the gnomes help the priest/priestess in his/her work. For instance, they might show him/her a particular plant or herb that he/she can use to cure diseases.

The *mmoatia adwa* (the stool of gnomes) motifs were actually executed by modelling clay round an armature made of twigs and ropes. The screen wall created by the motifs doubles as a window to the shrine room. The motifs comprise two different motifs which have been repeated alternatively vertically and horizontally. When the motifs are viewed diagonally, they form different patterns.

Bese saka motif

This motif is found on the upper wall of the shrine room. It consists of two sets of four tufts placed side by side. There are some lines in the shape of kites that are beneath the tufts. The motif is executed in low relief (See fig. 29 on pg. 61). It has the same meaning as the one on the Kentinkrɔno temple. Therefore refer to pages 35 and 36 for a discussion of the motif.



Figure 2. Adako Gyaakye Temple - Adako Gyaakye
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 3. Adako Gyaakye Temple (interior view) - Adako Gyaakye
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 4. *Sebo ne bɔfoɔ* motif (arrowed) – Adako Gyaakye
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 5. *Tɔ akyiri fa* motif – Adako Gyaakye

(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 6. *Agyinamoa* motif – Adako Gyaakye

(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 7. Asenemaso temple – Asenemaso

(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 8. *Owuo atwedee* motif – Asenemaso

(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 9. *Dwannini mmen* motif – Asenemaso
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 10. Kentinkrono Temple - Kentinkrono
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 11. Kentinkrono Temple (interior view) - Kentinkrono
(Photo courtesy the researcher)

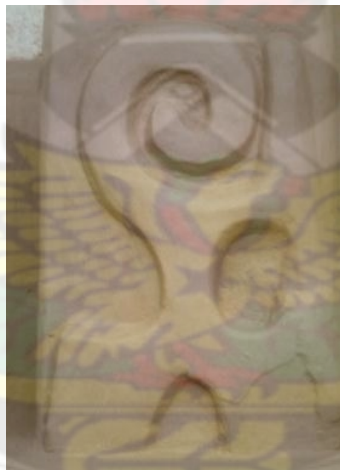


Figure 12. *Sankofa* motif - Kentinkrono
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 13. *Bese saka* motif - Kentinkrɔno
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 14. *Ɔdenkyem* motif - Kentinkrɔno
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 15. Besease Temple – Besease

(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 16. Besease Temple (interior view) – Besease

(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 17. *Dwannini mmen* motif – Besease
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 18. *Sankofa* motif – Besease
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 19. *Nnomaa mmienu* motif – Besease
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 20. Edwenease Temple – Edwenease
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 21. Edwenease Temple (interior view) – Edwenease
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 22. *Obofon* motif – Edwenease
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 23. *Ɔdenkyem* motif – Edwenease

(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 24. *Sasabonsam* motif - Edwenease Figure 28.

(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 25. Abirem temple – Abirem

(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 26. Abirem temple (interior view) – Abirem
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 27. *Nkinkyim* motif – Abirem
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 28. *Mmoatia adwa* motif – Abirem
(Photo courtesy the researcher)



Figure 29. *Bese saka* motif – Abirem
(Photo courtesy the researcher)

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The first item treated in this chapter is the summary of the research work. The conclusion and recommendations then follow.

Summary

The importance of the remaining Asante temples stem from the fact that they serve as evidence of a once flourishing traditional Asante architecture. They are also cherished because of the motifs on their walls.

Their motifs reflect the symbolism, religious beliefs, social norms and aesthetics of the Asante. The motifs are enjoyed as aesthetically appealing art works and also as sources of religious and social lessons to the people.

The GMMB since the 1960s has been restoring the temples in order to preserve them for the present and future generations. Some of them are in very good states while others are struggling to survive. Most of the temples can now be conveniently labeled as monuments as they are no more manned by priests or priestesses.

Conclusions

The indigenous Asante temples date back to the eighteenth century. Today the temples have been renovated to serve as evidence of a once flourishing aspect of Asante culture.

The motifs on the walls of the temples show some plants and animals which were found in the dense forest that surrounded the Asante. Some of the motifs are also in the form of lines and shapes.

The motifs are symbolic and they convey religious and social messages in the form of proverbs, beliefs and myths to the general public.

The aesthetic significance of the motifs lies primarily in their ability to convey the intended message. The motifs also beautify the temples.

The findings reveal the place of art in Asante societies they go to confirm the theory that African, and for that matter Asante, are influenced by the culture (beliefs, practices, notion of beauty

and world view) of the people. The arts are also used to send symbolic, social and religious messages to the people.

Recommendations

The local communities in which the temples are located, the GMMB, the Ministry of Tourism, individuals and businesses in the tourism industry should turn their attention to the temples in order to explore their tourism potentials to the fullest.

The GMMB should make conscious efforts to promote the rich meanings inherent in the motifs in order to help improve the social fabric of the country.

Other researchers should build on this study in order to expand the horizon of the topic.

REFERENCES

- ARY, D; JACOBS, L, C; RAZAVIEH, A. (2002), *Introduction to Research in Education*. (6th Ed.)Wadsworth Group. Belmont.
- ASAMOA, A. M. (1993). *Architectural Structures in Metropolitan Kumasi from Pre-Colonial Era to the Present*. (Unpublished Thesis, Dept. of Gen. Art Studies). KNUST, Kumasi.
- BEDU-ADDO, J. (2003). *Ghana Traveller's Guide The Ghanaian People, Their History and Culture*. (3rd Ed.)Books on African Studies. Schriesheim/Heidelberg.
- BEST, J.W. (1981). *Research in Education*. (4th Ed.)Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs. New Jersey.
- BODWICH, T, E. (1966). (3rd Ed.).*Mission from Cape Coast to Ashantee*. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. London.
- COETZEE, H.P. and Roux, J. P. A. (1998). *The African Philosophy Reader*. Routledge. London.
- COHEN, L. and MANION, L. (1994). *Research Methods In Education*. (4th Ed.). Routledge. London.
- CONSULTANTS FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT (nd), *Final Composite Report Identification of Cultural Heritage Assets In Asante Promoting Partnership With Traditional Authorities Project (PPTAP)*. CONTRAD. Kumasi,
- COURTNEY-CLARKE, M. (1990). *African Canvas the Art of West African Women*. Rizzoli Publications, Inc. New York.

DEBRAH, N. I.; NAA P. D.; ACHEAMPONG B. O.; IVOR N.; JOFFROY T.; MORISET S. and MISSE A. (n.d). *Asante Traditional Buildings*, Ghana Museums and Monuments Board.

GARRARD, T. F. (1989) *Gold of Africa*. Barbier-Mueller Museum. Geneva.

GHANA MUSEUMS AND MONUMENTS BOARD (n.d). Asenemaso Vernacular Building. (Unpublished work, Ghana Museums and Monuments Board). Kumasi.

GILLON, W. (1984). *A short History of African Art*. Viking. London.

GYEKYE, K. (1996). *African Cultural Values An Introduction*. Sankofa Publishing Company. Accra.

LARBI, S. (2004). *Aesthetics of Asante Fetish House Motifs*. (Unpublished thesis, Dept. of Painting and Sculpture). KNUST, Kumasi

LAYTON, R. (1991). *The anthropology of art*. (2nd Ed.). Cambridge University press. London.

MBITI, J. S. (1975). *African Religions and Philosophy*. Heinemann. London.

MCNEIL, P. (1990). *Research Methods*. Routledge. (2nd Ed.). New York.

OKPEWHO, I. (1977). Principles of Traditional African Art. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. The American Society for Aesthetics. (35, 3) 301-313.

OPOKU, K. A. (1978). *West African Traditional Religion*. FEP International Private Limited. Accra.

OTTENBERG, S. (1971). *Anthropology and African Aesthetics*. Ghana Universities Press. Accra.

PRUSSIN, L. (February, 1980), Traditional Asante Architecture. *African Arts*. UCLA James S. Coleman African Studies Center. (13,2) 57-87.

RATTRAY, R.S. (1927), *Religion and Art In Ashanti*, Oxford University press. London.

RATTRAY, R.S. (1969), *Ashanti*. Oxford University Press. London.

ROSS, D. H. (1999). *Wrapped in pride Ghanaian Kente and African American Identity*. Regents of the University of Carlifonia. Carlifonia.

ROSS, D. H. (2002). *Gold of the Akan from the Glassell Collection*. The Museum of Fine Arts. Houston.

SARPONG, P. (1974). *Ghana In Retrospect Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture*. Ghana Publishing Corporation. Tema.

SCHRECKENBACH, H. (1982). *Construction technology For a Tropical Developing Country*. Deutsche gesellschaft Fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GMBH.

SMITH, T. F. (1978) (vol. XI, no. 4). *African arts*. UCLA.

SWITHENBANK, M. (1969). *Ashanti Fetish Houses*. Ghana Universities Press. Accra.

UNESCO.org. (13-July-2008). *Asante Traditional Buildings*. Whc.unesco.org/en/list/35. 13-July-2008.

VANSINA, J. (1984). *Art History In Africa An Introduction To Method*. Longman. London.

WILLIS, L. (1989). Uli Painting and the Igbo World View. *African Art*. UCLA James S. Coleman African Studies Center. (23, 1) 62-63.



APPENDIX

Appendix I - An interview guide

SECTION A: HISTORY OF THE SELECTED TEMPLES

1. When was the temple built?
2. Who built the temple?
3. How significant has the temple been over the years to the people?
4. When was the motifs made?
5. Who made them?
6. Why were they made on the temples?

SECTION B: IDENTIFICATION OF THE MOTIFS

7. What are the names of the motifs?
8. How do they derive their names?

SECTION C: REPRESENTATIONS

9. What are the things represented?
10. Why were those objects represented?

SECTION D: MEANINGS/SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOTIFS

11. What are the symbolic significance of the motifs?
12. What are the religious significance of the motifs?
13. What are the social significance of the motifs?
14. What are their aesthetic importance?

Appendix II- An observational guide

Abirem temple	Found () Not Found ()
Adako Gyaakye temple	Found () Not Found ()
Asenemaso temple	Found () Not Found ()
Kentinkrɔno temple	Found () Not Found ()
Edwenease temple	Found () Not Found ()
Besease temple	Found () Not Found ()
Shrine room	Found () Not Found ()
Drummers rooms	Found () Not Found ()
Singers room	Found () Not Found ()
Cooking room	Found () Not Found ()
Motifs on the exterior walls	Found () Not Found ()
Motifs on the interior walls	Found () Not Found ()
Motifs on the lower walls	Found () Not Found ()
Motifs on the upper walls	Found () Not Found ()

